

Semantics I

LING 202

Ecole Normale Supérieure
Département d'Etudes Cognitives
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Instructor: Salvador Mascarenhas (salvador.mascarenhas@ens.fr)

Teaching assistant: Émile Enguehard (emile.enguehard@ens.fr)

1 Course description

This course is a fast-paced introduction to natural language semantics and pragmatics. The course is roughly divided into the following three modules.

I *Introduction to semantics and pragmatics* (80%)

Extensional semantics; compositionality; predication and modification; pronouns and quantification; presupposition; scalar implicature

II *A brief survey of intensional semantics* (10%)

Limitations of extensional approaches; modality; propositional attitudes

III *Beyond truth conditions* (10%)

Dynamic approaches to meaning; questions; commands

2 Assessment

- weekly homework assignments (80%);
- participation in discussions in class and TD (20%): if you want to take this course for credit but cannot attend the TD please come speak with the instructor **immediately**.

3 Textbook and readings

This course does not have a textbook. However we will liberally follow Irene Heim and Angelika Kratzer's *Semantics in Generative Grammar* (1998 Blackwell Publishing) for several topics in module I of the course. The book sells for EUR 42.02 on amazon.fr, but it is likely available in your university's library. Readings from other sources will be provided by the instructor for the more advanced topics toward the end of the course.

4 Course website

All information about the course, lecture slides, and homework assignments can be found on the course's website. Please contact the instructor for access to the website.

5 Course policies

Attendance Regular attendance of, and punctual arrival at, both lectures and TD are crucial to succeed in this course, and they are **mandatory** for all students registered for credit. This is important both for your individual success in this course, and for every other student's success. Keep in mind in particular that, by arriving late, you are jeopardizing your own but also your classmates' education by disrupting the flow of lectures. Practically speaking, if you are registered for credit then your grade will suffer from poor attendance or recurrent late arrivals. If you are not registered for credit, the same policy applies, though with different consequences: poor attendance or recurrent late arrivals may force us to ask you to stop auditing the course.

Participation You are strongly encouraged to participate in lectures and in TD. This means asking deep and challenging questions, but also asking simple questions, asking for clarification, saying "I'm just not getting this, please explain it in some new way" or "I'm lost, can you remind me why we're talking about this?" **You can ask questions in French at any time.**

Contacting the instructor and TA Email is the best way to contact us when you have brief questions. Please include both of us in your email and allow us 24 hours to respond (longer on the weekends). We are available to meet by appointment or to chat informally in the hallway.

Homework All homework assignments are to be handed in **at the beginning of class** the day that they are due, **by email to both the instructor and the TA**. Please **do not** send us photographs of handwritten assignments. Type up your answers properly, and use the opportunity to learn how to typeset logical symbols using your editor of choice. You can write up your answers in French or in English (NB you will not lose points for grammatical mistakes!). If you hand in all of the assignments, your lowest score will be factored out. Importantly if you do not hand in all of the assignments, your lowest score (namely 0) will **not** be dropped, and your grade will suffer accordingly. Naturally, exceptions will be considered on a case by case basis given adequately documented extraordinary circumstances.

Discussing assignments with classmates You are allowed (and to some extent encouraged) to discuss homework assignments with your classmates. However two things are required if you engage in substantive discussions of solutions: (i) you must indicate in your write-up the names of classmates with which you discussed solutions in some depth, and (ii) you must write up your answers to the assignment by yourself. Under no circumstances are you to share typed-up answers to the assignments or to discuss the actual write-ups. Use this opportunity for collaboration with your classmates wisely: working with a classmate who is more comfortable than you on a particular topic can help you understand that topic better; working with a classmate who knows less than you about a particular topic can help you consolidate what you know and force you to reassess fundamental elements of your knowledge. But you should collaborate with classmates in very small groups that are relatively well balanced in terms of understanding of the material.

Academic honesty policy Cheating will not be tolerated and may cost you your grade as well as have deeper repercussions in your academic career. The following is a non-exhaustive list of examples of what counts as cheating in this course: (i) signing on the attendance sheet without attending the class (e.g. signing and leaving, or signing for someone else); (ii) copying the homework write-up or exam answers of another student, with or without that student's knowledge; (iii) copying elements of your solutions of exercises from sources in the literature without giving them due credit.

6 Tentative schedule

#	date	topics
1	February 5	Semantics in the context of linguistics, cognitive science, and philosophy
2	February 12	Inferences — entailment, presupposition, implicature
3	February 19	Formal tools — language of set theory, first fragment of English
4	February 26	Typed λ -calculus as an answer to the problem of compositionality
5	March 5	Predicate modification, FoL with assignments leading to predicate abstraction and relative clauses
6	March 19	Quantification #1 — generalized quantifiers, determiners
7	March 26	Quantification #2 — limitations of FoL, syntax-semantics interface via QR
8	April 2	TBC: Categorical grammar — a different view of the syntax-semantics interface
9	April 9	Buffer
10	April 16	Introduction to intensional semantics (conditionals and attitudes)
11	April 30	Beyond truth conditions I — dynamic semantics
12	May 7	Beyond truth conditions II — questions and commands
13	May 14	Buffer / TBD
