

ENGL 356: Introduction to Semantics Fall 2020

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Course Description:

(Prereq: ENGL 101 and ENGL 102 with a grade of 'C' or better) This course introduces the systematic study of semantics, focusing on the representation of meaning at the lexical level. This course covers ways of describing meaning (sense and reference, computational analysis and prototype theory), ways of organizing meaning (the mental lexicon, connotation and euphemism, linguistic relativity), and ways of applying these concepts to sort predicates by argument structure patterns.

Required Materials:

- Murphy, M. Lynne. 2001. *Lexical Meaning*.
- Additional readings to be supplied through Moodle

Student Learning Outcomes:

Upon successfully completing this course, students will be able to:

- Describe and illustrate theories that have been proposed to describe the organization of the lexicon
- Discuss linguistic literature that provides insight into practical application of semantics as it interacts with other fields of linguistics
- Describe and illustrate how denotation of words differs from connotation
- Describe and illustrate which information is entailed in words
- Provide and explain an analysis that shows how concepts are encoded
- Provide individual examples of lexical relations and their patterns in a language

Course Requirements and Evaluation:

This course will be graded out of 100% as outlined below. Final grades will be converted to a letter scale.

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| • Participation | 10% |
| • Quizzes (x4) | 20% |
| • Exams (x2) | 50% |
| • Homework Assignments (x4) | 20% |

Grading Policy:

Letter Grade

A	90-100%
B+	87-89.9%
B	80-86.9%
C+	77-79.9%
C	70-76.9%
D+	67-69.9%
D	60-66.9%
F	59.9% or below

Participation: Students are expected to attend class and to actively participate in discussions. Your participation grade will be based on both your attendance and participation.

Quizzes: There will be four (4) quizzes throughout the semester. Quizzes will be completed in class and will not take the entire period. The quizzes are meant to help you understand which concepts you understand well and which you need more help with before the exam. Quizzes will be multiple choice.

Exams: There will be two (2) exams, a midterm and a final. The midterm will occur midway through the semester and cover material from the first day to that period. The final exam will occur during final's week. The final is not cumulative but will only cover material from the midterm forward. The exams will present you with real-world linguistic data and ask you to apply classroom concepts covered in lecture notes and the readings to analyze data.

Homework Assignments: There will be four (4) brief homework assignments throughout the semester. These assignments will give you the opportunity to apply classroom concepts to real-world language data, and they are meant to prepare you for the exams. The homework assignments will be completed outside of class time and turned in at the beginning of class on the days they are due.

Course Policies:

Attendance: Attendance is essential to your success in this course. As a serious student, you should plan to miss class only when it is unavoidable and are expected to keep track of your absences and the work you miss on those days. Excessive absences (more than 3 unexcused) will negatively impact your final grade; every class you miss after those initial 3 will result in a drop of a half letter grade for participation. In addition, arriving or leaving class more than 15 minutes late or early will be counted as a half absence. As two of these equal one absence you should plan to get to class on time. **8 or more unexcused absences for a T/Th course will result in automatic failure of this course.**

Accessibility and Disability Services: Coastal Carolina University is committed to equitable access and inclusion of individuals with disabilities in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. Individuals seeking reasonable

accommodations should contact Accessibility & Disability Services (843-349-2503 or <https://www.coastal.edu/disabilityservices/>).

Academic Integrity: Coastal Carolina University is an academic community that expects the highest standards of honesty, integrity and personal responsibility. Members of this community are accountable for their actions and are committed to creating an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust. All members of our community – students, faculty, staff and administrators – share responsibility for promoting a culture of academic integrity. Each group plays a different role and, together, cultivates mutual respect and ethical behavior.

Students:

- Understand and abide by the Code of Student Conduct
- Take responsibility for personal behavior
- Actively oppose every instance of academic dishonesty

Projected Schedule, Readings, and Due Dates

The table below presents the anticipated schedule for course topics, reading, homework assignments, and exams. Please complete the reading for each class prior to arriving in class. As the instructor for this course, I reserve the right to adjust this schedule in any way that serves the educational needs of the students enrolled in this course.

Week 1	Introduction to the study of meaning	
	Murphy Ch. 1. The lexicon – some preliminaries	
Week 2	Denotation vs. Connotation	
	Euphemism and Taboo	
Week 3	Murphy Ch. 2: What do we mean by meaning?	Homework #1 Due
	More on sense and reference	
Week 4	Murphy Ch. 3: Components and Prototypes	
	More on prototypes	
Week 5	Murphy Ch. 4: Modern componential approaches	
	More on GO, BE, and STAY	
Week 6	Murphy Ch. 5: Meaning variation: Polysemy, homonymy and vagueness	
	More on polysemy	Homework #2 Due
Week 7	Review	
	Midterm Exam	
Week 8	Murphy Ch. 6: Lexical and Semantic Relations	
	More on lexical relations	
Week 9	Murphy Ch. 7: Ontological categories and word classes	
	More on word classes	
Week 10	Murphy Ch. 8: Nouns and countability	
	Murphy Ch. 9: Predication: verbs, events, and states	Homework #3 Due
Week 11	Murphy Ch. 10: Verbs and time	
	More on aspect	
Week 12	Basics of set theory	
	Basics of functions	
Week 13	Intensions and Extensions	
	Computing extensions of complex phrases	Homework #4 Due
Week 14	The system of ‘semantic types’	
	The lambda notation for functions	
Week 15	Deriving truth-conditions	
	Final Exam	