

It Goes Without Saying: Conversation in Context

MAPS/EDSO 32700, PSYC 38826; CHDV/EDSO 22700; Winter 2024

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Office hours by appointment: Tuesday/Thursday 4 – 5pm – [Book an appointment](#)

Class meetings: Tuesday/Thursday 2pm - 3:20pm

Meeting location: 1155 Building Room 289B

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Course Description

Language enables humans to communicate infinitely complex ideas in neatly packaged strings of words, but these words are neither delivered nor received in a vacuum. In day-to-day conversation, the language we use is part of a larger interactive context. As speakers and signers, our bodies, faces, voices, and histories send messages above and beyond the words we choose. By broadening the scope of how we think about dialogue, we can examine conversation as a multifaceted event - where language is just one of many ways we communicate.

This course will take an interdisciplinary approach to the study of conversation to ask how identity, society, and the physical world allow us to make meaning from language. We will discuss how the study of interactional context varies across linguistics, psychology, and sociology and think critically about the overlap and divergence we find across these perspectives. Over the quarter students will build an interdisciplinary analysis of a single interaction by examining and reexamining data through lenses such as coordinated turn-taking, social distance, barriers to communication, and gesture.

Course Materials & Resources

Canvas

Course resources are managed through Canvas. The course Canvas page is organized into modules, so that all readings, assignments, slides, files, and other materials for the week/unit/topic are published in one place rather than using different pages for assignments, readings, files, etc. Please let me know immediately if you have difficulty accessing the Canvas page.

Readings

There is no textbook for this course. All readings will be posted on Canvas. Several readings come from the book *Using Language* by Herb Clark which is accessible as an e-book through the library website. Several copies are also available for purchase at the Seminary Co-op.

Video

Assignments for this class are centered around one short video clip you will choose during Week 1. It is essential that this video be accessible to *both you and me* through the end of the quarter. Online videos that are at risk of being removed for copyright infringement (or any other reason) are not an option. Videos that need to be purchased or require a paid streaming subscription will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

We will discuss the details of what this video clip should be on the first day of class, but the fundamental requirements are:

1. Video is of 2-4 people engaged in spontaneous, unscripted conversation
2. Clip is about 5 minutes in length (min 3, max 7; may be an excerpt from a longer video)
3. Video and audio are high quality
4. Language of interaction is English*

*While the concepts and methods we cover in this course are not specific to the English language or even spoken language, the assignments will be most successful if everyone – you, your classmates, and your instructor – are on relatively equal footing when it comes to understanding the video you choose. With that in mind I ask that, if possible, you select a clip that uses English. I recognize that English is not equally accessible to all students, so I will happily make exceptions to this requirement. If you ultimately use a video in another language, you will be required to schedule office hours with me once per unit to be sure we are on the same page before I grade your work. Regardless of what video clip you choose, I encourage everyone to think about how these topics apply to all language/communication systems you are familiar with and to bring this up in class discussion!

You can find example videos, including some videos used by students in past quarters, on Canvas.

Course Requirements, Learning Objectives, & Grading

Assignments for this class will be organized around performing a comprehensive analysis of a single conversational interaction. Over the 9 weeks, students will write brief papers discussing this interaction through four of the analytical perspectives we cover over the quarter. The final assignment will integrate these analyses into a larger discussion of interaction based on themes from the entire quarter. Grade distribution is as follows.

- **30% - Class participation.** Students are expected to attend and actively participate in all class discussions, activities, and out-of-class peer review exercises. At the end of the quarter, students will submit a self-evaluation with a short, written reflection and *suggested* grade.
- **5% - Methods assignment.** At the end of Week 2 students will complete an assignment demonstrating understanding of quantitative and qualitative approaches to the study of communicative interaction, including a short applied exercise.
- **15% - Topic papers.** Students will write 3 short (500) topic papers analyzing their video-recorded interaction through a lens from each unit topic. These papers will be graded as complete/incomplete and will be returned with formative feedback.
 - Learning objectives: Students will *identify multidisciplinary approaches* to the study of interaction. Students will *analyze original data* by revisiting an interaction from multiple perspectives.
- **50% - Final paper.** The final paper for the class will be a complete analysis of the student's selected interaction (~15 pages). It will comprise:
 - Introduction. A review of relevant course literature, interaction overview, and general methodological approach
 - Learning objective: Students will use course readings and discussions to *describe how analytical approaches overlap and diverge*.
 - Analyses. Revised versions of the 3 topic papers
 - Learning objective: Students will use instructor feedback to *evaluate and revise* their writing.
 - Discussion. Integration of all analyses with a holistic interpretation of the interaction
 - Learning objective: Students will *integrate discrete analyses* to present a single cohesive discussion.
 - **Graduate students only:** Final papers will follow the same general structure. Additionally, graduate students papers:
 - Must bring in literature from outside the course
 - Must provide a more thorough explanation of methodological practices and reasoning
 - Must include an appendix of data annotation and analysis (as appropriate to chosen methods)
 - May follow looser page length guidelines and exceed page limits with instructor approval

