



湖北工業大學  
HUBEI UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

<b>Course Title</b>	Semantics
<b>Course Code</b>	LING 4311
<b>Semester</b>	Summer 2026
<b>Course Length</b>	4 Weeks, 60 Contact Hours
<b>Credits</b>	4
<b>Instructor</b>	TBA
<b>Office</b>	TBA
<b>Email</b>	TBA
<b>Prerequisite</b>	LING 2111 Introduction to Linguistic Theory

### Course Description:

This course offers a systematic introduction to the study of meaning in natural language within contemporary linguistic theory. Emphasis is placed on formal, truth-conditional approaches to semantics and on the interaction between semantic interpretation, syntactic structure, and contextual factors. Topics include compositionality, logical form, quantification, scope and ambiguity, modality and intensionality, tense and aspect, event semantics, reference and anaphora, presupposition, and implicature. Students will practice formal semantic representation and analyses using tools such as set theory and logical notation.

### Course Goals:

Students who successfully complete this course will demonstrate competency in the following general education core goals:

- **Critical Thinking Skills** – Students will engage in analytical thinking, demonstrating the ability to critically evaluate, synthesize, and apply knowledge to complex problems, and construct well-reasoned solutions and arguments.
- **Independent Research and Inquiry** – Students will conduct independent research, utilizing academic resources to explore relevant topics, formulating research questions, analyzing data, and presenting findings in a coherent, scholarly manner.
- **Problem-Solving and Application** – Students will apply theoretical concepts and methodologies learned in the course to real-world problems, demonstrating the ability to develop practical solutions informed by academic inquiry.
- **Global and Cultural Awareness** – Students will gain awareness of the global and cultural contexts relevant to the course, appreciating diverse perspectives and considering the implications of their studies in a broader, international context.

### Student Learning Outcomes:

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Explain major theoretical approaches to meaning in natural language, with particular emphasis on truth-conditional and compositional semantics;
- Apply formal tools from logic, set theory, and lambda calculus to represent and analyze linguistic meaning;
- Analyze how semantic interpretation interacts with syntactic structure, quantification, modality, tense, and aspect;
- Distinguish and evaluate key semantic phenomena such as ambiguity, scope, presupposition, implicature, and referential opacity;
- Compare extensional and intensional contexts, including modal and propositional attitude constructions;
- Develop well-formed semantic arguments in both formal notation and academic prose, drawing on primary theoretical literature.

**Textbooks/Supplies/Materials/Equipment/ Technology or Technical Requirements:**

**Required:** Kate Kearns. *Semantics*, 2nd edition. Red Globe Press, 2011.

**Optional:** Paul H. Portner. *What is Meaning?: Fundamentals of Formal Semantics*. Wiley-Blackwell, 2005.

**Course Requirements:**

**Problem Sets (5)**

Five problem sets will be assigned throughout the term. These assignments focus on formal semantic analysis, including logical representation, compositional derivations, and interpretation of ambiguity and scope. Each problem set builds cumulatively on prior material and emphasizes precision and clarity of reasoning.

**Midterm Exam**

The midterm exam evaluates students' mastery of foundational concepts and formal tools introduced in the first half of the course, including truth-conditional semantics, logical notation, quantification, and compositionality. The exam consists of short-answer questions and analytical problems.

**Formal Analysis Assignment**

Students will complete a stand-alone formal analysis assignment focusing on a core phenomenon such as scope ambiguity, modality, presupposition projection, or pronominal reference. Students are required to:

- Selection of an appropriate empirical dataset (instructor-approved)
- Explicit statement of the analytical problem
- One or more formal semantic analyses using standard notation
- Comparison of alternative analyses or readings where relevant
- A concise written discussion (1000 words)

**Research Essay and Presentation**

Students will write a research essay (1200-1500 words) on a topic related to formal semantics, such as modality, generalized quantifiers, presupposition, or event semantics. The assignment emphasizes engagement with theoretical literature, coherent argumentation, and accurate use of formal concepts. Students will:

- Engagement with primary theoretical literature (minimum 5 academic sources)
- Clear thesis and structured argument
- Accurate use of formal representations where appropriate
- Proper academic citation and formatting
- Give a brief oral presentation on their research topic

<b>Assessments: Activity</b>	<b>Percent Contribution</b>
Problem Sets (5)	30%
Midterm Exam	15%
Formal Analysis Assignment	20%
Research Essay	20%
Research Presentation	15%

### Grading:

Final grades will be based on the sum of all possible course points as noted above.

