

# Semantics I

Rutgers University, Fall 2015

M, W 11:30–12:50  
18 Seminary Pl, Room 108

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**Office:** 18 Seminary Pl, Room 302

**Office hours:** Thursdays 2–4, by appointment

**Class website:** [simoncharlow.com/courses/f15/sem1](http://simoncharlow.com/courses/f15/sem1)

## 1 Overview/course description

This course is an introduction to formal semantics in the generative tradition. The subject matter is the principles that allow humans to pair linguistic form with meaning and the theoretical techniques that guide and organize research into semantic questions. My aims are to familiarize you with what everyone doing work in linguistics (or work where linguistics is relevant) should know about the basic techniques and insights of formal semantics, and to equip people who want to specialize in semantics and/or related fields to continue on with more advanced classes. We'll spend some time coming to grips with the basic mathematical techniques semanticists use (set theory, relations and functions, generalized quantifiers, lambdas, etc.). We'll look at some of the big questions and central fault lines in formal semantics, and you'll learn to critically read and respond to semantic argumentation. When the course is through, you'll have the foundation you need to move on to Semantics II (if you wish) and to read a good portion of primary literature in the field.

## 2 Readings/texts

The reading assignments and readings will be posted on the course website in a password-protected folder. Readings will be drawn both from textbooks (e.g. Heim & Kratzer 1998, Allwood et al. 1977) and the primary literature. There are **no required texts** for the course. (Nevertheless, I very much encourage you to buy your own copy of Heim & Kratzer 1998. It's hard to overstate the importance, usefulness, or clarity of this textbook. It's around \$35 on Amazon.)

## 3 Requirements

Most importantly, I ask that you do the assigned reading in advance of each class, come prepared to discuss the reading, and participate.

There will also be regular written work (i.e. problem sets). Collaboration on assignments is allowed and encouraged, but please write up your answers individually. Assignments will be given at the end of the week and due at the beginning of the following class.

A short squib (5pp or less), coupling an empirical observation with a concrete analysis, is due at the end of the term. We'll reserve a class meeting for squib presentations.

## 4 Plan

The schedule here is ambitious (therefore, subject to change).

Week	Topic	Day 1	Day 2
1	Compositionality and truth-conditions	<b>no class</b>	Sep 2
2	The semantics-pragmatics interface	<b>Sep 8</b>	Sep 9
3	Set-theoretic foundations	Sep 14	Sep 16
4	Compositionally interpreting formal, natural languages	Sep 21	Sep 23
5	Lambda calculus and type theory	Sep 28	Sep 30
6	Composition as saturation and modification	Oct 5	Oct 7
7	First-order quantification and $[[\lambda]]$	Oct 12	Oct 14
8	Pronouns as variables, binding as abstraction	Oct 19	Oct 21
9	Quantifiers	Oct 26	Oct 28
10	Quantification and LF	Nov 2	Nov 4
11	vP internal subjects, flexible types	Nov 9	Nov 11
12	Scope and binding	Nov 16	Nov 18
13	Questions	Nov 23	<b>no class</b>
14	{Dynamic, Event} semantics	Nov 30	Dec 2
15	(Cont.), student squib presentations	Dec 7	Dec 9

Note the following two changes:

- Week 2: We won't meet on Labor Day (Sep 7). Instead, our Monday meeting is pushed to Tuesday (Sep 8).
- Week 13: Because of the Thanksgiving holiday, our Wednesday meeting is canceled to make way for Friday courses.