

CLPS 1330: Introduction to Syntax

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TuTh 9:00-10:20 a.m.
Metcalf Chemical Laboratory 105

Office Hours: TBA (Metcalf Research 241)

Overview

This course introduces students to the syntax of natural languages. Students will gain practice conducting linguistic analysis and evaluating linguistic argumentation for data sets drawn from a variety of languages.

The course begins with an exploration of syntactic phenomena from a typological perspective, so that students may gain an appreciation of both the regularity and variation observed for syntactic systems across the world's languages. After this introduction, our attention shifts to developing an understanding of syntactic theory and the types of analyses that have been proposed to account for cross-linguistic patterns. The argumentation supporting syntactic theory has traditionally been informed by English and a handful of other well-studied languages. An important consideration in this course will be the degree to which standard syntactic proposals can be extended to account for data drawn from a broader range of languages and language types. To this end, students will be required to integrate their developing understanding of syntactic theory with their newly acquired knowledge of syntactic typology.

The best way to understand linguistics is to 'do' linguistics. In this course we will do a *lot* of linguistics. Outside preparation for the course will be demanding, with regular assignments and background readings for each class meeting.

Prerequisites

Students must have completed Introduction to Linguistic Theory (CLPS 0030 or COGS 0410) to enroll.

Textbooks

There are two required texts for the course. Both are available through the Brown bookstore.

- Tallerman, Maggie. *Understanding Syntax*, 3rd edition. Hodder Education, 2011.
- Carnie, Andrew. *Modern Syntax: A Coursebook*. Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Format and Assessment

Course meetings will be conducted in an interactive lecture format. Students are expected to have completed readings prior to class and are encouraged to participate in discussion. Students will complete **homework assignments** (expected 5 or 6) and **two writing assignments**: a language profile and a short case study (called a 'squib'). Details for both assignments will be provided in class. Students will also **complete two take-home exams**: one midterm and one final.

Weighting of each of these components in assessing final grades will be as follows:

- 15% Homeworks
- 10% Language Profile
- 20% Squib
- 20% Midterm Exam
- 35% Final Exam

Policies

Attendance at lecture is critical for gaining mastery of the material. It is understood that students may on occasion miss a class meeting, and on those occasions it is the student's responsibility to make up for the missed session (for example by obtaining lecture notes from a classmate). Students with **excessive absences** may find it difficult to maintain a passing grade.

Homeworks are due in class on the assigned date in hard copy. If you know that you are going to miss a class, you must email the homework to me prior to the start of class time to receive credit. Because homework solutions will be discussed in class, **no late homeworks** will be accepted. Late writing assignments (language profile and squib) will be marked down one letter grade per day and will not be accepted more than two days after the due date. **No accommodations will be made for late exams.** Exceptions to these policies on account of personal illness or other extenuating circumstances will of course be considered, but documentation from the Dean of the College is required.

All students are expected to adhere to the Brown Academic Code (available from the web site of the Dean of the College). Students are encouraged to **work together in groups** to master the concepts presented in class. Students are likewise permitted to discuss the concepts addressed in homework assignments with one another as well as solutions to homeworks, as long as each student completes his or her assignment independently, without collaboration and without referencing notes produced in collaboration with another student. Students are encouraged to form study-groups to review for exams up until the time that exams are distributed. **Once exams have been distributed, no collaboration of any kind is permitted.**

Provisional Schedule

(Please consult the Canvas course web site for an up-to-date schedule.)

Unit 1 Syntax and Syntactic Patterns

- What is syntax? (Tallerman ch. 1)
- Words and word classes (Tallerman ch. 2)
- Simple sentences and finiteness (Tallerman ch. 3)

Unit 2 Phrase Structure

- Introduction to phrase structure: headedness (Tallerman ch. 4)
- Constituency and tree structures (Tallerman ch. 5)
- Introduction to X-bar Theory (Carnie ch. 2)
- Lexical projections and functional projections (Carnie ch. 3)

Unit 3 Argument Structure

- Linking subjects and predicate (Tallerman ch. 6)
- Lexical alternations cross-linguistically (Tallerman ch. 7)
- Subjects and linking in generative grammar (Reading TBA)
- Current topics

Unit 4 Clauses and Embedding

- CP and “the periphery” (Haegeman ch. 5)
- Wh structures cross-linguistically (Carnie ch. 4)
- Current topics