

Philosophy of Language: What is Meaning?

01:090:296:02 Index# 13340

Professor Elisabeth Camp, SAS - Philosophy

TH 11:30A-2:30P

RU Academic Building Rm 3450

College Avenue Campus

In this class we will explore the varieties of meaning, from basic informational correlations (as when we say that smoke means fire), to the more or less arbitrary conventions of language and maps, and on to more open-ended forms of personal and cultural significance (as in my grandfather's watch, a movie, or life itself). What, if anything, do all these varieties of meaning have in common? Where does meaning come from? Is meaning possible without a conscious creator or interpreter? How might it have evolved? Must something have a determinate meaning to mean anything at all? Readings include philosophers (Wittgenstein, Quine, Lewis, Millikan); evolutionary biologists and game theorists (Shannon, Skyrms); and literary and critical theorists (Barthes, Bourdieu, Eco, Foucault).