

**Syllabus for LING 270**  
**Meaning**  
**Spring 2010**

**Course Meetings**

Class time: Mon/Wed 4:00-5:20pm  
Class location: Annenberg G15

**Instructor:** Hannah Rohde

Office: 2016 Sheridan Road, room 103  
Email: [hannah@northwestern.edu](mailto:hannah@northwestern.edu)  
Office Hours: Friday 1-2pm

**TAs:**

|         |  |  |
|---------|--|--|
|         | Elizabeth Mazzocco   | Honglei Wang   |
| Office: | Cresap 102-103   | Swift 007  |
| Hours:  | Wed 11am-12pm  | Wed 8:30-9:30am  |
| Email:  | <a href="mailto:elizabethmazzocco2013@u.northwestern.edu">elizabethmazzocco2013@u.northwestern.edu</a> | <a href="mailto:honglei-wang@northwestern.edu">honglei-wang@northwestern.edu</a> |

**What's this course all about?**

People use language to convey information. What makes a language, superficially no more than acoustic noise, suitable for this purpose, and how does it work? This question is at the center of the study of linguistic meaning. In this course, we will consider questions like these: How do the meanings of words like *everyone*, *a*, *hit*, and *saw*, give rise to the similarities and differences between *Everyone saw a hit*, *Everyone hit a saw*, *A saw hit everyone*, etc.? Can we always tell for sure what a given sentence means, and does it mean the same on all occasions? Does meaning come from sentences or from a speaker's use of sentences? What are the different types of meaning (e.g., linguistic, contextual, social)? What's the place of meaning in an overall theory of language? We will explore a variety of approaches to these questions and discuss their theoretical assumptions, methodological tools, and empirical strengths and weaknesses.

**Prerequisites**

None

**Format**

Lectures, discussion

**Website:**

Blackboard. You can access course information by going to [courses.northwestern.edu](http://courses.northwestern.edu). Let me know if you have trouble.

**Readings**

There is no required textbook. All readings will be available on Blackboard.

## Assessment

| Course Component                     | % of Final Grade |
|--------------------------------------|------------------|
| Homework assignments (6)             | 60%              |
| Exam 1                               | 20%              |
| Exam 2                               | 20%              |
| Experimental Requirement (see below) |                  |

## Policies

1. Keep up with class. Attending class is expected of everyone. Readings should be completed prior to the class for which they are assigned. Reading the materials carefully will facilitate class participation, which is part of your grade.
2. Hand in your work on time. Each homework will be due at the beginning of class on the day on which it is to be handed in. Assignments, regardless of whether they are handed out on Monday or Wednesday, will generally be due on the following Monday. Due dates are firm. No late work will be accepted or makeup exams given without documented evidence of a medical emergency. Any questions or special arrangements related to illness or other unforeseen problems should be taken up as soon as they become known and directly with the instructor. Any disputes regarding a grade on a given assignment or exam should also be taken up directly with the instructor. If a grade is under dispute, the entire assignment or exam will be re-evaluated, not just the particular question or section which the student has a question about.
3. Hand in easy-to-grade homework Type and print your homeworks if at all possible. If you write them by hand, write neatly and do not use a pencil. Illegible answers will be treated as false ones.
4. Working together on HW is fine/encouraged but final write-ups must be your own. You may work together on assignments, but you must hand in separate writeups and indicate clearly with whom you collaborated.
5. Exams The two exams also constitute an important part of your grade. In the exams, any collaboration will be considered a violation of Northwestern's policy on academic integrity (<http://www.wcas.northwestern.edu/advising/integrity/>). All violations will be reported to the WCAS Office of Studies.

**Experimental requirement** See the information at the end of this syllabus. It is *absolutely essential* that you do not delay this until the end of the quarter.

**Notice to students with disabilities** Any student with a documented disability needing accommodations is requested to speak directly to the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD; 847-467-5530 or [ssd@northwestern.edu](mailto:ssd@northwestern.edu)) and to the instructor as early as possible in the quarter (preferably within the first two weeks of class). All discussions will remain confidential.

