

Ling 201C: Semantics 2

propositions and sets of propositions

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when: Spring 2017, TTh 2-4
where: Campbell 2122

description

Following Montague’s groundbreaking contributions, formal semantics quickly developed in its characterization of the meaning and use of propositions. This class explores three such types of developments.

1. the adoption of possible worlds as a semantic primitive, which allows for an elegant treatment of propositional attitudes, modals, and counterfactuals.
2. Hamblin’s analysis of questions as sets of propositions, which inspired treatments of presupposition, focus, and discourse coherence.
3. modern adaptations of these uses of sets of propositions, which have formed the foundation of related semantic frameworks: Alternative Semantics (which we’ll examine in the context of indefinites and disjunction); Inquisitive Semantics (which we’ll examine in the context of focus and sluicing); and dynamic-semantic treatments of evidentiality and illocutionary mood.

schedule

week	date	topic	reading	homework
<i>propositions as sets of worlds</i>				
1	April 4 April 6	intensional semantics	von Fintel and Heim 2011 Chapter 1 & 2 von Fintel and Heim 2011 Chapter 3	
2	April 11 April 13	conditionals	von Fintel and Heim 2011 Chapter 4 von Fintel and Heim 2011 Chapter 5	homework 1 due
3	April 18 April 20	empirical complications	von Fintel and Gillies 2010 p351–373 Iatridou 2000 (<i>optional: von Fintel 1998</i>)	homework 2 due
<i>sets of propositions: phase 1</i>				
4	April 25 April 27	questions	Karttunen 1977: p1–22 Karttunen 1977: p23–44	homework 3 due
5	May 2 May 4	presupposition	Stalnaker 1973 (<i>optional: Stalnaker 1978</i>) Heim 1983	homework 4 due
6	May 9 May 11	focus & information structure	Rooth 1996 Roberts 1996: 1–36	homework 5 due
7	May 16 May 18	topic & focus	Roberts 1996: 36–69 Buring 2003	homework 6 due
<i>sets of propositions: phase 2</i>				
8	May 23 May 25	alternative semantics	Kratzer and Shimoyama 2002 Alonso-Ovalle 2005	homework 7 due
9	May 30 June 1	inquisitive semantics	AnderBois 2012 AnderBois 2010	homework 8 due
10	June 6 June 8	dynamic update student presentations	Murray 2011	

expectations: participation (20% of your grade); homework (30%); final paper & presentation (50%)

reading: The above schedule is almost certainly too ambitious for one quarter. We will amend it as we go, based on how discussion progresses, and how interested students are in the big picture versus the technical details.

homework: I will assign very short (1-2 exercise) weekly homework assignments to give students a chance to make sure they understand the relevant formalism.

final paper: A 10–15pg (single-spaced) paper is due on **Sunday, June 18**. In it, I'd like you to review one or two treatments of a particular phenomenon that invoke possible worlds or sets of propositions (i.e., papers that are written in the traditions of intensional semantics, Hamblin semantics, Stalnakerian update semantics, Alternative Semantics, or Inquisitive Semantics). The ideal paper will include constructive and thoughtful reviews and reflection on the recommended direction of future research.

presentation: Students will be asked to present foundational work for their paper in the last week of class. You should aim for a 10-15 minute presentation; the main goal of the presentation is to inform your peers about additional and interesting areas of research, as well as for you to solicit advice on the paper.

References

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