

# Semantic Variation

Amy Rose Deal

Fall 2015 • Linguistics 290B • W 3-6

<http://linguistics.berkeley.edu/~ardeal/courses/variation/>

## Syllabus

---

### Course description

Languages vary in how they encode meaning. Crosslinguistic formal semantics aims to characterize this variation in precise terms. Over the last decade, an explosion of research in this area has shed new light on the meanings of linguistic elements ranging from tense to modality to discourse particles to comparatives to mass nouns and beyond. We will explore a selection of this research in this seminar, focusing on definiteness, countability and modality. In each case, we will first explore the richness of the topic in a well-studied language before turning to questions of semantic variation. Along the way we will discuss the methodological basis of crosslinguistic formal semantics and semantic fieldwork.

### Student responsibilities

Enrolled students will complete a final paper, due 12/9. As an alternative to the standard research paper format, this may take the form of a literature review and fieldwork questionnaire / experiment design, preparing the ground for further research. A 1-2 page prospectus for this paper is due on 11/11. Each enrolled student is responsible in addition for two presentations of articles or chapters plus a final presentation of their individual research project (on 12/2). Some article/chapter presentations may be given as pairs, depending on the number of enrollees.

### Opt-out office hours

It is a basic student responsibility to seek help when help is needed. To facilitate this, office hours will be held on an opt-out basis. We will schedule a 15-minute slot (bi)weekly for each student to talk about questions and issues raised by the course and its content. You do not need to attend office hours, and you do not need a good reason not to attend, but the default expectation is that you will attend. If you will not be attending your slot in a given week, you must notify me by email no less than an hour in advance. I am also very happy to schedule longer meetings! Email me to set a time.

## Schedule

This is subject to modification depending on our pace and student interests.

Day	Topics, Readings and Assignments
8/26	<b>Introduction.</b> Getting precise about the questions. Form- and meaning- based typologies. Reading: von Stechow and Matthewson (2008)
9/2	<b>How meaning is encoded: theory, methodology, and crosslinguistic results.</b> Readings: Simons (2001), Tonhauser, Beaver, Roberts, and Simons (2013)
9/9	No class [ARD at Sinn und Bedeutung] Reading: Matthewson (2004)
9/16	<b>Roundtable: the methodology of crosslinguistic formal semantics.</b> In-class student-led reports and discussion about fieldwork methodology readings. ARD reports on selected SuB papers. Readings: selections from Bochnak and Matthewson (2015)
9/23	<b>Definites and indefinites in English.</b> Reading: Heim (1991) [English translation]
9/30	<b>Article systems.</b> Readings: Schwarz (2013), Arkoh and Matthewson (2013), Matthewson (1999)
10/7	<b>Bare nouns.</b> Reading: Dayal (2004)
10/14	<b>Countability distinctions in English.</b> Readings: Link (1983), Bale and Barner (2009)
10/21	<b>Variation in countability.</b> Readings: Krifka (1995), Lima (2014) [selections], Mathieu (2012)
10/28	<b>Modality in Germanic.</b> Reading: Kratzer (1981)
11/4	<b>Modal systems.</b> Reading: Rullmann, Matthewson, and Davis (2008), Deal (2011), Vander Klok (2013), Matthewson (2013)
11/11	no class [Veterans' Day] <i>Paper prospectus due.</i>
11/18	Topic TBA
11/25	no class [Thanksgiving]
12/2	<b>Future work on semantic variation:</b> presentation of student projects
12/9	no class [RRR week] <i>Final papers due</i>

## Readings

- Arkoh, Ruby, and Lisa Matthewson. 2013. A familiar definite article in Akan. *Lingua* 123:1–30.
- Bale, Alan, and David Barber. 2009. The interpretation of functional heads: using comparatives to explore the mass/count distinction. *Journal of Semantics* 26:217–252.
- Bochnak, Ryan, and Lisa Matthewson, eds. 2015. *Methodologies in semantic fieldwork*. Oxford University Press.
- Dayal, Veneeta. 2004. Number marking and (in)definiteness in kind terms. *Linguistics and Philosophy* 27:393–450.
- Deal, Amy Rose. 2011. Modals without scales. *Language* 87:559–585.
- von Stechow, Kai, and Lisa Matthewson. 2008. Universals in semantics. *The Linguistic Review* 25:139–201.
- Heim, Irene. 1991. Artikel und Definitheit. In *Semantik: Ein internationales Handbuch der zeitgenössischen Forschung*, eds. Arnim von Stechow and Dieter Wunderlich, 487–535. Berlin: de Gruyter.
- Kratzer, Angelika. 1981. The notional category of modality. In *Words, worlds and contexts: new approaches in word semantics*, eds. H.-J. Eikmeyer and H. Reiser, 38–74. Berlin: de Gruyter.
- Krifka, Manfred. 1995. Common nouns: a contrastive analysis of Chinese and English. In *The generic book*, eds. Greg Carlson and Francis Jeffrey Pelletier, 398–411. Chicago.
- Lima, Suzi. 2014. The grammar of individuation and counting. Doctoral Dissertation, University of Massachusetts Amherst.
- Link, Godehard. 1983. The logical analysis of plurals and mass terms: A lattice-theoretical approach. In *Meaning, use and interpretation of language*, ed. R. Baeuerle et al. DeGruyter.
- Mathieu, Éric. 2012. Flavors of division. *Linguistic Inquiry* 43:650–679.
- Matthewson, Lisa. 1999. On the interpretation of wide-scope indefinites. *Natural Language Semantics* 7:79–134.
- Matthewson, Lisa. 2004. On the methodology of semantic fieldwork. *International Journal of American Linguistics* 70:369–415.
- Matthewson, Lisa. 2013. Gitksan modals. *International Journal of American Linguistics* 79:349–394.
- Rullmann, Hotze, Lisa Matthewson, and Henry Davis. 2008. Modals as distributive indefinites. *Natural Language Semantics* 16:317–357.
- Schwarz, Florian. 2013. Different types of definites crosslinguistically. *Language and Linguistics Compass* 7:534–559.
- Simons, Mandy. 2001. On the conversational basis of some presuppositions. In *Proceedings of SALT XI*, eds. Rachel Hastings, Brendan Jackson, and Zsafia Zvolenszky, 431–448. Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: CLC Publications.
- Tonhauser, Judith, David Beaver, Craige Roberts, and Mandy Simons. 2013. Toward a taxonomy of projective content. *Language* 89:66–109.
- Vander Klok, Jozina. 2013. Pure possibility and pure necessity modals in Paciran Javanese. *Oceanic Linguistics* 52:346–378.