Date: 04.03.2026

Bar-Ilan University
אוניברסיטת בר-אילן

Syllabus - Teaching Program for the Course

Semantics

Masha Esipova| Department of English Literature and Linguistics

37289-01

Course Type:	course
Scope of credits:	___
Year of study:	___
Semester:	2025-2026, Semester B
Day & Time:	Tuesday 12-2pm, room 403-2 Thursday 2-4pm, room 403-2
Office hours:	by appointment
Lecturer Email:	mariia.esipova@biu.ac.il
Moodle Site:	https://lemida.biu.ac.il/course/view.php?id=106983

Course description and learning goals

Course Abstract

The course is aimed to provide a basic introduction to formal semantics, a subfield of linguistics which applies formal mathematical tools to derive the meaning of natural language expressions. The students will be familiarized with the foundations of semantic theory and provided with the basic technical and methodological tools for developing a semantic analysis.

Learning objectives

1. The students will understand the core goals and principles of formal semantics.
2. The students will develop familiarity with some of the core analytical concepts in formal semantics.
3. The students will master some of the basic formal analytical tools commonly used in formal semantics, such as set theory, propositional logic, and second order predicate logic.
4. The students will be able to apply the knowledge and skills above to some common semantic phenomena, such as semantic relations between sentences, natural language connectives, predication, modification, quantification, etc.

Course structure (subject to change)

Week No.	Lesson topic
1	Introduction. Truth-conditional compositional semantics.
2-3	Basic tools. Set theory. Extension and intension. Propositional logic. Predicate logic.
4-5	Modification. Nominal modifiers. Verbal modifiers and events.
6	Review for the midterm. Midterm.
7-8	Reference. Proper names. Definite and indefinite expressions. Plurals. Pronouns.
9	Quantifiers. Generalized quantifiers. Quantifiers in object position.
10	Tense and aspect.
11-12	Intensional constructions. Modals. Attitude predicates.
13	Semantics/pragmatics interface. Presupposition and implicature.
14	Buffer/review.

Formative Assessment

Description of the product	Weight in the final score
Pass/fail homework assignments	20% (you can fail two without it affecting your grade)
Midterm	30% of final grade
Final exam	50% of final grade

Final grade

Pass/fail homework assignments: 20%
Midterm: 30%
Final exam: 50%
(Note: on Inbar, your grades for the midterm and pass/fail homework assignments will be combined.)

Course requirements

Attendance: you can miss two classes without an explanation. Additional absences require justification for a passing grade, but contact the instructor if you need more flexibility. When classes are on campus, Zoom attendance can be allowed only in exceptional circumstances and needs to be negotiated with the instructor in advance.

Collaboration policy

You're allowed—and encouraged—to collaborate on pass/fail homework assignments, but (i) each of the collaborators must still submit their copy of the assignment on Lamda, even if it's exactly the same as their collaborators'; (ii) you must always indicate all your collaborators.

Plagiarism policy

Any instance of plagiarism in your assignments will immediately result in you failing this course and will be reported to the administration. Please consult the department's guidelines on what constitutes plagiarism:
https://english.biu.ac.il/sites/english/files/shared/what_is_plagiarism_biu_english_literature_and_linguistics.pdf

If you use generative AI (such as ChatGPT) to assist you in your assignments, you should properly report doing so by submitting a full record of your prompts and the AI's outputs. Failure to do so will be treated as an instance of plagiarism.

Prerequisites

Course number	Course name
184	Introduction to Linguistics

Bibliography: Up-to-date reading, viewing, and listening content items

The readings will be made available to the students electronically throughout the course. Most of the required reading will be assigned from the following textbooks:

- Portner, Paul. 2005. What is meaning? Fundamentals of formal semantics. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Coppock, Elizabeth & Lucas Champollion. 2025. Invitation to formal semantics. Ms. https://eecoppock.info/bootcamp/semantics-boot-camp.pdf