Philosophy 514. Recent and Contemporary Philosophy:  
Semantics of Natural Language  

Gilbert Harman and Mark Johnston  

Mondays 1:30-4:30PM, Fall Semester, 2004-2005

This is the version of the syllabus as of November 30, 2004.

Purposes of the Seminar

1. to survey recent linguistic semantics, including truth-functional semantics, Montague seman-
tics, quantifiers, generalized quantifiers, definite and indefinite descriptions, compositionality,
pragmatics, vagueness, and event semantics;

2. throughout to consider whether and how linguistic semantics might be relevant to issues in
metaphysics and epistemology;

3. in particular, to look at recent discussions of generic sentences, plurals, mass terms, and talk
about kinds.

Provisional Schedule

Part One: General Background

September 13 Introduction.

September 20 Semantics/Pragmatics.

September 27 Quantification, Compositionality, Domain Restriction.

October 4 Modality and Sentential Complements.

October 11 Adjectives, Vagueness, Verbs, Events

October 18 Talk by Francois Recanati.
Part Two: Noun phrases, Generics and Kinds

November 1 Descriptions and Pronouns

November 8 Plurals and Mass Terms

November 15 - December 6 Generics and Kinds

Provisional Reading Assignments

Part One: General Background

September 13 Introduction.


September 20 Semantics/Pragmatics.


Extra Added after class discussion on September 20.


September 27 Quantification, Compositionality, Domain Restriction.


October 4 Modality and Sentential Complements.


October 11 Adjectives, Vagueness, Verbs, Events

Chris Kennedy  “Towards a Grammar of Vagueness,” available online at http://www.ling.northwestern.edu/~kennedy/Docs/togramvague-abs.html


October 18 Talk by François Recanati.

François Recanati  Literal Meaning (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), text available online at http://jeanNicod.ccsd.cnrs.fr/documents/disk0/00/00/03/26/ijn_00000326_00/ijn_00000326_00.rtf.

Part Two: Noun Phrases, Generics, and Kinds

November 1 Descriptions and Pronouns


November 8 Plurals and Mass Terms


Thomas McKay  Draft of Plurals and Non-Distributed Predication available from his website, http://philosophy.syr.edu/mckay.html.

**November 15** Generics and Kinds—Part I


**November 22** Generics and Kinds—Part II


Reread Carlson from last week.


**December 6** Generics and Kinds—further reading


**Other Useful Reading**

**Basic Textbooks**


**Irene Heim and Angelika Kratzer** *Semantics in Generative Grammar* (Blackwell, 1998).


**Two Recent General Anthologies**


**Collections of new essays**

**Marga Reimer and Anne Bezuidenhout** *Descriptions and Beyond* (Oxford UP, 2004).

On-line Resources

Semantic Links http://semanticsarchive.net/links.html
Semantics Archive http://semanticsarchive.net/
Kai Fintel’s Semantics etc Blog http://semantics-online.org/blog/

Miscellaneous


Terrence Parsons A Primer in the Semantics of English, online at http://www.humnet.ucla.edu/humnet/phil/faculty/tparsons/Ling125/READINGS.htm.