Formatting and Assignment Specifics

All assignments should follow APA 7th Edition guidelines for both formatting and citations. APA offers several suggestions for font you can choose from, but when it doubt it's never a bad idea to go with 12pt Times New Roman. Cite sources with APA 7th Edition formatting, which you can learn more about on the [Purdue Owl website](#). The Canvas student resources module includes some additional resources on tips for academic writing and APA style.

You will not lose points for occasional typos, spelling errors, or for going a little over the word limit. You *will* lose points for spelling and grammatical problems that impact readability, writing errors that have not been corrected in your revised final paper, and completely ignoring the word limit. If you are struggling with these sorts of writing problems for any reason, please let me know. We can work together to find supportive resources and/or make accommodations.

Late Work

If you need an extension for any reason, please ask! The more advance notice you give me, the better a strategy we can make for completing the assignment. I do not want to penalize you for being unwell, having four papers due the same day, coping with a family emergency, etc. Email me in advance of the due date/time and we will work something out. Without advance notice, late assignments will receive a 1-point penalty per day. Late final papers will receive a 10% penalty per day.

Course Policies

Accessibility and Accommodation

I am committed to making this course accessible to students of all background, identities, and abilities. If there are circumstances that make aspects of this course difficult for you to access, please contact me so we can discuss how to accommodate your needs. This includes, but is not limited to, accommodations around the format of course materials, the use of Canvas and other digital resources, the classroom and other physical resources, and the structure of assignments.

I will work with you to create an accessible learning environment whether or not you disclose your disability or personal circumstances. If you choose to disclose personal information with me, I will keep those discussions confidential. For certain accommodations you may need to contact Student Disability Services at (773) 702-6000 or disabilities@uchicago.edu.

Diversity, Inclusion, and Community

We will commit as a class to creating a welcoming, respectful, and productive classroom. We will expect each other to be mutually respectful of our meaningful identities. I expect that when we engage with each other in discussion we are considerate of the diversity of our classroom with regards to gender, sexuality, disability, race, ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic status, immigration status, and linguistic background. It is critical that we maintain respectful dialogue, which includes using correct names and pronouns. If a member of our classroom community – including myself – is creating an unwelcome space for you, I hope you will bring this to my attention immediately. If you would prefer to discuss the situation with someone outside our

class, I encourage you to take advantage of the [UChicago CARES reporting and conflict resolution processes](#).

Attendance and Active Participation

The participation component of your final grade is an assessment of your in-class engagement with the course materials and your classmates.

Your grade will be based on your **active participation** in class, which can look many different ways. It includes sharing your take on the readings and answering questions, but there are many other ways to engage with your classmates. Ask your classmate to expand on their point, ask for clarification, politely express agreement or disagreement, be conscious of your body language, share something you found surprising or confusing, connect the discussion to something in pop culture, make a joke. Practice the “step up, step back” guideline: step up and say something if you haven’t made your voice heard, step back to make space for others to contribute if you’ve had the chance to say a lot. I understand some students find it very difficult or anxiety-provoking to speak up in class, and I welcome you to discuss concerns about participation with me in office hours.

In-Class Workshops

Beginning in Week 3, at least 20 minutes of each class will be set aside for in-class workshops. You are encouraged -- but not required -- to sign up to workshop your video in class at least once. As a full class we'll take about 20 minutes to watch your video (or part of it) and have a discussion about how topics from the current unit apply. These workshops are intended to give you concrete starting points when you write your topic papers. If you are interested in pursuing a graduate degree or doing any kind of social science research, this is a great opportunity to get a feel for the kind of collaborative idea-generation and feedback you can expect in the worlds of research and academia.

The workshop sign-up sheet is in the “General” module on Canvas. You may sign up in an open slot at any point in the quarter, but if you sign up for a slot <1 week in advance please also send me an email to make sure I see it and prepare.

Additional Participation Opportunities

As a means of supplementing (not replacing!) participation, there are several ways to engage with classmates and course materials on Canvas:

1. **Discussion Boards** – Each unit has a discussion board on Canvas. Comments on these boards can be very informal. (More detail on Canvas)
2. **Key Terms** – The “general” module includes a link to the key terms google sheet. Contribute to this document by filling in missing portions (e.g., definitions, examples, relationships to other terms), adding new terms, or leaving and responding to comments.
3. **Peer Review** – Swap papers with a partner or members of a small group for peer feedback. Your peer review “submission” should be an email to me (cc partner/group members) with a link to a shared document (e.g., Google doc) with your identifiable and substantive comments.

Absences & In-class Engagement

Please email me to let me know if you will be absent from class meeting. No need to defend yourself or prove you've got a good reason – I just want a heads up! Please do not come to class if you are feeling ill. There is no direct penalty to your grade for absences, but frequently missing classes may negatively impact your overall participation grade. If you are concerned that unavoidable absences may be hurting your grade, please let me know as soon as possible to discuss ways to get full credit.

Laptops, tablets, and other electronic devices may be used to take notes and access course materials during class. Your participation grade will suffer if your device is distracting you from engaging in discussion.

Pass/Fail

Students who choose to take this class pass/fail must arrange to do so before the end of 8th week. To receive a passing grade, students need to regularly attend discussion and complete three of the four unit assignments (methods assignment + 3 topic papers). Rather than a final paper, students should submit revised versions of at least two topic papers with a 1–2 page general discussion.

Academic Honesty & Plagiarism

Please read UChicago's (very brief) [Academic Honesty & Plagiarism policy here](#). To add clarity to this general policy, in this class I am using [Oxford University's explanation of plagiarism](#):

Plagiarism is presenting work or ideas from another source as your own, with or without consent of the original author, by incorporating it into your work without full acknowledgement. All published and unpublished material, whether in manuscript, printed or electronic form, is covered under this definition, as is the use of material generated wholly or in part through use of artificial intelligence (save when use of Artificial Intelligence - AI for assessment has received prior authorisation e.g. as a reasonable adjustment for a student's disability). Plagiarism can also include re-using your own work without citation.

AI Writing Tools

I recognize that AI tools like ChatGPT have become ubiquitous, and I believe they can be used as productive resources in your writing process. However, some uses of AI constitute plagiarism.

Examples of **appropriate uses** include things like brainstorming, finding sources, proofreading, and revising drafts for conciseness and tone.

Inappropriate and unacceptable uses of AI are those which claim the ideas and writing of another entity – including digital entities like ChatGPT – are your own. There is admittedly a fine line between using a phrase or wording suggestion produced by AI and using so much generated text as to constitute plagiarism.

If you are unsure whether your use of AI is appropriate or unacceptable, please do not hesitate to ask me! This is a sticky topic and we are all figuring it out together. I assure you I will not judge you for using it as a tool; I will appreciate the thoughtfulness you demonstrate by checking in with me, even if I end up advising you that it is inappropriate use.

Plagiarized work, whether from human or AI creators, will receive a non-negotiable 0. I assume my students are honest and sincerely want you to succeed. I will not accuse you of plagiarism without abundant evidence.

You can find more information about the plagiarism policy in the student resources module on Canvas, including practical suggestions for helpful and honest ways to take advantage of what AI can offer you and guidelines for finding the line between appropriate and inappropriate use.

All written assignments must include an attached AI Statement. This should either include an affirmation that you did not use AI *or* a brief description of how you used AI constructively, including prompts given to the model. (Prompts may be abbreviated/paraphrased as long as the intention is clear.)

Other Useful Information and Resources

As referenced throughout this syllabus, the student resources module on Canvas includes many helpful documents and links. In that module you will find resources that offer supports for both your academic success and personal health, wellness, and student life.

