How come the topic for so many days is tba (to be announced)? Here’s how this course works. Each class we will gradually add new features to our theory of English syntax. Most of the time (after the first few classes) the ideas will come from the students, with nudges and suggestions from me that decrease in intensity as expertise in the class rises. (So at the beginning I’m fairly heavy handed, but near the end I say very little.) It’s not possible to tell in advance which things we will add when, what appropriate readings might be, and what an interesting next move is, until we see how the class goes. So these things will be announced at the end of every class period. But, you should know in advance when the exams and presentations are scheduled, and so they are given here.

All papers are on closed reserve in the Library.

January 3: introduction

January 5: Pinker, “An Instinct to Acquire an Art,” “Chatterboxes,” and “The Language Mavens” (All three are from his book The Language Instinct.)


I recommend that you read the Syntax pamphlet slowly and carefully. People have reported to me that they have found it maybe a bit too efficient, as there isn’t a lot of repetition. All of the exercises that are mentioned here in this syllabus should be written up to hand in. They will, most of the time, be graded by our TA. You don’t need to type them, but neatness counts.

January 7: No class (Flynn out of town)

January 10: Flynn section 1.2. Exercises 2 – 7.

January 12: Flynn, up to but not including section 1.4.2. Exercises 8 – 10, 14 – 20.


January 17: Flynn, up to p. 50. Exercises 1 – 4 (of Part 2).

January 19: Finish the pamphlet, and do the rest of the exercises.

January 21: Lasnik, “Syntax”. Exercises 1.1, 1.2, 1.3 (Try to state the rule in terms of the metalanguage used in the Flynn pamphlet.), 1.5, 1.8, 1.10

January 24: tba

January 26: tba
January 28: tba

January 31: tba

February 2: Presentation Scheduling

February 4: Mid-term exam

February 7: Mid-term break

February 9: tba

February 11: tba;
    First drafts submitted; Make an appointment to see me.

February 14: tba

February 16: Presentations Begin. (tentative) We will do four per day. Each will last fifteen minutes. The presenter will speak for no more that ten minutes, and there will be a five minute question period.

1.
2.
3.
4.

February 18: Summary. We will interrupt presentations on Fridays to summarize the current state of the theory

February 21: Presentations

1.
2.
3.
4.

February 23: Presentations

1.
2.
3.
4.

February 25: Summary
February 28: Presentations

1.
2.
3.
4.

March 2: Presentations

1.
2.
3.
4.

March 4: Summary

March 7: Review

March 9: Exam. This is the last day of class. There is no other final exam scheduled.

March 15, 9:00 am: Final Papers Due in Goodsell 101C