

Semantics and pragmatics

(31363 MLTA / 31375 MET/MED)

Degrees: Master's in Theoretical and Applied Linguistics; Master's in Translation Studies; Master's in Discourse: Communication, Society, and Learning

Term: second

ECTS credits: 5

Student workload: 100 hours

Course type: Advanced foundational course

Instructors: Laia Mayol (laia.mayol@upf.edu , office 53.708) and Enric Vallduví (enric.vallduvi@upf.edu , office 53.714)

Language of instruction: English

1. General presentation

This course is an introduction to natural language semantics and pragmatics, including the basic issues and data that have traditionally been the focus of study in the most influential theoretical frameworks and in commonly used research methodologies. The overall goal is to develop the student's ability to analyze semantic and pragmatic phenomena in language.

2. Skills to be developed

General skills:

- Analysis and problem solving: To be able to propose the best analysis of a semantic or pragmatic phenomenon given some set of theoretical concepts and specific methods.
- Application of theoretical knowledge to practical cases: To be able to apply theoretical concepts and knowledge about semantics and pragmatics to the analysis of new data.
- Motivation for quality: To be better able to recognize different degrees of precision in the analysis of data and to develop a sense of the importance of formulating descriptions and analyses with maximal precision.

Specific skills:

- Ability to reflect on the functioning of language: To be able to distinguish between the respective roles of semantics and pragmatics in linguistic communication.

3. Contents

1. Week 01 Introduction, organizational issues; what is meaning? Content and context in meaning, semantics vs. pragmatics vs. other modules in grammar, basic notions in semantics and pragmatics (Kearns, ch. 1)
2. Week 02 Word meaning, sentence meaning, compositionality (Kearns, ch. 2, 4)
3. Week 03 Predicates, modification (Kearns, ch. 2 and 4, cont.)
4. Week 04 Reference and quantifiers (Kearns, ch. 3 and 6)
5. Week 05 Quantifiers and binding (Kearns, ch. 3 and 6)
6. Week 06 Conversational implicature, speech acts (Reading TBA)
7. Week 07 Presuppositions, conventional implicature (Portner, ch.10.2, Potts)
8. Week 08 Information structure (Portner, ch. 10.4, Vallduví & Engdahl)
9. Week 09 Anaphora (Reading TBA)
10. Week 10 General discussion, outlook

4. Grade

The grade for the course will be based on performance on a set of 4-6 exercises done over the course of the quarter (50%-75% of the final grade) and a final exam (25%-50% of the final grade).

5. Methodology

The class consists of one session per week. There will be weekly readings and mostly weekly exercises, all of which will be posted on the Aula Global Moodle for the course and which will form the basis for class discussion. The readings and exercises should be done BEFORE the class in which they are discussed.

6. Course materials

Most of the reading for the semantics part of the course will come from the following book:

Kearns, Kate. (2011). *Semantics* (2nd Edition). Palgrave Macmillan.

Other material will be posted on the Aula Global.

General background references:

Asher, N. (2011). *Lexical Meaning in Context*. Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press.

Chierchia, G. & S. McConnell Ginet (1990). *Meaning and Grammar*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

- Davis, S. (ed.) (1991). *Pragmatics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Dowty, D. (1979). *Word Meaning and Montague Grammar*. Berlin: Springer.
- Escandell-Vidal, M. V. (2004). *Fundamentos de Semántica Composicional*. Ariel.
- Green, G.M. (1989). *Pragmatics and Natural Language Understanding*. Hillsdale, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Geurts, B. (2011) *Quantity Implicatures*. Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press.
- Heim, I. & A. Kratzer (1998). *Semantics in Generative Grammar*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Horn, L.R. & G.L. Ward (eds) (2004). *The Handbook of Pragmatics*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Kadmon, N. (2001). *Formal Pragmatics: Semantics, Pragmatics, Presupposition, and Focus*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Kamp, H. & U. Reyle (1993). *Introduction to Discourse Representation Theory*. Dordrecht: Kluwer.
- Kearns, K. (2010). *Semantics* (2nd Edition). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Levinson, S.C. (1983). *Pragmatics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mey, J.L. (1993) *Pragmatics: An Introduction*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Partee, B., A. ter Meulen, & R. Wall (1990). *Mathematical Methods in Linguistics*. Dordrecht: Kluwer.
- Portner, P. & B. (eds.) (2002). *Formal Semantics: The Essential Readings*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Portner, P. (2005). *What is Meaning? Fundamentals of Formal Semantics*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- de Swart, H. (1998). *Introduction to Natural Language Semantics*. Stanford: CSLI Publications.