What’s this course all about?

People use language in context, so understanding the intended meaning of any utterance requires more than just linguistic models of syntax and semantics (crucial though these are). In this course we study the organization of language both at and above the sentence level (conversational structure, coherence, information structure and so on), and explore how this influences the meaning of language in context (implicature, pronoun interpretation, speech acts, etc.). We will look at philosophical, computational and psycholinguistic approaches to language in context, and discuss their theoretical assumptions, their methodological tools, and their empirical strengths and weaknesses.

Readings

There is no required textbook. All readings will be available on Learn and at [http://blake.ppls.ed.ac.uk/~pling/pragmatics](http://blake.ppls.ed.ac.uk/~pling/pragmatics). Listed web readings are to be read BEFORE class in order to support class discussion.

Aims and objectives

At the end of the course, you will be able to:

- Determine the inferential reasoning that gives rise to implicatures in context (How do people read between the lines?)
- Analyze discourse structure (Do the sentences in a discourse form a tree structure just like the words in a sentence?)
- Classify, for each utterance in a dialogue or a text, what information is given and new (How does the growing common ground between speakers change the forms they use?)
- Identify the pragmatic constraints that license particular syntactic constructions (When is passive voice appropriate?)
- Apply models of coreference and ellipsis to naturally occurring data (How do listeners interpret ambiguous or missing words?)
- Critically discuss psycholinguistic studies of pragmatic phenomena (What predictions emerge from theoretical pragmatics and how do you test them?)

Prerequisites

UG students must have passed LEL2A. The course is open to all PG students.

Use of class time

We will be using a mix of lectures and ‘flipped classroom’ sessions with questions targeting the webreadings.
Assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Component</th>
<th>% of Final Mark</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Homeworks:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3 assignments related to readings and class lectures</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final exam:</td>
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<tr>
<td>short essay questions (and perhaps short answer or multiple choice for UG)</td>
<td>70%</td>
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Policies

1. Keep up with class. Attending class is expected of everyone. Readings should be completed prior to the set of classes for which they are intended.

2. Hand in your work on time. Each homework is due at noon on the day on which it is to be handed in. Submit it via TurnItIn on Learn.

3. Working together on HW is fine/encouraged but final write-ups must be your own. You may discuss assignments together with other students (and certainly solicit acceptability/felicity judgments from native speakers), but you must hand in separate writeups.

4. Exam The final exam constitutes the majority of your mark. In the exam, any collaboration will be considered a violation of the university’s policy on academic integrity (http://www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/students/conduct/academic-misconduct). All violations will be reported to the School Academic Misconduct Officer.

Extensions

Students are expected to monitor their workload, be aware of all deadlines and prepare accordingly. Extension requests should be submitted before the submission deadline. They must be submitted to the Teaching Office for approval, and must include details of the assessment(s) affected and length of extension requested, together with supporting evidence if required. Other than in exceptional circumstances, extensions will only be granted in cases of illness or family emergency. If an extension of more than one week is requested, students must provide medical evidence and/or discuss the request with the Student Support Officer.

The Teaching Office will email the student to tell them whether the extension has been granted. If students feel that they have been unfairly denied an extension they should make a case to the special circumstances committee for the removal of late submission penalties at the examination board.

Extension requests due to time mismanagement, personal computing/printing problems or ignorance of deadline will not be accepted. Retrospective extensions will not be granted. For more information, see https://www.ed.ac.uk/ppls/current/undergraduate/extensions.

Students with Adjustment Schedules

Extension requests from students with adjustment schedules that allow ‘short notice extensions’ will be treated sympathetically where possible. Students should however be prepared to give a reason for the extension request; simply citing an adjustment schedule is not an adequate reason. If students are seeking extensions for more than one week, they must provide medical evidence and/or discuss the request with the Student Support Officer.

Any student with a documented disability needing accommodations is requested to speak directly to the Student Disability Service (SDS: 3rd floor, Main Library, 0131 650 6828) and to the instructor as early as possible. All discussions will remain confidential.
Course schedule

Week 1 Hannah Rohde: What is pragmatics?

Week 2 Chris Cummins: Entailment, implicature, Grice

Week 3 Chris Cummins: Implicature

Week 4 Chris Cummins: Presupposition, HW#1 assigned

Week 5 Hannah Rohde: Information structure, HW#2 assigned

HW#1 due noon Thursday 14 February

Festival of creative learning: no classes

Week 6: No classes due to job talks in Cognitive Science of Language

Week 7 Hannah Rohde: Coreference interpretation and production

Week 8 Jet Hoek: Discourse structure and coherence

HW#2 due noon Thursday 14 March

Week 9 Hannah Rohde: Ellipsis and perspective taking

Week10: No classes

Week11 Chris Cummins: Speech acts, HW#3 assigned

Week12 HW#3 due noon Thursday 11 April