SPRING 2023: **SYNTAX I**
Cognitive Science 050.320/620; **T –Th 12 – 1:15 pm, Krieger 134A**

Instructor: Geraldine Legendre, Krieger 249; legendre@jhu.edu
OH: Tu 4:15-5:15 pm and by appt; https://zoom.us/j/96617321574

TA: Angela Xu, Krieger 239; angela.xu@jhu.edu
OH: Th 2-3 pm and by appt; https://JHUBlueJays.zoom.us/my/angelaxusc

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

050.330/620 is an introduction to Generative Syntax which emphasizes developing a coherent and cross-linguistically valid theory of sentence structure. We will start with simple assumptions and bring everyone to the same place within about three weeks and then update our assumptions and develop our theory further in several major steps. The lectures will focus on English puzzles and well-chosen ones from other languages. Major assignments in the form of problem sets in other languages will focus on demonstrating that our theory is cross-linguistically valid despite having been largely developed on the basis of English. The instructor will make use of elaborate course notes in the form of handouts organized by theoretical themes that follow the order of textbook chapters. The handouts are made available before class on **Canvas/Modules**.

Feedback on the (fast) pace of the course and suggestions for facilitating learning of complex material are welcome throughout the semester.

Prerequisites (for undergraduates): Language & Mind or permission of instructor. The class assumes some familiarity with basic concepts of theoretical linguistics and syntax.

II. LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this course students will have
i) developed a comprehensive understanding of syntactic representations from the Generative Syntax perspective, using the Chomskyan Principles-and-Parameters model.
ii) developed solid analytical and argumentation skills and applied the theoretical model to languages other than English.
iii) developed an understanding of how a particular theory of syntax evolves in the face of new data.
iv) the background needed to turn to the primary literature that uses that model and more generally be ready for courses that investigate other aspects of syntax, including more advanced syntax, psycholinguistics (processing), language acquisition, NLP, computational linguistics, etc.

III. COURSE REQUIREMENTS (Undergrads and grads are graded separately)

A. Regular attendance and participation (incl. 3 min quizzes), **reading assignments, and weekly exercises**: 15% (✔+/3, ✔/2, ✔−/1). A grade of ✔−/1 is an indication that you are not mastering the material as needed to do well on major assignments described below.

Weekly exercises are announced on class handouts; they support incremental learning of new concepts every week; any changes will be posted to on Canvas/Announcements. Students are encouraged to submit questions of general interest to Canvas/Discussion.

B. Graded problem sets (typically on languages other than English) will be handed out **a week before** they are due. They include:
i) Three problem sets (15% each => 45%): due late February, mid March, and late April

ii) Take-home final exam (40%): due on the official final exam date for the class – **May 15, noon.**

Drawing syntactic trees correctly is a skill that needs to be mastered **early** in the semester. We advise you to use http://mshang.ca/syntree/ .

The graded problem sets and final serve to demonstrate that you are mastering analytical and argumentation skills that require putting together concepts and analytical techniques taught and practiced in previous weeks. A **review session** will be led by Angela before every major assignment. See info posted to **Canvas/Announcements**.

Hard-to-read handwritten assignments and trees will not be graded! Please type up all assignments and use the link above for trees. All assignments must be submitted as pdf documents to Canvas.

C. Graduate students may be required to do additional readings of classic papers (on **Canvas/Modules**) and post a one-page (single-spaced) summary of the main points of the article to **Canvas**, as scheduled.

IV. REQUIRED TEXTBOOK

Carnie, A. 2021. *Syntax: A Generative Introduction*, **Fourth** Edition**.** Blackwell.

V. LATE HOMEWORK AND INCOMPLETES:

i) **No late exercise/graded assignment**. Exceptions will be made only as follows: i) True emergencies (e.g. death of a loved one, sickness, etc.), will not incur a penalty if instructor and TA are immediately notified **by email** ii) Other cases —if requests are made by email at least 24 hours before the work is due and approved by instructor —will incur a penalty of one letter grade for every day the exercise/assignment is late. Absence of notification will result in an F for the assignment due.

Seniors will **not** be allowed to turn in any assignments/exams late in the semester even if needed to graduate.

ii) **No incompletes** will be given without written explanation from Academic Advising for undergraduates or without a solid justification for graduates.

VI. KEYS TO SUCCESS

- Attending ALL lectures and taking advantage of REVIEW sessions
- Focusing on the reasoning through empirical evidence demonstrated in class
- Seeking immediate help in OHs if new concepts are not well understood
- Drawing correct syntactic trees early on and seeking feedback otherwise
- Planning ahead for major assignments: spread the work over at least a week

VII. ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

The strength of the university depends on academic and personal integrity. Ethical violations include cheating on exams, plagiarism, reuse of assignments, improper use of the Internet and electronic devices, unauthorized collaboration, alteration of graded assignments, forgery and falsification, lying, facilitating academic dishonesty, and unfair competition. See the guide on "Academic Ethics for Undergraduates" and the Ethics Board Web site (http://ethics.jhu.edu) for more information.

Consulting one another and/or the internet, articles, books, etc. is NOT allowed on problem sets and final exam! ANY violation will result in an F for the course. NO EXCUSES PLEASE!

VIII. DISABILITY SERVICES

The Disability Services program within the Office of Institutional Equity oversees the coordination of

reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. More information may be found at the Disabilities Services website or by contacting (410) 516-8075.

Only accommodations approved by the Disability Services office will be honored. Please make an appointment to discuss your individual situation with Prof. Legendre.

IX. Diversity and Cognitive Science

The Cognitive Science department at Johns Hopkins is committed to an inclusive environment where undergraduate students can receive research experience to explore careers in Cognitive Science. There are opportunities available to perform research for credit, as well as grants available to support research as a paid job. Many professors are actively seeking research assistants. For more information, reach out to professors via email to inquire about potential research positions.

Further down the road, if you enjoyed the topics covered in this course, consider applying to graduate school to study Cognitive Science or related topics. Pursuing a PhD is more like a job than being an undergraduate student: PhD programs pay a full-time salary and health benefits to support you as you take ownership of a research topic. People come to graduate school from all sorts of backgrounds. Advanced degrees in Cognitive Science can lead to a variety of careers within or outside of academia. For example, some of our alumni currently work at NASA as a Technical Writer, at Apple as a Research Engineer, at various organizations as research scientists, and more. Talk to your advisor, another professor, or a graduate student for advice on applying to graduate programs.