

## CAS LX 433 / GRS LX 733 Intermediate Pragmatics: Meaning in Context

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Instructor: Elizabeth Coppock  
Time and place: Tuesdays and Thursdays 2-3:15 in CAS 204B  
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Office: 621 Commonwealth Ave., Room 110  
Office Hours: Mondays 12-2 and Thursdays 3:30-4:30, or by appointment

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### Course Description & Learning Objectives

“One of the most astonishing features of human language is its capacity to convey information efficiently in context” (Frank & Goodman, 2012). *Pragmatics* concerns itself with how this happens. This course will focus on the growing literature in pragmatics that is based on experimental methods: *experimental pragmatics*.

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 precisely represented and investigated; (ii) explore the specific interplay between context and meaning as it manifests itself in various sorts of implicature, as well as presupposition, indexicality, and subjective language; (iii) become familiar with the various methodological tools that are used to study pragmatics within the experimental literature; and (iii) have an opportunity to design and implement an original experiment, building on one or more of the examples reviewed in class.

Specific content areas we will focus on this year will most likely include and are not necessarily limited to: (i) post-Gricean models of scalar implicatures, ignorance implicatures, and related phenomena; (ii) non-cooperativity; (iii) reference games; and (iv) subjective language.

### Prerequisite

The prerequisite for this course is CAS LX 331 / GRS LX 631 Semantics & Pragmatics: Introduction to the Study of Linguistic Meaning (formerly CAS LX 502).

### Literature

There is no required textbook for this course. All readings will be made available via Blackboard.

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## Course Requirements & Policies

**Reading:** All readings must be completed by the beginning of class. This is extremely important, because classroom discussions will be central to your learning experience in this course.

**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 10% of your final grade. Students enrolled in LX 733 are expected to exhibit a particularly high degree of initiative, curiosity, and critical thinking during class.

If you are unable to attend class because of religious observance, you should submit email notification to Prof. Coppock at least a week in advance. Please look over the syllabus. If you anticipate a conflict, please bring this to her attention via email ASAP. In case of illness or other serious issues that may prevent your attending a class, please contact Prof. Coppock by email in advance (or as promptly after the class as possible, depending on circumstances). In case of extended illness or other extraordinary long-term circumstance, contact Prof. Coppock ASAP to make appropriate arrangements.

**Mini-presentations:** We will organize the discussion of the readings through mini-presentations. This will help to deepen your understanding of the reading material throughout the semester, and promote good class discussions. Mini-presentations will last 15 minutes, and concern a designated section of the reading (e.g., ‘Experiment 1’). You will have an opportunity to sign up for mini-presentations at least one week in advance, through a shared Google Doc, which will contain the breakdowns of the readings. You are required to make 7 mini-presentations over the course of the semester. Mini-presentations will make up 70% of your final grade, and will be evaluated based on mastery of the material, pacing, and clarity.

**Final Project:** You will also have a chance to design and carry out an experiment. Everyone in the class will design an experiment, and propose it to the class on **Thursday, April 23rd**. Following these presentations, we will vote on which experiment(s) to carry out as a class, and then begin working on the winner(s) in teams. In order to be chosen, your experiment proposal must be feasible to carry out within the time available, which means that it must be carried out over the web. Your proposal should include a motivation for why this experiment should be run, and mock stimuli for at least two of the experimental conditions.

The final write-up(s) will describe the theoretical background, the research question, the methods, the results, and a discussion of their implications. We will divide up these responsibilities equitably among the students in the class. The final project will constitute 20% of your grade.

**Graduate-level requirements.** Students enrolled in LX 733 will be expected to engage more deeply in the scholarly aspects of the final project, by seeking out relevant work, summarizing it in a cogent manner, helping to characterize the gap in the literature that our experiment fills, framing the results in relation to that work, and ensuring that the paper adheres to stylistic standards of academic writing in linguistics.<sup>1</sup> Graduate students are also expected to engage with the reading in a mature fashion, that is, critically, with an eye towards potential pitfalls and larger significance, and to communicate this engagement through classroom discussions.

**Academic Conduct.** You are expected to abide by Boston University's Academic Conduct Code, which is accessible at <https://www.bu.edu/cas/current-students/undergraduate/academic-conduct-code-2/>. Graduate students are additionally expected to abide by the GRS Academic Conduct Code, <https://www.bu.edu/cas/files/2017/02/GRS-Academic-Conduct-Code-Final.pdf>. 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!

