

SYLLABUS

LIN 837: Advanced Studies in Semantics and Pragmatics

1 The course

This course is two things at once:

- a continuation of the first-semester semantics course, expanding on the framework developed there and introducing more formal tools
- something like a seminar, in which you'll encounter the literature in earnest and do original research

2 Topics

The first chunk of the course aims to:

- provide you with some logical tools and some experience with a slightly different analytical framework
- briefly confront a few new empirical areas

After this, we'll narrow our empirical focus start looking at the literature. The topics we'll focus on this semester:

- formal pragmatics
- gradability, scalar meaning, & degree semantics

3 Contact Information

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4 Requirements

The requirements for this course are:

- Doing some small technical exercises.
- Doing a few more open-ended assignments that involve actual linguistic analysis. For one of these assignments, you—along with collaborators—will present your work and lead the ensuing discussion. You will need to have a fairly extensive handout (or slides) and plan to entertain us for most of a class.
- Writing a squib (very short paper) or more fully-developed paper. If you've been around a while, you might want to aim for a paper. If you're taking this class in place of doing a thesis, you should also aim something closer to a proper paper.
- Presenting your work on the squib/paper.
- Presenting one of the readings, probably with a collaborator.
- Participating vigorously in the discussion. This is not syllabus window-dressing. This really is a requirement.

Grading Your final grade will be determined on the basis of your written work and your contributions in class (in presentations and more generally), weighted equally. (So, seriously, talk.)

A word about squibs They don't need to provide a full analysis of a phenomenon, and they do not need to reflect an entirely novel empirical discovery. Reasonable things to do in a squib are:

- make some empirical observations that you haven't seen made before and explain their significance
- attempt to extend an existing analysis of some phenomenon to a new range of data
- point out a disadvantage or difficulty in an existing analysis or discuss some larger issues it presents
- develop your own analysis from scratch of a phenomenon, without looking at the literature, then compare what you invented to what others have proposed

It is *not* sufficient, though, to simply read and summarize a handful of papers.

If you're writing a paper, you'll need an actual analysis.

5 Textbooks

Much of what we read will be from the primary literature. But you should also get a copy of:

Gamut, L. T. F. 1990. *Logic, Language, and Meaning*. University of Chicago Press.

It comes in two volumes. You should get both. This is somewhere between a textbook and a reference work. We'll use it in class a bit, but it's particularly useful as a kind of handbook to have by one's side when reading semantics. It is quite sophisticated formally, which can make it pretty challenging in places.

For purely formal background, you might also be interested in this:

Partee, Barbara, Alice ter Meulen, and Robert Wall. 1990. *Mathematical Methods in Linguistics*. Kluwer, Dordrecht.

6 Tentative Schedule

We won't follow this exact schedule. It's just a rough roadmap. Adjustments in scheduling and probably readings will be made along the way.

- Aug. 31: logistics
indirect interpretation
propositional logic
brief chat about coming attractions
for next time: read [Gamut \(1991b\)](#)
- Sept. 12: predicate logic
articulating the indirect interpretation framework
generalized conjunction and indirect interpretation
for next time: read [Gamut \(1991a\)](#) and [Heim \(1983a\)](#) (or [Heim 1982](#))
- Sept 19: short debriefing after assignment
indefinites and discourse anaphora:
[Heim \(1982, 1983a\)](#)¹

¹Really, this discussion will focus on the part of Heim's dissertation ([Heim 1982](#)) reflected in in [Heim \(1983a\)](#) (a short paper based on part of it). We'll talk about the other major component, reflected in [Heim \(1983b\)](#), will be later.

- Sept. 26 assignment presentation: degree constructions
Discourse Representation Theory:
[Kamp \(1981\)](#) (or chapter 2 of [Kadmon 2001](#))
- Oct. 3 assignment presentation: plurals
presupposition and discourse: [Heim \(1983b\)](#)
- Oct. 10: short debriefing about plurals
assignment presentation: kinds and genericity
discourse context and the common ground:
[Stalnaker \(1979\)](#)
- Oct. 17: assignment presentation: events
bias, neutrality, and interlocutors' commitments:
[Gunlogson \(2002\)](#)
- Oct. 24: questions: [Karttunen \(1977\)](#)
focus: [Rooth \(1996\)](#)
- Oct. 31: adjectives, gradability, vagueness:
chapter 1 of [Kennedy \(1997\)](#)
chapter 3 of [Morzycki \(2016\)](#)
- Nov. 7: comparatives and AP structure:
chapter 2 of [Kennedy \(1997\)](#)
chapter 4 of [Morzycki \(2016\)](#)
- Nov. 14: polar antonyms & the ontology degrees
[Kennedy \(2001\)](#) (or chapter 3 of [Kennedy 1997](#))
vagueness and dynamic semantics: [Barker \(2002\)](#)
- Nov. 21: supervaluations and prototypicality:
[Kamp & Partee \(1995\)](#)
setting standards and interest relativity: [Graff \(2000\)](#)
- Nov. 28: personal taste and the judge parameter:
[Laserson \(2005\)](#)
expressive meaning (and more judging):
[Potts \(2007\)](#)
- Dec. 5: squib presentations
- Finals week: squib presentations

References

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