

## Pragmatics (01:615:350)

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|---------------------|---|
| <b>Time:</b>        | fully asynchronous and online   |
| <b>WWW:</b>         | hosted at <code>canvas.rutgers.edu</code>   |
| <b>Instructor:</b>  | Peter Alrenga   |
| <b>Email:</b>       | <code>peter.alrenga@rutgers.edu</code>  |
| <b>Support Hrs:</b> | Monday 4:30-5:30pm & Th 10-11am (drop-in), or by appt.<br>(online via Zoom—email for an appt. outside of scheduled times) |

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### Course Overview and Learning Goals

The study of linguistic meaning comprises two disciplines: *semantics*, the study of the literal, or conventional, meanings carried by words and sentences, and *pragmatics*, the study of how speakers use words and sentences in interactive communicative settings to convey messages. As we will see (and as any skilled conversationalist already knows), these messages may encompass much more than just the literal meanings of the sentences used to convey them.

This course surveys several core issues in pragmatics. We will be particularly concerned this semester with the interaction between pragmatics and semantics, exploring the numerous ways in which the literal meaning of a sentence interacts with the conversational context in which it is uttered. Our goals will be (i) to determine the extent to which these interactions are regular and well-defined, and (ii) to arrive at a more precise understanding of what constitutes an utterance context, and how various types of utterances may affect it. Along the way, we will also consider the relevance of pragmatic theory to other disciplines, such as cognitive psychology and the law.

Students who successfully complete this course will:

- understand the distinction between pragmatics and semantics, their respective domains of investigation, and their respective methods,
- gain mastery of the basic analytical tools of linguistic pragmatics,
- gain awareness of language usage in context,
- learn more about psycholinguistic/ developmental research in pragmatics,
- learn more about the real-world relevance of pragmatic theory (e.g., the law)
- (for majors and minors) add to your technical and conceptual repertoire in the Linguistics as you complete a (core) course as part of your degree.

Students will also make progress towards the following departmental learning goals, by developing their abilities to:

- reason about language scientifically,
- demonstrate knowledge of cross-linguistic variability and universal patterns in language,
- identify what someone knows when they know a language.

## Course Delivery, Technology Requirements & Technical Support

This course begins on January 17, 2023 and ends on May 1, 2023. **The last day to drop the course without a 'W' grade is January 26, 2023.**

This course is asynchronous and fully online. Suggested completion dates for our lecture videos and accompanying handouts, readings, and supplementary resources will be listed, but you may review these instructional materials at any time. However, **all graded submissions must be submitted by the posted deadlines.** Regular class engagement will be assessed through your weekly online activity and discussion participation.

To access the course, please visit [canvas.rutgers.edu](https://canvas.rutgers.edu). See the Canvas Student Resources website for assistance with getting started in Canvas: <https://canvas.rutgers.edu/students/>. For more information about course access or support, contact the OIT Help Desk at 833-OIT-HELP or [help@oit.rutgers.edu](mailto:help@oit.rutgers.edu). Visit the Rutgers Student Tech Guide for resources available to all students: <http://it.rutgers.edu/technology-guide/students/#new-brunswick>.

If you do not have the appropriate technology for financial reasons, please email the Dean of Students [deanofstudents@echo.rutgers.edu](mailto:deanofstudents@echo.rutgers.edu) for assistance.

Baseline technical skills necessary for Rutgers online courses:

- basic computer and web-browsing skills
- navigating Canvas
- for help, review the Rutgers Tech Guides: <https://it.rutgers.edu/technology-guide/>

Accessibility and privacy statements:

- Canvas accessibility: <https://community.canvaslms.com/t5/Canvas-Basics-Guide/What-are-the-Canvas-accessibility-standards/ta-p/1564>
- Canvas Privacy: <https://www.instructure.com/canvas/privacy>
- Hypothes.is accessibility: <https://web.hypothes.is/accessibility/>
- Hypothes.is privacy: <https://web.hypothes.is/privacy/>
- PlayPosit accessibility: <https://knowledge.playposit.com/article/82-accessibility>
- PlayPosit privacy: <https://api.playposit.com/privacy>

Learning remotely presents its own set of challenges. For assistance with addressing these challenges, please consult the resources available here: [https://rlc.rutgers.edu/remote\\_instruction](https://rlc.rutgers.edu/remote_instruction).

