

**CG 131**  
**Introduction to Syntactic Theory**  
Sem. II, 2007

Instructor: Pauline Jacobson  
Metcalf Research 234  
Ext. 3-3037  
OH: Mon. 2-3 and Thurs. 11-12

Course Organization: There will be two ways to take this course: either in the "regular track" or in the "syntax-heavy track". The syntax-heavy track is required for graduate students and highly recommended for potential linguistics concentrators, and is optional for all others. It's the track to take if you want a more thorough understanding of competing theories in syntax. If, on the other hand, you are an undergraduate and just want to get a taste of what the domain of syntactic theory is and how to construct arguments and evidence within theoretical linguistics, the regular track will be sufficient. The syntax heavy track requires attendance in sections and will have more reading. It might also have a few additional homeworks.

Sections: Sections will be held most (though not necessarily every) week, and are for the syntax-heavy track. These will consist of a more in-depth look at the "mainstream" theory of syntax, earlier known as "Government Binding Theory", now known as "Minimalism". (There are differences between these two, but we won't focus in any depth on the evolution of this theory.) Since this will be taught only somewhat incidentally in the main part of the course, but since it is absolutely essential for any linguist to understand this theory, it will be covered in much more detail in the section. The Carnie text (see below) will be required reading in the syntax-heavy track and will also help fill in your understanding of GB/Minimalism.

The time for the sections will be determined according to people's schedules.

Course Requirements:

1. It is absolutely impossible to understand the material in this class without regular class attendance. The "text" is drafty notes and you will discover that you cannot understand what is going on without regular attendance.

2. Regular (approximately weekly) homework assignments.

These are **required** - they are kind of informally graded (on a  $\checkmark$ ,  $\checkmark+$ ,  $\checkmark-$  type of system which I record). I don't formally factor them in to the final grade by some sort of formula, but they are taken into consideration. Failure to regularly do the homeworks will definitely be factored into the final grade, as well as resulting in your not understanding the material. Again, it is impossible to understand the course without doing the homeworks.

The first few homeworks may seem very easy - especially for people who already have some background in either syntax or in computational linguistics. But don't get lulled by that.

3. Thinking. Most of the work for the course consists of thinking (not so much reading). My goal is for you to understand how theoretical concepts are motivated by rediscovering them for yourselves, so much of the homework will be with this goal in

mind. In other words, to some extent we are going to try to build up an understanding of the syntactic system of a natural language "from the ground up". I'm more interested in having students understand how evidence is used in linguistic theory than having people memorize some set of rules and principles.

4 Take home midterm

5. Take home final

6. Possibly some additional homeworks for the syntax-heavy track.

Policies on late exams, collaboration, etc.:

- Collaboration on the homeworks is fine - in fact discussions with other students is in fact encouraged. But, obviously, no sort of collaboration is allowed on either of the take-home exams.
- Late exams: are not accepted without a written Dean's or medical excuse.
- Late homeworks: Better to do a homework late than not at all, but better to do it on time than late. The homeworks are partly to get you to think about material and about "problem-solving" before we discuss it, so you won't get nearly as much out of homeworks if you do them after the class discussion.

Readings:

Required: a packet, available at Allegra Copy (northwest corner of Waterman and Thayer - upstairs; enter on Waterman St.)

Jacobson, Pauline, partial draft of a text: *Introduction to Syntax and Semantics: A Categorical Grammar Approach*, plus two other papers of mine which will eventually be folded into the text.

Required for the syntax-heavy track: *Syntax: A Generative Introduction* (Second Edition), Blackwell Publishing, 2007. Available at the Brown bookstore.

Outline of Topics

(Note: I'm not keying these in to dates here because whenever I do it changes anyway - but fyi since there is no final project we will meet through reading period or at least most of it)

1. Introductory Remarks; putting this course in the context of theories of syntax; brief history of syntactic theory; the boundaries of syntax/semantics and pragmatics
2. Recursive rule systems and context-free phrase structure grammars; distributional considerations
3. Subcategorization vs. selection; rule schemata and generalizations
4. Basic Categorical Grammar syntax; "Wrap" operations (and their analogue in other theories); way to capture word order generalizations
5. Model-theoretic semantics and the syntax/semantics interface  
VP Coordination: a transformational approach vs. the "direct" approach
6. Argument-structure rearranging rules - the basic idea  
Dative "shift" and accounting for lexical exceptions
7. Subjects and Expletives

8. Passive: movement approaches vs. argument-structure rearranging ("lexical") approaches
9. Agreement and Case - and their interaction with Passive
10. Reflexives and Pronouns ("Binding Theory")
11. Control
12. Raising to Subject and Raising to Object
13. Wh-Movement and Islands in Transformational approaches
14. Wh-Movement in Categorical Grammar and related approaches
15. Coordination, including "non-constituent coordination"