

# LING 410

## Structure of a Specific Language

Winter 2021  
Tu, Th 11:35am–12:55pm  
Zoom

**Instructor:** Bernhard Schwarz  
**Office hours:** W 09:00–10:00pm  
or by appointment (Zoom)

### Language studied

German (with possible excursions into other Germanic languages)

### Prerequisites

LING 371 *Syntax 1* or permission of instructor

While we will be focusing on the structure of German, there is of course no need for you to have studied German before, let alone to speak German. However, you will ideally bring to this class a taste for linguistic patterns and puzzles and an interest in linguistic argumentation. Also, you will benefit from a certain tolerance for uncertainty, since many questions about the structure of German at present do not have conclusive answers.

### Course description

This term's edition of LING 410 *Structure of a Specific Language* is dedicated to investigating the structure of German. We will be focused mostly on syntactic structure, building on what is covered in LING 371 *Syntax 1*. The topics in the syntax of German that we will investigate include:

- Topological fields of the German clause (Müller 2015, sec. 1; Haider 2017, sec. 1.1–1.2)
- Basic German clause structure (Beck and Gergel 2014, II-2; Müller 2015, sec. 2)
- Scrambling: reordering elements in the middle field (Müller 2015, sec. 4; Haider 2017, secs. 2.1–2.2.3)
- Topicalization: filling the initial field (Müller 2015, sec. 3; den Besten and Webelhuth 1990; Höhle 2000)
- Extraposition: filling the final field (Müller 2015, sec. 5; Büring and Hartmann 1995)

- Case and passive voice (Müller 2015, sec. 6)
- Embedded clauses and clause union (Wurmbrand 2007)
- Coordination (Johnson 2002)

Since there is no suitable textbook (at least not one written in English), we will instead read selected journal articles and chapters (of textbooks, edited volumes, or handbooks). Most of those readings primarily target an audience with somewhat more background in linguistics than you are likely to have. It will accordingly be essential to attend classes, where these readings will be unpacked and interpreted.

## About remote delivery

Lectures will be delivered remotely through Zoom. A portion of each lecture will be dedicated to students practicing and solving problems in groups, using Zoom's "breakout room" function. Lectures will be recorded and recordings will be made available through myCourses. Lectures will be based on detailed handouts, which will also be posted on myCourses. Other readings will be made available electronically on myCourses as well. The myCourses "Discussions" tool will be used to invite offline discussion relating to class content. My office hours will likewise be conducted through Zoom.

For general information about remote teaching, please read the Guidelines on Remote Teaching and Learning <https://www.mcgill.ca/tls/instructors/class-disruption/strategies/guidelines-remote>.

Regarding the recording of lectures, you will be notified through a "pop-up" box in Zoom if a lecture or portion of a class is being recorded. By remaining in sessions that are recorded, you agree to the recording, and you understand that your image, voice, and name may be disclosed to classmates. You also understand that recordings will be made available in myCourses to students registered in the course.

## Readings

Readings will be available electronically on MyCourses. Additional required readings may be added over the course of the semester.

1. Beck, Sigrid, and Remus Gergel. 2014. *Contrasting English and German grammar: An introduction to syntax and semantics*. de Gruyter (Chapter II-2: Clause structure - English and German)
2. Buring, Daniel, and Katharina Hartmann. 1995. All right! In *On extraction and extraposition in German*, ed. Uli Lutz and Jürgen Pafel, 179–211. Amsterdam: Benjamins
3. den Besten, Hans, and Gerd Webelhuth. 1990. Stranding. In *Scrambling and Barriers*, ed. Günther Grewendorf and Wolfgang Sternefeld, 77–92. Amsterdam: John Benjamins
4. Haider, Hubert. 2017. Mittelfeld phenomena: Scrambling in Germanic. In *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Syntax*, ed. Martin Everaert and Henk van Riemsdijk, 1–73. Wiley Online Library, second edition (sections 1.1–1.2 and 2.1–2.2.3)
5. Höhle, Tilman N. 2000. The w-...w-construction: appositive or scope indicating? In *Wh-scope marking*, ed. Uli Lutz, Gereon Müller, and Arnim von Stechow, 249–270. Amsterdam: Benjamins (sections 1–8)

6. Johnson, Kyle. 2002. Restoring exotic coordinations to normalcy. *Linguistic Inquiry* 33:97–156
7. Müller, Stefan. 2015. German: a grammatical sketch. In *Syntax - Theory and Analysis: an International Handbook*, ed. Tibor Kiss and Artemis Alexiadou, volume 3, 1447–1477. Berlin: De Gruyter
8. Wurmbrand, Susi. 2007. How complex are complex predicates? *Syntax* 10:243–288

## Requirements and evaluation

class participation:	5%
5 homework assignments:	70%
term paper:	25%

## Assignments

Assignments are made available one week before the due date. For each homework assignment, I will provide written comments on your initial submission or discuss the assignment in class. You are then given the opportunity to submit an amended version of the assignment that takes into account the comments you received and/or class discussion. The resubmission of an amended version will be due one week after the initial submission is returned to you, and it can raise the grade for your assignment by maximally 0.5/10. Revisions in a resubmissions must be marked typographically, e.g. using colour.

