

Linguistics 5330–Formal Syntax

Fall 2010
UT Arlington

Course Information

Instructor: Joey Sabbagh

Contact Information: Office: Hammond Hall 407, Email: sabbagh@uta.edu

Class meeting time & location: T, Th: 2-3:20PM, Trimble Hall 218

Office Hours: Tuesday 3:30–4:30, Wednesday 2–3

Course Overview and Objectives

Syntax is the study of how words combine to form phrases, and how phrases combine to form sentences. Detailed investigation into sentence structure reveals that sentences are not formed simply by stringing together words. Instead, sentences have properties that imply a complex hierarchical organization which is rule governed and systematic within and across languages.

In this course, we will develop an approach to syntactic analysis that is founded in ideas that stem from the theoretical frameworks often referred to as *Principles and Parameters* (aka. “Government and Binding”) and *Minimalism*.^{1,2}

While emphasis is placed on developing an understanding of the concepts of the above mentioned theoretical frameworks, the primary objectives of this course are for you to gain familiarity with the central empirical phenomena, methodology, analytical reasoning and argumentation skills which are important for doing syntactic analysis within the context of any theoretical program. These objectives will be accomplished through regular written work and through classroom discussion.

Requirements

Homework Assignments (70%): There will be roughly 10 assignments total. These assignments will generally be handed out on Thursday, due **in class** on Thursday of the following week, and returned to you the following Tuesday. Your lowest assignment will not be counted towards your overall grade.

While some of the homework problems will be relatively straightforward, some will be a bit more strenuous. You are therefore strongly encouraged to work together on all homework problems as well as on the take-home exam. I only require that you write up your work independently, so that

¹Chomsky, Noam. 1981. *Lectures on Government and Binding*. Foris, Dordrecht.

²Chomsky, Noam 1995. *The Minimalist Program*. MIT Press, Cambridge, MA.

what you hand in really is your own work. Make sure to attribute any ideas or proposals that originated with someone other than yourself to the relevant individual(s), and **always write the names of the people you worked with at the top of your paper.**

Homeworks will generally be somewhat open-ended. There will not always be a particular right answer, and the important thing will be how well you present and support the proposal you come up with. So two equally good papers might have different and indeed incompatible solutions.

Homework assignments will also form the major basis for our discussion in class. It is therefore important that you complete them on time and be ready to discuss your solutions in class on the day that they are due.

Take Home Final (20%): The final will be in the same basic format as the homework assignments, but a bit more time-consuming.

Participation (10%): Regular attendance is extremely important if you wish to do well in this class. Each class will build on material from the previous class. In some classes, we may take small steps forward, in other classes, we may take giant leaps forward. Therefore, **Missing even one class may put you seriously behind.** If you must be absent from class for whatever reason, it is your responsibility to find out about the material you missed.

Textbook

There is no textbook for this course. Selections from certain textbooks will be made available online for you (details to follow). If you find yourself completely unable to live without a textbook, here are two that might be useful. I'll be more than happy to assist you making the connections between the selections of this book and the topics discussed covered in class.

- Carnie, Andrew. 2002. *Syntax: A Generative Introduction*. Blackwell Publishers.
- Radford, Andrew. 2004. *English Syntax: An introduction*. Cambridge University Press.

Note on Grading and Notification of Progress

The assignments for this course require solutions that cannot (in my mind) be evaluated by assigning a certain number of points and subtracting points for “mistakes”. In other words, this means that assignments will be evaluated in a more *holistic* fashion. In general, you can expect to receive detailed comments throughout your assignment, in addition to a final narrative evaluation of your work (usually, a paragraph or two on the last page of your assignment). I do not like assigning letter grades, and I will only do so if you specifically request me to. That said, even if you do not request letter grades be assigned on your home-works, you should be able to track your progress fairly straightforwardly. For instance, if final narrative evaluation of your assignment consistently starts off with: “This assignment is Excellent/Very Good overall...”, then you are in the ‘A’ range. If your assignments are consistently ‘Good’, this means you are in the ‘B’ range, and so on. At the mid-point of the semester, I will provide you with a synopsis of your overall performance, and will let you know where you currently stand in terms of your final grade (and, more importantly, how you can raise that grade over the course of the second half of the semester). When in doubt about your progress, just ask.

