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| Code of course: **BMI-LOTD-414E.04** |
| Title of course: **Language and Context Sensitivity** |
| Lecturer: **Zsófia Zvolenszky** |
| **General aim of the course:**  This is an accelerated introduction to philosophy of language that focuses on a special topic: the interaction of linguistic meaning and contexts of speech or though, and how such contexts can affect what speakers convey via language.  **Prerequisites:**  – Students should be prepared to read and discuss materials in English. The language of instruction for the course is English.  – This is an accelerated introductory course intended for students with some familiarity with contemporary Anglo-American analytic philosophy, its approach, tools, readings. Students are expected to have taken at least one course in: logic, philosophy of language, metaphysics, epistemology, philosophy of mind.  – If you haven’t yet taken a course in one of the above areas: the instructor’s permission is required for taking this course.  **Content of the course:**  People rely on shared linguistic meanings for their expressions to have, in some ways, a measure of stability across conversational contexts. Meanwhile, some expressions – indexicals like ‘I’, ‘here’, demonstratives like ‘that’, ‘you’, ‘they’ – clearly rely for their meaning on contexts (who the speaker, place of utterance, and so on, are). Other expressions still do this sort of relying, but do so less obviously: ‘tall’ is a gradable adjective that can invoke radically different height ranges if the subject discussed is first-graders than if it is basketball players. In this course we read an introductory textbook on the topic, by Cappelen and Dever, *Context and Communication*, to help us understand and connect some classic texts about context-sensitivity phenomena by philosophers of language as well as linguists.  **Grading criteria, specific requirements:**  – 30–65 pages of reading each week  – posting questions/comments at the course discussion forum each week  – class participation  – writing a seminar paper or several shorter response papers  – once during the semester, acting as MC (Master of Ceremonies) (this involves briefly introducing the readings as well as students’ questions and comments)  In the **seminar paper or response papers**, you should focus on critical assessment, don’t just summarize the readings. Instead, select an argument, claim, distinction or definition that you consider interesting and critique it. Your 3 response papers should be on distinct readings, but beyond that you are free to choose as the theme for your response paper any prior reading (textbook section or essay).  Two useful sites about writing response papers:  http://www.davidhildebrand.org/uploads/3/2/1/2/32124749/hildebrand\_how\_to\_write\_a\_short\_critical\_paper.pdf  http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html (this one is intended for a longer piece than ours).  It’s a good idea to get started early on the response papers, so you can get feedback based on which you can make your next response paper even better. For this reason, you can only hand in one response paper at a time, and by mid-semester you should hand in at least two of your response papers.  Regular preparation, attendance and participation are required. To receive a grade, you must attend at least 7 seminars (including the one when you are M.C.-ing).  **Required readings, materials include:**   * We’ll use as textbook the following: Herman Cappelen and Josh Dever: *Context and Communication* (2016 OUP). We’ll additionally read foundational papers by, among others, David Beaver, H. P. Grice, David Beaver, Saul Kripke, Rae Langton, David Lewis, Jennifer Saul, Robert Stalnaker.   If you have read through the syllabus and have questions, send the instructor an email at [zvolenszky@nyu.edu](mailto:zvolenszky@nyu.edu) |