Syllabus

Modal and Scalar Semantics - 36632

Last update 08-07-2015

**HU Credits:** 4

**Degree/Cycle:** 1st degree (Bachelor)

**Responsible Department:** Linguistics

**Academic year:** 2

**Semester:** 2nd Semester

**Teaching Languages:** Hebrew

**Campus:** Mt. Scopus

**Course/Module Coordinator:** Dr. Aynat Rubinstein

**Coordinator Email:** aynat.rubinstein@mail.huji.ac.il

**Coordinator Office Hours:** By appointment

**Teaching Staff:**
Aynat Rubinstein
Course/Module description:
Modal expressions (such as "must", "possible", and "necessarily") and gradable adjectives (such as "cute", "straight", and "full") have traditionally been the focus of largely separate lines of research in linguistics. In recent years, an emerging interest in the meaning of gradable modal expressions (for example, "more necessary than", "as crucial as") has raised the question of how these two subfields of linguistic semantics interact. This course provides an in-depth introduction to modality and scale-based semantics and explores various recent theoretical approaches to modeling the interaction between them.

Course/Module aims:
The main goal of the course is to familiarize students with the subfields of modality and scalarity and to explore their interaction in the domain of gradable modal expressions. The course provides a solid introduction to each of the two subfields, starting from classic work and building up to state-of-the-art research. Open questions in the domain of gradable modality will be presented and jointly explored in a seminar-style setting.

Learning outcomes - On successful completion of this module, students should be able to:
- Access and read relevant scholarly research in semantics
- Describe, compare, and evaluate classic and contemporary work in two important areas of semantics
- Analyze linguistic data at various levels of structure and use
- Construct clear linguistic arguments
- Integrate existing research on modality and scale-based semantics and identify theoretical and practical issues it applies to
- Conduct in-depth independent research on modality and scalarity
- Report on the design, findings, and conclusions of their research

Attendance requirements(%):
100

Teaching arrangement and method of instruction: Class periods will consist of lectures as well as more interactive teaching modules. Students are required to participate actively in frequent Q&A sessions about the assigned readings. Outside of class, students will need to meet with the instructor as they formulate and carry out their research project.
Course/Module Content:

i. Conceptual and formal foundations (truth-conditional semantics; adjective-noun modification; intensionality)
ii. Modality (quantificational possible worlds semantics; context dependency; grammatical constraints on the interpretation of modals)
iii. Scalarity (semantics of adjectives; degree constructions; vagueness, gradability, and degrees)
iv. Modality and scalarity (the desideratum of compositionality, probabilistic approaches, quantitative approaches, probability statements, modal gradability for epistemic and root modals)

Required Reading:


Additional Reading Material:


Course/Module evaluation:
End of year written/oral examination 0 
Presentation 20 
Participation in Tutorials 15 

Press.
Project work 0 %
Assignments 15 %
Reports 0 %
Research project 50 %
Quizzes 0 %
Other 0 %

Additional information: