

Syntax (01:615:305; Section 02)

Time: Monday & Wednesday 1:10pm-2:30pm
Location: online via Zoom
WWW: hosted at `canvas.rutgers.edu`

Instructor: Peter Alrenga
Email: `peter.alrenga@rutgers.edu`
Office Hrs: Monday 3:30-4:30pm, Friday 10-11am (and by appt.)
(online via Zoom)

Course Overview and Learning Goals

The objectives of this course are: (a) to familiarize students with the basic goals and assumptions of Generative Grammar, (b) to train students in the rudiments of syntactic analysis and argumentation, and (c) to familiarize students with the major syntactic structures of English and their relevance to linguistic theory.

The central goal of Generative Grammar is to understand what a person knows when they know a language, and to understand how it is that people acquire this knowledge. Syntax is that portion of what we know about our language that deals with the structure and word order of sentences. Most of this knowledge is actually unconscious: native speakers of English recognize what sounds to them like a perfectly normal English sentence, but when they hear a sentence that sounds "ungrammatical" to them, they rarely can say exactly why. In fact, the greatest portion of our linguistic knowledge has never been explicitly taught to us; rather, we have acquired it because we have human brains, and human brains are specially equipped to learn certain kinds of languages. Linguistics, from this perspective, is one of the cognitive sciences, which are dedicated to understanding how our brains work in a particularly human way.

The study of syntax is a very young science that has nonetheless made remarkable progress in understanding just how rich, complex and systematic the mind is. Advances in syntactic theory have led to much more subtle understandings of the grammars of particular languages, such as English, Chinese, Swahili, and Warlpiri, as well as to the discovery of linguistic universals, i.e., properties true of every human language. English has been the most intensely studied of all languages, so most of the foundational issues in theoretical syntax can be presented using structures familiar to any English speaker. As time allows, less familiar languages will also be discussed for comparison. Though many of the major syntactic structures of English will be analyzed, this course is designed to illustrate theoretical concepts and syntactic analysis rather than to present a complete a description of English syntax.

Prerequisite

The prerequisite for this course is Introduction to Linguistic Theory (01:615:201). Our readings and class discussions will presuppose a familiarity with the material covered in that course.

Course Materials

The required textbook for this course is:

Carnie, Andrew. 2011. *Syntax: A Generative Introduction*, 3rd edition. Wiley-Blackwell. (ISBN: 9780-470-65531-3)

Any supplementary readings, as well as all other instructional materials, will be made available to you via the course website.

Course Requirements

Reading: All readings should be completed by the beginning of the listed class.

Attendance & Participation: Regular attendance and participation are expected throughout the semester. If you expect to miss one or two classes, please use the University's Self-Reporting Absence Application to indicate the date and reason for your absence (<https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra>). An email will be automatically sent to me.

Quizzes: Seven quizzes will be given during the semester, which will cover recent material from our readings and class discussions. The quizzes will be administered via Canvas, and will consist of short answer, multiple choice, and T/F questions. You will have **90 minutes** to complete a quiz once it is opened, and you may not discuss the quizzes with other students. Your lowest two quiz scores will be dropped; the rest will account for 10% of your overall grade.

Exams: Two take-home exams will be given during the semester: the first **during Week 8**, and the second **during the week of final exams**. You may consult your notes when completing the exams, but you may not discuss them with other students. Each exam will constitute 20% of your overall grade.

Homework: Eight homework assignments will be given during the semester. Each assignment will build upon our readings, class discussions, and previous assignments, and will ask you to engage critically and independently with the course material. Assignments typically will be **due at the end (11:59pm) of Sunday during the listed week**. You may discuss the assignments with other students, but each student must complete their written work independently, without reference to the written work of any other student. Please list the students whom you worked with, alongside your own name, the date, and the assignment number, at the top of your submission. Your lowest two homework scores will be dropped; the rest will account for 50% of your overall grade.

Course Policies

Academic Integrity: You are expected to abide by the University's Academic Integrity Policy (<http://nbacademicintegrity.rutgers.edu>). If you have not yet reviewed this policy, then you should do so now. Since students are expected to be familiar with this policy and its commonly accepted standards, ignorance of these standards does not suffice to establish lack of intent. If you are unsure of any aspect of this policy, please ask!

Plagiarism in any form (including from online sources), presenting someone else's work as your own, and other academic misconduct will not be tolerated.

