



SYLLABUS

Possible World Semantics (taught in English)

Academic year 2025-2026

1. Information about the study program

1.1. University	Babeș-Bolyai University	
1.2. Faculty	The Faculty of Letters	
1.3. Department	English language and literature	
1.4. Field of study	Language and literature	
1.5. Study cycle (BA/MA)	Master	
1.6. Study programme/Qualification	Current Trends in Linguistics (DAL)	
1.7. Enrolment frequency	Full time	Full ti

2. Information about the subject

2.1. Course title			Possible World Semantics (taught in English)				Course code		LME2237	
2.2. Course tutor					Prof. dr. Ștefan Oltean					
2.3. Seminar / practical course (laboratory) tutor					Prof. dr. Ștefan Oltean					
2.4. Year of study	1	2.5. Semester	2	2.6. Type of assessment	E	2.7. Course status	Contents	DA		
							Mandatory	DO		

3. Total estimated time (teaching hours per semester)

3.1. Number of hours per week	3	of which: 3.2 course	1	3.3 seminar / practical course (laboratory)	2
3.4. Total number of hours in the curriculum	42	of which: 3.5 course	14	3.6 seminar / practical course (laboratory)	28
Allotted time for individual study (ID) and self-study activities (SA)					hours
Study based on textbook, course manual, recommended bibliography, personal notes (SA)					40
Additional research (in the library, online scientific databases/platforms, or field documentation)					30
Preparation for seminars / laboratory classes/ essays/ projects/ homework/ portfolios and reports					30
Tutoring					2
Assessment (examinations)					2
Other activities:					4
3.7. Total hours for individual study (ID) and self-study activities (SA)					108
3.8. Total hours per semester					150
3.9. Number of credits					6

4. Prerequisites (if necessary)

4.1. curriculum	
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Date of approval
Name and signature of Dean



4.2. skills	
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5. Conditions (if necessary)

5.1. for delivering lectures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Classroom with blackboard, computer and overhead projector During the course the students are required to respond to the teacher's request to engage in discussions and to answer the questions about the topic of the course.
5.2. for teaching seminars / practical courses (laboratory classes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The attendance of seminars is mandatory for all students. At the beginning of each seminar, students must submit, at the teacher's request, the homework received in the previous seminar(s).

6. Acquired specific skills

Professional/essential skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> C2.2 Appropriate use of scholarly literature C3.2 Explanation of syntactical, semantic and pragmatic classifications of linguistic data, analysis of spoken and written discourse in the English language by using the conceptual framework of possible world semantics or truth-conditional semantics Explanation and interpretation of meaning in natural languages C5 Description of the grammatical and semantic system of natural languages in general and of English and Romanian in particular, and their use for text production and translation, and verbal interaction
Transversal skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CT1 Using the instruments of linguistics and literary studies in accordance to professional ethics. CT2 Teamwork; interpersonal communication, taking on specific roles.

7. Course objectives (derived from the acquired specific skills)

7.1 General objective of course	The course examines the relevance of truth-conditional semantics and of possible world semantics for the study of meaning in natural language. It addresses the following issues: sense / reference; intension / extension; formal languages; predicate calculus; types of denotations; sets and types of functions; the lambda notation for functions; quantification; the standard theory of quantification; generalized quantifiers; possible worlds and intensional predicate calculus; possible worlds and types of sentences; transworld-identity; the ontological status of possible worlds; rigid designators and nonrigid designators (proper names, definite descriptions, fictional names); intensional constructions in natural languages: modality, tense; aspect, complementation, questions, exclamations; <i>de re</i> and <i>de dicto</i> readings; the semantics of adjectives; indexicality and the relevance of context for semantic analysis; possible worlds and the semantics fiction.
7.2 Specific objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analysis of the relevance of formal, truth-conditional semantics, and of possible world semantics for the explanation of meaning in natural languages Description of the methodological framework of possible world semantics and of the way it relates to logic and philosophy Use of the possible world framework to the semantic analysis of linguistic expressions



8. Contents

8.1 Course	Teaching methods	Remarks
Theories of meaning	enhanced lecture, debate, problem solving; handout, ppt	1 lecture
Sense / reference; intension / extension; arguments in favor of referential theories of meaning	enhanced lecture, debate, problem solving; handout, ppt	1 lecture
Formal languages and formalizations of meaning; predicate calculus; semantic value	enhanced lecture, debate, problem solving; handout, ppt	1 lecture
Types of denotation, sets and types of functions; the lambda notation for functions	enhanced lecture, debate, problem solving; handout, ppt	1 lecture
Compositionality of meaning	enhanced lecture, debate, problem solving; handout, ppt	1 lecture
The standard theory and the generalized theory of quantification	enhanced lecture, debate, problem solving; handout, ppt	2 lectures
Possible worlds and intensional predicate calculus; possible worlds and types of sentences; transworld identity; ontological status of possible worlds	enhanced lecture, debate, problem solving; handout, ppt	1 lecture
Rigid vs nonrigid designators (proper names, definite descriptions, fictional names)	enhanced lecture, debate, problem solving; handout, ppt	1 lecture
Intensional constructions in natural languages: modality	enhanced lecture, debate, problem solving; handout, ppt	1 lecture
Intensional constructions in natural languages: tense and aspect	enhanced lecture, debate, problem solving; handout, ppt	1 lecture
Intensional constructions in natural languages: complementation, propositional attitudes, <i>de re</i> and <i>de dicto</i> readings	enhanced lecture, debate, problem solving; handout, ppt	1 lecture
Semantics of adjectives	enhanced lecture, debate, problem solving; handout, ppt	1 lecture
Indexicality and the relevance of context for semantic analysis	enhanced lecture, debate, problem solving; handout, ppt	1 lecture
Bibliography 1. Chierchia, Gennaro and Sally McConnell-Ginet. <i>Meaning and Grammar: An Introduction to Semantics</i> . Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2000 2. Heim, Irene and Angelika Kratzer. <i>Semantics in Generative Grammar</i> , Oxford: Blackwell, 1998 4. Von Stechow, Peter, Kay, Irene Heim, <i>Intensional Semantics</i> , MIT, 2010 5. Lewis, David. "Possible worlds". In Michael J. Loux (ed.). <i>The Possible and the Actual: readings in the metaphysics of modality</i> . Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1979 6. Loux, Michael J. "Introduction: Modality and Metaphysics". In Michael J. Loux (ed.). <i>The Possible and the Actual: readings in the metaphysics of modality</i> . Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1979 7. Moeschler, Jaques & Anne Reboul. <i>Dicționar enciclopedic de pragmatică</i> . Cluj: Editura Echinox, 1999 8. Oltean, Ștefan. <i>Introducere în semantica referențială</i> . Cluj: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2006 9. Oltean, Ștefan. <i>Topics in the Semantics of Names and Discourse</i> . Cluj: Casa Cărții de Știință, 2015		



