

LING 323 : INTRODUCTORY SYNTAX

Section 01: MW 3:10–4:30 PM, Physics 121

Section 02: MW 6:10–7:30 PM, Vollum 116

Course Syllabus

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Office hrs: Mon 12:30–2:30, Tue 3:30–4:30, or by appointment

PREREQUISITES

There are no prerequisites for this course, other than an interest in language. LING 211 *Introduction to Linguistic Analysis* is recommended, but by no means required. Some familiarity with basic ‘school grammar’ terms like *noun*, *adjective*, *(in)transitive verb*, *preposition*, *phrase*, *sentence*, etc., would also be useful, but again is not required. If you would like to brush up on these grammar terms, I recommend the Hurford book listed below (see ‘Readings’).

FOCUS OF THE COURSE

Syntax is the branch of linguistics which deals with the scientific study of sentence structure in natural language. Syntacticians seek to characterize the largely unconscious rules that determine how speakers of a language combine words into larger units such as phrases and sentences, and how speakers parse (i.e., assign a structural representation to) the phrases and sentences that they hear or read. Most syntacticians approach this topic from a *universalist* perspective: that is, they are concerned not only with determining the sentence rules for some particular language (say, English), but also with determining what structural generalizations hold across *all* languages, and what these generalizations tell us about the nature of language as a property of the human species.

There are various frameworks for approaching the study of syntax. Here we follow linguists like Noam Chomsky in adopting an explicitly *generative* orientation. According to generative linguists, the goal of a theory of syntax is not to explain how speakers actually produce and parse sentences when they use language (*linguistic performance*). Instead, the goal is to characterize the system of knowledge which underlies speakers’ ability to do this (*linguistic competence*, or *mental grammar*). A fundamental assumption of generative syntax is that speakers’ mental grammar involves a coherent system of highly abstract principles—variously referred to as *constraints*, *filters* or *rules*—which can be discovered empirically and modeled formally. Generative linguists assume that these principles are specific to language, and at least partly innate; that is, children are born with a specialized capacity to acquire language.

In this introductory course we will engage in basic analysis of syntactic data, mostly from English, and develop a formal model to capture the patterns we observe in the data. The general goals of the course are twofold:

1. To learn how to construct a *syntactic argument*. This involves determining what counts as *evidence* in syntax, and learning how linguists use that evidence to argue for or against a particular analysis of some phenomenon.
2. To become acquainted with some of the basic terminology, concepts, and formalisms of contemporary generative syntactic theory.

Of these goals, (1) is the more important one. Most of our attention will be focused on learning how to *do* syntax. This will involve reading about and discussing the application of scientific methodologies to language data, as well as working together to construct analyses of actual fragments of English (including many phenomena for which no universally agreed-upon analysis exists.)

Regarding goal (2): There are a number of versions of generative syntax which we could investigate, each with its own terminology and formal notation. Here we will concentrate on *Government and Binding* theory (or GB for short), a framework which developed in the 1980s and early 1990s out of prior work by Chomsky and many others. The reasons for this choice are largely practical: GB is a highly influential and well-developed theory, with a good deal of empirical coverage. Most current research in syntax assumes the GB framework or one of its off-shoots—or else explicitly argues *against* this framework and its off-shoots. It is therefore useful to have some familiarity with GB jargon and notation in order to be able to read widely in the field.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS, POLICIES, DEADLINES

Students will be expected to attend every class and participate actively, to complete assigned readings and be prepared to discuss them, and to submit all written work by the assigned deadlines. The written work consists of eight problem sets and a comprehensive final exam. The problem sets will count for approximately **70%** of the total course grade, with participation and the exam counting for approximately **15%** each.

Participation — This course is structured more like a lecture/lab course than a standard seminar course. Reading assignments will generally be short and rather technical, while in-class discussion will center on working through sample problems together. Some of these exercises will originate as informal homework assignments, where I ask you to think about a body of data and come to class with a set of generalizations or the beginnings of an analysis. Regular attendance and consistent participation are therefore crucial to the success of the class.

Readings — The required textbook for this course, available for purchase in the bookstore, is listed below. This book is abbreviated **ST** in the course outline at the end of the syllabus. Although I expect you to purchase this textbook, I have also placed some back-up copies on 2-hour print reserve in the Library.

- * **Poole**, Geoffrey. (2011) *Syntactic Theory* (2nd edition). Palgrave Macmillan.
<P291.P64 2011>

The books listed below are also on print reserve. At various points in the course, readings from the Poole textbook will be supplemented by selections from the Aarts, Haegeman, Haegeman & Guéron, and Radford books. The other books in this list are optional reference works: Baltin & Collins is a general reference work on syntactic theory; while Hurford provides an informal guide to traditional grammar terms, many of which are used (sometimes with slightly different senses) in the syntax literature. The rest are alternative textbooks which you may wish to consult for further information or a different perspective on the material covered in the assigned readings.

