

Semantics and Generative Grammar (LING610): Syllabus

Linguistics 610
Monday, Friday 11:15-12:30
Hasbrouck Add 104B
Course Instructor: Seth Cable

Course Website:
<http://people.umass.edu/scable/LING610-FA09>
E-mail: scable@linguist.umass.edu

1. General Overview

- This course introduces students to the techniques of semantic theory, as well as certain basic results of the field.
- Student will develop experience with a particular formal semantic system (Heim & Kratzer 1998), largely by learning how such a system can be adjusted and expanded in order to cover ever-larger domains of linguistic phenomena.
- These phenomena will largely be taken from English, our primary language of study, but comparisons (and extensions) to other languages will regularly be made.
- Through the development of this formal semantic system, students will gain a better understanding of how to ask and answer ‘semantic questions’, not only regarding their own language, but also ones for which they themselves are not speakers.

2. Course Requirements

2.1 *Weekly Problem Sets*

Each Friday, you will receive a problem set, which will be due the following Friday. The answers to the problem set will be discussed on the day that it is due.

2.2 *Snippets: Questions, Criticisms, ‘Hunches’, etc.*

In order to fully absorb the course material, it is crucial that you continually be critically engaged with it. For this reason, every Monday you will be required to submit some ‘snippet’ demonstrating engagement with the course material. This ‘snippet’ can take one of many forms:

- A question on the material
- A criticism of some argument or point made during class
- A ‘hunch’ regarding how something from class might apply to a new domain

This ‘snippet’ can be as little as a sentence. It must, however, show some kind of engagement with the course material. I will aim to have snippets returned with comments by the Friday of that week.

2.3 Take-Home Exams

There will be two take-home exams. The mid-term exam will be distributed on October 23rd, and due on October 30th. The final exam will be distributed on December 7th, and due December 18th.

While these exams will include some ‘mechanical exercises’, they will largely emphasize critical thinking and writing. You will be asked to apply the knowledge gained in class to novel empirical and analytic problems.

3. Textbook

There is one textbook required for this class, which should be available at the University book store:

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

In addition, I will post scanned excerpts from various other works, particularly the following:

- Gennaro Chierchia & Sally McConnell-Ginet. 2000. *Meaning and Grammar*, 2nd Edition. MIT Press.

Towards the end of the semester, I’ll also begin assigning excerpts from articles and other works. These will also be scanned and posted for you.

4. Outline of Course Content

4.1 *Basic Review of Sets and Functions*

Required Reading:

Heim & Kratzer: 3-11

Suggested Reading:

Chierchia & McConnell-Ginet: 529-540

Partee *et al.*: 3-36

4.2 *Formalizing “Meaning”*

- The overarching program of ‘formal semantics’
- First steps towards compositionality
- Basic sentences with intransitive verbs

Required Reading:

Heim & Kratzer: 1-12, 13-26

Suggested Reading

Chierchia & McConnell-Ginet: 1-33, 53-73, 99-104

4.3 *Expanding Our Formalism*

- Transitive verbs
- The system of ‘semantic types’
- The lambda notation for functions
- Some broader, syntactic consequences of this system

Required Reading:

Heim & Kratzer: 26-42, 43-53

4.4 *Further Elements of English*

- Semantically vacuous words
- Non-verbal predicates
- Prepositions
- The rule of 'Predicate Modification'
- Adjectives
- Definite DPs (and a little on presuppositions)

Required Reading:

Heim & Kratzer: 61-85

4.5 *The Semantics of Binding and Movement*

- The semantics of pronouns and indices
- Relative clauses, and the semantics of movement
- The semantics of bound pronouns and traces

Required Reading:

Heim & Kratzer: 86-115, 239-245

4.6 *The Semantics of Quantifiers*

- The semantic type of quantificational NPs
- Generalized quantifiers
- Formal properties of quantifiers
- The basics of NPI distribution

Required Reading:

Heim & Kratzer: 131-153

Chierchia & McConnell-Ginet: 501-505, 517-528

4.7 *QR and/or Type-Shifting*

- The basic problem: Quantifiers in object position
- Type shifting analyses
- QR analyses
- Some basic (non-decisive) arguments for QR over type-shifting
- More on the syntax of QR

Required Reading:

Heim & Kratzer: 178-188, 193-208, 209-230

4.8 *Plurals and Mass Nouns*

- The basics of the semantics of plurals
- Distributivity and collectivity
- The basics of quantification with plurals
- The basics of the semantics of mass nouns

Required Reading:

Lasnik, *to appear*

Excerpts from Schwarzschild 1996

4.11 *Towards an Intensional Semantics; Sentential Complementation*

- Cases where extensional semantics is not enough
- The formalization of intensions: Possible worlds and functions over them
- A basic ‘intensional semantics’
- Some over-arching weaknesses of the formalism

Required Reading:

Heim & Kratzer: 299-312
von Stechow 2007: Chapter 1

Recommended Reading

Chierchia & McConnell-Ginet: 258-266; 303-311

4.12 *The Basics of Modals*

- Basic puzzles surrounding modal auxiliaries in English
- Modals as quantifiers over possible worlds
- Separating the modal base from its quantificational force
- Cross-linguistic variation

Required Reading:

von Stechow 2007: Chapter 3
Chierchia & McConnell-Ginet: 294-302

Recommended Reading:

Kratzer 1977, 2008
Rullmann *et al.* 2008

4.13 *The Basics of Tense*

- The basics of tense semantics in an intensional framework
- Tense as quantifying over times
- Tense as referring to times
- Linguistic variation in tense

Required Reading:

Chierchia & McConnell-Ginet: 279-294
Matthewson 2006

5. Important Dates

Friday 9/25:	No Class (I will be away)
Monday 10/12:	No Class (Columbus Day)
Tuesday 10/13:	Class (Monday schedule)
Friday 10/23:	Mid-Term Exams Distributed
Friday 10/30:	Mid-Terms Due
Friday 11/6:	No Class (I will be away)
Friday 11/20:	No Class (I will be away)
Friday 11/27:	No Class (Thanksgiving)
Monday 12/7:	Final Exams Distributed
Friday 12/11:	Last Day of Class
Friday 12/18:	Final Exams Due
Monday 12/28:	Final Grades Go Out