

CHIN6128: CHINESE SEMANTICS

Instructor:

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Meeting times:

Tuesday, 5:10-7:00pm at GOV 325

Course Description:

This is a graduate-level course which aims to offer students an in-depth survey of important semantic issues related to both Modern Chinese and Classical Chinese. Students engage in readings and discussions on topics ranging from the theory of meaning, symbolic logic, quantification, adjectives, prosody-semantics interface, context and pragmatics to philosophy of language in Ancient China. This course prepares students to do advanced research in linguistics, Chinese classics and language pedagogy.

Course materials:

1. Portner, Paul. 2005. *What is meaning?: fundamentals of formal semantics*. Blackwell Publishing.
2. Hansen, Chad. 1992. *A Daoist Theory of Chinese Thought*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
3. Selected journal articles.

Student Learning Objectives: At the end of this course, students should be able to

1. **Comprehend** various aspects of major up-to-date scholarship in formal semantics.
2. **Synthesize** knowledge in the core areas of formal semantics to understand issues related to Chinese.
3. **Analyze** Chinese language data using advanced formal tools.
4. **Recognize and explain** relevant facts about semantic issues of Chinese using major theories .
5. **Evaluate and critique** different semantic theories using linguistic data from Chinese.

Assessment Methods:

- Homework: there will be biweekly homework assignments.
- Readings: students should finish assigned readings each week by answering a few short questions.
- Class presentation: each student will make one presentation.
- Term papers: students will write a 15-page paper on a topic approved by the instructor.
- Midterm: there will be a midterm exam.
- Final Exam: there will be a final exam.
- Attendance and preparation: students are expected to attend each class on time, and also be well-prepared for each class, i.e. do assigned readings before class.

Grading Formula:

Attendance and preparation: 10%

Class presentation: 10%

Readings: 10%

Midterm: 20%

Term paper: 20%

Homework: 10%

Final Exam: 20%

Academic Integrity:

All students must abide by the Code of Academic Integrity of the University. The Code defines academic dishonesty as “cheating of any kind, including misrepresenting one’s own work, taking credit for the work of others without crediting them and without appropriate authorization, and fabrication of information” (p16). If you are not sure about anything, consult the course instructor. Note that if you knowingly give your own work to others for them to copy, your conduct is against academic integrity as well.

Tentative Schedule and Topics:

Date	Class Content
Part I: Foundation	
August 28	Fundamental Questions: meaning and truth. Different approaches to meaning from philosophical to structuralist to cognitive
September 4	Logic primer I: propositional logic Logic primer II: predicate logic
September 11	Predicate logic continued Semantic compositionality
Part II: Semantic Issues in Modern Chinese	
September 18	Quantifications [How expressions of quantity are different in Chinese and English]
September 25	Adjectives [Why Chinese lacks an unmarked bare adjectival form]
October 2	Meaning and prosody I [How prosodic strategies are used to distinguish meaning.]
October 16	Meaning and prosody II [How prosodic strategies are used to distinguish meaning.]
October 23	Contexts and pragmatics [Presupposition and discourse structure in Chinese]
October 30	Intension vs. Extension Logic Primer III: modal logic
Part III: Theory of Meaning in Classical Chinese	
November 6	Confucian theory of language
November 13	The Antilanguage period of Mencius and Laozi
November 20	Zhuangzi on language and its adequacy
December 4	The School of Names and linguistic analysis in Ancient China
December 11	Philosophical Issues with the Chinese writing system [The concept of ideas in Chinese and Western culture]