

Winter 2026
MW 12:30 a.m. – 2:20 p.m.
CMU 243

LING 479A — Semantics II
LING 579A/B — Semantic Theory II (Note boxed comments below)

Instructor: Toshiyuki Ogihara, Professor of Linguistics **email:** ogihara (at) uw.edu
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Course website: <https://canvas.uw.edu/courses/1863031>

Zoom access: Registration required

https://washington.zoom.us/join/3_kVY1msRr6wMozFFEFHAA

Only for remote CLMS students. Exceptions are granted under extenuating circumstances. Please consult the instructor. Recordings are available to all students. Passcode required (68702).

Poll Everywhere:  Respond at [PollEv.com/ogihara](https://poll-ev.com/ogihara)  Text **OGIHARA** to **22333** once to join, then **1, 2, 3, or 4**

Office Hours: W 2:45 – 3:45 (in person in GUG 415J)
F 9:30-10:25 (via Zoom at <https://washington.zoom.us/j/92901796902>)

Course Overview:

This course is an advanced introduction to the formal semantics of natural language. LING 479 and LING 579 meet jointly and cover the same core material. Expectations and grading differ slightly, as detailed below. While no formal prerequisite is required for linguistics graduate students (including CLMS students), some prior exposure to logical reasoning or formal analysis will be helpful. For undergraduates and non-linguistics graduate students, Semantics I (Ling 478) or Semantic Theory I (Ling 578) is a prerequisite. The course begins with an overview of the basic logical and mathematical tools necessary for any formal semantic discussion, including Predicate Logic and Set Theory. We will then go over specific issues in natural language semantics. We will use draft chapters from the instructor's forthcoming textbook (*Semantics in Action*) as our textbook. One crucial characteristic of *Semantics in Action* is that it draws on English and Japanese data in its discussions of semantic theory. Unlike Semantics I, the focus will be on the interface between syntax and semantics. Rather than studying a large number of different natural language phenomena and the interpretations of the entire sentence, we will discuss how the meaning of the whole is obtained from the meanings of the parts. I intend for the student to be able to apply the skills learned in this class to novel phenomena in their own language.

Prerequisite:

None for graduate students of linguistics; Semantics I (Ling 478) or Semantic Theory I (Ling 578) for undergraduate students and non-linguistics graduate students.

Textbook:

Semantics in Action, Toshiyuki Ogihara, draft chapters (UW net ID required for access)

https://uwnetid-my.sharepoint.com/:f/g/personal/ogihara_uw_edu/IgDHMqwwQ613S4Pw_CjxWXk7AUQzF80i_1S3k4bSHHfXIvo

Learning Goals:

By the end of the course, students will demonstrate the ability to

- Apply standard compositional semantic techniques to novel data.
- Examine natural language issues and problems compositionally and present some possible analyses.
- Construct and evaluate formal semantic analyses of specific constructions.
- Read formal semantics papers dealing with some specific empirical issues and conduct a mini project (Ling 579)

Requirements:

1. Class Meetings and Participation

Each class meeting is divided into two parts (approximately two 50-minute segments) with a five-minute break in the middle. Each part begins with an instructor lecture and is followed by in-class exercises.

The following two components are essential for earning participation credit.

1.1 Poll Everywhere Questions

Each lecture will include approximately **2–5 polling questions**, conducted during class using **Poll Everywhere**, a free polling application.

- Credit is given for **participation**, not correctness.
- If you participate and are present for polling questions in at least **80% of the lectures**, you will receive the full **5% participation credit** for this component.
- Below this threshold, only partial credit will be awarded.
- Missed polling participation **cannot be made up**.

2. Reading Assignments

Reading assignments must be completed **by the time they are discussed in class**.

3. Review/Preview Quizzes

- Quizzes should be completed **before each class period**.
- In general, **two attempts** are allowed per quiz.
- The **weekly deadline** for quizzes is **Friday**.
- The **lowest quiz score will be dropped**.

Special note:

The first two quizzes are exceptions: students may make an **unlimited number of attempts** until they achieve a **perfect score**.

4. Homework Assignments

There will be **six homework assignments**, submitted through Canvas.

- Homework is **graded** and counts toward your final course grade.
- The **lowest homework score will be dropped**.
- All submitted work must be **your own**.
- **No collaboration is permitted** on homework assignments.

5. Exams

There will be **two online exams**:

- **Exam 1** (Midterm)
- **Exam 2** (Final; cumulative)

6. Squib (Ling 579 only)

Students enrolled in **Ling 579** are required to write a **short squib** (5–10 double-spaced pages). The squib should:

- Focus on a specific construction or issue in a language you know well (native or near-native proficiency),
- Address a **compositional semantic issue** related to that construction.

Further details and guidelines will be provided separately.

Important notes:

1. If you miss a class lecture, please refer to the lecture notes (posted to the course website after each class) and the Zoom recordings (to be made available through the course website).
2. If you want to audit this class, please register as an official auditor. Only passive auditors are permitted, and they must also have the prerequisite. This requirement also applies to ACCESS students.

