

Syllabus, Linguistics 564
Introduction to Formal Semantics
Aug. 24, 1999

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Office hours: Tues/Thurs 4:45-5:15 or by appointment
Tues/Thurs. 3:30-4:45, SHNTZ 242W
(We'll try to move to the Linguistics seminar room; stay posted!)

Course description: Have you ever noticed that if the adage “All that glitters is not gold” were true, the guards at Fort Knox would be out of a job? Or wondered about the difference in size between a small dog and a small planet? Or laughed about that poor guy who gets mugged in the U.S. every three seconds? If so, this course is for you.

This course introduces the basic tools that semanticists use to analyze meaning: set theory, functions, compositional interpretation, predicate logic, and lambda abstraction, and explores the interface between syntactic and semantic representations. We will see how our tools are used in semantic treatments of some natural language phenomena, including at least some of: natural language quantifiers, the semantics of DPs, bound variable and other interpretations of pronominals, and tense and modality. As we go along we'll discuss conceptual, logical and linguistic questions about deep topics like truth, existence and reference.

1) Course requirements:

11 assignments	50% (5% each, drop the lowest grade)
2 quizzes	15% each
1 class presentation	10%
Class participation	10%

Note: Assignments are given out on Thursdays and are due the next class, the Tuesday. We will go over the assignments in class, so late assignments will not be accepted. The course is top-heavy, workwise, so although it may feel like a lot of work initially, keep in mind that there are no final exams or papers, and towards the end of term even the assignments disappear and your only responsibilities are reading and one presentation (of about 30 minutes).

2) Textbooks:

Introduction to Natural Language Semantics, Henriëtte de Swart
Semantics in Generative Grammar, Irene Heim and Angelika Kratzer
additional photocopied readings assigned as we go along

3) Approximate schedule of topics:

Aug. 24	What's the subject of formal semantics?
Aug. 26	Compositionality, ambiguity, entailment, presupposition, implicature, metalanguage
	Readings: deSwart Chapt. 1 and 2 H&K Chapt 1.1-1.2

	Assignment #1 handed out
Aug. 31	Propositional logic (Assignment #1 due) deSwart Chapt 3
Sept. 7	Propositional logic
	Assignment #2
Sept. 14	Set theory, functions (H&K 1.3, photocopied reading)
Sept. 16	Predicate calculus deSwart Chapt. 4.1, 4.2
	Assignment #3
Sept. 21	Predicate calculus deSwart Chapt. 4.3
Sept. 23	Predicate calculus deSwart, some of Chapt. 5
	Assignment #4
Sept. 28	Scope deSwart Chapter 5
Sept. 30	Quiz #1, The shortcomings of predicate calculus deSwart Chapt. 7
Oct. 5	The Fregean program: implementation H&K Chapt. 2.1, 2.2
Oct. 7	More Fregean Program, types, characteristic functions H&K Chapt. 2.3 – 5,
	Assignment #5
Oct. 12	Semantics and syntax Photocopied readings, H&K 3.1-3.3
Oct. 14	Theta-roles, argument structure, linking H&K 3.4, 3.5
	Assignment #6
Oct. 19	Nonverbal predicates, Modifiers H&K 4.1-4.3
Oct. 21	Definite article H&K 4.4-4.5
	Assignment #7
Oct. 26	Relative clauses, variables H&K 5.1-5.2.2
Oct. 28	Predicate abstraction, multiple variables H&K 5.2.3-5.3.2

Assignment #8

- Nov. 2 Coindexing
H&K 5.3.3-5.5
- Nov. 4 Discourse and donkey anaphora
deSwart 6

Assignment #9

- Nov. 9 Generalized Quantifiers
Review: deSwart 4.2-4.4
deSwart 8
- Nov. 11 Holiday
- Nov. 16 Generalized quantifiers
H&K 6.1-6.5
- Nov. 18 Generalized quantifiers
H&K 6.6-6.8

Assignment #10

- Nov. 23 Quantification and grammar
Review: deSwart 5
H&K 7
- Nov. 25 Quiz #2
- Nov. 30 Beyond extensional theories
deSwart 9.1-9.2
H&K 12
- Dec. 2 Counterfactuals, modals, worlds
deSwart 9.3-9.6

Assignment #11

- Dec. 7,9,14,16,21,23 Presentations, discussions, fun!