LING419W – "Topics in Syntactic Theory: *Wh*-questions around the world"
University of Maryland, Fall 2019

Course information

Time:	Tuesday & Thursday, 3:30–4:45pm
Location:	Marie Mount Hall (MMH) 1304
Website:	Course materials and assignments on ELMS (elms.umd.edu)
Prerequisites:	LING311

Instructor information

Instructor:	Aaron Doliana
Email:	doliana@umd.edu
Office:	Marie Mount Hall (MMH) 3416F
Office hours:	Mondays 2:00–3:00pm, and by appointment

Course description

This seminar provides background into the fundamental questions surrounding the syntax of *wh*-questions. The seminar begins by asking what a *wh*-question is, syntactically. It then turns to the question of what syntactic dependency, and mechanism, underlies *wh*-questions, looking first in detail at English. The empirical scope is then broadened to other languages, in particular so-called "*wh*-in-situ" languages such as Mandarin Chinese where the *wh*-phrase does not move, and languages which seem to have multiple *wh*-question strategies available. In this way, a question central to syntactic theory is approached: what is the relation between the different ways in which *wh*-questions are realized? is there a single fundamental mechanism in spite of differences in form? is there a single representation for all questions, at some level of representation? Throughout the seminar, we will read and discuss work that has formed and shaped these questions; you will learn about some of the core empirical paradigms and generalizations in this domain, and about influential theories that were formed based on them.

Course goals

The primary aims of this seminar are
- to help you gain confidence in reading and evaluating primary literature in the domain of *wh*-questions and *wh*-movement;
- to provide you with tools and diagnostics to analyze and reach conclusions about the syntax of *wh*-expressions in any language;
- to help you gain an appreciation for cross-linguistic variation, the questions about language acquisition that arise in this context, and how a theory of Universal Grammar attempts to answer them.

More specifically, in this course you will practice different aspects of syntactic research (translating sentences into trees, coming up with paradigms of sentences to test a given hypothesis or to replicate a certain effect, applying constraints to structures, proposing

solutions to unify cross-linguistic asymmetries, applying diagnostics to unknown paradigms), reading primary literature, giving presentations in an academic context, and critically assessing arguments and hypotheses (identifying implicit assumptions, evaluating the soundness of an argument, identifying predictions and testing them). In this course, you will also learn how to keep different levels of analysis separate: empirical generalizations, general approaches/theories to a problem, specific technical implementations of an approach/theory.

Expectations

Readings

The seminar will be essentially structured such that we will be reading one paper (either a journal article, or book chapter) per week. On Thursdays we prepare for the paper: the context of the paper is introduced, as well as unfamiliar concepts. On Tuesdays we discuss the paper in more depth. The papers will be made available on the ELMS course website. You are expected to read the assigned reading(s) by the day of class, and in such a way that you can be an active participant of the discussion and share your thoughts or questions. Reading responses/prompts (RR) are assigned to help you digest the readings and focus on certain aspects. It is highly recommended to finish reading the paper the day before the reading response is due, to allow yourself a night to digest the contents. Similarly, it is recommended to do a first pass of the paper when the paper is first indicated in italics in the syllabus. Papers in syntactic theory can be dense, so the number of pages is mostly not a good indicator for how long it will take you to read them: allow yourself plenty of time.

Assignments

There will be different kinds of assignments: 5 practice exercises (P), 10 reading responses (RR), 2 presentations (Pres) (one presentation of a paper, one presentation of your term paper topic), 5 stages of your term paper (TP) (proposal, outline, first draft, second draft, final draft). More information about the format of presentations and term paper will follow in the first month of the course.

Assignments are by default due by 11am on the day in the schedule. (*Italicized items suggest when to start an assignment.*) They will be posted at least one week before their due date on the course website (ELMS), and you should submit them as a PDF via ELMS. RRs will be mostly graded for completion, and the lowest grade RR will be dropped. This means you can cash it in as a joker (use it wisely), but you will still be expected to have done the reading and be prepared for class.

I will aim to return graded assignments within 7 days, and steps towards your term paper by Sunday of the week they are due.

