Ling 305.01
Semantics
Fall 2020

Instructor: Elena Guerzoni
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Class times: TTWW 3434
Location: Zoom
Office Hours: By appointment
Teaching Assistant: Furkan Dikmen (furkan.dikmen@boun.edu.tr)
Textbooks*: Parts of Portner, H. Paul *What is Meaning? Fundamentals of Formal Semantics* Malden, MA: Blackwell, Heim & Kratzer *Semantics in Generative Grammar* Ch1 and Ch2., Chierchia & McConnel Ginet *Meaning and Grammar,* Victoria Fromkin et al. *Linguistics: An Introduction to Linguistic Theory.*among others.

Course Description

The primary objective of Semantics Theory is to provide an understanding of how human competent speakers of a given language come to comprehend the meaning of simple expressions (e.g. words, morphemes) or complex expressions (e.g. compounds, phrases, sentences, utterances) of their language and know how these expressions can be used in a given situation to convey information. This is highly complex and structured ability which requires a rigorous and formally explicit descriptive apparatus in order to be properly characterized.

The course offers both an introduction to some of the main facts and discoveries about meaning in natural language (the empirical domain) as well as an introduction to some of the descriptive tools/apparatus **(set theory, propositional and predicate logic, mathematical functions)** that semanticist use to understand them.

Course Requirements

1. **Readings.** The semantic literature requires a good deal of attention to detail. This is why the reading material assigned for each week will be relatively little but you will be expected to read it slowly and carefully and to make sure that you understand what you are reading.

   I will provide electronic copies of the relevant chapters or parts of chapters on line (in Moodle) on a weekly basis.

2. **Class attendance and participation**: because of the complexity of the course topic, attendance to the lectures is mandatory. Moreover, your active participation in class discussions is a requirement for this course. This notwithstanding, you should understand that sometimes I may need to interrupt class discussions on interesting but tangential topics (but you are welcome and encouraged to schedule individual meetings to have your questions addressed). **Class notes and handouts will n be posted on Moodle before class.**

3. **Homework assignments:** Semantics is best learned by doing problem sets!!! There will be up to **6 homework assignments**. These assignments will serve to test your understanding of the

material covered in class and help you keep up with readings and lectures. Furthermore, your answers will provide me with continuous and reliable feedback. It is absolutely not expected that you get everything right at the first try. What is essential is that you come to understand the solutions and my comments on your attempts before you move on to the next step. Given this, **the problem sets will be corrected but not graded** – i.e., full points will be given as long as every part of the assignment is completed and handed in on time. The problem sets are always due at the beginning of class on the due date, because some of them will be discussed at the beginning of the class on the date they are "due.".** If you miss class for any reason, it is your responsibility to find out whether a problem set has been assigned.**

Lateness policy: Points will be deducted from problem sets, which are handed in late, at the rate of 20% of the total score per day. (A problem set handed in on the due date, but after the beginning of class meeting, will have a 10% taken off).

Although there will be a good deal of exploratory discussion in class, **most of your actual learning will consolidate only as you work on your readings and homework assignments**.

4. **Exams.** There will be one midterm and one final exam covering different portions of the material.

Grading scheme:
Attendance and participation: 20%
Problem sets: 20%
Midterm: 30 %
Final: 30%

Preliminary Weekly Schedule (Subject to change)

Week 1   **Week 1 Introductory remarks:**
                Meaning, Truth and Truth Conditions

Week 2   **Set Theory Review**
                Compositionality and Semantic Relations

Week 3   **Simple Predication and Semantic Relations**

Week 4   **Complex Predicates: Negation and Coordination**

Week 5   **Modifiers and Context**

Weeks 6   **Quantifiers**

Week 7   **Quantifiers and Quantificational Determiners**

Week 8   Tuesday: **Midterm Review**
                Wednesday December 16: Midterm
                (The midterm will cover material discussed in weeks 1 to 7 included)

Week 9	**Complex Predicates II: Relations: Transitives and Determiners Introducing Functions**
Week 10	**Compositionality and Type Driven Semantics**
Week 11	**Definite Descriptions and Presuppositions**
Week 12	**Implicatures**
Week 13	**Implicatures**
Week 14	**Final Review**