

advanced topics in semantics & pragmatics

TENSE & MOOD

LING 230C AUTUMN 2024

syllabus (updated September 24, 2024)

time	MW 3.30–5.20pm
location	160 (WALLENBERG) – Room 314
instructor	Cleo Condoravdi Josh Phillips
contact	cleoc@stanford.edu • joshphil@stanford.edu
office hours	BY APPOINTMENT

course description

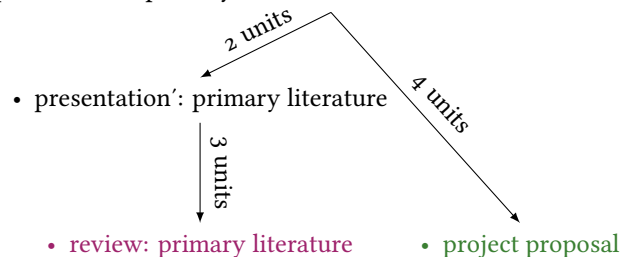
TENSE and MOOD are robust cross-linguistic functional categories whose interpretation varies systematically across matrix and embedded environments. At a high level, these expressions signal displacement within the space of time and possibility. On closer inspection, however, their interpretation deviates from intuitions about what their meaning appears to be in basic cases. This course focuses on research that aims to explain the distribution and interpretation of tense and mood morphology, and account for the typology of cross-linguistic tense and mood systems.

A central question throughout will be the interaction between mechanisms of the syntax-semantics interface, the semantics proper, and pragmatic reasoning.

prerequisites: LINGUIST 230B or instructor permission.

course requirements

- attendance & active participation
- occasional brief answers to targeted questions about the readings
- presentation: primary literature



Enrolled for 3 units? Term project involves a critical write-up of a paper (perhaps as one of the two that you've presented earlier in the term). Identify the key data/explananda and the contribution of the selected work.

Enrolled for 4 units? Final project involves pitching a project, identifying a tense/mood phenomenon and selecting key references/tools in order to develop an articulated understanding of that phenomenon. This will be assessed in terms of an abstract-length proposal (by w9) and a in-class lightning talk (by w10) before the final write-up (due at the end of term.)

Methodologically, the project can be **experimental** (in which case it will involve experimental design/pilot study), **theoretical** (in which case possibly relevant model-theoretic objects for explaining a given linguistic phenomenon will be identified), **metatheoretical** (e.g. apparent incompatibilities in different approaches to tense/mood will be evaluated) *etc.*

materials

Primary literature will be made available via the course website [[Canvas](#)] and in the class's [Zotero Library](#).

recommended reading. A good overview of recent work on Mood is found in Paul [Portner](#)'s 2018 OUP survey text. [Verkuyl](#)'s recent monograph (2021) additionally comprises an elaborate proposal for the semantics of TMA categories centred around the principle of composition.

background reading on intensionality. von Fintel, K. and Heim, I. R. (2021). *Intensional Semantics*. MIT ([freely available](#)) "textbook".

tentative

schedule

INTRODUCTIONS, THE SYLLABUS & THE BASICS

MON, 23 SEPT

Formal approaches to semantics by-and-large assume: • the **compositionality** of natural language, • **truth-conditionality**, • a **model-theoretic** approach/metalinguage (see [Dowty et al. 1981](#): ch 1)

*Of particular relevance to our area-of-study for this term is the notion of **intensionality** — particularly the semantics of temporal and modal operators: the ontological and model-theoretic ingredients needed for a proper treatment of these categories and an understanding of how they interact & compose.*

Rini, A. A. and Cresswell, M. J. (2012). *The World-Time Parallel : Tense and Modality in Logic and Metaphysics*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge

Prior, A. N. (1967). *Past, Present, and Future*. Number 6: Scientia. Oxford University Press, Oxford

Kaufmann, S., Condoravdi, C., and Harizanov, V. (2006). Formal approaches to modality. In Frawley, W., editor, *The Expression of Modality*, pages 71–106. De Gruyter, Berlin

TENSE & TEMPORAL INTERPRETATION

WEEKS 1–5

What is the structure and nature of our conception of time? And what do we need in our semantic ontology to talk about time and about situations that are temporally displaced? (E.g., does it make more sense for us to talk about “intervals” or “instants” of time?) On the linguistic side, what is the semantic contribution (...meaning) of tense morphology? How does it interact with the meaning of other temporal expressions, such as temporal modifiers?

