Syntax I
LIN380L - Unique Number 41560
Fall 2009
TTh2:00-3:30, CBA 4.326

Instructor:

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Office Hours: T10:30-12:00, W1:30-3:00, or by appointment

Goals:

The goal of this course is to explore the structure of sentences and the variation across languages in sentence structure. We will do this from the perspective of Generative Grammar, which seeks to formulate precise models of grammar that describe and explain these structures. We focus primarily on an approach to syntax usually referred to as the Principles and Parameters (P&P) approach, which has been the mainstay of much (though by no means all) work in syntax in the last 50 years. The main outcome of this course is two-fold: to understand the goals and methodologies of work in syntax (so that you are able to read primary literature in the field), and also to be in a position to begin doing original research in syntax for those of you who wish to continue on to Syntax II.

Textbooks:


We will primarily follow the Carnie book in structure, with supporting readings assigned from Haegeman and Kroeger’s textbooks. For any given reading assignment I recommend reading Carnie first and then Haegeman, who will go into more theoretical depth (but will be less introductory). The Kroeger book is available in e-format from the library. I will also put a hard copy on reserves. We may look at some additional readings in the classic or primary literature on specific issues; these will be distributed in class, through Blackboard, or through e-reserves.

Requirements and Expectations:

Graduate standing required (except by my permission). There are no prerequisites for this course. Regular attendance and participation are strongly encouraged. Please be advised that you are responsible for knowing everything that is said in class, whether you are there or not. Thus if you choose not to attend any given lecture, you should get notes from your classmates. There will be
weekly assignments, a midterm, and a final exam. Homeworks will be handed out on Thursday and hardcopies are due the following Thursday. I’ll do my best to get them back to you the following Tuesday. Homeworks and exams will consist of problem sets, with three types of problems:

- Technical problems (e.g. diagramming sentences)
- Short answer application of theory to language data
- Argumentation problems, written in prose like an essay (with intro, body, and conclusion)

We will be developing a rigorous, formal theory of sentence structure and meaning in this class. For technical problems it is important to pay careful attention to detail, so that you do not end up saying something you do not mean. For argumentation problems, you will need to provide a clear, well-written argument for some specific proposal, grounded in the relevant data and also in the theoretical assumptions we make. All homeworks and exams must be typed and spell-checked (exception: sentence diagrams are hard to do on a computer, so you may hand draw these).

**Grading:**

The final grade will be broken down as follows:

- Homework assignments: 40%
- Midterm Exam (24-hour take home, due October 29th at class time): 30%
- Final exam (24-hour take home, due December 12th at 10:00pm): 30%

Grades may vary by +/-1% (i.e. a borderline letter grade) depending on class participation. I will drop the lowest homework grade, and possibly the second lowest as well. By default, I will follow the following standard grading chart:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Range</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>≥93%</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>92%-90%</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>89%-87%</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>86%-83%</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>82%-80%</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>79%-77%</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>76%-73%</td>
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<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>72%-70%</td>
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<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>69%-67%</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>66%-63%</td>
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<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>62%-60%</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>&lt;60%</td>
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</tbody>
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However, I may lower (but not raise) the cutoffs (i.e. drop an A to ≥90, but never raise it to ≥95).

**Academic Dishonesty Policy:**

I encourage you to form study groups and work together on the homeworks, as part of doing syntax is learning to share ideas and work collaboratively. However, each student must write up and turn in his or her own assignments alone. Do not share your write-ups with one another. The other part of doing is syntax is learning how to make syntactic arguments and do linguistic writing, and this is individual work. You may not work together at all on exams. Any academic dishonesty of any sort (including basing your write up on someone else’s) will be handled according to the procedures of the office of Student Judicial Services (http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/index.php). Typical outcomes are that the incident is reported to the dean, possibly with a 0 on that assignment or exam and/or an F in the course.

If you have any problems with the assignments or the material, please come talk to me. I’m happy to work with everyone on an individual level to make sure we all meet the objectives of the course.
Documented Disability Statement:

UT Austin provides upon request appropriate academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. For more information, contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at 512 471 6259 (voice) or 512 232 2937 (video phone), or see http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/forstudents.php. Faculty are not required to provide accommodations without an official accommodation letter from SSD.

Religious Holy Days:

By UT Austin policy, you must notify me of your pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, I will give you an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

Outline of topics in the order in which they will occur (readings are tentative):

- Introduction (Carnie, Ch.1, Haegeman, Introduction):
  - The rise and role of syntax in linguistics
  - The innateness of linguistic knowledge (if we have time)
- Words (Carnie, Ch.2):
  - The role of words in syntax
  - Parts of speech
  - Functional categories
  - Subcategorization
- Phrase Structure and Constituency (Carnie, Ch.3-4:103-117):
  - Constituency and constituency tests
  - Trees as phrase structural models
  - Clause structure
  - Noun phrase structure
  - Structural properties of trees (c-command, m-command, government)
  - Types of grammars (regular, context-free, transformational)
- X'-Theory - Generalizing phrase structure (Carnie, Ch.6-7, Haegeman, Ch.2):
  - Commonalities across phrases of different types
  - Heads
  - Specifiers, complements, and modifiers
  - X'-theory
- The Lexicon - Constraining X'-Theory (Carnie, Ch.8, Kroeger, §5.1-5.4, Haegeman, Ch.1)
  - θ-roles and the θ-criterion
  - Argument structure
  - C-selection and s-selection
  - The (extended) projection principle
  - Argument structure changing operations
- Binding Theory - Using phrase structure (Carnie, Ch.5, Haegeman, §4.1.1-4.1.4.3, §2-5):
– Pronouns, anaphors, and R-expressions
– Syntactic constraints on coreference

• Grammatical Relations and Morphosyntax (Carnie, Ch.4:118-120, Kroeger, §4.3-4.5)
  – Case-marking, case systems
  – Subjects, Objects, Indirect Objects, Obliques - Structural or behavioral?
  – Prominence

• Head movement (Carnie, Ch.9, Kroeger, §9.1-9.4, Haegeman, Ch.11 except §11.5, §11.7):
  – Adverb ordering in English vs. French vs. Irish
  – The stranded affix filter
  – V→I/T movement, I/T→C movement
  – Do-support
  – VP-Shells: the structure of ditransitive verbs

• DP-movement (Carnie, Ch.10, Kroeger §7.1, Haegeman, §3.1-3.5 except §3.3, §6.1-6.3):
  – Raising and Passivization
  – Case-theory
  – Unaccusatives

• Raising vs. Control (Haegeman Ch.5):
  – *Seem vs. *want
  – Thematic and athematic arguments
  – Extending binding theory: PRO and the PRO-theorem

• Wh-movement (Carnie, Ch.11, Kroeger, Ch.11, §12.5, Haegeman Ch.7, elements of Ch.10):
  – Different types of clauses
  – Interrogatives
  – Relative clauses
  – Topicalization
  – Island constraints
  – Bounding theory, relativized minimality, barriers (in a nutshell)

• Move-α/MOVE and the Minimalist Program (Carnie, Ch.12):
  – Commonalities between types of movement (locality)
  – Covert movement

Additional readings:

For additional background on the generative enterprise, see:


For a mind-numbing bookend on generative grammar that will leave your head spinning (unless your head is already spinning in which case it may work out all right), see (in the following order):


For some colorful insight into the hearts and minds of some of the major early players in generative linguistics, see: