

**City University of Hong Kong  
Course Syllabus**

**offered by Department of Linguistics and Translation  
with effect from Semester B 2015 / 16**

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**Part I Course Overview**

**Course Title:** Semantics and Discourse

**Course Code:** LT5403

**Course Duration:** One Semester

**Credit Units:** 3

**Level:** P5

**Medium of Instruction:** English

**Medium of Assessment:** English

**Prerequisites:**  
(Course Code and Title) Nil

**Precursors:**  
(Course Code and Title) Nil

**Equivalent Courses:**  
(Course Code and Title) CTL5403 Semantics and Discourse

**Exclusive Courses:**  
(Course Code and Title) Nil

## Part II Course Details

### 1. Abstract

This course aims to introduce students to the study of meaning as it is realized at both the lexico-grammatical and discourse levels. The focus will be on how meaning is studied and analyzed from various perspectives, including semantics, pragmatics and discourse studies.

### 2. Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs)

(CILOs state what the student is expected to be able to do at the end of the course according to a given standard of performance.)

No.	CILOs	Weighting (if applicable)	Discovery-enriched curriculum related learning outcomes (please tick ✓ where appropriate)		
			A1	A2	A3
1.	Construe sense and reference in accordance with a theory of meaning. Discover and generate new ideas that are fundamental to the understanding of human language and world knowledge.		√	√	
2.	Identify word meaning and how word meaning is combined to give sentence meaning. Formulate and verify hypotheses that are descriptively and explanatorily adequate.		√	√	√
3.	Identify sentence relations and truth values of sentences. Apply knowledge to generate solutions to find out relations between sentences in accordance with a theory of truth-conditional semantics.		√	√	√
4.	Distinguish tense from aspect. Analyse and classify different situation types and discover and formulate hypotheses that are observationally, descriptively and explanatorily adequate.		√	√	√
5.	Identify participants of sentences and relevant grammatical relations.		√	√	√
6.	Describe speech act theory and conversational implicatures. Analyse texts by adopting different theories and analytic tools.		√	√	√
		100%			

**A1: Attitude**

*Develop an attitude of discovery/innovation/creativity, as demonstrated by students possessing a strong sense of curiosity, asking questions actively, challenging assumptions or engaging in inquiry together with teachers.*

**A2: Ability**

*Develop the ability/skill needed to discover/innovate/create, as demonstrated by students possessing critical thinking skills to assess ideas, acquiring research skills, synthesizing knowledge across disciplines or applying academic knowledge to self-life problems.*

**A3: Accomplishments**

*Demonstrate accomplishment of discovery/innovation/creativity through producing /constructing creative works/new artefacts, effective solutions to real-life problems or new processes.*

### 3. Teaching and Learning Activities (TLAs)

(TLAs designed to facilitate students' achievement of the CILOs.)

TLA	Brief Description	CILO No.						Hours/week (if applicable)
		1	2	3	4	5	6	
1	<b>Lecture and Class Activities -</b> Theoretical foundations and concepts related to the above learning outcomes are laid out in the lecture. Emphasis is put on how these theories can be applied to language data. Discussion and exercises are provided to familiarize students with the theoretical concepts acquired in the lecture and to use these concepts to generate new ideas.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
2	<b>Independent learning:</b> Materials are posted onto the blackboard from time to time, and students are advised to refer to these materials for independent learning.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
3	<b>Assignments:</b> Students are required to complete three assignments based on what they have learnt in class. Emphasis of assignments is placed on both theoretical aspect and data analysis.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	

### 4. Assessment Tasks/Activities (ATs)

(ATs are designed to assess how well the students achieve the CILOs.)

Assessment Tasks/Activities	CILO No.						Weighting	Remarks
	1	2	3	4	5	6		
Continuous Assessment: 60%								
<b>Assignments</b> Students are required to complete two assignments during the semester (30% each).	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Examination: 40% (duration: 2 hours)								
							100%	

## 5. Assessment Rubrics

(Grading of student achievements is based on student performance in assessment tasks/activities with the following rubrics.)

