

LING 4090 — Semantics and Pragmatics

Fall 2026 Syllabus

Instructor	Matthew W. Finegan
T.A.	none
Contact	Matthew.Finegan@unt.edu
Class Days	Monday & Wednesday
Class Time	12:45 PM – 2:05 PM
Location	GAB 310
Office Hours	MW 11:00 AM – 12:00 PM LANG 220 Online: by appointment

Course Description

(A) This course provides an introduction to the study of what is said (semantics) and what is meant (pragmatics) in natural human language. (B) Students will master topics in lexical semantics, compositional semantics, pragmatics, and interfaces of these three areas. (C) In a special focus of this course, students will examine the ways in which the topics in (B) are useful in understanding “social meaning,” which is information that linguistic forms convey about the social identity of language users and their relationships with interlocutors.

Materials

This course will make use of some online features of Canvas, so please ensure you have access to a computer and internet connection outside of class (you can use the library computers).

Primary Textbook: [*Analyzing Meaning: An Introduction to Semantics and Pragmatics*](#) (3rd Edition) by Paul Kroeger. This textbook is an Open Access book; a PDF of the book can be downloaded for free at the link above, so you do not need to purchase a hard copy.

Secondary Textbook: [*Semantics*](#) (4th Edition) by John I. Saeed. [This text is available online through the UNT library](#), so you do not need to purchase a hard copy.

Additional readings will be posted on the course Canvas site.

Contact

The best way to reach me outside of class is via **email**, though I also check my Canvas inbox. I attempt to respond to all emails by the end of the following business day (so if you email me on a Friday night, you might not get a response until Monday).

Evaluation

10 pts — Attendance & Participation

60 pts — Exams

30 pts — Final Paper & Presentation

20 pts — Paper

10 pts — Presentation

Total: 100 points + potential extra credit

Course Grades

A	≥ 90 pts
B	80 – 89 pts
C	70 – 79 pts
D	60 – 69 pts
F	≤ 59 pts

Attendance and Participation

Please make an attempt to attend class regularly and participate in class discussions and activities, and communicate with me in a timely manner if you need to miss class for any reason (illness, emergency, etc.). **Email** is preferred so that I have it on written record.

You will be allowed up to **three unexcused absences** without penalty. One point will be deducted from your participation grade for each additional unexcused absence.

If you need to miss class for religious observation, military service, university events, or other reasons outlined by [UNT Policy 06.039](#), these will be excused, but please give me advanced notice if possible.

In-Class Exams

There will be **three exams** given throughout the course of the semester. Each exam will be conducted **on paper in-class** and is worth **20 points** towards your total grade. **Extra credit** may be offered in the form of bonus questions on exams worth a few extra points each.

Additionally, all students will have the option of taking an **optional, cumulative final exam** during the scheduled final exam block. This can be used to replace a zero received for a missed exam, or otherwise used to replace your lowest exam score.

If you fail to attend class on an exam day without a valid reason, you will receive a **zero** on that exam. If you know ahead of time you will be absent on an exam day, or if you miss class unexpectedly due to illness or emergency, please let me know as soon as possible. We can attempt to arrange a time for you to take it outside of class, or else you may take the optional final to replace the grade.

If the date of an exam changes for any reason, an announcement will be given in class and posted on Canvas.

Final Paper

Your final for this course will be a **5 to 7 page paper** on a topic of your choice based on what we have covered in class. This will be due during finals week and is worth **20 points** towards your total grade. You will also be expected to give a **short, in-class presentation** (no more than 10 minutes) on your topic for **10 points** towards your total grade. We will discuss the project and your topics more in-depth around the mid-point of the semester.

Your paper will be turned in online on the night of its assigned due-date. I will allow submissions until 8AM the following morning. I may accept reasonable requests for extensions on a case-by-case basis. Please use [APA format](#) for your paper and citations.

Tentative Course Schedule

Week 1 08/17 – 08/23	Syllabus & course introduction
Week 2 08/24 – 08/30	Referring, denoting, & expressing
Week 3 08/31 – 09/06	Truth & inference
Week 4 09/07 – 09/13	Logic & truth <i>Monday 09/07: Labor day, no class</i>
Week 5 09/14 – 09/20	Monday 09/14 (in class): exam review Wednesday 09/16 (in class): Exam 1
Week 6 09/21 – 09/27	Word senses & sense relations

