

Graduate Semantics I (Champollion, Fall 2013)

Time / Location: Mondays and Wednesdays, 2pm-3:15pm, 10 Washington Place, room 103

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 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 formal semantics;
- learning a certain amount of mathematics underlying the structures on which some semantic explanations rest;
- becoming acquainted with some of the main problem domains of formal semantics;
- learning to evaluate and critique semantic solutions;
- learning to come up with new research questions.

Prerequisites: I 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 from logic and set theory. It will be important to have a firm instinctive grasp of the basic principles of set theory, propositional logic and predicate logic. Please review the first five chapters of *Logic in Linguistics* (by Allwood, Andersson, and Dahl, Cambridge UP, 1977) or make sure you have equivalent knowledge about propositional logic, predicate logic, and set theory. 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 me in class and in office hours.

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, it is strongly recommended to acquire 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. Exercise files will be provided.

Readings: Readings will generally be available through NYUClasses (<http://newclasses.nyu.edu/>). Let me know if you have problems accessing NYUClasses. The reading list in the syllabus is nonexhaustive and will be updated as the class progresses. Required readings will be announced.

Work: There will be book chapters and papers to read and discuss, and there will be regular problem sets. Collaboration is encouraged but please write up your assignments yourself. In addition, there will be **two squibs** (short—5 pages or less—papers making a simple point).

Contact: champollion@nyu.edu

Office hours: Mondays 11am-noon, or drop-in, or by appointment.

Schedule (preliminary)

Week 1: Review

- Mon Sep 2: Labor Day (no class)
- Wed Sep 4: organizational matters; overview of semantics; formal vs. other kinds of semantics; truth and truth conditions; compositionality

Week 2: Logic

- Mon Sep 9: review of propositional and predicate logic; translating English into logic by hand
- Wed Sep 11: implicatures and presuppositions
 - Beaver and Geurts: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/presupposition/>

Week 3: Set theory and the lambda calculus

- Mon Sep 16: review of set theory; simple compositional derivations
- Wed Sep 18: introduction to the lambda calculus: function application
 - Heim & Kratzer Chapters 1-3

Week 4: Lambda calculus and type theory

- Mon Sep 23: beta reduction continued; the issue of variable capturing
- Wed Sep 25: type theory, type-driven interpretation, syntax-semantics interface

Week 5: Generalized Quantifiers

- Mon Sep 30: Quantifiers: Determiners as relations over sets
 - H&K Chapter 6
 - Barwise, J. and R. Cooper: 1981, Generalized Quantifiers and Natural Language, *Linguistics and Philosophy* 4, 159–219.
- Wed Oct 2: Quantifiers and conservativity, and definiteness effect
 - Keenan, E.L. 2002. Some Properties of Natural Language Quantifiers: Generalized Quantifier Theory. in *Linguistics & Philosophy* 25: 627–654.
 - Keenan, Ed. 2007. A truth conditional approach to the definiteness effect. Ms.

Week 6: Binding and relative clauses

- Mon Oct 7: Binding
 - 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 Oct 9: Relative clauses and wh-movement

Week 7: Quantifier scope

- Mon Oct 14: From binding to quantifier scope. Resolution by quantifier raising. H&K ch. 7.
- Wed Oct 16: Quantifier scope resolution by flexible types. H&K ch. 7.
Fri-Sun Oct 18-20: NELS conference at UConn.

Week 8: Events and plurals

- Mon Oct 21: Event semantics.
 - Davidson, Donald. The logical form of action sentences. In N. Rescher (ed). *The Logic of Decision and Action*. University of Pittsburgh Press.
 - Parsons 1990. *Events in the semantics of English*. Ch. 1-3
- Wed Oct 23: Event semantics meets quantification.

Week 9: Algebraic semantics

- Mon Oct 28: Aspect and event semantics. Aspectual composition. Cross-domain parallels. Bach 1986 etc.
- Wed Oct 30: Plurals. Distributivity. Link 1998: Algebraic semantics in language and philosophy. CSLI publications.

Week 10: Coordination

- Mon Nov 4: Plurals and conjunction. Link 1998. Winter 2001: Flexibility principles in Boolean semantics. MIT Press, Cambridge, 2001.
- Wed Nov 6: Disjunction.

Week 11: Disjunction, continued

- Mon Nov 11: *Fall break – no class*
- Wed Nov 13: Disjunction and alternative semantics. Inquisitive semantics.
 - Alonso-Ovalle 2005. Disjunction in alternative semantics. UMass Ph.D.
 - Inquisitive semantics: a new notion of meaning. Ciardelli et al. *Language and linguistics compass*, 2013.

Week 12: Focus

- Mon Nov 18: Focus
 - 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 Nov 20: more focus

Week 13: Conditionals

- Mon Nov 25: Indicative conditionals.
- Wed Nov 27: Counterfactuals. Veltman 2005: Making counterfactual assumptions. *Journal of Semantics* 22(2).

Week 14: Miniconferences

- Mon Dec 2: Miniconference 1 (student squib presentations)
- Wed Dec 4: Miniconference 2 (student squib presentations)

Week 15: Buffer

- Mon Dec 9:
- Wed Dec 11: