Syntax
01:615:305

Time: Tuesdays and Thursdays 3:50–5:10 pm ET
Location: Hardenbergh Hall A4 (College Avenue Campus): location & classroom features
Website: Canvas (notifications will be sent to your Rutgers email)

Instructor: Ziling Zhu
Email: ziling.zhu@rutgers.edu
Office hours: Mondays 1-3 pm (additional meetings by request via Calendly)
  → In-person at Linguistics Building Room 003
  → Online over Zoom (Meeting ID: 972 1784 6270; Password: language)

Course learning goals
The basic objectives of this course are

- to familiarize students with the basic goals and assumptions of generative grammar,
- to train students in the rudiments of syntactic analysis and syntactic theorizing and argumentation, and
- to familiarize students with the major syntactic structures of English and their relevance to linguistic theory.

Course prerequisites
Introduction to Linguistic Theory (01:615:201). Our readings and class discussions will assume some familiarity with the materials used in LING 201.

Course overview
The central goal of Generative Grammar is to understand what a person knows when he or she knows 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, that is to say, native speakers of English “know” what sounds to them like a perfectly normal English sentence, but when native speakers 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 a “cognitive” science, like much of psychology, dedicated to understanding how our brains work in a particularly human way.

Part of the charm of investigating the syntax of one’s native language is that it is often not necessary to go to the library to amass the facts. Each native speaker of English knows what sounds like a good sentence of English, and native speakers agree about this much more than they disagree. For example, a sentence like (A) “Who did Mary say that she saw?” is a typical question which one might answer by saying, “Mary said that she saw Joe.” but a question like (B) “Who did Mary see the film which pleased?” sounds terrible, although one could imagine a logical response like “Mary saw the film which pleased Joe.” The curious fact about sentences like the ungrammatical question just mentioned is that no one is ever taught not to say it. In fact, a native speaker of French or Swahili will not have to be instructed not to say such a sentence either, as sentences with a “structure” like that in (B) are ungrammatical in every language in the world. English, or, for that matter, Swahili, are learnable precisely because children do not have to even consider the possible existence of sentences like (B). What humans “know” without being taught is what is of particular interest to linguists who want to understand what “knowledge” we are born with, and how it affects what we know after we have “learned” the language we know as adults.
The study of syntax is a very young science that has nonetheless made a remarkable degree of progress in understanding just how rich, complex and systematic the mind is. Advances in syntactic theory have led to much more subtle descriptions and understanding of the grammar 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. But as a young science, this sort of linguistics as cognitive science has barely come of age, and some of the most exciting questions about human potential are just beginning to be asked.

English has been the most intensely studied of all the natural languages, so most of the interesting issues in theoretical syntax can be presented using structures familiar to every speaker of English. As time allows, less familiar languages will also be discussed for comparison. Though most of the major syntactic structures of English will be analyzed, the presentation of the course is designed to illustrate theoretical concepts and to provide practice in syntactic analysis rather than to present a complete a description of English syntax.

This course is likely to be of interest to students in computer science, anthropology, language studies, philosophy and psychology as well as students in linguistics.

Course materials

The required textbook for this course is Syntax: A Generative Introduction, by Andrew Carnie. Both the 3rd edition and the 4th are accepted:


The latest edition (4th ed.) is preferred and can be purchased via Rutgers Bookstore.

Course website

This course has a website on Canvas (canvas.rutgers.edu). Log on using your NetID and password, and then look for the course in your Dashboard or Courses. If you encounter difficulty using Canvas, please contact their Helpdesk. You can also find additional resources by visiting Rutgers Student Tech Guide (https://it.rutgers.edu/technology-guide/students/#new-brunswick).

Office hours/student support hours

Office hours, or student support hours, are designed for students to communicate with the instructor regarding their questions about the course contents. You are also very welcome to discuss with me about your graduate school and career plans, communication strategies, help with study habits and organization, etc. However, you should not seek answers to homework questions.

Option 1: In-person office hours will take place every Monday 1-3pm, at Rutgers Linguistics Building, Room 003 (maps.rutgers.edu). The building is located on College Avenue Campus, not too far from our classroom. You do not need to email or schedule in advance — simply show up with questions!

If you cannot join in person, I will also be available online over Zoom during the same hours. Here are two ways to join the Zoom meeting:

- Link: https://rutgers.zoom.us/j/97217846270?pwd=U0lybHVXLzBGeHprZStEK0pmRXdvdQT09
- Meeting ID: 972 1784 6270; Password: language

Please join with your full real name. You are welcome, though not required to, keep your videos on. To protect your privacy, you may select a virtual background (see instructions here). Again, you do not need to email or schedule in advance; simply join on Zoom.

