

**LING 327 (3) Semantics**  
**2014W T1**

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**Course schedule:** T Th 11:00-12:20  
**Class location:** Buchanan B215  
**Office hours location:** Brock Hall Annex 2351

**Instructor:** Lisa Matthewson [lisa.matthewson@ubc.ca](mailto:lisa.matthewson@ubc.ca)  
**Office hours:** Wed 11:00-12:00

**Teaching assistant:** Erin Guntly [eaguntly@alumni.ubc.ca](mailto:eaguntly@alumni.ubc.ca)  
**Office hours:** Thu 10:00-11:00

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**Course Description:**

From UBC calendar: The analysis and theory of linguistic meaning with emphasis on formal techniques for semantic analysis and their application to empirical phenomena in language, including pragmatics.

This course provides an introduction to central semantic phenomena in natural language, with an emphasis on practical analysis and cross-linguistic applicability. We will use simple formal representations to analyze the semantic structure of sentences. Students will be given the opportunity to work with data from languages other than English throughout the course.

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**Pre-requisites:**

LING 201 (or equivalent)

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**Learning Outcomes:**

By the end of this course, it is anticipated that students will:

- be able to extract semantic generalizations from natural language data
- know how to formulate a testable hypothesis about linguistic meaning
- know how to test a semantic analysis on natural language data
- be able to communicate their findings effectively, using appropriate linguistic terminology, and supporting their arguments with illustrative examples

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**Course Format:**

Readings will be assigned before each class. Students will be expected to have done the readings before class, and to arrive ready to participate in activities which are designed to help students assimilate the material.

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**Course Requirements:**

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| • Participation / low-stakes writing | 15% |
| • Five online quizzes (2% each)      | 10% |
| • Two in-class quizzes (10% each)    | 20% |
| • Two assignments (15% each)         | 30% |
| • Squib (group project)              | 25% |

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**Required Reading:**

- Elbourne, Paul 2011. *Meaning: A Slim Guide to Semantics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

We will also read portions of the following two books. They are both available for free online.

- Kearns, Kate 2000. *Semantics*. Basingstoke: Macmillan. (Online through the library.)
- Magnus, P.D. *forall $\chi$ : An Introduction to Formal Logic*. <http://www.fecundity.com/logic/>.

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**Assessment, Evaluation, and Grading:*****Participation / Low-Stakes Writing***

The participation / low-stakes writing component of the course requires you to:

- Read the assigned materials
- Participate in low-stakes in-class writing exercises
- Participate in discussions in class and/or on the Connect website
- Actively participate in group work

Grading is based on (a) participation in in-class activities; (b) participation in low-stakes in-class writing exercises; (c) your group members' peer assessment of your participation level on the group project; (d) meeting with the TA or the instructor to discuss your squib.

***Five online quizzes***

The online quizzes will be offered through the Connect website and will test comprehension of assigned readings. They will be made available on Fridays and due at 10am on Tuesdays.

There are no retakes of online quizzes due to technical difficulties or other reasons. Instead, six quizzes will be offered and the best five grades will be counted.

***Two in-class quizzes***

The in-class quizzes will consist of short-answer questions and will take 15-20 minutes of class time. They may require you to analyze data from a non-English language. Quizzes may contain material which is discussed in class but is not in the assigned readings.

There are no retakes of in-class quizzes due to absence, except with a doctor's certificate or for an extremely good reason which has been discussed with the instructor in advance.

***Two assignments***

Assignments will involve applications of theories and tools learned in class, and some will involve gathering your own data from a language of your choice. Don't start them at the last minute!

Assignments will be handed in electronically via the Connect website. The only acceptable file format for submitting assignments is .pdf. The submission deadline is 11:59pm on the due date. Late assignments will either not be accepted, or will result in a deduction of marks. You may discuss your assignments with fellow students, but you must each write up your assignment separately, in your own words. Marks will be deducted (possibly down to zero) on assignments which have not been written up independently.

*Squib (group project)*

You will work in groups of 3-4 students. Each group will choose a topic in any area of semantics covered in the course. You will research the topic and write a 6-8 page squib (double-spaced). You do not have to solve the issue; it is enough to present some interesting data and explain why the data pose a problem. Guidelines and tips on how to write the squib will be given during the semester.

