Introduction to natural language semantics
Suggested topics for final essay

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1 Introduction

- Below I suggest indicate some possible topics for some final essays, and suggest some literature which may give you ideas.

- These topics are not exhaustive: you are absolutely welcome to choose a topic different from the ones below. In this case, please get in touch with me.

- The suggested readings are just meant as a starting point. As you read the literature or browse the web, you will see references to other papers which are not listed here, but which might be worth reading.

- On the other hand, as you become interested in a specific issue, you may find that not all the readings suggested below are relevant. You should feel free to focus on a subset of them.

- The headers below are macro-areas rather than specific topics for the essay. A typical topic will be a specific problem, question, debate, or phenomenon, located within one of these areas. However, your paper should situate the specific question in the broader context.

- You may choose one of the following two formats for your paper:

    - Survey essay: you survey a line of work in formal semantics/philosophy of language. You illustrate the relevant empirical observations and the theories which have been proposed to account for them; you explain the predictions made by the theories, and discuss the arguments that have been given for/against each theory. You are welcome to engage with the debate yourself, assessing the given arguments critically, and proposing new ones.

    - Research essay: you try yo make a small novel contribution to the literature. This could, e.g., take one of the following forms:
        * point out new data on a certain phenomenon, and use them to draw theoretical conclusions, or to argue for/against a certain account;
        * propose a new account of a problem, comparing it with existing ones;

* make new observations about what a theory predicts, and assess these predictions critically;
* generalize an existing account to cover new data, or work out in detail an account which is only sketched in the literature.

- In any case, you should explain clearly what your aim is; structure the paper into sections each of which has a clear purpose; make sure to relate your contribution firmly to the literature; and summarize your findings in the conclusion.

- You should aim for a size of 10 to 15 pages.

- See also the course webpage for more details on the requirements.

2   Suggestions

1. Epistemic modals

   - Kratzer (1977), What 'must' and 'can' must and can mean
   - Veltman (1996), Defaults in update semantics
   - Egan (2006), Epistemic modals, relativism and assertion
   - Yalcin (2007), Epistemic modals
   - von Fintel and Gillies (2007), An opinionated guide to epistemic modality
   - Yalcin (2011), Non-factualism about epistemic modality
   - Willer (2013), Dynamics of epistemic modality
   - Cariani (2018), Assertion and modality

2. Modals and free choice.

   - Kamp (1973), Free choice permission
   - Simons (2005), Dividing things up: The semantics of or and the modal/or interaction
   - Aloni (2007), Free choice, modals, and imperatives
   - Fox (2007), Free choice and the theory of scalar implicatures
   - Franke (2010), Free choice from iterated best response
   - Lin (2015), The meaning of epistemic modality and the absence of truth
   - Willer (2018), Simplifying with free choice
   - Cariani (2018), Choice points for a modal theory of disjunction

3. Presupposition projection and accommodation

   - Beaver and Geurts (2011), Presupposition (SEP entry)
   - von Fintel (2008), What is presupposition accommodation, again?
   - Beaver (1999), Presupposition accommodation: a plea for common sense

- Beaver and Krahmer (2001), A partial account of presupposition projection
- Schlenker (2009), Local contexts
- Chemla and Schlenker (2012), Incremental vs. symmetric accounts of presupposition projection: an experimental approach
- Katzir and Singh (2013), A note on presupposition accommodation
- Schwarz (2016), Experimental work in presupposition and presupposition projection
- Mandelkern, Zehr, Romoli, and Schwarz (2017), Asymmetry in presupposition projection: The case of conjunction

4. Structural redundancy and pragmatic felicity

- Chierchia, Fox, and Spector (2009), Hurford's Constraint and the Theory of Scalar Implicatures
- Singh (2008), On the interpretation of disjunction: asymmetric, incremental, and eager for inconsistency
- Katzir and Singh (2013), Hurford disjunctions: embedded exhaustification and structural economy
- Meyer (2013), Redundancy and embedded exhaustification
- Mayr and Romoli (2016), A puzzle for theories of redundancy: Exhaustification, incrementality, and the notion of local context
- Ciardelli and Roelofsen (2017), Hurford's constraint, the semantics of disjunction, and the nature of alternatives
- Mandelkern and Romoli (2018), Hurford conditionals

5. Demonstratives

- Kaplan 1978, Dthat
- King 2001, Complex Demonstratives: a quantificational account
- Roberts 2002, Demonstratives as definites
- Nowak 2014, Demonstratives without rigidity or ambiguity
- Nowak 2018, Saying 'that F' is saying which F: complex demonstratives, hidden arguments, and presupposition

6. Definites

- Heim (1983), File change semantics and the familiarity theory of definites
- Roberts (1993), Uniqueness in definite noun phrases
- Poesio (1994), Weak definites
- von Fintel (2004), Would you believe it? The king of France is back!
- Elbourne (2010), The existence entailments of definite descriptions

- Aguilar-Guevara and Zwarts (2010), Weak definites and reference to kinds
- Schwarz (2013), How weak and how definite are weak definites?

7. Questions

- Question semantics.
  - Groenendijk and Stokhof (1997), Questions
  - Aloni (2002), Questions under cover
  - Aloni, Beaver, Clark and Rooij (2007), The dynamics of topic and focus
  - Ciardelli (2017), Question meaning = resolution conditions
- Embedded questions
  - Karttunen (1973), Syntax and semantics of questions
  - Groenendijk and Stokhof (1982), Semantic analysis of *wh*-complements
  - Heim (1994), Interrogative semantics and Karttunen's semantics for *know*
  - Spector and Egré (2015), A uniform semantics for embedded interrogatives: an answer, not necessarily the answer
  - Ciardelli and Roelofsen (2018), An inquisitive perspective on modals and quantifiers
  - Theiler, Roelofsen and Aloni (2018), A uniform semantics for declarative and interrogative complements
  - Theiler, Roelofsen and Aloni (2018), Picky predicates: why *believe* doesn't like interrogative complements, and other puzzles