Participation and preparation

Participation is essential in every class, but even more so in a seminar. I expect you to come prepared, and to make every effort to be an **active** participant of the seminar. Preparation is key in this: write down thoughts you had while you were reading the paper, or highlight specific passages that you want to discuss in more detail. While I will have a plan for discussion, I also want the discussion to suit your interests. You don't need to worry about asking "stupid questions" (there is no such thing in a learning environment), or irrelevant or side-tracking

questions (I will reserve the right to "box" them if necessary). Your questions, remarks, observations, allow you to test your own understanding of an argument or an interpretation of a phenomenon. They also help others learn and gain clarity by filling in gaps or solving misunderstandings that others are likely to share with you.

Contributions of any sort are encouraged, but your participation is expected to be mindful and respectful of everyone's personal identities, which include at least (in no particular order) gender, race, sexual orientation, social class, cultural heritage, spirituality/faith, linguistic identity (accent/dialect), physical or mental condition.

Presentations

Each of you will give two presentations as part of this seminar. The first one is a presentation of a paper on the syntax of *wh*-questions in some language X. The second presentation will be about your (initial thoughts or conclusions from your) term paper. The two presentations are both aimed to help you practice presentation skills, but also serve two different purposes.

The paper presentation will serve the purpose of digesting a paper in syntactic theory, and spotting and presenting key aspects of the paper—aspects which we will have covered in the course of the semester. The presentation will be done in pairs to help you understand the contents more easily by discussing and preparing them in dialogue. You will be expected to prepare a handout for the presentation, and to meet with me before the presentation in order to clarify contents of the paper and go over the structure of your presentation. The handout and the presentation will be expected to minimally cover a number of aspects of the paper: what surface pattern is observed for *wh*-questions in language X, what syntax is proposed, what diagnostics were used to argue for that syntax. You will choose the paper from a pool of papers that will be made available to you on the course website. (More detailed information will be made available closer to the time of the presentation.)

The term paper presentation will serve the purpose of receiving feedback from your peers, as well as practicing giving feedback to them. You will give a brief presentation of your term paper (to be), at the stage where the first draft of the paper is due. You will be given guidelines closer to the time about how to maximize feedback by providing a clear and concise context for your term paper, and focusing on a particular aspect of it—for example, a tentative generalization about some data; the framing of a problem; the wording of a hypothesis; a request for help on how to extend the data; *etc*. Closer to the time, we will also talk about what makes good feedback so that you can be an effective audience for the speaker.

In both presentation contexts, I will ask the non-presenters to take on other tasks. For example, for each presentation, I will ask someone to "chair the session", *i.e.* to give the speaker(s) indications about how much time they have left and take questions from the floor.

Term paper

Instead of taking a final exam, you are expected to write a term paper at the end of the semester. To help you navigate this task, the writing is broken up into several steps: a proposal, an outline, a first draft, a second draft, a final draft. You will receive written feedback on each part leading up to the final draft, and will be expected to meet with me to discuss the topic and your outline before submitting those steps. The topic is of your choice—it essentially just needs to be about the syntax of *wh*-questions (or of a related *wh*-phenomenon): the paper can be a

critical literature review of a related domain we have not covered, explorational research in English or another (maybe even yet undocumented) language, ideas about how to further test a hypothesis that was covered during the semester, a proposal for an experiment or a study, *etc*.

Evaluation

Practice exercises (P):   20%
Reading responses (RR):   20%
Presentations (Pres):   20%
Participation: 15%
Term paper (TP):   25%

Scale:	100% - 98% = A+	<98% - 93% = A	<93% - 90% = A-
	<90% - 87% = B+	<87% - 83% = B	<83% - 80% = B-
	<80% - 77% = C+	<77% - 73% = C	<73% - 70% = C-
	<70% - 67% = D+	<67% - 63% = D	<63% - 60% = D-
	<60% = F		

Exams

There is no midterm, and no final exam. Instead of a midterm, one practice exercise will be slightly larger. Instead of the final, you will write a term paper.

