

Academic year 2022-23 (תשפ"ג)

Course title (English):

The Semantics of Generics and Habituals

Course title (Hebrew):

הסמנטיקה של משפטים גנריים ומשפטי הרגל

Course number:132.1.0129

Course slot (semester/s, weekday/s, hours): Sunday & Wednesday 12:00–14:00

Lecturer: Ariel Cohen

Lecturer's conference hour and contact details: arikc@bgu.ac.il

Course description & objectives:

In this course we are going to discuss the semantics of generics and habituals, exemplified by sentences such as the following:

- (1)
- a. Dogs are mammals.
 - b. Birds y.
 - c. The platypus lays eggs.
 - d. The Frenchman eats horsemeat.
 - e. Bulgarians are good weightlifters.
 - f. The giant panda is an endangered species.
 - g. Bees are sexually sterile.
 - h. Prime numbers are odd.
 - i. John jogs in the park.
 - j. Mary smokes.

What is it that makes such sentences true or false? Sentence (1a) seems to hold for all dogs, (1b) for most birds, (1c) for most female platypuses (presumably less than half the total number of platypuses), (1d) for rather few Frenchmen, (1e) for very few Bulgarians, and (1f) for no individual giant panda. On the other hand, the majority of bees are sexually sterile, and, except for the number 2, all primes are odd, yet (1g) and (1h) are false. Sentences (1i) and (1j) appear to be about events; how often does John have to jog, and how often does Mary have to smoke, for these sentences to be true?

In this class we will examine a number of approaches to the problem of generics.

Course requirements:

Attendance is not required.

Quiz (20%)

Proposal for seminar paper (20%)

Seminar paper (60%)