

**SYLLABUS**  
**553: Formal Semantics I**  
**Maribel Romero**

**Description of the course**

This course introduces you to the main concerns of current Formal Semantics. It teaches you how the meaning of a complex linguistic expression can be construed combining the meanings of the simple words that compose it. By studying different aspects of this semantic composition, the course provides you with tools to investigate empirical properties of natural language and with a basic background to understand current research in Formal Semantics.

**Prerequisites**

Ling 548 or equivalent background in Set Theory and Logic.  
Some background in syntax is highly recommended.

**Main topics and tentative schedule**

<b>Week of</b>	<b>Topic</b>
Jan 10	1. Review of mathematical tools.
Jan 17	2. Compositionality. Names and predicates in NatLg. 3. $\lambda$ -calculus
Jan 24	4. Non-verbal predicates. Modifiers. The definite article.
Jan 31	5. More on modifiers: Relative Clauses. **TAKE HOME I**
Feb 7	6. Pronouns I: variable binding in Natural Language.
Feb 14 – Feb 21	7. Quantification I: properties of natural language Determiners.
Feb 28	8. Quantification II: the scope of Quantificational Noun Phrases. **TAKE HOME II**
March 7	Spring Break
March 14 March 21	9. Pronouns II: cross-clausal and cross-sentential anaphora. Brief introduction to Dynamic Semantics. E-type pronouns.
March 28	10. Tense. **TAKE HOME III**
April 4	11. Intensionality I: Modals. Conditionals.
April 11	12. Intensionality II: Attitude reports.
April 18	13. Presupposition. **TAKE HOME IV**
April 25 Tentative	Mini-conference: ***PROJECT PRESENTATION***

## **Texts**

There is a textbook, which you can get at the Penn bookstore or at “House of Our Own” (3920 Spruce St., 215 222-1576):

Heim, I., and A. Kratzer. 1998. *Semantics in Generative Grammar*. Blackwell.

Other books that I recommend and that I may pass out readings from are the following:

Chierchia, G., and McConnell-Ginet, S. 1990. *Meaning and Grammar: An Introduction to Semantics*. MIT Press.

Gamut, L.T.F. 1991. *Logic, Language, and Meaning*. Volume 1 and 2. University of Chicago Press.

Partee, B., Ter Meulen, A. , and Wall. 1990. *Mathematical Methods in Linguistics*. Kluwer.

Partee, B., and P. Portner. 200x.

## **Course Requirements and Grade**

The requirements are the following: attendance, weekly readings from the aforementioned books and from selected papers, regularly assigned homework exercises, four Take Home assignments, and one (possibly joint) term project, presented at the mini-conference and written up as a paper.

On a regular basis (almost every week), you will be assigned some **homework exercises**. These assignments will not get a grade. We will go over them in class all together to make sure that everybody understood them (be ready to be called to do them on the blackboard). This work is for your own benefit: you are encouraged to work in teams if you find that it helps you, and you should contact me as soon as you get stuck. The purpose of it is to prepare you for...

... the **four Take Home assignments**, which you have to hand in on the date they are due and which you will get a grade for.

At the end of the semester, you have to give a (possibly joint) **project presentation** at the mini-conference and then write it up as a **term paper**. You are expected to present your own piece of research (possibly an extension of some homework assignment) or review critically some extra readings (from the aforementioned texts, and/or from some papers that I will assign you). You should meet with me and have a topic no later than March 28. All presentations require a handout.

Your **grade** will be based on your three best Take Homes, your project presentation/paper and your class participation.

## **Contact Information**

Office hours: TBA

610 Williams Hall

romero@ling.upenn.edu

Office phone: 573-5192