

Graduate Semantics I (Barker and Champollion, Fall 2012)

Goals: This course has two overlapping goals: to introduce what every well-trained researcher who cares about language should know about semantics; and to prepare scholars who may want to specialize in semantics and closely related fields (syntax, philosophy of language, sentence processing, etc.) for further study. The emphasis in this course (as opposed to in Semantics II) is on the first goal (basic semantic literacy). Furthering these goals includes the following sub-goals: learning how to read the primary literature in semantics (what are those exotic squiggles, anyway?); learning a certain amount of mathematics underlying the structures on which some semantic explanations rest (e.g., how does lambda-conversion work); becoming acquainted with some of the main problem domains that semanticists tend to worry about, with a slight bias towards topics that are also of interest to related subdisciplines (i.e., topics such as focus and events); learning to evaluate and critique semantic solutions; and—above all—experiencing the deep joy of new semantic insight.

Prerequisites: This course has no specific prerequisites. We will assume that everyone has significant exposure to basic linguistic concepts, especially notions such as “tree”, “derivation”, and “constituent”. The course will also involve considerable manipulation of formal systems (for example, the Predicate Calculus). It will be important to have a firm instinctive grasp of the basic principles of set theory. *Logic in Linguistics* (by Allwood, Andersson, and Dahl, Cambridge UP, 1977) is a good introductory treatment of Propositional Logic and Predicate Logic; Gamut 1991, *Logic, language, and meaning* (by L.T.F. Gamut, University of Chicago Press, 1991) is another worthy resource. But the main source of information must be your student colleagues and us in class and in office hours. You must meet with us often and long enough to understand perfectly—there is no other option.

Textbook: We will provide lecture notes and excerpts from various textbooks. There is no required textbook, but we will sometimes rely on parts of Heim and Kratzer. 1998. *Semantics in Generative Grammar*. Blackwell. In addition, we strongly recommend acquiring a copy of Anna Szabolcsi’s 2011 book, *Quantification*, Oxford, available from Amazon for \$45. Note that the first three chapters contain background material that covers or supplements many of the topics in this course.

Software: The course will make use of the *Penn Lambda Calculator*, an interactive pedagogical software tool. Students who would like to install the tool on their own computers can download it at <http://www.ling.upenn.edu/lambda>. We will provide exercise files.

Readings: Readings will generally be available on the class website on Blackboard, so please sign up for it. Let us know if you have problems accessing Blackboard. The reading list in the syllabus is nonexhaustive and will be updated as the class progresses. Required readings will be announced. We welcome contributions of improved scanner images of papers.

Work: There will be book chapters and papers to read and discuss, and there will be regular problem sets. In addition, there will be **one squib** (short—5 pages or less—paper making a simple point).

Contact: Lucas Champollion’s email is champollion@nyu.edu; Chris Barker’s email is chris.barker@nyu.edu. Please allow at least one work day for a reply.

Office hours: Lucas Champollion’s office hours are Tuesdays 11am-noon, or drop-in, or by appointment; Chris Barker’s office hours are drop-in or by appointment.

Schedule (updated as of Nov 5 2012)

Week 1: Introduction (CB & LC)

- Mon Sep 3: Labor Day (no class)
- Wed Sep 5: overview of topics, organizational matters, software installation; what is semantics?

Week 2: Semantics vs. pragmatics (CB)

- Mon Sep 10: Grice, Paul. 1975. Logic and Conversation. In P. Cole and J. Morgan (eds), *Speech acts*. Syntax and semantics Volume 3, 41–58, Academic Press.
- Wed Sep 12: [continuation of Grice]

Week 3: Set theory and propositional logic (LC) – Chris away this week

- Mon Sep 17: Set theory. Allwood, ch. 2.
- Wed Sep 19: Propositional logic. Allwood, ch. 4.

Week 4: Predicate logic (LC)

- Mon Sep 24: Conversational predicate logic. Allwood, ch. 5.
- Wed Sep 26: Business predicate logic. Allwood, ch. 5.

