Spring 2024

BCL, Université Côte d’Azur

**Formal Semantics**

**Preliminary Schedule and Introduction**

Instructor: Friederike Moltmann

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Time: Tuesdays 15.30h-17.30h

Room: R 005, Campus St. Angely, 25 ave Mitterand, 06300 Nice

Course webpage: <http://friederike-moltmann.com/teaching/formal-semantics-spring-2024/>

Requirements:

* Regular readings
* Active participation in the course and preparation of answers to problems
* Take-home exam

Main text:

Elisabeth Coppock / Lucas Champollion: *Introduction to Formal Semantics (IFS)*

Available online: <https://eecoppock.info/semantics-boot-camp-spring-2024.pdf>

**Preliminary schedule**

Session 1 (Feb. 13):

Introduction

Session 2 (Feb. 20):

Foundation of Semantics (IFS, chap. 1)

Session 3 (Feb. 27):

Sets, Relations, Functions (IFS, cap. 2)

Session 4 (March 5):

Propositional Logic (IFS, chap. 3)

Session 5 (March 19):

Predicate Logic (IFS, chap. 4)

Session 6 (March 26):

λ-Calculus (IFS, chap. 5)

Session 7 (April 2):

Presuppositions (IFS, chap. 8)

Session 8 (April 9):

Coordination and plurals (IFS, chap. 8)

Session 9 (April 16):

Tense and Aspect (IFS, chap. 9)

Session 10 (April 23):

Intensional semantics (IFS, chap. 8)

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**Introduction**

**1. Standard division of linguistics**

Theory of form: syntax, morphology, phonology

Theory of meaning: semantics

Theory of use: pragmatics

Issues about the division:

Syntax - semantics:

* Are selectional restrictions of predicates as semantic or a syntactic issue?
* Are quantifier scope possibilities due to semantic or syntactic constraints?

Semantics – pragmatics division:

An issue about the semantics – pragmatics divide

(1) Is pragmatics about utterance meaning that is not encoded in grammar? Pragmatics as everything else that is not part of lexical or structural meaning

(2) Pragmatics includes semantics of expressions and constructions that relate to speech acts

**2. What is semantics ?**

The theory of meaning, but what are meanings?

Notions of meaning:

(1) Concepts, conceptual meaning: meaning as something in the mind

(2) Objects being referred to

(3) Truth conditions: conditions under which a sentence is true or false / is true or false in a circumstance

Meanings of words are generally taken to be conceptual meaning.

Exception:

Proper names and names for kinds: are nowadays (since Kripke) taken to be directly referential: referring to objects / kinds without the mediation of concepts.

An important divide:

Lexical meaning vs. sentence meaning (structural meaning, syntactic meaning)

Lexical meanings: meanings of words and idioms (e.g. *kick the bucket*

Lexical meaning and sentence meaning are generally conceived very differently

**3. Lexical meaning**

What exactly is in the lexicon?

(1) Words with their syntactic category specifications, argument structure syntactic and semantic selection requirements

(2) Only roots: insertion into syntactic structures goes along with categorial specification, argument structure etc. (Distributive Morphology)

**4. Sentence meaning**

Functional expressions

Light verbs: *have, be, give, make,*

Prepositions: *of, at, on*

determiners: *the, every, no*

coordinators: *and, or, but*

Functional expressions form a closed class

The lexicon forms an open class

Interactions word meaning – grammar

(1) Semantic selection

(2) Category specification and type of lexical meaning

Basic properties of sentence meanings:

Truth conditions – but not always:

Some sentences have expressive meanings: e.g. optatives, exclamatives

Truth conditions in counterfactual circumstances

**5. Linguistic meaning and other meaning**

Mental states

Speech acts, utterances

Nonlinguistic signs – semiotics