Instructor: P. Jacobson  
Metcalf Research 234  
Ext. 3-3037  
Office Hours (subject to change): Mon. 1-2, Thurs. 1-2

Course Packet: available at Allegra Copy. Papers which are available on line are (generally) not included in the packet to (hopefully) keep the cost down; the url is provided below in the syllabus for those.

Course Requirements:

(1) It is impossible to learn the material in this class without regular attendance; there is no textbook, and so everything will be put together by class lectures and discussions. Obvious amounts of non-attendance will be factored into the final grade.

(2) You are expected to keep up with the assigned reading. I am aware that some of it is quite technical and might be rather daunting especially if you have had only CG 41. Don’t worry about this fact: I realize that the backgrounds in the class are diverse and do not expect people to be able to immediately understand the more technical parts of the reading. I’ll be giving pointers as to how to approach the various readings.

(3) There will be three written assignments; these will be (essay-type) questions to answer to assimilate the readings and in-class discussions and to get you to think further about the relevant issues. You'll have a week for each; tentative due dates are as follows:

Assignment 1 - Oct. 9  
Assignment 2 - Nov. 8  
Assignment 3 - Dec. 4

(4) A final "project". For this project, my expectations will vary according to what I know are the very different backgrounds of the people in the class. (Hence, linguistics graduate students, for example, will be expected to do a lot more than, say, someone for whom this is their second linguistics course.) For those without much background, you can do a kind of literature review if you want of some topic relevant to the class. For those with more background, obviously more will be expected. NOTE: A terrific project for students with either a psycholinguistic background/interests or computational linguistics background/interests will be to discuss the relationship between the notion of “word meaning” used in much of the psycholinguistic and/or computational linguistic literature and the notion used in the more theoretical linguistic literature. How do the results discussed in this course help illuminate or bear on the kinds of questions asked in these neighboring fields? (For example, one might consider how the results about word meaning within the more formal linguistics literature can help illuminate just exactly what is going on when we see lexical priming effects. Or, one can consider some of the tools for looking at word relatedness in the computational literature, and ask whether these can be helped by results of the kind discussed in this course.)

For everyone in the class, the paper must (a) be on a topic approved ahead of time, and (b) show some real assimilation of the material in this course. For any course, a good rule of thumb is: don’t write a paper that you could have written before taking the course. If the paper shows no contact with what we’ve done in the course, it will not be accepted.

Paper due date: Dec. 13

Note: Policy on late assignments - Late assignments are not accepted unless accompanied by a written Dean’s or Medical excuse. They are always due by 5 pm on the due date.
Tentative Outline and Readings

Note: Dates are very tentative, and additional readings might be suggested as we go along.

0. Introduction and Overview Sept. 7

PART I: Basic Concepts in Semantics and Pragmatics - How these interact with the lexicon and how the structure of the lexicon informs our understanding of semantics and pragmatics


   • model-theoretic semantics and compositional semantics: the general goals of a semantic theory and the tools of modern linguistic semantics
   • the notion of semantic types; semantic types and the lexicon
   • how model-theoretic semantics can illuminate the study of word meaning, and vice-versa

Readings:


Jacobson, Pauline, piece of manuscript on Categorial Grammar and semantics

2. Application to the lexicon: decompositional approaches using “primitives” vs. model-theoretic approaches Sept. 21-Oct. 2

   • early ideas on how to represent the component parts of meaning
   • how much syntax is packed into word meanings?
     what word meaning tells us about the organization of the grammar (and vice-versa)
   • recasting decompositional approaches into model-theoretic semantics; how to capture entailments and relations among word meanings
   • Two Case Studies:
     (a) the representation of causative verbs
     (b) temporal structure in verb meanings

Readings:


3. Pragmatics and the Lexicon Oct. 9-16

   • Basic Gricean pragmatics, and its application to word meaning
organization of the lexicon: competition classes

• How word meaning gives rise to other pragmatic phenomena
• Pragmatic explanations for systematic lexical gaps?

Readings:


PART II: Further Topics

5. Vagueness

• fuzzy meanings: fuzzy logics or other techniques? Oct. 18-23

Readings:


6. Meaning and Context

A. Indexicals Oct. 25

Readings:


B. Other contextual effects Oct. 23-Nov. 15

• the case of scalar adjectives
• determiners
• the local class
• predictates of personal taste

Readings:


downloadable at:  
http://www.springerlink.com/content/g15785r863301j26/?p=ba73371b5fc4fe9a776c5a5f2331b9a&pi=0

7. **Natural Kind terms and the notion of "rigid designators"**  

Nov. 20

Readings:


PART III: Syntactic structures and syntactic packaging - and its relation to lexical semantics

8. **Interaction of Syntax and Semantics in the Lexicon**

A. **Thematic Relations and Lexical "Argument Structure"**  

Nov. 27-29

- what is the theoretical status of "thematic relations"
- how do thematic relations constrain possible lexical items?
- to what extent is the syntactic packaging of semantic argument structure predictable/universal?

Readings:


B. **Case Study: Unaccusativity**  

Dec. 4-6

- is unaccusativity syntactically represented? -- the interaction of syntax and the lexicon
- is unaccusativity semantically predictable?
- are the diagnostics for unaccusative verbs instead diagnostics of (a) "agentivity" and (b) "telicity"?
- Is there really a uniform class of unaccusative predicates?

Readings:


most likely some additional readings will be assigned here

_A topic which can hopefully fit in somewhere:
9. More on events, word meaning, and argument structure

- does word meaning provide evidence for event semantics?
- morphological processes as evidence for the semantic "toolbox"

Readings:


downloadable at:

http://www.jstor.org/view/00978507/ap020301/02a00020/0