- * **Aarts**, Bas. (2001) *English Syntax and Argumentation*. Palgrave. <PE1369.A2 2001>
- * **Baltin**, Mark and Chris **Collins**, eds. (2001) *Handbook of Contemporary Syntactic Theory*. Blackwell. <P291.H246 2001>
- * **Carnie**, Andrew. (2007) *Syntax: A Generative Introduction* (2nd edition). Blackwell. <P295.C37 2007>
- * **Haegeman**, Liliane. (1994) *Introduction to Government and Binding Theory* (2nd edition). Blackwell. <P158.2.H34 1994> (**IGB**)
- * **Haegeman**, Liliane. (2006) *Thinking Syntactically: A Guide to Argumentation and Analysis*. Blackwell. <P291.H234 2006> (**TS**)
- * **Haegeman**, Liliane and Jacqueline **Guéron**. (1999) *English Grammar: A Generative Perspective*. Blackwell. <PE1106.H27 1999>
- * **Hurford**, James. (1994) *Grammar: A Student's Guide*. Cambridge. <PE1112.H857 1994>
- * **Ouhalla**, Jamal. (1999) *Introducing Transformational Grammar: From Principles and Parameters to Minimalism*. Oxford. <P158.O94 1999>
- * **Radford**, Andrew. (1988) *Transformational Grammar: A First Course*. Cambridge. <P158.R29 1988> (**TG**)
- * **Radford**, Andrew. (1997) *Syntactic Theory and the Structure of English*. Cambridge. <P291.R35 1997> (**STSE**)

Problem Sets — There will be eight problem sets, which together count for the bulk of the course grade. Dates when assignments will be handed out and collected are given in the table below (these dates are subject to modification as we go along). Assignments will be handed out in class and also made available for download from the course Moodle page.

	<i>handed out</i>	<i>due in class</i>
PS 1	January 27	February 3
PS 2	February 3	February 12
PS 3	February 12	February 24
PS 4	February 24	March 5
PS 5	March 5	March 24
PS 6	March 24	April 2
PS 7	April 2	April 14
PS 8	April 14	April 23

Assignments are due at the beginning of class. Papers must be *typed*, except for trees, which may be either drawn by hand (on unlined 8.5 x 11 paper) or created using a tree-drawing program. Given the size of the class, I would prefer to receive assignments in hard copy form; however, in cases where this is not possible (e.g., illness, last-minute printer failure), you may send me your assignment as an email attachment (PDF preferred) prior to the beginning of class. Written work must be turned in on time if you wish to receive full credit and comments. Extensions can be negotiated under certain circumstances, such as illness or family emergency. Unexcused late assignments will be penalized

10% of total possible points for each day they are late. A late problem set will not be accepted for credit if it is turned in after that assignment has been returned to students with comments.

I believe that written work should give students the opportunity to extend and develop what they have learned, rather than simply functioning as review. Consequently I try to make my assignments challenging, and sometimes include material which we have not yet covered in class or in the reading. Crucially, I do not expect that you will always be able to complete the problem sets without help. It is perfectly acceptable to consult with me and/or a peer tutor before an assignment is due if you are having trouble. In addition, you are encouraged—indeed, expected—to work on problem sets together, so long as you write up your answers in your own words (copying must be treated as academic dishonesty and a violation of the Honor Principle). So find yourself a study partner—or two or three—as soon as you can!

Final Exam — The final exam for this course will be comprehensive. It will be an untimed take-home exam, and you will be given approximately a week to work on it. The exam will be handed out towards the end of reading week and due towards the end of finals week (exact dates TBD). The format for the exam will be similar to that of the problem sets, except of course that you will have to work on the exam individually rather than in groups.

COURSE OUTLINE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

Below is a numbered list giving the reading assignments for the course, and the topics covered in each (**ST** stands for the Poole textbook, *Syntactic Theory*). This list is subject to change, depending on how quickly we get through the material, and it is very likely that we will not have time to cover all of the topics included here. You will notice that I have not assigned specific dates for the readings: instead, we will set the pace of the course as we go along. I will let you know in class which reading(s) you should be working on for the following week.

NOTE: **ST** readings are all required. Readings from supplementary textbooks are either required or recommended, as indicated. *Moodle* indicates readings available in electronic form from the Moodle page.

Introduction: Grammar and Grammaticality

1. **ST** chapter 1, pp. 1–20; **Radford** (TG) chapter 1, pp. 1–46 (*required, print reserve and Moodle*). / The generative perspective – Innateness, modularity, and Universal Grammar – Acceptability judgements and grammaticality – Theory building and criteria of adequacy – Economy and parsimony (Occam’s Razor).

