

ENGL 5338: SYNTAX (GRADUATE LEVEL)**Class time:** T/Th, 2:00 – 3:20 PM (from Jan 10 to April 29)**Location:** English/Philosophy building Rm 362**Instructor Information:**

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Overall course description:

Syntax is a sub-discipline of linguistics that deals with sentence structure—that is, what a sentence is formed and structured. This course aims to introduce the fundamental principles of theoretical syntax, and prepare students to conduct more advanced research in theoretical syntax or to apply the knowledge to other more applied disciplines such as language acquisition, language disorders, mass communication, machine translation, and artificial intelligence.

Students will learn analytical methods used in syntactic research such as how to analyze syntactic data drawn from various languages, how to formulate plausible hypotheses based on them, and how to compare and evaluate different theories and/or hypotheses. Topics will include but will not be limited to phrase structure rules, binding, and constraints on movement.

There will be a textbook and some minimal reading assignments. But the course will proceed based largely on lectures and discussions about the weekly assignments. In addition to doing the weekly assignments, students will read a journal article and do a critique on it. Furthermore, students will submit a final term paper, utilizing the acquired knowledge of syntax in linguistic analysis and will make a class presentation on the research findings.

How to do research in syntax:

The prototypical way of doing research in syntax involves the following steps:

- Identify a problem to work on
- collect some data
- describe the data and make generalizations
- situate the data in the context of the syntactic literature on this subject (general phenomena, or specifics on the data)
- analyze the data in some theoretical framework
- present arguments in favor of your analysis; refute alternative analyses

You can obtain the needed data from various sources such as texts, the Internet, or by conducting fieldwork in the form of interviews with native speakers of the language.

Learning Outcome

Upon successful completion of this course, you will be able to do the following:

- how to analyze syntactic data from various languages;
- how to formulate plausible hypotheses to explain the data;
- how to compare and evaluate hypotheses;
- how to build argumentation to make a new theoretical claim

In addition to these fundamental issues surrounding syntax, you'll also become familiarized with the following topics:

- word classes (traditionally known as parts of speech), in particular, lexical categories vs. grammatical categories
- structural relations (c-command, precedence, dominance)
- different types of pronominals and their binding conditions
- phrase structure rules and X-bar theory
- structures of finite/nonfinite clauses, complement and adjunct clauses
- NP movement (passives, NP-raising)
- Raising vs. control
- null or empty categories (e.g., traces, null pronouns)
- head to head movement
- wh-movement (in question formation, relative clauses, clefts)

Required Text (available at the campus bookstore or through *Amazon*):

- *Syntax: A Generative Introduction* by Andrew Carnie. 2002, Blackwell publishing.

Recommended/supplementary Texts (available in the library):

- *Introduction to Government and Binding Theory* by Liliane Haegeman. 1994. Blackwell publishing.
- *Syntax: A Minimalist Introduction* by Andrew Radford. 1997. Cambridge University Press.

Criteria for assessment:

| Assessment category | Percentage of Final Grade |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| In-class participation | 5% |
| 10 homeworks | 30% (3% each) |
| Proposal for the final term paper | Not-graded but required |
| Journal article critique | 20% |
| Term-paper | 30% |
| Presentation on the term paper | 15% |

- **In-class participation:** This portion of the grading will be based entirely on how actively you have participated in class discussion by critically but politely responding to others' remarks and by showing keen interests in the subject matter. More concretely, you are expected to do the readings **in advance** and come to class with a couple of **specific questions**. In addition, when we review the weekly assignments, you should be **prepared**

to share your own answers to the given problems with the rest of the class. **Note:** Being a graduate student, you are expected to come to **each and every class**.

- **Homeworks:** You will work on some concrete sets of syntactic problems in 10 homework assignments. This is because you can only learn syntax by actually doing it.

The problems will be a way of applying what you've learned in class but, occasionally, you will be given a problem set that will make you think about some specific problems in advance as a way of preparing for the upcoming lecture.

