INSTRUCTOR:
Prof. Ishani Maitra, Department of Philosophy
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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.
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) \(\text{Introduction}\)

Week 2 (January 20) \(\text{Implicatures}\)

Week 3 (January 27) \(\text{Implicatures, Cont’d}\)
Levinson, selections from his Presumptive Meanings: The Theory of Generalized Conversational Implicature.

Week 4 (February 3) \(\text{Presuppositions}\)

Week 5 (February 10) \(\text{Indexicality}\)

II. Contexts

Week 6 (February 17) \(\text{Index Theory}\)
Cresswell (1973), selections from his Logics and Languages.

Week 7 (February 24) \(\text{Common Ground Theory}\)

Week 8 (March 2) \(\text{New Directions}\)
III. What’s Said

Week 9 (March 16)  Relevance Theory

Week 10 (March 23)  Responses to Relevance Theory
†Carston (forthcoming), “Explicature and Semantics.”
†Recanati (forthcoming), selections from Literal Meaning.

Week 11 (March 30)  Compositionality

Week 12 (April 6)  Adjectives
TBA

IV. Contextualism

Week 13 (April 13)  In Epistemology
†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