Phrase Structure: Categories, Constituency, and X-bar Structure

2. **Aarts** chapter 2, pp. 8–21 (*required, print reserve and Moodle*); **Radford** (STSE) chapter 2, pp. 37–70 (*required, print reserve and Moodle*). / Predicate-argument structure and grammatical relations – Tests for subject and object – Lexical categories.
3. **ST** chapter 2, pp. 21–34; **Radford** (TG) chapter 2, pp. 50–56, 64–105 (*required, print reserve and Moodle*). / Basic tree drawing – Phrase structure rules – Constituent structure – Tests for constituency – Structural relations: dominance, sisterhood, c-command.
4. **ST** chapter 2, pp. 35–55; **Haegeman** (TS) chapter 2, pp. 72–118, especially pp. 107–117 (*recommended, print reserve*). / Projection levels – Intermediate projections and additional tests for constituency – Structural ambiguity and PP attachment.

5. **ST** chapter 3, pp. 61–86; **Haegeman** (TS) chapter 3, pp. 158–171, 181–186 (*required, print reserve*); **Haegeman** (TS) chapter 3, pp. 197–209 (*recommended, print reserve*). / X-bar theory – Specifier, head, complement, and adjunct – Functional categories: IP – The content of the Infl head – Additional functional categories: CP and DP – Binary branching – Head-initial versus head-final structures.

DP Licensing: Argument Structure, Case, and Binding

6. **ST** chapter 4, pp. 88–97; **Haegeman & Guéron** chapter 1, pp. 21–44 (*recommended, print reserve*). / Predicate-argument structure revisited – Theta roles and the Theta Criterion – Consequences of the Theta Criterion: Expletive subjects and covert (PRO) subjects.
7. **ST** chapter 4, pp. 97–115; **Haegeman** (IGB) chapter 3, pp. 155–180 (*recommended, print reserve*). / Case Theory: Morphological case versus abstract case – Case assignment configurations – Government: m-command and barriers – Exceptional Case Marking (ECM) – The Case Filter.
8. **ST** chapter 5, pp. 119–147; **Haegeman** (IGB) chapter 4, pp. 203–233 (*recommended, print reserve*). / Anaphors and Principle A – C-command, government, and binding domains – Accessible subjects – Pronouns and Principle B – R-expressions and Principle C.

Movement and Locality

9. **ST** chapter 6, pp. 150–172, 180–182. / Introduction to movement – D-structure (DS) versus S-structure (SS) – Traces, structure preservation, and evidence for movement – Head movement and inversion constructions – Wh-movement (A'-movement) – Successive cyclicity and subjacency – Evidence for successive cyclicity – Wh-movement in relative clauses.
10. **ST** chapter 6, pp. 172–180. / DP-movement (A-movement) – Passive and raising constructions – Binding and movement: reconstruction effects – Restating the Theta Criterion and Case Filter in terms of chains.
11. **ST** chapter 9, pp. 265–281; **Haegeman** (TS) chapter 4, pp. 238–267 (*recommended, print reserve*); **Haegeman & Guéron** chapter 3, pp. 288–299 (*recommended, print reserve*). / More on DP-movement and case licensing: The VP-internal subject hypothesis – The double object construction – VP shells, light verbs and *vP* – Accusative case assignment revisited: Burzio's Generalization – Small clauses.
12. **ST** chapter 7, pp. 188–216, pp. 219–222; **Haegeman** (IGB) chapter 9, pp. 488–507 (*recommended, print reserve*). / Logical form (LF), phonetic form (PF), and the T-model of grammar – Covert A'-movement: wh-movement in wh-in-situ languages – Quantifier scope and raising.
13. **ST** chapter 7, pp. 216–218; chapter 9, pp. 281–286, pp. 292–297. / Covert A-movement: Expletive replacement – Accusative case assignment revisited (again): Antecedent-contained deletion – Government versus specifier-head agreement as licensing configurations – ECM versus raising-to-object.
14. **ST** chapter 9, pp. 286–287; chapter 10, pp. 319–330; **Haegeman & Guéron** chapter 3, pp. 306–321 (*recommended, print reserve*). / IP versus TP – More on head-movement – V-raising in English, French, and German.

Refinements: More on Empty Categories, Movement, and Functional Projections

15. **ST** chapter 8, pp. 227–239, pp. 259–263. / Empty categories – Binding Theory revisited: [anaphor] and [pronominal] features – Locality and the binding status of DP-traces – The binding status of wh-traces – PRO and *pro* – The PRO Theorem.
16. **ST** chapter 8, pp. 240–259; **Haegeman** chapter 12, pp. 625–661 (*recommended, print reserve*). / More on locality: The Empty Category Principle (ECP) – Proper government and minimality – Subjacency and the ECP – Extraction from adjuncts – Overview of Relativized Minimality.
17. **ST** chapter 9, pp. 287–292. / The split-CP hypothesis.
18. **ST** chapter 10, pp. 299–307. / The copy theory of movement – Reconstruction and Quantifier Raising – Pronunciation of lower copies.