## Prerequisites

The prerequisite for this course is Introduction to Linguistic Theory (01:615:201). Our readings and class discussions will presuppose a familiarity with the material covered in that class.

## Course Materials

The required textbook for this course is:

Cummins, Chris. 2019. *Pragmatics*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.  
(ISBN: 978-1474440035)

The textbook is available at the Rutgers University Bookstore, as well as Amazon and other online retailers. All other instructional materials, including supplementary readings, lecture videos, and additional resources, will be made available via the course website.

## Course Requirements

**Reading:** Unless explicitly stated otherwise, all readings are required, and should be completed by the listed date.

A word of advice: do not leave these readings until the last minute! I have made every effort to find accessible readings, but even so, some of these will challenge you. You are not expected to understand every word of every reading, but I do expect that you will put forth your best efforts.

**Discussions:** Frequent interaction is vital to building an online learning community. In our course, these interactions will primarily occur in six small-group written discussion forums. Sometimes, your task will be to respond to specific questions that I have posed. Other times, you will have the opportunity to express your own interests in our course topics by suggesting your own discussion questions and responding to your classmates'. I also hope to use these discussions for collaborative work, e.g., solving language-analysis problems.

Your discussion posts should reveal thoughtful, sustained engagement with our instructional materials and with your classmates' contributions. At times, the discussion prompt will ask you to explicitly use and cite our recent instructional materials in your post. I encourage you to consult our Discussion Rubric, available at the course website, as you compose your discussion posts. You might also consider first composing your contributions in a word processor, where you can save and lightly edit your work, before posting it to the class discussion. **Discussion posts typically will be due at the end (11:59pm) of Sunday during the listed week.** Your six discussion posts will account for 30% of your overall grade.

**Homework Assignments:** Six homework assignments will be assigned throughout the semester. Some of your homework problems will be technical exercises designed to develop familiarity with our analytic tools. Others will be more substantial problems in linguistic analysis and argumentation, and will require clear and well-reasoned exposition. Your solutions to these problems should be presented in coherent prose — groups of complete sentences that lay out your thinking clearly, explicitly, and in an organized fashion. One-word or fragmentary responses will rarely suffice in this course: always make sure that that you’ve written enough (i) to be adequately understood (i.e., don’t leave it to me to fill in any gaps that you have left in your response), and (ii) to fully justify your response (i.e., don’t expect me to assume that you understand why your response is correct—your goal should be to demonstrate to me that you possess this understanding.)

The homework problems will both test your understanding of previously covered material, and also serve to introduce new topics that will be covered in the upcoming week(s). In some cases, you will not yet have the tools to fully solve a particular problem; your goal here will be to develop a novel proposal for how to solve the problem, and to argue for it as best you can. My expectations regarding the sort of response that you provide to a problem will be different, depending on whether the problem covers material that we’ve already discussed, or whether it introduces you to a new topic

**Homework assignments typically will be due at the end (11:59pm) of Sunday during the listed week.** Your lowest homework score will be dropped; the remaining five will account for 30% of your overall grade.

**Exams:** A midterm exam will be given in Week 8, and will cover the topics learned in the first seven weeks of the course. The midterm exam will account for 20% of your overall grade. There will also be a cumulative final exam, which will emphasize the topics covered in the final six weeks of the course. The final exam will also account for 20% of your overall grade.

Both exams will be unproctored and administered via Canvas. You will be allowed to refer to the course materials while completing the exams. **I will ask that you complete the exams in a designated amount of time (e.g., 90 minutes for the midterm exam, 180 minutes for the final exam), and that you complete them in one sitting.** The exam questions will very much resemble what you encounter in our quizzes and homework assignments, though the questions will be structured to ensure that you can attempt the entire exam in the allotted time.

