

Semantics 3

LING 660

Fall 2024

Tuesdays and Thursdays 1:05 pm - 2:25 pm
1085 Dr. Penfield, room 117

Instructor

Luis Alonso-Ovalle

Office location: 1085 Penfield, room 314.

Office hours: Tuesdays, 2:30pm - 3:30pm or by appointment.
Use this [link](#) to book an appointment with Luis.

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Course description

This course is a graduate level introduction to formal semantics. The course develops a basic compositional semantics for several extensional constructions. Topics include predication, modification, semantic binding, the semantics of quantificational determiners, and pronouns. Students will familiarize themselves with basic mathematical concepts that underlie the semantic interpretation system developed (sets, relations, functions.)

Readings

Readings, class handouts, and assignments will be available via myCourses.

Although there is no required textbook, we will make extensive use of Heim and Kratzer's textbook.

- Irene Heim & Angelika Kratzer. 1998. *Semantics in Generative Grammar*. Blackwell.

A note on class handouts

Class handouts will be posted in myCourses. You are expected to read the class handouts before the online meetings. They contain exercises that you will be asked to do beforehand. One handout usually covers more than one meeting. Handouts will be revised and modified from meeting to meeting, so you should always check myCourses for the latest version.

Evaluation schema

Homework assignments (worth 70% of the final grade.)
One snippet (worth 30% of the final grade.)

Note: to qualify for a grade, you need to do *both* the homework assignments *and* the snippet, if you fail to complete all the assignments or the snippet, you will get an incomplete grade.

Homework assignments

There will be nine homework assignments (roughly one per week, see schedule at the end of the course outline.)

Homework assignments will be handed out on Thursdays and will be due by next Thursday. The assignments will largely consist of technical exercises that require applying concepts explained in class, but they might also include open-ended questions that test how well you can evaluate the pros and cons of certain hypotheses.

You might not get all the answers right on the first pass, and that is expected. What's important for me is to see where you ran into difficulty and for you to understand the assignment fully once we discuss it and you have a chance to redo it.

You will receive an A if the assignment is perfect. A B or a lower grade indicates that the assignment needs to be redone and resubmitted. I will provide you written comments on each assignment.

There will be assessments during add-drop period. In the unlikely event that you enter class during this period, you will have to catch up with the missed assignments. After you register, you will be given the missed assignments. You should do them consecutively, in parallel with other due assignments. You will be given one week to complete the first missed assignment. After you hand this one, you will be given another week to complete the second, etc.

In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the control of McGill University, assessment tasks in a course are subject to change, provided students are sent adequate and timely communications regarding the change.

The snippet

Your 'snippet' will be a very short, self-contained, and explicit note (max. 3-4 pages) that can:

- (i) present a new set of data that either confirms or calls into question previously accepted generalizations, poses a challenge to existing theories, or leads to interesting theoretical questions, or
- (ii) present inconsistencies, point out unnoticed assumptions, or call attention to new predictions of an existing analysis.

If your snippet presents a puzzle, it does not have to provide a solution to it.

You can read more about snippets here: <http://www.ledonline.it/snippets/>

Snippets will be presented in class, at the end of the semester. You will be asked to submit written questions for your classmates about their snippets.

Course policies

Homework

Student collaboration

Students are encouraged to discuss homework assignments with their classmates. You can submit one assignment per group. Homework assignments must clearly list the students that collaborated in the assignment. You are expected to hand in the assignment in class on the date that it is due. No late assignments will be accepted.

Level of difficulty

There will be times where the homework will mostly consist of ‘finger exercises’: you will be simply asked to apply rules and perform mechanical computations so that you understand what these rules and computations do. However, there will also be times where you will be forced to test the limits of what you learned in class and where you will have to explore and grope in the dark. This will be challenging, and it can be sometimes frustrating for some people. Don’t despair. Making mistakes will help you figure out what you do not fully understand.

Academic integrity

McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (for more information, see <http://www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest>).

Students are advised to declare all sources in their homework assignments and other written work, following the citation conventions that are standard in the field.

Right to submit written work in English or French

In accord with McGill University’s Charter of Students’ Rights, students in this course have the right to submit any written work either in English or in French.