## Course Schedule

| Date                 | Topics  | Reading/HW   |
|----------------------|---|--|
| March 29             | <i>Introduction</i><br>What is meaning?<br>Semantics, Pragmatics  |  |
| March 31, April 5, 7 | <i>Words</i><br>Noun meanings<br>Lexical relations<br>Ambiguity and vagueness<br>Some set theory                                | Saeed, Ch. 3<br>HW#1 out April 5   |
| April 12, 14         | <i>Sentences</i><br>Relationships between sentences<br>Inference patterns<br>Compositionality<br>Some propositional logic       | Martin, Ch. 1;<br>de Swart, Ch. 3<br><b>HW#1 Due April 12</b><br>HW#2 out April 14 |
| April 19, 21, 26     | <i>Verbs and Times</i><br>Event types<br>Tense and aspect   | Saeed, Ch. 5<br><b>HW#2 Due April 21</b><br>HW#3 out April 26                      |
| April 28, May 3      | <i>Modality</i><br>Consequence and consistence<br>Epistemic, deontic, <i>etc.</i>   | Saeed, Ch. 5<br><b>HW#3 Due May 3</b>  |
| May 5                | <b>First Exam</b> (in class)  |  |
| May 10, 12           | <i>Presupposition</i><br>Presupposition vs. entailment<br>Existential and sentential presuppositions<br>Triggers and projection | Green, Ch. 4 (pp. 72-86)<br>HW#4 out May 12  |
| May 17, 19           | <i>Implicature</i><br>What is said vs. what is meant<br>Conventional/conversational implicature                                 | Green, Ch. 5<br><b>HW#4 Due May 17</b><br>HW#5 out May 19                          |
| May 24, 26           | <i>Speech Acts</i><br>Performative verbs<br>Conditions of success<br>Direct and indirect speech acts                            | Martin, Ch. 7-9;<br>Searle (1965)<br><b>HW#5 Due May 24</b>                        |
| June 4               | Take-home exam posted   |  |
| June 7 [Mon]         | <b>Exam DUE by 4pm to instructor</b>  |  |

## Linguistics Department Experimental Requirement

This course has an experimental requirement. Students may fulfill this requirement by either participating in two experiments of one hour each, by attending two video presentations of one hour each, or by participating in one experiment of one hour and one video of one hour. The experiment will be part of ongoing research in the department and will illustrate features of language structure and use that are relevant to topics covered in the core linguistics curriculum. Similarly, the videos will be on topics covered in the core linguistics curriculum.

**Failure to complete this requirement will result in a lowered course grade.**

*NOTE WELL:* Don't leave this requirement to the end of the quarter! The last experiments and the last video showing will be scheduled during reading week at the latest. Don't count on sufficient experiment slots being available for everyone to fulfill this requirement at that late date. We highly recommend that you fulfill at least one experimental unit by week 5, and both by week 9.

### Option 1: Experiments

The experiments will be run either in the Linguistics House (2016 Sheridan Road) or in linguistics laboratories in Swift Hall and Cresap Hall. A list of available experiments with available times and instructions on where to go will be posted on the *Experimetrix* web site (see instructions below). Please note:

- You can do each experiment only once. You may not sign up for more than 1 slot in any individual experiment.
- Be sure to arrive on time for the experiments you sign up for. If you are more than 5 minutes late or fail to show up at all, you will receive **a negative credit** (i.e. you'll have to do 3 instead of just 2 credits)
- If the experimenter is more than 5 minutes late or fails to show up at all, notify your instructor immediately (via email is best). In the email include your name, the date, time and place of the appointment, and the experiment name. After the appointment has been verified with the appropriate experimenter, you will receive the credit.

### Option 2: Videos

Attendance at one video showing will count as fulfillment of one of the two hours of experiment participation required for this course. Information about the video showings will be available on the *Experimetrix* web site. In order to receive full credit for your attendance at a video showing, you need to:

- Sign-up on the *Experimetrix* web site ahead of time.
- Fill out the sign-in sheet upon entering the classroom. If you're late don't enter the room.
- Stay at the video showing for the entire duration of the video.

## Instructions for using *Experimetrix*

Experimetrix is a web site that handles the scheduling of the Linguistics experiments and video showings for all 200-level Linguistics courses. It keeps track of which experiments you have participated in and/or videos you have attended and how many credits you have earned. Below are the basic instructions for using the site (more detailed instructions are available on the site itself).

### Step 1. Register

Go to <http://experimetrix.com/nuling> and click on “New User.” Follow the instructions for registration. Make sure to follow the instructions that will be emailed to you shortly after you have completed your registration.

**NOTE! Be sure to go to the link given above. There are other departments using Experimetrix, and you want to be sure you are at the Linguistics site.**

### Step 2. Sign-up for experiments and manage your profile

Once you have completed the registration process, you can sign up for experiments, edit your profile, keep track of past participation and future appointments, **and assign earned experiment credits to your courses.**

**Note well!** Make sure to indicate which course(s) you are taking this quarter under profile options. All procedures are explained on the page which is displayed after you log-in.

### Step 3. Apply credits towards classes

Once you have participated in an experiment, check the web site to make sure that you have been given credit for your participation. Then, assign your credit towards the fulfillment of your requirement in your selected class(es) under the “Assign credit towards your classes” feature. This is a crucial step in making sure that your courses are credited properly.

### IMPORTANT

\*\*\*Be sure to assign your credits after your participation. If they are not credited by you, the instructor for your course does not receive a report indicating your participation. If you do not apply the credits to the appropriate class, no credit is assigned, and your grade will be lowered accordingly. *This is your responsibility, please be sure to follow through in order to receive your credit!* If this procedure is unclear to you after registering at the web site, please ask your instructor for assistance.\*\*\*