

SYLLABUS

LING 425: Advanced Semantics
LING 525: Semantic Theory and Analysis

1 Course information

LING 425: Advanced Semantics (3 credits)

LING 425: Semantic Theory and Analysis (3 credits)

2 Prerequisites

LING 425: LING 327 or PHIL 220. A basic introduction to syntax is recommended (e.g., LING 100, LING 201, or ENGL 331).

LING 525: There seem not to be any prerequisites listed in the Calendar, but de facto it's, minimally, the consent of the instructor.

3 Contact information

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Office hours: 2:30–3:30 Wednesdays or by appointment

Office: Totem Field Studios 226

Canvas: . . . is something that we'll use.

4 Course structure

The course will be primarily structured around collective problem-solving and theory construction, both in and outside of class. There will also be some more traditional lecture at the start of the semester, but I hope to minimize that and

discussion is always welcome. Near the end of the semester, we will dip a toe into the research literature. That won't involve collective-problem solving explicitly, but it should be approached in the same spirit—and it should definitely be viewed as a collective discussion rather than a non-participatory lecture.

The work will involve assignments, readings, and some independent research. See 'Activities' for more.

5 Objectives

The overriding aim of this course is to move from a a basic understanding of issues in semantics to being able to generate original research in the field. The course will consist of two parts (which may temporally overlap):

- We'll develop a (reasonably) explicit type-driven and fully compositional theory of semantic interpretation, revisiting some issues that you'll already be familiar with from a different technical perspective.
- We'll build on that foundation in some hopefully novel directions and gradually turn our attention to the literature.

6 Activities

The principal requirements for the course are:

- Contributing frequently and thoughtfully to class discussions.
- Ordinary take-home assignments, of which there will be three. These will require you to devise solutions to empirical problems and present them in the form of a brief well-reasoned argument. The first will also contain some brief non-open-ended exercises.
- A take-home midterm exam. It will essentially be a long assignment.
- Writing a squib, or very short paper (approx. 8—12 pages) that lays out a concrete problem and presenting it in class. More detail on this will follow. This should consist of original research—your own ideas—rather than being a survey of the literature.

Outside of class You can—in fact, definitely should—discuss your work with other students. *You're encouraged to collaborate on a single write-up* in groups of up to three on all class work *including the squib*, but each group member must be able to defend the group's proposals. Other people's ideas must be properly cited. If you find any of this confusing, ask me for clarification.

In class The course will revolve primarily around in-class discussion, and much of the progress we make will be made that way, so *coming to class is crucial*. If you

miss classes, you are likely to miss information that will be necessary to understand the assignments and subsequent discussion. If you anticipate having to miss class frequently, do not take this course.

7 Assessment

Each assignment and each exam will receive a percentage grade. Your final grade will be determined as follows:

Assignments:	37.5%
Midterm exam:	25%
Participation:	12.5%
Squib presentation:	12.5%
Squib write-up:	12.5%

You may notice this means every piece of work counts equally except the exam, which counts double.

Of course, this is subject to UBC's broader policies about grading, which apparently include the possibility of 'scaling' your grade to better accord with institutional goals.

8 Reading

We'll use the following textbook as a general resource:

Heim, Irene and Angelika Kratzer. 1997. *Semantics in Generative Grammar*. Blackwell Publishers, Oxford.

We won't follow it chapter-by-chapter, however. It's useful for providing depth and breadth—it pursues some topics farther than we will, and covers some we won't discuss. It is, of course, *not a substitute for coming to class*—much of what we discuss will have no direct counterpart in the textbook, and where there is overlap, the conclusions will often have been arrived at differently.

You will get occasional review handouts that go over some of what happened in class. You should of course take notes, but you definitely *don't* need to write down everything that appears on the board.

We'll also read a few articles, including some classics and some recent work.

9 Notes and course policies

Communication and work format You'll get handouts, assignments, and exams via Canvas. You should turn them in that way too, in the form of a PDF file. Please *don't* submit files in Word or any other format. Please turn assignments in on the due date *before the start of class*.

Disability Please notify me during the first two weeks of the course to make any special arrangements to accommodate a disability. If you haven't already done so, you should contact the UBC Centre for Accessibility.

Academic integrity Don't plagiarize. The structure of the course may make this a little trickier than it might seem. If someone that isn't actually a coauthor of your write-up gives you an idea that you use or build on, say in the write-up who it was. *Don't look for solutions to the problems on your assignments online.* In most cases, this isn't possible, but in all cases, it's a form of cheating. For more on the university's academic integrity policies, look at the university's Academic Honesty and Standards statement.

Social media and copyright issues Don't share course materials (handouts, assignments, etc.) with anyone outside of class. Don't record anything that happens in class without my prior approval.

