

Semantics (01:615:325)

Time: Mon & Thurs 10:20–11:40am

Location: Hardenbergh Hall – A3

Course website: canvas.rutgers.edu

Instructor: Dr. Shuyan Wang

(shuyan.wang514@rutgers.edu)

Office hour: Tuesdays 8:30–9:30am (online)

1 About this course

This is an introductory course on semantic interpretation in natural languages. The learning goals and objectives of this course include the following:

- To learn about how to reason about language scientifically
- To learn about how to investigate and analyze linguistic data
- To learn about the application of symbolic systems in modeling natural language meaning
- To understand the relation between form and meaning of natural language expressions
- To understand the distinction between semantics and pragmatics and what is meant by each
- For majors and minors: To add to your technical and conceptual repertoire in the field of Linguistics as you complete a (core) course as part of your major or minor.

Course website & Office hours & Contacts

- This course has a website on Canvas (canvas.rutgers.edu) Log on using your NETID and password, and then look for the course in your Dashboard or Courses. If you encounter difficulty using Canvas, please contact their helpdesk.
- Office hours are Tuesdays 8:30-9:30am and by arrangement. All office hours take place on Zoom (Appointments are necessary. No drop-ins!) In most cases, each person may reserve a 15-mins slot per week. To make an appointment, please send an email to Dr. Wang (shuyan.wang514@rutgers.edu) to request a meeting link. Extra appointments must be scheduled at least 3 days in advance.
- Office hours can NOT be used for re-teaching the materials. If you need to make up a class, you must go over the handouts and notes by yourself first before visiting the office hours. Please also note that your instructors cannot help with solutions for assignments that are not yet graded.

2 Course requirements

Your final grade is based on problem-sets, exams, and participation. The percentage-wise breakdown is on the left, and the corresponding letter grades are on the right.

Grading breakdown		Letter grades	
Participation	10%	A	$\geq 90\%$
6 problem sets	60%	B+	85–89.9%
Midterm exam	15%	B	80–84.9%
Final exam	15%	C+	75–79.9%
		C	70–74.9%
		D	60–69.9%
		F	$\leq 59.9\%$

- **Participation (10%)**

When you attend a class, you are expected to participate in discussions, ask questions, and be involved in the in-class activities. If you miss a class, you are responsible for reading the relevant course materials and finishing the exercises on the handout before the next class in a timely manner.

University policy excuses absences due to religious observance or participation in Rutgers-approved activities, and permits students to make up work missed for these circumstances. You must notify Dr. Wang in advance if this applies to you.

If you anticipate that you will be absent for whatever reason, you must notify Dr. Wang in writing as soon as possible AND report your absence via this link: <https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/>

Note that it will be extremely difficult to perform successfully in this class, should you miss multiple classes.

- **6 problem-sets (60%)**

There will be 6 problem-sets. In most weeks, the new problem-set will be distributed via Canvas on Thursday/Friday and must be **submitted to Canvas** in pdf/jpeg/jpg/png by the following **Wednesday 10:00pm**. Late submissions will not be accepted. Hard copies will not be accepted.

You are allowed to form discussion groups to discuss the assignments, but the final answers that you submit must be in your own words.

- **Midterm Exam and Final Exam (30%)**

We will have two take-home exams: a mid-term and a final (15% each). The midterm will be posted on **Friday Oct 27**, and will be due on **the following Tuesday Oct 31**. The final exam will be distributed on **Wed Dec 13**, and will be due on **Mon Dec 18**.

- **Experiment participation (extra credits)**

You have the opportunity to raise your final grade by **up to 2 points** through experimental participation. More information to be added once made available.

Materials

There is no official textbook for this class. Readings will be mostly taken from the following book. Be aware that different books/readings might use different symbolic systems. When working on the assignments and exams, you should use the symbolic system learned in class.

- Irene Heim & Angelika Kratzer. 1998. Semantics in Generative Grammar. Blackwell.

Schedule

This plan is subject to change. See the course website for the most up-to-date version.

Course schedule:

Week	Topic	Readings	Requirements
1 Sep 7	Course Intro	Heim & Kratzer: pp.1-3	
2 Sept 11 & 14	Sets & Functions	Heim & Kratzer: pp. 3-11	HW1
3 Sept 18 & 21	Propositional Logic		HW2
4 Sept 25 & 28	Formalization of 'Meaning'	Heim & Kratzer: pp. 13-26	
5 Oct 2 & 5	Transitive Verbs, Connectives, and Types	Heim & Kratzer: pp. 26-29	HW3
6 Oct 9 & 12	Lambda Calculus	Heim & Kratzer: pp. 34-49	HW4
7 Oct 16 & 19	Nouns and Adjectives	Heim & Kratzer: pp. 61-73	
8 Oct 23 & 26	Review and Mid-term Exam (no class on Thursday)		Midterm exam
9 Oct 30 & Nov 2	Definite DPs	Heim & Kratzer: pp. 73-85	
10 Nov 6 & 9	Quantifiers	Heim & Kratzer: pp. 131-147	HW5
11 Nov 13 & Nov 16	Pronouns		
12 Nov 20 & Spring break	Adverbs and Events		HW6
13 Nov 27 & Nov 30	Adverbs and Events		
14 Dec 4 & Dec 7	Semantics in Language Processing and Language Acquisition		
15 Dec 11	Review and Final Exam		Final Exam

General policies

The following policies are provided at ling.rutgers.edu > Academics > Undergraduate > Learning Goals and Policies (a direct link is [here](#)). It is the responsibility of all students to read and abide by the policies.

Rutgers Code of Student Conduct

Policy on Religiously Observant Students
Students with Disabilities
Attendance Policy
Academic Integrity
Concerns
Email and Contact Information Policy