

Linguistics 325: Semantics

Spring 2016

Instructor: Simon Charlow
Email: simon.charlow@rutgers.edu
Office hours: W, Th: 1–2pm (and by appointment), 18 Seminary Place #302
Course website: sakai.rutgers.edu
Class time: M, Th: 11:30–12:50
Location: Scott Hall 115

About this course (learning goals)

This course is an introduction to *semantics*, the science of how humans associate linguistic form and meaning. People are incredibly adept at producing linguistic expressions of their thoughts, and at matching other people's words and sentences with their intended meanings. How does this happen? And what is meaning, anyway? We'll explore this seemingly murky territory, using formal (i.e., mathematical) tools to build a theory of the semantic aspects of human linguistic cognition. In addition to gaining experience with the requisite formal tools (including set theory, propositional and first-order logic, compositional interpretation, type theory, and generalized quantifiers), this course will teach you how to think like a semanticist: how to identify what *kinds* of meaning an expression has, as well as how to construct and argue for (or against) semantic analyses of linguistic phenomena.

Textbook

There is one required textbook:

Semantics, 2nd Edition (by Kate Kearns)
Palgrave, Modern Linguistics series
ISBN: 0-333-69344-2 (paperback)

You can find it for ~\$32 on amazon.com and bn.com. Be sure to get the 2nd edition! If you buy from an online book-seller, it'll take a bit of time to get your copy. For that reason, I'll post the first few readings on Sakai.

In addition to the required textbook, there will be some supplementary readings as we go, drawn from various sources and posted on Sakai.

Requirements

Do the reading, come to class, and participate. You'll find this material new and, at times, challenging. In order to keep on top of it, there's simply no substitute for doing *all* the reading and actively participating in class.

There is no midterm or final exam. The bulk of your graded work consists of weekly problem sets (i.e., homework). These are assigned at the beginning of a week and due by the end of the next Friday (you'll submit your assignments as pdfs on Sakai). Late assignments will not be accepted, but your two lowest-scoring homeworks will be dropped.

Here's the relevant breakdowns:

		A	≥90%
		B+	85–89.9%
		B	80–84.9%
Attendance & participation	10%	C+	75–79.9%
Weekly homeworks	90%	C	70–74.9%
		D	60–69.9%
		F	≤59.9%

Schedule

Our plan is to follow the textbook closely throughout the semester, tackling a chapter a week, with some room for slack. This is a working plan, and it may shift somewhat as the semester goes on, subject to students' interests and how fast we make progress.

Academic integrity

Take a moment to review the university's academic integrity policy: academicintegrity.rutgers.edu. It's unethical and unacceptable to pass off anyone else's work as your own. I encourage students to work together on assignments, but it's imperative that you write up your answers *individually*: you may not look at anybody else's written work until after the assignments have been graded and returned.

Attendance

Students are expected to attend all classes; if you expect to miss one or two classes, please use the University absence reporting website (sims.rutgers.edu/ssra) to indicate the date and reason for your absence. An email is automatically sent to me.

Disability Services

Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation: ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines. If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus's disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, please complete the Registration form on the ODS web site at: ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form.

Counseling, ADAP & Psychiatric Services (CAPS)

CAPS is a University mental health support service that includes counseling, alcohol and other drug assistance, and psychiatric services staffed by a team of professional within Rutgers Health services to support students' efforts to succeed at Rutgers University. CAPS offers a variety of services that include: individual therapy, group therapy and workshops, crisis intervention, referral to specialists in the community and consultation and collaboration with campus partners. Call (848) 932-7884 or visit rhscaps.rutgers.edu.

Violence Prevention & Victim Assistance (VPVA)

The Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance provides confidential crisis intervention, counseling and advocacy for victims of sexual and relationship violence and stalking to students, staff and faculty. To reach staff during office hours when the university is open or to reach an advocate after hours, call 848-932-1181.

Scarlet Listeners

Free and confidential peer counseling and referral hotline, providing a comforting and supportive safe space. Call (732) 247-5555 or visit scarletlisteners.com.

Just In Case Web App

Access helpful mental health information and resources for yourself or a friend in a mental health crisis on your smartphone or tablet and easily contact CAPS or RUPD. Visit codu.co/cee05e.