

Course Syllabus

HUMA3030 Language, Communication and Culture

[3-0-0:3]

Spring 2017/18

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Office Hours: Tue/Fri 15:00-16:30

Course description

This course explores human language in relation to the communicative functions which it serves and the cultural context in which it is used. Issues such as how human language is distinct from other communication systems, how language is used to convey different meanings and how culture affects the use of language will be examined in order to highlight the uniqueness of human language.

This course is designed as a required course in the interdisciplinary area of "Literature, Communication and Media" for SHSS's major program. Students major in Global China Studies can take it in their first or second year of study. This course is also open to non-major students who can take it to fulfill their elective requirement.

Intended learning outcomes

- Identify the differences between language and other forms of communication systems
- Analyze the correspondence between form and meaning/function
- Improve the competence in interpersonal and group communication

Major Topics to be covered

1. Introduction

- What this course is about
- Our approach to the topics
- Basic concepts of semantics and pragmatics
- Entailment and presupposition

2. The Meaning of Meaning

- Utterances, Sentences, & Propositions
- Truth-conditional Meaning
- Three Types of 'Invisible' Meaning

3. Cooperative Principle and Conversational Implicature

- Cooperative Principle
- Conversational Maxims
- Characteristics of conversational implicature
- Case Study: Some interesting tricks of advertising
- Case Study: The tricks of joking
- Grice's Classification of implicatures
- Some basics of propositional logic

4. Advanced Topics on Entailment, Presupposition, and Implicature

- Properties of Entailment, Presupposition, and Implicature
- Presupposition triggers
- Two perspectives to view 'presupposition'
- Interim summary
- Neo-Gricean theories

5. Complexity of Language as a Communication System: An Interim Discussion

- Language as a Sign System
- Three types of sign
- Language as a Communication System
- Human language vs animal language
- Unanswered questions about implicit meanings

6. Speech Acts

- Austin's Speech Act Theory
- Constatives and Performatives
- Felicity Conditions
- Locutions, Illocutions, and Perlocutions
- Searle's Speech Act Theory
- Searle's Taxonomy of Illocutionary Acts

7. Indirect Speech Acts

- Direct Speech Acts vs Indirect Speech Acts
- Conventional Indirect Speech Acts
- Non-conventional Indirect Speech Acts
- Empirical verification of the Theory of ISA
- Cross-cultural diversity

8. Linguistic Politeness

- Problems in Grice's theory & the theory of speech acts
- Politeness as a linguistic universal
- The distinction between politeness1 & politeness2
- Integration of politeness with Grice's CP
- Leech's Politeness Principle
- Scales of Politeness

9. Cross-cultural Differences in Language Use

- Introduction
- NSM and Cultural Scripts
- Cross-cultural Differences: Examples

Assessment

Attendance	10%
Quiz/Homework assignments	40%
Final exam	50%

Selected readings

(Actual reading titles will be assigned in each module)

Akmajian, Adrian et al. 2010. *Linguistics: An Introduction to Language and Communication*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press. (HKUST Library E-Resource: P121 .A4384 2010eb)

Brown, Penelope & Stephen Levinson. 1987. *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (HKUST Library E-Resource: P299.H66 P6 2005eb)

Matras, Yaron. 2009. *Language contact*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (HKUST Library E-Resource: P115 .M38 2009eb)

Verschueren, Jef and Jan-Ola Östman. eds. 2009. *Key Notions for Pragmatics*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. (HKUST Library E-Resource: P99.4.P72 K49 2009eb)

Watts, Richard J., Sachiko Ide, and Konrad Ehlich. eds. 2005. *Politeness in Language: Studies in its History, Theory, and Practice*. Mouton de Gruyter. (HKUST Library E-Resource: P299.H66 P6 2005eb)

*Wierzbicka, Anna. 1992. *Semantics, culture, and cognition: universal human concepts in culture-specific configurations*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press. (HKUST Library: P204 .W54 1992)

*Wierzbicka, Anna. 1997. *Understanding cultures through their key words: English, Russian, Polish, German, and Japanese*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press. (HKUST Library: P35 .W54 1997)

*Wierzbicka, Anna. 2003. *Cross-cultural Pragmatics: The Semantics of Human Interaction*. 2nd Edition. Berlin & New York: Mouton de Gruyter. (HKUST Library: P99.4.P72 W53 2003)

*Wierzbicka, Anna. 2006. *English: Meaning and Culture*. New York: Oxford University Press. (HKUST Library E-Resource: PE1585 .W53 2006eb)