UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

Course Information

Course Title: Questions: Meaning, use, learning
Course Number: LING449E
Term: Fall 2020
Credits: 3
Course Dates: From Aug 31, 2020 – Dec 14, 2020
Course Times: MW 12:00pm - 1:15pm

Instructor: Yu'an Yang
Email: yuanyang@umd.edu
Office Hours: W 2pm or by appointment
Online, Synchronous

Course Description

We constantly ask and answer questions. But have you thought about why you ask certain questions in certain contexts, what effects they have, and how you learned these questions? In this class, we will explore the meaning and use of different types of questions, as well as explore how children acquire questions. Through our discussions of the syntax, semantics and pragmatics of questions, hopefully you will start paying attention to the questions you ask in your daily life. Perhaps years from now, when you think someone asks a question that seems out of place, you'll be able to recognize what went wrong in the interaction.

Course Objectives

After successfully completing this course you should be able to demonstrate your ability to:

- Read and understand original scientific articles, where you need to identify the research questions, methods, conclusions, and most importantly, the chain of reasoning provided by the author(s);

- Use linguistic examples to make an argument, including explaining others' argument using your own examples and finding counterexamples to argue against someone's claim.

- Clearly articulate linguistic arguments and the chain of reasoning in writing.

Required Resources

- Course Website: elms.umd.edu

- All reading materials will be posted on ELMS; you do not need to buy a textbook.

Course Structure

This course has two live sessions each week via zoom that are mandatory. You do not have to be in a specific location to participate; however, you must have access to a full-screen computer or tablet for with a stable internet connection for each live session. (If you use a tablet for the live session, you must be comfortable typing responses on it.) The online nature of this class will push you to take an active

role in the learning process. You will do this by engaging and collaborating with other students and the instructor on a regular basis both, in live sessions, as well as through group work and activities.

Responsibilities and Expectations

Readings and responses:

At least one reading – a journal article or a book chapter – will be assigned before each class. As mentioned above, all readings will be made available electronically. Readings should be done before the day indicated on the class schedule and you should come to class prepared to discuss what you read. Some of the readings are long and/or difficult. These should not be put off until the last minute. Each week, you are expected to submit a prep exercise on Mondays (6am) and a post-class reflection on Fridays (6am).

- Prep Exercises (usually on Mondays at 6am; specific due dates may vary):

  - Walk-me-throughs:

    Pick a paper in the list of readings for the week, and pick **one** numbered example from the reading and walk us through what the author is trying to argue in the section of the paper with the example. Bonus points will be given to students who can additionally find a similar example from real life and explain the argument with their own example, or find a counterexample to the claim made by the author. Detailed instructions will be sent out separately.

    This exercise is designed to help you read linguistic papers, which usually comes with a lot of examples. For most papers, understanding what these examples are there for is important to understanding the key arguments of a paper. Additionally, this exercise may help you develop the skill of making an argument with examples. By learning how others use examples, you will be able to use them effectively in your own projects.

  - Insightful questions:

    For **each reading**, you are asked to post **one** insightful question and your tentative answer on the discussion board. Your answer does not need to be correct at this point, but needs to reflect your thought processes. An example and detailed instructions will be sent out separately.

- Post-class reflections (Fridays at 6am):

  - After our discussions of a paper, you are also asked to comment on your own answer; do you think you were right or wrong, or if you still have questions, what are they? Your reflection should be kept short (1-3 paragraphs) but informative.

    This exercise is for you to review what we discussed in class and reflect on your own thought process when reading the paper. An example and detailed instructions will be sent out separately.

Homework
- There will be 2-3 homework assignments this semester. In these assignments, you will be asked to explain certain assumptions and conclusions made by the authors, apply techniques discussed in the paper, etc. These assignments are there to make sure your understanding, and help it to stick clearly in your memory.

Participation & Engagement

This class will be almost entirely discussion based. For this reason, you are expected to actively participate. Spend time thinking about the readings and come to class prepared to share your thoughts. This not only increases your own understanding of the material and the likelihood that you'll retain it, it benefits your classmates too. It might be that they had the same question as you but didn't want to ask or that they hadn't thought of the reading from your perspective. Your participation also benefits me in being able to tailor the course material. Don't hesitate to speak up when you find something unclear, when you see a connection between a particular topic and other material we've discussed in this course, and when you are unconvinced by the logic of an argument or have a different argument that you would like to propose. Please follow the guidelines of communicating with peers included in this syllabus in all discussions.

- During live sessions, come prepared to share your thoughts, and turn on your camera as much as you can so your fellow students and I can see your reactions to our discussions.

