

The Chinese University of Hong Kong
Department of Linguistics and Modern Languages
Second Term, 2024-25

Course Title: LING6905 Topics in Semantics

Description:

This course aims at exploring various semantic phenomena and examining the relation between meaning and structure in human languages. Emphasis will be given to current topics that are central to research in semantics. The discussion will also help students appreciate the relation between semantics and other sub-fields such as pragmatics, syntax and philosophy of language. The study of the related literature will help student develop the ability to carry out semantic analysis.

Content, highlighting fundamental concepts

Topic	Contents/fundamental concepts
1. Set Theory and some basic concepts in semantics	Principle of Compositionality, sense, references, etc.
2. Statement logic and predicate logic	Existential and universal quantification, characteristic function, function and relation, etc.
3. Type theory	Basic types, functional application, theta criterion, etc.
4. Lambda calculus	Predicate modification: restrictive vs. non-restrictive
5. Modification	Conjunction and modification
6. Relative clauses and Chinese de	
7. Quantification	
8. Scope and quantifier raising	
9. Intensional semantics	
10. Universal quantification in Chinese	

Learning outcomes:

- develop a good grasp of the theoretical and empirical issues that arise in formal semantics;
- identify and address research questions, taking an interdisciplinary perspective in the field of formal linguistics;
- appreciate the important relationship between syntax and semantics
- develop the ability to conduct a small-scale research project on a topic in formal semantics; and
- raise students' awareness of the complexity of natural language and deepen their appreciation of the role of formal semantics in language understanding and interpretation.

Learning activities

Lecture (hr) in /out class		Interactive tutorial (hr) in /out class		Lab (hr) in /out class		Discussion of case (hr) in /out class		Field-trip (hr) in /out class		Projects (hr) in /out class		Web-based teaching (hr) in /out class		Other (hr) in /out class	
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M	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	M	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

M: Mandatory activity in the course

O: Optional activity

NA: Not applicable

Assessment scheme

Task nature	Description	Weight
Participation	Weekly attendance, active participation in discussion and presentation of assigned articles	10%
Assignment	3-4 assignments (no AI generated assignment is allowed!)	90%
		Total: 100%

Feedback for evaluation

Students are encouraged to give feedback or comments on course contents and teaching materials throughout the course. Students can contact either the lecturer or tutor directly. See contact details below. Mandatory term-end evaluation for teacher's reflection will also be conducted.

Grade Descriptors

Grade	Descriptor s
A	Outstanding performance on all learning outcomes.
A-	Generally outstanding performance on all (or almost all) learning outcomes.
B	Substantial performance on all learning outcomes, or high performance on some learning outcomes which compensates for less satisfactory performance on others, resulting in overall substantial performance.
C	Satisfactory performance on the majority of learning outcomes, possibly with a few weaknesses.
D	Barely satisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes.
F	Unsatisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes, or failure to meet specified assessment requirements.

Learning Resources / Required Readings

1. Pan, Haihua Lecture notes on formal semantics, to be provided in class
2. Heim, I. and A. Kratzer (1998) Semantics in Generative grammar, Blackwell.
3. Pan, Haihua and Lei Zhang Notes on universal quantification in Chinese, to be provided in class.

Course schedule

Week	Date	Content
1	06-Jan	Set Theory and some basic concepts in demantics
2	13-Jan	Statement logic and predicate logic
3	20-Jan	Statement logic and predicate logic
4	27-Jan	Type theory
5	10-Feb	Lambda calculus
6	17-Feb	Modification and relative clauses
7	24-Feb	Quantification I
8	03-Mar	Quantification II
9	10-Mar	Scope and quantifier raising
10	17-Mar	Intensional semantics
11	24-Mar	Relative clauses and Chinese de
12	31-Mar	No class due to academic leave
13	07-Apr	Universal quantification in Mandarin Chinese I
14	14-Apr	Universal quantification in Mandarin Chinese II

Teachers' or TA's contact details

Professor/Lecturer/Instructor:	Professor Haihua Pan
Office Location:	Leung Kau Kui Building G01
Telephone:	3943-7097
Email:	panhaihua@cuhk.edu.hk
Teaching Venue:	Wong Foo Yuan Building 106
Teaching Timeslot:	Mondays 10:30a.m. – 13:15p.m.
Other information:	

A facility for posting course announcements

All announcements of the course will be circulated and posted by group email.

Academic honesty and plagiarism

Attention is drawn to University policy and regulations on honesty in academic work, and to the disciplinary guidelines and procedures applicable to breaches of such policy and regulations. Details may be found at http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academic_honesty/. With each assignment, students will be required to submit a statement that they are aware of these policies, regulations, guidelines and procedures.