Linguistics 466—Semantics  
Spring 2019, Mon/Wed 2:00–3:15pm, MER 211

Instructor  Nicholas Fleisher  
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Office hours  Thu 10am–12pm and by appointment (Johnston Hall 127)

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.

(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
a fragment of English, built using the tools described above, situated within a generative syntax
3. Beyond the H&K grammar (weeks 13–14): further topics, including a preview of topics addressed  
in Linguistics 566, as time permits

Course expectations, grade component weighting, credit hour policy
• Regular attendance and participation in discussion (ungraded, but success unlikely without att-  
tendance)
• Weekly problem sets: 10 total, due dates noted on reverse; lowest problem set grade dropped  
  (75% undergrad, 65% grad)
• Short squib (undergrad) or research paper (grad), due May 8 (25% undergrad, 35% 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 8 (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](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 accommodations for disabilities, religious observances, academic  
  misconduct, complaint procedures, and more, see [http://uwm.edu/secu/syllabus-links/](http://uwm.edu/secu/syllabus-links/).
Week-by-week overview

1. **Jan 23**
   Propositions, truth conditions, inferences

2. **Jan 28–30**
   Propositional logic and predicate logic

3. **Feb 4–6**
   Basics of the H&K system (H&K ch. 1 and 2)
   *Problem set 1 due Mon, Feb 4*

4. **Feb 11–13**
   Modification, definite descriptions (H&K ch. 3 and 4)
   *Problem set 2 due Mon, Feb 11*

5. **Feb 18–20**
   Variable binding (H&K ch. 5)
   *Problem set 3 due Mon, Feb 18*

6. **Feb 25–27**
   Natural-language quantification (H&K ch. 6, excerpt from von Fintel 1994)
   *Problem set 4 due Mon, Feb 25*

7. **Mar 4–6**
   Quantifiers in the grammar; quantifier raising (H&K ch. 7)
   *Problem set 5 due Mon, Mar 4*

8. **Mar 11–13**
   Constraints on quantifier movement (H&K ch. 8)
   *Problem set 6 due Mon, Mar 11*

   **Mar 18–20**: NO CLASS (SPRING BREAK)

9. **Mar 25–27**
   Pronouns and ellipsis (H&K ch. 9)

10. **Apr 1–3**
    E-type anaphora (H&K ch. 11)
    *Problem set 7 due Mon, Apr 1*

11. **Apr 8–10**
    Binding (H&K ch. 10, Büring 2005)
    *Problem set 8 due Mon, Apr 8*

12. **Apr 15–17**
    Intensionality (H&K ch. 12)
    *Problem set 9 due Mon, Apr 15*

13. **Apr 22–24**
    Questions: overview (selections from Dayal 2016)
    *Problem set 10 due Mon, Apr 22*

14. **Apr 29–May 1**
    Questions, cont.

15. **May 6–8**
    Wrapping up; squib presentations
    *Squibs/papers due Wed, May 8*