Lectures: **Mondays, 9:30 - 12:20, WMC 3220**

Prerequisite: **LING 222**

Instructor: **Nancy Hedberg**

Instructor email: [hedberg@sfu.ca](mailto:hedberg@sfu.ca)

Instructor office: **RCB 9101**

Instructor office hours: **Mondays, 12:30 - 1:20 p.m., and by appointment**

Teaching assistant: **Helen Zhang**

Teaching assistant email: [hyz1@sfu.ca](mailto:hyz1@sfu.ca)

Teaching assistant office: **RCB 9205 (tentative)**

Teaching assistant office hours: **Wednesdays, 2:00 - 3:00, and by appointment**

**Course Description:**

People use sentences to mean things: to convey information about themselves and about states of affairs in the world. This class provides an introduction to the study of how meaning is encoded and expressed in natural language. We will examine basic concepts in the study of formal aspects of meaning: e.g., compositional semantics, truth-functional connectives, and quantification in natural language. Basic formal tools and techniques in doing semantic analysis will be studied, supplemented by rigorous problem-solving exercises. We will also discuss how semantic aspects of meaning are distinguished from pragmatic aspects of meaning: e.g., the role of context, conversational implicatures, and speech acts.

**Required readings:**

**Textbook:**

**Supplementary textbook chapters:**

**Research articles for group presentation and Canvas discussion:**
Course Requirements:

In-class participation activities (7%). Students are required to attend class and participate in small-group or large group activities each week. Only 7 out of 9 in-class participation activities will count for credit—i.e. students are allowed to miss 2 days without penalty.

Homework assignments (18%). There will be 6 homework assignments to be typed and turned in on Canvas by 12:00 noon on Sundays. Assignments will be graded for completeness. The correct answers will be conveyed through class presentations by individual students. Students are expected to bring a copy of the assignment they handed in to class the next day to correct themselves.

Individual presentation of homework problem (2%). 3 points will be given for each student individually presenting the answer to a homework or in-class exercise to the whole class, after checking with the instructor during office hours that their answer is correct. Students will volunteer for such presentations.

Midterm exams (63%). There will be 3 in-class mid-term exams. Students will have 75 minutes to complete each exam individually (each worth 18% of final grade). After handing in the exam, students will break into groups and take the exam again as a group for 30 minutes (each worth 3% of final grade). If the group gets a lower grade than an individual student, the individual score will count for the group grade.

Small group presentation of research article (4%). Students will prepare power-point presentations on three research articles. There will be 10 groups of 4 students, each to present 1/3 or 1/4 of a research article. Groups will meet with teaching assistant the week prior to their presentation day to plan their presentation and to assign individual responsibility.

Critical response to research articles (6%). Individual students will submit a critical response to each research article in Canvas Discussions.

Extra credit (+2%). Students can earn up to 2% of the final grade in one of two ways:
- Participate in a research project. Up to two participations, each worth 1%. See the list of available projects and explanation of the procedures at http://www.sfu.ca/linguistics/research/research_participation_system.html.
- Attend a colloquium in Linguistics (http://www.sfu.ca/linguistics/colloquia.html). Up to two participations, each worth 1%. For credit, you must email in a paragraph of at least 150 words describing one or more things that you learned from the talk that cannot be gleaned from the abstract alone.

Grading scale:
Percentage scores on exams will be based on objective criteria guided by qualitative judgment, according to the scale below. Final letter course grades will be computed from total percentage scores on the basis of the same scale. Some of the exam questions will be essay questions; evaluation of these will depend on clear, concise, logical argumentation in proper academic English.


General expectations concerning student behavior:
1. Students are expected to attend class every day.
2. Students are expected to have read the assigned readings before class. Because the readings and notes are sometimes complex, students are expected to read them multiple times.
3. Students are expected to bring the assigned notes to class.
4. Late assignments will not be accepted without prior approval from the instructor.
5. There will be no makeup exams. This is departmental policy.
6. Students are responsible for all materials in the assigned readings and lectures.
7. Academic dishonesty is forbidden. It will result in disciplinary action. Academic dishonesty includes cheating and plagiarism. For information on academic dishonesty visit the following website, http://www.sfu.ca/policies/teaching/index.htm.
8. Students requiring accommodations as a result of a disability, must contact the Centre for Students with Disabilities (778-782-3112 or email to csdo@sfu.ca).

Topics covered
Sentential vs. lexical semantics; Semantics vs. pragmatics
Mathematical Preliminaries: Set theory, relations, functions
Methodological Preliminaries: Inference types: entailment, presupposition, implicature; ambiguity
Propositional Logic: Truth-functional connectives: not, and, or, if...then, if and only if
RESEARCH ARTICLE: Demonstratives
Meaning, mind, and world
EXAM 1
Compositional semantics I: intransitive/transitive/ditransitive sentences; Sentence connectives: it is not the case that, and, or.
Pragmatics: Conversational implicature and speech acts
RESEARCH ARTICLE: Metaphor: Relevance theory and cognitive semantics
Predicate Logic: Predicate-argument structure, universal and existential quantifiers
EXAM 2
Compositional Semantics II: Sentences with one and two quantifiers: every, a, the; quantifier scope ambiguity, quantifier raising
Information structure
RESEARCH ARTICLE: Justification and truth
EXAM 3