Official Semantics & Pragmatics syllabus

*Linguistics 4090 – Semantics & Pragmatics*

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http://www-personal.umich.edu/~jlawler/hajpapers.html
Squibnet is at http://www-personal.umich.edu/~jlawler/haj/Squibnet/


The good news: Any tests will be open book – any books or other materials may be brought to the tests. More likely, they will be take-home. You will be able to consult more there than you can carry.

The bad news: None of your materials will help much, if you have not learned to think for yourself about the course. This course is not about memorization of a set of concepts and definitions. Rather, what is required is a general openness of mind, and the exercise of intelligence and creativity. What is not required, but is fervently hoped for, is that you become fascinated with language in general and meaning in particular, and find that you cannot live without it. [BTW: you can’t]

Grading policy: To be discussed in class. Unreasonable numbers of unexcused absences may result in grade deflation.
Disabilities: In accordance with the terms and spirit of Public Law 101-336 (Americans with Disabilities Act) and Section 504, Rehabilitation Act, I will cooperate with the Office of Disability Accommodation to make reasonable special arrangements for students with disabilities. If you have a disability which will require some accommodation under the terms of these acts, please come to me and discuss your individual needs, or give me a written statement. If you have not registered yet with the Office of Disability Accommodation, I encourage you to do so. Their telephone number is (940) 565-4323; TDD access (940) 565 2958.

General: Insofar as this is possible, nothing is written in stone. No significant learning is possible in contexts which are not as kind and flexible as possible. We are all humans, trying to learn from each other. If there are special problems for you, come and talk to me about them.

- It is in fact nothing short of a miracle that modern methods of instruction have not yet entirely strangled the holy curiosity of inquiry; for this delicate little plant, aside from stimulation, stands warmly in need of freedom; without this, it goes to wrack and ruin without fail.

  Albert Einstein

- The most beautiful experience we can have is the mysterious. It is the fundamental emotion that stands at the cradle of true art and true science.

  Albert Einstein

*The World As I See It*

"I never try to teach my students anything. I only try to create an environment in which they can learn."

Albert Einstein
Section I – Semantics – the Study of Meaning

Week 1. Basic distinctions

1st class: Propositions. Lexical semantics vs. function words. Notations for coding meaning contrasts.

Homework: Read Lawler on Semantics, Saeed Chapter 1.

Week 2. Basics of sentential (first-order) and modal logic

3rd class: Basic connectives: and, or, not, if, possible, necessary
4th class: DeMorgan’s Law and truth tables. Modus ponens.

Homework: Read Saeed Chapter 2, Grice.

Week 3. Interpropositional relations

5th class: Presupposition and entailment. Factivs.

Homework: Read Saeed Chapter 3.

Week 4. Basic tools for lexical analysis

8th class: Polysemy and homonymy. Etymology.

Homework: Read Saeed Chapter 4.

Week 5. Semantic change

9th class: Dictionaries. Etymology.
10th class: Grammaticalization. Universal pathways of change.

Homework: Read Saeed Chapter 4, Hopper.

Week 6. Markedness

11th class: Center / periphery (a.k.a. unmarked / marked)

Homework: Read Saeed Chapter 5, Greenberg, Ross on paths.

Week 7. World order

13th class: Squishes and non-discrete linguistics.
14th class: Freezes. Sounding.

Homework: Read Saeed Chapter 6, Cooper and Ross, Ross on sounding. Lakoff and Johnson Chapters 1 and 2
Week 8. Metaphor and other tropes

15th class: Unmetaphoring. Seeing the world into pages.
16th class: Coexisting metaphorical structurings in a domain.
Homework: Read Saeed Chapter 7, Lakoff and Johnson Chapters 3-4, Lakoff on the contemporary theory of metaphor.

Midterm.

Week 9. Syntax “and” semantics

17th class: Generative semantics / Interpretive semantics. Auxiliaries as verbs. The remote structure of actions. Predicate Raising. What was wrong with Generative Semantics (§)?
18th class: Logical categories and deep syntactic categories. What nouns are for, what verbs are for, what adjectives are for.
Homework: Read Saeed Chapter 8, Postal, Huck & Goldsmith.

Section II – Pragmatics – How we use language

Week 10. Speech acts

19th class: Austin. The performative hypothesis.
20th class: Derived force rules. Pragmantax.
Homework: Read Saeed Chapter 9, Ross on declaratives, Ross on where to do things with words.

Week 11. Information flow.

22nd class: Questions and answers. Conjunctive and disjunctive \(wh\)-clauses
Homework: Read Saeed Chapter 10, Givón, Ross on Conjunctive and disjunctive \(wh\)-clauses

Week 12. The architecture of emphasis

23rd class: Cleft and pseudocleft sentences.
24th class: Left and right dislocation. Left and right deictic dislocation.
Homework: Read Saeed Chapter 11, Prince, Ross on frozenness.

Week 13. Interpersonal relations

25th class: Politeness. Gender.
26th class: The N-word. “Correctness.”
Homework: Read Robin Lakoff on Women’s language, Labov on African-American Vernacular English.
Week 14. Poetics and ineffability

27th class: The art of fusion. The space of creation.
28th class: The great Roman Jakobson.
Homework: Read Jakobson on verbal art, Ross on hologramming & languages as poems, Becker on silence

Week 15. Review, summary, prospects.

29th class: The Great Pete Becker. Language and world view.
30th class What we have learned so far. So what? Next steps? TAKE-HOME FINAL.

Readings

Givón, Talmy. 1983. Topic Continuity in Discourse - A quantitative cross-language study
Lakoff, Robin. 1975. Language and Woman's Place. ISBN 0195167570

**Academic integrity**

It is your responsibility to become familiar with UNT’s Academic Dishonesty Policies: [http://vpaa.unt.edu/academic-integrity.htm](http://vpaa.unt.edu/academic-integrity.htm)

This policy defines the following forms of academic dishonesty:

- Cheating intentionally using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, or study aids in any academic exercise. The term academic exercise includes all forms of work submitted for credit or hours.
- Plagiarism the deliberate adoption or reproduction of ideas, words, or statements of another person as one’s own without acknowledgment.
- Fabrication intentional and unauthorized falsification or invention of any information or citation in an academic exercise.
- Facilitating academic dishonesty intentionally or knowingly helping or attempting to help another to violate a provision of the institutional code of academic integrity.

If any course material is submitted that violates this policy of academic dishonesty, the assignment will receive a grade of "F" and appropriate judicial action will be filed. This action includes a report of academic misconduct to your college Dean and possible dismissal from The University of North Texas. There are no first-offense warnings regarding plagiarism.

It is expected that plagiarism and the correct use (citation) of other’s ideas (including print, digital, images, and other media) are fully understood. Contact me if you are ever confused about what constitutes academic dishonesty.
Misunderstandings, miscommunication, oversights, or lack of comprehension as to what constitutes academic dishonesty is not accepted in this course.

**NB:**

Furthermore, with respect to citing from the internet or from published works, I am not interested in your skills in using search engines, or your finding relevant quotes via library searches or other methods. **I am only interested in the contents of your own mind.**

Therefore, if you paste from the internet, or copy word-for-word from some other source, even if you correctly identify all sources, I will only count this copied material as a valid answer if it is accompanied by your own words, explaining how you understand the material. Without your own explanations, quoted material will receive a zero.