

Language Structure: An Introduction to Generative Syntax

10.08.2026 - 14.08.2026

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Monday 10-08	
Theme	The framework, constituency
Description	We will cover some basic issues with which linguists are concerned. We will discuss how human language is perceived and what is assumed about it, as well as how we come to have these assumptions. We will also introduce a basic concept in syntax: hierarchical structure.
Topics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The field of syntax in linguistics • The purpose and approach of syntax (Principles & Parameters approach to linguistic knowledge) • The innateness hypothesis and Universal Grammar (UG) • Grammaticality and acceptability • Universality, diversity, and variation • Limitations of linear representations (ambiguity, co-reference) • Hierarchical structure: hierarchical relations (dominance, precedence, c-command), constituency

Tuesday, 11-08	
Theme	Phrase structure and theta theory (the role of lexical semantic representations)
Description	The structural regularity in language is robust. In order to capture this, linguists started with Phrase Structure (rewrite rules and developed X-bar theory. Students will learn to represent hierarchical structure of actual sentences using 'syntactic trees' (a simple representation of structural properties), on the basis of their own argumentation as to why the structure should be that way rather than other logical possibilities.
Topics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grammatical categories • Recursive PS-rules • X-bar schema • lexical vs. functional categories; arguments vs. predicates; adjuncts • Theta-roles/semantic roles: θ-grids, (Extended) Projection Principle, Theta Criterion • Subcategorization frames

Wednesday, 12-08	
Theme	Movement/Displacement
Description	Many sentences seem to arise from another, more basic form, from which elements have abstractly been moved to other positions. We discuss what motivates these movement operations, what sort of movements are at work, how the structural mechanisms interact with movement and how the analyses explain linguistic data.
Topics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subject-movement • Wh-movement • Verb movement • Pied-piping, Preposition Stranding • Movement constraints: syntactic islands

Thursday, 13-08	
Theme	Anaphoric dependencies, Non-sentential syntax
Description	We assume the presence of grammatical elements which are inaudible but linguistically significant. We discuss these 'empty categories' and their dependency on other elements in the sentence. This dependency leads us to the topic of anaphora (reflexives, reciprocals). Finally, we will also see that syntax is not only about full sentences but also about the internal structure of smaller constituents (e.g., pronouns, names).
Topics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traces/copies, pro, and PRO • Anaphora and Binding Theory (Principles A, B, C) • Non-sentential syntax: pronouns, names

Friday, 14-08	
Theme	Covert movement, minimalist syntax, and linguistics as a science
Description	Our interpretation of a sentence depends on its structural analysis. We will discuss the relationship between syntax and semantics and consider LF (logical form) as part of syntax. We then reassess the syntactic approach and the methodology used in linguistic research, taking the view of linguistics as a science, and briefly contrast this with a contemporary framework: minimalist syntax.
Topics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Syntax-semantics interface: LF movement • Empirical data and theory construction • Minimalist syntax: Bare Phrase Structure (BPS), Merge

Note: This schedule is tentative and may be adjusted if needed.