Causation in Semantics and Grammatical Structure   Winter 2019/2020

INSTRUCTOR	Dr. Prerna Nadathur (prerna.nadathur@phil.hhu.de)
OFFICE	24.53.00.87
CLASS SCHEDULE	Thursday 16.30-18.00
CLASS LOCATION	24.21.U1.21 (Z50)
COURSE WEBSITE	`pnadathur.github.io/causation-winter19.html`
	All course materials will be posted on the website.

DESCRIPTION

In communicating our knowledge of causal relationships between events in the world, language represents our primary encoding. The structure and expression of causation in language is therefore of interest to linguists, philosophers, and cognitive scientists seeking to understand how causal information is represented in cognition. This course surveys a range of literature on the semantics and grammatical structure of causation, examining both the expression of causation in a cross-linguistic perspective, as well as theoretical approaches to modeling different types of causal connections. Topics include causative verbs and morphology, agentive and non-agentive causation, causal event structure, and causal models in the study of counterfactual conditionals and lexical semantic representation.

COURSE AIMS

This course is intended for students of linguistics, or the philosophy of language, who have some background in semantics and pragmatics. It aims to familiarize them with the literature on causation in semantics and grammar, introduce them to active areas of research, and provide them with the tools to investigate and ask questions about causation in a semantic framework. The course is structured around reading and discussion. It is assumed that attendees have completed the assigned reading prior to class. Please see below for policies regarding credit points and the Abschlussprüfung.

POLICIES

(i) **Readings.** Readings should be completed before the class for which they are assigned. All readings can be downloaded from the course webpage. To access the reading list, you will need the course password: `lukeminen`.

(ii) **Assignments.** You are asked to complete short weekly reading responses (1–2 pages). You should pick one of the assigned readings and provide a short summary, and then focus on a particular claim or idea it introduces: you might either present some reasons to be critical of the claim, suggest a way of further investigating this claim, or contrast it with other ideas in the relevant literature. You might also discuss some questions raised by the paper or article.
Reading responses should be submitted by email or on paper in class or in the department office (24.53.00.86). Responses are due by beginning of the class for which the reading was assigned. Late responses will not be accepted. Note that if you submit them by midday

on the previous day (Wednesday), it may be possible for me to incorporate your questions into the lecture/discussion, so you are encouraged to consider submitting your responses early.

(iii) **Participation.** To receive credit points (Kreditpunkten, Beteiligungsnachweis) for participation, you must complete 10 reading responses throughout the course. (Note that this means there are three weeks in which you need not submit a response: it is entirely up to you to choose which weeks you do not complete responses.)

(iv) **Final exam/Abschlussprüfung.** In order to qualify for the AP, you must complete a final paper (8–12 pages). You can apply for the AP using the appropriate forms for your course of study, available in the linguistics department office (24.53.00.86). The final paper may either be a critical review of an approved paper, or represent an original contribution (descriptive or theoretical). You should submit a short proposal for your paper topic to me at latest by the final lecture (30.01.2020).

(v) **Language.** Lectures and any supplementary materials will be in English. You are strongly encouraged to complete the reading responses in English: you will NOT be penalised for grammatical mistakes. If you would strongly prefer to complete your responses in German, please let me know in advance so that I can make arrangements for you to receive feedback. If you intend to apply for the AP and wish to write your final paper in German, please let me know by 19 December.

(vi) **Academic integrity.** Academic dishonesty and plagiarism are strictly prohibited. You are welcome to use the library, textbooks, journal articles, and other resources, but you *must* cite any sources that you use. Quoted material in particular must be attributed, including page numbers where possible. You are welcome to discuss the readings with other students, but you must write up your responses independently, in your own words. You may NOT work with other students on the final exam.

(vii) **Electronic devices.** As a courtesy to other students, please do not use cell phones during class. You may use a laptop to take notes.

COURSE PLAN (subject to revision)

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1. Introduction and course overview   10.10.2019

2. Formal basics, lexical decomposition   17.10.2019
   Reading: Dowty 1979 (excerpts from Ch. 2); Fodor 1970; McCawley 1978 *Response due*

3. Typology of causative constructions   24.10.2019
   Reading: Comrie 1989 (Ch. 8); Shibatani 1976a   *Response due*

4. Direct and indirect causation   31.10.2019
   Reading: Wolff 2003; Neeleman & van de Koot 2012   *Response due*

5. The causative alternation   07.11.2019
   Reading: Levin 2015 (Secs. 1, 2, 5); Levin & Rappaport Hovav 1994   *Response due*
   Optional: Schäfer 2009

6. The causative alternation   14.11.2019
   Reading: Alexiadou et al. 2006; Rappaport Hovav 2014   *Response due*

7. Internal and external causation   21.11.2019
   Reading: McKoon & MacFarland 2000; Wright 2002   *Response due*

8. Agentive causation   28.11.2019
   Reading: DeLancey 1984, Van Valin & Wilkins 1996; Kittilä 2005   *Response due*

9. Causal event structure   05.12.2019
   Reading: Demirdache & Martin 2016; Lyutikova & Tatevosov 2014;   *Response due*
   Tatevosov & Ivanov 2009

10. Models of causal meaning   12.12.2019
    Reading: Lewis 1973; Hobbs 2005; Copley & Wolff 2014   *Response due*
    Optional: Woodward 2003

11. Structural equation models   19.12.2019
    Reading: Sloman 2005; Croft 1991   *Response due*

12. Causal models continued   09.01.2020
    Reading: Ciardelli et al 2017; Lauer & Nadathur 2019; Martin 2018   *Response due*

13. Force dynamics   16.01.2020
    Reading: Sloman et al 2009; Copley & Harley 2014   *Response due*
    Optional: Wolff 2014

14. Beyond causatives   23.01.2020
    Reading: Baglini & Francez 2016; Alonso-Ovalle & Hsieh 2017;   *Response due*
    Hara 2017

15. Review, project discussions   30.01.2020
    Topic proposals due (last day)

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