PLIN0009 Semantic Theory
Syllabus - 2023-2024

Week 1 - Set Theory
We cover some basic concepts in set theory which can be used to compute meaning: sets, relations between sets, operations between sets, and ordered pairs.

Week 2 - Predicate Logic
We introduce a formal language, Predicate Logic, which, unlike propositional logic, features quantifiers. We'll look into how simple natural language sentences can be translated into Predicate Logic statements.

Week 3 - Compositionality
We apply set theory to natural language, determining the denotation (reference) of proper names, transitive and intransitive verbs, other predicates, and sentences. We discuss how the meaning of a complex expression is composed of the meanings of its parts.

Week 4 - Quantifiers
We discuss what quantifiers denote, and whether our assumptions about compositionality need to be adjusted in order to accommodate the denotation of quantifiers.

Week 5 - Quantifiers in Object Position
We discuss quantifiers in object position and consider two possible solutions to the problem that they pose for the theory of compositionality.

Week 6 - Properties of Quantifiers
We study two properties of quantifiers: conservativity and monotonicity, with emphasis on the latter.

Week 7 - Negative Polarity Items
We explore the behaviour of Negative Polarity Items (NPIs), which can only appear in certain environments, and we try to define what licenses them.

Week 8 - Constraints on Quantifier Scope
We discuss under what conditions a quantifier (or other scope-taking element) can or cannot take scope over another. We look into the exceptional wide scope of indefinites.

Week 9 - Semantics of Time (guest lecture by Tim Jantarungsee)
The lecture will introduce tense and aspect, tense logic, and some issues in tense/aspect semantics such as sequence of tense, the perfect, and tenselessness.

Week 10 - Field Semantics (guest lecture by Tim Jantarungsee)
The lecture will be an introduction to doing fieldwork in linguistics more broadly and in semantics more specifically.