Late Policy: It is your responsibility to bring any potential scheduling conflicts to my attention promptly, so that alternative arrangements can be made. In the absence of any such prior arrangements, no credit will be awarded for late submissions.

Instructor Communication: Please contact me via my Rutgers email address (peter.alrenga@rutgers.edu). I will reply to emails within 24 hours during weekdays. Emails sent over the weekend may not receive a reply until the following Monday, but I will try my best to communicate promptly.

Technical Support: For help with Canvas, please contact the Office of Information Technology (OIT) at <https://it.rutgers.edu/help-support>.

Student Resources: The faculty and staff at Rutgers are committed to your success. Students who are successful tend to seek out resources that enable them to excel academically, maintain their health and wellness, prepare for future careers, navigate college life and finances, and connect with the RU community. Resources that can help you succeed and connect with the Rutgers community can be found at <http://success.rutgers.edu>, and nearly all services and resources that are typically provided in-person are now available remotely.

Grading: Your overall course grade will be assigned according to the standard undergraduate grading scale at Rutgers, which is listed here:

Grade	Range
A	90 – 100
B+	85 – 89
B	80 – 84
C+	75 – 79
C	70 – 74
D	60 – 69
F	Below 60

Preliminary Schedule (subject to change as the semester proceeds)

WEEK/DATES	CLASS TOPIC	READINGS	ASSIGNMENTS
1 W 1/20	<u>Getting Started</u> What is syntax?; Descriptive vs. prescriptive rules; Lexical categories	Carnie Chap. 1 (pgs. 1-31) Carnie Chap. 2 (pgs. 43-61)	
2 M 1/25 & W 1/27	<u>Constituency & Structural Relations</u> Phrase structure rules and syntactic trees; Constituency tests; Syntactic ambiguity; Relations within a syntactic tree	Carnie Chap. 3 (pgs. 71-106); Carnie Chap. 4 (pgs. 117-135)	
3 M 2/1 & W 2/3			HW1 due
4 M 2/8 & W 2/10	<u>X-bar Theory & Functional Categories</u> The X-bar schema; Complements, adjuncts, and specifiers; Cross-linguistic differences in word order; Determiners, complementizers, and tense	Carnie Chap. 6 (pgs. 163-199); Carnie Chap. 7 (pgs. 207-219)	HW2 due
5 M 2/15 & W 2/17			HW3 due
6 M 2/22 & W 2/24	<u>Theta Theory</u> Thematic relations, theta roles, and theta grids; Expletives and the Extended Projection Principle <u>Modals and Auxiliaries</u> <u>Binding Theory</u> The distribution of anaphors, pronouns, and R-expressions <u>Exam Review</u>	Carnie Chap. 8 (pgs. 227-240); Carnie Chap. 9 (pgs. 249-279); Carnie Chap. 5 (pgs. 147-158)	
7 M 3/1 & W 3/3			HW4 due
8 M 3/8 & W 3/10			Take-Home Exam #1 due
Spring Break (Sa 3/13 – Su 3/21)			

Preliminary Schedule (subject to change as the semester proceeds)

WEEK/DATES	CLASS TOPIC	READINGS	ASSIGNMENTS
9 M 3/22 & W 3/24	<u>Head Movement</u> Verb movement; Tense movement; Cross-linguistic differences in the syntax of verbs and tense	Carnie Chap. 10 (pgs. 287-312)	HW5 due
10 M 3/29 & W 3/31	<u>DP Movement</u> Passive and Raising constructions; Case Theory; Raising vs. Control predicates and PRO	Carnie Chap. 11 (pgs. 323-346); Carnie Chap. 15 (pgs. 429-451)	
11 M 4/5 & W 4/7			HW6 due
12 M 4/12 & W 4/14	<u>Wh-Movement</u> Questions and relative clauses, Long- distance dependencies and successive cyclic movement; Islands	Carnie Chap. 12 (pgs. 357-384); Carnie Chap. 13 (pgs. 391-405)	HW7 due
13 M 4/19 & W 4/21			
14 M 4/26 & W 4/28	<u>Logical Form</u> Scope and covert movement; Ellipsis and related phenomena	Carnie Chap. 16 (pgs. 457-471)	HW8 due
15 M 5/3			<u>Exam Review</u>
Take-Home Exam # 2 due (Finals Week)			