

Linguistics 406 and 802

Advanced Semantics

Fall Semester 2004

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Course Page: <http://www.sfu.ca/~jeffp/Ling406Spring05.htm>

Prerequisite: Ling. 321 and 324 or equivalent (please contact me in advance to discuss “equivalences”) plus 9 credit hours of upper division linguistics, or permission of the instructor. Please contact me in advance to discuss missing prerequisites.

Description:

This course builds on Ling 324. It will cover many issues in intensionality, as this term is understood in Linguistics and Philosophy. Some of the topics are modality (including knowledge and belief modalities), tense (and temporal adverbs), the use of generalized quantifiers as a representation of noun phrases, the role of context, conditionals, the application of lambda-abstraction as a way to represent predicates. What unites all these areas is the framework of Possible-Worlds semantics, which we will study both informally and formally—the latter to understand the background of intensional logic. We will also consider some issues in the semantics of words, such as how to characterize the meaning of verbs, adjectives, and adverbs, and how these word-level semantics are related to sentence meaning.

Required Readings:

Gennaro Chierchia & Sally McConnell-Ginet (2nd edition, 2000) *Meaning and Grammar: An Introduction to Semantics* (MIT Press, Cambridge MA)

There will also be other readings that will be made available during the term.

Course Requirements and Evaluation:

For Ling 406 students:

- Assignments (25%)
- Assignment Presentation (5%)
- Midterm Exam (30%)
- Research Paper (30%)
- Class participation (including attendance) (10%)

The assignments and exams will include problems that require you to apply (and possibly extend) techniques/concepts introduced in class and in the readings. They will have a problem-solving component, and possibly a fairly substantial writing component. They will be evaluated on the correctness of the analysis and coherence of the argumentation in proper English.

The assignments will be graded on this basis: 3 (full credit), 2 (some aspects missing—20% off), 1 (substantially inadequate—50% off), or 0 (not submitted—100% off). The assignments must be submitted on time in order to count.

You also have to present your solution and analysis of one problem from the assignments to the class. You will be graded on the 3-2-1-0 basis here also.

For the research paper, you can write a critical review and synthesis of two articles, or an original research paper on a topic of your choice. Some possible topics and guidelines to paper writing will be passed out in class. The paper should be about 10 pages long (double-spaced, normal fonts). You must have your topic approved by me at least two weeks before it is due. The papers are due the last day of class, either electronically or in paper form. Late papers will be penalized at the rate of 10%/day! They will be graded in part on their coherence of argumentation in proper English.

For 802 students:

In addition to doing all the work required of Ling 406 students, we will meet one extra hour each week and discuss material related to the course. This will take the form of reading research articles, and each week someone will be responsible for presenting the material in that article and leading a discussion about it. The number of presentations each student will do depends on the number of graduate students in 802. On the first meeting of this extra hour, I will pass out a list of possible extra topics, and some suggested readings. We will decide then on a direction to follow.

In addition, the final research paper is to be about 15 pages long.