Outline of Topics

WEEK 1 / *Generative grammar; Basic argumentation*

WEEK 2 / *Constituent structure and phrase structure; Subcategorization (S-Selection, C-Selection and L-Selection)*

- Assignment 1 handed out 9/2 (Due 9/9)

WEEK 3 / *X-Bar theory; Binding Principles*

- Assignment 2 handed out 9/9 (Due 9/16)

WEEK 4 / *TENSE/INFL as the head of the clause; Agreement; The auxiliary system*

- Assignment 3 handed out 9/16 (Due 9/23)

WEEK 5 / *Embedded clauses*

- Assignment 4 handed out 9/23 (Due 9/30)

WEEK 6 / *Interrogatives I*

- Assignment 5 handed out 9/30 (Due 10/7)

WEEK 7 / *VP-Internal Subjects; Passive sentences*

- No assignment

WEEK 8 / *Sentential subjects, extraposition, and Case-theory; Unaccusative and Unergative predicates*

- Assignment 7 handed out 10/14 (Due 10/21)

WEEK 9 / *Infinitival Clauses: ECM and Raising*

- Assignment 8 handed out 10/21 (Due 10/28)

WEEK 10 / *Infinitival Clauses (cont.): Raising (cont.); Control*

- Assignment 9 handed out 10/28 (Due 11/4)

WEEK 11 / *Infinitival Clauses (cont.): Raising and Control (cont.)*

- Assignment 10 handed out 11/4 (Due 11/11)

WEEK 12 / *TBA*

WEEK 13 / *TBA*

WEEK 14 / *TBA*

WEEK 15 / *TBA, Summary, Q & A*

- Final assignment handed out 12/9 Due (12/16)

Guidelines for written work

- All assignments should be done carefully and should be finished by the beginning of class on the due date. Homework will frequently form the basis for class discussion. Handing it in after class therefore makes it less useful and missing class because it is not done will put you further behind. **All assignments must be typed.** Also, if you care to help me lower my optometry bills, please use 1.5 or double spacing, and—if you use Word or some-such—set the alignment to “Justify”.
- Writing up an assignment DOES NOT reduce to a list of answers (trees, rules, example sentences). It should have a meaningful, essay-style, structure, which organizes the material in a systematic fashion and helps the reader understand your reasoning in developing these answers. Points should be made clear through illustrative examples and derivations. In general solutions should be 3-10 pages in length. Print on one side of the paper only, and leave sufficient room in the margins for comments. Staple loose sheets together.
- Write in complete sentences. Be as clear as possible. When in doubt, err on the side of clarity.
- As much as possible, adhere to the following notational conventions:
 - Number your examples and set them apart from the text
 - If you cite example material in the running text, put it in italics or underline it, do not place them in scare quotes “ ”.
 - Annotate your examples as follows: * placed before an ungrammatical sentence, ? placed before a sentence of doubtful grammaticality, and # for ‘semantically or pragmatically unacceptable’. The absence of annotation indicates ‘grammatical’.
 - If you use any other annotation marks make sure to introduce and define these first. The same goes for any abbreviations or new terminology that you use.
 - If providing data from a language other than English, include a morpheme-by- morpheme gloss and a free translation. (If in doubt, follow the style used in any of the major linguistics journals, which I can provide you with upon request.)
 - When constructing minimal pairs of sentence, parentheses may be used to enclose the difference, as in *He thinks (that) pigs can fly*. If the two versions of the example differ in grammaticality, place the annotation mark accordingly: *I asked whether (*that) pigs can fly* vs. **(That) pigs can fly is news to me*.

Other Policies

Drop Policy: Students may drop or swap (adding and dropping a class concurrently) classes through self-service in MyMav from the beginning of the registration period through the late registration period. After the late registration period, students must see their academic advisor to drop a class or withdraw. Undeclared students must see an advisor in the University Advising Center. Drops can continue through a point two-thirds of the way through the term or session. It is the student's responsibility to officially withdraw if they do not plan to attend after registering. Students will not be automatically dropped for non-attendance. Repayment of certain types of financial aid administered through the University may be required as the result of dropping classes or withdrawing. Contact the Financial Aid Office for more information.

Americans with Disabilities Act: The University of Texas at Arlington is on record as being committed to both the spirit and letter of all federal equal opportunity legislation, including the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). All instructors at UT Arlington are required by law to provide "reasonable accommodations" to students with disabilities, so as not to discriminate on the basis of that disability. Any student requiring an accommodation for this course must provide the instructor with official documentation in the form of a letter certified by the staff in the Office for Students with Disabilities, University Hall 102. Only those students who have officially documented a need for an accommodation will have their request honored. Information regarding diagnostic criteria and policies for obtaining disability-based academic accommodations can be found at www.uta.edu/disability or by calling the Office for Students with Disabilities at (817) 272-3364.

As a student, your responsibility rests with informing the instructor in writing or email and providing the official documentation from the Office for Students with Disabilities no later than the end of the second week of classes.

Academic Dishonesty: At The University of Texas at Arlington, academic dishonesty is a completely unacceptable mode of conduct and will not be tolerated in any form. Students involved in academic dishonesty will be disciplined in accordance with University regulations and procedures. Discipline may include suspension or expulsion from UTA.

According to the UT System Regents' Rules and Regulations, "Scholastic dishonesty" includes but is not limited to cheating, plagiarism, collusion, the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person, taking an examination for another person, any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student or the attempt to commit such acts" (Part One, Chapter VI, Section 3, Subsection 3.2, Subdivision 3.22).

While the Department of Linguistics and TESOL hopes to foster a sense of community in which students can enhance their educational experience by conferring with each other about the lectures, readings, and assignments, all work submitted must be the product of each student's own effort. Students are expected to know and honor the standards of academic integrity followed by American universities; ignorance of these standards is not an excuse for committing an act of academic dishonesty (including plagiarism). If you have questions, please speak with your instructor, your academic advisor, or the department chair.

Please be advised that departmental policy requires instructors to formally file charges with the Office of Student Conduct, following procedures laid out for faculty there

(<http://www.uta.edu/studentaffairs/conduct/faculty.html>), as well as notify the department chair of the filing of the charges.

Student Support Services Available: The University of Texas at Arlington provides a variety of resources and programs designed to help students develop academic skills, deal with personal situations, and better understand concepts and information related to their courses. These resources include tutoring, major-based learning centers, developmental education, advising and mentoring, personal counseling, and federally funded programs. For individualized referrals to resources for any reason, students may contact the Maverick Resource Hotline at 817-272-6107 or visit www.uta.edu/resources for more information.

Final Review Week: A period of five class days prior to the first day of final examinations in the long sessions shall be designated as Final Review Week. The purpose of this week is to allow students sufficient time to prepare for final examinations. During this week, there shall be no scheduled activities such as required field trips or performances; and no instructor shall assign any themes, research problems or exercises of similar scope that have a completion date during or following this week unless specified in the course syllabus. During Final Review Week, an instructor shall not give any examinations constituting 10% or more of the final grade, except makeup tests and laboratory examinations. In addition, no instructor shall give any portion of the final examination during Final Review Week.

Auditors: The Department of Linguistics and TESOL has a “no audit” policy, with one exception. With instructor permission, Department of Linguistics and TESOL faculty, staff, and students enrolled in a linguistics/TESOL degree program may be able to audit a course. Audited courses cannot be used to satisfy any degree or program requirements/electives, nor will any credit (including retroactive) be granted for audited courses.