

Syntax 3

LING 671 — Fall 2024

M/W 10:05-11:25 pm

Instructor: Martina Martinović

`martina.martinovic@mcgill.ca`

Office hours: Wednesdays, 3-5 pm, and by appointment

Description of the Course

This course is an introduction to generative syntax for graduate students. It covers fundamental concepts and basic topics in syntax, and provides training in syntactic argumentation and exposition.

All readings will be from the primary literature. Many of them will be hard to follow if you don't have a strong background in syntax. Don't worry too much about this. Being lost and confused is the normal state for students taking introductory graduate syntax classes. It is important that you do all the readings, even if you feel like you don't fully understand them. The goal is to try and get an idea of the big picture; as the semester progresses, the details of the theory will become clearer.

Structure of the course

We will discuss approximately two papers per week. The person responsible for teaching the paper (either me or, for student presentations, one of you; see below) will teach the main points of each paper. In addition, you will have to turn in 8 assignments and a squib proposal. A detailed breakdown of the coursework is given below.

Course requirements and evaluation

The following components will be evaluated.

Graded components	Percentage of the grade
MyCourses posts	10%
Article presentation	10%
Assignments	60% (x 8, 7.5% each)
Final squib & presentation	20% (15% squib, 5% presentation)

Participation

This course is based on readings and discussion. You are therefore expected to read the assigned papers in advance of class meetings. If you cannot attend the class, you should still complete the readings in advance. You are not expected to understand everything, however, the expectation is that you will have read the paper carefully enough to identify what you do not understand. In this course, participation involves attending the class, engaging in classroom discussion, and posting comments/questions on readings on MyCourses (see below).

MyCourses posts

You are required to make a post on each reading by 11:59 pm the day before class. Your post can be a critical comment on the reading, or can involve questions on anything that you found unclear. The main purpose of these posts is to ensure that you complete the readings in a timely manner, and that you critically engage with the literature.

Article presentation

Each student is expected to teach the topic of one article. See the schedule for the available articles. The presentation should be accompanied by a detailed handout. You should schedule a meeting with me in advance to discuss your presentation, which should include: a brief summary of the background, goals, and motivation for the paper; connection to any relevant material already discussed in class; presentation of the proposal and critical discussion of the arguments; discussion of the predictions made by the analysis, and any questions that arise.

Assignments

You will have 8 assignments related to the class material. You can discuss assignments with your classmates, but you must write them up on your own. **You are not allowed to search for answers in the literature (aside from that covered in class). If you are referencing any literature that you are already familiar with, you must cite it.** Assignments should be submitted on MyCourses in PDF format. If you cannot turn in your assignment by the deadline, inform me of this as soon as possible. Late assignments will otherwise not be accepted.

The assignments will be graded with letter grades as follows:

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- A assignment exceeds expectations (excellent!)
 - B assignment meets expectations (good)
 - C assignment is on the right track, but does not quite get there (come see me!)
 - <C assignment does not meet expectations (come see me!)
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Final squib proposal

A *squib* is a short paper (usually around 10-12 pages long) that identifies an interesting puzzle that raises a theoretical or empirical question, often related to claims made in the literature. The squib may propose

a solution, but often doesn't. Despite the fact that it often lacks an analysis, a squib still make original contributions.

In this class you will write a short proposal for a squib (2-3 pages). **You do not have to write the squib**, but the proposal should have the potential to be turned into one. (You may, of course, write the squib if you wish!)

Your task for your final presentation is to identify and discuss the puzzle or problem you have identified. Your presentation should be clearly organized, connected to material we have covered in the course, and it should be made clear which contributions are original.

Regulations

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 www.mcgill.ca/integrity for more information).

Territory acknowledgement

McGill University is on land which has long served as a site of meeting and exchange amongst Indigenous peoples, including the Haudenosaunee and Anishinabeg nations. We acknowledge and thank the diverse Indigenous people whose footsteps have marked this territory on which peoples of the world now gather.

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.

Inclusiveness

As instructor of this course, I endeavour 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).

Schedule

The following topics will be covered approximately in the order laid out below. The readings and the schedule are subject to change. The readings will be available through MyCourses. There are approximately two readings per class (if there are three, one of them is very short). *Readings that are in italics* are not obligatory; I might talk about them in class, but you do not have to read them (though, of course, you should if you are a syntactician in training!).

WEEK	TOPIC	READINGS (subject to change)	ASSIGNMENTS (due Fridays, end of day)
Aug 28	Constituency	Introduction	
Sep 2	LABOUR DAY		
Sep 4	Phrase Structure	Phillips (1996): Ch 2	
Sep 9	Phrase Structure	Cinque (1999): Ch 1-2	
Sep 11	Phrase structure	Cinque (1999): Ch 3	hwk1
Sep 16	Phrase structure	Grimshaw (1979)	
Sep 18	Subjects	McCloskey (1997); Kratzer (1996)*	hwk 2
Sep 23	Subjects	Harley (2013)	
Sep 25	Head Movement	Pollock (1989); Matushansky (2006)*	hwk3
Sep 30	Head Movement	Arregi and Pietraszko (2021)	
Oct 2	Unaccusatives	Levin and Rappaport-Hovav (1995): Ch 2	
Oct 7	Passives	Bruening (2013)*	
Oct 9	NO CLASS		hwk4
Oct 21	Case	Bobaljik and Wurmbrand (2008)	
Oct 23	Case	Baker (2014)	
Oct 28	Agreement	Deal (2015); Bobaljik (2008)	
Oct 30	Agreement	Coon and Keine (2021)	hwk5
Nov 4	Raising & Control	Perlmutter (1970)	
Nov 6	Raising & Control	Bobaljik and Landau (2009)	hwk6
Nov 11	Wh-movement	Ross (1967): Ch 4	
Nov 13	Wh-movement	McCloskey (2001)	hwk7
Nov 18	Relative clauses	Ershova (2021)*	
Nov 20	C/T	Martinović (2023)	squib proposal
Nov 25	Ellipsis	Merchant (2013)	
Nov 27	Ellipsis	Gribanova (2013)	hwk8
Dec 2	Binding Theory	Büring (2005): Ch 1, 3, 8, <i>Reinhart and Reuland (1993)</i>	
Dec 4	Student presentations		

* – papers available for student presentation

References

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