

## Semantics: Rutgers Course No. 01-615-325 , Fall 2005

### Instructor

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For course webpage login in to WebCt at <https://webct.rutgers.edu/>

### Course Description

This course is an introduction to truth conditional semantics. We will be attempting to characterize the knowledge speakers of a natural language possess which allows them to assign meanings to expressions of a language. An important aspect of this enterprise involves looking at how the meanings of complex phrases depend on the meanings of their parts and at the role of syntactic structure in semantic interpretation. Students will be exposed to concepts of elementary set theory necessary to pursue a model-theoretic approach to semantics. The theory will be developed using American English as the language under investigation.

### Grades

30% Homework	20% Article Summaries
30% Midterm	20% Final Paper

#### *Homework*

There will be occasional homeworks. Unless otherwise indicated, every homework is worth 10 points. In grading the homework, I will check to see that the homework was done and I will select a few exercises to look over carefully. In computing the final grade, I will ignore one of your homework grades (a grade that is less than or equal to all your other homework grades). **A late homework will be assigned a grade of 0.**

The first homework is available on the course website. It is due on Monday, September 12<sup>th</sup>.

#### *Article Summaries*

In the latter part of the course we will read and discuss one or more published articles. The articles will be made available on the course webpage

and will be on reserve in the library. For each article, you will be required to submit a summary of the article and four questions on the article **before** the article is discussed in class. I will notify you in advance of the discussion so you will have time to write the summary and questions.

**SUMMARY:** This should be about 2 pages long. After you've read the article at least once, reflect on what is going on there. What is the main point? What questions is the author addressing? What solutions is the author providing? How do the findings support the thesis? What new idea is the author bringing to the table? As a general guideline, you can think of this summary as a tool that someone could use to learn about the article's contents. Comments such as "this was a good article" are uninformative and should be avoided.

**FOUR QUESTIONS:** Among other things, these can address:

- i. how the proposal applies to cases not considered by the author.
- ii. background that you needed to filled in
- iii. details about how the proposal works
- iv. If you see a potential problem for the theory, explain why it is a problem (doesn't have to be in interrogative form).

**SUBMISSION:** Make two copies of the summary and of the four questions. One copy is for you to look at during the class discussion. The other copy is for me and is due at the beginning of the class in which the summarized article is discussed. If you prefer to submit the summary and four questions by email, send them as a pdf file to **vroger@ruccs.rutgers.edu**. They must be sent no later than the day before the day the summarized article is discussed. In the subject line put: **325 YOURNAME AUTHOR'S NAME**

### *Final Paper*

The final paper does not have to be long. Three pages would suffice if they are contentful. The purpose of the paper is to allow you to use what you've learned in class to explore further. Your paper could:

- a) cover the truth conditional content of some construction or expression we didn't discuss in class, from English or from some other language.
- b) extend some analysis we've begun in class.
- c) report on an article in one of the following journals: *Natural Language Semantics, Linguistics and Philosophy, Journal of Semantics*
- d) relate to other courses you've taken in linguistics or in other fields.

The final paper is due by **Noon on December 20<sup>th</sup> 2005**.  
**Late papers will be assigned a grade of 0.**

## Course Schedule

There is no textbook for the course, however there are two readings that will provide background for the first part of the course. They are:

**AAD** Allwood, J., L.-G. Andersson and O. Dahl (1977) *Logic in Linguistics*  
Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

**MC<sup>2</sup>** Chierchia G. and S. McConnell-Ginet (1990) *Meaning and Grammar* MIT  
Press, Cambridge, MA [On Reserve in the Library (Call Number:  
P325.C384)]

These readings are on reserve in the library or they can be downloaded from the course webpage.

### *Order of Presentation*

1. Set Theory: sets, relations, functions;  
Chapter 1 of **AAD**
2. Intro to Truth Conditional Semantics;  
Chapter 1 of **MC<sup>2</sup>**
3. A Formal Grammar. **MC<sup>2</sup>** chapter 2, section 3.2
4. Set Theory: Sets of sets. Predicate notation with two variables. (eg  $\{x : \{y : \langle y, x \rangle \in R\} = \emptyset\}$ )
5. Quantificational Noun Phrases.  
A. In subject position.  
B. In object position.
6. **MIDTERM** (tentative date: Monday, October 31<sup>th</sup>)
7. Parameters of evaluation: speaker, hearer, non-participant, times
8. Discussion of published articles