Linguistics 466—Semantics
Spring 2017, Mon/Wed 2:00–3:15pm, MER 347

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Office hours Thu 10am–12pm and by appointment

Course description An introduction to the study of meaning in natural language. We will develop a system for representing the meaning of linguistic expressions based on the principle of compositionality, which allows us to describe in a precise way how the meanings of complex expressions (e.g., sentences) are built up from the meanings of simpler expressions (e.g., words). We will discuss the place of semantics in linguistic theory, with special attention to the interactions of semantics with both syntax and pragmatics. Specific topics and tools to be covered include patterns of inference, propositional and predicate logic, the lambda calculus, the grammar of quantification, and intensionality.

Course textbook Irene Heim and Angelika Kratzer, Semantics in Generative Grammar, Blackwell, 1998 (UWM Library copy on reserve); supplementary readings to be distributed in class

Course outline

1. Basic issues and tools for doing semantics (weeks 1–2): Propositions vs. utterances vs. sentences, truth conditions, inferences, propositional and predicate logic, set theory, models
2. Building a grammar (weeks 3–13): Heim and Kratzer’s (1998) simple but powerful grammar for a fragment of English, built using the tools described above, situated within a generative syntax
3. Beyond the H&K grammar (week 14): an overview of topics addressed in Linguistics 566, as time permits

Course requirements, grade component weighting, credit hour policy

• Regular attendance and participation in discussion (10% of total grade, undergrad and grad)
• Weekly problem sets: 12 total, due dates noted on reverse; lowest problem set grade dropped (75% undergrad, 65% grad)
• Short squib (undergrad) or research paper (grad), due May 9 (15% undergrad, 25% grad)
• There is no final exam in this course.
• Credit hour policy: this 3-credit course meets for 2.5 hours per week during the semester; students are expected to put in approximately 7.5 hours of additional work per week studying and working on assignments in order to meet the learning goals of the course (144 hours total)

Squib guidelines A short report on any phenomenon of semantic interest. The topic may be an extension of something that we cover in the course or something that you come up with completely on your own. You must provide a thorough description of the phenomenon, state why it is semantically interesting, and attempt an analysis of what is going on. 5–10 pages, due May 10 (final class period).

⇒ Graduate students: for graduate credit, things should be developed in more detail (15–20 pp.)

Course policies

• You are encouraged to collaborate with classmates on the problem sets; however, THE WORK YOU TURN IN MUST BE YOUR OWN. That is, while you may discuss the problems with others in the class, you must write up your answers individually. (For information on plagiarism, see http://guides.library.uwm.edu/noplagiarism.)
• Late work will not be accepted for credit, barring a legitimate (e.g., medical) documented excuse.
• For university policies regarding students with disabilities, religious observances, academic misconduct, complaint procedures, etc., see http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/SyllabusLinks.pdf
Week-by-week overview

1. **Jan 23–25**
   Propositions, truth conditions, inferences, propositional and predicate logic

2. **Jan 30–Feb 1**
   Basics of the system (relevant H&K chapters: 1 and 2)
   *Problem set 1 due Mon, Jan 30*

3. **Feb 6–8**
   Modification, definite descriptions (relevant H&K chapters: 3 and 4)
   *Problem set 2 due Mon, Feb 6*

4. **Feb 13–15**
   Variable binding (relevant H&K chapter: 5)
   *Problem set 3 due Mon, Feb 13*

5. **Feb 20–22**
   Limitations of types e and ⟨e, t⟩ (relevant H&K sections: 6.1–6.2)
   *Problem set 4 due Mon, Feb 20*

6. **Feb 27–Mar 1**
   Natural-language quantification (H&K remainder of ch. 6, excerpt from von Fintel 1994)
   *Problem set 5 due Mon, Feb 27*

7. **Mar 6–8**
   Quantifiers in the grammar (relevant H&K chapter: 7)
   *Problem set 6 due Mon, Mar 6*

8. **Mar 13–15**
   Quantifier raising (H&K chapter 7, cont.)
   *Problem set 7 due Mon, Mar 13*
   **Mar 20–22:** NO CLASS (SPRING BREAK)

9. **Mar 27–29**
   Constraints on quantifier movement (relevant H&K chapter: 8)

10. **Apr 3–5**
    Pronouns and ellipsis (relevant H&K chapter: 9)
    *Problem set 8 due Mon, Apr 3*

11. **Apr 10–12**
    E-type anaphora (relevant H&K chapter: 11)
    *Problem set 9 due Mon, Apr 10*

12. **Apr 17–19**
    Binding (relevant H&K chapter: 10)
    *Problem set 10 due Mon, Apr 17*

13. **Apr 24–26**
    Intensionality (relevant H&K chapter: 12)
    *Problem set 11 due Mon, Apr 24*

14. **May 1–3**
    Indefinites; preview of 566
    *Problem set 12 due Mon, May 1*

15. **May 8–10**
    Wrapping up; squib presentations
    *Squibs/papers due Wed, May 10*