Linguistics 4020: *The Structure of Modern English*
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Some poetics and syntax papers are at
[http://www-personal.umich.edu/~jlawler/hajpapers.html](http://www-personal.umich.edu/~jlawler/hajpapers.html)

Squibnet is at [http://www-personal.umich.edu/~jlawler/haj/Squibnet/](http://www-personal.umich.edu/~jlawler/haj/Squibnet/)

**Goals:**
This course will examine the particularities that Modern English manifests. It will have sections on Phonetics, Phonology, Morphology, Syntax, Semantics and Pragmatics. In each section, we will celebrate English's orneriness – it willingness to boldly go where no language has gone before (nor is any language likely to follow its lead).

**Books:**

Optional: Anyone who is going to want to deeply remember syntax will of course eventually want to buy Jim McCawley's indelible *The Syntactic Phenomena of English* University of Chicago Press (0226556298 / 0-226-55629-8) This is the edition with two volumes in one book (1998)

Similarly, if you are addicted to morphology, you will always treasure Mark Aronoff's *Word Formation in Generative Grammar* (1976). MIT Press. ISBN: 0-262-51017-0. And Beth Levin's *English Verb Classes and Alternations: A Preliminary Investigation*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (1993) ISBN 0-226-47533-6 (paper) is a delicious cookie jar of weird (and unweird) classes of verbs that you may have thought you had forgotten since you were three.

I do not now know what to recommend to you as similarly permanent introductions to phonology and to semantics.

All-purpose recommendation, for any course, any major:


The good news: Any tests will be open book – any books or other materials may be brought to the tests. More likely, they will be take-home. You will be able to consult more there than you can carry.

The bad news: None of your materials will help much, if you have not learned to think for yourself about our DRINK ME reawakening potion. This course is not about memorization of a set of concepts and definitions. Rather, what is required is a general dancingness of mind, and the exercise of intelligence and creativity. What is not required, but is fervently hoped for, is that you become fascinated with language in general and grammar in particular, and find that you cannot live without it. [BTW: you can’t]

Grading policy: To be discussed in class. Unreasonable numbers of unexcused absences may result in grade deflation.

Disabilities: In accordance with the terms and spirit of Public Law 101-336 (Americans with Disabilities Act) and Section 504, Rehabilitation Act, I will cooperate with the Office of Disability Accommodation to make reasonable special arrangements for students with disabilities. If you have a disability which will require some accommodation under the terms of these acts, please come to me and discuss your individual needs, or give me a written statement. If you have not registered yet with the Office of Disability Accommodation, I encourage you to do so. Their telephone number is (940) 565-4323; TDD access (940) 565 2958.

General: Insofar as this is possible, nothing is written in stone. No significant learning is possible in contexts which are not as kind and flexible as possible. We are all humans, trying to learn from each other. If there are special problems for you, come and talk to me about them.
It is in fact nothing short of a miracle that modern methods of instruction have not yet entirely strangled the holy curiosity of inquiry; for this delicate little plant, aside from stimulation, stands warmly in need of freedom; without this, it goes to wrack and ruin without fail.

Albert Einstein

The most beautiful experience we can have is the mysterious. It is the fundamental emotion that stands at the cradle of true art and true science.

Albert Einstein

The World As I See It

"I never try to teach my students anything. I only try to create an environment in which they can learn."

Albert Einstein
I. Phonetics

Week 1A The unusualness of English’s segment inventory: 30% of the total number of phonetic elements used in English are vowels. Weird segments: *huh! hunh hmpf tsk tsk pfft whew uh-oh eeee* Syllabic consonants, and the syllabication of uncertainty.

Week 1B Faspeach. How “standard” Phonetics mutates as rate of speech increases. *Grape pizza. Bapman No I do not want any of them.* Award given for student who can shrink this sentence to the fewest number of syllables. The faspeach existence of many segments and other phonetic entities believed “impossible” in English phonetics. Elision.

II. Phonology


Week 2B Ross’s critique of SPE. The unpredictability of word stress.

Week 3A Phonological conspiracies: how independent rules function together in such a way as to attain various phonological targets. Leftward ho!

Week 3B Phonological hierarchies of boundaries.

III. Morphology

Week 4A The primary strata of the English vocabulary: Germanic, Latinate (and French), Greek. Morphological miscegenation.


Week 5A Productive prefixation of #-marked prefixes. Wording up: hitting the unmarked sentential bull’s-eye.

Week 5B Latinate morphological rules. The squish from Latinate to Germanic.

TAKE-HOME MIDTERM

IV. Syntax

Week 6A The cornerstone: three insights of Zellig Harris
1. Big sentences are made up out of little ones (which are called kernels).
2. Meanings of big sentences are made up of the meanings of their kernels.
3. Languages resemble each other more kernelly than surfacely.

The fundamental notions of related sentences, deep and surface structure, transformations, grammatical relations, and thematic roles. Islands and other types of restrictions. Idioms and constructions. Markedness and universal grammar.

| Week 8B | Left and Right Dislocations. Deictic Dislocation. |
| Week 9B | Siamese sentences: Everybody was drinking wine: Jen was drinking The Little Penguin, Kim was drinking Eooc Domani, and Art was drinking Ripple. Rotrooters sentences: I whipped him into signing was bow I forced him to sign. |
| Week 10A | Lingsquishtics/ Nouniness. The frozenness of pseudoclefts. |
| Week 10B | Like-syntax. Defective NP’s. Auxiliaries as (crappy) verbs. |
| V. | Semantics |
| Week 12A | Freezes, Me First. Sounding. |
| Week 12B | Immediacy. Iconicity in semantax. |
Week 13B  About itself.  Topicalization

VI.  Pragmatics


Week 14B  Metaphor.  The conduit metaphor.

Week 15  Review and final exam.

Reading


______.  “The superficial nature of anaphoric island constraints.”  Linguistic Inquiry, 2.4, pp. 599-600. (1971e)


______.  “Languages as poems.”  In Deborah Tannen (ed.), Georgetown University Round Table on Languages and Linguistics 1985: Languages and Linguistics - The Interdependence of Theory, Data, and Application, Georgetown University Press, Georgetown, Washington, D.C., pp. 180-204. (1986c)

______.  “Defective noun phrases.”  In Audra Dainora, Rachel Hemphill, Barbara Lukas, Barbara Need and Sheri Pargman (eds.) (eds),