COGSCIL 6AS3: Advanced semantics
Winter 2023 Syllabus

Instructor: Dr. I. Kučerová
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Course website: http://avenue.mcmaster.ca/

Course objectives:

This course examines advanced issues in formal semantics, investigating in more depth and more formal rigour issues of compositional semantics introduced in LING 3II3. Students will learn how to build a formal theory, how to work with a formal language, and how to use these formal tools to uncover the compositional underpinning of natural languages. This is going to be an interactive class, with parts of the content delivered in a lecture form but with a significant focus on exercises done individually and in small work groups. We will work toward a safe learning space to create the best learning environment for students in class.

Textbook:

Heim, Irene and Angelika Kratzer. 1998. Semantics in generative grammar. Oxford: Blackwell.

Method of Assessment:

This class will be a combination of lectures and seminars. Students will be required to actively participate in the class, submit several written assignments. To provide more flexibility, the lowest mark on the assignments will be dropped. There will be a take-home final exam.

EVALUATION CRITERIA:
10% – active class participation & groupwork
50% – weekly or bi-weekly written assignments (the lowest mark will be dropped)
20% – take-home final exam
20% – term paper
100% – Total

Course policy on missed work, extensions, and late penalties:

Late assignments will be graded 0. Only assignments submitted online will be accepted. Even though some class-work will be in small groups, only individual work will be accepted for the evaluation. If you are not sure what counts as individual work, do not hesitate to ask the instructor for help with determining the boundaries.

This course is mainly problem-solving oriented. The problem sets are designed to develop your analytical abilities by letting you do what linguists actually do. Homework is extremely important – you learn by doing, not just by listening or reading. Homework will invite you to use the information you learned in class and/or read in your book in actual problems in a creative manner. Be prepared to work ahead. Start your homework early. This way you have time to discuss it with your classmates, in class, in online discussion groups or during office hours.

The term paper should be either a squib or a literature overview paper. The expected length is about 15 pages, and the paper should work with minimally 2 primary papers.

Topics and readings (subject to change):

Week	Begins	Topic	Reading assignment
Week 1	Jan. 9	Truth-conditional semantics; λ-notation	chtp. 1
Week 2	Jan. 16	Type-driven interpretation	chpt. 3
Week 3	Jan. 23	Modifiers	chpt. 4
Week 4	Jan. 30	Definite articles; Presupposition failure	chpt. 4
Week 5	Feb. 6	Variables;	chpt. 5
Week 6	Feb. 13	Variable binding	chpt. 5
Week 7	Feb. 20	midterm recess	n/a
Week 8	Feb. 27	Variables continued	chpt. 5
Week 9	March 6	Quantifiers	chpt. 6
Week 10	March 13	Presuppositional quantifiers	chpt. 7
Week 11	March 20	Quantification and grammar	chtp. 8
Week 12	March 27	Constrains on QR	chpt. 8
Week 13	April 3	Scraps & review	n/a