

*The University of Western Ontario*  
**Department of Modern Languages and Literatures**  
Principles of Syntax  
**SPANISH - SP 9700B**  
**LINGUISTICS – LING 9601**  
**Preliminary syllabus**

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### **Course Description and Objectives**

How do you put words together to form sentences? How does the way we build our sentences contribute towards interpretation? Why are some sentences ambiguous? Does the concept of grammaticality exist in the mind, or is it a social construct?

This course aims at understanding ways in which these questions and others may be approached, and how they contribute to our understanding of the human mind. More than focusing on ready-made answers, we hope to learn to ‘think scientifically’ about language, that is, we will try to analyze sentences in different ways, making different hypotheses about them. Then we will try to weigh the evidence that supports each of these hypotheses.

The course is taught once a week (3:00 hours) in English.

### **Methodology**

The methodology is one of discovery. Classes will be divided in the following way: about an hour and a half will be dedicated to theories and the evidence needed to back them up, an about half will be dedicated to putting the theory in practice. In every class the students will receive a list of sentences that we will discuss and try to understand from a linguistic point of view.

### **Learning Outcomes**

At the end of the course, you will be able to:

- Understand the relevance of all types of linguistic data to linguistic analysis, with a focus on English/Spanish (we will also see other languages).
- Form hypotheses about the structure of sentences based on data.
- Produce arguments in support of certain analyses.

- Compare different analyses and understand their relation to the data.
- Understand how sentences are put together to form meaning.
- Understand the relations between different parts of the sentence.
- Understand the different causes of ambiguity.
- Construct visual representations of the structure of sentences and parts of sentences.
- Question any analysis that does not include evidence.

### **Recommended Textbook**

If you do not have firm foundations in syntax, the following book is recommended but not obligatory:

Radford, Andrew. (2004). *Minimalist Syntax. Exploring the Structure of English*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Possible alternative:

Radford, Andrew. (2009). *Analysing English Sentences. A Minimalist Approach*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Helpful (for Spanish students):

Zagona, Karen. (2002). *The Syntax of Spanish*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press. PC4361.Z34 2002

Eguren Gutiérrez, Luis Javier & Olga Fernández Soriano. (2004). *Introducción a una sintaxis minimista*. Madrid, Gredos. P291.E427 2004.

### **Required Work**

- *Participation*: Students should propose analyses for the sentences that are under scrutiny and try to defend their interpretation. They must participate actively in the discussions.
- *Summary of article*: You have to summarize an article (around 5 pages) including the nature of the problem, the main hypothesis and the arguments and the data that the author uses to support the thesis. Your summary will be presented orally to the class.
- *Problem sets*: You will complete around 3 problem sets that you will hand in. Besides this, you will receive several practice problem sets that will be gone over in class.
- *Final paper*: The paper will not be too long, around 10 pages. You will first produce an outline and a list of references. You can summarize the literature and choose a position, showing evidence for it, or you can extend the problem to cases not generally covered, such as dialect variation.

**Plagiarism:** Plagiarism is a major academic offense (see Scholastic Offense Policy in the Western Academic Calendar). Plagiarism is the inclusion of someone else's **verbatim** or **paraphrased** text in one's own written work without immediate reference. Verbatim text must be surrounded by quotation marks or indented if it is longer than four lines. A reference must follow right after borrowed material (usually the author's name and page number). Without immediate reference to borrowed material, a list of sources at the end of a written assignment does not protect a writer against the possible charge of plagiarism. The University of Western Ontario uses a plagiarism-checking site called Turnitin.com.

**Absenteeism:** Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department.

Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness

[https://studentservices.uwo.ca/secure/medical\\_accommodations\\_link\\_for\\_OOR.pdf](https://studentservices.uwo.ca/secure/medical_accommodations_link_for_OOR.pdf)

Downloadable Student Medical Certificate (SMC)

<http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/medicalform.pdf>

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Information on Student Support Services is found at <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

### **Grading for Graduate Students**

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| Participation      | 20% |
| Final paper        | 30% |
| Summary of article | 20% |
| Problem sets       | 30% |