

Midterm Exam study questions

The exam on October 28 will contain eight questions drawn from the following list of nineteen questions. There will be some choice on the exam, and no single question will be mandatory. These are **short essay** questions, and you will be expected to answer five of them. You should plan to spend about 15-20 minutes on each answer. Obviously, in many cases one might need much more time and space to write a really complete answer; you should try to stick to the points you think are the most important.

Please bring an **examination book** with you for the exam, as well as a writing implement (and a backup).

1. Grice's account of meaning_{NN} is often described as a "reflexive intention" account. Sketch the account, making clear why it is correctly so described.
2. How does Grice's "intention-based semantics," as presented in his article "Meaning," compare to a semantic theory that is not intention-based (such as Frege's)? Point out the most important differences, and indicate what each theory's strengths and weaknesses are.
3. How is Frege's distinction between sense (*Sinn*) and denotation (*Bedeutung*) supposed to explain how an identity sentence can be both true and informative (non-trivial)?
4. What are Fregean senses, and what are they senses *of*? What roles do these senses play in Frege's semantic theory? Why does Frege think that senses are in a "third realm," and not in the realm of "things" or in the realm of ideas?
5. According to Frege, the denotation of a sentence is a function of the denotations of its component names. Using the example 'McCain is older than Obama', explain how this works. What is the denotation of each of the following: 'McCain', 'Obama', 'is older than', 'is older than Obama', 'McCain is older than Obama'? How is the denotation of the last a function of the denotations of the first four?
6. Explain Frege's theory of the senses and denotations of names that occur in "indirect" or "oblique" (*ungerade*) contexts. Why does he feel compelled to adopt this theory?
7. Why are names that are "multiply embedded" in oblique contexts especially problematic for Frege?
8. What is the "slingshot argument" intended to prove? How is it supposed to work? Be sure to illustrate it by means of an example.

9. According to Gödel, Russell's Theory of Descriptions, which holds that a definite description "denotes nothing at all but has meaning only in context," can be used to block the slingshot argument and its conclusion that every true sentence denotes the same thing. Use an example to show exactly where Russell's treatment of descriptions would stop the slingshot from proceeding.

10. Frege and Russell agree that the following argument is invalid:

Tom believes that Saturn is the largest planet.
Jupiter = the largest planet.
Therefore, Tom believes that Saturn is Jupiter.

But they disagree on how to explain why its premises might be true and its conclusion false. Describe their solutions to this problem, making clear the ways in which those solutions differ.

11. What, according to Russell, is the correct analysis of a sentence of the form 'The *F* is *G*'? Explain the difference between Russell's and Strawson's views of the logical relation between 'The *F* is *G*' and 'There is an *F*'.

12. Explain, by means of an example, Russell's distinction between primary and secondary occurrences of a definite description.

13. According to Russell, Meinong's theory of denoting phrases causes a "breach of the law of contradiction," i.e., it entails some proposition of the form '*p* & not-*p*'. Show how Meinong's theory leads to this result. How does Russell's theory avoid it?

14. Russell claims that the sentence 'The King of France is bald' is meaningful, but false. What does Strawson say about each of these claims, and why?

15. Explain Donnellan's distinction between attributive and referential uses of definite descriptions. How does he use this distinction to criticize both Russell and Strawson?

16. Can we accommodate Donnellan's referential/attributive distinction within a Russellian treatment of definite descriptions? If so, how? If not, why not?

17. Mill uses the name 'Dartmouth' to illustrate a general point he wants to make about proper names. What is the point, and how does Mill's 'Dartmouth' example illustrate it?

18. Mill classifies names as either (1) individual or general, (2) concrete or abstract, and (3) connotative or non-connotative. Explain each of these three distinctions, and their interrelations, using examples where appropriate.

19. Mill claims that "all concrete general names are connotative." What does he mean by this claim? How does he try to establish it?