Course policies

This section is adapted from a syllabus by Phoebe Gaston

A full list of course-related policies and relevant links to resources may be found at: http://www.ugst.umd.edu/courserelatedpolicies.html . It is your responsibility to make yourself familiar with university policies. Policies specific to this course are described below.

Communication

All course-related communication will occur via ELMS. Adjustments to the schedule of topics, readings, and assignments will also be published on the course website. Please allow up to 24h for me to respond during the week, and until Monday morning for messages received during the weekend. Make sure to review your notification settings on ELMS if you want announcements and messages to be forwarded to your email! (ELMS->Account->Notifications)

Electronic Devices

You may use your computer or tablet for taking notes during class. It should go without saying, but please do not use your computer or tablet for anything other than taking notes or referring to a reading. This includes email or anything in your internet browser, both of which are distracting to people around you. As for cellphones, please refrain from using them during class, entirely. Cellphones should be on silent, unless you have a potential emergency (in which case your phone may be on vibrate).

Attendance

You are expected to attend every class, and to let me know in advance if you will miss class. If you have missed class, you can download the handout from ELMS, and I recommend asking a classmate if they are willing to share their notes with you. After you have reviewed the handout and notes, you are welcome to come to office hours and/or ask me any additional questions. If you have an emergency or if you are experiencing an illness or any other situation which is interfering with your ability to attend class or participate fully in the course, make sure that you contact me as soon as possible to let me know what is happening. Letting me know of a problem in a timely manner helps to make sure that I can accommodate your needs.

Late work

If you have a medical or family emergency, please email me whenever feasible and we will work out a solution for late work, without penalty.

Otherwise, for assignments (practice exercises, term paper components), please let me know by email, ahead of the deadline, if you need an extension. If you have done so, late assignments will be accepted within 48h of the deadline, with a 25% penalty. The penalty may be waived in cases of illness or other special circumstances. Having a lot of work in your other classes does not count as a special circumstance.

If you have not written to me before the deadline in a non-emergency situation, late assignments (practice exercises, final paper components) will not be accepted.

For reading responses, extensions will not be granted in general, unless you have an emergency. This means that late reading responses (submitted after 11 am on the day the reading is assigned for) cannot be given credit. I have this policy because doing the reading and submitting your summary *before* class has much more value both for you, so that you are prepared for class discussions, and for me, so that I know what students took away from the readings before we start our discussions.

Group work & Academic Honesty

You are welcome to discuss assignments with other people. However, you must complete each part of an assignment yourself (no dividing questions among group members) and all work must be written up by yourself and in your own words. At the top of the assignment, indicate who you worked with (*e.g.* "thanks to Name for discussing aspect/section x with me"). If you fail to do this, undisclosed collaborations will be treated as plagiarism. It is also plagiarism to hand in something that your group worked on that you don't fully understand. The final paper will be done individually, although you are welcome to discuss ideas with your classmates. Reading responses should also be written on your own, although, again, discussing the readings with your classmates is completely fine and encouraged. Any suspected cases of plagiarism will be reported to the Student Honor Council. If you are in any doubt about what is acceptable, just ask me.

Children in the Classroom

All exclusively breastfeeding babies are welcome in class as often as necessary. Older children and babies will be tolerated in the case of unforeseen disruption of childcare but should remain

an exception and not a long-term solution. In all such cases I ask that the student and child sit close to the door so that any special attention can be taken care of outside with minimum disruption for other students. Should you require childcare-related absences, including from sheer tiredness, contact me and I will be happy to problem-solve and make you feel supported.

Disability Support

Students with a documented disability should inform the instructor within the add-drop period if academic accommodations will be needed. *NB*: The university requires you to meet with me in person to provide me with a copy of the Accommodations Letter and to obtain my signature on the Acknowledgement of Student Request form. We will plan together how accommodations will be implemented throughout the semester. To obtain the required Accommodation Letter, please contact Disability Support Service (DSS) at 301-314-7682 or dissup@umd.edu .

Tentative schedule

Schedule is subject to change; see course site for up-to-date version. All changes will be announced in class and via ELMS notifications. In particular, classes marked with an asterisk (*) are subject to change depending on interests and time.

