

LING 302 · Introduction to Syntax

Syllabus

Fall 2022

Time: Mon, Wed 12:00pm – 1:50pm
Room: GFS 105
Instructor: Travis Major
GFS 301s
Office hours: Thursday 1-2pm
and by appointment
Email: tmajor@usc.edu

1 General course description

This course examines the sentence structure of natural language, addressing the (mostly unconscious) knowledge that a native speaker has of the structure of their own language. It explains, among other things, why you can run up a bill, and run up a hill, but while you can run a bill up, you can't run a hill up. We clearly have mental expectations about what kinds of sentences count as "English" (or any other language) and what kinds do not: these expectations are a mental grammar. This course addresses puzzles about the grammar of human language, serving as an introduction to generative syntactic theory, which proposes cognitive structures for human language. The course emphasizes syntactic description and argumentation, with a writing-centric curriculum. There are two main components to the study of syntax (and other natural phenomena), the descriptive and the explanatory

- **Description:** Understanding how languages put sentences together, what is similar between languages, and what the points of variation are between languages.
- **Explanation:** Deals with the question of, "Why?" in addressing the cognitive structure that underlies language and examining why we find variation between languages in some ways but not others. Consists not only of asking what the structure of language is in the mind, but why it is that particular way and not some other way.

Student Objectives:

By the end of the course, you can expect to:

- (i) Use linguistic and syntactic terminology to describe syntactic structure.
- (ii) Understand and describe syntactic variation between languages.
- (iii) Draw a tree structure for most basic sentences in most languages.
- (iv) Write clear, concise, and logical syntactic argumentation using empirical evidence to make and defend theoretical analyses.
- (v) Have a robust understanding of the complexity and systematicity of human language and natural language syntax in particular.
- (vi) Explain to a non-linguist (and non-academic) the relevance of syntax to cognitive science and the investigation of human nature.

Textbook

Carnie, Andrew. 2013. *Syntax: A Generative Introduction*. 3rd Edition. Wiley-Blackwell.

Grade Composition:

50% Tree-Drawing Evaluations (x2 = 25% each)

10% Class Participation

40% Writing Assignments

10% Paper 1: Phrasal and Prepositional Verbs.

25% Paper 2: Ellipsis

5% Final Reflection Paper

Important Dates

- 9/21: *Paper 1 due*
- 10/4: *Tree drawing evaluations (in class)*
- 11/1: *Tree drawing evaluations (in class)*
- 12/4: *Paper 2 due*
- 12/7: *Final Reflection Paper due*

Papers:

Papers make up the majority of the grade in this class – an opportunity for you to utilize the analytical and theoretical tools you learn in order to explain new data. The papers are not research papers: you will be given a syntactic data set for which you will develop an analysis. Expectations for paper-writing are discussed in much more depth in separate handouts. All papers are due at 11:59pm on the day listed on the course schedule. You will be given a choice to complete a final exam or write a final paper - details to follow.

Group Work:

Group work is highly encouraged for all work in the class (except for the one in-class tree-drawing evaluation). However, each student must turn in their own write-up of each assignment, expressing and explaining the solution in their own words. Any directly copied work is not allowed. I request that you list your collaborators at the top of your papers/assignments.

Participation:

Participation will be evaluated on the basis of in-class participation, completion of non-paper assignments, and talking points. I will generally give minimal written feedback (if any) for these assignments, but am happy to discuss them at greater length during office hours or via appointment.

Blackboard:

Assignments, announcements, documents, readings, grades, and other information related to the course will be posted on the course site on Blackboard.

Late Work:

To get full credit for your work, it must be turned in on time. Exceptions will be made if you make arrangements with me **48 hours before the assignment is due**. The best time to make these arrangements is during office hours or appointments. In the case of emergency, please let me know ASAP and I will do my best to offer accommodations. For late work without an excuse, points will be deducted for day that it is late.

The class e-mail list

I will send important announcements via e-mail. If you are registered for the class, you should be on the email list. Keep in mind that all emails will be sent to your USC email account. Make sure to check this account regularly.

2 Tentative schedule

This is all subject to change and occasionally will. I will inform you when changes take place!

