

Pragmatics

LING 565

Winter 2023
M,W 8:35–9:55
1085 Penfield, R. 002

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Office hours: W 10:00–11:00 (or by appointment) Th 11–12 (or by appointment)

Course content

Pragmatics is concerned with aspects of meaning that are tied to actual language use. Pragmatics therefore requires close attention to the relevant characteristics of the context of utterance, such as the topic of the conversation, the utterance location and the time, the identity of speaker and addressee, and their beliefs, expectations, and shared assumptions. Instead of providing a broad survey, this course offers an in-depth introduction to a selection of central themes from contemporary research in pragmatics: presupposition, quantity implicature, and indexical expressions.

We will read a few selected works on these topics—journal articles and book chapters. Those readings primarily target an audience with more background in linguistics than you are likely to have, but they will be unpacked and interpreted in class. Class attendance is therefore essential.

Prerequisites

LING 360 and PHIL 210, or instructor's permission

Requirements and evaluation

Evaluation

4 homework assignments:	48%
Project, paper:	35%
Project, class presentation:	12%
Class participation:	5%

Final projects

Normally in groups of up two, you will choose and investigate a topic of your interest for your final project that is related to course material. You will give a class presentation and write a short paper on that topic. The paper will typically include a critical review of one or more research papers, but it may also focus on the outcome of your own research—e.g., propose an analysis of certain data collected data from native speakers or the internet, etc. The presentation is intended as a stepping stone towards the paper, and must be based on a handout or slides. There will be more information about final projects as the term progresses.

Schedule (subject to possible revision)

The circled numbers (Ⓢ) identify projected due dates for homework assignments. You are normally given one week to complete an assignment. The schedule, including due dates of assignments, is subject to likely revision.

	TOPIC	READING
WEEK 1		
W 01/04	Background: semantics of sentences	Larson (1995, sec. 12.1-12.3)
WEEK 2		
M 01/09		Cresswell (1988, sec. 1 & 2)
W 01/11		
WEEK 3		
M 01/16	Presupposition: admittance theory	Potts (2015, sec. 1 & 2)
W 01/18		
WEEK 4		
M 01/23		Aravind et al. (2022)
W 01/25 Ⓢ		
WEEK 5		
M 01/30	Presupposition: projection	Silk (2022)
W 02/01		
WEEK 6		
M 02/06		
W 02/08		
WEEK 7		
M 02/13	Implicature: quantity reasoning	Potts (2015, sec. 3)
W 02/15 Ⓢ		
WEEK 8		
M 02/20		Geurts (2011, ch. 1-3)
W 02/22		
WEEK 9		
M 03/06		
W 03/08		
WEEK 10		
M 03/13 Ⓢ	Indexicals: layers of sentence meaning	Schlenker (2018)

W	03/15		
WEEK 11			
M	03/20		
W	03/22	Indexicals: ellipsis puzzles	Charnavel (2019)
WEEK 12			
M	03/27		
W	03/29		
WEEK 13			
M	04/03 ④	Student presentations	
W	04/05		
WEEK 14			
M	04/10		
W	04/12		

Course rules and procedures

Academic integrity

McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the code of student conduct and disciplinary procedures (see <http://www.mcgill.ca/integrity> for more information).

L'université McGill attache une haute importance à l'honnêteté académique. Il incombe par conséquent à tous les étudiants de comprendre ce que l'on entend par tricherie, plagiat et autres infractions académiques, ainsi que les conséquences que peuvent avoir de telles actions, selon le Code de conduite de l'étudiant et des procédures disciplinaires (pour de plus amples renseignements, veuillez consulter le site <http://www.mcgill.ca/integrity>).

Assignments may be done in groups. However, a group may contain a maximum of three students. Also, each student must turn in a separate assignment *written up individually and independently*. If you worked in a group, you must provide the names of the students who you worked with on the first page of your assignment.

Missed submission deadlines

No late assignments will be accepted and no make-up assignments will be offered unless you have a documented medical excuse and I have been notified within 24 hours of when the assignment was due. Any problem with grading on an assignment must be reported within one week of when the assignment was returned.

Course materials and copyright

© Instructor generated course materials (e.g., handouts, notes, summaries, exam questions, etc.) are protected by law and may not be copied or distributed in any form or in any medium without explicit

permission of the instructor. Note that infringements of copyright can be subject to follow up by the University under the [Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures](#).

Class handouts

There will be a handout for each class that you will need to have access to in order to follow the lecture. Revised versions of handouts will sometimes be posted on myCourses after class. It is your responsibility to make sure that you always consult the latest version of the handout.

E-mail

You can expect me to respond to your e-mail questions and comments. However, please do not expect instant responses. I will try to respond within two working days.

Right to submit in French

In accord with McGill University's [Charter of Students' Rights](#), students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.

Inclusiveness

As instructors of this course, I endeavor to provide an inclusive learning environment. However, if you experience barriers to learning in this course, do not hesitate to discuss them with me and [the Office for Students with Disabilities](#), (514) 398-6009.

References

- Aravind, Athulya, Danny Fox, & Martin Hackl. 2022. Principles of presupposition in development. *Linguistics and Philosophy*.
- Charnavel, Isabelle. 2019. Supersloppy readings: Indexicals as bound descriptions. *Journal of Semantics* 36:453–530.
- Cresswell, M.J. 1988. Semantic competence. In *Semantical Essays*, volume 36 of *Studies in Linguistics and Philosophy*, 12–33. Springer Netherlands.
- Geurts, Bart. 2011. *Quantity implicatures*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Larson, Richard K. 1995. Semantics. In *An Invitation to Cognitive Science: Language*, ed. Lila Gleitman & Mark Liberman, volume 1, chapter 12, 361–380. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Potts, Christopher. 2015. Presupposition and implicature. In *The handbook of contemporary semantic theory*, ed. S. Lappin & C. Fox, volume 2, 168–202. Wiley Online Library.
- Schlenker, Philippe. 2018. Indexicals. In *Introduction to formal philosophy*, ed. Sven Ove Hansson & Vincent F. Hendricks, 297–321. Cham: Springer International Publishing.
- Silk, Alex. 2022. Challenges for independence-driven and context-repair responses to the proviso problem. *Natural Language Semantics*.