Assessment Task	Criterion	Excellent (A+, A, A-)	Good (B+, B, B-)	Adequate (C+, C, C-)	Marginal (D)	Failure (F)
1. Assignments	Demonstrate understanding of basic concepts in semantics and how they can be used in analysing the meaning of our language.	Demonstrate strong evidence of capacity to analyse and superior grasp of basic concepts in semantics; and evidence of excellent understanding of key issues involved in meaning of natural languages at lexical, phrasal, sentence and discourse levels.	Demonstrate some evidence of capacity to analyse and synthesize; grasp of basic concepts of semantics, and evidence of good understanding of key issues involved in meaning of natural languages at lexical, phrasal, sentence and discourse levels.	Demonstrate evidence of ability to develop solutions to simple problems in the study of semantics; adequate understanding of basic concepts of semantics and key issues involved in meaning of natural languages at lexical, phrasal, sentence and discourse levels.	Demonstrate little understanding of basic concepts of semantics and key issues involved in meaning of natural languages at lexical, phrasal, sentence and discourse levels.	Demonstrate limited or virtually no understanding of basic concepts of semantics and key issues involved meaning of natural languages at lexical, phrasal, sentence and discourse levels.
2. Examination	Demonstrate understanding of basic concepts in semantics and discourse analysis, and fundamental and key issues in natural language semantics. Show the capacity to analyse meaning at all levels of language.	<u>Demonstrate excellent understanding of</u> basic concepts and fundamental issues in semantics and discourse analysis, and strong evidence of capacity to analyse natural language semantics.	<u>Demonstrate good understanding of</u> basic concepts and fundamental issues in Semantics and discourse analysis, and some evidence of capacity to analyse natural language semantics.	<u>Demonstrate adequate understanding of</u> basic concepts and fundamental issues in semantics and discourse analysis.	<u>Demonstrate little understanding of</u> basic concepts and fundamental issues in semantics and discourse analysis.	<u>Demonstrate limited or virtually no understanding of</u> basic concepts and fundamental issues in semantics and discourse analysis.

**Part III Other Information** (more details can be provided separately in the teaching plan)

**1. Keyword Syllabus**

(An indication of the key topics of the course.)

Semantic structure and analysis: Semantic rules; sense and reference; meaning relations: synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy, homonymy, meronymy, polysemy; semantic decomposition; collocation, lexical sets and semantic fields; idioms; presupposition.

Sentence relations and truth: logic and truth, propositional logic, necessary truth, a priori truth and analyticity, entailment and presupposition.

Sentence semantics: simple and relative tenses, situation types and aspect, thematic roles, thematic role grids.

Language as communication: context and inference; pragmatics and speech act theory; Gricean maxims; the cooperative principle; politeness strategies; implicature.

Text analysis: Functional-semantic analysis; rhetorical structure theory. Texture and textuality.

**2. Reading List**

**2.1 Compulsory Readings**

(Compulsory readings can include books, book chapters, or journal/magazine articles. There are also collections of e-books, e-journals available from the CityU Library.)

1.	Saeed, John I. (2009) <i>Semantics</i> . 3 <sup>rd</sup> edition. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.
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**2.2 Additional Readings**

(Additional references for students to learn to expand their knowledge about the subject.)

1.	Cann, Ronnie. (1993) <i>Formal Semantics</i> . Cambridge: CUP.
2.	Cann, Ronnie, Ruth Kempson and Eleni Gregoromichelaki. (2009) <i>Semantics: An Introduction to Meaning in Language</i> . Cambridge: CUP.
3.	Chierchia, Chierchia and Sally McConnell-Ginet. (2000) <i>Meaning and Grammar</i> . 2 <sup>nd</sup> edition. London: MIT Press.
4.	Heim, Irene and Angelika Kratzer. (1998) <i>Semantics in Generative Grammar</i> . Oxford: Blackwell.
5.	Hurford, James R., Brendan Heasley and Michael B. Smith. (2007) <i>Semantics: A Coursebook</i> . 2 <sup>nd</sup> edition. Cambridge: CUP.
6.	Johnstone, B. (2007) <i>Discourse Analysis</i> . Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
7.	Kearns, Kate. (2011) <i>Semantics</i> . 2 <sup>nd</sup> edition. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
8.	Kempson, Ruth M. (1977) <i>Semantic Theory</i> . Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
9.	Portner, Paul H. (2005) <i>What is Meaning? Fundamentals of Formal Semantics</i> . Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
10.	de Swart, Henriëtte. (1998) <i>Introduction to Natural Language Semantics</i> . Stanford: CSLI Publications.