- What sorts of things do we need to be able to talk about when describing the different “tenses” of English?
recommended prereading: [Reichenbach \(1947\)](#), [Klein \(2009\)](#)
- Tense morphology: generalized quantifiers? pronouns?
recommended prereading: [Partee \(1973\)](#), [von Stechow \(2009\)](#)

approaches to tense

WED, 25 SEPT

Ogihara, T. and Kusumoto, K. (2021). The Interpretation of Tense. *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Semantics*, pages 1–24

EXCERPTS (§§1–7) FROM [Grønn, A. and von Stechow, A. \(2016\)](#). Tense. In Aloni, M. and Dekker, P., editors, *The Cambridge Handbook of Formal Semantics*, pages 313–341. Cambridge University Press, 1st edition

tense in intensional contexts**week 2**

Abusch, D. (1997). Sequence of Tense and Temporal *de re*. *Linguistics & Philosophy*, 20(1):1–50

Heim, I. R. (1994). Comments on Abusch's theory of tense. In Kamp, H., editor, *Ellipsis, Tense and Questions*, pages 143–170. University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam

ADDITIONAL READING.

von Stechow, A. (1995). On the proper treatment of tense. In Simons, M. and Galloway, T., editors, *Proceedings of SALT V*, volume 5, pages 362–86, Ithaca, NY. Cornell University

Kratzer, A. (1998). More Structural Analogies Between Pronouns and Tenses. In Strolovitch, D. and Lawson, A., editors, *Semantics and Linguistic Theory VIII*, pages 92–, Ithaca. Cornell University

tense in embedded clauses**week 3**

von Stechow, A. and Grønn, A. (2013a). Tense in Adjuncts Part 1: Relative Clauses. *Language and Linguistics Compass*, 7(5):295–310

von Stechow, A. and Grønn, A. (2013b). Tense in Adjuncts Part 2: Temporal Adverbial Clauses. *Language and Linguistics Compass*, 7(5):311–327

Kauf, C. and Zeijlstra, H. (2018). Towards a New Explanation of Sequence of Tense. *Semantics and Linguistic Theory*, 28:59–77

typologies of tense systems**weeks 4–6****variation in the syntax-semantics interface and/or in tense semantics****weeks 4-5**

BACKGROUND READING. Ogihara, T. and Sharvit, Y. (2012). Embedded Tenses. In Binnick, R. I., editor, *The Oxford Handbook of Tense and Aspect*, Oxford Handbooks. Oxford University Press, Oxford ; New York

Sharvit, Y. (2020). Sequence of Tense. In Gutzmann, D., Matthewson, L., Meier, C., Rullmann, H., and Zimmermann, T., editors, *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Semantics*, pages 1–24. Wiley, 1 edition

Vostrikova, E. (2018). A puzzle about adverbials in simultaneous readings of present and past-under-past in Russian. In Lenertová, D., Šimík, R. M. R., and Szucsich, L., editors, *Advances in formal Slavic linguistics 2016*, pages 455–477. Language Science Press, Berlin

Tsilia, A. (2021). Embedded Tense: Insights from Modern Greek. Master's thesis, ÉNS/Panthéon-Sorbonne, Paris

ADDITIONAL READING. [Bochnak et al. 2019](#)

variation in optionality**week 6**

BACKGROUND READING. Smith, C. S. (2008). Time With and Without Tense. In Guéron, J. and Lecarme, J., editors, *Time and Modality*, pages 227–250. Springer

Matthewson, L. (2006). Temporal semantics in a superficially tenseless language. *Linguistics & Philosophy*, 29:673–713

Bochnak, M. R. (2016). Past time reference in a language with optional tense. *Linguistics and Philosophy*, 39(4):247–294

Pancheva, R. and Zubizarreta, M. L. (2023). No tense: Temporality in the grammar of Paraguayan Guarani. *Linguistics and Philosophy*, 46(6):1329–1391

ADDITIONAL READING. [Mucha 2013](#), [Tonhauser 2011](#), [Bittner 2005](#), [2011](#)

variation in temporal relations

week 6

BACKGROUND READING. Mucha, A. (forthcoming 2024). Semantics of Remoteness Markers and Graded Tenses. In *The Cambridge Handbook of Temporality in Language*. CUP, Cambridge

Cable, S. (2013). Beyond the past, present, and future: Towards the semantics of 'graded tense' in Gikūyū. *Natural Language Semantics*, 21(3):219–276