I call attention some critical issues here in the syllabus, but I hope you will explore the available resources and/or come to me if I can offer direct or indirect support.

Food and Housing

I encourage anyone who is having difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day, and/or who lacks safe, stable housing, to contact your advisor for support. If you would like me to help initiate that conversation, please let me know.

If you need immediate assistance with food, the Greater Chicago Food Depository offers a directory of resources: www.chicagosfoodbank.org.

Mental Health

If you are struggling with stress, anxiety, or any other mental health challenges, please ask for help. There are many forms of support available on campus, including:

- The 24/7 mental health helpline available to all UChicago students. You can speak with a therapist at any time by calling (773) 702-3625. You can remain anonymous if you wish.
- Individual counseling, support groups, and psychiatric services available through Student Wellness. To make an appointment to speak with a clinician, visit <http://wellness.uchicago.edu/login> or call (773) 834-9355.

Please don't wait until you reach a state of crisis to ask for help. My door is open (often literally, but always metaphorically) to check in, but please remember I am not a therapist. I am, however, here to support you in making contact with these or other services.

Class Schedule

Please come to class each Tuesday having completed all readings for that week. Any changes to schedule and/or assigned readings will be shared via Canvas announcements.

*Readings marked with an asterisk are long, in-depth, or highly methodological. You only need to skim these before class but you may find them quite useful as you write your papers.

Unit 1: Introduction to Interaction – Video Selection due Friday 1/5*. Methods assignment due Monday 1/15

**Absolute deadline for approval submission Sunday 1/7. See assignment on Canvas for details.*

Week 1 (1/4): Conversation in Context

- Clark, H. H. (1996). Introduction. *Using language*. Cambridge University Press.
 - Chapters: Introduction, 11 Conversation
- Levinson, S. C. (2006). On the human ‘interaction engine’.

Week 2 (1/9; 1/11): Cross-disciplinary Methods in the Study of Interaction

Class meetings this week will be hands-on workshops on methods commonly used in the study of interaction (e.g., Elan, Praat, and Atlas.ti) as options for use in your papers. Readings for this week can generally be considered reference materials. It is not necessary to read these before Tuesday, but you should skim them to get a sense of how/when to return to them as needed.

Readings are found in the “Methods Resources” module on Canvas (*not* the Unit 1 module).

- *Allwood, J., Cerrato, L., Jokinen, K., Navarretta, C., & Paggio, P. (2007). The MUMIN coding scheme for the annotation of feedback, turn management and sequencing phenomena. *Language Resources and Evaluation*, 41(3), 273–287.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10579-007-9061-5>
- *Floyd, S., Giovanni, R., & Enfield, N. J. (2020). *Getting others to do things: A pragmatic typology of recruitments*. Zenodo.
- Hyland, Paltridge, & Wong (2021). *The Bloomsbury Handbook of Discourse Analysis*. Bloomsbury Academic.
 - Chapters 2 (*Conversation Analysis*, Waring) and 18 (*Multimodal discourse analysis*, O’Halloran)
- *Knudsen, M., Martin, J.-C., Ayuso, M., Bernsen, N., Carletta, J., Kita, S., Heid, U., Llisterri, J., Pelachaud, C., Poggi, I., Reithinger, N., & van Elswijk, G. (2002). *Survey of multimodal annotation schemes and best practice*.
- Stivers, T., & Enfield, N. J. (2010). A coding scheme for question–response sequences in conversation. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 42(10), 2620–2626.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2010.04.002>
- *Wiebe, J., Wilson, T., & Cardie, C. (2005). Annotating Expressions of Opinions and Emotions in Language. *Language Resources and Evaluation*, 39(2–3), 165–210.

Unit 2: Body and Voice – Topic paper due Friday 1/26

Week 3 (1/16; 1/18): Non-verbal behavior

- Bavelas, J. B., & Gerwing, J. (2011). The Listener as Addressee in Face-to-Face Dialogue. *International Journal of Listening*, 25(3), 178–198.
- *Debras, C. (2015). Stance-taking functions of multimodal constructed dialogue during spoken interaction. *Actes Du Colloque Gesture and Speech in Interaction*, 4, 6.
- Debras, C., & Cienki, A. (2012). Some Uses of Head Tilts and Shoulder Shrugs during Human Interaction, and Their Relation to Stancetaking. *2012 International Conference on Privacy, Security, Risk and Trust and 2012 International Conference on Social Computing*, 932–937.
- *Ekman, P., & Friesen, W. V. (1969). The Repertoire of Nonverbal Behavior: Categories, Origins, Usage, and Coding. De Gruyter Mouton.

