1 Background

Pragmatics is the study of the ways we enrich the conventionalized meanings of the things we say and hear into their fuller intended meanings. In class, we'll focus on the principles that govern this enrichment process, with special emphasis on the extent to which it is systematic and universal.

2 Group task

Work through section 5. Each example is accompanied by some questions. Answer those as a group. There's no rush to get through them. You can pick which ones you want to start with.

3 Goals

• Get better acquainted with pragmatic data.
• Begin thinking about pragmatic enrichment.
• See if we can develop generalizations that get at our implicit knowledge of pragmatics.

4 Final products

• Each group turns in a completed worksheet with all the group member's names at the top.
• We will go around the room to hear about what the groups discovered. So you should think about what your group will present, and you might designate a spokesperson.

5 Examples

Two friends are having a culinary adventure:

A: Have you made fondue in this pot yet?
B: Not chocolate fondue.

i. Does B’s answer entail (in our semantic sense) that B has made fondue in the pot?

ii. Do you regard B’s answer as cooperative?
John and Mary have recently started going together. Valentino is Mary’s ex-boyfriend. One evening, John asks Mary, “Have you seen Valentino this week?” Mary answers, “Valentino’s been sick with mononucleosis for the past two weeks.” Valentino has in fact been sick with mononucleosis for the past two weeks, but it is also the case that Mary had a date with Valentino the night before. (From Speaking of Crime)

i. What is your guess about what Mary intended to communicate with her answer?

ii. Did Mary lie?

Source: The detective show Monk, ‘Mr. Monk goes to the Carnival’

Context: The subject is whether Mr. Monk, who earlier had a nervous breakdown, is ready to be put back on the police force. Stottlemeyer is Monk’s friend and former captain.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commission member</th>
<th>Mr. Monk ready to be put back on the force?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stottlemeyer</td>
<td>Mr. Monk has excellent instincts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commission member</td>
<td>Yes, but is he ready to be reinstated?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stottlemeyer</td>
<td>He is an excellent investigator.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commission member</td>
<td>Captain, please…</td>
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</tbody>
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i. What is Stottlemeyer’s strategy here? How is he hoping to be understood?
**Source:** May 2004 Senate hearing

**Senator Jack Reed (D-RI)** General Sanchez, today's USA Today, sir, reported that you ordered or approved the use of sleep deprivation, intimidation by guard dogs, excessive noise and inducing fear as an interrogation method for a prisoner in Abu Ghraib prison. Is that correct?

**General Sanchez** Sir, that may be correct that it's in a news article, but I never approved any of those measures to be used within CJTF-7 at any time in the last year.

i. Note the final *within* clause of Sanchez's reply. What does it contribute to the overall message he ends up sending?

ii. What's a good, or likely, follow-up question for Senator Reed to ask?

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During the 2000 presidential race (before U.S. politicians were more or less free to admit to past marijuana use), the *Dallas Morning News* asked candidate George Bush how he would answer the questions about drug use on the application for getting a high-level government security clearance. Bush replied, “As I understand it, the current form asks the question, ‘Did somebody use drugs within the last seven years?’, and I will be glad to answer that question, and the answer is ‘No’.”

i. What does this answer suggest about Bush's history of drug use?

ii. What's a good, or likely, follow-up question?
Bart and Lisa Simpson have both taken the same test at school. It is well-known that Lisa does better in school than Bart.

Marge: Did Lisa pass the test?
Teacher: Well, BART passed. You do the math!

i. What is your guess about what the teacher intended to communicate?

ii. What facts about the context and the utterance conspire to communicate this?

Source: Car Talk (March 31, 2002)

Example: One of the hosts read the following joke, purportedly taken from an evaluation sheet filled in by students at the end of a college course:

Q: “How would you describe the quality of the textbook?”
A: “Very high. It is printed on the very best paper and beautifully bound.”

i. Is this the sort of information that the evaluation sheet was asking for?

ii. What is your guess about what the student intended to communicate with his answer?