Mucha, A. (2017). Past interpretation and graded tense in Medumba. *Natural Language Semantics*, 25(1):1–52

ADDITIONAL READINGS. Cable 2017, Plungian and van der Auwera 2006, Fleischman 1989, Hayashi and Oshima 2015, Phillips 2021

FUTURITY + REALITY STATUS

— INTERLUDE —

WEEK 7

Since the ancients (Aristotle + Diodorus Chronos), the question of future contingents has cast doubt on the idea of the status of a FUTURE TENSE and suggested a modal treatment of FUTURE morphology (this idea is importantly reflected in Arthur Prior's later work, e.g. 1967). This dovetails with the notion of REALITY STATUS—a notional semantical category, possibly grammaticalised in many world languages, that clearly relates to mood and modal displacement.

Cariani, F. and Santorio, P. (2018). Will done better: Selection semantics, future credence, and indeterminacy. *Mind*, 127(505):129–165

von Prince, K., Krajinović, A., and Krifka, M. (2022). Irrealis is real. *Language*, 98(2):221–49

SEE ALSO RESPONSE 'Irrealis expressions and modality' (Grano et al. 2024)

MOOD

WEEKS 8–10

In this part of the course we'll predominantly be focusing on "verbal mood" (cf. Portner 2018: ch. 2). If MOOD as a grammatical category is generally taken to reflect information about modality, VERBAL MOOD—for Portner—broadly encodes "how a proposition is used in the computation of subsentential modal meaning." The locus classicus of this area of study is the indicative/subjunctive distinction as it's realised in European (particularly Romance) languages. What is it that's encoded in this paradigmatic opposition? And how can we characterise the semantics of predicates with modal meaning?

Quer, J. (2020). The Subjunctive. In *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Semantics*, pages 1–28. Wiley

Farkas, D. F. (1992). On the Semantics of Subjunctive Complements. In Hirschbühler, P. and Koerner, E. F. K., editors, *Romance Languages and Modern Linguistic Theory*, pages 69–104. Mouton, Amsterdam

Portner, P. (1997). The semantics of mood, complementation, and conversational force. *Natural Language Semantics*, 5(2):167–212

Oikonomou, D. (2021). Modally conditioned mood-switch: The Case of ADVISE-Predicates in Greek. *Semantics and Linguistic Theory*, pages 662–682

Anand, P. and Hacquard, V. (2013). Epistemics and attitudes. *Semantics & Pragmatics*, 6(8):1–59

Portner, P. and Rubinstein, A. (2020). Desire, belief, and semantic composition: Variation in mood selection with desire predicates. *Natural Language Semantics*, 28:343–93

Matthewson, L. (2010). Cross-linguistic variation in modality systems: The role of mood. *Semantics & Pragmatics*, 3:1–74

ADDITIONAL READINGS. Quer 2001, Farkas 2003, Giannakidou and Mari 2021, Fălăuş and Laca 2020, Faller 2019, Baker and Travis 1997

ON SENTENTIAL MOOD. Another edition of 230c!

In the meantime, see Krifka 2024, Condoravdi and Lauer 2017, Starr 2014, Portner 2018: ch. 3...

