Course Description
Philosophy 2700G

Course Proposal for Revised General Education Course: Philosophy 2700G

1. Catalogue Description
   a. 2000-level
   b. Language and Human Nature
   c. 3-0-3
   d. F, S
   e. Language
   f. A formal 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 active.

2. Student Learning Objectives
   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 6-8: 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 and complementizer phrases); the Binary Branching Hypothesis and child language learning.

Week 9: Case Theory: noun phrase case; morphological vs. abstract case in English, German, Latin, and Polish; case assigners in English.  (Midterm Exam)

Weeks 10-12: Binding Theory: typology of noun phrases (anaphors, pronouns, and R-expressions); binding of English anaphors; binding of English pronouns and R-expressions.

Week 13: Control Theory: the fourth noun phrase type; PRO and control; the PRO Theorem; child acquisition of English control verbs.

Weeks 14-15: 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.  (Final Exam)

4. Evaluation of Student Learning.

a. Student performance will be evaluated by regular homework problems and 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 (5% each), six collected homeworks (1.6% each), a midterm exam (30%), and a final exam (30%).

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 PHI 2700G are English 1001G and English 1002G, or permission of the instructor. Due to the introductory approach to the theories developed in the course, it is listed as a 2000-level course.

c. The course does not overlap with existing courses.

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
   c. No additional costs to students.
   d. The course will first be offered in Spring 2002.

7. A community college course may not be judged equivalent to this course.

8. Date approved by the department: 3/27/01

9. Date approved by CAHCC: 4/18/01

10. Date approved by CAA:

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