

Ling/Phil 522

**Lexical Semantics**

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Heidi Harley *email* hharley@email.arizona.edu *office* Comm 114b *phone* 520-626-3554  
Tuesdays/Thursdays 2-3:15, SSCI 114

**What it's about:**

Words and meaning.

All theories of grammar incorporate some type of lexicon: the most basic step in characterizing the sound-meaning pairing that constitutes language is to identify phonological strings with concepts. The structure of the lexicon and the type of operations (if any) that are included in it can vary widely from theory to theory. The relationship of the lexicon to the rest of the grammar is a central topic for any linguistic model, and we will look at the question from several angles: morphological, syntactic, psychological, semantic and typological.

**Requirements and evaluation:**

15% participation: formulate and post a minimum of 5 Official Questions, also post discussion of a minimum of 10 OQs posted by others

10% short paper topic statement **due March 4**

15% *short* in-class presentation

20% short paper **due March 25**

10% long paper topic statement **due April 3**

30% long paper **due May 8**

On the papers:

Ideally your papers will present your own research/analysis of something to do with lexical semantics. The short paper could be like a squib; the long one like a brief journal article.

This ideal is rarely achieved and not expected, however. You could for your short paper present a summary and critique of some paper relevant to class topics and your own research interests; your long paper could also be a more extensive literature review and critique. Another possibility would be to propose an experimental design for your long paper, providing motivation, lit review, methods, and predictions.

Lexical semantics interfaces with a lot of other corners of linguistics and language study, so you could pursue quite a broad range of methodologies and intersections with other subdisciplines: syntax, formal semantics, morphology, processing, production, acquisition (1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup>), language typology, language description... you name it. You can check the broad lines of your paper plans with me verbally or over email, but also keep in mind the topic statement (1 para to a page) is also intended as a chance for feedback from me before you put too much into the paper itself.

On the presentations:

For the presentation you will be expected to prepare a handout and present a paper from the literature to the class, along with your own commentary and ideas. Presentations

should be **15 minutes**, plus **3-5 minutes** for questions. You could instead present your own research plans/results if you wish; check with me first. You must provide the class with the paper you will be presenting a minimum of **two weeks** in advance; you can email it to me and I will put it on the course website or email it to the group. If you email your handout to me (if you're using handout) a day or two before the relevant class I will copy it for you.

I can easily provide suggestions for good papers/authors to present if you are not sure what direction you would like to pursue, or provide help with finding a good paper if you have an idea of what you'd like to learn more about but do not feel familiar enough with the literature. You should plan to schedule your presentation among a group of readings where the topic of the paper is most relevant (see the five general subgroups below, and the approximate plan of readings).

Your presentation can, and probably should, feed into/derive from the topic you choose for your short and/or long paper.

### On the Official Questions

D2L has a 'Discussion' section. I've created forums titled 'General', 'Verbs', 'Adjectives' and 'Nouns', each with a topic 'General', to start us off. I could also create subtopics for each paper we're reading, but I'm not sure if that's necessary. Anyway, the requirement is, during the course of the semester, to post at least five questions/initiations of discussion, and post at least ten comments on questions/initiations posted by other people. They don't have to be super deep or anything at all. I've subscribed to all the forums and will keep a spreadsheet so I can track your progress towards your 15% as the questions and comments come in.

### **Readings & Schedule (subject to extreme revision):**

January 16 (today): Syllabus.

Discussion of meanings relevant to different kinds of lexical categories

Jan 21: Partee, "On Semantics" in Osherson et al, Vol 1

Jan 23: Guasati: Acquisition of the lexicon.

### *Verbs*

Jan 25: Gleitman 1 1990. "The structural sources of verb meanings."

and Gleitman 2: Lidz, J. and L. Gleitman. 2004 "Argument Structure and the Child's Contribution to Language Learning." *TICS 8.4*

Jan 30: Hale and Keyser 1993: "On argument structure and the lexical expression of grammatical relations"

- Feb 4: Kratzer, A. 1996. Severing the external argument from its verb.  
Marantz 1997: "Don't try morphological analysis in the privacy of your own lexicon."
- Feb 6: Fodor, J. 1970. Three reasons for not analyzing 'kill' as 'cause to die' + Harley on lexical decomposition
- Feb 11: Kiparsky on denominal verbs & the Canonical Use Constraint (up), and my reply (not up). ☺
- Feb 13: Ramchand, Gillian. 2011. Argument Structure and Argument Structure Alternations. Den Dikken, ed. *The Cambridge Handbook of Generative Syntax*.
- Feb 18: Dowty, D.R. (1991) "Thematic Proto-Roles and Argument Selection", *Language* 67, 547-619.
- Feb 20: Zaenen, A. 1993. Unaccusativity in Dutch: Integrating syntax and lexical semantics. J. Pustejovsky, ed., *Semantics and the Lexicon*, Kluwer. 129-161
- Feb 25: Koenig and Davis 2001 Sublexical Modality And The Structure Of Lexical Semantic Representations. *Linguistics and Philosophy* 2001, 71-124
- Feb 27: Beavers 2010. The structure of lexical meaning, or why semantics really matters.
- Mar 4: Beavers and Francez 2012. Several problems with predicate decomposition. BLS paper  
Folli and Harley 2013. Manner of motion constructions. WCCFL paper.
- Mar 6: Bloom, P. 1992. Possible names: The role of syntax-semantics mappings in the acquisition of nominals\*. *Lingua* 92, 297-329.
- Mar 11: Jackendoff, R. 1991. Parts and Boundaries. *Cognition* 41, 9-45.
- Mar 13: Dayal, V. A Semantics for pseudo-incorporation. Ms. Rutgers University  
[http://mutis.upf.es/~mcnally/ESSLLI/Dayal\\_2003.pdf](http://mutis.upf.es/~mcnally/ESSLLI/Dayal_2003.pdf).
- Mar 18-20: SPRING BREAK
- Mar 25: Gillon Brendan 1999 The lexical semantics of English count and mass nouns
- Mar 27: Gentner and Iida, and Harley response.
- April 1: Kennedy and McNally, 2005. Scale Structure, Degree Modification, and the Semantics of Gradable Predicates, *Language* - Volume 81, Number 2, June 2005, pp. 345-381

Apr 3: Syrett, K., Kennedy, C., & Lidz, J. "Meaning and context in children's understanding of gradable adjectives." *Journal of Semantics*, v. 27, 1-35, (2010).

Apr 10: Frazier, Clifton and Stolterfohl, 2008. Scale structure: Processing Minimum Standard and Maximum Standard Scalar Adjectives. *Cognition* 106.1, pp. 299-324.

April 15: Landau, Idan. Ways of being rude. (aka 'Saturated Adjectives, Reified Properties') <http://www.bgu.ac.il/~idanl/files/Rude%20Adjectives.named.pdf>

April 17: Gleitman 3: Gleitman L, Gleitman H, Miller, C., Ostrin, R. 1996. "Similar and similar concepts." *Cognition* 58, 321-376.

April 22: TBA

April 24: Guest lecture

May 1: Free play