

Pragmatics

Ling 625

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1 Goals

The primary goal of the course is to acquaint students with the history and basic principles of the field of linguistic pragmatics, to read a few of the classic texts, and to understand where they have taken us in terms of current research.

2 Grading

Grading will be based on exercises, classroom participation and preparation, a paper, and a presentation.

Assignments	0%
Classroom prep	15%
Paper + Bib + Outline	65%
Presentation	20%

3 Practice

3.1 Textbook

The course will use *Pragmatics* by Stephen Levinson as a backbone reader or backbone text book. Birner's *Pragmatics* text will fill in areas where Levinson is out of date. We will cover an introduction to formal pragmatics, filling in your knowledge of semantics where necessary. There will be weekly readings on specific topics such as deferred reference, presupposition, negative polarity, and quantification. The course will gradually lead up to some papers taking the view that pragmatics is social cognition, part of the general human faculty that allows us to function in groups where cooperation is a necessity for survival. That in turn will lead us to question our conception of what literal meaning is. We will conclude with an introduction to game theoretic semantics and rational speech act theory.

3.2 Readings, Assignments, Presentations

Come to class prepared, with your readings and assignments completed. Assignments will be discussed carefully in class, and students need to be prepared to justify their answers in discussion. Readings work very much the same way. Students will be expected to be able to discuss the content of the readings. Difficulty of the material will be taken into account, but failure to read it will not. "I read this, but I didn't understand a thing," is a far less compelling defense than "I read this, and here specifically is what I don't understand." Come in with questions, observations, counterexamples, and criticisms, all tied to the specific reading.

Participation is not voluntary. Everyone in class will be called on and everyone will be expected to know what the readings contain. We will explore the difficulties of these readings together, and we will be responsible for each other's education. Don't let your classmates down.

Your grade will be based on conceiving a reasonable paper, creating a good bibliography and outline, being to present the ideas clearly in an oral presentation, and, of course, the quality of the paper you produce at the end of the class.

Some thoughts on that.

3.3 Paper

A large part of your grade will be based on a paper.

Your paper may either be data-based, analyzing a single phenomenon in collected or archived data, or it may trace the development of one topic in the literature. In either case, the topic of the paper must be directly relevant to issues covered in the class. Recycled papers will not be accepted. Papers will go through two preliminary stages of development, topic (and possibly data) choice, and outline, both of which are described on pages linked to from the class outline. Note that bibliography and outline are separate components of the grade. Both **may** be done in advance of the final paper; but the outline **must** be done in advance. Doing the bibliography in advance will give students a chance to receive feedback and improve it. It will also provide some good ideas for fleshing out the outline. Since the outline is due early, and will be graded early, fleshing out the outline at the end as the paper is written will not improve a student's outline grade, but the bibliography will only be graded at the end, so improving a poor bibliography with some late additions will count toward improving the bibliography grade.

This will give you ample opportunity to enrich the material, and to draw out connections with other issues and work.

4 Presentations

Each student will be responsible for presenting one or more of the papers on our reading list.

A presentation must be on an assigned reading paper topic. Your job as presenter is to facilitate discussion of a paper. But you are in charge, and you are responsible for making sure discussion happens. You will do this by making use of the paper specific questions I provide and by having questions of your own. Helpful hint one on formulating questions of your own: Since you are primarily serving as discussion facilitator, don't raise issues you have nothing to say about. Be aware that I may close discussion on off-topic questions. Note that discussion threads that relate the discussion paper to other papers we have read will be particularly valued. Helpful hint two: Most of our assigned papers discuss examples in some detail. Examining the assumptions and claims of those data-oriented discussions is a great place to steer class discussion. Hint three: You should spend no time summarizing the

paper at the beginning of your presentation, since that's what I'll be doing. Assume everyone has read the paper and ask questions that meaningfully probe the main issues of the paper.

Your questions **may** be clarification questions. In other words they may start "Here's a part of the paper I had trouble understanding." But be aware that "I didn't understand anything in this paper," is not a helpful way of generating discussion.

5 Attendance

So the bad news is that attendance will be taken. It is impossible for attendance not to matter if class contribution does, since we do not want someone skipping class whenever they haven't completed that week's assigned reading, with no penalty. You may miss two class sessions with no penalty, after which you will be given exactly the same 0 grade that someone receives if they reveal they haven't done the reading.

6 Concepts, student learning outcomes

Literal meaning. Truth conditions. Definites and indefinites. Deixis. Implicature. Grice's Maxims. Neo-Gricean accounts. Relevance theory. Speech acts. Politeness (Is there a politeness principle?) Presupposition. Presupposition projection.

Student Learning Outcomes

1. Students will be able to derive Gricean implicatures to explain divergences of what is communicated from what is said in ordinary conversation.
2. Students will draw the distinction between general and particular implicatures in ordinary conversation.
3. Students will apply Neo-Gricean principles to ordinary conversational phenomena to identify and explain phenomena like politeness and scalar implicature.
4. Students will describe cases of presupposition and presupposition projection and relate them to a theory of a common ground.

7 Course outline

Course outline.

8 Time/place

Days	Time	Place
Mon	4:00-6:40	Zoom!

9 Policies

Accommodations

If you are a student with a disability and are in need of accommodations for this class, please contact Student Ability Success Center (619) 594-6473 as soon as possible. Please know accommodations are not retroactive, and I cannot provide accommodations based on disability until I have received an accommodation letter from the Student Ability Success Center.

Student Privacy and Intellectual Property

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) governs the protection of student information, including contact information, grades, and graded assignments. I will use Canvas to communicate with you, and I will not post grades or leave graded assignments in public places. If I would like to retain your assignment as a reference to share with future classes, I will not do so without first obtaining your permission. Any assignments retained in this way will have your name and other personally-identifiable information removed to maintain intellectual property rights to work products that are a part of this course unless they are formally notified otherwise.

Religious observances

According to the University Policy File, students should notify their instructors of affected courses of planned absences for religious observances by the end of the second week of classes.

Student email addresses

Students are provided with an SDSU Gmail account for course communication use. This SDSU email address will be used for all course-related communication. Per university policy, students are responsible for checking their university email once per day. For more information, see the [Official Email Address Use Policy](#) here.

Academic Honesty

The University adheres to a strict policy prohibiting cheating and plagiarism. Examples of academic dishonesty include but are not limited to:

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- altering or interfering with grading procedures;
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- using sources verbatim or paraphrasing without giving credit

10 Office Hours

Office SHW 238
Tu 3:30-4:30
Tu,Th 12:30-1:30
Th 09:30-10:30
by appointment

11 Contact Information

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12 Broad Course Outline

Some of this may change from year to year.

Week One	Definition of Pragmatics. Pragmatics/Semantics Boundary.
Week Two	Set Theory: Brief introduction, using sets of possible worlds as
Week Three	Deixis, Definite NPs
Week Four	Implicature: Pragmatics unburdens semantics
Week Five	Conventional Implicature and expressive meaning
Week Six	Presupposition: Foundations
Week Seven	Presupposition projection, Dynamic theories of context
Week Eight	Quantification and context
Week Nine	Negative polarity
Week Ten	Speech Acts
Week Eleven	Relevance Theory, Cognitive Pragmatics
Week Twelve	Scalar implicature revisited, Embedded implicatures
Week Thirteen	Game Theoretic pragmatics
Week Fourteen, Fifteen	Pragmatics as social cognition Rational Speech Act Theory