FOUNDATIONS OF SYNTACTIC THEORY
LING 403/503
FALL 2008

M&W 3:00 – 4:15, HARV 313

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Course Description : This course is an introduction to the formal theory of syntax. We will examine the syntactic structure of Language within the *Generative* framework of syntax. From this point of view, sentences are considered to be generated by a formal mathematical system of rules and constraints that are part of the linguistic knowledge of the speaker. In this class, the theory of *Principles and Prameters* (P&P) approach to syntax will be introduced. This approach, known also as *Government and Binding Theory* (GB), had a rich empirical foundation. We will see how various modules of syntactic systems interact to generate sentences, and how specific universal constraints control this generation. Topics include the lexicon, phrase structure, Case and Theta theories, binding theory, empty categories, locality and economy conditions, overt movements, covert movement, Logical Form (LF), etc. Data from a number of related and unrelated languages will be examined and discussed.

While the course is primarily designed to discuss syntactic concepts within the framework of P&P, we will also refer to Chomsky's *Minimalist Program* (MP), the last three sessions of this course will be devoted to discussions of the relationship between the syntactic theory and the greater domain of biological systems. This portion of the course will be presented by our guest lecturer **Massimo Piattelli-Palmarini (MPP).**

Goal: one of the essential goals of this course is to develop a deep understanding of the syntactic structure of Language through problem solving. In this regard, homework assignments prove to be very crucial.
Note: this course requires intensive reading. Please put aside several hours a week just for the reading assignments.

Prerequisites
- Undergraduate students are required to have successfully passed LING 300.
- Graduate students are not required to have any background in formal syntax. However, they are expected to learn theoretical materials quickly and systematically.

Readings

1.   Baker, Mark 2001. *The Atoms of Language*. Basic Books.
2.   Carnie, Andrew 2007. *Syntax: A Generative Introduction*. Blackwell Publishing.
3.   Haegeman, Liliane 2002. *Introduction to Government and Binding*. Blackwell Publishing.
     (2nd edition)

Recommended Reading

Green, Georgia & Jerry Morgan 2001. *Practical Guide to Syntactic Analysis*. CSLI Press.
(chapters 1-4)

Requirements :

➢ Six homework assignments.
➢ Ten minute discussion on some mystery construction. See below for specifics.
➢ *Graduate students*: One term paper (15-20 pages). It can either be a research paper on a syntactic problem, or a review paper based on two or more journal papers on the same syntactic theme. We would like to see your paper in three steps:
   o   A short description of your paper topic.
   o   A one page data and relevant description.
   o   The paper itself.   See below for specifics.
➢ *Undergraduate students:* a paper consisting of answers to specific questions based on selected squibs (short papers). See below for specifics.

Grades

Homework assignments	60	(10 each)
Attendance and participation	5	
Discussion of a mystery construction	5	(only for grads)
Paper	30	(for Grads) 35 (for undergrads)

Important Dates

Homework assignments	Aug. 27	Due Sept. 3	HH
	Sept. 10	Due Sept. 17	HH
	Sept 29	Due Oct. 13	AB
	Oct. 20	Due Oct. 27	SK
	Nov. 3	Due Nov 17	AB
	Nov. 24	Due Dec. 1	SK
Paper proposal (one paragraph)	October 22		
One page data	November 5		
Final draft	December 10		

Important Notes

➢ The assignments will be based on readings and lecture material. You will have one week to complete each of them. The assignments may all involve data from languages that we have not analyzed in class. Note that the bulk of your grade is determined by your performance on these assignments.
➢ Each student is encouraged to be a member of a discussion group to discuss the course material as well as the homework assignments. These discussions will help you grasp the complicated issues better and faster.

- o NOTE
    - ▪ you MUST hand in your own answers, and
    - ▪ you MUST write the names of the people you worked with on the top of the first page.
- ➤ Doing the reading assignments is *extremely* important. If you don't read and understand the basic material, you won't be able to comprehend advanced issues. Here is a suggestion as to how to prepare for class:
    - o before coming to class, read the material assigned for that specific date, and familiarize yourself with the topic(s).
    - o after the lecture, read the handout, and go through the readings again.
    - o make a list of your questions and comments.
    - o discuss them with your group members.
    - o bring the puzzling ones to class.
- ➤ We strongly encourage you to ask questions in class since they will be helpful to clarify the issues for you and other participants.

Mystery constructions
See the related handout

Term paper
I Research paper:
   Choose a syntactic problem in any language you like.
- ➤ a problem that has not been discussed in the literature, or
- ➤ a problem that has not been adequately discussed, or
- ➤ a problem that has been discussed in a different theory/framework.
- ➤ You should start out by surveying the literature on that problem (or similar problems).
- ➤ Then you need to go beyond the review literature by presenting your own analysis.
- ➤ The topic needs to be manageable.

II Literature review:
   Compare and contrast two papers which approach a particular empirical question from different angles. Evaluate the papers and try to come up with your own proposal.

III Talk with us in case you have other ideas in mind.

Policy of attendance:
Please don't miss the class unless you have a real personal problem. Missing one class means not understanding a good part of the next class, and soon you will find yourself completely lost. If you HAVE to miss a class, get the handout, and discuss the material with your group members.

CALENDAR
(subject to change)

Dates	Subject	Readings	Instructor
August 25	Introduction		AB, HH, SK
August 27 & Sept 1	Grammar The Lexicon	Baker 1-3 Haegeman 1 Carnie 7	HH
September 3 & 8	The Theta Theory	Haegeman 1 Carnie 7	HH
September 10 & 15	Structural Relations	Haegeman 2 Carnie 3, 4, 5 and 6	HH
September 17 & 22	Structural Relations (con't)	Haegeman 2	HH
September 24 & 29	Binding Theory	Carnie 5 Haegeman 4	AB
October 1 & 6	Binding Theory (con't)	Carnie 5 Haegeman 4	AB
October 8 & 13	Case Theory & NP Movement	Carnie 9 Haegeman 6	SK
October 15 & 20	Case Theory & NP-Movement (con't)	Carnie 9 Haegeman 6	SK
October 22 & 27	Empty categories	Carnie 10 Haegeman 5 & 8	SK
October 29 & Nov. 3	Wh-Movement	Carnie 11 Haegeman 7	AB
November 5	Wh-Movement (con't)	Haegeman 8	AB
November 10 & 12	Logical Form	Haegeman 9	AB
November 17	Logical Form (con't)	Haegeman 9 May 2002	AB

CALENDAR (con't)
(subject to change)

Dates	**Subject**	**Readings**	**Instructor**
November 19 & 24	Functional Heads & Head Movement	Carnie 8 Haegeman 11	SK
November 26 & Dec. 1	Relativized Minimality	Haegeman 12	SK
December 3, 8 & 10	Issues in the Biology of Language		MPP

HAVE A GREAT SEMESTER