

Semantics

Ling 305 – Fall 2021

Time MMWW-3434
Place Zoom

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Course Description

This course is a formal introduction to truth conditional compositional semantics of natural language. The course introduces some major concepts in the study of semantics as well as some formal tools (set theory, functions, propositional logic, predicate logic) used by semanticists to represent meaning and execute their program. The course also touches upon some alternative semantic frameworks and meaning representation systems like *Frame Semantics*, *ontologies*, and *embeddings*.

Course Learning Goals

- understanding the key intuitions behind truth conditional semantics
- understanding the semantic nature of some linguistic expressions (individuals, predicates, quantification, propositions) and the relations between them (entailment, implicature, presuppositions)
- understanding and implementing rigorous formal methods to derive the meaning of linguistic expressions compositionally

Reading

We will read sections from the following books:

- [1] Coppock, Elizabeth and Lucas Champollion. 2021. *Invitation to Formal Semantics*.
- [2] Portner, H. Paul. 2005. *What is Meaning? Fundamentals of Formal Semantics* Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Relevant sections will be posted on Moodle.

Course Requirements & Evaluation

| Evaluation Criteria | | Grade Catalog | |
|---------------------|-----|---------------|-------|
| Problem Sets | 40% | AA | ≥ 90% |
| Midterm Exam | 30% | BA | ≥ 85% |
| Final Exam | 30% | BB | ≥ 80% |
| | | CB | ≥ 75% |
| | | CC | ≥ 70% |
| | | DC | ≥ 60% |
| | | DD | ≥ 55% |
| | | F | ≤ 54% |

To pass the class, you must
take the midterm and the final exams.
score at least 55% on the final exam.

Formal orientation of the course requires a lot of practice. For this reason, you will get 6 problem sets. Problem sets are mainly feedback oriented. They will be leniently graded but feedback will be due. **Lowest 2 grades on the problem sets will be dropped.**

Exams are intended for measuring your achievement and they will be meticulously and fairly graded. Hence, there can be a gap between the grade distributions between the problem sets and the exams.

Course Schedule

| Week | Date | Topic | Assignment |
|------|----------------|---|------------------------|
| 1 | Oct. 6 | Intro, Syllabus, Overview | |
| 2 | Oct 11 - 13 | Truth Conditional Semantics Portner 1 - 2 | |
| 3 | Oct 18 - 20 | Inference: Entailment, Presupposition, Implicature Coppock & Champollion 1 | Problem Set 1 released |
| 4 | Oct 25 - 27 | Set Theory Review Coppock & Champollion 2 | Problem Set 2 released |
| 5 | Nov 1 - 3 | Propositional Logic Coppock & Champollion | |
| 6 | Nov 8 - 10 | Predication Portner 3 | Problem Set 3 released |
| 7 | Nov 15 - 17 | Modification Portner 4 | |
| 8 | Nov 22 - 24 | Review & Midterm Exam | |
| 9 | Nov 29 - Dec 1 | NPs, Referring Expressions, & Pronouns Portner 5 | Problem Set 4 released |
| 10 | Dec 6 - 8 | Quantifiers Portner 6 | Problem Set 5 released |
| 11 | Dec 13 - 15 | Compositionality & Type Driven Semantics | |
| 12 | Dec 20 - 22 | Questions | Problem Set 6 released |
| 13 | Dec 27 - 29 | Alternative Semantic Models Lexical Semantics, AMR, Embeddings | |
| 14 | Jan 3 | Review | |

The schedule is tentative and subject to change. We will shift gears depending on how the semester unfolds.

Please, make sure your email registered in ÖBİKAS is in use. It is your responsibility to keep track of the email announcements.

Policies

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory. Any student who misses five or more classes is considered to have “missed more than an occasional class”. Students who must, for any reason, miss more than an occasional class should consult with their instructors directly.

Lateness Policy

Late assignments will be accepted until

1. an answer key is released,
2. the answers are discussed in a problem session,
3. or feedback (for other students) is released.

5% will be deducted from your grade for each late day. Rich feedback is not guaranteed for late assignments.

If you are ill and missed the deadline, you will be asked to provide proof of illness (doctor’s report).

If you know you will miss a deadline due to a family, cultural, or religious observance, it is your responsibility to contact the instructor early in the semester. You should arrange to take an alternative assessment, or to submit the assignment on another date.

Academic Integrity

Students are expected to know and follow Boğaziçi University policies on Academic Integrity:

- Student Rights and Responsibilities

Discussion on problem sets is allowed and encouraged. However, each student must write their own answers. No copy-paste is allowed. All instances of plagiarism will be reported.

Disability Services

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should reach out to the instructor as well as:

- Students with Disabilities Unit
- Engelli Öğrenciler Danışma Ve Koordinasyon Birimi

Useful Links

Department of Linguistics: <https://linguistics.boun.edu.tr>