

**2015 LSA Institute Course:  
Introduction to Pragmatics 111**  
Syllabus

Instructor: Craig Roberts (The Ohio State University)  
Time: Mondays, Thursdays 10:30-12:20  
Place: Foster 103  
Course site: <http://www.ling.ohio-state.edu/~croberts/LSA/>

Pragmatics is a rapidly changing sub-field of linguistics, closely related to semantics. When I was a student, it was the “pragmatic wastebasket” (Bar-Hillel 1971), a hodgepodge of topics without a theory: speech acts, conversational implicature, presupposition, topic, focus, deixis. . . . If a semantic phenomenon obviously arose out of the interaction between literal content and context, one was forced to assign it to pragmatics, but one was loathe to do so. For to say that some aspect of meaning was a contextual effect was to concede that one couldn’t explain it in a scientifically interesting way; one’s account wasn’t falsifiable, because pragmatic theory made no predictions. In rigorous compositional semantic interpretation, contextual information was at best represented by an index, or indices—ways of plucking values out of thin air to plug into anaphoric holes in the composition.

But in the intervening years, that has changed. Beginning with the account of presupposition projection due to Karttunen & Peters (1979), and especially with the dynamic semantics of Kamp (1981) and Heim (1982), linguists began to develop formal theories that put tight constraints on the resolution in context of particular context-sensitive expressions—in those cases, presupposition triggers and anaphora. These theories didn’t get it all right, but that’s exactly the point: We could see what they predicted and where we needed to do more work. This work helped to usher in a new era in pragmatics, a new view of the semantic relationship between conventional content and context.

Today the field is thriving, and a variety of formal tools are available to model theories of discourse. To fully appreciate those theories, one needs two kinds of background: First, it is essential to study formal semantics, because an adequate formal pragmatics is designed to interact with a compositional semantics. Students in this course who have not had an introduction to that subject should enroll in Chris Kennedy’s LSA course “Introduction to Semantics 112”, MR 8:30-10:20 in SS302. Second, one needs a grasp of the kinds of contextual factors that regularly play a role in interpretation, and of the kinds of phenomena they give rise to. The goal of this course is to begin to address this second requirement.

Because class background is diverse and time is short, we cannot delve into details of formal theories. Nor can we study the relevant background literature. Instead, I’ll paint a picture, from my own point of view, of how we might model the context of utterance and its interaction with conventional semantic content in light of basic analyses of a small set of inter-related and pervasive pragmatic phenomena: presupposition, contextually-mediated reference, indexicality, and conventional implicature. No matter what your interest in pragmatics, you need to understand these phenomena as the background for an adequate analysis. To frame this

discussion, we'll start by talking about what a speech act is, and how that's related to the notion of an *utterance*; and at the end of the course we'll talk about one of the most subtle and difficult phenomena in pragmatics, conversational implicatures, especially those which are usually called relevance implicatures and quantity implicatures. Throughout we'll talk about the role of pragmatics in a general linguistic theory of meaning, as well as discussing a number of pragmatic universals and what they tell us about that role.

### **Course requirements:**

Those who want credit for the course will be required to prepare a proposal for a research project, with (a) a well-articulated question for investigation, and (b) an annotated bibliography of relevant work and how it bears on (a). These students are urged to discuss this with the instructor in the first week of class, so that we can get you on the right path asap.

### **Course Schedule:**

Note that there will be no regular class on Thursday, 7/16, the first day of XPRAG 2015, meeting in downtown Chicago (link below). This conference reports on some of the most exciting work in pragmatics today, so come to learn what's new and what's hot in pragmatics.

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|-----------------|--|
| Monday, 7/6:    | Interpretation in Context: Utterances and Speech Acts  |
| Thursday, 7/9:  | The Language Game, the QUD and Focus<br><b>Reading:</b> Roberts (2004) or Roberts (1996/2012)  |
| Monday, 7/13    | Presuppositions and Projection<br><b>Reading:</b><br>a) Beaver & Geurts (2014)<br>b) Tonhauser et al. (2013)   |
| Thursday, 7/16: | <b>No class:</b> students are strongly encouraged to attend XPRAG 2015<br><a href="https://lucian.uchicago.edu/blogs/xprag2015/">https://lucian.uchicago.edu/blogs/xprag2015/</a><br>pre-conference student registration: \$35 |
| Sunday, 7/19:   | post-XPRAG workshop on the QUD, 10am – 5pm, by arrangement<br><b>Reading:</b> Simons et al. (to appear)  |
| Monday, 7/20    | Contextual influences on reference<br><b>Reading:</b><br>a) Roberts (to appear)<br>b) Geurts & Beaver (2011)   |
| Thursday, 7/23  | Indexicality and perspective<br><b>Reading:</b> Roberts (in progress) Chapters 1 - 4   |
| Monday, 7/27    | Auxiliary content and conventional implicature<br><b>Reading:</b><br>a) Camp (2014)  |

b) Roberts (in progress) Chapter 6

Thursday, 7/30

Pragmatic intrusion and conversational implicature

**Reading:**

a) Simons (2012)

b) Simons (2013)

**Course reading:** These include original papers and handouts by the instructor and a few others, with extended offerings of supplementary readings, as you have the time and interest. I urge students to look into basic texts on pragmatics for more background and reviews of the literature; see the list of texts at the end of the syllabus. The course handouts will be available on-line as of class time; I urge you to bring a laptop and access them during class on the course site, as we have no budget for printing long handouts.