Inclusive learning environment

As the instructor of this course I endeavor to provide an inclusive learning environment. However, if you experience barriers to learning in this course, do not hesitate to discuss them with me. Students have the right to request reasonable accommodations from Student Accessibility and Achievement (SAA). SAA may mandate accommodations, and in these cases, accommodations must be granted. SAA may suggest accommodations, in which case the final decision to provide the accommodation lies with the instructor. Assessment specific accommodation requests must be received before the assessment is due.

Roadmap

The following is a *preliminary* and *approximate* list of topics and readings in chronological order. The list will most probably be adjusted and fine-tuned during the semester, in response to the needs of the class. Significant changes will be announced and kept track of through myCourses. (Dates in boldface type: assignments handed out / due.)

Week		Topic	Reading
1.	Th 8/29	Logistics	Start reading handout 1.
2.	T 9/3 Th 9/5 h	What is semantics? Truth conditions. Semantics and grammar: NPI licensing and downward entailingness.	Cresswell (1998), Portner (2005), 1.2-1.3. Larson (1995), secs.1-3. Baker (1970), Ladusaw (1983)
3.	T 9/10 Th 9/13	Semantics and grammar: NPI licensing and downward entailingness. Meanings, extensions, functional application. Tools: Sets, Relations, Functions.	Partee, ter Meulen and Wall (1993), ch. 1-2, Heim & Kratzer (1998) 2.5.
4.	T 9/17 Th 9/19	Tools: Sets, Relations, Functions.	No class: Luis at <i>Sinn und Bedeutung</i>
5.	T 9/24 Th 9/26	Meaning composition, semantic types. Modification (I)	H&K, ch. 4, Partee (1995) Advanced: Morzicky (2015), chapter 2.
6.	T 10/1 Th 10/3	Modification (II): Traces and Binding.	H&K, ch. 5.
7.	T 10/8 Th 10/11	DP semantics (I): Quantifiers	Larson (1995), secs. 4-5, Szabolcsi (2010), ch.3
Reading Break			
8.	T 10/22 Th 10/25	DP semantics (I): Quantifiers	Fox (2003) 2.1-2.3, H&K, ch. 7
9.	T 10/29 Th 10/31	DP semantics (II): Covert movement. Bound variable pronouns.	Heim (2008)
10.	T 11/5 Th 11/7	Bound variable pronouns. DP semantics (III): Indefinites.	H&K, ch. 11. Heim (1982), chapter 1. Schwarz (2011)
11.	T 11/12 Th 11/14	DP semantics (III): Indefinites.	Alonso-Ovalle and Menéndez-Benito (2013)

12.	T 11/19 Th 11/21	The limits of extensionality. Intensionality (I)	H&K, ch.12. von Fintel & Heim (2011), ch. 1.
13.	T 11/26 Th 11/28	Intensionality (I) Snippet presentation session(s).	
14.	T 12/3	Snippet presentation session(s).	Geurts (2010), ch.3; Sauerland (2010). Hacquard (forthcoming)

Readings

- Alonso-Ovalle, Luis and Menéndez-Benito, Paula: 2013, 'Epistemic Indefinites', *Language and Linguistics Compass*, 7:2, 102-122.
- Baker, C. Lee: 1970, 'Double Negatives', *Linguistic Inquiry* 1, 169-186.
- Cresswell, M. J.: 1988, 'Semantic Competence', chapter 2 of *Semantical Essays: Possible Worlds and their Rivals*, Springer, Dordrecht: 12-33.
- Fox, Danny: 2003, 'On Logical Form', in Randall Hendrick (ed.), *Minimalist Syntax*, Blackwell, Oxford, pp. 82-95.
- Geurts, Bart (2010). *Quantity Implicatures*. Cambridge University Press.
- von Fintel, Kai & Irene Heim: 2011. *Intensional Semantics*. MIT ms.
- Hacquard, Valentine (forthcoming), 'Actuality Entailments' in L. Matthewson, C. Meier, H. Rullmann, T. E. Zimmermann (eds.) *Companion to Semantics*. Wiley.
- Heim, Irene: 1992, *The Semantics of Definite and Indefinite Noun Phrases*, Ph. D. dissertation, University of Massachusetts at Amherst.
- Heim, Irene: 2001, 'Degree Operators and Scope', in C. Féry and W. Sternefeld (eds.), *Audiatur Vox Sapientiae*, Akademie-Verlag, Berlin, pp. 214-239.
- Heim, Irene: 2008, 'Features on Bound Pronouns', in D. Adger, S. Béjar, and D. Harbour (eds.), *Phi Theory: Phi Features across Interfaces and Modules*, Oxford University Press.
- Heim, Irene and Angelika Kratzer: 1998, *Semantics in Generative Grammar*, Blackwell, Oxford.
- Ladusaw, William: 1983, 'Logical Form and Conditions on Grammaticality', *Linguistics and Philosophy* 6, 373-392.
- Larson, Richard: 1995, 'Semantics', in Gleitman, Lila R., and Mark Liberman (eds.), *An Invitation to Cognitive Science, Vol. 1: Language*. MIT Press/Bradford Books, Cambridge, pp. 361-380.
- Morzicky, Marcin: 2015, *Modification*. Oxford University Press.
- Partee, Barbara H.: 1995, 'Lexical Semantics and Compositionality', in Gleitman, Lila R., and Mark Liberman (eds.), *An Invitation to Cognitive Science, Vol. 1: Language*. MIT Press/Bradford Books, Cambridge, pp. 311-360.
- Partee, Barbara H, Alice ter Meulen, Robert E. Wall: 1993. *Mathematical Methods in Linguistics*, Kluwer, Dordrecht.
- Portner, Paul: 2005, *What is Meaning? Fundamentals of Formal Semantics*, Blackwell, Oxford.

