

# Syllabus for CG131: “Introduction to Syntax”

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Tuesday and Thursday, 9–10:30am, Sayles Hall 105

This course studies the syntax of human languages, i.e., how morphemes and words combine to form larger units such as phrases and sentences. This topic is central to modern generative linguistics, and our understanding of syntactic structures and processes has dramatically increased over the past few decades. The course itself will focus on the syntactic structures and processes of English, and class discussion and homework will involve studying related structures and processes in English and other languages.

The Kim and Sells textbook gives analyses based on HPSG (Head-driven Phrase Structure Grammar), while Santorini and Kroch textbook gives analyses in a Principles and Parameters framework.

## 1 Textbooks and Web sites

I will try to post all handouts for the class on our departmental web site: please let me know if anything isn't accessible. The site for the class is:

- <http://cog.brown.edu/~mj/classes/cg131/>

The textbook for this class is:

- Kim and Sells (2008) “English Syntax: An Introduction”

Exercises from this text will be set for homework, so you should have your own copy.

Beatrice Santorini and Tony Kroch (professors in the Linguistics department at the University of Pennsylvania) have an excellent on-line textbook that discusses much of the same information as we will cover in this course. You can find it at:

- <http://www.ling.upenn.edu/~beatrice/syntax-textbook/>

## 2 Homework and Assessment

The readings are an essential part of the course. I expect you to have read the relevant chapter(s) *before* the class that discusses them.

There will be approximately 7 homework assignments, which will be due at regular intervals through the semester. Homework will be due at the beginning of class, and will be discussed in class.

The final grade for the course will be based on the *homework grades* and *class participation* (so be sure to ask questions).

## 3 Tentative Syllabus

**Week 1:** Outline of the course. The goals of syntactic theory. Readings: KS, Chapter 1, and Santorini, Chapter 1.

**Week 2:** Parts of speech, categories, constituency and phrase-structure. Context-free grammars. Trees. Readings: KS, Chapter 2, and Santorini, Chapter 2.

**Week 3:** Grammatical functions and semantic roles. Readings: KS, Chapter 3, and Santorini, Chapter 3.

**Week 4:** Heads, complements and modifiers. Feature structures. Readings: KS, Chapter 4, Santorini, Chapter 4.

**Week 5:** Introduction to  $X'$  theory. Readings: KS, Chapter 5, Santorini, Chapter 5.

**Week 6:** Noun phrases and agreement. Readings: KS, Chapter 6, Santorini, supplemental section on nouns.

**Week 7:** Auxiliary constructions. Readings: KS, Chapter 8, Santorini, Chapter 6.

**Week 8:** VP shells and verb movement. Readings: Santorini, Chapter 7.

**Week 9:** Case theory and subcategorization. Readings: Santorini, Chapter 8.

**Week 10:** Raising and Control. Readings: KS, Chapter 7, Santorini, Chapter 9.

**Week 11:** Passive constructions. Readings: KS, Chapter 9, Santorini, Chapter 10.

**Week 12:** WH-movement. Readings: KS, Chapter 10, Santorini, Chapter 11.

**Week 13:** Relative clauses. Readings: KS, Chapter 11, Santorini, Chapter 12.

**Week 14:** *Tough* and cleft constructions. Readings: KS, Chapter 12.