



Joint Faculties of Humanities and Theology

ALSM15, General Linguistics: Experimental Pragmatics, 7.5 credits

Allmän språkvetenskap: Experimentell pragmatik, 7,5 högskolepoäng
Second Cycle / Avancerad nivå

Details of approval

The syllabus was approved by The Pro Dean of First and Second Cycle Studies at The Joint Faculties of Humanities and Theology on 2026-05-25 (U 2026/212). The syllabus comes into effect 2026-06-01 and is valid from the spring semester 2027.

General information

The course is an elective component of the Master of Arts program in Language and Linguistics (HASPV). The course is also offered as a free-standing course and can be included in a first- or second-cycle degree.

Language of instruction: English

Main field of study

Language and Linguistics with specialization in General Linguistics

Specialisation

A1N, Second cycle, has only first-cycle course/s as entry requirements

Learning outcomes

On completion of the course the student shall

Knowledge and understanding

- identify and explain the difference between the semantic and pragmatic meaning of an utterance, making reference to experimental evidence,
- explain, on the basis of experimental evidence, how semantic and pragmatic meaning are understood differently by different populations (children and adults, typically-developing and neurodivergent),
- explain the theoretical and empirical state of the art of research on basic phenomena in pragmatics such as reference, presupposition, metaphor, irony, implicature and speech acts,

- explain competing theories of pragmatic language comprehension with reference to experimental and developmental evidence,

Competence and skills

- reconstruct and critically evaluate the reasoning steps involved in pragmatic theories and how these are linked to the experimental evidence,
- analyze and discuss the merits of experiments with regards to the different populations that are tested,
- explain key predictions of pragmatic theories and discuss them on the basis on data provided by the instructor,
- explain and evaluate experimental designs and their relationship to theoretical accounts on the basis of hypothetical experiments,

Judgement and approach

- demonstrate an experimental mindset by being able to identify and critically evaluate how and when experimental data supports a theoretical claim or not.

Course content

In the field of experimental pragmatics, researchers derive predictions from linguistic and philosophical accounts of language use and test them using a variety of methods from experimental psychology. This course provides an introduction to experimental pragmatics by examining the field's most important theoretical and experimental approaches.

The course will cover theories on the comprehension of various pragmatic phenomena such as presupposition, implicatures, figurative language (irony and metaphor in particular) and reference. We will discuss how different experimental methods (e.g., reaction times, truth-value judgements, eye-tracking, EEG) have been used to test these theories, as well as how different populations (e.g., adults, children, typically-developing and neurodivergent populations) have been in focus.

By the end of the course, students will be acquainted with the most important theories and experimental findings in the field, as well as have developed the skills to critically evaluate how experiments are used to support and oppose theoretical claims. In a final oral exam, students will be shown novel experimental pragmatic data as well as hypothetical experimental designs that they will be expected to discuss and critically evaluate on the basis of the content of the course.

Course design

The teaching consists of lectures.

Assessment

The assessment is based on three written in-class assignments (3 credits) and on an oral examination (4.5 credits).

The examiner, in consultation with Disability Support Services, may deviate from the regular form of examination in order to provide a permanently disabled student with a form of examination equivalent to that of a student without a disability.

Grades

Grading scale includes the grades: Fail, Pass, Pass with distinction
The written in-class assignments are graded with Fail or Pass.

In order to get a Pass grade, students must receive at least that grade on all parts of the examination. In order to get the grade Pass with distinction, students must additionally receive Pass with distinction on the oral examination.

Entry requirements

90 credits, of which at least 60 credits are from within a language discipline or linguistics (general linguistics or phonetics), and English 6/English B from Swedish upper secondary school, or the equivalent.

Further information

- The course is offered at the Centre for Languages and Literature, Lund University.
- The credits allocated for course content that in whole or in part is commensurate with another course can only be credited once for a degree.
- For further details see the current registration information and other relevant documentation.