

LING 478 Semantics I / LING 578 Semantic Theory I (Autumn 2025)

Lectures: SMI 313 TTh 12:30 – 2:20 PM

Instructor: Dr. Toshiyuki Ogihara, Professor of Linguistics

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Course Web Site: <https://canvas.uw.edu/courses/1831708>

PollEverywhere Site: <https://pollev.com/ogihara>

Office Hours: T 10:45 – 11:45 (in person @ GUG415J)

F 9:00 - 10:00 (via zoom @ <https://washington.zoom.us/j/92901796902>)

TA (Xiaolin Niu) office hours: 3:00 - 4:00 p.m. on Th (in person @ GUG407 Desk 35)

Course Description: This course introduces students to a formal approach to natural language semantics and pragmatics. No mathematical skills beyond the high school level are presupposed. However, a previous logic course (such as Phil 120) would be extremely helpful. To make the course material maximally accessible, we will emphasize natural language data and deemphasize precise formalization.

The issues and topics to be discussed in this course include the distinction between semantics and pragmatics, truth-conditional semantics, presuppositions, inference patterns, predicate logic, quantification, modality, NP/DP quantifiers (called “generalized quantifiers”), definite descriptions, *de dicto/de re*, tense and aspect, and events.

The class will be conducted through lectures and in-class discussion of exercises. We shall use PollEverywhere to assess your learning progress. You are also required to work on review/preview quizzes and homework assignments on line. There will be two on-line exams (midterm and final).

Prerequisite: LING 461 (Syntax 1) or equivalent. Ling 200/400 is not sufficient. PHIL 120 is recommended (but not required).

Learning Objectives:

Upon successful completion of this course, students will have the knowledge and skills to:

1. Understand key issues in the study of meaning
2. Use some basic technical tools in a formal analysis of meaning
3. Solve simple problems in semantic analysis
4. Describe some semantic data in the student’s native language or research language (Ling 578)

Important Notes:

1. Linguistics graduate students in the PhD program can take this class (Ling 578) or Ling 579 (Semantic Theory II) to satisfy the semantics requirement for PhD.
2. The first half consists of lectures, and the second half exercises and discussion. We take a ten-minute break in the middle (after 50 minutes or so).
3. No make-up homework assignments or exams. No incompletes.
4. No late homework will be accepted. It is your responsibility to check the course website for the availability and deadline of assignments.

Textbook (required): Kate Kearns, *Semantics*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2nd edition 2011 (available

at University Bookstore or from online retailers)

Requirements:

1. Class attendance. The first half of each class will be a lecture, while the second half consists of in-class exercises. You can work on in-class exercises individually or in groups. This is entirely up to you.

Throughout the class meeting time (both the lecture part and the exercise part), I ask you to submit your responses to **PollEverywhere** questions in class using your phone/tablet/laptop.

Each lecture will include approximately 2-5 polling questions, conducted during the course of the lecture time (including the second half), using Poll Everywhere, a free polling App. The purpose of using polling software is to engage students and encourage active learning, which has been shown to improve learning outcomes in measurable ways. Equal credit will be given for correct and incorrect responses. I shall also use PollEverywhere questions during the discussion period (i.e., the second half). If you participate and are present for at least 80% of the lectures and discussion periods with polling questions, you will earn the full 10% grade for this activity. Below this threshold, only partial credit will be given.

For your responses to be recorded properly, you must be logged in using your UW email (i.e., UW ID of the form xxx@uw.edu) to the Poll Everywhere course website:

www.pollerywhere.com. It is your responsibility to make sure you are registered and set up properly for the class. Missed polling participation cannot be made up. If your personal web-enabled device for submitting your polling responses is lost/broken/otherwise not working on a given day, please submit your work written on a piece of paper at the end of the class period.

Here's the instruction about how to set up your Poll Everywhere account:

<https://itconnect.uw.edu/learn/tools/pollerywhere/set-up-account/>

Once registered, you will need the following information to access the relevant questions online.

Respond at PollEv.com/ogihara or Text OGIHARA to 22333 once to join, then 1, 2, 3, or 4

2. Reading assignments for each class.

3. Nineteen (19) Review/Preview Quizzes — due 30 minutes before each class period. The lowest score will be dropped.

4. Six Homework Assignments to be done through the Canvas site (see above). The lowest score will be dropped. Keep in mind that homework assignments are graded and count toward your course grade. The work you submit must be your own. No collaboration is permitted.

5. Two online exams conducted through Canvas (Midterm and Final). We will have in-class “mock exams” to prepare you for the “real exams.”

6. Undergraduate students (Ling 478 students): a review quiz (online) and a write up (two pages) containing a question or disagreement about a specific claim made in the textbook or in a lecture. Present a specific natural language example when you do so.

Graduate students (those who are taking Ling 578): a descriptive paper (at least 5 double spaced pages) about a semantic phenomenon in your native language (or a research language). Detailed information will be provided separately.

Relative weight of each course requirement

20% – six homework assignments

10% – participation
 15% – 19 Review/Preview Quizzes
 10% – Undergraduate students (Ling 478): a review quiz (online) and a write up (two pages) containing a question or disagreement about a specific claim made in the textbook or in a lecture.
 Graduate students (Ling 578): a descriptive paper (at least 5 double spaced pages) about a semantic phenomenon in your native language (or a research language). (See above for details.)
 20% – Midterm
 25% – Final

Additional Notes, Classroom Rules of Conduct, etc.

