Linguist9600B - Syntax
Syntax Seminar on Pseudo-Cleft

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Office hours: Tuesday 9-30-11h30 (or by appointment)

In this course, we will explore issues related to syntax and semantics of pseudo-cleft sentences like what Mary is is wonderful. These types of sentences have puzzled linguists since the 1960s, and one of the goals of the course is to try to figure out why. As the structure and properties of these sentences are discussed, students will need to understand and recognize basic constructions of natural language (clefts sentences, (free) relative clauses- relation to wh-questions), the kind of contexts where these constructions can be used, the effect of word order on the interpretation of these sentences, etc. The students will also review basic fundamental components of syntactic theory, such as binding theory, case, structural command, scope relations and others. As each of these aspects are discussed, students will be able to understand what make these constructions special, and understand the basic lines of argumentation that have been proposed in the literature to analyze them.

By the end of the course students should
• feel confident reading formal syntactic literature
• be able to apply theoretical analyses to original data
• be able to critique and present research papers
• feel confident about doing research regarding theoretical and empirical issues discussed in the course
• be able to communicate their research results (in the form of abstracts, squibs, and oral presentations)

Format of the course:
• lectures
• discussion groups on concepts introduced in the papers
• solving empirical problems in class and at home (assignments)
• student presentations of relevant literature
• original research

Grading is based on:
2 Topic logs @ 7.5% each 15%
2 group presentations @ 7.5% each 15%
3 assignments @ 5% each 15%
Final paper (based on topic log)
- topic (one sentence) 2%
- proposal (one paragraph) 3%
- outline (2 pages) 5%
- class presentation 15%
- written version 30%

**Topic log:** Each student will identify a topic that s/he will report on throughout the course. The logs will be based on the reading materials: the student will find data that is relevant to issues discussed in a particular paper.

**Requirements for group presentations:** Each student will participate in 2 group presentations; the groups will be different each time. The topic of the presentation is an article selected from the “additional readings” list. The goal is to present the central proposal of the paper, identify the empirical issues involved, and work through one or two examples in detail. The presentations will be 15 minutes each, followed by discussion. The group must provide a handout (maximum 6 pages) or use PowerPoint.

**Requirements for individual presentations:** Each student will give a presentation of their research paper. The presentation will be 15 minutes, followed by a 5-minute discussion period. The handout is a maximum of 6 pages.

**Requirements for the research paper:** The goal is to identify an empirical or theoretical problem concerning pseudo-cleft, present a data set that bears on it, assess the implications of the analysis and work through the type of analysis that could deal with it. Format: 20 pages maximum, 12-point font, 1.5 line spacing, 1-inch margins.

**Attendance:** Attendance and active participation in all lectures is required.

**Core reading:**


**Additional readings:**


