

The Chinese University of Hong Kong  
Department of Linguistics and Modern Languages  
First Term, 2025-26

**Course Code:** LING5102B

**Course Title:** Foundations II: Syntax and Semantics

**Course Overview:**

The course aims to introduce to the students the basic theoretical concepts in generative syntax in both GB (the Government and Binding Theory) frame and MP (the Minimalist Program) frame, and to provide the students with basic trainings in syntactic-semantic analysis of cross-language (mainly English and Chinese) data. The major content includes: the differences between traditional grammar and generative grammar in terms of their object of inquiry and methodology, the lexicon and lexical features, the X-bar theory, the Case Theory, the Binding Theory, conditions on NP-movement, and Wh-movements, and also the basics in MP syntax (Lexical Array, Merge, Label, Spell-out and the interface Conditions).

**Learning Outcomes:**

Upon completion of the course, the students will be able to understand some of the on-going discussions in syntax in general and generative syntax in particular, and to lay foundations for further studies in syntax and semantics.

**List of Topics**

Topic	Contents/fundamental concepts
1. Basic concepts in generative syntax and semantics	The object of inquiry of generative syntax; Methodology in doing generative syntax.
2. The X-bar Theory	Bar-level projection, head, complement, Spec, adjuncts,
3. The X-bar theory extended for functional categories	DPs, CPs, TPs
4. The Binding Theory	c-command, anaphor, Binding Theory, locality.
5. The Theta Theory	Thematic relations, theta-roles, EPP
6. AUX and Functional categories	Complementizers, Determiners, Tense, Aspect, Voice and Mood
7. Head-to-head Movement and DP movement	Verb movement, V movement, Do-support. The Case Theory, passives, raising.
8. Wh-movement and Locality Conditions	Covert wh-movement and overtwh-movement, Relativization, Island Conditions.
9. Advanced Topics	Raising and Control, The Empty Category Principle.
10. Basic Concepts in MP syntax	Differences between GB syntax and MP syntax
11. Basic Concepts in semantics	Reference, sense, meaning triangle, predicate logic, etc.
12. Aspect and quantification	Entailment, presupposition, aspect, quantification

**Learning activities (weekly)**

Lectures (2.5 hours) in/out class		Interactive tutorial (0.5 hour) in/out class	
M √	M/O	M √	M/O

M: Mandatory activity in the course

O: Optional activity

NA: Not applicable

**Back-up Assessment scheme (for online teaching)**

Task nature	Description	Weight
Assignments	3 assignments	60%
Final Exam	Problem solving in GB syntax and semantics.	40%

**Grade descriptors**

Grade	Overall Course
A	Outstanding performance on all learning outcomes. The student demonstrates a deep understanding of the theoretical and empirical motivations for the generative syntactic approach. S/he is able to use diagnostic tests creatively to analyze syntactic structures, both novel and taught. Coherent syntactic argumentation can be well articulated. The knowledge synthesized enables them to discover theoretical gaps and suggest alternative in syntactic theories.
A-	Generally outstanding performance on all (or almost all) learning outcomes. The student should have a comprehensive understanding of the generative syntactic approach. S/he is able to properly explain the relations between syntactic concepts and conduct relevant syntactic tests in analyzing structures discussed in class and novel structures.
B	Substantial performance on all learning outcomes, or high performance on some learning outcomes which compensates for less satisfactory performance on others, resulting in overall substantial performance. The student has a reasonable understanding of the generative syntactic theory. S/he is able to propose and apply relevant syntactic tests in analyzing structures taught in the course. But some problems are found in analyses.
C	Satisfactory performance on the majority of learning outcomes, possibly with a few weaknesses. The student only demonstrates reasonable but partial understanding of the syntactic theory and principles, and is able to collate relevant information or enumerate some tests in analyzing syntactic structures. However, there are obvious problems in justifying the proposed syntactic analysis.

D	Barely satisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes. The student is able to recall some concepts taught and name some relevant syntactic tests. However, understanding of the relations between concepts is generally poor. S/he can only provide some vague description of the syntactic structures taught without justifications.
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F	Unsatisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes, or failure to meet specified assessment requirements. The student can only name the concepts at best and barely have any understanding of the relations between them. They have little idea how structures are described and diagnosed.
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**Recommended learning resources:**

**1. TEXTBOOK**

Andrew Carnie (2013): *Syntax-A Generative Introduction* (The 3rd edition), Wiley-Blackwell.

John Saeed (2008): *Semantics*, Wiley-Blackwell.

**2. RECOMMENDED READINGS**

Noam Chomsky (1995) *The Minimalist Program*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

**Feedback for evaluation:**

Course Blackboard page, one-minute paper, e-mail, Teaching Evaluation questionnaire

**Course schedule**

Class/week	Date (MM/DD)	Topic
1.	09-05	Basic concepts in generative syntax
2.	09-12	The X-bar Theory
3.	09-19	The X-bar theory extended for functional categories
4.	09-26	The Binding Theory
5.	10-03	The Theta Theory
6.	10-17	AUX and Functional categories
7.	10-24	Head-to-head Movement and DP movement
8.	10-31	Wh-movement and Locality Conditions
9.	11-07	Raising and Control, The Empty Category Principle
10.	11-14	Basic Concepts in MP syntax
11.	11-21	Basic Concepts in semantics
12.	11-28	Entailment, presupposition, aspect
13.	12-05	Final Examination

PS. no class on 10 October 2025.

<b>Professor/Lecturer/Instructor:</b>	
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