

Course Proposal for Revised General Education Course: Philosophy 3700G

1. Catalogue Description

- a. 3000-level
- b. Language and Human Nature
- c. 3-0-3
- d. On Demand
- e. Language
- f. A study of human language structure as an object of scientific inquiry and its relation to questions of human nature.
- g. English 1001G, English 1002G, or permission of the instructor.
- h. The course is writing-intensive.

2. Student Learning Objectives.

- a. Students will learn to analyze the syntactic structure of English (as well as fragments of many other languages) by developing detailed empirical hypotheses about natural language. This undertaking serves the triple function of
 - (i) making the students more familiar with the hidden grammatical structure of their own native language, and its relation to foreign languages;
 - (ii) introducing students to scientific methodologies of hypothesis formation, empirical testing, and subsequent hypothesis revision; and most importantly
 - (iii) illustrating an array of striking features of the human mind, through the facts presented in syntactic theory and psycholinguistics, which address traditional philosophical issues about the mind.

3. Course Outline.

This course is divided into 15 units, to be distributed evenly during a 15-week/50-minute course (45 classes) or a 15-week/75-minute course (30 classes)

Week 1: Overview of the philosophy and methodology of Chomskyan program and its rivals; temporal and social factors in child language acquisition.

Week 2: Language acquisition by adults, deaf and blind children, and language isolates; relation of acquisition to conditioning and to intelligence; brain trauma and linguistic capacity.

Week 3: Preliminary theory and method of syntactic theory: native speaker's judgments; distribution and paraphrase; syntactic categories; phrase structure;

Weeks 4-5: The Lexicon and Projection: selectional restrictions; verbs and theta roles; the Theta Criterion and the Projection Principle; methodology for determining theta roles: deletion, grammaticality, and semantic change; expletives; theta roles and child language learning.

Weeks 6-7: X-Bar Syntax and Phrase Structure: intermediate phrasal categories in verb and noun phrases; the generalized X-bar framework for phrases; semantic effects of intermediate categories; extending the framework to sentences (inflectional phrases, complementizer phrases, and 'small clauses'); innateness and generalized phrase structure for English, Japanese, and German; the Binary Branching Hypothesis and child language learning.

Week 8: Case Theory: noun phrase case; morphological vs. abstract case in English, German, Latin, and Polish; case assigners in English; structural relations: adjacency, c-command, and m-command.
(Midterm Exam)

Weeks 9-10: Binding Theory: typology of noun phrases (anaphors, pronouns, and R-expressions); binding of English anaphors; binding of English pronouns and R-expressions; feature analysis of noun phrase types; the fourth noun phrase.

Week 11: Control Theory: the fourth noun phrase revisited; PRO and control; the PRO Theorem; subject- and object-control; child acquisition of English control verbs.

Weeks 12-13: NP Movement: motivation for NP Movement (phrase structure, theta theory, binding theory); passive verbs and NP Movement; raising verbs and NP Movement; NP Movement and case assignment; NP traces.

Week 14-15: WH Movement: motivation for WH Movement (phrase structure, theta theory, binding theory); questions and WH Movement; WH Movement and case assignment; WH traces; Subjacency in English and Italian, and the Subjacency parameter.
(Final Exam)

4. Evaluation of Student Learning.

a. Student performance will be evaluated by regular homework problems, quizzes, and midterm and final exams. Through numerous individual problems on grammatical and ungrammatical English sentences, as well as sentences from other languages, students will come to better appreciate the hidden syntactic structure of English, and the relation of English to other natural languages. Grading will be based on six quizzes (6 points each), six collected homeworks (2 points each), a midterm exam (36 points), and a final exam (36 points).

b. The course is writing active, as students develop their own theories of English language, often using examples of their own construction, and explain in writing why the evidence does or does not support their hypotheses.

5. Rationale.

- a. The course will be placed in the Social and Behavioral Sciences segment of the general education program, as it focuses on empirical and theoretical research in linguistics, and the implications of this research for philosophical issues of human nature.
 - b. The prerequisites for PHI3700G are English 1001G and English 1002G , or permission of the instructor. Due to the technical nature of the theories developed in the course, and the more advanced pace, it is listed as a 3000-level course.
 - c. Some introductory material (from the first three weeks) may overlap with the Psycholinguistics course offered by the Psychology department. However, the detailed investigation of Linguistic theory that occupies the majority of the course is not mirrored in the Psychology course.
 - d. The course is not a requirement for any major or minor.
6. Implementation.
- a. The course will initially be assigned to Prof. Brian Beakley
 - b. The texts for the course are *Introduction to Cognitive Science*, Vol. 1: Language, ed. Gleitman and Lieberman (MIT Press, 1995); and *Introduction to Government and Binding Theory*, 2nd ed., Liliane Haegeman (Blackwell: 1994).
 - c. No additional costs to students.
 - d. The course will first be offered in Fall 2000.
7. A community college course may not be judged equivalent to this course.
8. Date approved by the department: 3/27/00
9. Date approved by CAHCC: 4-5-00
10. Date approved by CAA: 10/19/00

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