Description

How do languages succeed in capturing the full range of meanings that human beings are capable of putting together in their minds? In linguistics, semantics, or the study of meaning in human languages, tries to answer this question, and this course will begin by focusing on key concepts and terminology in semantics. We will also look at three specific approaches to semantics: decompositional semantics, which breaks up the meaning of a word into smaller units; formal semantics, which uses logic and the concept of truth to account for sentence meaning; and cognitive semantics, which sees sentence meaning as related to and inseparable from cognitive abilities having to do with perception and reasoning. We will see how a wide variety of languages (including, to name just three, Ibibio, a Niger-Congo language of Nigeria; Tzeltal, a Mayan language of Mexico; and Nez Perce, a Penuthian language of Idaho, U.S.A.) handle various aspects of meaning, such as the different sets of color terms, verb tenses, and gender pronouns that exist in different languages. This course will also provide you with a basic introduction to propositional and predicate logic and their application to sentence meaning in linguistics. In general, this course is intended to give you the foundation you need to go on to study linguistic semantics at a more advanced level. Assignments will include weekly problems in semantics; an open-book midterm and an open-book final.

Required Texts (Available at Brooklyn College Bookstore):

Required Primary Texts:


A variety of other readings will be assigned.

Course Outline:

1 January 30: Introductions, backgrounds, preview of the text
2 February 1: Saeed, Chapter 1; Semantics in Linguistics
3 February 6: Saeed, Chapter 1; Allwood, Chapter 1, Logic in Linguistics
4 February 8: Saeed, Chapter 2, Meaning, Thought, and Reality
5 February 13: Saeed, Chapter 2; Allwood, Chapter 2, Set Theory
6 February 15: Saeed, Chapter 3, Word Meaning
**Conversion day: Tuesday, February 20 follows a Monday schedule**
7 February 22: Saeed, Chapter 3; Allwood, Chapter 3, Inference and Logical Analysis
8 February 27: Saeed, Chapter 4, Sentence Relations and Truth
9 March 1: Saeed, Chapter 4; Allwood, Chapter 4, Propositional Logic
10 March 6: Allwood, Chapter 4
11 March 8: Allwood, Chapter 5, Predicate Logic
12 March 13: Allwood, Chapter 5
13 March 15: Midterm
14 March 20: Saeed, Chapter 5, Sentence Semantics 1: Situations
15 March 22: Saeed, Chapter 6, Sentence Semantics 2: Participants
16 March 27: Saeed, Chapter 6
17 March 29: Saeed, Chapter 7, Context and Inference

**Spring Break: March 30 to April 8**

18 April 10: Saeed, Chapter 7; Allwood Chapter 6, The Deductive System
19 April 12: Allwood, Chapter 6
20 April 17: Saeed, Chapter 8: Functions of Language: Speech as Action
21 April 19: Saeed, Chapter 8; Allwood, Chapter 7, Modal Logic
22 April 24: Allwood, Chapter 7; Saeed, Chapter 9; Meaning Components
23 April 26: Saeed, Chapter 9; Saeed, Chapter 10, Formal Semantics
24 May 1: Allwood, Chapter 8, Intensional Logic and Categorial Grammar
25 May 3: Allwood, Chapter 8, Intensional Logic and Categorial Grammar
26 May 8: Saeed, Chapter 11; Cognitive Semantics
27 May 10: Saeed, Chapter 11; Cognitive Semantics
28 May 15: Review
**Final Exam:** Tuesday, May 19, 10:30-12:30 pm; room to be announced.

**Participation:**
Students must attend regularly, arrive on time and must be prepared to participate, having done the assigned work. Participation will count for 20% of the overall grade for the course.

**Assignment Quizzes and Exams:**
There will be 5 quizzes.
There will be weekly homework assignments.
There will be an open-book midterm and an open-book final.

**Grading:**
Grades will be based on the following percentages:
Attendance and participation-20%, quizzes-20%, midterm exam-30%, final examination-30%
Statement on the University's policy on Academic Integrity
The faculty and administration of Brooklyn College support an environment free from cheating and plagiarism. Each student is responsible for being aware of what constitutes cheating and plagiarism and for avoiding both. The complete text of the CUNY Academic Integrity Policy and the Brooklyn College procedure for implementing that policy can be found at this site: http://www.brooklyn.cuny.edu/bc/policies. If a faculty member suspects a violation of academic integrity and, upon investigation, confirms that violation, or if the student admits the violation, the faculty member MUST report the violation.

Statement in Reference to the Center for Student Disability Services
In order to receive disability-related academic accommodations students must first be registered with the Center for Student Disability Services. Students who have a documented disability or suspect they may have a disability are invited to set up an appointment with the Director of the Center for Student Disability Services, Ms. Valerie Stewart-Lovell at 718-951-5538. If you have already registered with the Center for Student Disability Services please provide your professor with the course accommodation form and discuss your specific accommodation with him/her. See page 64 of the 2013-2014 Bulletin for more information.

The state law regarding non-attendance because of religious beliefs
You should check this on page 54 in the 2013-2014 Bulletin.

Important Information Regarding College Regulations

* Please note that for students whose programs required an adviser's approval prior to registration and for students who wish to withdraw from basic skills courses (e.g., English 1), prior approval of CAASS (Academic Advisement) is required.

* Please note that resolution of Spring/Summer 2014 Incomplete and Absent grades will only be accepted if the missing work was made up prior to the deadline. Exceptions to this policy will require the approval of the Committee on Course and Standing and must be supported by clear documentation of the reasons for the request.

* Please note that Late-Adds and Reinstatements will not be accepted after the Late-Add period under any circumstances (except for acknowledged College error).

* All students should read carefully and thoroughly the 2013-2014 Brooklyn College Bulletin, especially pp. 35-50, pp. 51-56, and other relevant sections of the bulletin for a complete listing of academic regulations of the College.