- Sauerland, Uli. 2010. 'The Computation of Scalar Implicatures: Pragmatic, Lexical or Grammatical?', *Language and Linguistics Compass* 6/1, 36-49.
- Schwarz, Bernhard: 2011. 'Long Distance Indefinites and Choice Functions', *Language and Linguistics Compass* 5/12, 880-897.
- Szabolcsi, Anna: 2010. *Quantification*. Cambridge University Press.

Some Resources

Journals

Natural Language Semantics (since 1992)

Linguistics and Philosophy (since 1977)

Journal of Semantics (since 1982)

Semantics and Pragmatics (online open access journal; since 2008) [<http://semprag.org/>]

Snippets (online open access journal; since 2000) [<http://www.ledonline.it/snippets/>]

Annual conferences with proceedings

Semantics and Linguistic Theory (SALT, usually in North America.) Available online at: <http://elanguage.net/journals/salt>

Sinn und Bedeutung (SuB, in Europe). Recent proceedings available online at:

SuB9: <http://ncs.ruhosting.nl/sub9/>

SuB10: <http://www.sfs.uni-tuebingen.de/~cebert/papers/SuB10Proceedings.pdf>

SuB11: <http://parles.upf.edu/llocs/glif/pub/sub11/index.html>

SuB12:

<http://www.hf.uio.no/ilos/forskning/aktuelt/arrangementer/konferanser/2007/SuB12/proceedings/>

SuB 13: http://www.uni-stuttgart.de/linguistik/sfb732/index.php?article_id=110

SuB 14: <http://www.univie.ac.at/sub14/>

SuB 15:

<http://universaar.unisaarland.de/monographien/volltexte/2011/30/html/artikeluebersicht.html>

SuB 17: <http://semanticsarchive.net/sub2012/>

SuB 18: <http://semanticsarchive.net/sub2013/>

SuB 19: <http://semanticsarchive.net/Archive/TVIN2I2Z/sub19proc.pdf>

SuB 20: <https://semanticsarchive.net/Archive/GRmOGQ4N/SUB20html4.html>

SuB 21: <https://sites.google.com/site/sinnundbedeutung21/proceedings-preprints>

SuB 22: <https://semanticsarchive.net/sub2018/>

SuB 23: <https://semanticsarchive.net/Archive/Tg3ZGI2M/Proceedings23.html>

SuB 24: <https://semanticsarchive.net/Archive/mZhNDA4Y/index.html>

SuB 25: <https://ojs.ub.uni-konstanz.de/sub/index.php/sub/issue/view/29>

SuB 26: <https://ojs.ub.uni-konstanz.de/sub/index.php/sub/issue/view/30>

SuB 27: <https://ojs.ub.uni-konstanz.de/sub/index.php/sub/issue/view/31>

Amsterdam Colloquium (AC, in Amsterdam, every other year). Recent proceedings available online at:

