

# 2012 Course Outline

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Credit Points	3 (three)
Contact	Two lectures and 1 tutorial / week
Instructor:	Olga Temple KD Room 231 Email: <a href="mailto:olga.temple77@gmail.com">olga.temple77@gmail.com</a>
Prerequisites:	4.11406 – Introduction to Linguistics 4.21320 – Linguistic Analysis

## Course Description

This course is about the essence of human language – MEANING, and how we create it. After a brief revision of the basic principles of dialectical analysis, we focus on the ‘technical specifications’ of the tool we use to spin our individual and collective ‘webs of significance’; this social tool is our Language.

In order to understand how the tool works, we must examine its features – that is what we do in the semantics part of this course. We begin by examining the structural parts of language – its smallest units (denotative word-meanings) and the ‘**systemic**’ relationships between them (a.k.a. ‘**lexical relations**’ of *synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy, meronymy, polysemy & homonymy*).

We then take a more wide-angle view of the Language tool and look at how and why it changes over time. We identify **Generalization** by the collective social mind as that **Rational Mechanism** of Language, which produces changes in the overall structure and functioning of our ‘spinning wheel’ over time. In particular, we distinguish the various processes of **semantic change** (*widening /narrowing, amelioration/ pejoration*), as well as **grammaticalization**, which involves both semantic and structural change.

In the second part of this course, we look at how we **use** the ‘wheel’ to spin **complex meanings**. We begin with a critical look at some traditional theories of meaning (i.e., ‘theory of reference,’ some ‘propositional’ theories, based on the ‘compositionality principle,’ and at the ‘foundational’ theories of meaning, which try to explain why individuals /societies assign symbols their meanings in the first place). To get out of the woods, we then use dialectics to see how we, ‘spinners,’ use the wheel to spin our own ‘webs of significance.’ This WA lens of dialectics reveals the ‘causes’ of change and ambiguity, so inherent in language, and explains why **meaning-in-use** cannot be ‘fixed’ by objective analysis.

## Course Objectives

The main objective of this course is to catch a glimpse of Language ‘*live*,’ and show how we use our social ‘wheel’ to spin our communal / individual ‘webs of significance.’ To achieve this goal, the course first zooms in on the wheel’s ‘technical details’ and performance over time, and then provides a wide-angle view of how we use it to create and share with others an endless variety of complex meanings.

## Course Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, you will begin to understand how we use language to create complex meanings (thoughts, ideas):

- ❖ The knowledge of lexical relations will make you more familiar with the ‘stuff of thought’ – words, and
- ❖ An understanding of the basic principles and the *logical* ‘sinews’ of sentence structure will help you become an expert spinner of your own ‘webs of significance’ - you’ll have learnt ‘the ropes’! 😊

Lecture Schedule: Mondays 11–12 KD 236(L); Thursdays 2–3 KD 236 (L); Fridays 1–2 KD 234 (T).

Part I: Semantics		
Wk.	Topics	Readings
1.	1. The dialectics vs. metaphysics in the study of complex wholes. 2. The basic principles of dialectical linguistics	Temple, O. 2011. <i>Genesutra</i> : pp. 1-14. Temple, Olga. 2011. <i>The Webs of Significance</i> : pp. 1-26; 129-135.
2.	<b>The “Technical Specifications” of the social ‘spinning wheel’ (1):</b> <i>Denotative meanings</i> : generalizations in the collective mind of the society <i>Lexical relations</i> : <i>Synonymy &amp; Antonymy, Hyponymy &amp; Meronymy, Homonymy and Polysemy</i>	Temple, O. 2011. <i>Genesutra</i> : pp. 30-40.
3.	<b>The ‘spinning wheel’ in the 4<sup>th</sup> dimension – Time (1):</b> <b>Semantic change</b> : (Widening / narrowing, amelioration / pejoration)	Temple, O. 2011. <i>Genesutra</i> : pp. 30-40.
4.	<b>The ‘spinning wheel’ in the 4<sup>th</sup> dimension – Time (2):</b> <b>Grammaticalization</b> Syntactic change: function words Deixes: the ‘pointing’ words	Temple, O. 2011. <i>Genesutra</i> : pp. 15-29. Cruse, Alan. 2004. <i>Meaning in Language</i> . Oxford Linguistics: pp. 332 – 339.
5.	<b>The “Technical Specifications” of the social ‘spinning wheel’ (2):</b> ‘Spinning’ instructions (syntax): synthesis & analysis	Temple, O. 2011. <i>Genesutra</i> : pp. 41-50.
Part II: Pragmatics		
6.	Traditional semantics cannot explain the ‘causes’ of linguistic change: Associationism: pairing meanings with forms Theory of reference; the Compositionality Principle	Vygotsky, Lev. 1934. <i>Thinking and Speaking</i> . Chapter 1 - The Problem and the Approach. <a href="http://www.marxists.org/archive/vygotsky/works/words/vygotsky.htm">http://www.marxists.org/archive/vygotsky/works/words/vygotsky.htm</a> Cruse, Alan. 2004. <i>Meaning in Language</i> . Oxford Linguistics: pp. 63-77.
7.	Current semantic theories: Propositional theories Foundational theories	<i>Theories of Meaning</i> . 2010. <a href="http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/meaning/">http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/meaning/</a>
8.	Meaning through the WA lens: ‘Man (mind) is the measure of all things’	Temple, O. <i>Language: captured ‘live’ through the lens of dialectics</i> . LLM Vol. 29, <a href="http://www.langxmelanesia.com">www.langxmelanesia.com</a>
9.	Meaning as Use: sentence mosaics. Generalizing minds → Mind is the Measure → ‘inderterminacy’ of meaning	Lecture notes <a href="http://www.templeok.com">www.templeok.com</a>
10.	The ‘causes’ of linguistic change, as seen through the lens of dialectics	Lecture notes <a href="http://www.templeok.com">www.templeok.com</a>
11.	Revision	
12.	Exams	

### Assessment

Assessment will be based on 3 in-course written assignments (each worth 10%), class participation (tests and quizzes during tutorials – combined value of 30%) and a final examination (40%).

### Course Materials

Temple, O. 2011. *The Webs of Significance: Lectures in Language, Culture & History (2004-2011)*. University of Papua New Guinea Press. ISBN: 978-9980-84-913-7

Temple, O. 2011. *Genesutra: a Course in Dialectical Linguistics*. University of Papua New Guinea Press. ISBN: 978-9980-84-910-6

Cruse, Alan. 2004. *Meaning in Language*. Oxford Linguistics.

Vygotsky, Lev. 1934. *Thinking and Speaking*. <http://www.marxists.org/archive/vygotsky/works/words/vygotsky.htm>

Temple, O. 2012. *Semantics & Pragmatics: Lecture Notes 2012*. [www.templeok.com](http://www.templeok.com)