

**CLPS 1341**  
**Lexical Semantics**

**Fall, 2012**

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Office Hours: TBA

Course Requirements:

- (1) Regular attendance. There is no way to understand the material in this course without regular class attendance. (Obvious amounts of non-attendance will be factored into the final grade.) The readings are mainly primary sources, written for people with considerable background in linguistics in general and some background in semantics. In other words, the readings generally assume more background than most of the students in this course will have. There is no way around that, as there is no suitable textbook on this material. So part of my job as instructor will be to go over the readings and the points and make them more accessible. Which means that the readings will make very little sense to most people unless they are accompanied by the class presentation and discussion.
- (2) Readings: The particular readings will be announced as we go along, and will be made available either on the course website or links will be provided to material available on-line. As noted above, many of the readings are fairly technical. I will generally be pointing out what part of the readings you should concentrate on so don't get intimidated by the readings; I am aware of the general level of background in this class.
- (3) An in-class midterm, tentatively scheduled for Thursday, Oct. 18. (This date is subject to change)
- (4) A take-home final, which will consist mainly of directed essays intended to assimilate the points throughout the course.
- (5) A 3-6 page squib. A squib is a short note on some observation or short piece of analysis on something which flows from the points raised in the course. It should be something *which relates to the course material and which is something that could not have been done before taking the course*. I'll be giving examples of "squib-like" observations as we go along. For example: you might come up with some fairly ordinary looking word and realize that to analyze its meaning, you need the kinds of tools developed in the course. Or you might realize that its meaning interacts with pragmatic principles in an interesting way.

Squib due: Nov. 29 (but any time before that is just fine; if you think of something earlier by all means seize the opportunity and write it up when it strikes you).

- (6) Homeworks: There will probably be occasional homework exercises assigned. These will not be graded, but will be notated and factored into the final grade in borderline cases. They are designed primarily to help you assimilate the material.
- (6) *For graduate students only:* Graduate students will be expected to add in one component to the final - possibly an expository project involving a critical review of something in the literature. We will arrange suitable topics on an individual basis.

Outline and tentative dates: (most of the readings are TBA)

General, Introduction, Overview	Sept. 6
Setting the stage: A basic framework for semantics	Sept. 11-20
Reading: P. Jacobson, <i>Compositional Semantics: An Introduction to the Syntax-Semantics Interface</i> , (draft), Oxford University Press (to appear), Chapters 1-5.	
Lexical Decomposition: Syntactic vs. Semantic approaches	Sept. 20-Oct. 4
Early approaches to decomposition	
Verb meanings and verb classes	
Temporal and causative components to verb meanings	
Verbs of motion	
The ongoing debate about syntactic decomposition	
Pragmatics and the Lexicon	Oct. 9-16
Meaning vs. use: scalar implicatures	
Lexical gaps: pragmatic explanations?	
Midterm:	Oct. 18
Meaning and Context	Oct. 23-25
Indexicals: Character and Content	
Adjectives, comparison classes, and the modeling of vagueness	
Other contextual parameters	Oct. 30-Nov. 8
Domain restriction	

Predicates of personal taste  
“hidden variables” and implicit arguments

Natural Kind Terms	Nov. 13-15
Thematic relations; verb argument structure	Nov. 20-27
Unaccusative Hypothesis	Nov. 29 - Dec. 4
Word meaning and the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis	Dec. 6