1. Your questions are always welcome. However, questions that go beyond the content of the class session may have to be answered after class, during office hours, or by email.
2. You are expected to follow rules of conduct in the classroom. For example, you must refrain from engaging in private conversations in the classroom; if you have to come late, please enter the classroom quietly so as not to disrupt the lecture or the atmosphere of the classroom.
3. You are responsible for the content of class lectures. If you miss a class meeting, please access lecture slides from the canvas website.

Explanation of grading policy: Your course grades will be based on the following scale, which is the standard grading scale adopted by UW.

≥ 95% = 4.0	88 = 3.3	81 = 2.6	74 = 1.9	67 = 1.2
94 = 3.9	87 = 3.2	80 = 2.5	73 = 1.8	66 = 1.1
93 = 3.8	86 = 3.1	79 = 2.4	72 = 1.7	65 = 1.0
92 = 3.7	85 = 3.0	78 = 2.3	71 = 1.6	64 = .9
91 = 3.6	84 = 2.9	77 = 2.2	70 = 1.5	63 = .8
90 = 3.5	83 = 2.8	76 = 2.1	69 = 1.4	62 = .7
89 = 3.4	82 = 2.7	75 = 2.0	68 = 1.3	<.7 = 0

No rounding up is implied here. For example, If your percentile score is 92.9, then your course grade will be a 3.7.

Academic Integrity: Students are expected to maintain the highest standards of academic ethics, honesty, and integrity. It is your responsibility to read and understand the University's expectations in this regard (online at <https://www.washington.edu/cssc/expectations/>) Any student found to be in violation of proper academic conduct will be dealt with in the strictest manner in accordance with University policy. You are encouraged to study with classmates. However, the work you submit must be yours. You must not copy someone else's work and submit it as your work. If you cite from a source other than the textbook, you must acknowledge it. See also: <https://www.washington.edu/cssc/faculty-resources/grading-and-academic-misconduct/>

Special needs: If you have a letter from DSS indicating that you have a disability that requires special academic accommodations, please present the letter to your instructor as soon as possible so the proper accommodations can be discussed and met. For help with accommodations contact Disabled Student Services: 448 Schmitz, (206) 543-8924 <http://depts.washington.edu/uwdrs/>

Religious Accommodations Policy: Washington state law requires that UW develop a policy for accommodation of student absences or significant hardship due to reasons of faith or conscience, or for organized religious activities. The UW's policy, including more information about how to

request an accommodation, is available at Faculty Syllabus Guidelines and Resources (<https://registrar.washington.edu/staffandfaculty/syllabi-guidelines/>). Accommodations must be requested within the first two weeks of this course using the Religious Accommodations Request form available at <https://registrar.washington.edu/students/religious-accommodations-request/>.

Schedule (Any scheduling change will be announced in advance.)

<u>Week</u>	<u>Class #</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic to be covered</u>	<u>Reading</u>	<u>HW due dates</u>
1	1	9/25 Th	Introduction + Pragmatics	Ch. 1 (disregard 1.2.3)	
2	2	9/30 T	Basic Logical Tools	Ch. 2	
	3	10/2 Th	The Logical Quantifiers	Ch. 3 (3.1-3.4)	
3	4	10/7 T	Scope and Scopal Ambiguity	Ch. 3 (3.5)	HW1 due (Tu)
	5	10/9 Th	Modality and Possible Worlds	Ch 5, mainly 5.1.2, 5.1.3, 5.2.2, 5.2.3	
4	6	10/14 T	Modality and Possible Worlds	Ch 5, mainly 5.1.1 and 5.3	
	7	10/16 Th	Natural Language Quantifiers	Ch. 6 (6.1, 6.2, 6.4)	HW2 due (Fri)
5	8	10/21 T	Natural Language Quantifiers	Ch. 6 (6.3, 6.5, 6.6, 6.7)	
	9	10/23 Th	Definite Descriptions	Ch. 6 (6.8, 6.9) [disregard 6.10]	HW3 due (Fri)
6	10	10/28 T	Review for Midterm		
	11	10/30 Th	“Mock midterm”	“Real midterm” is an online exam	
7	12	11/4 T	Referential Opacity (<i>de re/de dicto</i>)	Ch. 7	
	13	11/6 Th	Indefinite Descriptions, Plurals, etc.	indefinites_required_reading.pdf (available from the course website)	
8	No class	11/11 T	Veterans Day		
	14	11/13 Th	Aktionsarten	Ch. 8	HW4 due (Fri)
9	15	11/18 T	Tense	9.1, 9.4, 9.5	
	16	11/20 Th	Perfect and Progressive Reichenbach’s theory	9.3.4., 9.3.5, 9.6	HW5 due (11/25 Mon)
10	17	11/25 T	Thematic roles and events	10.1 and 10.2 11.1	
11	18	12/2 T	Events and neo-Davidsonian developments	11.1 and 11.2	
	19	12/4 Th	Final Practice Problems (“Mock Final”)		Review HW due (12/9) Ling 478 only
12	Final Exam Week		Final Exam (cumulative) canvas quiz (2 hours)		Write-up 478/ Squib 578 due (12/12) Final exam open (12/10-11)