Week 4 (1/23; 1/25): Paralinguistics

- Clark, H. H. (1996). Chapter 9 Utterances. *Using language*. Cambridge University Press.
- Clark, H. H., & Fox Tree, J. E. (2002). Using uh and um in spontaneous speaking. *Cognition*, 84(1), 73–111.
- Duncan, S. (1972). Some signals and rules for taking speaking turns in conversations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 23(2), 283–292.
- Krahmer, E., & Swerts, M. (2005). How children and adults produce and perceive uncertainty in audiovisual speech. 48, 29–53.

Unit 3: Interlocutors as Individuals – Topic paper due Friday 2/9

Week 5 (1/30; 2/1): Speaker identities

- Bucholtz, M., & Hall, K. (2004). Language and identity. *A companion to linguistic anthropology*, 1, 369-394.
 - Note: This is a dense and challenging anthropology chapter. Read it carefully and try to develop a working definition for the “big ideas,” but anticipate that this may feel overwhelming. Come to class prepared with questions.
- Jones, T., Kalbfeld, J. R., Hancock, R., & Clark, R. (2019). Testifying while black: An experimental study of court reporter accuracy in transcription of African American English. *Language*, 95(2), e216–e252.
- Lund, Holly (2019) "The Linguistic Capital of Amazon's The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel: Season 1," *Occam's Razor*: Vol. 9 , Article 5.
- Gross, T. (2015, July 23). From Upspeak To Vocal Fry: Are We “Policing” Young Women’s Voices? In *Fresh Air*. NPR. <https://www.npr.org/transcripts/425608745>

Week 6 (2/6; 2/8): Communicative barriers

- Friedner, M., & Block, P. (2017). Deaf studies meets autistic studies. *The Senses and Society*, 12(3), 282–300.

- Nicolaidis, C., Raymaker, D. M., Ashkenazy, E., McDonald, K. E., Dern, S., Baggs, A. E., Kapp, S. K., Weiner, M., & Boisclair, W. C. (2015). "Respect the way I need to communicate with you": Healthcare experiences of adults on the autism spectrum. *Autism*, 19(7), 824–831.
- Park, J. E. (2007). Co-construction of Nonnative Speaker Identity in Cross-cultural Interaction. *Applied Linguistics*, 28(3), 339–360.
 - Note: This is a dense linguistics paper. Focus on the big picture.

Unit 4: Social Distance – Topic paper due Friday 2/23

Week 7 (2/13; 2/15): Socialization as distance

- *Andresen, N. (2014). Flouting the maxims in comedy: An analysis of flouting in the comedy series *Community*. ***Note: Not a peer-reviewed publication! Just kind of a fun way of thinking.***
- Boxer, D. (1993). Social distance and speech behavior: The case of indirect complaints. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 19(2), 103–125.
- Clark, H. H. (1996). Chapter 10 Joint Commitment. *Using language*. Cambridge University Press.

Week 8 (2/20; 2/22): Language as distance

- *Cromdal, J. (2004). Building bilingual oppositions: Code-switching in children's disputes. *Language in Society*, 33(01).
- Jan, J. M. (2003). Code-switching for power wielding: Inter-gender discourse at the workplace. *Multilingual - Journal of Cross-Cultural and Interlanguage Communication*, 22(1), 41–57.
- Snow, C. E., & Uccelli, P. (2009). The Challenge of Academic Language. In D. R. Olson & N. Torrance (Eds.), *The Cambridge Handbook of Literacy* (pp. 112–133). Cambridge University Press.

Week 9 (2/27; 2/29): Conclusions in context

- Clark, H. H. (1996). Chapter 12 Layering. *Using language*. Cambridge University Press.
- Du Bois, J. W. (2007). The stance triangle. In R. Englebretson (Ed.), *Pragmatics & Beyond New Series* (Vol. 164, pp. 139–182). John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Levinson, S. C. (2006). On the human 'interactional engine'. (again!)

Final paper due Tuesday, March 5th, 2024