Week 5: Inference and entailment (CB)

- Mon Oct 1: Davidson, Donald. The logical form of action sentences. In N. Rescher (ed). *The Logic of Decision and Action*. University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Wed Oct 3: Stalnaker, Robert. 1978. Assertion. *Syntax and Semantics* (New York Academic Press) 9:315-332. Also in Paul Portner and Barbara Partee, *Formal Semantics: The Essential Readings*. (Wiley).

Week 6: Presuppositions (CB)

- Mon Oct 8: Beaver and Geurts: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/presupposition/>
- Wed Oct 10: [presuppositions continued]

Week 7: Examples of beautiful semantics (LC)

- Mon Oct 15: *no class*
- Wed Oct 17: Beautiful semantics: Negative polarity items (LC).
 - Ladusaw, W. A. 1996. Negation and polarity items. In: S. Lappin (Ed.), *Handbook of contemporary semantic theory*. Blackwell: 321-42. (1996).

Fri-Sun Oct 19-21: *NELS conference*

Week 8: Lambda calculus (CB & LC)

- Mon Oct 22: Type theory and lambda calculus basics (CB) – *LC away*
 - Bob Carpenter. 1997. Simply typed lambda-Calculus. *Type-logical semantics, Chapter 2*. MIT Press. 37–73.
- Wed Oct 24: lambda calculus, lambda abstraction (LC)
 - Heim & Kratzer Chapters 3,4,5

Oct 29 - Nov 4: Hurricane break

Week 9: Binding and relative clauses

- Mon Nov 5: Binding (CB)
 - Szabolcsi, Anna. 2011. Scope and binding. *Semantics: An International Handbook of Natural Language Meaning, Vol. 2*. Maienborn, von Stechow, and Portner (eds). de Gruyter, pp. 1605-1641.
- Wed Nov 7: Relative clauses and wh-movement (LC)

Week 10: Quantifiers (LC)

- Mon Nov 12: Quantifiers: Determiners as relations over sets (LC)
 - H&K Chapter 6

- Barwise, J. and R. Cooper: 1981, Generalized Quantifiers and Natural Language, *Linguistics and Philosophy* 4, 159–219.
- Optional reading: Partee, B.: 1987, Noun Phrase Interpretation and Type-Shifting Principles, in J. Groenendijk et al. (eds.), *Studies in Discourse Representation Theory and the Theory of Generalized Quantifiers*, GRASS 8, Foris, pp. 115–143.
- Wed Nov 14: Quantifiers and conservativity (LC)
 - Keenan, E.L. 2002. Some Properties of Natural Language Quantifiers: Generalized Quantifier Theory. in *Linguistics & Philosophy* 25: 627–654.

Week 11: Quantifier scope and data collection (CB)

- Mon Nov 19: Quantifier scope (CB)
- Wed Nov 21: Data collection in semantics (CB)
 - Manfred Krifka. Varieties of semantic evidence. *Semantics: An International Handbook of Natural Language Meaning, Vol. 2*. Maienborn, von Stechow, and Portner (eds). de Gruyter. 242–267.

Week 12: A taste of algebraic semantics (LC); beautiful semantics (CB)

- Mon Nov 26: Distributivity (LC)
- Wed Nov 28: Beautiful semantics again: *There*-insertion (CB) (*class before Thanksgiving – find alternate date?*)
 - Keenan, Ed. 2007. A truth conditional approach to the definiteness effect. Ms.

Week 13: Focus (CB)

- Mon Dec 3: Focus (*squib deadline*)
 - Rooth, Mats. 1996. Focus. In Lappin (ed). *Handbook of contemporary semantic theory*. Blackwell.
 - Krifka, Manfred. 2007. Basic notions of information structure. In C. Fery and M. Krifka (eds.), *Interdisciplinary Studies of Information Structure* 6, Potsdam, 2007. Also in *Acta Linguistica Hungarica* 55 (2008), 243-276.
- Wed Dec 5: Focus

Week 14: Miniconferences

- Mon Dec 10: Miniconference 1 (student squib presentations)
- Wed Dec 12: Miniconference 2 (student squib presentations)