COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course will explore the topic of linguistic semantics, primarily from the truth-conditional perspective. We will sample topics in formal, compositional semantics by working through some of the more basic sections of the Heim and Kratzer textbook to see concretely how that approach to semantics works. Some interesting topics that we will cover are how the notion of a mathematical function can be used to explain how sentences with verbs that have different numbers of arguments can be interpreted bottom-up following the syntactic tree, how different types of adjectives can be identified and handled formally, how different types of quantifiers can be accounted for using the theory of generalized quantifiers, how scope ambiguity and pronoun interpretation can be handled through quantifier movement, and how it is useful to consider different possible worlds to interpret propositional attitude verbs like ‘believe’ and ‘hope’.

We will also explore some case studies in semantic topics drawn from the recent *Semantics: An International Handbook of Natural Language Meaning*. These articles are primarily descriptive and contain almost no formalism, but they illustrate the richness of the empirical coverage of the truth-conditional approach as discovered over the past 40 years. The case studies will be drawn from a proposed set of articles on varieties of semantic evidence, event semantics, mass nouns and plurals, count/mass distinctions across languages, modality, and imperatives. A final case study possibility explores the English aspectual auxiliary system in construction grammar, a theory that is influenced by both truth-conditional semantics and its chief rival, cognitive semantics. We may not read all of the articles—the class will decide which articles to read and discuss.

REQUIRED TEXT:
Heim, Irene and Angelika Kratzer. 1998. *Semantics in Generative Grammar*. Oxford: Blackwell. ISBN 0631197133 (pbk.) Textbook available for purchase at the SFU Bookstore, Burnaby campus only. Additional reading materials will be available on the course website or will be distributed by email.

GRADING:

Assignments based on the textbook 20%
Lead class discussion on article 15%
3 short (3-5 pp.) mini-papers based on articles or textbook 30%
Class presentations on mini-papers 15%
Class participation 20%

Students should familiarize themselves with the Department's Standards on Class Management and Student Responsibilities at [http://www.sfu.ca/linguistics/undergraduate/standards.html](http://www.sfu.ca/linguistics/undergraduate/standards.html).

Please note that effective May 1, 2009, a grade of “FD” may be assigned as a penalty for academic dishonesty.

All student requests for accommodations for their religious practices must be made in writing by the end of the first week of classes or no later than one week after a student adds a course.

Students requiring accommodations as a result of a disability, must contact the Centre for Students with Disabilities (778-782-3112 or csdo@sfu.ca).