Each group will meet with the TA and/or the instructor at least once before November 11 to discuss your topic ideas. Attending this meeting will count towards your participation grade.

Grading is based on (a) the appropriateness and interest of your chosen topic; (b) evidence of having located and read appropriate literature, where available; (c) the clarity of the exposition; (d) use of appropriate and relevant data to support what is said; (e) the accuracy, insightfulness and originality of the proposals; (f) correct formatting, presentation of data, referencing, etc.

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**Course Schedule:**

Week	Dates	Topics
1	Sept. 4	Introduction
2	Sept. 9,11	Truth conditions, sense and reference, compositionality
		<i>ONLINE QUIZ 1</i>
3	Sept. 16,18	Relations between propositions, propositional logic
		<i>ONLINE QUIZ 2</i>
4	Sept. 23,25	Predicate logic, quantification in natural language
		<i>IN-CLASS QUIZ 1 TUESDAY SEPT. 23</i>
5	Sept. 30, Oct. 2	Modality
		<i>ONLINE QUIZ 3</i>
6	Oct. 7,9	Definite descriptions
		<i>ONLINE QUIZ 4</i>
7	Oct. 14,16	Indefinite descriptions
		<i>ASSIGNMENT 1 DUE THURSDAY OCT. 16</i>
8	Oct. 21,23	Pragmatics: speech acts, presuppositions
		<i>ONLINE QUIZ 5</i>
		<i>FORM SQUIB GROUPS BY OCT. 23</i>
9	Oct. 28, 30	Pragmatics: implicatures
		<i>ONLINE QUIZ 6</i>
10	Nov. 4,6	Tense and grammatical aspect
		<i>ASSIGNMENT 2 DUE THURSDAY NOV. 6</i>
11	Nov. 11,13	Lexical aspect

		<b><i>MEET WITH LISA OR ERIN BY NOV. 11 TO TALK ABOUT SQUIB TOPIC</i></b>
12	Nov. 18,20	Students' choice Guest lecture by Erin Guntly
		<b><i>IN-CLASS QUIZ 2 THURSDAY NOV. 20</i></b>
13	Nov. 25,27	Squib preparation

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**Academic Integrity and Responsibility:**

As a member of this class, you are responsible for contributing to the course objectives through your participation in class activities and your written and other work and projects. In the process of coming into your own as an independent, responsible participant in the academic community, you are encouraged to seek advice, clarification, and guidance in your learning from your instructor and/or Teaching Assistant. If you decide to seek help beyond the resources of this course, you are responsible for ensuring that this help does not lead you to submit others' work as your own. If an outside tutor or other person helps you, show this policy to your tutor or helper: make sure you both understand the limits of this person's permissible contribution.

Academic communities depend on their members' honesty and integrity in representing the sources of reasoning, claims, and wordings which appear in their work. Like any other member of the academic community, you will be held responsible for the accurate representation of your sources: the means by which you produced the work you are submitting. If you are found to have misrepresented your sources and to have submitted others' work as your own, or to have submitted work for which you have already received credit in another course, penalties may follow. Your case may be forwarded to the Head of the department, who may decide that you should receive zero for the assignment. The Head will report your case to the Dean's Office, where it will remain on file. The Head may decide, in consultation with your instructor, that a greater penalty is called for, and will forward your case to the Dean's Office. After an interview in the Dean's Office, your case may be forwarded to the President's Advisory Committee on Academic Misconduct. Following a hearing in which you will be asked to account for your actions, the President may apply penalties including zero for the assignment; zero for the course; suspension from the university for a period ranging from 4 to 24 months; a notation on your permanent record. The penalty may be a combination of these.

Academic communities also depend on their members' living up to the commitments they make. By enrolling in this course, you make commitments to an academic community: you are responsible for meeting deadlines; attending class and engaging in class activities; guaranteeing that the work you submit for this course has not already been submitted for credit in another course. If you find that you cannot meet a deadline or cannot participate in a course activity, discuss your situation with your instructor or TA before the deadline or before your absence.

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**Illness and Absence:**

If you experience medical, emotional, or personal problems that affect your attendance or academic performance, please notify Arts Academic Advising or your home Faculty's Advising Office. If you are registered with Access and Diversity, you should notify your instructor at least two weeks before examination dates. If you are planning to be absent for varsity athletics, family obligations, or other commitments, you should discuss your commitments with the instructor before the drop date.