

# Pragmatics

## Ling 625

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## 1 Goals

The primary goal of the course is to acquaint students with the history and basic principles of the field of linguistic pragmatics, to read a few of the classic texts, and to understand where they have taken us in terms of current research.

## 2 Grading

Grading will be based on exercises, quizzes, classroom participation and preparation, a paper, and a presentation.

Assignments	0%
Classroom prep	15%
Paper + Bib + Outline	65%
Presentation	20%

## 3 Practice

### 3.1 Textbook

The course will use *Pragmatics* by Stephen Levinson as a backbone reader or backbone text book. Untitled Chapter references in the outline are to Levinson; we will largely accept his definition of the scope of the field.

### 3.2 Readings, Assignments, Quizzes

Come to class prepared, with your readings and assignments completed. Assignments will be discussed carefully in class, and students need to be prepared to justify their answers in discussion. Readings work very much the same way. Students will be expected to be able to discuss the content of the readings. Difficulty of the material will be taken into account, but failure to read it will not. "I read this, but I didn't understand a thing," is a far less compelling defense than "I read this, and here specifically is what I don't understand." Come in with questions, observations, counterexamples, and criticisms, all tied to the specific reading.

Participation is not voluntary. Everyone in class will be called on and everyone will be expected to know what the readings contain. We will explore the difficulties of these readings together, and we will be responsible for each other's education. Don't let your classmates (and me) down.

There will be some ten-minute quizzes distributed throughout the semester, covering either (a) material in your reading; (b) material in the assignment you have just turned in. or (c) material from the previous week's assignment. Students will be notified of quizzes the Friday before the quiz.

The quizzes will cover concepts introduced in the readings, and practiced on the homework. You will need to do both to score well on the quizzes. Many homeworks are graded loosely, especially at the beginning of the course, since they are regarded as learning experiences. But quizzes, midterms, and finals will be graded as evaluations of knowledge. Basically, I will let many mistakes go on assignments; I will deduct for mistakes on the quizzes.

### 3.3 Paper

A large part of your grade will be based on a paper.

Your paper may either be data-based, analyzing a single phenomenon in collected or archived data, or it may trace the development of one topic in the literature. In either case, the topic of the paper must be directly relevant to issues covered in the class. Recycled papers will not be accepted. Papers will go through two preliminary stages of development, topic (and possibly data) choice, and outline, both of which are described on pages linked to from the class outline. Note that bibliography and outline are separate components of the grade. Both **may** be done in advance of the final paper; but the outline **must** be done in advance. Doing the bibliography in advance will give students a chance to receive feedback and improve it. It will also provide some good ideas for fleshing out the outline. Since the outline is due early, and will be graded early, fleshing out the outline at the end as the paper is written will not improve a student's outline grade, but the bibliography will only be graded at the end, so improving a poor bibliography with some late additions will count toward improving the bibliography grade.

This will give you ample opportunity to enrich the material, and to draw out connections with other issues and work.

## 4 Presentations

Each student will be responsible for a presentation.

A presentation must be on an assigned reading paper topic. Your job as presenter is to facilitate discussion of a paper. But you are in charge, and you are responsible for making sure discussion happens. You will do this by having reading-specific questions. These questions must be submitted to me by Saturday at 4 PM (48 hours before class time). I will give you feedback to try to help you improve your questions. Helpful hint: Since you are primarily serving as discussion facilitator, don't raise issues you have nothing to say about. Be aware that I may close discussion on off-topic questions. Note that discussion threads that relate the papers to other papers we have read will be particularly valued. Helpful hint two: most of our assigned papers discuss examples in some detail. Examining the assumptions and claims of those data-oriented discussions is a great place to steer class discussion. Hint three: You should spend no time summarizing the paper at the beginning of your presentation, since that's what I'll be doing. Assume everyone has read the paper and ask questions that meaningfully probe the main issues of the paper.

Your questions **may** be clarification questions. In other words they may start “Here’s a part of the paper I had trouble understanding.” But be aware that “I didn’t understand anything in this paper,” is not a helpful way of generating discussion.

## 5 Attendance

So the bad news is that attendance will be taken. It is impossible for attendance not to matter if class contribution does, since we do not want someone skipping class whenever they haven’t completed that week’s assigned reading, with no penalty. You may miss two class sessions with no penalty, after which you will be given exactly the same 0 grade that someone receives if they reveal they haven’t done the reading.

## 6 Concepts, student learning outcomes

Literal meaning. Truth conditions. Definites and indefinites. Deixis. Implicature. Grice’s Maxims. Neo-Gricean accounts. Relevance theory. Speech acts. Politeness (Is there a politeness principle?) Presupposition. Presupposition projection.

### Student Learning Outcomes

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1. Students will be able to derive Gricean implicatures to explain divergences of what is communicated from what is said in ordinary conversation.
2. Students will draw the distinction between general and particular implicatures in ordinary conversation.
3. Students will apply Neo-Gricean principles to ordinary conversational phenomena to identify and explain phenomena like politeness and scalar implicature.
4. Students will describe cases of presupposition and presupposition projection and relate them to a theory of a common ground.

## 7 Course outline

[Course outline.](#)

## 8 Time/place

Days	Time	Place
Mon	4:00-6:40	SH 221

## 9 Cheating: Academic Dishonesty

Academic misconduct includes the following examples as well as any other similar conduct which is aimed at falsely representing a student's academic performance: cheating, plagiarizing, unauthorized collaborating on course work, stealing course examinations or materials, falsifying records or data, or intentionally assisting another individual in any of the above.

Academic misconduct will not be tolerated. Students who cheat will receive an "F" for the course grade and the Linguistics Department's Undergraduate Advisor and SDSU's Judicial Coordinator will be notified. The Judicial Coordinator will conduct an investigation, and depending on the outcome, the student may be expelled, suspended, or placed on probation.

For more information on SDSU's policies and procedures regarding academic misconduct visit the following site: [Academic Dishonesty](#).

## 10 Office Hours

Office	SHW 238
Tu	3:30-4:30
Tu,Th	11:00-12:00
Th	09:30-10:30
	by appointment

## 11 Contact Information

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