Assignments of any form are due by 11am on the day indicated (unless specified differently), to allow me to overview them before class (P=practice exercise; RR=reading response).

Week	Date	Topic	Readings	Assignments due (11am)
1	Tu 8/27	Introduction to seminar		
	Th 8/29	What is a *wh*-question?	*Dayal (2016:ch1.1)*	P1 Expectations
2	Tu 9/3	What is a *wh*-question? How are *wh*-questions formed? Architecture of Grammar	Dayal (2016:ch1.1) Chomsky (1986:65–78)	RR1
	Th 9/5	<u>*Wh*-movement</u> Length of dependency (*Locality*)	*den Dikken & Lahne (2013)*	
3	Tu 9/10	"—Islands and Subjacency	den Dikken & Lahne (2013)	RR2 P2
	Th 9/12	<u>*Wh*-movement</u> Path of dependency (*Successive Cyclicity*)	*Boeckx (2008:ch2)*	
4	Tu 9/17	"— evidence	Boeckx (2008:ch2)	RR3 P3
	Th 9/19	"— evidence	Boeckx (2008:ch2)	
5	Tu 9/24	<u>*Wh*-Movement</u> Superiority, Crossover		

	Th 9/26	*Wh-in-situ* English multiple *wh*-questions	*Pesetsky (1987)*	RR4
6	Tu 10/1	"—LF-movement *vs* Unselective Binding	Pesetsky (1987)	P4
	Th 10/3	*Echo questions* Properties	*Sobin (1990)* (*skim*)	
7	Tu 10/8	"—Applying movement diagnostics	*Sobin (1990)* (*skim*)	
	Th 10/10	*Wh-in-situ* Overview	*Cheng (2009)*	
8	Tu 10/15	"	Cheng (2009)	RR5
	Th 10/17	"Trigger" of *wh*-movement Clausal Typing	*Cheng (PhD thesis:ch2)*	
9	Tu 10/22	"—discussion: what was the trigger until now?	Cheng (PhD thesis:ch2)	RR6
	Th 10/24	Optional *wh*-fronting Movement or not?	*Cheng (PhD thesis:ch3)*	*Pres0: pick paper (by end of day); start meeting*
10	Tu 10/29	"	Cheng (PhD thesis:ch3)	RR7
	Th 10/31	Data considerations Experimental syntax; Mandarin Chinese (again)	*Lu, Thompson, & Yoshida (2019)*	
11	Tu 11/5	"	Lu, Thompson, & Yoshida (2019)	RR8 P5: Part 2
	Th 11/7	More wh-typology: The Wh-Criterion again		Pres1: met
12	Tu 11/12	**Optional wh-movement workshop**		*TP0: start meeting for topic*
	Th 11/14	**Optional wh-movement workshop**	*Lutz et al. (2000): Intro*	
13	Tu 11/19	More wh-typology: The Wh-Criterion, still. What prevents multiple wh-fronting in English. "Long *wh*-questions"	Lutz et al. (2000): Intro	TP1: Proposal; *start meeting for outline*
	Th 11/21	**Term paper presentations** OR *"Long" wh-questions: Partial *wh*-movement and *wh*-copying*	*Bruening (2006)*	
14	Tu 11/26	**Term paper presentations** OR *"Long" wh-questions: Partial *wh*-movement and *wh*-copying*	Bruening (2006)	TP2: Outline RR9
	Th 11/28	NO CLASS (Thanksgiving break)		

15	Tu 12/3	**Term paper presentations** OR *"Long" *wh*-questions:* Partial *wh*-movement and *wh*-copying*	Lutz et al. (2000): Intro *Bruening (2006)*	TP3: Draft 1
	Th 12/5	**Term paper presentations** OR *"Long" *wh*-questions:* Partial *wh*-movement and *wh*-copying*	Bruening (2006)	
	Tu 12/7	NO CLASS (Exam week)		
	Th 12/12	NO CLASS (Exam week)		TP4: Final version

References: Assigned readings

Boeckx, Cedric (2008). *Understanding Minimalist Syntax: Lessons from Locality in Long- Distance Dependencies*, *Generative Syntax*, vol. 9. Blackwell.