Week 7 09/28 – 10/04	Components of meaning & meaning composition
Week 8 10/05 – 10/11	Cognitive semantics
Week 9 10/12 – 10/18	Monday 10/12 (in class): exam review Wednesday 10/14 (in class): Exam 2
Week 10 10/19 – 10/25	Grice's theory of implicature
Week 11 10/26 – 11/01	Implicature (cont.) & speech acts
Week 12 11/02 – 11/08	Speech acts (cont.)
Week 13 11/09 – 11-15	Monday 11/09 (in class): exam review Wednesday 11/11 (in class): Exam 3
Week 14 11/16 – 11/22	Full course review & final project workshop
Week 15 11/23 – 11/29	<i>Fall break, no class</i> Sunday 11/29 (night): Final Presentation Due
Week 16 11/30 – 12/06	Final project presentations
Finals Week 12/07 – 12/13	Monday 12/07 (10:30 AM): Final Exam (optional) Tuesday 12/08 (night): Final Paper Due

Academic Integrity

Academic Integrity Standards and Consequences. According to [UNT Policy 06.003](#), Student Academic Integrity, academic dishonesty occurs when students engage in behaviors including, but not limited to cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, forgery, plagiarism, and sabotage. A finding of academic dishonesty may result in a range of academic penalties or sanctions ranging from admonition to expulsion from the University. For more information on the university's policy on academic dishonesty please consult the [UNT Code of Student Conduct and Discipline](#).

AI Policy

The use of generative AI tools / large language models (LLMs) such as ChatGPT, Claude, etc. on any assignment is prohibited. This includes but is not limited to using it to assist with writing and research assignments. Use of AI will result in a failing grade on the assignment in question.

No matter what a tech company will try to sell you, LLMs are predictive text generators, not knowledge bases or search engines. They output the most statistically likely string of words to respond to a prompt based on their training data, which means they cannot *reliably* produce accurate information or provide adequate citations. Outsourcing your work to an LLM means that not only are you compromising your academic integrity, but you are also missing out on the opportunity to develop your own writing, research, and critical thinking skills.

ADA Policy

The University of North Texas makes reasonable accommodation for students with disabilities. Students needing a reasonable academic accommodations must first register with the Office of Disability Access (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the student will request their letter of accommodation. ODA will provide faculty with a reasonable accommodation letter via email to begin a private discussion regarding a student's specific needs in a course. Students may request reasonable accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of reasonable accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of reasonable accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. Students are strongly encouraged to meet with faculty regarding their accommodations during office hours or by appointment. Faculty members have the authority to ask students to discuss such letters during their designated office hours to protect the privacy of the student. For additional information, refer to the [Office of Disability Access website](#).

Sexual Assault Prevention

UNT is committed to providing a safe learning environment free of all forms of sexual misconduct, including sexual harassment sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking. Federal laws (Title IX and the Violence Against Women Act) and UNT policies prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex, and therefore prohibit sexual misconduct. If you or someone you know is experiencing sexual harassment, relationship violence, stalking, and/or sexual assault, there are campus resources available to provide support and assistance. UNT's Survivor Advocates can assist a student who has been impacted by violence by filing protective orders, completing crime victim's compensation applications, contacting professors for absences related to an assault, working with housing to facilitate a room change where appropriate, and connecting students to other resources available both on and off campus. The Survivor

Advocates can be reached at SurvivorAdvocate@unt.edu or by calling the Dean of Students Office at 940-565- 2648. Additionally, alleged sexual misconduct can be non-confidentially reported to the Title IX Coordinator at oeo@unt.edu or at (940) 565 2759.

Emergency Notification & Procedures

UNT uses a system called Eagle Alert to quickly notify students with critical information in the event of an emergency (i.e., severe weather, campus closing, and health and public safety emergencies like chemical spills, fires, or violence). In the event of a university closure, please refer to Canvas for contingency plans for covering course materials.

Student Resources

- [Student Health and Wellness Center](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-health-and-wellness-center)
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- [Counseling and Testing Services](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-services)
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- [UNT Care Team](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/care) (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/care>)
- [Registrar](https://registrar.unt.edu/registration) (<https://registrar.unt.edu/registration>)
- [Financial Aid](https://financialaid.unt.edu/) (<https://financialaid.unt.edu/>)
- [Student Legal Services](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-legal-services) (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-legal-services>)
- [Career Center](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/career-center) (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/career-center>)
- [UNT Food Pantry](https://deanofstudents.unt.edu/resources/food-pantry) (<https://deanofstudents.unt.edu/resources/food-pantry>)
- [Academic Resource Center](https://clear.unt.edu/canvas/student-resources) (<https://clear.unt.edu/canvas/student-resources>)
- [Academic Success Center](https://success.unt.edu/asc) (<https://success.unt.edu/asc>)
- [UNT Libraries](https://library.unt.edu/) (<https://library.unt.edu/>)
- [Writing Lab](http://writingcenter.unt.edu/) (<http://writingcenter.unt.edu/>)
- [MathLab](https://math.unt.edu/mathlab) (<https://math.unt.edu/mathlab>)