

## Linguistics 610: Semantics and Generative Grammar

Fall 1998 Barbara Partee

An introduction to formal semantics and to issues concerning its place in theories of the grammar of natural languages. Emphasis on how the principle of compositionality relates to the organization of grammar. Prerequisite: LING 601 concurrently (or permission of the instructor.) No specific background in logic presupposed, but for those who have had a lot, some parts of this will be familiar (and you can use the time to explore related issues in greater depth, or to work harder on your other courses), and for those who have had none or very little, some parts may be difficult - don't hesitate to let me know.

The course will incorporate a relatively brief introduction to (or review of) propositional logic and first order predicate logic and will include a first introduction to the lambda calculus. The main part of the course will be devoted to topics in linguistic semantics and the interfaces of semantics with syntax and with issues in the philosophy of language and in cognitive science. Topics will include quantification, the semantics of noun phrases, bound variable and other interpretations of pronouns, referential opacity. As we go along we will also discuss the relationship between semantics and pragmatics and read some classic articles in the philosophy of language.

### **Text:**

Heim and Kratzer, *Semantics in Generative Grammar*. Blackwell, 1998.

Additional recommended books:

Partee, ter Meulen, and Wall, *Mathematical Methods in Linguistics*. Kluwer, 1990.

A.P.Martinich (ed.) *The Philosophy of Language*. Oxford Univ. Press

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Don't hesitate to call me at home or send e-mail.)

Tues 1:30-3:00 and by appt.

**Requirements:** Attendance, frequent exercises, and an oral report, typically on one of the reading assignments. No term paper. For the primary clientele of this course, first semester first-year Linguistics Ph.D. students, this is one of several required courses, and you should say something to me (and/or your other instructors) if the workload gets too heavy. We're trying to give you all a solid foundation in the core areas of linguistics, but it shouldn't be an endurance trial. Note: A great deal of your learning will take place in doing the assignments, and a great deal of the feedback I will get on how things are going will come from reading your assignments, and for both of those purposes it is important that you hand in assignments on time. When I read assignments, I like to read everybody's Problem 1, then everybody's Problem 2, etc.; that really helps me identify issues that would be good to discuss in class, etc. That requires getting all the assignments on time, so please try hard to do that.

Getting help: I have not formally arranged for a tutor this semester, but that could be done if there

is sufficient demand. Feel free to work in teams on assignments, but everyone should try every exercise themselves before comparing notes. When you turn in assignments, feel free to include questions, and flag any parts of your solutions you're not sure of so I'll particularly give you feedback there. Think of your written assignments as parts of an ongoing dialog, and add any notes you think relevant. Also don't hesitate to look for me or call me up for help or discussion; I often look busy, but you are among my top priorities. It's important to let me know when you are running into difficulties – whether it's a matter of something being unclear or difficult, or excessive workload, or some apparent false presuppositions about what you already know, or whatever. If I find out, we can do something about it; if I don't, problems may snowball.

**General Plan of the Course:** (subject to change in details)

This is my first time teaching from the Heim and Kratzer textbook, and I'm looking forward to it. I plan to go through all or almost all of the book in order, assigning many of the problems that are in the book as written assignments to be handed in. In addition, I will assign several classic articles that can be found in the Martinich collection, and a few that will be handed out separately; I will ask for student volunteers to make presentations about those, sometimes in pairs in the form of a debate. The Partee, ter Meulen and Wall textbook will not be covered systematically, but will serve mainly as a reference book for fuller background on some of the technical background issues. Most of our time will be spent discussing the issues raised in the Heim and Kratzer book, and the assignments you will be doing.

Here is a tentative schedule, with more detail near the beginning; detailed assignments for later parts will be given as we proceed. Schedule can be modified if it turns out to be too ambitious.

**Th Sept 10.** Introduction. Truth conditions and compositionality. On not starting with the question “What is meaning?”

**Assignment 1, due September 15:** H&K Exercise, page 9.

**Reading for Sept 15:** Read: Heim and Kratzer (H&K) Ch.1, 2.1, 2.2. Also read Davidson, “Truth and Meaning”, in Martinich, 79-90.

**Tu Sept 15.** Executing the Fregean program, part 1. H&K 2.1, 2.2.

**Assignment 2, due Sept 17:** H&K Exercise p.23, Exercise p.24.

**Reading for Sept 17:** Read: H&K 2.3, 2.4.

**Th Sept 17.** H&K 2.3, 2.4. TVs, types, Schönfinkelization.

**Assignment 3, due Sept 22:** H&K pp 31-34, Exercises 1,2,3.

**Reading for Sept 22:** Read H&K 2.5.

**Tu Sept 22.** H&K 2.5. Lambdas.

**Assignment 4, due Sept 24:** H&K pp 39-40, Exercises 1-4.

**Reading for Sept 24:** Read Partee, ter Meulen, and Wall, Chapter 13. Also read Grice, “Logic and Conversation” in Martinich. I would like a student volunteer to do a 20-minute presentation on the Grice article on Sept 24 and help lead discussion of it.

**Th Sept 24.** More lambdas; and Grice on the division of labor between semantics and pragmatics.

**Assignment 5, due Sept 29:** Partee, ter Meulen and Wall, end of Chapter 13, problems 6 and 7. Answers to a few subparts of problem 7 are in the back of the book.

**Reading for Sept 29:** H&K Chapter 3, 4.1-4.3

**Tu Sept 29.** Semantics and syntax. Type-driven interpretation. Syntactic well-formedness, semantic interpretability, and issues concerning the division of labor between them. (H&K, Ch. 3). Also More of English. H&K 4.1-4.3

**Th Oct 1.** Definite descriptions. H&K 4.4-4.5. Also Donnellan, “Reference and Definite Descriptions”.

[**Tu Oct 6:** either no class or class with a substitute; I will be away. Somehow the beginning of H&K chapter 5 ( Relative Clauses, Variables, Variable Binding) should get under way that day.]

**Th Oct 8.** Continuing Chapter 5, and also class presentations on issues about the roles of pragmatics and semantics. Readings in Martinich: Russell, “On Denoting”; Strawson “On Referring”; Donnellan, : “Reference and Definite Descriptions”; Kripke, “Speaker’s Reference and Semantic Reference”. I would like to have class presentations in this part, ideally two two-person teams, one team to stage a Russell-Strawson debate, and one to stage a Donnellan-Kripke debate. I may also assign a short written assignment with a choice of topics relating to these readings, if feasible.

**Tu Oct 13** Finish H&K Chapter 5.

**Th Oct 15, Tu Oct 20, Th Oct 22, Tu Oct 27:** H&K Chapter 6: Quantifiers: Their semantic type. Also in this section I will give you copies of papers by Bill Ladusaw and Marcia Linebarger advocating respectively a semantic and a syntactic (LF) account of the licensing of negative polarity items; I’d like a pair of students to do a presentation of the debate between them.

**Th Oct 29, Tu Nov 3:** H&K Chapter 7. Quantification and Grammar

**Th Nov 5, Tu Nov 10, Th Nov 12:** H&K Chapter 8: Syntactic and Semantic Constraints on Quantifier Movement.

**Tu Nov 17, Th Nov 19:** H&K Chapter 9: Bound and Referential Pronouns and Ellipsis.

**Tu Nov 24, Tu Dec 1:** H&K Chapter 10: Syntactic and Semantic Binding. Also Stalnaker, “Assertion.” (not in Martinich; to be handed out.)

**Th Dec 3, Tu Dec 8:** H&K Chapter 11: E-Type Anaphora.

**Th Dec 10:** H&K Chapter 12: First steps towards an intensional semantics.