

LING 53, Semantics 1

Course Description & Syllabus

Summer 2018

1 Organizational matters

- Class: Mondays and Wednesdays 1:00PM-4:30PM, Social Sciences 1, Room 145
- Instructor: Hitomi (Tomida) Hirayama
Email: hhirayam@ucsc.edu
Office hours: Mondays 10:30-11:30 and by email appointment, at Stevenson 238
- TA: Jake Vincent
Email: jwvincen@ucsc.edu
Office hours: Wednesdays 10:30-11:30 at Stevenson 269

Web access

- Course Website (on Canvas): <https://canvas.ucsc.edu>.
- The syllabus, problem sets, and handouts will be posted under Files.
Please **CHECK REGULARLY!**

Weekly schedule

- Assignments will generally be posted at the end of every week of classes (see Canvas > Files)
- The due date for each assignment is specified at the very beginning of that assignment; please print them, solve them, and bring them to class on their due date.
- Please write legibly (typing your assignments would be best).

Important note

If you qualify for classroom accommodations because of a disability, please get an Accommodation Authorization from the Disability Resource Center (DRC) and submit it to me in person outside of class (e.g., office hours) as soon as possible. Contact DRC at 459-2089 (voice), 459-4806 (TTY), or <http://drc.ucsc.edu> for more information on the requirements and/or process.

2 General Description

The course is an introduction to the study of linguistic meaning. When we investigate how language is used in communication, we recognize two interacting systems:

- a. the semantic system, which is part of our knowledge of the language we speak
- b. the pragmatic principles that guide our interpretation of language in actual situations of use

This course is concerned with both the semantic and the pragmatic aspects of language understanding. Our goal is to investigate aspects of the semantic structure of English within the framework of an explicit theory of linguistic meaning. We will, however, make reference to other languages as we go along, though knowledge of another language is not required.

We begin with the pragmatic side, by distinguishing among different layers of meaning that an utterance conveys. We then move on to explore the basic meaning of verbs and the way the meaning of sentences is constructed from the meaning of their parts. We end with issues concerning reference and discourse. In talking about the meaning of sentences, we use the logical language of predicate calculus to help us arrive at a compositional account of the truth conditions of English sentences.

No previous work in linguistics is presupposed.

3 Course Requirements

The learning (and grading) tools are: lectures and problem sets.

- Class attendance is a necessary part of this course, especially since the class has no textbook. Reading the posted notes is crucial but does not substitute for class attendance. Speaking up in class is strongly encouraged. If you cannot make a class, it is your responsibility to find out what happened in the class you missed. If handouts/slides are available, they will be posted on the Canvas site after the class. Reviewing them is important but does not substitute for class attendance.
- Written work for the course consists of problem sets, posted on Canvas and due on the date specified in each assignment. Homework assignments will NOT be handed out in class. Homework should NOT be submitted by email — it must be submitted in person on the day it is due. Again: please write legibly.
- It is an excellent idea (and highly recommended) to form study groups and discuss the problem sets in your meetings. However, **you should write up the assignments ON YOUR OWN**. Also, if you do form study groups, please list the people you discussed the problem set with at the beginning of the assignment. Turning in identical homework counts as plagiarism for all students involved.
- Homework policy: no late homework is accepted unless by prior arrangement (or because of a health problem properly documented to the satisfaction of the instructor). A student who misses more than one assignment automatically fails the course.
- There will be no midterm or final for this class.

Grade calculation

- lecture attendance and participation: 10%
- 4 problem sets: 90% in total

Grading procedures:

- Problem sets will be graded on a 0-100 point scale.
- The percentage of the final grade that a given problem set represents will be specified on each assignment.

4 Course structure (subject to change)

The following is a general outline of the progress of the course. Details are subject to change.

1: Introduction

What is this course about?

2: Relations between sentences

What do we commit to when we say something?

- pragmatic implicature, entailment, presupposition
- tests for distinguishing between implicatures, entailments, presuppositions

3: Logical and compositional semantics

- what is the meaning of *and*, *or*, and negation?
- propositional logic and sentential connectives
- how can we *compositionally* interpret simple English sentences?
- what is the meaning of *every*?
- predicate logic and quantification in natural language