

LIN341 - Semantic Theory

September - December 2021
Department of Linguistics, University of Toronto

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1 General information

Instructor: Guillaume Thomas
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Office Hours: TBD
Office: Sidney Smith, Room 4087
Lectures: Thursday 13-16
Lecture room: SS 1074

2 Course description

This course is an advanced introduction to the study of meaning in generative linguistics. After reviewing the goals and fundamental concepts of truth-conditional compositional semantics, we will present a framework for the analysis of the interface between syntax and semantics known as type driven semantic composition. We will then explore various issues in the semantics of English in this framework. While doing so, we will pay close attention to how research problems are formulated and solved in semantics. In other words, we will learn how to think as semanticists. Compared to LIN241, there will be more emphasis on motivating semantic analyses with rigorous argumentation.

Prerequisite: LIN241

3 Course Outcomes

By the end of the course, you should be able to:

- Explain the goals of truth conditional compositional semantics and its place in generative linguistics.
- Formulate analyses of simple English sentences using the semantic theory presented in this course.
- Motivate these analyses using rigorous argumentation.
- Start reading research papers written in this framework.

This course will give you an opportunity to practice skills of argumentation (motivating semantic analyses in plain English), logical reasoning (reasoning about the entailments of English sentences and of their meaning representations in a formal language) and qualitative modeling (using tools like first order logic, the lambda calculus and syntactic trees to model the structure and interpretation of sentences of English).

4 Course materials

We will use of the following textbook:

Elizabeth Coppock & Lucas Champollion. 2021. Invitation to Formal Semantics. Draft Textbook (August 20, 2021 version).

<http://eecoppock.info/bootcamp/semantics-boot-camp.pdf>

We will also use the Lambda Calculator software, which can be downloaded at the following URL:

<http://lambdacalculator.com/>

Lucas Champollion, Joshua Tauberer and Maribel Romero. 2007. "The Penn Lambda Calculator: Pedagogical Software for Natural Language Semantics", in T. Holloway King and E. M. Bender (eds.), Proceedings of the Grammar Engineering across Frameworks (GEAF) 2007 Workshop, July 13-15 2007. CSLI On-line Publications

5 Evaluation

4 homework assignments	40%
Midterm test	30%
Final exam	30%

Graded homework: There will be four graded homework assignments. These assignments will be posted on Quercus on Thursday after the lecture, and will be due on Quercus the next Thursday before the lecture (except homework assignment 3, which will be assigned on November 4 and due on November 18, after reading week).

Homework assignments count for 40% of the final grade. The term grade for homework assignment will be the average of the 4 assignments.

Late homework will not be accepted. Missed homework will be assigned a mark of zero unless you have an acceptable and documented (e.g. medical) reason for not submitting it.

Policy on collaboration for homework assignments: Homework assignments are individual. Sharing assignment answers will be treated as a breach of academic integrity.

Midterm test: There will be one midterm test worth 30%, on October 28 (as indicated on the course schedule).

Student responsibilities: Attendance, preparedness and participation are expected on weekly meetings. Students are expected to study any assigned readings before the corresponding lecture. Students are also responsible for turning in assignments on time. More detailed information and instructions on homework assignments will be posted on Quercus.

6 Important dates

September 9: classes begin.

November 8-12: Reading Week.

December 8: Classes end in F section code courses and in Y section code courses (for Fall session)

December 9: Make up Day (we will have a lecture on that day!)

7 Tentative calendar

Date of lecture	Wednesday
Week 1 - Sept. 9	Foundations, Sets and Functions (CC ch. 1-2)
Week 2 - Sept. 23	Propositional Logic (CC ch. 3) HW1 assigned
Week 3 - Sept. 30	Predicate Logic (CC ch. 4)
Week 4 - Oct. 7	Type-driven interpretation (CC ch. 5, 6.1-6.2)
Week 5 - Oct. 14	Modifiers: Adjectives and Relative clauses (CC ch. 7.1-7.3, 7.5) HW2 assigned
Week 6 - Oct. 21	Quantifiers (CC ch. 6.3-6.4, 7.4)
Week 7 - Oct. 28	Midterm test
Week 8 - Nov. 4	Presuppositions and Definiteness (CC ch. 8) HW3 assigned
Week 9 - Nov. 18	Dynamic Semantics (CC ch. 9)
Week 10 - Nov. 25	Coordination and Plurals (CC ch. 10) HW4 assigned
Week 11 - Dec. 2	Event Semantics (CC ch. 11)
Week 12 - Dec. 9	Tense and Aspect (CC ch. 12)

CC: Coppock & Champollion (2020), *Invitation to Formal Semantics*.

vFH: von Stechow & Heim (2011), *Intensional Semantics*.

8 Absence declaration

If you must miss a deadline due an emergency, please inform the instructor and complete an Absence Declaration tool in ACORN:

<https://www.acorn.utoronto.ca/>

Note that you do not have to provide details about the nature of your emergency to the instructor: please only inform the instructor that an emergency prevents you from completing an assignment on time.

9 Academic integrity

Students are expected to understand university policy on academic dishonesty, and to be familiar with the MLA guidelines on plagiarism. Cheating, plagiarism, or representing other people's work as your own will severely affect your academic standing. Note that the homework assignments are bundled together so that any cheating (e.g., copying, allowing someone else to see your work, etc.) on one assignment will affect the entire homework component of your grade and may result in more serious consequences being imposed by the university. All suspected cases of academic dishonesty will be forwarded to the Department of Linguistics and the Office of Student Academic Integrity. For information on what constitutes an academic offence, you can visit the following link:

<https://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/current/academic-advising-and-support/student-academic-integrity/academic-misconduct>

You might also consult the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters at:

<http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm>

For information on "How Not to Plagiarize," please see:

<http://advice.writing.utoronto.ca/using-sources/>

10 Grading policy

The Department of Linguistics follows the University Assessment and Grading Practices Policy. For more information on this policy, see the document at the following link:

<https://www.linguistics.utoronto.ca/undergraduate-programs/grading-policy>

<http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/Assets/Governing+Council+Digital+Assets/Policies/PDF/grading.pdf>

11 Learning resources & academic support

Below are some links that you might find helpful in supporting your learning in this course.

Academic Success Centre: “The Academic Success Centre is dedicated to making sure you achieve your highest possible learning potential. [...] We invite students from across the university community to make use of our services.” Website:

<https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/departments/academic-success/>

Accessibility: The University of Toronto is committed to accessibility. If you require accommodations or have any accessibility concerns, please visit:

<https://hrandequity.utoronto.ca/inclusion/accessibility/>

Writing Support: If you would like more information about resources to support your academic writing skills, visit the following webpage:

<http://www.writing.utoronto.ca>

Additionally, you can book an appointment to visit a Writing Centre on campus. For information on Writing Centres, visit the following link:

<http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/writing-centres>

Tutoring: The Linguistics Graduate Course Union, or LGCU (the Union of graduate students in the Department of Linguistics), offers tutoring service at an hourly rate of \$25. Tutors are graduate students in the department. Tutoring services are not guaranteed, as they depend on there being graduate students interested in being a tutor. For more information on tutoring, visit the following link:

<https://www.linguistics.utoronto.ca/curriculum-course-information/tutoring>

Tutors will not provide answers to assigned homework. Please note that tutors are not individually approved or endorsed by the course instructor or the department.