

Meaning in Language (21521)

Degree: Applied Languages

Year: third

Term: second

ECTS credits: 4

Student workload: 100

Course type: Compulsory

GG Teacher: Louise McNally (louise.mcnally@upf.edu, office 53.706)

Language of instruction: Catalan or English

1. General presentation

This course is an introduction to the study of meaning in language. The student will become familiar with the most fundamental aspects of word and phrasal meaning and how these combine with context to yield a full interpretation for a sentence, as well as with some basic patterns of cross-linguistic similarities and differences in the way meaning is encoded in language. Finally, the student will learn develop some formal techniques for the analysis of meaning.

2. Skills to be developed

General skills:

- Analysis and problem solving: To be able to propose the best analysis of a semantic or pragmatic phenomenon given some set of theoretical concepts and specific methods.
- Application of theoretical knowledge to practical cases: To be able to apply theoretical concepts and knowledge about semantics and pragmatics to the analysis of new data.
- Motivation for quality: To be better able to recognize different degrees of precision in the analysis of data and to develop a sense of the importance of formulating descriptions and analyses with maximal precision.

Specific skills:

- Ability to reflect on the functioning of language: To be able to distinguish between the respective roles of semantics and pragmatics in linguistic communication.

3. Contents

- Conventional and inferential meaning
- Literal and figurative meaning
- Lexical meaning and semantic composition
- The dynamicity of meaning

4. Grade

Regular assessment

- Mid-term test: 50% of the final grade.
- Final (partial) exam: 50% of the final grade. **You must pass the exam (minimum grade 50/100) to pass the course.**
- In borderline cases, performance on the weekly exercises and participation in class will be taken into account.

No type of academic dishonesty will be tolerated. If you are caught cheating in any way on either of the exams (by copying someone else's work, consulting materials of any kind that you are not explicitly permitted to bring, etc.), you will get a 0 on the exam on which you are caught cheating. If we suspect that you have copied in any way on the weekly exercises, we will let you know that we suspect this and we will reserve the right not to evaluate your work.

Supplemental assessment (September)

- You must pass a cumulative final exam.

5. Methodology

The course is organized in the following way:

- 1 large group session/week; 1 seminar/week
- Reading: An average of 2 hours/week. You will be expected to do the required reading **before** the class in which it is discussed.
- Exercises: There will be weekly exercises, the role of which is to give you the opportunity to make sure you understand the concepts and techniques that are discussed in class, as well as to prepare you for the exams. The exercises will be turned in electronically.

The large group sessions will consist in the presentation and discussion of the concepts and methods that are necessary to understand the readings and do the exercises. The seminar sessions will be mainly devoted to discussing the weekly exercises. Active participation of the student is essential in both types of classes, but especially in the seminars. The work to be done outside of class will mainly consist of the weekly readings and exercises.

6. Course materials

Obligatory reading:

Kearns, Kate. 2010. *Semantics* (2nd Edition). Palgrave Macmillan. (Can be easily purchased online.)

Other material will be posted on the Aula Global.