

**PHI 750: Contexts and Context-Dependence
Spring 2004**

INSTRUCTOR:

Prof. Ishani Maitra, Department of Philosophy

Office: 529 Hall of Languages

Mailbox: 541 Hall of Languages

Phone: 443-5816

Email: imaitra@syr.edu

Office hours: Wednesdays 1:00–2:30p.m., and by appointment

CLASS MEETINGS:

Tuesdays 7:15–10:00 p.m. in the Dietl Room (538 Hall of Languages).

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

It is a commonplace that what we manage to communicate via our linguistic utterances depends crucially on context. But there's a variety of different ways in which context can affect communication. This course is intended to serve as an introduction to the different kinds of context-dependence. We will begin by looking at some of the classic work in this area, on implicature, presupposition, and indexicality. Then, we will turn to consider what sorts of entities contexts are, and how they should be represented in our semantic theories. Third, we will examine the (intuitively familiar and philosophically important) distinction between what's *said* by an utterance and what's communicated in some other way: we shall see that the phenomenon of context-dependence makes this a difficult distinction to capture. Finally, we will use what we've learned about context-dependence to evaluate arguments to the effect that certain expressions of particular interest to philosophers – for instance, 'know,' 'free,' and 'cause' – are context-dependent.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

1. A term paper (15-20 pages), on a topic of your choosing. The term paper can be an extension of one of the 'monthlies' (see below).
2. Presentation of term paper topic and outline, in the last meeting (April 27).
3. Three 'monthlies,' each 4-5 pages, on a topic covered in the first, second, and third sections of the course, respectively. The first 'monthly' is due at the end of Week 5, the second at the end of Week 9, and the final at the end of Week 13.

TEXTS:

There are no required texts for this course. The following texts are highly recommended: we'll read several selections from each of them.

1. Steven Davis, *Pragmatics: A Reader*, Oxford University Press, 1991.
2. Robert Stalnaker, *Context and Content*, Oxford University Press, 1999.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE OF TOPICS BY WEEK:

Note: The readings for each meeting will be made available for photocopying in the usual place in the graduate student lounge. Readings marked with a '+' are available on the web, either from the author's website, or from the journal website.

I. Introduction to the Course

Week 1 (January 13) *Introduction*

Week 2 (January 20) *Implicatures*

Grice (1967, 1989), "Logic and Conversation," in his *Studies in the Way of Words*.

Grice (1967, 1989), "Further Notes on Logic and Conversation," in his *Studies in the Way of Words*.

Davis (1998), selections from his *Implicature: Intention, Convention, and Principle in the Failure of Gricean Theory*.

Week 3 (January 27) *Implicatures, Cont'd*

Levinson, selections from his *Presumptive Meanings: The Theory of Generalized Conversational Implicature*.

Karttunen and Peters (1979), "Conventional Implicature," in *Syntax and Semantics, Vol. 11: Presupposition* (edited by Oh and Dineen).

+Bach (1999), "The Myth of Conventional Implicature," in *Linguistics and Philosophy* 22: 327-66.

Week 4 (February 3) *Presuppositions*

Strawson (1964, 1971), "Identifying Reference and Truth-Values," in his *Logico-Linguistic Papers*.

Stalnaker (1974, 1999), "Pragmatic Presuppositions," in his *Context and Content*.

Heim (1988, 1991), "On the Projection Problem for Presuppositions," in *Pragmatics: A Reader* (edited by S. Davis).

Week 5 (February 10) *Indexicality*

Kaplan (1977, 1989), "Demonstratives," from *Themes from Kaplan* (edited by Almog, Perry, and Wettstein).

Nunberg (1993), "Indexicality and Deixis," in *Linguistics and Philosophy* 16: 1-46.

II. Contexts

Week 6 (February 17) *Index Theory*

Cresswell (1973), selections from his *Logics and Languages*.

Lewis (1980, 1998), "Index, Context, and Content," in his *Papers on Philosophical Logic*.

Lewis (1970, 1983), "General Semantics," in his *Philosophical Papers, Volume 1*.

Week 7 (February 24) *Common Ground Theory*

Stalnaker (1978, 1999), "Assertion," in his *Context and Content*.

Stalnaker (1998, 1999), "On the Representation of Context," in his *Context and Content*.

+Stalnaker (2002), "Common Ground," in *Linguistics and Philosophy* 25: 701-721.

Week 8 (March 2) *New Directions*

+Glanzberg (2002), "Context and Discourse," in *Mind and Language* 17: 333-375.

+Gauker (1998), "What is a Context of Utterance?" in *Philosophical Studies* 91: 149-172.

III. What's Said

Week 9 (March 16) *Relevance Theory*
Sperber and Wilson (1995), selections from *Relevance: Communication and Cognition, Second Edition*.
Carston (1988, 1991), "Implicature, Explicature, and Truth-Theoretic Semantics," in *Pragmatics: A Reader* (edited by S. Davis).

Week 10 (March 23) *Responses to Relevance Theory*
†Szabó and Stanley (2000), "On Quantifier Domain Restriction," in *Mind and Language* 101: 29-57.
†Stanley (2000), "Context and Logical Form," in *Linguistics and Philosophy* 23: 391-434.
†Carston (forthcoming), "Explicature and Semantics."
†Recanati (forthcoming), selections from *Literal Meaning*.

Week 11 (March 30) *Compositionality*
Travis (1993), "On Constraints of Generality," in *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, New Series*, 44: 165-188.
†Szabó (2001), "Adjectives in Context," in *Perspectives on Semantics, Pragmatics, and Discourse* (edited by Kenesei and Harnish).

Week 12 (April 6) *Adjectives*
TBA

IV. Contextualism

Week 13 (April 13) *In Epistemology*
Lewis (1996), "Elusive Knowledge," *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, : 549-567.
DeRose (1999), "Contextualism: An Explanation and Defense," in *The Blackwell Guide to Epistemology* (edited by Greco and E. Sosa): 187-205.
†Stanley (forthcoming), "On the Linguistic Basis for Contextualism."

Week 14 (April 20) *In Metaphysics*
TBA

Week 15 (April 27) *Wrap-Up and Term Paper Presentations*

FURTHER POSSIBLE TOPICS

- Tense
- Focus
- Negation
- Conditionals: Indicative and Counterfactual
- Quantifiers
- Methodology
- Two-Dimensionalism