Fall 2022

BCL, Université Côte d’Azur

**Philosophy of Language: Natural Language Ontology**

Instructor: Friederike Moltmann

Contact: fmoltmann@gmail.com

Time: Mondays 16h-18h

Discussion session: Mondays 18h-19h (TBC)

Room: R 128, Campus St Angeli, 25 ave Mitterand

ZOOM link: please email me: fmoltmann@gmail.com

**Schedule**

October 3:

Introduction; Ontology, Semantics, and Syntax

* What is ontology, what is metaphysics?
* How does ontology relate to natural language?
* The ways of involvement of objects in the semantics of natural language:

referential NPs, anaphora, implicit arguments, parameters of evaluation

* The importance of ontology for syntax and vice versa
* What sorts of linguistic data display the ontology implicit in natural language? A first look at the core-periphery distinction

October 10:

Reference and predication

* Referential and other NPs
* The argument structure of predicates
* Predicates and properties
* The Fregean criterion of objecthood
* Potential problems for the view that referential NPs stand for objects

October 17:

Quantification

* Quantification in logic and in natural language
* Quantification and ontological commitment
* Adverbial quantification
* ‘Non-nominal’ or special quantification

October 24:

Implicit arguments

* Event semantics and its alternatives
* Other implicit arguments in the semantic literature
* Implicit arguments vs light silent nouns
* Syntactic constraints on implicit arguments
* Implicit and explicit arguments: distinction in ontological commitment?

November 7:

Parameters of evaluation

* Some basics of modal logic and modality in natural language
* Some basics of the semantics of tense
* Ontological commitment to possible worlds or situations: extending the range of criteria
* Ontological commitment to times

November 14:

Nonexistent objects?

* Contexts of apparent referential NPs not standing for actual objects
* Existence predicates and intentional verbs
* Meinongianism and other approaches to apparent non-referring ‘referential’ NPs
* Restrictions on the availability of non-existent objects in the semantics

November 21:

Syntactic categories and ontology

* Ontological and grammatical categories
* Older view about the correlations of ontological and syntatcic categories
* Crosslinguistic challenges
* Challenges from recent syntactic theories

November 28:

Chomsky’s challenges to referentialist semantics 1

* Phenomena of apparently incompatible copredication
* Semantic and ontological approaches to issues of co-predication

December 5:

Chomsky’s challenges to referentialist semantics 2

* What sorts of semantic values can and cannot be ‘real things’?
* Conceptions of reality in philosophy
* The individuation of artifacts and related things

December 12:

The ontological core-periphery distinction

* The motivations for the core-periphery distinction
* How should the distinction bet characterized content-wise?
* How is the distinction linguistically grounded?
* How does the distinction relate to Chomsky’s core-periphery distinction?