Syllabus
(version of August 1, 2012)

**Time**
T Th 12.45-2.05 (1 hr 20 min = 80 min)

**Place**
Jennings 160

**Instructor**
Peter Culicover

**Office**
Oxley 307

**Phone**
614-292-4052 (Linguistics dept.)

**Email**
culicover.1@osu.edu

**Office hours**
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2.05 – 3.05 pm

**Text**
*Natural Language Syntax*, by Peter W. Culicover
Oxford University Press.
[This text is required]

http://www.ling.upenn.edu/~beatrice/syntax-textbook/
[This text is available on line, and provides a nice perspective on many issues]

**Readings**
There will be a number of readings from the primary literature. They will be available on the course website on Carmen.

## 1. Syllabus

This course is a graduate introduction to contemporary syntactic theory. The goal is to survey to the extent possible:

- the central goals of syntactic theorizing;
- the main empirical phenomena that have preoccupied linguists working on syntax for the past 50 years or so, and the terminology used to refer to them;
- the most prominent theoretical approaches to accounting for the phenomena;
- the historical and conceptual development of some of the main issues;
- how to go about identifying, tackling and solving syntactic problems.

We will be primarily focused on understanding what syntax is about. We will not get into the gory details of any particular theory in class. If you are interested in following up on something in particular, let me know outside of class and I will help you do that. And of course there will be plenty of opportunity in subsequent courses and seminars.

In some linguistics departments, the first graduate course in linguistics involves throwing published articles at the students and making them try to understand the issues, methods, data, etc. and in particular the details of some theoretical framework, all at once. I think that is counterproductive, unless you have a pretty strong background already, in which case you should not be in this course. What we will do is move a bit more slowly, and focus on the linguistic phenomena, contemplate what is going on empirically and
(hopefully) gradually begin to bring out some of the theoretical issues. After a few weeks you will be working on a squib (see below), and at that point you will have to come to terms with some of the literature, and the theoretical issues that are raised there.

2. **Homework**

There will be homework assignments based on the exercises in the text designed to familiarize you with the practice of identifying syntactic generalizations in data, and characterizing these generalizations using standard notational conventions and terminology. We will also use the homework assignments to explore the implications and limits of widely accepted methodology and assumptions. And the homework will hopefully provide us with some interesting problems to talk about. **The homework will not be graded. But you have to demonstrate that you did the homework, and that will be part of your grade.** We will use some class time to go over the homework and that will give you an opportunity to figure out things that perhaps you didn’t quite get the first time around.

**Participation**

Students are expected to attend every class meeting, do all of the readings, and participate on a regular basis. Participation counts for 20 points of the grade (out of a total of 200).

**Exams**

There will be a mid-term exam and a final exam. Both are take-home.

3. **Squib**

You will also be expected to write an original short piece, 5 pages single-spaced (a ‘squib’), about some syntactic problem that you find interesting. The squib should have the following structure.

**Title**
1. Summary of the data (essential examples only).
2. Explanation of why this is a problem.
3. Previous solutions? What’s right about them. What’s wrong with them.
4. Possible solution(s) that you would suggest would be worth exploring.

**References**

A written note (1 paragraph) about what you are going to work on is due to me no later than the first class of the fifth week (that would be **Tuesday, 9/25**). We will have a meeting about it shortly thereafter. A brief (1-2 page) summary of the data, possible sources and accounts is due no later than the first class of the seventh week (that would be **Tuesday, 10/9**). The final product is due before noon in my mailbox on the Friday after the last class of the semester (that would be **12/7**).
I would like you to do your best to follow the format and style of the papers that we are reading from the primary literature. The goal is

- not only to begin to do original research, which is pretty difficult the first few thousand times you try,
- but to become aware of the way in which we present the problem that we are working on,
- and the results of what we have found,
- so that they are clear and accessible to others.

What I will be looking for in the squibs:

- Clear statement of the problem
- Clear summary of the data
- Identification of some syntactic issue
- Recognition of the relevance of the questions that we have been discussing in class
- Presentation of the problem (and possible solution) in a clear and professional form.

**Grading**

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Homework</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mid-term exam</td>
<td>60</td>
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<td>Final exam</td>
<td>60</td>
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<tr>
<td>Squib</td>
<td>40</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation in class</td>
<td>20</td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>200</strong></td>
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**Grading scheme**

Here is how I calculate the grades.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Score Range</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>A</td>
<td>186-200</td>
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<td>A-</td>
<td>180-185</td>
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**4. SCHEDULE (TENTATIVE)**

(As of August 1, 2012)

