Cas LX 433 / GRS LX 733  Intermediate Pragmatics:  
Meaning in Context

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Office Hrs:  Tu 3:30-5; F 12:30-2 (and by appt.)

WWW:  http://www.bu.edu/linguistics/UG/alrenga/Pragmatics_F16/index.html  
(username: pragmatics  password: grice)

Course Description & Learning Objectives

The study of linguistic meaning comprises two disciplines: semantics, the study of the conventional meanings carried by words and sentences, and pragmatics, the study of how speakers use words and sentences to convey meaning. This course surveys several core issues in pragmatics. We will be particularly concerned this semester with the interaction between pragmatics and semantics, exploring the numerous ways in which the truth-conditional meaning of a sentence interacts with the context in which it is uttered. Our goals will be (i) to determine the extent to which these interactions are regular and well-defined, and (ii) to arrive at a more precise understanding of what constitutes an utterance context, and how various types of utterances may affect it. Along the way, we will also consider the relevance of pragmatic theory to other disciplines, such as cognitive psychology and the law.

Students who complete this course will: (i) achieve an understanding of the different ways in which context contributes to linguistic interpretation, and how these contributions can be formally represented and investigated; (ii) explore the specific interplay between context and meaning in a broad variety of domains, including deixis/anaphora, implicature, presupposition, speech act theory, and metaphorical uses of language; (iii) see how the results of pragmatic research have found applications in diverse academic domains, such as psychology, law, and literary studies; and (iv) have an opportunity to engage with the foundational pragmatics literature, and to evaluate the proposals and argumentation contained within it.

Prerequisite

The prerequisite for this course is CAS LX 331/GRS 631 Semantics & Pragmatics: Introduction to the Study of Linguistic Meaning (formerly CAS LX 502). Our readings and class discussions will presuppose a familiarity with the material covered in that class.
Readings

There is no textbook for this course. Throughout the semester, we will read several foundational articles from the pragmatics literature, along with excerpted chapters from various pragmatics textbooks. (See the final page of this syllabus for a full list of readings.) Individual reading assignments will be distributed to students as PDFs available from the course website.

Course Requirements & Policies

Reading: All readings are required, and should be completed by the beginning of class.

Attendance & Participation: Regular attendance is required for a passing grade in this course, and participation in class discussions is expected. Together, attendance and participation will account for 5% of your final grade.

Group Presentation: Each of you will participate in one group presentation during the semester, during which your group will provide a comprehensive overview of one of the week’s readings. The presentation will constitute 10% of your final grade.

Reading Responses: Throughout the semester, you will submit five reading responses, in which you will summarize that week’s reading: what are the issues, what are the core proposals, and what arguments are advanced in support of those proposals? Usually, I will pose specific questions about the week’s reading, around which your discussion should be organized. Students enrolled in LX 433 should aim to submit 1 to 1½ single-spaced pages of concise, targeted prose. Students enrolled in LX 733 will be expected to demonstrate a more substantial engagement with the readings, and should aim to submit 2½ to 3 pages. The responses will constitute 35% of your final grade.

Problem Sets: You will complete three problem sets during the semester. The problem sets will cover material from the readings and our class discussions. You may also be asked to apply your understanding of this material to novel types of problems. The problem sets will constitute 25% of your final grade.

Final Paper: You will also write and present a final paper on a topic in pragmatics. Depending on your interests, this might involve the description and analysis of some pragmatic phenomenon (perhaps in a language other than English), or an extended discussion of some paper(s) from the pragmatics literature that we have not already read. A one-page topic proposal will be due on Monday, November 14. During our final two class meetings, each of you will present your paper to the rest of the class. The paper itself will be due on Monday, December 19. For students enrolled in LX 433, the paper should be between 7-10 pages in length; for those enrolled in LX 733, it should be between 10-13 pages in length. The paper will constitute 25% of your final grade.
**Academic Conduct**: You are expected to abide by Boston University’s Academic Conduct Code, which is accessible at http://www.bu.edu/academics/resources/academic-conduct-code/. Graduate students are additionally expected to abide by the GRS Academic Conduct Code, which is accessible at http://www.bu.edu/cas/students/graduate/forms-policies-procedures/academic-discipline-procedures/. Plagiarism in any form (including from online sources) and other academic misconduct will not be tolerated. If you are unsure of any aspect of these policies, please ask!

**Late Policy**: It is your responsibility to bring any potential scheduling conflicts to my attention promptly, so that alternative arrangements can be made. In the absence of any such prior arrangements, late work will not be accepted.
## Preliminary Schedule (readings listed in **bold** will be presented by students)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Class Topic</th>
<th>Readings</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>M 9/12</td>
<td>Course Overview: Meaning, Use &amp; Context</td>
<td>Potts 2007</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>M 9/19</td>
<td>Reference I: Deixis, Anaphora &amp; Indeterminacy</td>
<td>Huang 2007: Ch. 5 (§5.3 is optional); Partee 1989: §1-4</td>
<td>Reading Response #1</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>M 9/26</td>
<td>Reference II: (In)definite NPs in Discourse</td>
<td>Karttunen 1976; Haviland &amp; Clark 1974</td>
<td>Problem Set #1</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>M 10/3</td>
<td>Conversational Implicature I: Sentence Meaning, Utterance Meaning &amp; Grice’s Maxims</td>
<td>Grice 1975; Geurts 2010: Ch. 2</td>
<td>Reading Response #2</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Tu 10/11</td>
<td>Conversational Implicature II: Quantity Implicatures &amp; Lexical Scales</td>
<td>Geurts 2010: Ch. 3; Papafragou &amp; Musolino 2003</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>M 10/17</td>
<td>Conversational Implicature III: Sentence Meaning vs. Utterance Meaning Revisited</td>
<td>Sadock 1978; Carston 1988 (skip §5)</td>
<td>Problem Set #2</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>M 10/24</td>
<td>Presupposition I: Diagnostics, Triggers &amp; Projection</td>
<td>Huang 2007: Ch. 3, 64-75; Karttunen 1973 (skip §8,10,11)</td>
<td>Reading Response #3</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>M 10/31</td>
<td>Presupposition II: Common Ground &amp; Accommodation</td>
<td>Stalnaker 1974; Lewis 1979: 339-53</td>
<td>Reading Response #4</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>M 11/7</td>
<td>Information Structure: Topic, Focus &amp; Given vs. New</td>
<td>Kim 2007; Birner 2012, Ch. 7</td>
<td>Problem Set #3</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>M 11/28</td>
<td>Metaphorical Utterances; Pragmatics &amp; Lang. Structure</td>
<td>Searle 1979</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>M 12/5</td>
<td>Student Presentations</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>M 12/12</td>
<td>Student Presentations</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>M 12/19</td>
<td>Final Paper Due (@ 8pm)</td>
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Reading List