10. Oltean, Ștefan., "On the semantics of fictional names," *Revue Roumaine de Linguistique*, LVIII, 4, p. 371–382, 2013
11. Portner, P. H. *What Is Meaning? Fundamentals of Formal Semantics*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2005
12. Soames, Scott. *Beyond Rigidity. The Unfinished Semantic Agenda of 'Naming and Necessity'*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2002.

8.2 Seminar / practical course (laboratory class)	Teaching methods	Remarks
Formal languages: predicate calculus and propositional calculus; representations of sentence meaning	Debate, exercise and problem-solving based on applications provided by the instructor	1 seminar
Functional application and lambda notation; representations of the semantic value of nominals, transitive and intransitive verbs	Debate, exercise and problem-solving based on applications provided by the instructor	1 seminar
Compositionality of meaning: atomic sentences	Debate, exercise and problem-solving based on applications provided by the instructor	1 seminar
Quantification; standard quantifiers; quantifier scope; generalized quantifiers	Debate, exercise and problem-solving based on applications provided by the instructor	1 seminar
Analytical sentences, synthetic sentences, <i>a priori</i> and <i>a posteriori</i> necessarily true sentences, contingently true sentences; exemplifications, exercises	Debate, exercise and problem-solving based on applications provided by the instructor	1 seminar
Transworld identity; its linguistic relevance: rigid and nonrigid designators; syntax and semantics of proper names; exemplifications, exercises	Debate, exercise and problem-solving based on applications provided by the instructor	1 seminar
Intensional constructions (modality, propositional attitudes); exemplifications	Debate, exercise and problem-solving based on applications provided by the instructor	2 seminars
Questions and exclamations	Debate, exercise and problem-solving based on applications provided by the instructor	1 seminar
<i>De re</i> and <i>de dicto</i> readings	Debate, exercise and problem-solving based on applications provided by the instructor	1 seminar
<i>Tense and aspect</i>	Debate, exercise and problem-solving based on applications provided by the instructor	1 seminar



The role of context in semantic analysis	Debate, exercise and problem-solving based on applications provided by the instructor	2 seminars
Possible worlds for fiction. Case study	Debate based on the novel <i>The Turn of the screw</i> by Henry James	1 seminar
<p>Bibliography</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Chierchia, Gennaro and Sally McConnell-Ginet. <i>Meaning and Grammar: An Introduction to Semantics</i>. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2000 2. Heim, Irene and Angelika Kratzer. <i>Semantics in Generative Grammar</i>, Oxford: Blackwell, 1998 3. Von Stechow, Kai, Irene Heim, <i>Intensional Semantics</i>, MIT, 2010 4. Oltean, Ștefan. <i>Introducere în semantica referențială</i>. Cluj: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2006 5. Portner, P. H. <i>What Is Meaning? Fundamentals of Formal Semantics</i>. Oxford: Blackwell, 2005 <p>Salmon, Nathan. "Are General Terms Rigid?" <i>Linguistics and Philosophy</i>, 28, 117-134, 2005</p>		

9. Validating course contents based on the expectations of epistemic communities, professional associations and of potential employers related to the field of study.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The topics discussed are based on the international bibliography in this field; • The instructor has publications in the fields of linguistics and semantics; • Part of the aspects discussed in the course and the seminar have been presented at international or national conferences.

10. Assessment (examination)

Type of activity	10.1 Assessment criteria	10.2 Assessment methods	10.3 Weight in the final grade
10.4 Course	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written exam with two subjects 	Written exam	60%
10.5 Seminar/practical course (laboratory class)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application of theoretical knowledge to the analysis of linguistic data (2 subjects) 	Written exam	20%
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance in class 	Students will be graded during the semester for solving applications, for their active and constructive involvement in conversations, for answering the questions related to the topic, for the	20%



		solved homework received in previous seminar(s).	
10.6 Basic performance standard			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The student understands the main concepts, recognizes them and uses them correctly Capacity to use the basic, minimal, specialized language of semantics At least 50% correct answers 			

11. Labels ODD (Sustainable Development Goals)

	General label for Sustainable Development
	Se pune la toate DISCIPLINELE, exceptând Fișele de practică

Date:
7/02/2025

Course tutor's name and signature

Ștefan Oltean

Seminar tutor's name and signature /
Practical course tutor's (Laboratory
tutor's) name and signature,
Ștefan Oltean

Date of approval:

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Head of Department's name and signature,

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Date of approval
Name and signature of Dean