- We will use discussion boards on ELMS for offline discussion. Please read and respond to other students' posts and questions. Not only will you learn from each other, actively participating in online discussions will help us build a community.

- "Quirky Questions":

    Each week, you are asked to post a conversation containing a question you heard in life/TV shows/YouTube clips on the discussion board under the thread "Quirky Questions". For each post, you must describe the contexts of the conversation, the question itself and if exists, the addressee's response (you can either transcribe the conversation, send out a link, or upload a clip), and a few sentences explaining why this question stands out for you (see the discussion thread "quirky questions" for more details). We will read from this thread at the beginning of each class and share our thoughts.

    This exercise is to help you contextualize linguistics in your everyday life, as well as practice describing the contexts and effects of questions. One cool feature of linguistics is, you don't have to sit in a lab to do linguistic research. As we will talk about a variety of questions, your example might be the focus our discussion at some point. Also, they might become ideas for your final projects; so be on the lookout!

    You are expected to submit a post before the Monday class every week starting Sep 9 (we do not have classes that Monday), but you have 5 free weeks—you can choose any 5 week to not submit any posts.

Paper Presentation (group)
- In a team of two, choose a paper in the syllabus marked by * to present. Detailed instructions will be sent out separately.

- Before presenting, you need to schedule an appointment with the instructor to discuss the paper.

Final Project (group/individual)
The final paper is a chance to apply what you've learned during the semester to a specific problem that you find particularly interesting. You can work alone on the project, or work with one other member of the class. To complete the project, you need to:
- Pick a topic and make an appointment with me to talk about it

Some possible topics include:

- o A critical review of the literature on a particular topic discussed in class (must go beyond the paper discussed in class)

- o An in-depth discussion of a phenomenon related to questions (e.g. tag questions in English, question particles in some other languages)

- o A corpus investigation of how a certain type of question is used in conversations (e.g. how parents ask questions when they talk to their children)

Each topic has their pros and cons; it really depend on what you prefer/are most excited about. If you have other ideas for a final project not listed above, please schedule an appointment with me!

- ● Write a 1-page proposal (Due Oct 23)

Describe your research question and what you have found in the literature.

- ● Give a 15-minute presentation in class (Dec 7&9)

Presentations will consist of a description of your research question, your working hypotheses, the methods used to test your hypotheses, and your initial results. If you choose to do a review project, you must present the main arguments and evidence of each paper you reviewed and provide a critical evaluation of the arguments.

This is not meant to be stressful, take it as an opportunity to share your work with others!

- ● Write a short paper (5 pages, single-spaced) reporting your findings (Dec 20 at 1am).

More details and guidelines for each step will be posted on ELMS.

Grading Structure

Assignment	Percentage %
Reading and responses	30%
Homework	15%
Participation/Engagement	15% - **Live sessions 5%** - **Discussion board 5%** - **Quirky questions 5%**
Team Presentation	10%
Final project	30%: - **proposal 5%,** - **presentation 10%,** - **paper 15%**
Total	100%

Tips for Success in an Online Course

1. **Participate.** Discussions and group work are a critical part of the course. You can learn a great deal from discussing ideas and perspectives with your peers and professor. Participation can also help you articulate your thoughts and develop critical thinking skills.
2. **Manage your time.** Make time for your online learning and participation in discussions each week. Give yourself plenty of time to complete assignments including extra time to handle any technology related problems.
3. **Login regularly.** Log in to ELMS-Canvas several times a week to view announcements, discussion posts and replies to your posts. You may need to log in multiple times a day when group submissions are due.
4. **Do not fall behind.** This class moves at a quick pace and each week builds on the previous. It will be hard to keep up with the course content if you fall behind in the pre-work or post-work.
5. **Use ELMS-Canvas notification settings.** Canvas ELMS-Canvas can ensure you receive timely notifications in your email or via text. Be sure to enable announcements to be sent instantly or daily.
6. **Ask for help if needed.** If you need help with ELMS-Canvas or other technology, IT Support. If you are struggling with a course concept, reach out to me, and your classmates, for support.

Campus Policies

It is our shared responsibility to know and abide by the University of Maryland's policies that relate to all courses, which include topics like:

- Academic integrity
- Student and instructor conduct
- Accessibility and accommodations
- Attendance and excused absences
- Grades and appeals
- Copyright and intellectual property

Please visit www.ugst.umd.edu/courserelatedpolicies.html for the Office of Undergraduate Studies' full list of campus-wide policies and follow up with me if you have questions.