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Percentage of available points</b>
A	94-100
A-	90-93
B+	87-89
B	84-86
B-	80-83
C+	77-79
C	74-76
C-	70-73
D	64-69
D-	60-63
F	0-59

### Course Schedule:

*The schedule of activities is subject to change at the reasonable discretion of the instructor. Minor changes will be announced in class, major ones provided in writing.*

<b>LING 4311 Schedule</b>		
<b>Lecture</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Readings</b>
L1	What Is Meaning? The Scope of Semantic Theory	Ch. 1
L2	Semantics vs. Pragmatics; Kinds of Meaning	Ch.1.1-1.2
L3	Truth-Conditional Semantics & Denotation	Ch.1.3
L4	Meaning Relations & Entailment	Ch.1.3.4
L5	Implicature and Contextual Inference	Ch.1.4
L6	Presupposition & Indexicality	Ch.1.5-1.6
L7	Logical Representation of Meaning	Ch.2.1
L8	Logical Connectives & Sentence Meaning	Ch.2.2
L9	Predicates, Arguments, and Valency	Ch.2.3
L10	Quantifiers I: Universal & Existential	Ch.3.1-3.2
L11	Quantifiers II: Scope, Ambiguity, and Structural Interpretation	Ch.3.5
L12	Formal Composition: Types & Functions	Ch.4.1-4.3
L13	Lambda Abstraction & Compositional Rules	Ch.4.4-4.6
/	<b>Midterm Exam</b>	/

L14	Modality and Intensionality: Possible-Worlds Semantics	Ch.5.1-5.2
L15	Counterfactuals, Negation, and Modal Reasoning	Ch.5.3
	<b>Research Essay - Abstract Due</b>	
L16	Generalized Quantifier Theory	Ch.6.1-6.2
L17	Definiteness, Determiners & There-BE Constructions	Ch.6.6-6.8
L18	Polarity, Quantifiers & Negative Contexts	Ch.6.9-6.10
L19	Reference, Anaphora, and Pronominal Interpretation	Ch.1.5; Ch.7
L20	Extensional vs. Intensional Contexts; Referential Opacity	Ch.7.1-7.4
	<b>Formal Analysis Assignment Due</b>	
L21	Propositional Attitudes: Belief, Desire, Knowledge	Ch.7.3-7.6
L22	Event Semantics: Davidsonian and Neo-Davidsonian Approaches	Ch.11.1-11.2
	<b>Research Essay - Final Paper Due</b>	
L23	Event Modification: Adverbs, Aktionsart, and Aspect	Ch.8
L24	Tense, Temporal Reference, and Narrative Time	Ch.9
L25	Limits of Semantics: Pragmatics, Focus, and Interface Issues	Review
/	<b>Presentations</b>	/

### Accommodation Statement:

Academic accommodations may be made for any student who notifies the instructor of the need for an accommodation. It is imperative that you take the initiative to bring such needs to the instructor's attention, as he/she is not legally permitted to inquire. Students who may require assistance in emergency evacuations should contact the instructor as to the most appropriate procedures to follow.

### Academic Integrity Statement

Each student is expected to maintain the highest standards of honesty and integrity in academic and professional matters. The University reserves the right to take disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal, against any student who is found guilty of academic dishonesty or otherwise fails to meet the standards. Any student judged to have engaged in academic dishonesty in coursework may receive a reduced or failing grade for the work in question and/or for the course.

Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, dishonesty in quizzes, tests, or assignments; claiming credit for work not done or done by others; hindering the academic work of other students; misrepresenting academic or professional qualifications within or outside the University; and nondisclosure or misrepresentation in filling out applications or other University records.

### Other Items:

#### Attendance and Expectations

All students are required to attend every class, except in cases of illness, serious family concerns, or other major problems. We expect that students will arrive on time, be prepared to listen and participate as appropriate, and stay for the duration of a meeting rather than drift in or out casually. In short, we anticipate that students will show professors and fellow students maximum consideration by minimizing the disturbances that cause interruptions in the learning process. This means that punctuality is a must, that cellular phones be turned off, and that courtesy is the

guiding principle in all exchanges among students and faculty. You will be responsible for the materials and ideas presented in the lecture.

**Assignment Due Dates**

All written assignments must be turned in at the time specified. Late assignments will not be accepted unless prior information has been obtained from the instructor. If you believe you have extenuating circumstances, please contact the instructor as soon as possible.

**Make-Up Work**

The instructor will not provide students with class information or make-up assignments/quizzes/exams missed due to an unexcused absence. Absences will be excused and assignments/quizzes/exams may be made up only with written documentation of an authorized absence. Every effort should be made to avoid scheduling appointments during class. An excused student is responsible for requesting any missed information from the instructor and setting up any necessary appointments outside of class.

**Access, Special Needs, and Disabilities**

Please notify the instructor at the start of the semester if you have any documented disabilities, a medical issue, or any special circumstances that require attention, and the school will be happy to assist.