**Grading:** Your overall course grade will be assigned according to the following grading scale:

|           |           |           |             |
|-----------|-----------|-----------|-------------|
| A: 90-100 | B+: 85-89 | C+: 75-79 | D: 60-69    |
|           | B: 80-84  | C: 70-74  | F: below 60 |

## Course Policies

**Attendance & Engagement:** Because all work will be completed asynchronously for this course, there is no formal attendance policy. Regular class engagement will be assessed through your online activity and discussion participation.

To be successful in this course, you should expect to spend roughly the same amount of time with the instructional materials, activities, and assignments as you would in a traditional in-person course, about 8-10 hours per week. Be sure that you are visiting the course website at least two times per week, including those weeks with minimal online course activity. (During most weeks you will probably access the course website many times.) If a situation arises that may cause you to miss an extended period of time, please contact me immediately.

**Late Work:** Please stay abreast of the availability periods and submission deadlines listed at the course website and plan accordingly. I am happy to work with students to overcome scheduling conflicts and other, unanticipated circumstances that may interfere with timely submission of coursework. However, **I expect you to bring such circumstances to my attention promptly, so that alternative arrangements can be made.** (Note that each successive week of our course will build upon the preceding weeks' materials; the submission deadlines have been chosen to ensure that your understanding grows in a similarly cumulative fashion.)

**Academic Integrity:** You are expected to abide by the University's Academic Integrity Policy (<http://nbacademicintegrity.rutgers.edu>). If you have not yet reviewed this policy, then you should do so now. Since students are expected to be familiar with this policy and its commonly accepted standards, ignorance of these standards does not suffice to establish lack of intent. If you are unsure of any aspect of this policy, please ask!

I encourage you to discuss the course material with each other. However, **each student must complete their written work independently, without reference to the written work of any other student.** In particular, you are required to:

- avoid working on quizzes together,
- avoid discussing quiz questions/answers during quiz availability periods,
- develop and write your own discussion posts and homework responses,
- cite your sources, including classmates whose thoughts have informed yours,
- avoid facilitating academic dishonesty by allowing your own work to be submitted by another student.

Collaboration on quizzes, plagiarism in any form (including from online sources), presenting someone else's work as your own, and fabrication of information or citations all constitute violations of the University's Academic Integrity Policy, and will be subject to (at least) the following penalties:

- the student will automatically receive a '0' grade on the relevant assignment,
- the assignment will not be eligible for any subsequent re-attempt,

- the student will be required to compose a 1-page (anonymous) letter to their classmates, in which they describe the nature of their violation and its potential negative effects on their classmates, their instructor, and themselves,
- after a brief open-discussion period, the student will be required to meet with me to discuss their classmates' responses to their letter.

**Civility & Respectful Communication:** The following are my expectations for how we will communicate in our class discussions and elsewhere:

- While there is no need to compose your discussion contributions as if you were writing a formal research paper, please try to express yourself clearly and professionally. Please also refrain from using all CAPITAL LETTERS.
- Please cite your sources to back up any specific claims. For course readings, list the title and page numbers. For online sources, include a link.
- Let's maintain a supportive learning community where everyone feels safe and people can cordially disagree. Remember that sarcasm and irony don't always come across online.
- Above all, please remember to be considerate, and to treat your fellow students (and your instructor!) with respect.

**Instructor Communication & Feedback:** Please contact me via my Rutgers email address ([peter.alrenga@rutgers.edu](mailto:peter.alrenga@rutgers.edu)). I will reply to emails within 24 hours during weekdays. Emails sent over the weekend may not receive a reply until the following Monday, but I will try my best to respond promptly.

Weekly classwide announcements and updates will be distributed via the course website. I will also regularly follow, and occasionally post to, the class discussions. For all graded work, I will aim to post grades and written feedback within 7-10 days of the submission deadline.

**Accommodations for Special Needs:** Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disabilities services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation. More information can be found in the "Documentation Guidelines" section of the Office of Disability Services website: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines>.

Visit the "Student" section of the Office of Disability Services website for more information.