**Final Course Grade:** Your overall course grade will be determined as follows:

10%	Attendance/Participation
70%	Mini-presentations
20%	Final Project

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<sup>1</sup>See <https://www.linguisticsociety.org/resource/unified-style-sheet>.

**Schedule (subject to change)**

DATE	THEME	READING
T 1/29	Introductions	
R 1/31	Grice	Grice (1975)
T 2/5	Implicatures	Geurts (2011) ch. 2-3
R 2/7	Implicatures	Cummins & Katsos (2010)
T 2/12	Implicatures	Cummins et al. (2012)
R 2/14	Implicatures	Cremers et al. (2017)
T 2/21	<b>No class; Monday schedule</b>	
R 2/24	Time course of implicatures	Schwarz et al. (2015)
T 2/26	Time course of presuppositions	Romoli & Schwarz (2014)
R 2/28	Non-cooperativity	Bonnefon et al. (2009)
T 3/5	Non-cooperativity	Pryslopska (2013)
R 3/7	<b>No class*</b>	
T 3/12	<b>Spring break</b>	
R 3/14	<b>Spring break</b>	
T 3/19	Reference games	Sedivy et al. (1999)
R 3/21	Reference games	Frank & Goodman (2012)
T 3/26	Reference games	Leffel et al. (2016)
R 3/28	Reference games	Aparicio & Coppock (in prep.)
T 4/2	Subjectivity	Lasersohn (2005); Coppock (2018)
R 4/4	Subjectivity	Khoo (forthcoming)
T 4/9	Subjectivity	Kaiser & Lee (2018)
R 4/11	Subjectivity	Kneer (under review)
T 4/16	<b>No class; Monday schedule</b>	
R 4/18	Workshop on experimental design	
T 4/23	Experiment proposal contest	
R 4/25	Experiment workshop	
T 4/30	Experiment workshop	
R 5/2	Presentations	

**Final project due Thursday, May 9th.**

\*Prof. Coppock will be out of town for a conference on this day. Please do yourself a favor and catch up on some sleep.

## References

- Bonnefon, Jean-François, Aidan Feeney & Gaëlle Villejoubert. 2009. When some is actually all: Scalar inferences in face-threatening contexts. *Cognition* 249–258.
- Coppock, Elizabeth. 2018. Outlook-based semantics. *Linguistics and Philosophy* 41(2). 125–164.
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- Cummins, Chris & Napoleon Katsos. 2010. Comparative and superlative quantifiers: Pragmatic effects of comparison type. *Journal of Semantics* 27. 271–305. doi: 10.1093/jos/ffq006.
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- Kaiser, Elsi & Jamie Herron Lee. 2018. Predicates of personal taste and multidimensional adjectives: An experimental investigation. In *Proceedings of the 35th west coast conference on formal linguistics*, 224–231. Cascadilla Proceedings Project.
- Khoo, Justin. forthcoming. Quasi indexicals. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* .
- Kneer, Markus. under review. Perspectival plurality: A natural language phenomenon. University of Pittsburgh.
- Laserson, Peter. 2005. Context dependence, disagreement, and predicates of personal taste. *Linguistics and Philosophy* 28. 643–86.
- Leffel, Timothy, Ming Xiang & Christopher Kennedy. 2016. Imprecision is pragmatic: Evidence from referential processing. In *Semantics and linguistic theory*, vol. 26, 836–854.
- Prylowska, Anna. 2013. *Implicatures in uncooperative contexts*. Universität Tübingen MA thesis.
- Romoli, Jacopo & Florian Schwarz. 2014. An experimental comparison between pre-suppositions and indirect scalar implicatures. In *Experimental perspectives on pre-suppositions*, 215–240. Springer.
- Schwarz, Florian, Jacopo Romoli & Cory Bill. 2015. *Scalar implicatures processing: slowly accepting the truth (literally)*. Proceedings of Sinn und Bedeutung 19.
- Sedivy, Julie C., Michael K. Tanenhaus, Craig G. Chambers & Gregory N. Carlson. 1999. Achieving incremental semantic interpretation through contextual representation. *Cognition* 109–147.