

**Introduction to semantics**

Berit Gehrke

**Abstract**

This course is an introduction to the formal semantics of natural language. We introduce central concepts and issues in semantics, and develop a basic formal compositional model of meaning, extending it as we go to accommodate a wider range of empirical phenomena. An emphasis will be on students developing skills in semantic analysis and argumentation.

**Topics**

- Introduction and basic concepts (nature of meaning; meaning and truth; semantics vs. pragmatic; meaning relations)
- The formal representation of meaning (predicates and arguments; functions and sets; logical connectives; semantic types)
- Meaning composition (compositional rules; lambda abstraction; lambda conversion, modification)
- Quantification (logical quantifiers; quantifier scope; generalized quantifiers and their properties)
- Event semantics

**Readings**

- Kearns, Kate (2011). *Semantics* (2nd edition). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Coppock, Elizabeth & Lucas Champollion (2025). *Invitation to Formal Semantics*. <https://eecoppock.info/bootcamp/semantics-boot-camp.pdf>