**Student Resources:** The faculty and staff at Rutgers are committed to your success. Students who are successful tend to seek out resources that enable them to excel academically, maintain their health and wellness, prepare for future careers, navigate college life and finances, and connect with the RU community. Resources to help you succeed and connect with the Rutgers community can be found at <http://success.rutgers.edu>, and nearly all services that are

typically provided in-person are now available remotely. More information about specific resources can be found at the following websites:

- Student Support Services:  
<https://www.rutgers.edu/academics/student-support>
- The Learning Centers: <https://rlc.rutgers.edu/>
- The Writing Centers: <https://writingctr.rutgers.edu>
- Rutgers Libraries: <https://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/>
- Office of Veteran and Military Programs and Services:  
<https://veterans.rutgers.edu>
- Student Health Services: <http://health.rutgers.edu/>
- Counseling, Alcohol/Other Drug Assistance Program & Psychiatric Services (CAPS):  
<http://health.rutgers.edu/medical-counseling-services/counseling/>
- Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance: <http://vpva.rutgers.edu/>

## Preliminary Schedule (subject to change as the semester proceeds)

Weekly course topics, readings, and assignments are briefly described below. All other instructional materials, including lecture videos, supplementary readings, and additional resources, will be made available via the course website. Detailed information about each assignment, with availability periods and submission deadlines, may be found at the course website.

| WEEK         | CLASS TOPIC  | READINGS   | ASSIGNMENTS  |
|--------------|--|--|--|
| 1<br>Tu 1/17 | <u>Course overview</u><br>• what is linguistic pragmatics?<br>• course logistics & requirements  | Devlin Ch. 9 (209-235)   | <b>Introductions;<br/>Survey/Syllabus<br/>"Quiz"</b> |
| 2<br>M 1/23  | <u>The semantics/pragmatics boundary</u><br>• two types of linguistic meaning<br>• distinguishing sentence meaning from utterance meaning                              | Cummins, Ch. 1;<br>Chierchia & McConnell-Ginet, Ch. 1 (16-28)                                      | <b>Disc. #1 due</b> (by end of Su 1/29)              |
| 3<br>M 1/30  | <u>Conversational implicature, I</u><br>• cooperative speakers, charitable listeners & utterance meaning<br>• Grice's maxims & examples of conversational implicatures | Cummins, Ch. 2 (15-23);<br>Grice 1975  | <b>HW1 due</b> (by end of Su 2/5)                    |
| 4<br>M 2/6   | <u>Conversational Implicature, II</u><br>• Relevance & Quantity implicatures<br>• strength, relevance & discourse goals<br>• lexical scales & scalar implicatures      | Cummins, Ch. 3 (38-55)   | <b>Disc. #2 due</b> (by end of Su 2/12)              |
| 5<br>M 2/13  | <u>Conversational Implicature &amp; the Law</u><br>• perjury & the "literal truth rule":<br><i>Bronston vs. United States</i><br>• the Clinton impeachment trial       | Solan & Tiersma, Ch. 11  | <b>HW2 due</b> (by end of Su 2/19)                   |
| 6<br>M 2/20  | <u>Reference, I</u><br>• deictic expressions across languages<br>• pronouns & types of context-dependency  | Huang, Ch. 5 (133-162);<br>Chierchia & McConnell-Ginet, Ch. 1 (28-32);<br>Cummins, Ch. 5 (100-109) | <b>Disc. #3 due</b> (by end of Su 2/26)              |
| 7<br>M 2/27  | <u>Reference, II</u><br>• semantic vs. pragmatic functions of noun phrases<br>• discourse models & discourse referents   | Karttunen 1976;<br>Haviland & Clark 1974   | <b>HW3 due</b> (by end of Su 3/5)                    |
| 8<br>M 3/6   | <u>Midterm Exam</u><br>• review/Q&A sessions ( <b>optional</b> , will be recorded and made available to all students via the course website)                           |  | <b>Midterm Exam due</b> (by end of F 3/10)           |