References

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- Anand, P. and Hacquard, V. (2013). Epistemics and attitudes. *Semantics & Pragmatics*, 6(8):1–59.
- Baker, M. C. and Travis, L. (1997). Mood as verbal definiteness in a “tenseless” language. *Natural Language Semantics*, 5:213–269.
- Bittner, M. (2005). Future Discourse in a Tenseless Language. *Journal of Semantics*, 22(4):339–387.
- Bittner, M. (2011). Time and Modality without Tenses or Modals. In Musan, R. and Rathert, M., editors, *Tense across Languages*, pages 147–188. De Gruyter, Berlin; Boston.
- Bochnak, M. R. (2016). Past time reference in a language with optional tense. *Linguistics and Philosophy*, 39(4):247–294.
- Bochnak, M. R., Hohaus, V., and Mucha, A. (2019). Variation in Tense and Aspect, and the Temporal Interpretation of Complement Clauses. *Journal of Semantics*, pages 1–46.
- Cable, S. (2013). Beyond the past, present, and future: Towards the semantics of ‘graded tense’ in Gikūyū. *Natural Language Semantics*, 21(3):219–276.
- Cable, S. (2017). The implicatures of optional past tense in Tlingit and the implications for ‘discontinuous past’. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory*, 35(3):635–681.
- Cariani, F. and Santorio, P. (2018). *Will* done better: Selection semantics, future credence, and indeterminacy. *Mind*, 127(505):129–165.
- Condoravdi, C. and Lauer, S. (2017). Conditional imperatives and endorsement. In Lamont, A. and Tetzloff, K., editors, *Proceedings of North-East Linguistic Society (NELS) 47*, volume 1, pages 185–204. Amherst, MA. GLSA.
- Dowty, D. R., Wall, R. E., and Peters, S. (1981). *Introduction to Montague Semantics*. Number 11 in Synthese Library. Kluwer, Dordrecht.
- Faller, M. (2019). The discourse commitments of illocutionary reportatives. *Semantics and Pragmatics*, 12(8):1–46.
- Farkas, D. F. (1992). On the Semantics of Subjunctive Complements. In Hirschbühler, P. and Koerner, E. F. K., editors, *Romance Languages and Modern Linguistic Theory*, pages 69–104. Mouton, Amsterdam.
- Farkas, D. F. (2003). Assertion, belief and mood choice. In *Workshop on Conditional and Unconditional Modality, ESSLLI*, Vienna.
- Fleischman, S. (1989). Temporal distance — a basic linguistic metaphor. *Studies in Language*, 13:1–50.
- Fălăuș, A. and Laca, B. (2020). Modal–Temporal Interactions. In Gutzmann, D., Matthewson, L., Meier, C., Rullmann, H., and Zimmermann, T., editors, *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Semantics*, pages 1–33. Wiley, 1 edition.
- Giannakidou, A. and Mari, A. (2021). *Truth and Veridicality in Grammar and Thought: Mood, Modality, and Propositional Attitudes*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago, Ill.
- Grano, T., Ziegler, G., Bohnert, A., Hanink, E., Berkson, K. H., Chelliah, S., and Par, S. H. (2024). Irrealis expressions and modality: A response to von Prince, Krajinović, and Krifka. *Language*, 100(2):e84–e93.
- Grønn, A. and von Stechow, A. (2016). Tense. In Aloni, M. and Dekker, P., editors, *The Cambridge Handbook of Formal Semantics*, pages 313–341. Cambridge University Press, 1st edition.
- Hayashi, M. and Oshima, D. Y. (2015). How multiple past tenses divide the labor: The case of South Baffin Inuktitut. *Linguistics*, 53(4):773–808.
- Heim, I. R. (1994). Comments on Abusch’s theory of tense. In Kamp, H., editor, *Ellipsis, Tense and Questions*, pages 143–170. University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam.
- Kauf, C. and Zeijlstra, H. (2018). Towards a New Explanation of Sequence of Tense. *Semantics and Linguistic Theory*, 28:59–77.
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- Klecha, P. (2016). Modality and embedded temporal operators. *Semantics and Pragmatics*, 9(9):1–55.
- Klein, W. (2009). Concepts of Time. In Klein, W., Li, P., Klein, W., and Levinson, S. C., editors, *The Expression of Time*, number 3 in *The Expression of Cognitive Categories*. Mouton de Gruyter, Berlin; New York.
- Kratzer, A. (1998). More Structural Analogies Between Pronouns and Tenses. In Strolovitch, D. and Lawson, A., editors, *Semantics and Linguistic Theory VIII*, pages 92–, Ithaca. Cornell University.
- Krifka, M. (2024). Performative updates and the modeling of speech acts. *Synthese*, 203(1):31.
- Matthewson, L. (2006). Temporal semantics in a superficially tenseless language. *Linguistics & Philosophy*, 29:673–713.
- Matthewson, L. (2010). Cross-linguistic variation in modality systems: The role of mood. *Semantics & Pragmatics*, 3:1–74.
- Mucha, A. (2013). Temporal interpretation in Hausa. *Linguistics and Philosophy*, 36(5):371–415.
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- von Stechow, A. and Grønn, A. (2013a). Tense in Adjuncts Part 1: Relative Clauses. *Language and Linguistics Compass*, 7(5):295–310.
- von Stechow, A. and Grønn, A. (2013b). Tense in Adjuncts Part 2: Temporal Adverbial Clauses. *Language and Linguistics Compass*, 7(5):311–327.
- Vostrikova, E. (2018). A puzzle about adverbials in simultaneous readings of present and past-under-past in Russian. In Lenertová, D., Šimík, R. M. R., and Szucsich, L., editors, *Advances in formal Slavic linguistics 2016*, pages 455–477. Language Science Press, Berlin.