

LING/PHIL 519 Formal Semantics of Natural Language

Fall 2009, TuTh 3:30-4:45pm

Instructor Information

Dr. Kimiko Nakanishi
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Office hours: TuTh 2-3pm or by appointment

Course Webpage

<http://blackboard.ucalgary.ca/>

Prerequisites

You must have achieved a grade of at least C- in Philosophy 279 or 377 (or consent of the Department). Philosophy 307 or 407 or Linguistics 319 recommended.

Course Description

This course discusses current issues in natural language semantics. You learn how the meaning of a complex linguistic expression can be construed combining the meanings of the simple words that compose it. By studying different aspects of this semantic composition, the course provides you with analytical tools involved in the investigation of the core empirical domain of natural language semantics. The topics include (but not limited to): compositionality, modification, definite descriptions, mass-count nouns, presuppositions and implicatures.

Attending class meetings is an obligatory component of the class. Students are expected to participate in class discussions by asking questions, raising problems, etc. For this purpose, doing reading assignments is critical. Moreover, during the first half of the course, exercises will be assigned every class, which we will go through in class. Although these assignments will not be graded, it is critical that students work on them at home.

Textbook

- Heim, I., and A. Kratzer. 1998. *Semantics in Generative Grammar*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Additional reading materials will be posted on Blackboard.

Course Requirements

- Three assignments 30% (10% each)
- One in-class exam 20%
- One class presentation 15%
Students will give a 15 minute presentation of related material from the primary literature.
- Term paper
Students will write a critical review of the literature or report on their own research on semantics/pragmatics.
 - Proposal (Suggested length: 1-2 double spaced pages) 5%
 - Final paper (Suggested length: 10-15 double spaced pages)
 - Organization / Writing style 10%
 - Argumentation & Solution 20%

Grading Schedule

A+	96-100	B+	80-84	C+	65-69	D+	53-54
A	90-95	B	75-79	C	60-64	D	50-52
A-	85-89	B-	70-74	C-	55-59	F	0-49

Tentative Course Schedule

Note: Students will give a presentation between Week 7 and Week 14 (i.e., gray-shaded dates).

Week	Date	Topic	Reading	Assignment
Week 1	Tues. Sept 8	Truth-conditional semantics Some mathematical tools	H&K Chapter 1	
	Thur. Sept. 10			
Week 2	Tues. Sept. 15			
	Thur. Sept. 17			
Week 3	Tues. Sept. 22	Compositionality The Fregean Program	H&K Chapter 2	
	Thur. Sept. 24			
Week 4	Tues. Sept. 29	Semantics and Syntax	H&K Chapter 3	Assignment 1 due
	Thur. Oct. 1			
Week 5	Tues. Oct. 6	Modifiers Definite descriptions	H&K Chapter 4	
	Thur. Oct. 8			
Week 6	Tues. Oct. 13			
	Thur. Oct. 15			
Week 7	Tues. Oct. 20	Definite descriptions (Russell, Donnellan, etc.)	tbd	Assignment 2 due
	Thur. Oct. 22			
Week 8	Tues. Oct. 27			
	Thur. Oct. 29	In-class exam		
Week 9	Tues. Nov. 3	Mass-count noun	tbd	
	Thur. Nov. 5			
Week 10	Tues. Nov. 10			
	Thur. Nov. 12	READING DAY – no class		
Week 11	Tues. Nov. 17	Presuppositions and implicatures	tbd	Proposal due
	Thur. Nov. 19			
Week 12	Tues. Nov. 24			
	Thur. Nov. 26			
Week 13	Tues. Dec. 1			Assignment 3 due
	Thur. Dec. 3			
Week 14	Tues. Dec. 8			
Week 15	Wed. Dec. 16			Term paper due

Some Ground Rules

Communication: Students are encouraged to see me during my office hours with any questions concerning the course material. If the students cannot come to the office hours and still need to see me, I can set up an individual appointment.

Late assignments: Assignments must be handed in on the due date at the beginning of class. Late assignments will be penalized by a deduction of 10 percent of the full marks per calendar day past the due date. An extension of the deadline will only be granted at the instructor's discretion if the students can present a legitimate and documented reason for why the deadline has been missed, for instance in case of illness or family circumstances.

Plagiarism and cheating: Homework assignments and the exam should all be the students' own individual work and written by the students in their own words. Exactly the same answers (especially in the assignments) are considered to be plagiarism. Carefully read the definition of plagiarism and academic misconduct below.

Student advising: For any questions regarding the linguistics major or minor, the organization of your program, or the selection of courses, you can see the linguistics undergraduate adviser: Dr. Suzanne Curtin (ling.undergrad@ucalgary.ca)

Student's Union Contact Information:

SU VP Academic Phone: 220- 3911 and email: suvpaca@ucalgary.ca

Plagiarism and Academic Misconduct

Plagiarism involves submitting or presenting work in a course as if it were the student's own work done expressly for that particular course, when, in fact, it is not. Most commonly plagiarism exists when:

- a) the work submitted or presented was done, in whole or in part, by an individual other than the one submitting or presenting the work (this includes having another impersonate the student or otherwise substituting the work of another for one's own in an examination or test),
- b) parts of the work are taken from another source without reference to the original author,
- c) the whole work (e.g. an essay) is copied from another source, and/or
- d) a student submits or presents work in one course which has also been submitted in another course (although it may be completely original with that student) without the knowledge of or prior agreement of the instructor involved.

While it is recognized that scholarly work often involves reference to the ideas, data and conclusions of other scholars, intellectual honesty requires that such references be explicitly and clearly noted. Some course assignments call for students to work in groups. Unless noted otherwise in writing, students must write up their own answers for submission of the assignment. Failure to do so constitutes plagiarism.

Plagiarism is an extremely serious academic offence. Possible penalties for plagiarism include: failing the assignment, failing the course, disciplinary probation, suspension, or expulsion.

Any student who voluntarily and consciously aids another student in the commission of plagiarism is also guilty of academic misconduct.

Disability Accommodation

It is the student's responsibility to request academic accommodations. If you are a student with a documented disability who may require academic accommodation and have not registered with the Disability Resource Centre, please contact their office at 220-8237. Students who have not registered with the Disability Resource Centre are not eligible for formal academic accommodation. You are also required to discuss your needs with your instructor no later than fourteen (14) days after the start of this course.