**Readings and references cited above:**

Bar-Hillel, Y. (1971) *Pragmatics of Natural Language*. Dordrecht: Reidel.

Beaver, David & Bart Geurts (2014) Presupposition. In *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.  
<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/presupposition/>

Camp, Elisabeth (2014) The semantics of slurs: A dual speech-act analysis. Ms., Rutgers University.

Geurts, Bart & David Beaver (2011) Discourse Representation Theory. *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/discourse-representation-theory/>

Heim, Irene (1982) *The Semantics of Definite and Indefinite Noun Phrases*, Ph.D. dissertation, University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

Horn, Laurence R. (2004) Implicature. In Horn & Ward (eds.) *The Handbook of Pragmatics*. Blackwell.

Kadmon, Nirit (2001) *Formal Pragmatics*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Karttunen, Lauri & Stanley Peters (1979) Conventional implicatures. In C.K. Oh & D. Dineen (eds.) *Presupposition. Syntax and Semantics, Vol. 11*. NY: Academic Press.

Kamp, Hans (1981) A Theory of Truth and Semantic Representation. In Jeroen Groenendijk, Theo M. V. Janssen and Martin Stokhof (eds.) *Formal Methods in the Study of Language, Vol. I*, Mathematische Centrum, Amsterdam. Reprinted in Groenendijk, Janssen and Stokhof (eds.), 1984, *Truth, Interpretation and Information*, Foris, Dordrecht.

Roberts, Craige (1996/2012) Information Structure in Discourse: Towards an Integrated Formal Theory of Pragmatics. In Jae Hak Yoon and Andreas Kathol (eds.) *Ohio State University Working Papers in Linguistics* Volume 49. Reprinted in the 1998 version with a new Afterword in *Semantics and Pragmatics*, Volume 5, 2012.

Roberts, Craige (2004) Context in dynamic interpretation. In Laurence Horn and Gregory Ward (eds.) *Handbook of Contemporary Pragmatic Theory*, Blackwell, 197-220.

Roberts, Craige (in press) Contextual influences on reference. For B. Abbott & J. Gundel (eds.) *Oxford Handbook on Reference*. Oxford University Press.

Roberts, Craige (in progress) *Indexicality: The role of perspective in reference*.

Simons, Mandy (2012) Conversational implicature. In Claudia Maienborn, Klaus von Heusinger & Paul Portner (eds.) *Semantics: An International Handbook of Natural Language Meaning*. Preprint: <http://www.hss.cmu.edu/philosophy/faculty-simons.php>

- Simons, Mandy (2013) Local pragmatics and structured contents. *Philosophical Studies*.  
Published on-line May 1, 2013 DOI 10.1007/ss11098-013-0138-2.  
<http://www.hss.cmu.edu/philosophy/simons/LocalPrag.PhilStudies.March2013-preprint.pdf> [PREPRINT]
- Simons, Mandy, David Beaver, Craige Roberts & Judith Tonhauser (to appear) The Best Question: Explaining the projection behavior of factives. For a special edition of *Discourse Processes* on the Question In Discussion.
- Tonhauser, Judith, David Beaver, Craige Roberts & Mandy Simons (2013) Towards a taxonomy of projective content. *Language* 89.1:66-109. Awarded Best Paper in *Language* in 2013 by the Linguistic Society of America.

**Recommended general introductions to pragmatics and topics therein:**

- Birner, Betty (2012) *Introduction to Pragmatics*. Wiley & Sons.
- Horn, Laurence R. & Gregory Ward (2004) *The Handbook of Pragmatics*. Blackwell. Excellent introductory articles by experts across a wide range of topics.
- Kadmon, Nirit (2001) *Formal Pragmatics*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Korta, Keppa & John Perry (2015) Pragmatics. *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*:  
<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/pragmatics/>
- Levinson, Stephen C. (1983) *Pragmatics*. NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Maienborn, Claudia, Klaus von Stechow & Paul Portner (eds.) (2011-2012) *Semantics: An International Handbook in three volumes*. Especially recommended:
- Vol 2:
- Chapter 72: Craige Roberts, Topics
  - Chapter 73: Betty Birner & Gregory Ward, Discourse effects of word order variation
  - Chapter 74: Andrew Kehler, Cohesion and coherence
  - Chapter 76: Malte Zimmermann, Discourse particles
- Vol. 3:
- Chapter 87: Gennaro Chierchia, Danny Fox & Benjamin Spector, Scalar implicature as a grammatical phenomenon.
  - Chapter 89: Thomas Ede Zimmermann, Context dependence
  - Chapter 91: David Beaver & Bart Geurts, Presupposition
  - Chapter 92: Mandy Simons, Implicature
  - Chapter 93: Gerhard Jäger, Game theory in semantics and pragmatics
  - Chapter 94: Christopher Potts, Conventional implicatures and expressive content
- Many of these are available free on-line in pre-print form. Google around.