Semantics

Prof. Savina Raynaud

[The first module of the Faculty of Arts and Philosophy teaching syllabus, under the course name “*Philosophy of Language”,* is provided by the Faculty of Linguistic Sciences and Foreign Literature]

***COURSE AIMS AND INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES***

*Aim of the course*: to pose the question “what is meaning?" against a background of pre-theoretical assumptions and intuitions inherent in verbal language, acquiring a basic proficiency in order to provide an answer with the aid of an institutional framework of theory and some points on its history.

*Intended learning outcomes*: The course aims to help students acquire a concise but systematic knowledge of a theory of meaning based on philosophy and linguistics; this knowledge will be based on a deep understanding of the subject, rather than learning by rote. At the end of the course, students will be able to use proper terminology and critical analysis skills.

***COURSE CONTENT***

Language and languages: the species-specific ability to communicate in one or more languages. Overview of the subject: contributions by philosophers of language, linguists and the cognitive scientists to the development of models.

From lexical semantics to propositional semantics: the role of predication, noun-phrases and verbal phrases.

Utterances, enunciations and illocutionary forces.

Communicative implicit information.

***READING LIST***

A. Frigerio, *Filosofia del linguaggio,* Apogeo, Milan, 20202. Second revised edition replacing the first.

Further readings, slides, and teaching material will be made available on Blackboard.

***TEACHING METHOD***

Lectures on theory with some exploration of the history of theory. Students on the Philosophy and Humanities degree programmes, whether classical or modern (6 ECTS credits), are requested to undertake a semantic analysis of a text, using the procedures taught in the Semantics Workshop. These same students will also undertake a number of practical classes for further study in the areas of: philosophy or linguistics/philology.

***ASSESSMENT METHOD AND CRITERIA***

Oral examination to assess:

* the ability to progress from pre-theoretical (implicit and intuitive) proficiency to the gradual outline and critical foundations of a basic semantic theory; simple memorisation of exam material is strongly discouraged; students should be able to give own examples of the key theories learned;
* the ability to apply this knowledge to actual writings (students’ own work, or by others), an aim to be further pursued systematically during the “Workshop” (see below).

The assessment criteria will be structured as follows: knowledge of the theory (50%); analysis of selected texts (25%); application of the theory to a selection of texts (25%).

***NOTES AND PREREQUISITES***

*Notes*: This intensive single-semester course (30 hours) will be taken as the first module in semester 2. It is taken as an introduction to the Semantics Workshop (complementary).

*Prerequisites:* There are no prerequisites for attending this course. However, students of year 1 are expected to relate what they learn during this course with the study of languages (either modern, or classical, or native ones) and the contents of the other courses in which they are enrolled; students of other years, instead, are supposed to focus on the descriptive and regulatory features of languages, metalinguistic reflection, and communication skills.

Further information can be found on the lecturer's webpage at http://docenti.unicatt.it/web/searchByName.do?language=ENG or on the Faculty notice board.

Semantics Workshop

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[The second module is provided by the Facoltà di Lettere e filosofia (Faculty of Letters and Philosophy) under the name *“Filosofia del linguaggio”* (Philosophy of Language)]

***COURSE AIMS AND INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES***

The aim of the course is for students to test the effectiveness and adequacy of the theoretical tools they acquired during the *Semantics* course and to enhance their ability to understand texts.Ongoing study of the first module of the course and development of the ability to relate data with theory, to find solutions in cases of doubt, to work as a team to develop justified answers, to make final evaluations on the overall semantic characteristics of texts, to complement the highly analytical work required in the first phase.

***COURSE CONTENT***

Semantic analysis of texts presented in class/composition of texts in class, based on specific instructions:

recognition/establishment of predicative-argument relations, referential and co-referential expressions, inferential operations, including from a contrasting and translational perspective (analysis of the semantism of lexical items and morphosyntactic structures), within individual statements and overall texts; evaluation of the operability of illocutionary forces and conversational maxims.

***READING LIST***

An analysis grid (based on the reading list for the Semantics course) and supplementary documents will be provided at the beginning of the workshop and uploaded onto Blackboard.

***TEACHING METHOD***

The workshop is a supervised and experience-based practical course held in class, with a high degree of interaction between the students and the lecturer, designed to consolidate students’ skills - on both a critical and applied level - in relating data to theory.

***ASSESSMENT METHOD AND CRITERIA***

*Method*: assessment of the skills gained throughout the practical workshop will be based on the reading and correction of individual essays, *in itinere* and at the end of the workshop, and the quality of students’ interaction in lectures and in carrying out analyses. Finally, students will be asked to analyse a text of their choice. The assignments that are not submitted in class, must be sent to the lecturer at least one week before the assessment date. The mark will be communicated and discussed during the assessment.

*Criteria*: accuracy of the analysis (50%); interpretive skills and concision (50%).

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