Here are a few topics that you can use for your reading essay due as an attachment to an email by 5 pm on Thursday, February 5. Please select your own topic if you’d prefer—that is generally the better course of action. The topics below are not written in a way that lines up with the structure of the essays I want. These statements are meant to get you thinking—simply answering the questions in order will not result in an adequate essay. Please do not write more than 2 pages!

1. In Ch. 2, pp. 23-27, Lycan introduces Donnellan's referential/attributive distinction as the source of a criticism of the Russellian view of definite descriptions. Reconstruct the anti-Russell argument he develops around this distinction and then respond to it with an argument of your own.

2. What is Russell's analysis of denoting phrases? Identify a problem this is supposed to solve and indicate how the solution works. Provide a critical evaluation of this analysis.

3. What is Lewis’s analysis of convention? Illustrate it. Do you agree that language is conventional in this sense? Defend your view.

4. Provide Chomsky’s analysis of the nature of linguistic knowledge. How does he defend this? What is your view of his claims concerning knowledge?

5. Consider Objection 9, in which the convention of truthfulness and trust is dismissed as a “needless complication”. What is the argument advanced here against Lewis’s view? What is his response? What do you make of this debate?

6. What is the property of “discrete infinity” and why does it apply to language? How does it figure into Chomsky’s view of language? Do you believe that a biologically-based language can have this property?

7. Extract an argument for the public nature of meaning from the exchange between Alice and Humpty Dumpty involving use of the sentence, "There's glory for you!" (This would be Alice’s perspective on the exchange.) Do you find this particular point of view compelling?

8. What is Locke's view of meaning, in a paragraph? Run a communication-based argument against this view. Do you find this objection compelling?