AC23: <https://tinyurl.com/mryj7et>

AC22: <http://events.illc.uva.nl/AC/AC2019/Proceedings/>

AC21: <https://semanticsarchive.net/Archive/jZiM2FhZ/AC2017-Proceedings.pdf>

AC20: <http://semanticsarchive.net/Archive/mVkOTk2N/AC2015-proceedings.pdf>

AC19: <http://www.illc.uva.nl/AC/AC2013/Proceedings/>

AC18: <http://www.springerlink.com/content/978-3-642-314810/#section=1087298&page=1>

AC17: <http://www.springerlink.com/content/978-3-642-14286-4/-section=784115&page=1>

AC16: <http://www.illc.uva.nl/AC/AC2007/index.php%3Fpage=15.html>

North East Linguistics Society (NELS)

West Coast Conference for Formal Linguistics (WCCFL, usually every year)

Recent proceedings available online: <http://www.cascadilla.com/wccfl.html>

An online paper archive

<http://semanticsarchive.net/>

Useful collections

Aloni, Maria and Paul Dekker (eds.): 2016, *The Cambridge Handbook of Formal Semantics*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Davis, Steven and Brendan Gillon (eds.): 2004, *Semantics: A reader*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Horn, Larry and Gregory Ward (eds.): 2006, *The Handbook of Pragmatics*, Blackwell, Oxford.

Lappin, Shalom (ed.): 1994, *The Handbook of Contemporary Semantic Theory*, Blackwell, Oxford.

Maienborn, Claudia, Klaus von Stechow, and Paul Portner (eds.): 2011/to appear, *Semantics: An International Handbook of Natural Language Meaning (3 volumes)*, Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Partee, Barbara and Paul Portner (eds.): 2002, *Formal Semantics: the Essential Readings*, Blackwell, Oxford.

Stechow, Arnim von and Dieter Wunderlich (eds.): 1991, *Semantik: Ein internationales Handbuch der zeitgenössischen Forschung (Semantics: an International Handbook of Contemporary Research)*, Walter de Gruyter, Berlin.

Textbooks

Altshuler, Daniel, Terence Parsons, and Roger Schwarzschild: 2019, *A Course in Semantics*, MIT Press, Cambridge, MA.

Chierchia, Gennaro and Sally McConnell-Ginet: 2000. *Meaning and Grammar* (2nd. ed.), MIT Press, Cambridge, MA.

- Coppock, Elizabeth and Lucas Champollion: 2017, *Formal Semantics Boot Camp*, ms.
<http://eecoppock.info/semantics-boot-camp.pdf>
- Heim, Irene and Angelika Kratzer: 1998. *Semantics in Generative Grammar*, Blackwell, Oxford.
- Larson, Richard and Gabriel Segal: 1995. *Knowledge of Meaning. An Introduction to Semantic Theory*. MIT Press, Cambridge, MA.
- De Swart, Henriëtte: 1998. *Introduction to Natural Language Semantics*. CSLI.
- Winter, Yoad: 2016. *Elements of Formal Semantics*. Edinburg University Press.
- Zimmermann, Thomas Ede & Wolfgang Sternefeld: 2013. *Introduction to Semantics. An Essential Guide to the Composition of Meaning*, de Gruyter Mouton, Berlin/Boston.

(If you read Italian, you should check out:

Chierchia, Gennaro: 1997. *Semantica*. Il Mulino, Bologna.)

Informal introductions to formal semantics written for a general audience

- Bach, Emmon: 1989. *Informal Lectures on Formal Semantics*. SUNY Press. [Informal, but great reading.]
- Elbourne, Paul: 2011. *Meaning. A Slim Guide to Semantics*. Oxford University Press.
- Portner, Paul: 2005, *What is Meaning? Fundamentals of Formal Semantics*, Blackwell, Oxford.

Formal background

- Gamut, L.T.F. *Logic, Language and Meaning. Vol. 1: Introduction to Logic*. University of Chicago Press.
- Gamut, L.T.F. *Logic, Language and Meaning. Vol. 2: Intensional Logic and Logical Grammar*. University of Chicago Press. [more advanced.]
- McCawley, James D. : 1981. *Everything that Linguists have Always Wanted to Know about Logic but Were Ashamed to Ask*. The University of Chicago Press.
- Partee, Barbara H, Alice ter Meulen, Robert E. Wall: 1993. *Mathematical Methods in Linguistics*, Kluwer, Dordrecht.