The answers should be written up as a **brief but formal essay**, with an introduction and conclusion. This will help you to develop your skills in syntax and in writing in the field of linguistics. There is rarely one absolutely correct answer and there will be cases where we cannot come up with an answer, given the limitations of the present syntactic theory. So what will be valued most in your homework will be whether you can **clearly outline your thinking process** and **build your argumentation**, rather than presenting one simple solution to a problem.

In most cases, homeworks will be given out on a Thursday and will be **due on the following Tuesday**. They must be **typed, printed, and stapled except for tree diagrams**, and turned in **on time**. **No late homeworks** will be accepted. The length of the homework will vary depending on the content and the nature of the problem but it's likely to be between **2-4 pages, double-spaced**.

- **Journal article critique (due March 27):** Pick a paper that addresses an interesting topic in theoretical syntax or in a related discipline. You're strongly advised to select a paper that will serve as a basis for your final paper. In the critique, you're expected to provide a summary and a critique of the article. When you provide criticism, you must provide concrete data to illustrate the points.

The critique is expected to be 10-11 pages, double spaced, and must be submitted in class. In addition to submitting a written critique, students will also make an informal presentation in class to share the ideas they have come up with while working on this project.

- **A written proposal on the final term-paper (due April 3):** must be a **2-paged**, short paper which clearly outlines the **topic** you are interested to investigate and must contain a preliminary literature review including **the list of references** you will build on, although it doesn't have to be exhaustive at this point. Ideally, one of the references you include here will serve as a point of departure in your own research. You are **strongly encouraged** to talk to me before deciding on your topic. It is also recommended that you outline the **research methodology** to be utilized to work on the topic.

- **Formal presentation of the research findings (you'll sign up for the day on which you want to present):** you will share the research findings of your term-paper by making a formal presentation on them. This means that you will prepare a **typed handout or power-point slides** for your presentation, so that the audience can follow your talk, and also you'll give a talk in a professional manner as if you were at a conference. All presentations must occur on the assigned date in order to receive full credit. Failure to give a presentation will **lower your grades by 2 levels**, that is, an A will become a B. Tips on how to make a good presentation will be given later.

- **Final paper (due April 29):** should be **13-15 pages, double-spaced** and submitted in class. **No electronic** submission will be accepted.

Papers will be evaluated based on (i) organization and style, (ii) clarity of writing, (iii) thoroughness of the literature review, (iv) originality of the research, and (v) the strength of argumentation.

Schedule (subject to Change)

The readings must be done **in advance**.

| Day, Date | Content | Reading | Notes |
|-----------|---|---------|---|
| Th, 1/10 | Orientation | None | |
| T, 1/11 | Intro to Generative Grammar | Ch. 1 | |
| Th, 1/15 | Parts of speech | Ch. 2 | Homework (HW) 1 given out |
| T, 1/17 | HW 1 review Constituency, tree-diagramming, and phrase structure Rules | | HW 1 due |
| Th, 1/22 | Structural relations | Ch. 3 | HW 2 given out (Jan 25 : last day to drop a course and get a refund) |
| T, 1/29 | HW 2 review | | HW 2 due |
| Th, 1/31 | Binding theory | Ch. 4 | HW 3 given out |
| T, 2/5 | HW 3 review | | HW 3 due |
| Th, 2/7 | X-bar Theory | Ch. 5 | HW 4 given out |
| T, 2/12 | HW 4 review | | HW 4 due |
| Th, 2/14 | Extending X-bar theory | Ch. 6 | HW 5 given out |
| T, 2/19 | HW 5 review | | HW 5 due |
| Th, 2/21 | Theta-roles and the lexicon | Ch. 7 | HW 6 given out |
| T, 2/26 | HW 6 review | | HW 6 due |
| Th, 2/28 | Discussion of a paper on binding | | |
| T, 3/4 | NP/DP movement | Ch. 9 | (March 5 : mid semester grades due) |
| Th, 3/6 | Cont'd | | HW 7 given out |
| T, 3/11 | HW 7 review | | HW 7 due (March 12 : last day to drop a course) |
| Th, 3/13 | Raising vs. control | Ch. 10 | HW 8 given out |
| T, 3/18 | Spring break (No class) | | |
| Th, 3/20 | Spring break (No class) | | |
| T, 3/25 | Presentation on journal article critiques | | |
| Th, 3/27 | Presentation on journal article critiques | | Journal article critique due |
| T, 4/1 | HW 8 review Head to head movement | Ch. 8 | HW 8 due |