Course-Specific Policies

Academic Integrity
Note to you the instructor: In this course, we will collect written assignments using Turnitin's "Originality Checker." This tool scans student submission against online content and previously-submitted papers, alerts students to some writing errors (e.g., incorrect or insufficient citations) so that they can improve their writing, and alerts faculty to submissions that may contain text matching another source. For guidance on academic integrity and how to use Turnitin in your course, visit the TLTC's page on Academic Integrity & Technology. If you decide to use Turnitin, below is some sample syllabus language you can include:

For this course, some of your assignments will be collected via Turnitin on our course ELMS page. I have chosen to use this tool because it can help you improve your scholarly writing and help me verify the integrity of student work. For information about Turnitin, how it works, and the feedback reports you may have access to, visit Turnitin Originality Checker for Students

Names/Pronouns and Self-Identifications

The University of Maryland recognizes the importance of a diverse student body, and we are committed to fostering inclusive and equitable classroom environments. I invite you, if you wish, to tell us how you want to be referred to both in terms of your name and your pronouns (he/him, she/her, they/them, etc.). The pronouns someone indicates are not necessarily indicative of their gender identity. Visit trans.umd.edu to learn more.

Additionally, how you identify in terms of your gender, race, class, sexuality, religion, and dis/ability, among all aspects of your identity, is your choice whether to disclose (e.g., should it come up in classroom conversation about our experiences and perspectives) and should be self-identified, not presumed or imposed. I will do my best to address and refer to all students accordingly, and I ask you to do the same for all of your fellow Terps.

Communication with Instructor:

Email: If you need to reach out and communicate with me, please email me at yuanyang@umd.edu. Please DO NOT email me with questions that are easily found in the syllabus or on ELMS (i.e. When is this assignment due? How much is it worth? etc.) but please DO reach out about personal, academic, and intellectual concerns/questions.
While I will do my best to respond to emails within 24 hours, you will more likely receive email responses from me on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 2:00pm-5:00pm EST

ELMS: I will send IMPORTANT announcements via ELMS messaging. You must make sure that your email & announcement notifications (including changes in assignments and/or due dates) are enabled in ELMS so you do not miss any messages. You are responsible for checking your email and Canvas/ELMS inbox with regular frequency.

Communication with Peers:

With a diversity of perspectives and experience, we may find ourselves in disagreement and/or debate with one another. As such, it is important that we agree to conduct ourselves in a professional manner and that we work together to foster and preserve a virtual classroom environment in which we can respectfully discuss and deliberate controversial questions.

I encourage you to confidently exercise your right to free speech—bearing in mind, of course, that you will be expected to craft and defend arguments that support your position. Keep in mind, that free speech has its limit and this course is NOT the space for hate speech, harassment, and derogatory language. I will make every reasonable attempt to create an atmosphere in which each student feels

comfortable voicing their argument without fear of being personally attacked, mocked, demeaned, or devalued.

Any behavior (including harassment, sexual harassment, and racially and/or culturally derogatory language) that threatens this atmosphere will not be tolerated. Please alert me immediately if you feel threatened, dismissed, or silenced at any point during our semester together and/or if your engagement in discussion has been in some way hindered by the learning environment.

Academic Integrity

The University's **Code of Academic Integrity** is designed to ensure that the principles of academic honesty and integrity are upheld. In accordance with this code, the Smith School does not tolerate academic dishonesty. Please ensure that you fully understand this code and its implications because all acts of academic dishonesty will be dealt with in accordance with the provisions of this code. All students are expected to adhere to this Code. It is your responsibility to read it and know what it says, so you can start your professional life on the right path. **As future professionals, your commitment to high ethical standards and honesty begins with your time at the Smith School.**

It is important to note that course assistance websites, such as CourseHero, are not permitted sources, unless the instructor explicitly gives permission for you to use one of these sites. Material taken or copied from these sites can be deemed unauthorized material and a violation of academic integrity. These sites offer information that might not be accurate and that shortcut the learning process, particularly the critical thinking steps necessary for college-level assignments.

Additionally, it is understandable that students may use a variety of online or virtual forums for course-wide discussion (e.g., GroupME or WeChat). Collaboration in this way regarding concepts discussed in this course is permissible. For prep exercises and homework, if you benefitted from discussion with fellow students, please acknowledge their contribution at the beginning of the exercise/homeowrk. However, collaboration on graded assignments is strictly prohibited unless otherwise stated. Examples of prohibited collaboration include: asking classmates for answers on quizzes or exams, asking for access codes to clicker polls, etc.

Finally, on each assignment you must write out and sign the following pledge:

"I pledge on my honor that I have not given or received any unauthorized assistance on this exam/assignment."

Please visit the **Office of Undergraduate Studies' full list of campus-wide policies** and follow up with me if you have questions.

To help you avoid unintentional violations, *the following table* lists levels of collaboration that are acceptable for each type of assignment. If you ever feel pressured to comply with someone else's academic integrity violation, please reach out to me straight away. Also, *if you are ever unclear* about acceptable levels of collaboration, *please ask*!

The following table lists levels of collaboration that are acceptable for each type of graded exercise. See each CANVAS-ELMS page for academic integrity expectations for each individual assignment. If you are ever unsure about acceptable levels of collaboration, please ask!

	OPEN NOTES	USE BOOK	SEARCH ONLINE	ASK FRIENDS	WORK IN GROUPS
Prep Exercises	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
Homework	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
Paper Presentation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Final Project	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Grades

All assessment scores will be posted on the course ELMS page. If you would like to review any of your grades or have questions about how something was scored, please email me to schedule a time for us to meet and discuss.

- For prep exercises, **late submission will not be accepted** for credit. The purpose of the prep exercises is to prepare you for our discussions, which might feature your thoughtful questions. Late submission will defeat this purpose. 3 submissions that have the lowest scores will be dropped in the final grade calculation.

- For "Quirky questions", you are asked to submit a question every week before Monday's class. You have **5 free weeks**—you can choose 5 weeks to not submit any posts, in case you cannot find anything interesting that week.

- For homework assignments, **late work may be submitted up to 48 hours late with a 50% penalty**; after 48 hours it will not be accepted for credit. Any assignment turned in more than 15 minutes after the submission deadline will be considered late. Exceptions to this policy may be made in special circumstances, but **you have to inform me before the deadline.**

I am happy to discuss any of your grades with you, and if I have made a mistake I will immediately correct it. Any formal grade disputes must be submitted in writing and within one week of receiving the grade.

Final letter grades are assigned based on the percentage of total assessment points earned. To be fair to everyone I have to establish clear standards and apply them consistently, so please understand that being close to a cutoff is not the same as making the cut (89.99 ≠ 90.00). It would be unethical to make exceptions for some and not others. The following table demonstrates how final letter grades will be assigned:

Final Grade Cutoffs									
+	97.00%	+	87.00%	+	77.00%	+	67.00%	+	
A	94.00%	B	84.00%	C	74.00%	D	64.00%	F	<60.0%
-	90.00%	-	80.00%	-	70.00%	-	60.00%	-	

Course Outline

Prep exercises and HWs are due Mondays 1am of the week; Reflections are due Fridays 1am of the week; Readings for group presentation are marked by *.

Unit	Week #		Topic	Reading	Assignments
Intro	1	31-Aug	Overview	No reading	
Meaning	1	2-Sep	Why questions?	Portner (2005) Chap 1, Dayal (2015) Chap 1.1	
	2	9-Sep	What are questions?	Dayal (2015) Chap 1.1, Krifka (2012) Section 1-2	Prep ex; reflection
	3	14-Sep	Composing questions	Dayal 2.1.1	Prep ex; reflection
	3	16-Sep	Hamblin semantics	Dayal 2.1.1	
	4	21-Sep	Karttunen question semantics	Dayal 2.1.2; optional: section 5.1 of Ciardelli, Groenendijk, and Roelofsen (2015)	HW1
	4	23-Sep	Partition semantics + review		
Use	5	28-Sep	How should we think about conversations?	Lewis (1979), Stalnaker (1978)	Prep ex; reflection
	5	30-Sep			
	6	5-Oct	Question in conversation	Roberts (1996/2012)	Prep ex; reflection
	6	7-Oct			
	7	12-Oct	Speaker meaning	Grice* (1975)	Prep ex; reflection
	7	14-Oct	Speech Act theory	Searle* (1965), Searle (1975), Green* (2016)	
	8	19-Oct	Taking stock: Conversational scoreboard	Rudin (2018) Section 1.2, optional: Farkas and Bruce (2010)	Prep ex; reflection

