Topics in Semantics: Causation (Linguistics 290B, Berkeley) Fall Semester 2020

INSTRUCTOR	Prerna Nadathur (pnadathur@berkeley.edu)
OFFICE HOURS	By appointment
CLASS SCHEDULE	M/Th 1:00-2:29pm
COURSE WEBSITE	`https://bcourses.berkeley.edu/courses/1496871` 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 or psychology 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: students will be expected to participate actively during class, to lead discussion of an assigned paper, and to complete one short midterm paper responding to a particular reading or topic, and a longer final paper containing an original contribution (which can be descriptive, experimental, or theoretical).

ASSESSMENT AND POLICIES

Attendance	Since this class is discussion-oriented, attendance is important! Please let me know if you need to miss a session; we may be able to reschedule.
Rubric	Participation (attendance and class discussion, ~20%) Paper presentations (lead class discussion of two readings, ~20%) Summary/overview of final paper topic (~10%) Final presentation (in-class presentation of final paper topic, ~10%) Final paper (8-12 pages, containing original contribution, ~40%)

1. Introduction, background (lexical decomposition)   Weeks 1–2
   Reading: Dowty 1979 (excerpts), Fodor 1970, McCawley 1978

2. Causativization, typology of causative constructions   Weeks 3–4
   Reading: Comrie 1989 (Ch. 8), Shibatani 1976, Wierzbicka 1998, Haspelmath 1993

3. The causative alternation   Week 5
   Reading: Levin 2015, Levin & Rappaport Hovav 1994, Piñón 2001

4. Direct and indirect causation   Weeks 6–7
   Reading: Neeleman & van de Koot 2012, Wolff 2003, Martin 2018, Jerro 2019

5. Internal and external causation   Weeks 8–9
   Reading: McKoon & MacFarland 2000, Wright 2002, Koontz-Garboden 2008, Samardzić & Merlo (2018), Alexiadou (2014)

6. Agentivity and causation   Weeks 10–11
   Reading: DeLancey 1984, Beavers & Zubair 2013, Kittilä 2005, Alonso-Ovalle & Hsieh 2017

7. Causal event structure and (non)culmination   Weeks 12–13
   Reading: Croft 1991 (excerpts), Danlos 2001, Demirdache & Martin 2016, Tatevosov & Ivanov 2009, Lyutikova & Tatevosov 2014, Copley & Harley 2014, Kroeger 2017

8. Causal models, counterfactuals, lexical semantics   Weeks 14–15
   Reading: Sloman 2005 (excerpts), Lewis 1973, Copley & Wolff 2014, Schulz 2011, Henderson 2011, Briggs 2012, Hobbs 2003, Sloman et al 2009, Baglini & Francez 2016, Hara 2017, Nadathur & Lauer 2020

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