

Phil 57 section 3
Prof. Stemwedel
Homework #3

1. In an SNL skit from many years ago, two workers at a nuclear power plant are arguing about the meaning of a sign on the wall of their control room that says, "You can't have too much water in a nuclear cooling tank." (Later, after things at the reactor go wrong, they argue over the safety manual that says, "You can't look too long at a nuclear blast.") *Explain the **ambiguity** in these two instructions (e.g., by spelling out the two different ways one might interpret each sentence).*

2. Another old SNL skit featured a newscaster saying, "In this country, a woman gives birth every 12 minutes. She must be found and stopped." *Explain the **ambiguity** in the newscaster's first sentence.*

3. The novelist Lois Duncan is a young adult author. Lois Duncan is also 76 years old. *Discuss what is **vague** about the term "young adult author" and give a definition that removes the vagueness.*

4. At the movie theater, the ushers try to make sure that no children attend movies with R ratings unless accompanied by an adult parent or guardian. Children ages 2-12 pay one ticket price, and everyone older than 12 pays the adult ticket price. *Discuss what is **vague** about "children" and "adult" here (at least as far as the ushers are concerned). How could a 14-year-old use this vagueness to argue that he should be admitted to an R-rated movie?*

5. *Explain what's wrong with each of these lexical definitions:*

- a. "Politically" means "in a political manner."
- b. "Hamster" means "a small animal."
- c. "Fork" means "a utensil for eating foods."
- d. "Whale" means "an aquatic mammal."
- e. "Overture" means "the orchestral opening to the symphony."

6. Discuss the **persuasive force** of "natural medicines" and of "evidence-based medicine." Describe the categories these terms pick out. (Are they completely distinct categories?)

7. Give a **verbal extensional definition** for "the five senses". Give a **verbal extensional definition** for "pizza toppings." Discuss the limits of these definitions (e.g., in conveying information to someone who doesn't already have a clear understanding of what sense are, or of what pizza is).

8. For each of the following pairs of terms, identify whether there is a difference in **emotive force** between the members of the pair, and whether both members of each pair have the same **intensional meaning** (i.e., whether they refer to the same things):

- a. Fragile – weak
- b. Public servant – bureaucrat
- c. Native American – Indian
- d. Sweat – perspire
- e. Chairman – chairperson
- f. Cop – police officer
- g. Boy – young man
- h. Waiter – waitress
- i. House – home
- j. Estate tax – death tax
- k. College – university
- l. Psychiatrist – shrink
- m. Woman – lady
- n. Tolerance – “anything goes”
- o. Undocumented immigrant – illegal immigrant
- p. Tuition payer -- student

9. Formulate an **operational definition** for “hot” in “This jalapeño is hot.”

10. Formulate an **operational definition** for “awake” in “The students in the lecture are awake.”