1. Class 1 - *Introduction*: 8/21

- Syllabus
- Course Structure

2. Class 2 - *Puzzle of Human Language Syntax*: 8/23

- Grammatical Diversity in English
- Read: Carnie 1

3. Class 3 - *Syntactic Categories; Predicates, Arguments, and Adjuncts*: 8/28

- Discussion of writing expectations
- Read: Carnie 2

4. Class 4 - *Constituency; Phrasal & Prepositional verbs*: 8/30

- Read: Carnie 3
- Analytical Practice: syntactic analysis of the readings of 'turn on' (explained in class)
- *Paper 1 prompt distributed*

5. Class 5 - No Class - *Labor Day*: 9/4

6. Class 6 - *Hierarchical Structure in Language: Constituency tests & basic tree-drawing*: 9/6

- Grammatical Diversity in English
- Optional Reading: Aarts (1997) ch 11
- **Hand in 'turn on' analysis**

7. Class 7 - *Structural Relationships between Phrases: Domination, c-command, etc*: 9/11

- Read: Carnie 4
- Most pressing concepts: branch, node, domination, immediate domination, mother, daughter, sisters, root node, terminal node, exhaustive domination = constituency, c-command

8. Class 8 - *Binding Theory*: 9/13

- Read: Carnie 5

9. **Class 9 - Paper Workshop: 9/18**
 - Paper is due 9/21
10. **Class 10 - Structure of Phrases: X'-Syntax: 9/20**
 - Read: Carnie 6
11. **Class 11 - More X'-Syntax: 9/25**
 - Read: Carnie 7
12. **Class 12 - Syntax is more than just trees: lexicon, theta-roles, subcategorization: 9/27**
 - Read: Carnie 8
13. **Class 13 - Review/Tree practice: 10/2**
14. **Class 14 - Tree Drawing Evaluation: 10/4**
 - *In-class evaluation. You will be asked to draw X'-syntax trees for phrases and sentences*
15. **Class 15 - Cross-linguistic Syntax: Identifying Parameters of Variation: 10/9**
 - Parameters dataset (in class)
16. **Class 16 - Parameters continued: 10/11**
 - Parameters dataset (in class)
17. **Class 17 - Syntactic Displacement (i.e. Movement): V-to-T, T-to-C: 10/16**
 - Read: Carnie 10
 - *Paper 2 prompt distributed*
18. **Class 18 - More V-to-T, English Auxiliaries, do-support: 10/18**
 - Read: Carnie 9
19. **Class 19 - Case Theory: English passives, raising: 10/23**
 - Read: Carnie 11
20. **Class 20 - Agree, agreement, and A-movement properties: 10/25**
 - No reading
21. **Class 21 - Review: 10/30**

22. Class 22 - *Tree Drawing Evaluation II*: 11/1

- In class evaluation. This evaluation covers head movement.

23. Class 23 - *A'-movement in English*: 11/6

- Read: Carnie 12

24. Class 24 - *Relative Clauses and other non-question A'-movement*: 11/8

- In class: Swahili relative clause data set

25. Class 25 - *Internal Structure of Verb Phrases*: 11/13

- Read: Nothing
- Due: Nothing
- In class: Ditransitives Problem Set

26. Class 26 - *Unified Theory of Movement*: 11/15

- Read: Carnie 13
- Analytical Practice: data handouts from class

27. Class 27 - *A Preview: the minimalist program*: 11/20

- Read: None

28. Class 28 - *No Class - Happy Thanksgiving!*: 11/22

29. Class 29 - *Paper workshop*: 11/27

- **Paper due 12/4**

30. Class 30 - *Peer Review*: 11/29

- Bring draft of your paper for review.

Notes:

- Reading is expected to be done before class.

3 Academic conduct

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself

with the discussion of plagiarism in SCampus in Section 11, *Behavior Violating University Standards* (<https://scampus.usc.edu/1100-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions>). Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct>.

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the *Office of Equity and Diversity* (<http://equity.usc.edu>) or to the *Department of Public Safety* (<http://adminopsnet.usc.edu/departement/departement-public-safety>). This is important for the safety of the whole USC community. Another member of the university community – such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member – can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. The *Center for Women and Men* (<http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm/>) provides 24/7 confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage (<http://sarc.usc.edu>) describes reporting options and other resources.

4 Students with disabilities

If you have a disability that requires special arrangements (e.g., note- and/or test-taking), please register with USC's *Office of Disability Services and Programs*. Every effort will be made to accommodate those with registered disabilities.