LING 53, Semantics 1
Course Description & Syllabus
Fall 2018

1 Organizational matters

• Class: MonWedFri 10:40 AM – 11:45 AM, Merrill Acad 102

• Instructor: Adrian Brasoveanu

• Teaching Assistants: Jérémie Beauchamp, Jed Pizarro-Guevara

• Sections:
  – Jérémie Beauchamp:
    A: Wed 04:00PM-05:05PM Steven Acad 152
    B: Th 08:30AM-09:35AM Soc Sci 2 179
  – Jed Pizarro-Guevara:
    C: Th 01:30PM-02:35PM Crown Clrm 202
    D: Th 03:20PM-04:25PM Kresge Acad 194

  Sections for this class are mandatory.

Office hours

• Adrian Brasoveanu: Fri, 8:45-9:45 am and by appointment, Stevenson 259
  abrsvn@ucsc.edu

• Jérémie Beauchamp: Tu 1:00PM–2:00PM, Stevenson 269
  jebeauch@ucsc.edu

• Jed Pizarro-Guevara: Th 12:00PM–1:00PM, Stevenson 237
  jpguevar@ucsc.edu

Web access

• There is a Canvas site for this course. To access it, go to:
  https://canvas.ucsc.edu/.

• The syllabus, problem sets, and handouts are posted under FILES. CHECK REGULARLY for updates, e.g., before/after each class, every day an assignment will/might be posted etc.
Biweekly schedule for assignments

• Assignments are due on Fridays in weeks 2, 4, 6, 8 and 10 (unless otherwise specified, e.g., because of Thanksgiving, one assignment is due 2 days earlier on a Wednesday), at the beginning of the class, i.e., print them, solve them and bring them to class on their due date.

• Please write legibly (typing your assignments would be best): if the grader cannot read your assignment, you will get 0 points for it.

Important note

If you qualify for classroom accommodations because of a disability, please get an Accommodation Authorization from the Disability Resource Center (DRC) and submit it to me in person outside of class (e.g., office hours) within the first two weeks of the quarter. Contact DRC at 459-2089 (voice) and/or go to http://drc.ucsc.edu for more information on the requirements and/or process.

2 General Description

The course is an introduction to the study of linguistic meaning. When we investigate how language is used in communication, we recognize two interacting systems:

a. the semantic system, which is part of our knowledge of the language we speak

b. the pragmatic principles that guide our interpretation of language in actual situations of use

This course is concerned with both the semantic and the pragmatic aspects of language understanding. Our goal is to investigate aspects of the semantic structure of English within the framework of an explicit theory of linguistic meaning. We will, however, make reference to other languages as we go along, though knowledge of another language is not required.

We begin with the pragmatic side, by distinguishing among different layers of meaning that an utterance conveys. We then move on to explore the basic meaning of verbs and the way the meaning of sentences is constructed from the meaning of their parts. We end with issues concerning reference and discourse. In talking about the meaning of sentences, we use the logical language of predicate calculus to help us arrive at a compositional account of the truth conditions of English sentences.

No previous work in linguistics is presupposed.

3 Course Requirements

The learning (and grading) tools are: lectures, section meetings, more or less biweekly problem sets.

• Class attendance is a necessary part of this course, especially since the class has no textbook. Reading the posted notes is crucial but does not substitute for class attendance. Speaking up in class is strongly encouraged. If you cannot make a class, it is
your responsibility to find out from a classmate what happened in the class you missed. Handouts will be posted on the Canvas site the night before class or the day of class. Reading them is important but does not substitute for class attendance.

- The teaching assistants conduct mandatory section meetings (attendance will be taken). Students usually find sections for this course particularly useful in helping them understand the material. The purpose of the sections is to go over homework problems in detail and to discuss whatever issues you feel need further attention. If you cannot make any of the sections, that might prove to be a significant problem. Please talk to your instructor as soon as possible about that.

- Written work for the course consists of more or less biweekly problem sets, posted and due according to the biweekly schedule above. Homeworks will NOT be handed out in class. Homework should NOT be submitted by email—it must be submitted in person at the beginning of the class (on the day it is due). Again: please write legibly.

- It is an excellent idea to form study groups and discuss the problem sets in your meetings. However, **YOU SHOULD WRITE UP THE ASSIGNMENTS ON YOUR OWN**. If you do form study groups, please list the people you discussed the problem set with at the beginning of the assignment. Turning in identical homeworks counts as plagiarism for all students involved.

- Homework policy: no late homework is accepted unless by prior arrangement (or because of a health problem properly documented to the satisfaction of the instructor). A student who misses more than 2 assignments automatically fails the course.

- There will be no midterm or final for this class.

**Grade calculation**

- Course & section attendance and participation: 10%.

- Completing 5 problem sets (assigned biweekly, starting in the 2nd week of classes): 90% (18% per problem set).

- Possible extra-credit opportunity: TBD; if applicable, it will be announced around the 3rd or 4th week of classes.

Grading procedure for problem sets:

- There will be 5 problems sets.

- Problems sets will be graded on a 0–100 point scale; the number of points associated with each problem will be explicitly listed.

- The percentage of the final grade that a given problem set represents is 18%.

**4 Course structure (subject to change)**

The following is a general outline of the progress of the course. Details are subject to change.
1: Introduction (Week 1)
What is this course about?

2: Relations between sentences (Week 2, 3)
What do we commit to when we say something?
- pragmatic implicature, entailment, presupposition
- tests for distinguishing between implicatures, entailments, presuppositions

3: Verb meaning (Week 4)
How do we know who does what to whom?
- event typology, semantic roles, aspectual classes

4: Logical semantics (Weeks 5–9)
- what is the meaning of \textit{and}? \\
- what is the meaning of \textit{every}? \\
- propositional logic and sentential connectives \\
- predicate logic and quantification in natural language (very briefly if at all)

5: Morphological details (Weeks 9, 10)
- semantics of number, tense, aspect and (in)definiteness (very briefly if at all)

6: Back to the beginning (Week 10)
- presuppositions and context, accommodation of presuppositions, the dynamics of discourse \\
- review