Grading policy:

Ling 479

- **Quizzes** ($\approx$ one per class meeting; due at the end of the week; lowest score dropped): **10%**
- **Participation: 10%**
 - Poll Everywhere: **5%**
 - In-class participation: **5%**
- **Midterm Exam: 25%**
- **Final Exam** (cumulative): **30%**
- **Homework** (6 assignments; lowest score dropped): **25%**

Ling 579

- **Quizzes** ($\approx$ one per class meeting; due at the end of the week; lowest score dropped): **10%**
- **Participation: 10%**
 - Poll Everywhere: **5%**
 - In-class participation: **5%**
- **Midterm Exam: 20%**
- **Final Exam** (cumulative): **25%**
- **Homework** (6 assignments; lowest score dropped): **25%**
- **Squib: 10%**

Grading method:

I will adopt the following (standard) grading scale:

Percent = Grade

$\geq 95\% = 4.0$	$88 = 3.3$	$81 = 2.6$	$74 = 1.9$	$67 = 1.2$
$94 = 3.9$	$87 = 3.2$	$80 = 2.5$	$73 = 1.8$	$66 = 1.1$
$93 = 3.8$	$86 = 3.1$	$79 = 2.4$	$72 = 1.7$	$65 = 1.0$
$92 = 3.7$	$85 = 3.0$	$78 = 2.3$	$71 = 1.6$	$64 = 0.9$
$91 = 3.6$	$84 = 2.9$	$77 = 2.2$	$70 = 1.5$	$63 = 0.8$
$90 = 3.5$	$83 = 2.8$	$76 = 2.1$	$69 = 1.4$	$62 = 0.7$
$89 = 3.4$	$82 = 2.7$	$75 = 2.0$	$68 = 1.3$	$< 60 = 0.0$

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

Schedule (Subject to Change) — Quiz due dates are given separately.

Wk	Class #	Date	Topics	Reading Assignment	Due Dates
1	1	1/5	How to conduct semantic research Set Theory basics	Ch. 1 Introduction Ch. 2 Section 1 Set Theory	
	2	1/7	Our “logical language” — a higher-order language based on Predicate Logic	Ch. 2 Predicate Logic and its extensions (2.2 - 2.7)	
2	3	1/12	Compositional semantics basics	Ch. 3 Simple Sentences	
	4	1/14	Adnominal modifiers	Ch. 4 Adnominal Modifiers	HW1 due 1/16
3		1/19	Martin Luther King Jr. Day (holiday)		
	5	1/21	Determiners and determiner phrases (1)	Ch. 5 Determiners and Determiner Phrases	
4	6	1/26	Determiners and determiner phrases (2)	Ch. 5 Determiners and determiner phrases	HW2 due 1/27
	7	1/28	Relative clauses in English	Ch. 6 Relative clauses in English and Japanese	HW3 due 1/30
5	8	2/2	Relative clauses in Japanese	Ch. 6 Relative clauses in English and Japanese	
	9	2/4	Mock Midterm		
Midterm Exam (Exam 1) takes place here. It is an online exam.					
6	10	2/9	Quantifier scope and bound variable pronouns (1)	Ch. 7 Quantifier scope and pronouns	
	11	2/11	Quantifier scope and bound variable pronouns (2)	Ch. 7 Quantifier scope and pronouns	HW4 due 2/13
7		2/16	Presidents' Day (holiday)		
	12	2/18	Modality	Ch. 8 Intensionality and modals	
8	13	2/23	Propositional attitude verbs	Ch. 9 <i>Believe</i> and its kin	
	14	2/25	Tense	Ch. 10 Tense	
9	15	3/2	Events	Ch. 11 Events	HW5 due 3/3
	16	3/4	Aspect (1)	Ch. 12 Aspect	
10	17	3/9	Aspect (2) + Review	Ch. 12 Aspect	HW6 due 3/10
	18	3/11	Mock Final		
11	Final exam week	3/17 - 19	Final Exam (online)		3/17 (L579) squib

Additional remarks

More details about Poll Everywhere

To ensure your responses are recorded correctly:

- You must be logged in using your **UW email address** (xxx@uw.edu).
- It is your responsibility to ensure your Poll Everywhere account is properly set up.

Account setup instructions:

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

Once registered, you can respond in one of the following ways:

- Visit **PolLEv.com/ogihara**, or
- Text **OGIHARA** to **22333** (once to join), then respond with **1, 2, 3, or 4**.

If your web-enabled device is lost, broken, or otherwise not functioning on a given day, you may submit your answers **on paper** at the end of the class period.

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:

<http://depts.washington.edu/uwdrs/>

Notes on zoom recordings:

This course is scheduled to run synchronously at our scheduled class time via Zoom. These Zoom class sessions will be recorded. The recording will capture the presenter's audio, video and computer screen. Student audio and video will be recorded if they share their computer audio and video during the recorded session. The recordings will only be accessible to students enrolled in the course to review materials. These recordings will not be shared with or accessible to the public. The University and Zoom have FERPA-compliant agreements in place to protect the security and privacy of UW Zoom accounts. Students who **do not** wish to be recorded should:

- Choose a Zoom username that does not include any personal identifying information like their name or UW Net ID; and
- Not share their computer audio or video during their Zoom sessions.

Additional Notes, Classroom Rules of Conduct, etc.

1. Your questions are always welcome. However, please try to find a natural break point in the lecture to ask your question, if possible. Sometimes, your question may go beyond the issue being discussed in class may have to be answered wafter 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.