Instructor: Dr. Amy K. Donahue  
Temporary Assistant Professor  
Office: Social Sciences Building, Rm. 4092  
Phone: 770.423.6624  
Email: adonahu3@kennesaw.edu

Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays, 2:00pm — 3:15pm, or by appointment. I’m very willing to meet, in person or electronically, whenever my schedule allows.

Prerequisites: ENGL 1102 with a minimum grade of C

Catalogue Course Description: The course is a study of the major movements in twentieth century western philosophy including positivism, pragmatism, phenomenology, philosophy of language, and postmodern; and the impact of these philosophical movements on the other areas including the arts, sciences, and politics.

Instructor’s Course Description: In this class, we'll read select portions of three primary texts that chart the development, and you might say, eventual identity crisis, of empiricist epistemologies and philosophies of language in the twentieth century: AJ Ayer's *Language, Truth, and Logic*, WVO Quine's *The Pursuit of Truth*, and Bruno Latour's *Science in Action*, along with select articles, such as Quine's "Two Dogmas of Empiricism" and Donna Haraway's "Teddy Bear Patriarchy." Through close, detailed engagement with these texts, we will explore questions such as, what does it mean to speak or think nonsensically or sensibly? What, if anything, makes expressions meaningful? Do utterances lacking in possible experiential content, such as “infinity,” mean anything? To what degree, if at all, do meaningful utterances rely on culture and social conventions? How are “truths” about nature and society established? And how do disproportionately distributed power and resources feature in their establishment?

Required Texts:

Select online materials and handouts.
**Instructional Methods:** The course will emphasize “active” rather than “passive” learning methods. As much as is logistically and pedagogically possible, small group exercises and group discussions will take priority over lectures. The course aims to introduce students to the notion of philosophy, critical thought, and philosophical reading as interpersonal practices.

**Learning Outcomes:** For a grade of “B” or better, students must fulfill the following learning outcomes for this course:

- Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of arguments and concepts of select twentieth century primary texts through weekly online textual responses, active classroom participation, two textual summaries, a midterm paper, an oral presentation, and a final paper.
- Write one five to seven page midterm paper that summarizes and critically engages specific aspects of AJ Ayer’s logical positivist program in the philosophy of language.
- Prepare and deliver one ten minute presentation in which the student summaries and evaluates select arguments that we have studied and examines their implications for some contemporary practice or concern.
- Write one eight to ten page final paper that accurately and subtly represents select arguments that we have studied, shows how these teachings might inform responses to and/or diagnoses of some contemporary practice or concern, and defends a clearly stated and philosophically relevant thesis.
- Actively engage with fellow students’ live and online class contributions. Assist them with their thoughts and pose relevant, informed, and on-topic critical questions.

**Course Requirements:** Students must attend classes, **read course materials**, bring appropriate texts to class, and complete assignments unless there are exceptional circumstances that they can document. Each student is expected to treat other members of the class with respect, to arrive promptly to class, and to actively participate in class assignments, exercises, and discussions.

**Grading:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weekly Online Textual Responses</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two 2-page argument summaries</td>
<td>16% (8% each)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midterm Paper</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral Presentation</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Paper</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class participation</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Grading Scale:**

- 100 – 90 = A
- 89 – 80 = B
- 79 – 70 = C
- 69 – 60 = D
- < 60 = F
**Weekly Online Textual Responses:** One post is required each week, from Weeks 2 — 15, on the class’ online discussion board. Your posts are due by 10pm on the night before the week’s first class. Each post is worth 1 per cent of your final grade.

Each 75—150 word online textual response should be written in conversational English and should demonstrate your direct, personal familiarity with, if not expertise in, the assigned reading for the upcoming class. Responses should highlight a specific part of the text that interests, concerns, or puzzles you and offer an interpretation of its meaning and implications. I will moderate the board primarily to ensure that students are actively and appropriately engaging the relevant primary texts and to non-intrusively identify areas of student interest, concern, or confusion that I may address later in class. The discussion board is also meant to serve as a place for students, including those who find live class interactions awkward, to raise questions or concerns about textual concepts and philosophical perspectives, and to try to answer or address classmates’ questions or difficulties. So, although you are required to post online textual responses once per week, you are also welcome to respond to and engage other students’ posts. Doing so will contribute to your class participation grade. Online textual responses will be evaluated according to the following rubric:

1 point — The response is posted on Blackboard by 10pm on the night before the week’s first class, it is written in intelligible if not grammatically perfect English, it demonstrates direct and subtle engagement with the assigned reading material (e.g., through citations and/or direct textual quotes), it offers a cogent, if not expert, interpretation of the text’s meaning and implications, and it does not appear to the professor to substantially repeat an earlier student post.

0 points — Either the response is not posted by 10pm before the week’s first class, or it isn’t written in intelligible English, it does not demonstrate direct and subtle engagement with the assigned reading material, it does not offer a cogent interpretation of the text’s meaning and implications, or it appears to the professor to substantially repeat an earlier student post.