	8	21-Oct	The Table model		
Interim summary	9	**26-Oct**	How do we use questions?	**Stiver*(2010)**	**HW2 due Oct 19;**
	9	**28-Oct**	Review + project guidelines	**No reading**	**Proposal due Oct 23**
Quirky Questions	10	**2-Nov**	"It's raining?"	**Joeng* (2018), Gunlogson* (2008), Malamud and Stephenson* (2015)**	
	10	**4-Nov**	"It's raining?"		**Prep ex; reflection**
	11	**9-Nov**	"Isn't it raining?"	**Romero and Han* (2004); a paper by Dan (tbd)**	**Prep ex; reflection**
	11	**11-Nov**	Guest lecturer: Dan Goodhue		
	12	**16-Nov**	Question particles in other languages	**Davis & Hara* (2014), Theiler*(2020), Yang (2020)**	
	12	18-Nov	Question particles in other languages		**Prep ex; reflection**
Learning	13	**23-Nov**	What do children know about questions? Guest lecturer: Mina Hirzel	**Tbd**	**Prep ex; reflection**
	14	**30-Nov**	How do parents talk to children?	**Shatz* (1978, 1979), Yu, Bonawitz, Shafto* (2019);**	**Prep ex; reflection**
		2-Dec	Intonation and question	**Geffen & Mintz* (2017)**	
	15	**7-Dec**	Questions and turn-taking + review	**Hilbrink et al.* (2015)**	**No HW**
	15	9-Dec	**Student presentation**		**Presentations**
	16	**14-Dec**	**Student presentation**		**Final paper due (Dec 20 at 1am)**

Note: This is a tentative schedule, and subject to change as necessary – monitor the course ELMS page for current deadlines.

Resources & Accommodations

Accessibility and Disability Services
The University of Maryland is committed to creating and maintaining a welcoming and inclusive educational, working, and living environment for people of all abilities. The University of Maryland is

also committed to the principle that no qualified individual with a disability shall, on the basis of disability, be excluded from participation in or be denied the benefits of the services, programs, or activities of the University, or be subjected to discrimination. The **Accessibility & Disability Service (ADS)** provides reasonable accommodations to qualified individuals to provide equal access to services, programs and activities. ADS cannot assist retroactively, so it is generally best to request accommodations several weeks before the semester begins or as soon as a disability becomes known. Any student who needs accommodations should contact me as soon as possible so that I have sufficient time to make arrangements.

For assistance in obtaining an accommodation, contact Accessibility and Disability Service at 301-314-7682, or email them at **adsfrontdesk@umd.edu**. Information about **sharing your accommodations with instructors**, **note taking assistance** and more is available from the **Counseling Center**.

Student Resources and Services
Taking personal responsibility for you own learning means acknowledging when your performance does not match your goals and doing something about it. I hope you will come talk to me so that I can help you find the right approach to success in this course, and I encourage you to visit **UMD's Student Academic Support Services website** to learn more about the wide range of campus resources available to you.

In particular, everyone can use some help sharpen their communication skills (and improving their grade) by visiting **UMD's Writing Center** and schedule an appointment with the campus Writing Center.

You should also know there are a wide range of resources to support you with whatever you might need (**UMD's Student Resources and Services website** may help). If you feel it would be helpful to have someone to talk to, visit **UMD's Counseling Center** or **one of the many other mental health resources on campus**.

Basic Needs Security
If you have difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or lack a safe and stable place to live, please visit **UMD's Division of Student Affairs website** for information about resources the campus offers you and let me know if I can help in any way.

Technology Policy
Please refrain from using cellphones, laptops, and other electronic devices during class sessions unless we have designated such use as part of a class exercise.

Netiquette Policy [Optional]
Netiquette is the social code of online classes. Students share a responsibility for the course's learning environment. Creating a cohesive online learning community requires learners to support and assist each other. To craft an open and interactive online learning environment, communication has to be conducted in a professional and courteous manner at all times, guided by common sense, collegiality and basic rules of etiquette.

Participation
- Given the interactive style of this class, attendance will be crucial to note-taking and thus your performance in this class. Attendance is particularly important also because class discussion will be a critical component for your learning.

- Each student is expected to make substantive contributions to the learning experience, and attendance is expected for every session.

- Students with a legitimate reason to miss a live session should communicate in advance with the instructor, except in the case of an emergency.

- Students who miss a live session are responsible for learning what they miss from that session.

- Additionally, students must complete all readings and assignments in a timely manner in order to fully participate in class.

Course Evaluation

Please submit a course evaluation through CourseEvalUM in order to help faculty and administrators improve teaching and learning at Maryland. All information submitted to CourseEvalUM is confidential. Campus will notify you when CourseEvalUM is open for you to complete your evaluations for fall semester courses. Please go directly to the **Course Eval UM website** to complete your evaluations. By completing all of your evaluations each semester, you will have the privilege of accessing through Testudo, the evaluation reports for the thousands of courses for which 70% or more students submitted their evaluations.

Copyright Notice

Course materials are copyrighted and may not be reproduced for anything other than personal use without written permission.

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