



LANGUAGE  
SCIENCE  
DEPARTMENT  
COLLOQUIUM



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## ***"VERBAL IRONY, PRETENSE, AND THE COMMON GROUND***

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We propose that several types of verbal irony are forms of linguistic countersignaling, where agents engage in pretense about the state of the world or the perspective they hold in order to communicate about the common ground. We formalize this intuition using the Rational Speech Acts framework, by introducing a mechanism for pretense and a speaker whose goal is to be informative about the state of the common ground. In so doing, we resolve a number of the challenges facing Grice's original account for verbal irony, and provide a novel account of the social function of irony. We show that our model extends to several types of non-declarative content in a modular way.

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