Instructor: P. Jacobson
Metcalf Research 234
Ext. 3-3037
Office Hours: Mon. 1-2, Thurs. 3-4

Course Packet: available at Allegra Copy

Course Requirements:

(1) It will be virtually impossible to do well in this class without regular attendance; there is no textbook, and so everything will be put together by class lectures and discussions.

(2) You are expected to keep up with the assigned reading. I am aware that some of it is quite technical and might be rather daunting especially if you have had only CG 41. Don’t worry about this fact: I am aware that the backgrounds in the class are diverse and do not expect people to be able to immediately understand the more technical parts of the reading. I will be suggesting what parts of the readings are essential vs. those parts which you want to try to just to the best you can with.

(3) There will be three written assignments; these will be (essay-type) questions to answer to assimilate the readings and in-class discussions and to get you to think further about the relevant issues. You’ll have a week for each; tentative due dates are as follows:

Assignment 1 - Feb. 23
Assignment 2 - March 23
Assignment 3 - April 27

(4) A final "project". This can be a standard term paper on some topic related to the course, and especially a paper which further probes one or more of the topics which we will be convering in only an introductory way in the course. However, in lieu of a standard term paper, students are free to instead choose an annotated bibliography project on some topic. This can be anywhere from a somewhat in-depth critical discussion of say 2 or 3 readings on some topic to a real annotated bibliography of 10 or so items on a topic. I’m also happy to have group papers on a single topic (with, of course, the understanding that they will represent the appropriate amount of additional work).

Due date for the final project: May 9

Note: Policy on late assignments - Late assignments are not accepted unless accompanied by a written Dean's or Medical excuse. They are always due by 5 pm on the due date. (This policy is inlexible.)
Tentative Outline and Readings

Note: Dates are very tentative, and additional readings might be suggested as we go along

0. Introduction and Overview  
   Jan. 26

PART I: Basic Concepts in Semantics and Pragmatics - How these interact with the lexicon and how the structure of the lexicon informs our understanding of semantics and pragmatics

1. A general framework for semantics; model-theoretic semantics  
   Jan.31 - Feb. 7
   - model-theoretic semantics and compositional semantics: the general goals of a semantic theory and the tools of modern linguistic semantics
   - the notion of semantic types; semantic types and the lexicon
   - how model-theoretic semantics can illuminate the study of word meaning, and vice-versa

   Readings:
   Jacobson, Pauline, piece of manuscript on Categorial Grammar and semantics

2. Application to the lexicon: decompositional approaches using “primitives” vs. model-theoretic approaches  
   Feb. 9 - Feb. 23
   - early ideas on how to represent the component parts of meaning
   - how much syntax is packed into word meanings?
     what word meaning tells us about the organization of the grammar (and vice-versa)
   - recasting decompositional approaches into model-theoretic semantics; how to capture entailments and relations among word meanings

   Two Case Studies:
   (a) the representation of causative verbs
   (b) temporal structure in verb meanings

   Readings:
3. **Pragmatics and the Lexicon**  
   Feb. 28 - March 9

   - Basic Gricean pragmatics, and its application to word meaning  
     organization of the lexicon: competition classes  
   - How word meaning gives rise to other pragmatic phenomena  
   - Pragmatic explanations for systematic lexical gaps?

**Readings:**


NOTE: This is not in the packet, and will be made available later.

**PART II: Further Topics**

5. **Meaning and Context**  
   March 14 - 21

A. Indexicals

**Readings:**


B. Other contextual effects

   - the case of scalar adjectives  
   - determiners  
   - the local class  
   - more on “degree achievements”  
   - predicatates of personal taste

**Readings:**


6. Vagueness
   March 23 - April 4
   - fuzzy meanings: fuzzy logics or other techniques?

Readings:

7. Natural Kind terms and the notion of "rigid designators"
   April 6

Readings:

PART III: Syntactic structures and syntactic packaging - and its relation to lexical semantics

8. Thematic Relations and Lexical "Argument Structure"
   April 11 - 18
   - what is the theoretical status of "thematic relations"
   - how do thematic relations constrain possible lexical items?
   - to what extent is the syntactic packaging of semantic argument structure predictable/universal?

Readings:

9. Case Study: Unaccusativity
   April 20 - 25
   - is unaccusativity syntactically represented? -- the interaction of syntax and the lexicon
   - is unaccusativity semantically predictable?
   - are the diagnostics for unaccusative verbs instead diagnostics of (a) "agentivity" and (b) "telicity"?
   - Is there really a uniform class of unaccusative predicates?

Readings:

10. More on events, word meaning, and argument structure April 27- May 2

• does word meaning provide evidence for event semantics?
• morphological processes as evidence for the semantic "toolbox"

Readings: