

20th Century Analytic Philosophy
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First Paper Assignment

The first paper assignment is due Friday, Feb. 15 at 5:00 in my e-mail inbox: bricker@philos.umass.edu. It should be around 800 words (2-3 double spaced pages), but anything between 600 and 1000 words is fine. You should choose some specific issue or argument from one of the papers we have read and try to clearly say in your own words what that issue or argument is. Then try to say something of your own about the issue or argument. It could be something critical, or it could be just asking a question raised by the issue or argument.

I encourage you to choose your own topic to write on. But here are four “prompts”, one from each of the four papers we have done so far. If you discuss your paper with other students in the class, or use any secondary sources, please be sure to note that in your paper.

1. What are Frege’s “three realms”, and how does Frege argue that thoughts do not belong to the first or second realm, and must therefore belong to a “third realm”?
2. How does Frege use identity statements to argue that proper names have both a sense and a reference? How does Frege understand the sense of a proper name?
3. First present Russell’s analysis of definite descriptions. Explain how Russell’s account satisfies his claim that “denoting phrases never have a meaning in themselves, but every proposition in which they occur has a meaning”.
4. Strawson emphasizes the difference between a sentence or expression, and the use of a sentence or expression, something Russell ignores. Explain this distinction. Could Russell’s analysis of definite descriptions be amended so as to take this distinction into account?