LING 786 – Syntax I – Spring 2020

Course organization

Where? Innovation Hall 316
When? T 4:30-7:10 pm

Instructor: Géraldine Walther
Email: gwalth**e**@gmu.edu **!! without** the last letter of my surname **!!**
Office: Robinson Hall B 470B (in the back of the Computational Linguistics Lab)
Office hours: Th 10:30-12:30, and by appointment

Prerequisites

LING 306 or 520 (Introduction to Linguistics) at GMU, or equivalent.

Course Description

Nature and form of syntactic theory. Examines and analyzes properties of several major natural language syntactic structures. May not be repeated for credit.

Course Objectives

This course provides an overview of approaches to syntactic analysis. After a general introduction, the first part of the course reviews the linguistic traditions that exerted the greatest influence on formal approaches to syntax. The second part introduces Lexical Function Grammar (LFG) as a constraint-based grammar variant of existing formal approaches. The third part presents some lexical and constructional extensions and a description of hybrid approaches, based on LFG. The fourth and last part introduces alternate approaches to gradient phenomena that elude strictly symbolic approaches to syntax.

Bibliography

A list with required readings will be posted on Blackboard and completed as the term advances. *Please keep checking for updated readings as the term advances*.

LFG Textbook:

Mary Dalrymple. (2001) *Lexical Functional Grammar.* San Diego, CA: Academic Press.

Required readings:

Harry Tily, Susanne Gahl, Inbal Arnon, Neal Snider, Anubha Kothari, Joan Bresnan (2009). "Syntactic probabilities affect pronunciation variation in spontaneous speech." *Language and Cognition* **1**.

Christopher D. Manning (2003) "Probabilistic Syntax." In Rens Bod, Jennifer Hay, and Stefanie Jannedy (eds), *Probabilistic Linguistics*, pp. 289-341. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press

Thomas Wasow, T. Florian Jaeger, and David M. Orr (2011). "Lexical Variation in Relativizer Frequency." Simon, Wiese (Eds.), *Expecting the Unexpected: Exceptions in Grammar.* De Gruyter Mouton.

Optional readings:

Ash Asudeh and Ida Toivonen (2015) "Lexical-Functional Grammar." In *The Oxford Handbook of Linguistic Analysis*. Bernd Heine and Heiko Narrog (eds.) Oxford University Press.

Blevins, James P. (2013). American descriptivism ('structuralism'). In Allan, K. (ed.), *Oxford Handbook of the History of Linguistics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, chapter 18, 419-437.

Rens Bod and Ronald Kaplan (1998) "A Probabilistic Model for Lexical-Functional Analysis" In *Proceedings of COLING 1998*, (pp. 146-151).

Stefan Müller. 2018. *Grammatical theory: From transformational grammar to constraint-based approaches*. Third revised and extended edition. (Textbooks in Language Sciences 1). Berlin: Language Science Press.

Course schedule (provisional)

W	Date	Topic	Homework
1	T 01/21	Course logistics Introduction: what is syntax?	
2	T 01/28	Syntactic analysis and representations (units, constituency, dependency)	
3	T 02/04	Phrase Structure Grammars	
4	T 02/11	LFG 1: Functional structure and feature descriptions	HW1
5	T 02/18	LFG 2: Syntactic correspondences	
6	T 02/25	LFG 3: Argument structure and mapping theory	
7	T 03/03	LFG 4: Modifiers and arguments	
8	T 03/10	**!! Spring break: no class !!**	HW2
9	T 03/17	LFG 5: Anaphoric control	
10	T 03/24	LFG 6: Long-distance dependencies	
11	T 03/31	PLFG 1: Theoretical innovations	
12	T 04/07	PLFG 2: Probabilities in grammars	
13	T 04/14	Probabilistic syntax 1: Gradient patterns and their implications (Manning 2003)	HW3
14	T 04/21	Probabilistic syntax 2: Relativizer frequencies in English (Wasow *et al*. 2011)	
15	T 04/28	Probabilistic syntax 3: Relativizer frequencies in English (Tily *et al*. 2009)	
E	TBD	Final examination	

Graded assignments

Homework (50%) Homework (50%) There will be 3 homework assignments. No late homework will be accepted. *Contact me early if you encounter any problems!!*

Comprehensive Final (30%) There will be a final assignment during the examination period.

In class participation (20%) Includes participation during quiz and exercise sections and general classroom engagement.

Grading criteria

100%:	Excellent answer, no mistakes
90-99%:	Excellent answer, only a few very minor mistakes
85–89%:	Excellent answer, but several minor mistakes
80-84%:	Good answer, but a few fairly important mistakes or misunderstandings
70–79%:	Good answer, but some more important mistakes or misunderstandings
65–69%:	Good attempt, but a significant number of important mistakes/misunderstandings
50–64%:	Serious attempt, but major mistakes and serious misunderstandings
0–49%:	No serious attempt to solve the problem or no submitted work

General notes and information

Resources: All course policies, calendars, assignments, and readings will be posted on our Blackboard site. Let me know if you have trouble accessing the site!

Course schedule: The course schedule above is likely to be adjusted over the term. A revised version of the syllabus will be available on Blackboard. The most recent online copy of the syllabus will always supersede previous versions, including the one handed out on the first day.

Computers and electronic devices: Non-class-related use of computers or other electronic devices should be avoided.

Attendance: Class attendance is not optional. Practical coding exercises and (pop) quizzes will be conducted in class, some of them graded. Please let me know in advance if you are unable to attend a session.

Academic Integrity: Students are reminded of their obligation to adhere to the GMU Honor Code. All class work should clearly acknowledge the source of ideas and materials, and direct quotations must be explicitly identified and properly cited. If you are in any doubt, please contact me before submitting your work. The Pledge and full text of the Honor Code are available at: http://oai.gmu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/George-Mason-University-Honor-Code-2019-2020-final.pdf

Disability Services: GMU is committed to providing equitable access to students with disabilities. Students who require accommodations should register with Disability Services <https://ds.gmu.edu/> as early as possible, since accommodations/grade adjustments cannot be made retroactively.

Diversity, inclusion, and safety: GMU is committed to providing students with a safe and respectful environment. Visit https://diversity.gmu.edu for more information. Feel free to reach out if you have questions or feel need for support.