The tentative schedule conforms closely to the organization of *Natural Language Syntax*. The text is organized so that each chapter begins with basic concepts, examples and phenomena and then gets into more advanced issues. Even more advanced issues are reserved for the Problems and Research Questions at the end of each chapter.
The text will serve as background to the readings. So I will not lecture about all of the material in the text. I assume that everyone in the class has at least some background in syntax. But it is very likely that there are some things that you are unfamiliar with. Therefore I would like everyone to read each chapter completely and raise questions about such things so that we don’t find ourselves moving too far forward without the proper grounding.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Assignment due</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>.5</td>
<td>8/23</td>
<td>Business. The schedule, etc.</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• What is syntax?</td>
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<td>• The goals of linguistic theory</td>
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<td>• Where does syntactic theory fit in? (What are we doing here?)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>8/28</td>
<td>Syntactic Categories</td>
<td>NLS, Chapter 1, 2, 3</td>
<td>Prob. 2.3, 2.4</td>
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<td></td>
<td>8/30</td>
<td>Basic sentential structure</td>
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<td>Prob. 3.3</td>
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<td>• The simple sentence</td>
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<td>• Complements, arguments and adjuncts</td>
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<td>• Grammatical functions</td>
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<td>• Marking grammatical functions</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>9/4</td>
<td>• Marking grammatical functions</td>
<td>Woolford 2006</td>
<td>Prob. 3.1 + RQ 3.1, 3.2</td>
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<td>9/6</td>
<td>• Tests for constituency</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>9/11</td>
<td>Phrasal Categories</td>
<td>NLS, Chapter 4</td>
<td>Prob. 4.2, 4.3, 4.5, 4.6</td>
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<td>• X’ theory</td>
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<td>• The structure of the verb phrase</td>
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<td>• The structure of the noun phrase</td>
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<td>9/13</td>
<td>• The English verbal sequence</td>
<td>Pollock 1989</td>
<td>RQ 4.2, 4.3</td>
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<td>• Applications of strong X’ theory</td>
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<td>• VP internal subjects</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>9/18</td>
<td>Argument Realization</td>
<td>NLS, Chapter 5</td>
<td>Prob. 5.5, RQ 5.1</td>
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<td>• θ-roles</td>
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<td>• Canonical argument realization</td>
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<td>• Passive</td>
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<td>9/20</td>
<td>Dowty 1991</td>
<td>Dowty 1991</td>
<td>Study questions</td>
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<td>Topics</td>
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| 9/27 | • Causative  
• Antipassive | Davies and Sam-Colop 1990 |
| 10/2 | • Dummy subjects  
• Null pronouns and clitics | (Extra: Jaeggli and Safir 1989)  
Prob. 6.5, 6.6 |
| 10/4 | • The transformational analysis of passive  
• Theta criterion, EPP, and UTAH | Baker et al. 1989  
Prob. 6.3, RQ 6.12 |
| 10/9 | Complex clauses: raising and control  
• Infinitival complements – the data | NLS, Chapter 7  
Prob. 7.4, 7.5 |
| 10/11 | • Raising as movement  
• Syntactic configuration and control | Culicover and Jackendoff 2006  
Prob. 7.6, 7.7 |
| 10/16 | **Mid-terms due**  
A’ constructions  
• Questions | NLS, Chapter 9  
Prob. 9.3 |
| 10/18 | • Relative clauses | Culicover 2011  
Prob. 9.11 |
| 10/23 | • The theory of wh-movement | Rizzi 1996  
RQ 9.1, 9.3 |
| 10/25 | • Topicalization | Rizzi 1997  
Prob. 9.12 |
| 10/30 | • Constraints 1 - Ross | Excerpt from Ross 1967  
Prob. 9.15 |
| 11/1 | • Constraints 2 – Conditions | (Extra: Chomsky 1973)  
RQ 9.5 |
| 11/6 | • The ECP | Chomsky 1977  
Prob. 9.18 |
| 11/8 | • Other A’ constructions | (Extra: Rizzi 2006) |
| 11/13 | Binding theory  
• The binding theory | NLS, Chapter 10  
Exer. 10.6, 10.7 |
| 11/15 | • Crossover | (Extra: Postal 2004: Chapter 7)  
RQ 10.7 |
| 11/20 | • Anaphors | Pollard and Sag 1992  
Prob. 10.6, 10.7 |
| **11/22** | **Thanksgiving, no class** |
| 11/27 | Fragments  
• Bare argument ellipsis | NLS, Chapter 11  
Merchant 2008  
Prob. 11.2 |
| 11/29 | • VP ellipsis and related constructions | (Extra: Culicover and Jackendoff 2012)  
Prob. 11.3 |
| 12/4 | • Review  
Final exam, end of 14.5. **Due 12.00** |
Important dates (put these in your calendars now!)
9/25/2012  Brief description of squib topic due
10/9/2012  1-2 page summary of squib, with basic data, due
10/11/2012 Hand out mid-term exam
10/16/2012 Hand in mid-term exam, in class
11/22/2012 Thanksgiving – no class
12/4/2012  Hand out final exam
12/7/2012  Final version of squib due, before noon.
12/10/2012  Hand in final exam, before noon, in Culicover’s mailbox in Oxley 225.

References

Culicover, P. W. 2011. A reconsideration of english relative constructions. Constructions 2,
Culicover, P. W., Jackendoff, R. 2006. Turn control over to the semantics. Syntax 9, 131-52.