10 University policies

UBC requires that course syllabi contain the following text verbatim:

UBC provides resources to support student learning and to maintain healthy lifestyles but recognizes that sometimes crises arise and so there are additional resources to access including those for survivors of sexual violence. UBC values respect for the person and ideas of all members of the academic community. Harassment and discrimination are not tolerated nor is suppression of academic freedom. UBC provides appropriate accommodation for students with disabilities and for religious observances. UBC values academic honesty and students are expected to acknowledge the ideas generated by others and to uphold the highest academic standards in all of their actions.

Details of the policies and how to access support are available on the [UBC Senate website](#).

11 Approximate road map

The following is an approximate road map of some of the topics we'll discuss in something like the order we'll discuss them. The precise path we take and the precise pace will depend on class discussion and our collective interests. (We're likely not to move quite as fast as predicted here.) I realize this is more inconvenient in terms of planning than a traditional lecture-style presentation with fixed dates, but I think the trade-off is worth it to have a more interactive and personalized class.

Jan. 7 Logistics & syllabus
 The design of the semantics

- Direct & indirect interpretation
 Functions and lambda abstraction
After class, read: Heim & Kratzer chapter 1
- Jan. 9 Types and type-driven interpretation
 Simple nouns, verbs, and adjectives
 Multiple arguments and Schönfinkeling/Currying
Part 1 (of 2) assignment distributed
After class, read: H&K chapter 2
- Jan. 14 Higher types and functional categories
 Negation
 The passive
After class, read: H&K chapter 3
- Jan. 16 Type clashes
 Presupposition
 Definite descriptions
 Discourse-sensitivity
Part 2 (of 2) of assignment distributed around this time
After class, read: H&K chapter 4.4–4.5
- Jan. 21 Definite descriptions continued
 Two kinds of functions
 Presupposition beyond definite descriptions
 Diagnostics for presupposition
- Jan. 28 Modification
 Vagueness and structural ambiguity
Assignment due around this time
After class, optionally read: H&K chapter 4.1–4.3
- Feb. 4 Pronouns, movement, and relative clauses
Only after we've discussed this topic, read:
 H&K chapter 5
- Feb. 6 Quantification
 Scope ambiguity
- Feb. 11 Resolving scope ambiguity
Assignment distributed around this time
Only after we've discussed this topic to death, read:
 H&K chapter 6–7
- Feb. 13 Intensionality & possible worlds
 Clausal embedding
Start reading: H&K chapter 12
- Feb. 18 Modals & conditionals
Assignment due around this time
- Feb. 21 Degrees & gradability

(Reading week) No class.

- Feb. 25 Other degree constructions
Measure phrases
Optionally, after we've discussed this topic to death read:
Morzycki (2016), chapter 3
- Feb. 27 Degree constructions across languages
Before class, read: Schwarzschild (2012)
- March 3 Events
Thematic roles revisited
Start reading: Davidson (1967)
- March 5 Adverbial modification
(Take-home midterm exam distributed around this time)
- March 10 Kinds & genericity
Optionally, after class discussion read:
Carlson (1977) or Chierchia (1998)
- March 12 Generalized conjunction *(Midterm due around this time)*
- March 17 Plurals
- March 19 Tense & aspect in English
- March 24 Expressive meaning
Read: Potts (2007)
- March 26 Focus
Assignment due around this time
Read: Rooth (1996)
- March 31 Discourse structure
Formal pragmatics
Only after class discussion, read:
Gunlogson (2002)
Optionally, you could also read the classic in this area:
Stalnaker (1979)
- April 2 Squib presentations & discussion
- April 7 Squib presentations & discussion
- May 16 *Squibs due*

References

Carlson, Greg. 1977. *Reference to Kinds in English*. Doctoral dissertation, University of Massachusetts Amherst. Published in 1980 by Garland.

- Chierchia, Gennaro. 1998. 'Reference to kinds across languages'. *Natural Language Semantics* 6(4), 339–405.
- Davidson, Donald. 1967. 'The logical form of action sentences'. In Nicholas Rescher (ed.), *The Logic of Decision and Action*, pp. 81–95. University of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh. Republished in Donald Davidson, 1980. *Essays on Actions and Events*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Gunlogson, Christine. 2002. 'Rising declarative questions'. In Brendan Jackson (ed.), *Proceedings of Semantics and Linguistic Theory (SALT) 12*. CLC Publications, Ithaca, NY.
- Morzycki, Marcin. 2016. *Modification*. Key Topics in Semantics and Pragmatics. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Potts, Christopher. 2007. 'The expressive dimension'. *Theoretical Linguistics* 33(2), 165–198.
- Rooth, Mats. 1996. 'Focus'. In Shalom Lappin (ed.), *The Handbook of Contemporary Semantic Theory*, pp. 271–297. Blackwell Publishing, Oxford.
- Schwarzschild, Roger. 2012. 'Directed scale segments'. In Anca Chereches (ed.), *Proceedings of Semantics and Linguistic Theory (SALT) 22*. eLanguage.
- Stalnaker, Robert. 1979. 'Assertion'. In Peter Cole (ed.), *Syntax and Semantics*, vol. 9. Academic Press, London.