

Syntax 3

LING 671 — Fall 2020

Tuesdays 2:35-5:35

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Office hours: by appointment (on Zoom)

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.

This class will be held entirely online. We will have class meetings over Zoom during around half of the scheduled class time. Class meetings will also be recorded and the recordings will be available on MyCourses for students who are unable to attend.

In order to reduce lecture time on Zoom, the other half of the class will consist of activities students will do in groups.

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 on Zoom, and the lectures will be recorded and available on MyCourses (for alternatives, see below). This will constitute about half of the class time. The other half will consist of guided activities that you will perform in groups of 2-3 students. You will receive a list of discussion questions for each paper that you will talk about within your group (using any medium you like – email, Zoom, Slack, chat...). You will then share your answers and any question you have with the rest of the class on the Discussion board on MyCourses. We will then all have the opportunity to review each other's findings, comment on them, and clarify any points of confusion. You should attempt to complete this activity within 48 hours after class (we will determine the deadline together, depending on your timezone and other factors).

Course requirements and evaluation

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

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. In this course, participation involves responses to readings on the MyCourses site. Each student is required to post a comment or a question to the MyCourses Discussion site by 8 pm (EST) the day before class, addressing either the readings, or the material in general. Your comments/questions should address all the assigned readings. 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. This is especially important given the fact that the class is delivered remotely, and will help me address the most important issues during the lecture.

MyCourses group posts

As summarized in the *Structure of the course* section of the syllabus, you will receive a guide for group work related to each article. This will consist of a couple of questions and discussion prompts meant to help you understand the material and increase the level of interaction during the course. You will post your responses to the prompts and questions to the MyCourses site. A post that addresses all of the assigned material will be given full credit. A post that addresses half of the material will be given half credit. If your post addresses less than half of the material, you will receive no credit. The same amount of credit will be given to all members of the group (e.g. if the group's response addresses only half of the material, every member of the group will be given half credit). **You will not be graded on accuracy or your level of understanding of the material, only on completeness.**

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. Your presentation should be structured in the same way as my lectures: half of the time should be devoted to teaching the paper, and half to the group activity. I will help you put together the prompts and questions for the activities.

If you are unable to attend classes, you can record yourself presenting the article. If you are unable to record yourself, contact me and we will find a suitable alternative. The manner in which you present the article will not impact the grade you receive for this task.

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. Assignments should be submitted on MyCourses, on Monday by 5 pm, 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.

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 they often lack an analysis, 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. If you cannot attend classes, you can record your presentation. If you are unable to do this, we will find an alternative way for you to share your work with the class.

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 can!).

WEEK	TOPIC	READINGS (subject to change)	ASSIGNMENTS (due Mondays, 5pm)
Sep 8	Phrase Structure	Phillips (1996): Ch 2 Cinque (1999): Ch 1-2	
Sep 15	Phrase Structure	Cinque (1999): Ch 3-4 Grimshaw (1979)*	hwk1
Sep 22	Subjects, applicatives	McCloskey (1997); Kratzer (1996)* <i>Harley (2013)</i>	hwk2
Sep 29	Head Movement	Pollock (1989); Matushansky (2006)* <i>Harizanov and Gribanova (2019)</i>	
Oct 6	Passives, Unaccusatives	Levin and Rappaport-Hovav (1995): Ch 2 Merchant (2013)*; <i>Bruening (2013)</i>	hwk3
Oct 13	Case	Bobaljik and Wurmbrand (2008) Baker (2014)*	hwk4
Oct 20	Agreement	Bobaljik (2008) Kalin and van Urk (2015)*; Deal (2015)	hwk5
Oct 27	Raising and Control	Landau (2003) Bobaljik and Landau (2009)*	hwk6
Nov 3	Control	Polinsky and Potsdam (2002)* Cinque (2004)	hwk7
Nov 10	Wh-movement	McCloskey (2002) Ross (1967): Ch 4	squib proposal
Nov 17	Binding Theory	Büring (2005): Ch 1, 3, 8 <i>Reinhart and Reuland (1993)</i>	hwk8
Nov 24	Ellipsis	Johnson (2001) Gribanova (2013)*	
Dec 1	Student presentations		

* – papers available for student presentation

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).

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.

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.

References

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