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| WEEK         | CLASS TOPIC   | READING   | ASSIGNMENTS                              |
|--------------|---|---|--|
| 9<br>M 3/20  | <u>Presupposition, I</u><br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• persistence &amp; the S-family test</li> <li>• presupposition triggers</li> <li>• given vs. new information</li> </ul>   | Cummins, Ch. 4 (73-90);<br>Cummins, Ch. 4 (90-99) | <b>Disc. #4 due</b> (by end of Su 3/26)  |
| 10<br>M 3/27 | <u>Presupposition, II</u><br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• given vs. new information &amp; the conversational common ground</li> <li>• presupposition projection &amp; the common ground</li> </ul>                            | Stalnaker 1974                                    | <b>HW4 due</b> (by end of Su 4/2)        |
| 11<br>M 4/3  | <u>Conversational Scorekeeping</u><br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• conversation as a game; elements of the conversational scoreboard</li> <li>• why conversation ≠ baseball: accommodation &amp; scoreboard repair</li> </ul> | Lewis 1979 (pgs. 339-353)                         | <b>Disc. #5 due</b> (by end of Su 4/9)   |
| 12<br>M 4/10 | <u>Speech Acts, I</u><br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• saying vs. doing things with words: performative utterances &amp; verbs</li> <li>• sentence types and the conventional encoding of speech acts</li> </ul>               | Cummins, Ch. 8 (186-198);<br>Austin 1956          | <b>HW5 due</b> (by end of Su 4/16)       |
| 13<br>M 4/17 | <u>Speech Acts, II</u><br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the problem of indirect speech acts</li> <li>• idiom vs. inference approaches to indirect speech acts</li> <li>• conventions of language vs. use</li> </ul>            | Searle 1975                                       | <b>Disc. #6 due</b> (by end of Su 4/23)  |
| 14<br>M 4/24 | <u>Speech Acts &amp; the Law</u><br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• requesting consent to search: <i>Schneckloth vs. Bustamante</i></li> <li>• distinguishing requests from orders</li> </ul>                                    | Solan & Tiersma, Ch. 3                            | <b>HW6 due</b> (by end of Su 4/30)       |
| 15<br>M 5/1  | <u>Final Exam</u><br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• review/Q&amp;A sessions (<b>optional</b>, will be recorded and made available to all students via the course website)</li> </ul>  |   | <b>Final Exam due</b> (by end of W 5/10) |

## Readings List

- Austin, John L. 1956/1961. Performative utterances. In J.O. Urmson and G.J. Warnock (eds.), *J.L. Austin: Philosophical Papers*, 233-252. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Chierchia, Gennaro and Sally McConnell-Ginet. 1990. *Meaning and Grammar: An Introduction to Semantics*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Cummins, Chris. 2019. *Pragmatics*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Devlin, Keith. 1997. *Goodbye, Descartes: The End of Logic and the Search for a New Cosmology of the Mind*. New York: J. Wiley & Sons.
- Grice, Paul. 1975. Logic and conversation. In P. Cole and J. Morgan (eds.), *Syntax and Semantics, Vol. 3: Speech Acts*, 41-58. New York: Academic Press.
- Haviland, Susan & Herbert Clark. 1974. What's new? Acquiring new information as a process in comprehension. *Journal of Verbal Learning and Verbal Behavior* 13: 512-521.
- Huang, Yan. 2007. *Pragmatics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Karttunen, Lauri. 1976. Discourse referents. In J.D. McCawley (ed.), *Syntax and Semantics, Vol. 7: Notes from the Linguistic Underground*, 363-385. New York: Academic Press.
- Lewis, David. 1979. Scorekeeping in a language game. *Journal of Philosophical Logic* 8: 339-359.
- Searle, John R. 1975. Indirect speech acts. In P. Cole and J. Morgan (eds.), *Syntax and Semantics, Vol. 3: Speech Acts*, 59-82. New York: Academic Press.
- Solan, Larry M. and Peter M. Tiersma 2005. *Speaking of Crime: The Language of Criminal Justice*. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press.
- Stalnaker, Robert C. 1974. Pragmatic presuppositions. In M.K. Munitz and P.K. Unger (eds.), *Semantics and Philosophy*, 197-213. New York: New York University Press. (Reprinted in R.C. Stalnaker *Context and Content: Essays on Intentionality in Speech and Thought*, 47-62. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1999)