**Argument Summaries:** Approximately two weeks before your midterm and final papers are due, you are required to submit a two page, detailed, text-based summary of one philosophical argument that we have read and studied in class. Each written argument summary should be double-spaced, with 12 point Times New Roman font and 1” margins, and should follow MLA citation guidelines (see [http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/02/](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/02/)). We’ll talk about the structure of philosophical arguments in class. Students are also invited to view this Oxford University video podcast series’ introduction to arguments in philosophy: [http://www.philosophy.ox.ac.uk/podcasts/critical_reasoning_for_beginners](http://www.philosophy.ox.ac.uk/podcasts/critical_reasoning_for_beginners). Your summaries must accurately represent and explain 1) a conclusion defended by one particular philosopher whom we have read, 2) the premises that he or she gives to support the truth of the conclusion, and 3) why, according to the author, the premises make the conclusion necessarily or most likely true. Your summaries should appropriately reference the primary text in detail (not simply class notes,
and certainly not unassigned sources in print or online that you have discovered on your own), and do so in ways that show that your representations and explanations are textually accurate and responsible. Think of these summaries (as well as your weekly online posts) as part of the drafting process for your midterm and final papers. You will be welcome to include them verbatim in these papers.

**Papers:** Your midterm and final papers should be formatted with double-spacing, 12 point Times New Roman font, and 1” margins, and follow MLA citation guidelines (see [http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/02/](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/02/)). Please review KSU’s policies on academic integrity and plagiarism before submission. Time permitting, I am extremely happy to review paper drafts before assignments are due and to work with students to improve their academic writing. Graded papers are normally returned no more than two weeks after their due date. I will distribute a grading rubric for your written assignments before assigning your papers.

**Oral Presentations:** The majority of the last three class sessions will be reserved for student oral presentations. Each presentation should consist of roughly 10 minutes of prepared remarks and materials. A final portion of these classes will be reserved for group discussion and clarification of concepts. Students are encouraged to present on topics that they address in their final 8-10 page papers.

**KSU Academic integrity policy:** No student shall receive, attempt to receive, knowingly give or attempt to give unauthorized assistance in the preparation of any work required to be submitted for credit (including examinations, laboratory reports, essays, themes, term papers, etc.). Unless specifically authorized, the presence and/or use of electronic devices during an examination, quiz, or other class assignment is considered cheating. Engaging in any behavior which a professor prohibits as academic misconduct in the syllabus or in class discussion is cheating. *When direct quotations are used, they should be indicated, and when the ideas, theories, data, figures, graphs, programs, electronic based information or illustrations of someone other than the student are incorporated into a paper or used in a project, they should be duly acknowledged. No student may submit the same, or substantially the same, paper or other assignment for credit in more than one class without the prior permission of the current professor(s).*

**Attendance Policy:** Attendance is mandatory. Students are required to provide a reasonable, documentable explanation for class absences. After three unexcused absences, students lose a full letter grade, to be deducted from class participation, with each additional unexcused absence. Repeated failure to arrive punctually to class will result in deductions from your class participation grade.

**Disabilities** — I will be happy to work to meet the access needs of any student who requires reasonable accommodations because of the impact of a physical or mental disability.
Tentative Course Schedule
(reading assignments and activities are subject to revision)

Week 1:

8/20 — Class introductions, welcome, discussion of syllabus, and discussion of meaningful vs. nonsensical thought and speech, and the political and philosophical context of the Vienna School’s and AJ Ayer’s logical positivist program.


Week 2:


Week 3:

9/3 — LABOR DAY — No Class.


Week 4:


Week 5:


**Week 6:**


**Week 7:**


**Week 8:**

10/8 — Online textual response due. Reading — WVO Quine, “Two Dogmas of Empiricism” (uploaded to Blackboard). What are the “two dogmas” that Quine identifies, and to what extent do they threaten Ayer’s logical positivist program?

10/10 — No new reading assigned. Re-read “Two Dogmas of Empiricism” (uploaded to Blackboard). Introduction to Quine’s “naturalized epistemology” and his theory of evidence.

10/12 — Last day to withdraw without academic penalty

**Week 9:**

10/15 — **MIDTERM PAPER DUE.** Online textual response due. Reading — *The Pursuit of Truth*, Chapter 1: Evidence. Clarification of concepts,
examination of arguments, and class discussion. How does Quine substitute and revise logical positivist concepts in his effort to “naturalize epistemology?”


Week 10:

Week 11:

Week 12:

Week 13:
Week 14:
11/21 — SECOND ARGUMENT SUMMARY DUE. Fall Break. No class.

Week 15:
11/26 — Online textual response due. Reading — Donna Haraway, “Teddy Bear Patriarchy” (uploaded to Blackboard). Relate to Latour, and examine its implications for Quine and for the prospects of feminist and other non-dominant epistemologies rooted in his naturalized epistemology. Where should empiricist epistemologies go from here?
11/28 — Oral presentations.

Week 16:
12/3 — Oral presentations
12/5 — Oral presentations. Last day of class.

FINAL PAPER: DUE ELECTRONICALLY FRIDAY, DECEMBER 7, BY 8PM THROUGH BLACKBOARD.