**Compact course: Metaphysics and Natural Language**

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IHPST

**Time:**

Monday, May 24, 2017

11h-13h, 15h-18h

Tuesday May 25, 2017

11h-13h, 15h-18h

**Place:**

Grande salle, IHPST, 13 rue due Four, 75006 Paris

**Description**

Metaphysics in the past was considered mainly a pursuit of philosophers, asking questions about being in most general terms. While some philosophers made appeal to natural language in order to argue for a ontological category or metaphysical notion, others have rejected such an appeal arguing that the ontology reflected in language diverges significantly from what there really is, from any philosophically accepted ontology. Whatever one’s view may be of what a philosopher should pursue, it has become clear, especially with the development of natural language semantics, that the metaphysics reflected in natural language is an important object of study in itself, as the subject matter of natural language ontology or more generally natural language metaphysics. This compact gives an overview of the sort of appeals philosophers have made to natural language, of the ways natural language reflects ontological notions and structures, of cases of discrepancies between the ontology reflected in language and the reflective ontology of philosophers or non-philosophers, of the ways the relation of natural language metaphysics can be conceived with respect to other projects in metaphysics, and of the ways in which degrees of ontological commitment may be reflected in the semantic structure of language.

**Recommended reading**

'[Natural Language Ontology](http://friederike-moltmann.com/uploads/Natural%20Language%20Ontology-2016%283%29.pdf)'. To appear in [*Oxford Research E*ncyclopedia of Linguistics](http://linguistics.oxfordre.com/page/forthcoming/). Oxford UP, New York, 2017 (online).