Assignments may be discussed in groups. However, a group may contain a maximum of three students. Also, each student must turn in a separate assignment **written up individually and independently**. If you worked in a group, you must provide the names of the students who you worked with on the first page of your assignment.

## Term papers

In teams of two (or, exceptionally, on your own), you will choose a topic of your interest for a short term paper that is related to the course materials. Once you have a topic, there are two approaches to developing it for your project: (i) to find one or more papers about your topic and read them critically; or (ii) do your own research by, for example, collecting data from native speakers, the internet and so on, and providing an analysis of some aspects of the data. The two approaches can of course be combined.

## Schedule (subject to possible revisions)

Key: Numbers in circles mark homework assignment (initial submission) due dates.  
 (Assignments are made available one week before the due date;  
 resubmissions are due one week after the assignment is returned.)

	TOPIC	READING
<b>WEEK 0</b>		
Th 01/07	A first portrait of the German clause	Müller (2015, sec. 1)
<b>WEEK 1</b>		
Tu 01/12	A first portrait of the German clause (continued)	Müller (2015, sec. 2)
Th 01/14		Haider (2017, sec. 1.1–1.2)
<b>WEEK 2</b>		
Tu 01/19	Scrambling: order in the middle field	Müller (2015, sec. 4)
Th 01/21		Haider (2017, secs. 2.1–2.2.3)
<b>WEEK 3</b>		
Tu ① 01/26	Topicalization: filling the initial field	Müller (2015, sec. 3)
Th 01/28		den Besten and Webelhuth (1990)
<b>WEEK 4</b>		
Tu 02/02	Topicalization: filling the initial field (continued)	Höhle (2000, secs. 1–8)
Th 02/04		
<b>WEEK 5</b>		
Tu 02/09	Extraposition: filling the final field	Müller (2015, sec. 5)
Th ② 02/11		Büring and Hartmann (1995)
<b>WEEK 6</b>		
Tu 02/16	Case and passive voice	Müller (2015, sec. 6)
Th 02/18		
<b>WEEK 7</b>		
Tu 02/23	Embedded clauses and clause union	Wurmbrand (2007)
Th 02/25		
STUDY BREAK 03/01–03/05		
<b>WEEK 8</b>		
Tu ③ 03/09	Embedded clauses and clause union (continued)	Wurmbrand (2007)
Th 03/11		
<b>WEEK 9</b>		
Tu 03/16	German clause structure and coordination	Johnson (2002)
Th 03/18		
<b>WEEK 10</b>		
Tu 03/23	German clause structure and coordination (cont.)	Johnson (2002)
Th ④ 03/25		
<b>WEEK 11</b>		
Tu 03/30	TBA/catch-up	
Th 04/01		
<b>WEEK 12</b>		
Tu 04/06	TBA/catch-up	
Th 04/08		
<b>WEEK 13</b>		
Tu ⑤ 04/13	TBA/catch-up	

term papers due  
 Tu, 04/20, 11:59pm

## Course rules and procedures

### Academic integrity

McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the code of student conduct and disciplinary procedures (see <http://www.mcgill.ca/integrity> for more information).

L'université McGill attache une haute importance à l'honnêteté académique. Il incombe par conséquent à tous les étudiants de comprendre ce que l'on entend par tricherie, plagiat et autres infractions académiques, ainsi que les conséquences que peuvent avoir de telles actions, selon le Code de conduite de l'étudiant et des procédures disciplinaires (pour de plus amples renseignements, veuillez consulter le site <http://www.mcgill.ca/integrity>).

Work submitted for evaluation as part of this course may be checked with the text matching software Urkund within myCourses

Assignments may be discussed in groups. However, a group may contain a maximum of three students. Also, each student must turn in a separate assignment **written up individually and independently**. If you worked in a group, you must provide the names of the students who you worked with on the first page of your assignment.

### Missed submission deadlines

No late assignments will be accepted and no make-up assignments will be offered unless you have a documented medical excuse and I have been notified within 24 hours of when the assignment was due. Any problem with grading on an assignment must be reported within one week of when the assignment or exam was returned.

### Course materials and copyright

© Instructor generated course materials (e.g., handouts, notes, summaries, exam questions, etc.) are protected by law and may not be copied or distributed in any form or in any medium without explicit permission of the instructor. Note that infringements of copyright can be subject to follow up by the University under its Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (<https://www.mcgill.ca/deanofstudents/students/student-rights-responsibilities/code>).

### E-mail

You can expect me to respond to your e-mail questions and comments. However, please do not expect instant responses. I will try to respond within two working days.

## **Right to submit in French**

In accord with McGill University's [Charter of Students' Rights](#), students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.

## **Tutors**

If you feel that you need more individual attention, we encourage you to contact either the Student Tutorial Service at (514) 398-6011) or SLUM (the Society of Linguistics Undergraduates) at [slum.linguistics@mail.mcgill.ca](mailto:slum.linguistics@mail.mcgill.ca). Of course, it is understood that tutors help with the content of the course but do not help directly with assignments. Make sure that your tutor is knowledgeable about the course content, which can change from term to term.

## **Inclusiveness**

As instructors of this course, I endeavor to provide an inclusive learning environment. However, if you experience barriers to learning in this course, do not hesitate to discuss them with me and [the Office for Students with Disabilities](#), (514) 398-6009.