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| Th, 4/3 | Head to head movement cont'd | | Term-paper proposal due HW 9 given out |
| T, 4/8 | HW 9 review Wh-movement | Ch. 11 | HW 9 due |
| Th, 4/10 | Wh-movement | | HW 10 given out |
| T, 4/15 | HW 10 review Towards minimalism | Ch. 12 | HW 10 due |
| Th, 4/18 | Presentation on term paper project | | |
| T, 4/22 | Presentation on term paper project | | |
| Th, 4/24 | Presentation on term paper project | | |
| T, 4/29 | Presentation on term paper project | | Final project due |

Course policy

Basic course-related requirements:

- Students must be PRESENT, PUNCTUAL, AND PREPARED for each class. To avoid being penalized unnecessarily, students should inform their professor, in advance when possible, and immediately after any inevitable or special situations that affect their attendance or their preparation. Students with **more than 6 absences** should expect an **automatic F** in the course unless they present proof of a legitimate reason for it.
- Every assignment must be turned in **typed, printed on clean papers, and stapled**, and they must be submitted **on time**. **NO** late submissions are accepted.
- Most announcements will be made in class but there may be some important announcements and notices made **via e-mail**. So **check e-mail at least twice a day** and stay updated on any notices or changes made about the course.

Academic Integrity

This course follows the University's statement on academic integrity as in p. 82 of the *Bulletin of Texas Tech*: "It is the aim of the faculty of Texas Tech University to foster a spirit of **complete honesty** and a **high standard of integrity**. The attempt of students to present as their own work that they have not honestly performed is regarded by the faculty and administration as a **serious offense** and renders the offenders liable to serious consequences, possibly suspension."

In other words, cheating and plagiarism will NOT be tolerated in this class.

- **What counts as cheating:** Dishonesty on examinations and quizzes or on written assignments, illegal possession of examinations, the use of unauthorized notes during an examination or quiz, obtaining information during an examination from the examination paper or otherwise from another student, assisting others to cheat, alteration of grade records, illegal entry to or unauthorized presence in an office are instances of cheating.

- **What counts as plagiarism:** Offering the work of another as one's own, without proper acknowledgment, is plagiarism; therefore any student who fails to give credit for quotations or an essentially identical expression of material taken from books, encyclopedias, magazines, and other reference works, or from the themes, reports, or other writings of a fellow student or any other person, is guilty of plagiarism.

Civility in the Classroom

Students are expected to assist in maintaining a classroom environment that is **conducive to learning**. No behavior that will cause distraction or discomfort will be allowed such as talking to someone in class unless it's allowed by me or responding rudely to someone's remarks or questions. Inappropriate behavior in the classroom shall result, minimally, **in a request to leave class**. Appropriate student behavior (whether online, in person, or over the telephone) creates a better environment for learning and teaching.

Repercussions: Failure to uphold the Code of Student Conduct as laid out in the Student Affairs Handbook (<http://www.studentaffairs.ttu.edu/campuslife/handbook.pdf>), in particular, with respect to academic honesty and appropriate behavior, may result in one or more of these penalties, depending on the instructor's assessment of the seriousness of the violation: e.g., a failing grade on an assignment, a failing grade for the course, reporting to the Dean of Students, referral for disciplinary action to the Student Mediation Center, or other relevant disciplinary action. Students should remember that **every action has a consequence** and that students bear responsibility for all of their own actions.

Student with Disabilities

Any student who because of a disability may require special arrangements in order to meet course requirements should contact the instructor as soon as possible to make any necessary accommodations. Students should present appropriate verification from AccessTECH. No requirement exists that accommodations be made prior to completion of this approved university procedure.