Option 2: You may request for additional individual meetings with me on Calendly (https://calendly.com/zilingzhu/ling-305). On the website, you will be prompted to choose the meeting time (20-minute slots on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays) and the meeting format (in-person/Zoom). Please use your real name and Rutgers email address when you make the appointment. Each student can request for at most two 20-minute slots each week.
Evaluation and required work

Your final grade is based on homework assignments, midterm and final exams, and attendance/participation. The percentage-wise breakdown is on the left, and the corresponding letter grades are on the right. There is no P/NC policy this semester. Warning grades may be assigned in the second half of October, due to poor attendance, poor performance, or both.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grading breakdown</th>
<th>Letter grades</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9 out of 10 assignments (lowest 1 dropped)</td>
<td>50% A ≥ 90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midterm exam</td>
<td>20% B+ 85-89.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final exam</td>
<td>20% B 80-84.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance &amp; Participation</td>
<td>10% C+ 75-79.9%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C 70-74.9%</td>
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<td></td>
<td>D 60-69.9%</td>
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<td></td>
<td>F ≤ 59.9%</td>
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Attendance

According to Rutgers Course Attendance Policy, you are expected to attend all regularly scheduled course meetings. Attendance and participation grades will be calculated based on your submissions of in-class practice handouts, which will be graded by completeness only. Here’s how it works:

- The in-class practice handouts are due at the end of each class meeting.
- If you have to miss a class (and have reported your absence), you can still earn the attendance credit by submitting the practice handout before the next class meeting.
- I will not accept make-up practice handouts from two or more class meetings ago (please resist the temptation to submit all the practice handouts at the end of the semester to earn full participation credit).

Permissible exceptions include illness requiring medical attention, participation in recognized curricular or extracurricular activities, religious holidays, among others specified in the Policy. If you miss a class, you are responsible for the following:

- emailing me before the class meeting to indicate the date and reason for your absence,
- viewing the slides before the next class meeting,
- completing the in-class practice handouts, and
- completing the assignments in a timely manner (discuss with me if you need more time!).

Readings

You must keep up with the readings. All readings should be completed by the beginning of the listed week.

Homework

Homework assignments must be submitted to Canvas by the due date and time, in one PDF file. All homework assignments will be due on Wednesdays. Late submissions, by the beginning of the class meeting on Thursdays, will lead to a 50% decrease in your assignment grade. Late submissions after 3:50pm on Thursdays will not be accepted. Your two lowest-scoring homework assignments will be dropped. Please do not collaborate on any homework (see more in the Academic Integrity section).

Exams

Exams will take place in person. Missed exams will result in a score of zero for the exam. To reschedule any exams, please contact Rutgers Dean of Students (https://studentsupport.rutgers.edu) directly.

Extra credit

Response to a linguistics paper. You have the opportunity to raise your final grade by up to 2 points through a response piece on a linguistics paper we select together. The deadline to reach out to me about this extra credit opportunity is Nov 21. The deadline to submit a response is Dec 12.
Schedule

The course schedule is given in Table 1. This schedule is tentative and subject to change, but hopefully it helps you get your bearings. Notice in particular:

