

Syntax 1

Linguistics 20400/30400, Fall 2005

TuTh 10:30-11:50 am, Social Sciences 3xx

Instructor

Jason Merchant
merchant@uchicago.edu
office phone: (773) 702-8523
home.uchicago.edu/~merchant
Office: Classics 305
Office hours: Thursdays 12-2pm

Teaching Assistant

Kjersti G. Stensrud
kgs@uchicago.edu
Section time: TBA
Section place: TBA
Office hours: TBA

Course description

This course introduces the fundamental goals and techniques of current syntactic theory and the empirical facts it is based on. It also has the goal of putting you in a position to pursue more advanced study of the structure of human languages and to provide a foundation for your own research. After reviewing the basic concepts of modern grammatical theory, the course moves on to the principles of current theoretical syntax: phrase structure and constituency, the interaction of syntax and the lexicon, and the nature and type of structure-building and movement operations. Emphasis is placed on coherent argumentation and empirical justification for theoretical claims, as well as overall understanding of theoretical concepts and tools.

Undergraduate course requirements

- Attendance and participation in the class; diligent reading
- Homework assignments
- Midterm exam (in class)
- Final exam

The final grade will be an average of all grades received on assignments plus participation (worth one assignment), the midterm (worth two assignments), and the final exam (worth four assignments)

Graduate student course requirements

Students enrolled in this course under its graduate number (30400) must complete all the above coursework; they must also complete one additional assignment (the 'formal' homework of week 4), complete all the readings, including the ones marked as optional for the undergraduates in square brackets, and write a final squib. The squib is a short paper (5-10 pages double-spaced) on a topic of your choosing: you may consult with me about the topic of course--typically applying some of the tools we've learned to a new set of data, either from English or another language you know, or exploring some theoretical tension in the set of analyses and definitions presented in class. Unlike assignments, the squib must be entirely individual work.

Overview of the contents of the course:

The following topics will be covered (roughly in the order below):

- The basics of phrase structure
- The lexicon; types of lexical information; the interaction between the lexicon and the phrase structure system (the theory of selection)
- The basics of clausal architecture; functional and lexical categories
- Theta theory, argument structure, grammatical relations
- The internal subject hypothesis and the organization of the VP
- Voice: active/passive constructions, unaccusatives and unergatives
- Case theory
- Expletives and impersonal constructions; the 'extended projection principle'
- Raising and control ('equi')

Weekly schedule

Week	Dates	Topic	Reading (to be completed before class on date) [undergrad optional reading in brackets]	Homework (to be turned in on the Tuesday of the week indicated)
1	9/27, 9/29	Introduction, background features	chs. 1 and 2	
2	10/4, 10/6	constituency	ch. 3	ch. 2, ex 1 'Reflexives and phi-features' (p.53)
3	10/11, 10/13	phrase structure ditransitives	ch. 4 (up to 4.4.4) Barss and Lasnik 1986	ch. 3, ex 1 'Pseudoclefts' (p. 97)
4	10/18, 10/20	unaccusativity	ch. 4 (4.4.4 to end); [Perlmutter 1978,] Alexiadou et al 2004	Formal homework (for grad students only)
5	10/25: Midterm 10/27	auxiliaries, head movement <i>do</i> -support	ch. 5	
6	11/1 11/3	expletives the internal subject hypothesis	ch. 6 McCloskey 1997	ch. 5, ex. 2 'copulars' (p. 196)
7	11/8 11/10	case, voice	Mithun 1999	ch. 6, ex. 4 'expletives' (p. 240)
8	11/15 11/17	raising control	ch. 8 Jackendoff & Culicover 2003 [Jackendoff & Culicover 2001]	Case systems homework
9	11/22 11/24	control continued [Thanksgiving]	[Landau 2001]	ch. 8, ex. 7 'classifying verbs' (p. 336); In class derivations
10	11/29 12/1: No class	Remaining issues, or nonconfigurationality (time permitting) Reading period	Baker 2001 [Pensalfini 2004]	In class derivations continued

Final: Thursday, December 8, 10:30am-12:30pm

Graduate student final squibs are due in my office or mailbox (hard copies only, please!) by noon on Friday, December 9.

Text

Core syntax: A Minimalist approach by David Adger. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2003.

Other readings: (these will all be available as pdf files on e-reserve through the Regenstein)

- Alexiadou, Artemis, Elena Anagnostopoulou, and Martin Everaert (eds.). 2004. Introduction to *The unaccusativity puzzle: Explorations of the syntax-lexicon interface*, pages 1-21. Oxford University Press: Oxford..
- Baker, Mark. 2001. The natures of nonconfigurality. In Mark Baltin and Chris Collins (eds.), *The handbook of contemporary syntactic theory*, pages 407-438. Blackwell: Malden, Mass.
- Barss, Andrew and Howard Lasnik. 1986. A note on anaphora and double objects. *Linguistic Inquiry* 17: 347-354.
- Culicover, Peter and Ray Jackendoff. 2001. Control is not movement. *Linguistic Inquiry* 32: 493-512.
- Jackendoff, Ray and Peter Culicover. 2003. The semantic basis of control in English. *Language* 79:517-556.
- Landau, Idan. 2001. Control and extraposition: The case of super-equi. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* 19: 109-152.
- McCloskey, James. 1997. Subjecthood and subject positions. In Liliane Haegeman (ed.), *Elements of grammar*, 197-235. Kluwer: Dordrecht.
- Mithun, Marianne. 1999. *The languages of native North America*, pages 204-226. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge.
- Pensalfini, Rob. 2004. Towards a typology of configurality. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* 22:359-408.
- Perlmutter, David. 1978. Impersonal passives and the Unaccusativity Hypothesis. In Jeri Jaeger et al. (eds.), *Proceedings of the fourth annual meeting of the Berkeley Linguistics Society*, 157-189. Berkeley Linguistics Society: Berkeley, Ca.

Guidelines for writing up assignments:

The assignments should take the form of short papers aimed at explaining sets of problematic data using, and (where necessary) extending, the set of analytical tools adopted in class. Emphasis will be placed on providing empirical justification for claims, strength of argumentation, and form and clarity. You are free to work together in developing solutions to the problems in the assignments, with the following two requirements:

- (i) you must acknowledge your collaborators (i.e., include a footnote saying who you worked with), and
- (ii) you must write up the assignments individually

Write-ups should be in complete prose, with all examples, trees, rules, etc., numbered and referred to in the text by number. Do not refer to numbered examples on handouts or in the textbook without reproducing the examples in your write-up. The general structure will be to introduce a set of data (pointing out generalizations as necessary), explain their significance, propose or reiterate one or several hypotheses about the data, and argue for the superiority of a particular hypothesis on the basis of the data, introducing new data as relevant. The final product should be a **self-contained** piece of analysis, readable and understandable by your colleagues and classmates without their needing the textbook or other class materials at hand.

In general, assignments are due at the beginning of class on Tuesday. We will generally spend part of Tuesday's class discussing the data in the assignment and its analysis. For this reason, *late assignments cannot be accepted without a Dean's note.*

In class participation

You are expected to do the readings and to contribute in class. The format of the class is by necessity largely lecture, but with questions and comments driving class as well. At some point late in the quarter, you will be broken up into groups of three and required to provide a derivation on the board for a sentence I assign you: one member of the group will write the final tree on the board, another member will explain the derivation, and the third member will answer questions about it. You will have about 15 minutes in class to prepare.