PLIN0064: Introduction to Generative Grammar B

2023/24 Module information sheet

Name of lecturer
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Module description
We ask what sort of knowledge must be attributed to someone who "knows a language" and begin to answer that question by developing some of the essential building blocks of natural language grammars. The aims of the course are: to introduce students to the scientific study of the structure of sentences; to analyse data sets and formulate appropriate generalisations that characterise them; to discover how such generalisations can be captured by abstract linguistic principles. The course builds on PLIN0003 to provide students with an overview of the current research programme in generative syntax.

Prerequisites
PLIN0003 Introduction to Generative Grammar A or equivalent

Timetable: https://timetable.ucl.1(a)6(b)6[h)6(tt)6(p)6(s:)3(//)6(tim)8(e)6(t)-21(a)6(b)6(le)3(.u)9(cl)-2(.1(a)6(b)6[h)6(tt)6(p

3. Question & Answer session clarifies lecture content and answers any queries on problem set
4. Tutorial develops the week's content further
5. Problem set for the week is due

The problem sets constitute the main work of the course and performance on these problems makes up 50% of the grade. There will also be a final take-home exam – worth the remaining 50%.

You will work on the weekly homework problems, except for the final exam, in groups. Some of the problems are very hard and designed to be too difficult to be solved by one person

I do recommend the following book as optional reading

Haegeman, L. 1994. Introduction to Government and Binding Theory. Blackwell.

The following readings may also serve you well:

General: R. Huddleston and G. K. Pullum. A student's introduction to English grammar. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, 2005.
This is a good introductory descriptive grammar of English.

General: S. Pinker. The Language Instinct. 1994.
An entertaining and polemical defense of the Chomskyan position regarding language that we will be following here.

General: B. Carey. How we learn: The surprising truth about when, where, and why it happens. Random House, New York, 2014.
This is not a linguistics text, but might help you to make the most of your study time in an unusual but evidence based way.

Assessment

submission dates.

You will be assessed on the basis of a portfolio of your group's solutions to the problem sets given (50% of the grade), and a final coursework (50% of the grade).

For the problem sets that go into your portfolio, you are expected to work in groups of four (or five) students, which we will assign you to. You will co-operate and be graded on the best 7 of the graded problem sets given out during the term and you will be the lead author in writing up two of them. The submissions are graded on an A=75, B=65, C=55, D=45, F=20 scale. Exceptionally insightful answers may earn an A+=85 or even an A++=95. Your grade for the portfolio will be determined as follows:

1. the average of the two submissions for which you were lead author; this counts for half of the portfolio grade.

2. the average of the 7 best of your group's graded submissions for that. Grades can be altered upward or downward by up to 10 points depending on how active you are in your group and how well you do as a team player in your group. The adjustment will be based on the group's self-reports and the document histories on google docs.

To do well in this course, here are the things you need to do:

    Attend weekly lecture
    Attend weekly Q&A session
    Attend weekly workshop session
    Cooperate with your group
    Make sure your group hands in all assignments
    Make sure your group does the assignments carefully and well

Here are the things we look for in written work: a written assignment should be

    Neat
    Clear
    Careful
    Thorough

Neatness should be self-explanatory; clarity is mainly about the quality of your writing, but in this course, it also refers to the relation between what you write and certain formal representations which we will adopt, as well as argument and reasoning; in the first few weeks we will point out things that you need to be careful and thorough about.

Some course policies

    Attendance in all sessions is expected. Absences will have a negative effect on the grade.

    You are signed up for one of two tutorials. You must attend your assigned tutorial. New material will be introduced in tutorials, and you will be responsible for it.

We realize that in most courses the syllabus gives you an outline of the course, with topics and reading assignments and all that. But in this course, the topics are mostly a surprise, so you won't get that here. What you get is a promise that at the end of the course you will know a lot about the syntax of English, a bit about the nature of language in general, and something about how to investigate and argue in an area that is very human, very formal, and at the same time very empirical. This can be a lot of work, but it can also be a lot of fun.

Late work and extenuating circumstances
There are no extensions for homework problems. Any requests for extensions to deadlines for your assignments, or for extenuating circumstances to be taken into consideration by examiners, should be made by completing the relevant form. Instructions are available on the Moodle page for this module, under the Assessment tab. No extensions or special consideration can be given outside of this process, and there is a grading penalty for late and over length submission of coursework. Again, information about this policy can be found on the course Moodle page, under the 'Assessment' tab.

Recording: Lectures for this module are recorded via the UCL Lecturecast system, and a link to recordings will be made available via the Moodle page for this module. Please note that recordings can fail for a number of reasons.

Feedback Mechanisms

Other automated feedback (please give details) Further details: Mock exam to serve as revision for real exam after the end of term 1.	x

Oral responses within class (e.g. demonstrators talking to students in lab, stats and computing classes). Further details: Two backup tutors will be present at each of the two group backup sessions.	x
Oral responses outside class (e.g. students are invited to telephone or come to see the module convenor/demonstrators/members of staff teaching on the module with individual queries regarding topics taught) Further details: (e.g. contact details/office hours may be specified here) I operate an open door policy. When my office door (115b) is open, please walk in. I am also happy to arrange a meeting by email: k.abels@ucl.ac.uk.	x
Electronic responses to queries from individual students are provided (as above) Further details:	x
Summative comments on coursework (e.g. handwritten feedback at the end of a written assessment which counts towards the module mark) Further details: There will be summative feedback on group submissions.	x
On-script comments in the body of individual summative coursework Further details: Individual comments will be provided on the submitted .pdf-file via moodle. Detailed comments on common problems will also be contained in the sample solution.	x
Indication of achievement against set marking criteria (e.g. for an individual essay or a lab report) Further details: Coursework will be graded.	x
Feedback using a standard feedback form (e.g. essay feedback form or lab marking forms) Further details:	
Oral feedback on coursework talking to individual students about their coursework on the phone or in person, this could be summative points or specific comments on parts of the essay / lab report / project. Further details:	
Electronic feedback on coursework This could be via email or on a VLE (e.g. using Gradebook on Moodle) Further details: Some feedback will be provided through Moodle, as appropriate.	x
Other specific, targeted tutor feedback (please give details) Further details:	

Peer feedback Fellow students commenting on/marking each other's

UCL Personal and Professional Development Framework: Transferable Skills

Specific transferable skills (categorised into skill areas)	Skill

communication across cultures, including learning other languages	
Planning and making decisions - Able to identify steps needed to work towards goals and communicate them, including means of monitoring progress	x
WORKING WITH OTHERS	
Working in teams - Able to co-operate with others, to contribute your strengths and learn from theirs with a common purpose	x
Negotiating - Able to respect the needs and interests of others when they differ from your own and to find common ground	x
Leading - Able to galvanise a team into cooperative action, to manage, guide or facilitate a group to maximise success	

Understanding others -