SYNTAX
LING 166/ANTH 112
Syllabus: Spring 2019

Syntax is the study of the processes governing the formation of all and only the grammatical sentences of human languages. In this course, we will engage in a collaborative project to build a working grammar from the ground up, using curated sets of natural language data as our object of study. We will consider not only English (a language we happen to share in this classroom), but a number of other languages in a comparative light, prompting important questions about what syntax might have to tell us about how human languages work more generally. You will be asked to collaborate extensively with your fellow students as you explore the systematic syntactic forms and processes of language.

Meeting Time/Place:
MWF 12-12:50, Jeffords 127

Instructor:
Dr. Emily Manetta
514 Williams Hall
Emily.Manetta@uvm.edu
Office Hours: Tuesday 10:40-11:40am or by appointment

Teaching Assistants: Emma Roach, Kayla Warren

How will this course work?
This course is very different from other courses you may have taken. We have no readings and no textbook. Instead, the course is homework-driven.
  Each week you will receive a homework assignment that will look a lot like a puzzle. You will work on this assignment collaboratively in a small group of your classmates, then write up the results of your investigation on your own and submit your work.
  Then we will begin a large group discussion in class concentrating on to how to solve the puzzle. Everyone will make suggestions and at the end of our conversation, we will arrive at a group solution. Then we will be ready to move on to the next puzzle!
  We will keep track of our progress in the form of our class grammar. Each week you will see the model for generating grammatical sentences of English being built and refined, step by step.

We will continue to use a modified **hybrid model** for this course.

What is a hybrid course?
A hybrid course is a course that is primarily a typical classroom course, but also has a required online component. Usually an instructor chooses a model like this when they want to try to do something innovative or make better use of limited resources.

In our case I want you all to spend plenty of time **practicing** what we have learned in the classroom, so one meeting per week will be devoted to a **syntax lab**, delivered online. My hope is that this extra practice makes you a more talented manipulator of syntactic structure, and better able to tackle your homeworks and exams!

On a typical week, we will meet Monday and Wednesday as a full class. Between Wed. and Fri. you will be assigned an online "lab" allowing you to practice the key new skills we are developing. In addition, on Fridays during class time, the TAs will hold a recitation section, in which you can practice material from the week and/or ask questions or get assistance. Please see our course document "How to hybrid" for detailed information on this aspect of our course experience.

How will I be assessed?
10 homework assignments (50%)
1 take-home midterm (15%)
1 take-home final (15%)
Attendance/participation (20%)

- The homework assignments will be assigned an adjectival grade (see below); the lowest one will be dropped.
- The take-home exams will be given a letter grade.
- Attendance will be taken at every in-person class meeting and for every online lab. There are no excused absences from lab.

Schedule:
HW 1 due **Wednesday Jan 23** (Monday is a holiday, no class)
HW 2 due Monday Jan 29
HW 3 due Monday Feb 4
HW 4 due Monday Feb 11
HW 5 due **Wednesday Feb 20** (Monday is a holiday, no class)
HW 6 due Monday Feb 25
Take Home Midterm due Friday March 8
SPRING BREAK NO HW (March 11-15)
HW 7 due Monday March 25
HW 8 due Monday April 1
HW 9 due Monday April 8
HW 10 due Monday April 15
Take Home Final due Friday May 3 (last day of our class)

NOTE: Late homework can receive no greater than half credit. No exceptions. Lowest homework grade is dropped.

What should my homework look like?
Homework should be written up by you alone, solely in your own words (with no help from the internet, or classmates). Although you should try solving the problems in a

group, the way you write up that solution is crucial. Through this course you will learn to use a concise, clear, analytical writing style.

Your homework should be written up in prose, in complete, well-crafted sentences. You should use examples both from the homework itself and of your own creation to illustrate your claims. You should present a solution to the problem at hand, or write clearly about why none of your attempted solutions will work.

The homeworks will be graded for clear argumentation, effective writing, strong use of linguistic examples, and internal consistency. The "right" answer (when there even is one) is not nearly as valuable as your approach to the problem.

What about readings?
There aren't any. Really.

What about research?
I must ask you to try to refrain from doing any internet sleuthing to figure out the "answer" to your homework puzzles. In most cases, it won't help you, and will only be confusing and make your homework sounds less like you. And as I said, I value the "right" answer far less than the well-written and well-explained one, so save your time for focusing on consistency in your own work.

I have to work in a group? How?
Yup, you sure do. These puzzles are, for the most part, designed to be too difficult to solve by yourself. Collaboration is a key part of the process, and you will be graded in part by how well you work with your group.

You and your group will need to find a way to meet in order to work on each assignment. You can **meet in person** (highly recommended) or use technology to "meet" in virtual space. Please do not come to tell me that your busy work/life/partying/skiing/commuting/lacrosse/greek/surfing/babysitting/swimming/parenting/curling schedule will not permit you to do group work. Surely one of the people in this classroom has one free hour in common with you per week. Make it work and you will most likely be pleased with the results, trust me.

Please put the full name of the folks you work with on the top of your HW. BE CERTAIN that you and your group are COLLABORATING with one another, NOT COPYING from one another.

Communication Policy:
I will contact you via your UVM email. Please be sure you have that email forwarded to an address you check regularly.

I will respond to your email within 24 hours during the week (usually much sooner!). If I don't, remind me (nicely!) and I will feel incredibly guilty and get back to you asap.

Course Policies

Plagiarism is defined as any time that you present another's work as your own, and it will not be tolerated in this course. Be sure to give credit or cite sources whenever necessary (though this should rarely be necessary in this course).. If you have any questions about how to avoid plagiarism, please ask me, or consult UVM's Code of Academic Integrity. Late work: Late homework can receive no greater than half credit. There are no exceptions.

Accommodations in the course can be provided with documentation of a learning disability or other disability (including a chronic health problem) through the ACCESS office. Please discuss any special requirements with the instructor.

Adjectival Grading

If you are unfamiliar with an adjectival grading, it may take a few homeworks to get used to. The system is loosely equivalent to letter grades, but not precisely. Your homework will be assessed and I will make detailed comments. At the end I will assign it an adjectival evaluation from this list: Excellent, Very Good, Good, Fair, Poor. Sometimes I will say that your assignment is, for instance, "good to very good work". At the end of the semester I will average your two exams (midterm and final), as well as your best 9 homeworks and your in-class and lab attendance to determine your final grade (the lowest homework will be dropped).

  Excellent (A-ish)– Demonstrating total mastery of the material and a level of effort well beyond what was required in the assignment. Such a paper would likely include significant data not present in the HW assignment (that you had though of yourself as you worked), perfect writing/organization, exceptional style, and original, careful analytic thinking.

  Very Good (B-B+ ish) – Strong understanding of the material and complete response to all basic questions asked by the assignment. Few to no flaws in writing, compositional style, and competent and consistent analysis of all data presented in the assignment. Meets all expectations.

  Good (B- to B ish) – Decent, but not total understanding of the material, or perhaps incomplete response to some of the more complex questions asked by the assignment. Occasional or perhaps more systematic flaws in writing, style, and/or background knowledge developed in the course so far. Does not meet all expectations.

  Fair (C ish)– Flawed comprehension of the material, distinct lack of effort, and/or incomplete response to the assignment. Characterized by significant flaws in writing and use of data and background knowledge. Meets few expectations.

  Poor/Not Passing (D or below) – Work is not of passing quality, significantly lacking in basic understanding, and fails to meet most expectations.