- Readings are due on the Tuesdays of their week in Table 1, by the beginning of our class meeting.
- Homework assignments are due on the Wednesdays of their week in Table 1.
- Final: Date & time TBA. Open-notes, in-person.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Day 1</th>
<th>Day 2</th>
<th>Homework</th>
<th>Reading/Extra Credit</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sept 5, 7</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>Word categories</td>
<td></td>
<td>Carnie, Ch1, Ch2</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Sept 12, 14</td>
<td>Phrase structure I</td>
<td>Phrase structure II</td>
<td>HW1</td>
<td>Carnie, Ch3 (3.0–3.3)</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Sept 19, 21</td>
<td>Constituency</td>
<td>Structural relations</td>
<td>HW2</td>
<td>Carnie, Ch3 (3.4–3.6), Ch4</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Sept 26, 28</td>
<td>X'-theory I</td>
<td>X'-theory II</td>
<td>HW3</td>
<td>Carnie, Ch6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Oct 3, 5</td>
<td>X'-theory III</td>
<td>Theta Theory I</td>
<td>HW4</td>
<td>Carnie, Ch7</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Oct 10, 12</td>
<td>Theta Theory II</td>
<td>Theta Theory III</td>
<td>HW5</td>
<td>Carnie, Ch8, Ch9</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Oct 17, 19</td>
<td>Binding Theory I</td>
<td>Binding Theory II</td>
<td></td>
<td>Carnie, Ch5</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Oct 24, 26</td>
<td>Midterm review</td>
<td>Midterm exam</td>
<td>HW6</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Oct 31, Nov 2</td>
<td>Head movement I</td>
<td>Head movement II</td>
<td></td>
<td>Carnie, Ch10</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Nov 7, 9</td>
<td>Passives</td>
<td>Raising</td>
<td>HW7</td>
<td>Carnie, Ch11</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Nov 14, 16</td>
<td>Case filter</td>
<td>Control I</td>
<td></td>
<td>Carnie, Ch15 (15.0–15.2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Nov 21, 23</td>
<td>Control II</td>
<td>Thanksgiving Recess</td>
<td>HW8</td>
<td>Last day to select a paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Nov 28, 30</td>
<td>Wh-movement I</td>
<td>Wh-movement II</td>
<td>HW9</td>
<td>Carnie, Ch12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Dec 5, 7</td>
<td>Relative clauses</td>
<td>Islands</td>
<td>HW10</td>
<td>Carnie, Ch13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Dec 12</td>
<td>Final review</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Last day to submit a response</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Dec 15–22</td>
<td>Final exam</td>
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Table 1: Tentative class schedule

Assignment topics & deadlines

- HW1: Word categories due 9/13
- HW2: Phrase structure rules due 9/20
- HW3: Constituency & Ambiguity due 9/27
- HW4: Structural relations due 10/4
- HW5: X'-theory due 10/11
- HW6: Binding theory due 10/25
- HW7: Theta theory & Head movement due 11/8
- HW8: DP-movement & Case theory due 11/22
- HW9: Raising vs. Control due 11/29
- HW10: Wh-movement & Successive cyclic movement due 12/6
**General policies**

The following policies are provided at ling.rutgers.edu > Academics > Undergraduate > Learning Goals and Policies (a direct link is here). It is the responsibility of all students to read and abide by the policies.

**Religious holidays**

University attendance and religious holiday policies are at http://catalogs.rutgers.edu/generated/hb-ugurrent/pg1433.html

**Academic Integrity**

Students are expected to maintain the highest level of academic integrity. You should be familiar with the university policy on academic integrity. Violations will be reported and enforced according to this policy. Use of external website resources such as Chegg.com or others to obtain solutions to homework assignments, quizzes, or exams is cheating and a violation of the University Academic Integrity policy. Cheating in the course may result in grade penalties, disciplinary sanctions or educational sanctions. Posting homework assignments, or exams, to external sites without the instructor’s permission may be a violation of copyright and may constitute the facilitation of dishonesty, which may result in the same penalties as plain cheating.

**Disability Services**

Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University’s educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation: http://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines. If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus’s disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, please complete the Registration form on the ODS web site at: ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form.

**Counseling, ADAP & Psychiatric Services (CAPS)**

CAPS is a University mental health support service that includes counseling, alcohol and other drug assistance, and psychiatric services staffed by a team of professional within Rutgers Health services to support students’ efforts to succeed at Rutgers University. CAPS offers a variety of services that include: individual therapy, group therapy and workshops, crisis intervention, referral to specialists in the community and consultation and collaboration with campus partners. Call (848) 932–7884 or visit nhscaps.rutgers.edu.

**Violence Prevention & Victim Assistance (VPVA)**

The Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance provides confidential crisis intervention, counseling and advocacy for victims of sexual and relationship violence and stalking to students, staff and faculty. To reach staff during office hours when the university is open or to reach an advocate after hours, call 848–932–1181 or visit www.vpva.rutgers.edu/.

**Other resources**

- Student Success Essentials: https://success.rutgers.edu
- Student Support Services: https://www.rutgers.edu/academics/student-support
- The Learning Centers: https://lrc.rutgers.edu/
- The Writing Centers (including Tutoring and Writing Coaching): https://writingctr.rutgers.edu
- Rutgers Libraries: https://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/
- Office of Veteran and Military Programs and Services: https://veterans.rutgers.edu
- Student Health Services: http://health.rutgers.edu/
- Scarlet Listeners: Call 732-247-5555 or visit scarletlisteners.com