

NON-PARADIGMATIC PRAGMATICS

Spring 2025

Taught by:	Andy Egan (eganam@gmail.com) Daniel Harris (danielwharris@gmail.com) Karen Lewis (klewis@barnard.edu)
Locations:	Rutgers Department of Philosophy, Room 524B CUNY Grad Center, Room 9207 Columbia Department of Philosophy, Room 716
Time:	Mondays, 12:00-2:30
Website:	https://danielwharris.com/teaching/pragmatics/

Course Description

Most work in pragmatics is built around influential idealized models that treat conversations as small-scale, cooperative activities that are organized around shared information, questions, and goals. Our plan for this course is to start by getting a firm grip on these models by reading some of the classics, and then to look at a range of recent and in-progress work that attempts to lift some of the standard idealizations.

Some questions we'll consider: How do our models have to be adjusted to make sense of conversations with aims other than efficient information exchange? What about online communication, or other situations when we're communicating with large, diverse, shifting groups of interlocutors? What about when things get less cooperative? What about the use of language to construct our social identities? What about situations in which differences in perspective are especially important? What are the psychological states and processes being modeled by our pragmatic theories, anyway, and how do they change in these different contexts?

Website and Readings

The syllabus, readings and other course information are all on the course website: <https://danielwharris.com/teaching/pragmatics/>

Class Modality

This course will take place at Rutgers, CUNY Grad Center, and Columbia, alternating weeks (see schedule of locations below). It is expected that you attend this course in person. However, we understand that sometimes attending in person might be impossible, in which case you may attend via zoom: <https://columbiauniversity.zoom.us/j/97360278410?pwd=Na4hbGrt8rlmJvAjmO2K1bFfzfgjYz.1>

Meeting ID: 973 6027 8410 Passcode: 256831

Discord Server

We have created a Discord server for this class, which you can get to by clicking on this link: <https://discord.com/invite/GfnFfXejPB>. THE DISCORD SERVER IS FOR REGISTERED STUDENTS ONLY. Discord is a free tool for group communication, We will use it as a place where you will submit weekly discussion points and communicate with us and the other

members of the class. You must have access to Discord to participate in the course. We recommend installing the app on your computer and/or phone and turning on notifications for our server.

Weekly writing

Each student registered for the course is expected to submit a short discussion point of around 250 words or less on the weekly reading by the Friday night before class. You will submit it via Discord, in the appropriate channel for that week. For example, for February 10's class, you'll submit your discussion point no later than Friday night, February 7 in the #W3-Feb10 channel on the Discord Server. These discussion points should be concise enough that we can all read all of them relatively quickly when preparing for class.

The discussion point should take the form of a paragraph or two in which you engage critically with (one of) that week's readings. These will be incorporated into the class discussion. Here are some (non-exhaustive) examples of things you could write:

1. A question about something in a reading that is unclear or confusing, along with an explanation of why it is hard to understand.
2. A criticism of one of the arguments in a reading.
3. An argument against the conclusion in a reading.
4. An argument in favor of one of the conclusions of a reading that isn't in the reading.
5. A summary of some empirical evidence for or against a reading's conclusion(s) that the reading doesn't discuss.

Whichever of these you do, you should cite whatever source(s) influenced you (if any) and try to summarize the key argument or evidence in enough detail that we can usefully discuss it in class. These discussion points are also great places to start trying out ideas that could eventually form the basis of your term paper.

Paper pitches

A paper pitch is a short proposal for a term paper (about 200-500 words). It should specify a thesis that you're going to defend, the basics of an argumentative strategy for defending it, some research on which you're planning to draw, and a target length. You should submit your pitches to Andy, Dan, and Karen via email with the subject 'Pitch #n', where n is the appropriate number. We are always happy to meet with you about the paper idea. Your second and third pitches can be revised or extended versions of an earlier pitch or completely different ideas.

You should submit three pitches over the course of the semester according to the following schedule:

Pitch #1: No later than Wednesday, February 26, 2025

Pitch #2: No later than Wednesday, March 26, 2025

Pitch #3: No later than Wednesday, April 30, 2025

Final paper

The final paper should be based on one of the pitches you submitted. Specific guidelines for the final paper vary by institution and can be found on the supplement for this syllabus specific to whether you are a student at CUNY, Rutgers, or Columbia.

End of semester workshop

This course ends with a 2-day workshop on May 12-13, at Rutgers. This workshop is open to all (even those who did not attend the seminar), but is mandatory for registered students. The workshop will be an opportunity to discuss the papers we read in the course with the authors of those papers. Confirmed participants for the workshop include: Josh Armstrong, Sam Berstler, Elisabeth Camp, Ethan Nowak, and Craige Roberts.

Class etiquette, Professionalism, and Academic Integrity

We expect you to behave ethically and professionally. This means coming to class each week prepared to actively engage in the seminar. We expect you to treat each other and each other's ideas respectfully. This does not mean you should not be critical (quite the opposite!), but do so in a respectful manner. We are all responsible for making this seminar a welcoming and philosophically productive environment for every member of the class.

We take academic integrity very seriously. Cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of dishonesty will not be tolerated.

Schedule of readings and locations

Readings should be read **by the date for which they are listed**. All readings can be found on the course website. Reading schedule is subject to change – consult the website for the most up to date information.

Locations:

Rutgers: 106 Somerset St, 5th Floor, large seminar room (Room 524B)

CUNY Grad center: Room 9207

Columbia: Philosophy Hall, 7th floor, seminar room (Room 716)

Date	Location	Readings
1/27	Rutgers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Herb Clark, “Common Ground” (from <i>Using Language</i> , ch. 4) • H.P. Grice, “Meaning”, and “Logic and Conversation” • David Lewis, “Scorekeeping in a Language Game” • Craige Roberts, “Context in Dynamic Interpretation” and “Information Structure in Discourse” • Robert Stalnaker, “Assertion”, “Common Ground”, and “Common Ground and Keeping Score” (from <i>Context</i>, Ch.2)
2/3	CUNY	Same readings as Week #1
2/10	Columbia	Elisabeth Camp, “Insinuation, Common Ground, and the Conversational Record”
2/17	Rutgers	Karen Lewis, “Imagined Audiences and Common Ground”
2/24	CUNY	Josh Armstrong, “The Evolutionary Foundations of Common Ground” Suggested reading: Josh Armstrong, “Provincialism in Pragmatics”
3/3	Columbia	Andy Egan, “Conversational Double-Bookkeeping”
3/10	Rutgers	Sam Berstler, “The Grice is Right”; Suggested Reading: Sam Berstler, “The Structure of Open Secrets”
3/17	No class	Spring Break I
3/24	CUNY	Mandy Simons, “Availability without Common Ground”; Suggested readings: Dan Harris, “We talk to People, Not Contexts”; Daphna Heller and Sarah Brown-Schmidt, “The Multiple Perspectives Theory of Mental States in Communication”
3/31	Columbia	Craige Roberts, “The architecture of interpretation: Dynamic pragmatics and pragmatic competence”
4/7	Rutgers	Elmar Unsteinsson and Dan Harris, “Genre and Conversation”
4/14	No class	Spring Break II
4/21	CUNY	TBD
4/28	Columbia	Elisabeth Camp, “Nicknames as Tools for Managing Face”
5/5	CUNY	Ethan Nowak, “Creative Conception in Ordinary Language”