Bruening, Benjamin (2006). Differences between the Wh-Scope-Marking and Wh-Copy Constructions in Passamaquoddy. *Linguistic Inquiry*, 37, no. 1: pp. 25–49.

Bruening, Benjamin (2007). Wh-in-Situ Does Not Correlate with Wh-Indefinites or Question Particles. *Linguistic Inquiry*, 38, no. 1: pp. 139–166.

Cheng, Lisa Lai-Shen (1991). *On the Typology of Wh-Questions*. Ph.D. thesis, MIT. Cheng, Lisa

Lai-Shen (2009). Wh-in-situ, from the 1980s to Now. *Language and Linguistic Compass*, 3, no. 3: pp. 767–791.

Chomsky, Noam (1986). *Knowledge of Language*. New York: Prager Publishers.

Dayal, Veneeta (2016). *Questions*, *Oxford surveys in Semantics and Pragmatics*, vol. 4. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

den Dikken, Marcel and Antje Lahne (2013). The Locality of Syntactic Dependencies. In: *Generative Syntax*, edited by Marcel den Dikken, *Cambridge Handbooks in Language and Linguistics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 655–698.

Lu, Jiayi, Cynthia K. Thompson, and Masaya Yoshida (Just Accepted). Chinese Wh-in-Situ and Islands: A Formal Judgment Study, to be published in *Linguistic Inquiry.*

Lutz, Uli, Gereon Müller, and Arnim von Stechow (2000). Introduction. In: *Wh-Scope Marking*, edited by Uli Lutz, Gereon Müller, and Arnim von Stechow, *Linguistik Ak- tuell/Linguistics Today*, vol. 37, Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins, pp. 1–16.

Sobin, Nicholas (1990). On the Syntax of English Echo Questions. *Lingua*, 81: pp. 141–167.

References: Choices for student presentations (Workshop on "Optional *wh*-(non-)fronting")

Babaljik, Jonathan and Susi Wurmbrand (2015). Questions with Declarative Syntax Tell Us What About Selection? In: *50 Years Later: Reflections on Chomsky's Aspects*, edited by Ángel Gallego and Dennis Ott, Cambridge, MA: MITWPL, pp. 13–32.

Chang, Melody Ya-yin (2000). On Tsou Wh-Questions: Movement or in Situ? *Language and Linguistics*, 1, no. 2: pp. 1–18.

Davies, William D. (2003). Extreme Locality in Madurese *Wh*-Questions. *Syntax*, 6, no. 3: pp. 237–259.

Denham, Kristin (2000). Optional Wh-Movement in Babine-Witsuwit'en. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory*, 19: pp. 199–251.

Potsdam, Eric (2009). Austronesian Verb-Initial Languages and Wh-Question Strategies. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory*, 27: pp. 737–771.

Sato, Yosuke and Jian Gang Ngui (2017). *Wh*-Questions in Singapore English Tell Us What About Questions With Declarative Syntax? *Glossa*, 2, no. 1: pp. 17.1–18.

Torrence, Harold and Jason Kandybowicz (2015). *Wh*-Question Formation in Krachi. *Journal of African Languages and Linguistics*, 36, no. 2: pp. 253–285.

References: Other work discussed in class in more depth

Baker, C. L. (1970). Notes on the Description of English Questions: The Role of an Abstract Question Morpheme. *Foundations of Language*, 6, no. 2: pp. 197–219.

Henry, Alison (1995). *Belfast English and Standard English: Dialectal Variation and Pa- rameter Setting*, chap. 5, Inversion in Embedded Questions. Oxford University Press, pp. 105–123.

Kayne, Richard and Jean-Yves Pollock (1978). Stylistic Inversion, Successive Cyclicity, and Move NP in French. *Linguistic Inquiry*, 9, no. 4: pp. 595–621.

Lasnik, Howard and Mamoru Saito (1992). *Move α: Conditions on Its Application and Output*, *Current Studies in Linguistics*, vol. 22. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Soh, Hooi Ling (2005). *Wh*-in-Situ in Mandarin Chinese. *Linguistic Inquiry*, 36, no. 1: pp. 143–155.