Date: 24.03.2025

Bar-Ilan University
אוניברסיטת בר-אילן

Syllabus - Teaching Program for the Course

Formal approaches to pragmatics

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Course No 571

Course Type:	course
Scope of credits:	___
Year of study:	___
Semester:	2024-2025, Semester B
Day & Time:	Thursday, 12-4pm
Office hours:	Thursday, 11am-12pm, 502/003-021 (or by appointment)
Lecturer Email:	mariia.esipova@biu.ac.il
Moodle Site:	

Course description and learning goals

Course Abstract

This course is an introduction to the study of various pragmatic phenomena in linguistic communication using formal tools. We will focus our attention on different types of inference that have been categorized as pragmatic and a selection of discourse-level phenomena, looking at how investigating these empirical issues has led to the development of various formal pragmatic theories, such as the QUD model of the discourse or the Rational Speech Act framework.

Learning objectives

1. The students will get familiarized with various formal pragmatic tools by looking at various empirical phenomena that led to their development.
2. Through in-class practice and homework assignments, the students will learn how to apply those formal tools to novel data.

Course structure (subject to change)

Week No.	Lesson topic
1	Introduction: what is pragmatics? Overview of the course.
2-4	Implicatures. Conversational implicatures. Scalar implicatures.
5-8	Presuppositions. Presupposition triggering as a pragmatic phenomenon. Presupposition projection as a pragmatic phenomenon.
9	Discourse modeling. Information structure in discourse. Discourse coherence relations.
10	Non-canonical questions.
11	Vagueness.
12	Social meaning.
13-14	Buffer/recap/bonus topic.

Final grade

Description of the product	Weight in the final score
Homework assignments (formative assessment)	40% of final grade. These homework assignments will be graded as pass/fail and will cumulatively add up to 40%. One assignment can be skipped/failed without it affecting the grade. Any additional skipped/failed assignments will result in point deduction from the 40%.
Take-home final exam	60% of final grade

Course requirements

Attendance: you can miss two classes without an explanation. Additional absences require justification for a passing grade, but contact the instructor if you need more flexibility.

Plagiarism policy

Any instance of plagiarism in your work will immediately result in you failing this course and will be reported to the administration. Please consult the department's guidelines on what constitutes plagiarism:
https://english.biu.ac.il/sites/english/files/shared/what_is_plagiarism_biu_english_literature_and_linguistics.pdf

If you use generative AI (such as ChatGPT) to assist you in your assignments, you should properly report doing so by submitting a full record of your prompts and the AI's outputs. Failure to do so will be treated as an instance of plagiarism.

Prerequisites

Course number	Course name
37-289 OR 37-987	Semantics Introduction to Syntax and Semantics

Bibliography: Up-to-date reading, viewing, and listening content items

Required and optional readings will be made available to the students electronically throughout the course.

Sample readings:

- Roberts, Craige. 2012. Information structure: Towards an integrated formal theory of pragmatics. *Semantics and Pragmatics* 5(6). 1–69. https://doi.org/10.3765/sp.5.6
- Schlenker, Philippe. 2016. The semantics-pragmatics interface. In Maria Aloni & Paul Dekker (eds.), *Formal semantics*, 664–727. Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139236157.023