

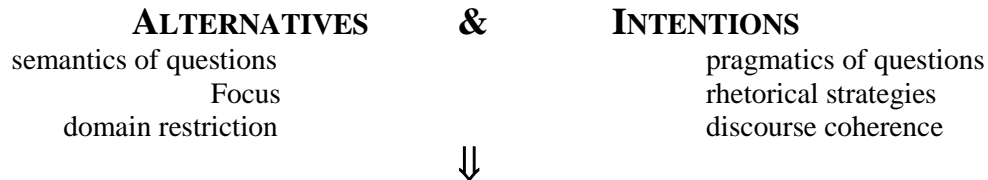
## QUESTIONS IN DISCOURSE Course Syllabus

Over the past 17 years, a good bit of work on discourse in Linguistics and Philosophy of Language presumes that a central pragmatic factor driving and constraining interpretation is the Question Under Discussion (QUD). The idea is central in the work of Ginzburg, van Kuppevelt, and Roberts, and plays a part in work by Beaver, Büring, Jasinskaja, Kadmon, Pollard, Portner, van Rooij, Simons, and Zeevat, and their collaborators, *inter alia*; is closely related to the Inquisitive Semantics of Groenendijk and his colleagues; and is reflected more recently in an increasingly broad range of psycholinguistic research. This thread is also closely related to the extensive work on Planning Theory in AI (e.g. Cohen, Grosz & Sidner, Perrault, Stone, Thomason). There are intuitive conceptual links to other theories of discourse, including those involving Rhetorical Structure Theory (like the SDRT of Asher and Lascarides, and the Coherence Theory of Kehler) and game theory (as in the work of philosophers like van Rooij).

This course will give students some background in the basic concepts and empirical motivation for this approach to discourse pragmatics. It will consist of five sessions of lecture and discussion, addressing the following topics relevant to QUD-based accounts:

- **Basic empirical motivations:** What kinds of problems in discourse pragmatics might benefit from the use of something like questions under discussion? As this is a very wide range of topics and time is short, we will concentrate on prosodic focus and presupposition projection, especially as these bear on anaphora resolution and domain restriction. Please see the on-line bibliography cited below for other relevant empirical issues.
- **Basic concepts:** What are questions and what role do they play in context? How are questions modeled semantically in some of the theories of interest? How are theories involving the QUD related to classic theories of linguistic context, including the Common Ground-based contexts of Stalnaker, Kaplan's contexts assigning values to dedicated indexicals, and theories using assignment functions or discourse referents for modeling constraints on anaphora resolution? And briefly: How are questions in discourse related to alternative semantics and to some of the other discourse theories cited above?
- **General questions about the relationship between semantics and pragmatics:** What does the QUD buy us from an explanatory point of view? How does the work which assumes its centrality in discourse essentially improve on earlier models of discourse context in linguistics and philosophy of language? What should a pragmatic theory be like, and how should it interact with (syntactically-grounded) compositional semantics to account for attested interpretations? What range of phenomena are properly, or partly to be accounted for pragmatically?

Course Organization:



### WHAT'S AT ISSUE ?

Proffered content vs. Supposed content  
Anti-matter and projection



### RETRIEVING MEANING<sub>NN</sub>: RELEVANCE & SALIENCE

anaphora resolution  
domain restriction



### PSYCHOLINGUISTIC IMPLICATIONS

#### Recommended Background Reading:

Here are a couple papers by me which lay out the basic assumptions that will be operative in this short course:

Craige Roberts (1996/2012) Information Structure: Towards an integrated formal theory of pragmatics. In Jae Hak Yoon and Andreas Kathol (eds.) *OSUWPL Volume 49: Papers in Semantics*, 1996. The Ohio State University Department of Linguistics. The 1998 version is soon to appear with a new Afterword in *Semantics and Pragmatics*, 2012. [[1998 revision](#)] [[2012 Afterword](#)].

Craige Roberts (2004) Context in dynamic interpretation. In Laurence Horn and Gregory Ward (eds.) *Handbook of Contemporary Pragmatic Theory*, Blackwell. [[scan](#)]

To get a feeling for the range of issues that have been tackled in this area, and references for work by the authors cited above and others as well, see the bibliography at <http://www.ling.ohio-state.edu/~croberts/QUDbib/>.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This bibliography is intended to be updated as relevant new work becomes available. Kindly inform me if there's work that you think should be included, whether it adopts this general perspective on discourse or provides critical response.