

ENG 573: TOPICS IN ENGLISH SYNTAX

Linguistics Section, Department of English Studies, University of Cyprus

Spring Semester 2008: Tuesdays & Fridays, 10.30–12.00 — Room A 110

www.punksinscience.org/kleanthes/courses/UCY08S/TIES

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DESCRIPTION

In this course we will explore the syntax of modern English from a theoretical perspective within Generative Grammar, the Principles-and-Parameters approach to human language. Concentrating on the Government-and-Binding Theory (GB) and possibly more current minimalist approaches we will investigate advanced topics in English syntax, such as an articulate verb phrase structure, movement, raising vs. control and empty categories, and binding concerns. Depending on time, we might also integrate more specific students' interests and present your work in class.

ASSESSMENT

Regular attendance is strongly advised! Besides the class lectures, there will be:

1. one mid-term **exam** based on exercises from the textbook (30%)
2. one **presentation** identifying a problem to be solved later (20%)
3. one term **paper** (which could relate to your presentation) (50%)
4. presence and preferably **participation** in class throughout (±x...)

The **mid-term exam** will be held in class. It will cover the **introductory parts of the textbook**, which you can also have on you for the exam (so it's an **open-book mid-term exam**). The mid-term will consist of exercises straight from the book, based on what we cover in class. The plan is to cover more or less **familiar concepts** up to the mid-term and then explore more **exciting syntactic issues**.

*However, in light of recent copyright infringement issues in Cyprus, you may only use a commercial copy of the book — for legal reasons, then, **photocopied materials are not permitted at the exams**.*

I want you to **start thinking early** on about a possible **little research project** for you to investigate throughout the semester. You should **present it in class** to share your ideas and motivation, and then **write it up** on the basis of everyone's feedback.

NB: You should discuss your project idea with me first to get it approved, ideally by February 20.

Your presentation should **not be too long**. The idea is to fit them all in two classes (as per syllabus). The length of your paper depends on what you do, something we will discuss in class. There will be an **easy option** (summary/review/exercise) and a more **interesting option** (your own research).

READING

In the past I used to say: **I can't stress enough how important it will be that you read at home!** However, experience has shown that students don't read anything beyond the absolute necessary, if they read at all. As a consequence **I did not put any books on hold at the library.** If anyone is interested in reading beyond the assigned texts, please consult me and I can give you pointers, or do the research on relevant sources yourself. This means your readings are kept at a bare minimum, so: **Make sure you do all your minimal readings and learn how to understand what you read!**

However, since you will have to prepare an oral presentation with some material which you then need to write up in the form of a term paper, it is important that you **read to prepare** both. Also, you will probably have to **read around** a little to get an idea what you would like to do in the first place.

Classes will be crucial and equally crucial will be that you understand everything we do. I will not always cover all the material; we will find our pace in a few classes. **On the syllabus you will find your reading assignments.** These we will cover in class, sometimes following the book closely, at other times less so. The **exercises provided in the textbook** are also relevant. Feel free to give them a shot and **discuss your solutions with me**, or **raise questions in class.** Note that some of these exercises are quite complex and could **lead to a term paper**, with a bit of extra work.

In general, make sure you make good use of my office hours: If you don't come, I can't help you!

There is **one required textbook** on syntax of which every student must have his/her own copy! (Moufflon Bookshop has enough copies, but they will return those not purchased **by February 1.**)

Carnie, Andrew. 2007. *Syntax: A Generative Introduction*, 2nd edn. Oxford: Blackwell.
[you can get more material from here: <http://www.blackwellpublishing.com/carnie>]

And of course our **library** is filled with relevant publications. Figuring out what you need to read and how to find it will **improve your study and research skills.** And it will also force you to do **teamwork:** If one of you finds a book that might be of interest to others but takes it out without sharing, it will send bad signals. Of course, you can **consult me** on relevant literature for your topic.

Even though the course is a seminar on English syntax, **your research project does not have to be strictly and purely theoretical.** If you would like to investigate some **sociolinguistically relevant topics** in English, possibly as it pertains to Cyprus (maybe in combination with or relation to other seminars), or aspects that deal with **morphology or phonology**, for example, that will be fine, if you consult me first. Likewise, if you would like to **explore Cypriot Greek**, I will encourage you too.

Another interesting area is **psycholinguistics**, dealing with first language **acquisition** (Greek Cypriot children acquiring Greek or English, for example) or language **disorders** (or Specific Language Impairment), for which you could go out and gather data. More topics come to mind which we will discuss jointly in class, depending on your own interests and backgrounds, of course. I'm flexible.

PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism is a serious offence! Please make yourself familiar with the rules (again) if you're not quite sure. Basically, it means that you are not allowed to copy from your notes or classmates during in-class exams. But it also covers more: You cannot simply copy and paste text you find on the internet, in books, or from other sources (including your classmates) for your written work! **If I detect cheating or plagiarism in any way, I will report you to the Board of the Department of English Studies — as a consequence, you automatically fail this course and face more severe punishment which can even lead to expulsion from university.** So, be honest and work honest.

In today's class I will pass out an elaborate document on plagiarism, which might look familiar.