Semantics I

Rutgers University, Fall 2014

Tu 4:30 – 5:50, Fr 11:30 – 12:50

18 Seminary Pl, Room 108

Instructor: Simon Charlow (simon.charlow@rutgers.edu)
Office: 18 Seminary Pl, Room 302
Office hours: By appointment
Class website: simoncharlow.com/courses/f14/sem1

1 Overview/course description

This course is an introduction to formal semantics in the generative tradition. The subject matter is the principles that allow humans to pair linguistic form with meaning and the theoretical techniques that guide and organize research into semantic questions. My aims are to familiarize you with what everyone doing work in linguistics (or work where linguistics is relevant) should know about the basic techniques and insights of formal semantics, and to equip people who want to specialize in semantics and/or related fields to continue on with more advanced classes. We'll spend some time coming to grips with the basic mathematical techniques semanticists use (set theory, relations and functions, generalized quantifiers, lambdas, etc.). We'll look at some of the big questions and central fault lines in formal semantics, and you'll learn to critically read and respond to semantic argumentation. When the course is through, you'll have the foundation you need to move on to Semantics II (if you wish) and to read a good portion of primary literature in the field.

2 Readings/texts

There will be weekly reading assignments. The reading assignments, along with the readings themselves, will be posted on the course website in a password-protected folder. Readings will be drawn both from textbooks (e.g. Heim & Kratzer 1998, Allwood et al. 1977) and the primary literature. There are **no required texts** for the course. (Nevertheless, I very much encourage you to buy your own copy of Heim & Kratzer 1998. It's hard to overstate the importance, usefulness, or clarity of this textbook. It's around $35 on Amazon.)

3 Requirements

- Most importantly, I ask that you do the assigned reading in advance of each class, come prepared to discuss the reading, and participate.

- There will also be regular written work (i.e. problem sets). Collaboration on assignments is allowed and encouraged, but please write up your answers individually. Assignments will be given at the end of the week and due at the beginning of the following class.

- A short squib (5pp or less) is due at the end of the term. Squibs should couple an empirical observation with a concrete analysis. We'll reserve the last one or two meetings of the class for squib presentations.

4 Plan

Notes on scheduling:

- I'll be out of town Sept 26. We'll reschedule, subject to folks' availability.

- The week before Thanksgiving has some changes: Tuesday's class is cancelled. Friday's class is on Wednesday (same time and place).

The schedule here is ambitious (therefore, subject to change).

Week	Topic	Day 1	Day 2
1	Compositionality, implicature and presupposition	Sep 2	Sep 5
2	Sets, relations, functions, Currying	Sep 9	Sep 12
3	Modification, type theory, lambdas	Sep 16	Sep 19
4	Variables, abstraction, relative clauses	Sep 23	**Sep 25**
5	Quantification, LF/QR, scope and binding	Sep 30	Oct 3
6	Type-shifting, quantifying into XP, constraining QR	Oct 7	Oct 10
7	Binding, ellipsis, parallels between pronouns and tense	Oct 14	Oct 17
8	Event semantics and argument structure	Oct 21	Oct 24
9	Plurals	Oct 28	Oct 31
10	Dynamic semantics for anaphora	Nov 4	Nov 7
11	Dynamics semantics for presupposition	Nov 11	Nov 14
12	Indefinites and disjunction	Nov 18	Nov 21
13	Focus, questions, information structure	**Nov 26**	**no class**
14	Student squib presentations / buffer	Dec 2	Dec 5
15	Buffer	Dec 9	**no class**