

Instructor: Marjorie Pak, Program in Linguistics. Call me **Dr. Pak** [pak]; pronouns *she/her*.

- Preferred contact: mgpak@emory.edu. During the semester I try to respond to course-related questions within 24 hours. If I take longer, you can email again or leave a voicemail at 404-727-8077.

Class meetings: TuTh 11:30am-12:45pm, North Decatur Building 155, starting Th 8/24.

Occasional classes may be held on Zoom; see Canvas for login information.

Office hours: see Canvas Announcements for times and locations

Course description: Much of the language you hear over the course of a day consists of sentences you have never heard before, and yet you are able to understand them. How is this possible? The **Principle of Compositionality** states that the meaning of a sentence is determined by the meanings of its words and the way they are combined. In the first part of this course, students will learn a system for doing just this—combining phrase structure trees and computing the meanings that result, using the formal language of predicate logic to represent sentence meanings. Then, in the second part of the course, we'll focus on utterance meaning—aspects of meaning that go beyond what is shown in the predicate logic. For example, what enables us to understand a sentence like *There's ice cream on your shirt* as a simple informative description in some contexts, as an accusation in others, and as a warning in still others? We'll discuss speech acts, implicature, information structure, and other aspects of utterance meaning as we explore the close relationship between semantics and pragmatics.

Course goals: My primary goal in *all* of my classes is to help students fall a little more in love with a life of intellectual curiosity! In this class, you'll work toward this goal by achieving these learning outcomes:

- explain the role of *truth-conditional meaning* and *compositionality* in formal semantics, and discuss (in a more nuanced way) the fundamental role of compositionality in human language
- practice the methods of formal semantic analysis, e.g. logical entailment and other sentence relations, first-order logic, truth tables, quantifiers, syntactic trees, lambda calculus
- apply key concepts in implicature, speech act theory and presupposition to natural language
- read (with more speed and accuracy) papers in formal semantics and the philosophy of language
- articulate some issues that arise in the division of labor between semantics and pragmatics

Prerequisite: Some background in syntactic trees and basic linguistic theory will be assumed. If you have not taken Foundations of Linguistics (LING-201/ANT-203), please email me right away.

Materials:

- Bring **paper and pencils** for note-taking to each class. Due to the nature of our material (trees, diagrams, formulas, etc.), typing notes on a laptop will generally be ineffective. (It's fine to use a tablet and stylus, as long as you're well-versed in your drawing app and won't get slowed down.)
- At the end of the semester there will be several days when we discuss assigned readings. You'll need to **bring each reading with you to class**. I strongly recommend hard copies and am willing to provide them upon request (with at least 48 hrs notice). If you prefer to read on-screen, the device you bring to class needs to be at least tablet-sized ($\geq 10''$), and you need to download the paper ahead of time so that it's immediately available when we start class.
- You should have the [minimum recommended hardware and software](#) for an Emory online class (access to a computer with speakers, mic and webcam, reliable internet, Canvas, Zoom, etc.).

Schedule *(subject to change; see Canvas for up-to-date version)*

Aug 24	Overview; intro to formal semantics	
Aug 29	Propositional logic	PS1 due 8/31
Aug 31	Truth tables	PS 2 due 9/7
Sep 5	Predicate logic	
Sep 7	Quantifiers	PS3 due 9/14
Sep 12-21	Type theory and lambda calculus	PS4 due 9/21
Sep 26	Interim review; history of formal semantics	
Sep 28	Test 1	
Oct 3-5	Frege vs. Russell on <i>the</i>	
Oct 12	Presupposition and factivity	PS5 due 10/17
Oct 17-19	Implicature; Grice 1975	
Oct 24	Reading quiz & discussion: Chierchia et al.	PS6 due 10/26
Oct 26-31	Speech acts	
Nov 2	Test 2	
Nov 9-28	Selected paper discussions (see Canvas)	daily quizzes & participation
Dec 5	Wrap-up and Test 3 review	Test 3, Tu 12/12 at 11:30am

Assignments and grading

Problem sets (40%): There will be six problem sets assigned over the semester. Each problem set will be posted on Canvas several days before it is due and will be graded on a 5- to 7-point scale.

- You are encouraged to discuss problem sets with other students, but **you must each write up your answers independently** (i.e., no word-for-word matching responses). If you discuss a problem with others, write their names under your name at the top of your paper. See Honor Code below.
- Unless otherwise instructed, please neatly hand-draw or hand-write your work in dark pencil or ink on unlined or lightly-lined white paper. You may also use a drawing app on your tablet. Hand your hard copy directly to me in class and/or scan and upload it to Canvas as a **single PDF file**. Make sure your scans are high-contrast, without shadows, and that your text is at least as large as surrounding 12-point text in your doc. **Late work must be submitted online.** If I find your work difficult to read, I may deduct partial credit.

Tests (45%): There will be two in-class tests, one on **Th 9/28** and one on **Th 11/2**. Questions will be similar to those seen on problem sets. A third test will be given during part of our assigned final exam slot, **Tu 12/12, 11:30am-1:00pm**. It will consist primarily of short-essay questions about assigned readings and broader issues. Each test will be worth 15% of your final grade.

Reading quizzes and discussions (15%): At the end of the semester, we'll read a series of papers about the semantics-pragmatics interface and the nature of truth-conditional meaning. Be prepared for a <5-minute quiz on each reading at the beginning of class (2 pts.). I may have you complete a write-up in lieu of a quiz; this will be pre-announced. Bring the reading to class and participate actively in the discussion (1 pt.). There will be chances to earn bonus points in case of an absence or occasional missed question.

