

FOUNDATIONS OF SYNTACTIC THEORY

LING 403/503

FALL 2009

M&W 3:00 – 4:15, HARV 313

Instructors:	Andy Barss (AB)	Andrew Carnie (AC)	Heidi Harley (HH)
Office	Communication 114A	Douglass 308	Communication 114B
Phone	626-3284	621 2802	626-3554
E-mail	barss@u.arizona.edu	carnie@u.arizona.edu	hharley@u.arizona.edu
Office Hours	MISSING	By Appointment	MISSING

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 Parameters* (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

- Carnie, Andrew 2006. *Syntax: A Generative Introduction*. Second Edition. Wiley-Blackwell Publishing.
- Haegeman, Liliane 2002. *Introduction to Government and Binding*. Blackwell Publishing.(2nd edition)
- PDFs of readings on the D2L site

Requirements :

- 12 homework assignments.
- **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:
 - A short description of your paper topic.
 - A one page data and relevant description.
 - The paper itself. See below for specifics.
- Ten minute (ONLY!) discussion on some mystery construction. 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	(5 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 24	Due Aug 31	AC
	Aug 31	Due Sept 7	AC
	Sept. 7	Due Sept. 14	AC
	Sept 23	Due Sept. 30	AB
	Oct. 12	Due Oct. 19	HH
	Oct. 19	Due Oct. 26	HH
	Oct. 26	Due Nov. 2	HH
	Nov. 2	Due Nov. 9	AB?
	Nov. 16	Due Nov. 23	AB
	Nov. 25	Due Dec. 2	AC

One more each for HH & AB How about one less for AC? ☺

Paper proposal (one paragraph)	October 21
One page data	November 18
Final draft	December 9

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.
 - 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.

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- 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:
 - before coming to class, read the material assigned for that specific date, and familiarize yourself with the topic(s).
 - after the lecture, read the handout, and go through the readings again.
 - make a list of your questions and comments.
 - discuss them with your group members.
 - 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 24	Introduction & Foundations		AB
August 26	Grammar Constituency & Phrase Structure	Baker 1-3 reading on D2L Carnie 3	AC
August 31	X Bar theory	Reading on D2L Carnie 6 & 7	AC

September 2	Structural Relations	reading on D2L Carnie 4	AC
September 7	The LCA and Adjuncts	reading on D2L	AC
September 9	Merge	reading on D2L	AC
September 14	Theta Theory	Haegeman 1 Carnie 8	HH
September 16	Theta Theory	reading on D2L	HH
September 21 & 23	Binding Theory	Carnie 5 Haegeman 4	AB
September 28 & 30	Binding Theory (con't)	Carnie 5 Haegeman 4	AB
October 5 & 7	Case Theory & NP Movement	Carnie 10 Haegeman 6	HH
October 12 & 14	Case Theory & NP-Movement (con't)	Carnie 10 Haegeman 6	HH
October 19 & 21	Empty categories	Carnie 14 Haegeman 5 & 8	HH
October 26 & 28	Wh-Movement	Carnie 11 Haegeman 7	SK
November 2	Wh-Movement (con't)	Haegeman 8	SK
November 4	WHAT DO WE PUT HERE	Hmm! not sure. How about a lecture from our current senior syntax dissertators (Jeff, Dave?) on their diss work?	
November 9 & 11	Logical Form	Haegeman 9	AB
November 16 & 18	Logical Form (con't)	Haegeman 9 May 2002	AB
November 23 & 25	Functional Heads & Head Movement	Carnie 8 Reading on D2L	AC
November 30	Relativized Minimality	Haegeman 12 Carnie 12 Reading on D2L	AC
December 2, 7 & 9	Issues in the Biology of Language		MPP

HAVE A GREAT SEMESTER