General grading procedures:

- *Feedback.* You can expect grades for on-time submissions to be posted in Canvas within one week of the due date. (Work submitted late may take longer.) Feedback will be written directly on the assignment, announced in class, or posted on Canvas as an answer key or video. The only exception is Test 3, which I'll grade after classes end. You can email me after the end of the semester if you'd like individual feedback on that.
- *Late work.* If you start falling behind in this class, please **email me for help right away!** No need for a doctor's note or lengthy excuse (but do feel free to share what you want). For problem sets, I will usually grant a 24-hour extension with no penalty, as long as you request it before the deadline. If I don't hear from you, late work is lowered up to 20% a day—so again, **please email me!**
- *Extra-credit* questions will be included on some problem sets and tests. There may also be opportunities to earn extra credit by attending and writing about an event outside of class. Special extra-credit assignments are not created *ad hoc* for individual students.
- *Final grades* are assigned as follows: 93+ **A**, 90-92 **A-**, 87-89 **B+**, 83-86 **B**, 80-82 **B-**, 77-79 **C+**, 73-76 **C**, 70-72 **C-**, 67-69 **D+**, 60-66 **D**, 0-59 **F**. (If you have selected the S/U grading option, a grade of 60 or above will count as **S**.)
- *For anyone who needs to hear this:* Grades in my classes are *not* a reflection of how much I like you as a person, or of how smart, interesting or competent I think you are generally. They simply reflect the completeness, quality and timeliness of the assignments you do for this class. If you'd like to improve your grades and don't know how, or if you're having trouble getting your work done for personal reasons, email me and we'll meet to discuss your situation. No need for embarrassment!

Class expectations and policies

Above all, be respectful, courteous, honest and clear in your interactions with other students, me, and our assigned texts. I will strive to model this kind of behavior myself. This includes interactions in class, office hours, online discussions, and email. We *can* challenge one another's ideas—but let's do so thoughtfully and sensitively, after careful listening and reading.

- I expect people to **attend regularly, participate appropriately** in activities and discussions, stay focused and allow others to stay focused to the best of your ability. I keep attendance records and take this information into account when deciding whether to round up borderline final grades.
- **If you must miss class** for any reason—including **late enrollment during Add/Drop/Swap**—please email me ASAP. You don't have to share details. To help you stay caught up, I'll be posting slides, handouts and some whiteboard photos on Canvas. I will let you know what to do about any missed assignments; see also *Late Work* above. Ultimately it's your responsibility to keep up, but I'm always willing to answer your specific questions about class material that you've reviewed. Note: If you enroll in the course after Problem Set 1 is due, you'll need to email me immediately for a substitute exercise, which will be due 72 hours after you enroll.
- It's courteous to **let me know if you must miss part or all of a class**. If you have a situation that will lead to multiple absences, email me ASAP—don't just disappear! Keep in mind that it's your responsibility to keep up; that class materials will be posted on Canvas to help you keep up; and that

you can request a 24-hour extension on any problem set. I won't be able to meet with you to go over all you missed, but I'll try to help with specific questions.

- I'll be posting handouts, slides and some whiteboard photos and Zoom recordings on Canvas. Audio, video and Chat contributions are included in Zoom recordings. Recordings and other materials are for the sole purpose of educating students enrolled in the course. The release of such information (including but not limited to directly sharing, screen capturing, or recording content) is strictly prohibited, unless I state otherwise. Doing so without my permission will be considered an Honor Code violation and may also be a violation of other state and federal laws, such as the Copyright Act.
- The **Honor Code** is in effect throughout the semester. By taking this course, you affirm that it is a violation of the code to cheat on exams, to plagiarize, to deviate from the teacher's instructions about collaboration on work that is submitted for grades, to give false information to a faculty member, and to undertake any other form of academic misconduct. You also affirm that if you witness others violating the code you have a duty to report them to the honor council.

Unless I explicitly state otherwise, using an artificial intelligence program to generate any content for any assignment in this course constitutes plagiarism and is a violation of the Honor Code. The use of an artificial intelligence program in this course without my permission may also constitute seeking unauthorized assistance or violate other parts of the Honor Code. Any suspicion of academic misconduct will be reported to the Honor Council.

catalog.college.emory.edu/academic/policies-regulations/honor-code.html

More resources

Voting. It's important to participate in every election if you're eligible! **Email me** or visit [Emory Votes](#) if you need help with the logistics of voting. You can also get reminders and information at emory.turbovote.org.



Important dates:

- ASAP: Register to vote or update your registration. If you want to vote in Georgia this year, the registration deadline is **Oct. 10**; see [this info sheet](#), also in Woodruff library near the fax machine.
- ASAP: If you need to vote by mail, you may need to request a ballot from your state. See emory.turbovote.org/vote-by-mail
- Oct 16–Nov 3: Early voting in Georgia. If you're registered in DeKalb County, you can vote at 1599 Clifton Rd.; more info TBA.
- Nov 7: Election Day. Polls open 7am–7pm in Georgia; find your polling location at mvp.sos.ga.gov
- Dec 5: Georgia Runoff Election Day (TBA)

Inclusive instruction. The Department of Accessibility Services (DAS) works with students who have disabilities to provide reasonable accommodations. It is your responsibility to request accommodations. To receive consideration, you must register with DAS at accessibility.emory.edu/students/. Accommodations cannot be retroactively applied, so you need to contact both DAS and your instructor as early as possible. For more information, contact DAS at (404) 727-9877 or accessibility@emory.edu.

Stress management and mental health. If you are struggling with this class, please email me! If you think you might benefit from additional support, please visit <http://campuslife.emory.edu/support/index.html> for a list of resources available on campus, including [Counseling & Psychological Services](#), [Student Case Management and Interventions Services](#) and the 24/7 resource [Emory Anytime Student Health Services](#).