



Ling 5900/8900: Topics in Linguistics  
*Introduction to Questions*

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Spring 2020, University of Minnesota  
Office Hours: W, 11-12, Elliott S313

### ABOUT THE COURSE

**T**HIS course will be an in-depth exploration into the very broad natural language phenomenon of questions (and answers), with a view towards studying their syntax and to some extent, their semantics/pragmatics. A diverse range of questions – matrix and embedded counterparts of polar questions, wh-questions, alternative questions, split questions, biased questions, tag questions – will be covered, with a robust emphasis on cross-linguistic data paradigms. We will read about syntactic issues such as basic generation of questions, islands, extraction, multiple wh-questions, superiority and anti-superiority, polarity particles, pied-piping, Q-particles, and some semantic issues like disjunction and alternatives generation (intro to Alternative Semantics), prominent theories such as Hamblin (1953) and Karttunen (1977), scope readings, bias and evidence, exhaustivity in embedded questions, questions and focus.

### LOGISTICS

- Classes: 9:45am – 11am TTh, Folwell Hall 119.
- Prereqs: Syntax I or Syntactic Theory I, and a willingness to read linguistics papers carefully.
- Textbook: None. Readings will be posted on the course site.

### EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT

Reading & participation in discussion	30%
Argument Map creation & presentation	30%
Final Term Paper/Squib	40%

If you do not participate in class discussions in reasonable amounts, I'll have no way of knowing if you did the reading, and will thus assume that you didn't. Argument Maps are crucial to analytical thinking (see the document 'Argument Maps' under Course Files for explicit instructions on how to execute one for any paper of your choice). Undergraduate students can either write a squib (5-8 pages) or a term paper (10-12 pages), while graduate students are required to write a term paper. Theory-informed descriptions are acceptable for either kind of submission.



Week	Topic	Reading
Week 1 T Jan 21, Th Jan 23	what are questions, typology of questions	
Week 2 T Jan 28, Th Jan 30	wh-movement, wh-in-situ, islands	Carnie (2013), Chapter 12
Week 3 T Feb 4, Th Feb 6	movement and locality, contd.; LF movement	Watanabe (2001)
Week 4 T Feb 11, Th Feb 13	the Pied-Piper of Hamelin; pied-piping	Cable (2012)
Week 5 T Feb 18, Th Feb 20	q-particles & related strategies	Cable (2010), Chapter 1
Week 6 T Feb 25, Th Feb 27	introduction to embedding	Grimshaw (1979)
Week 7 T Mar 3, Th Mar 5	exclamatives as wh-constructions	Zanuttini & Portner (2003) (p. 39-66)
Week 8 T Mar 17, Th Mar 19	<b>Argument Map presentations</b>	
Week 9 T Mar 24, Th Mar 26	questions and focus	Kiss (1995), Chapter 1
Week 10 T Mar 31, Th Apr 2	multiple wh-questions, superiority	Richards (1997), Chapter 3
Week 11 T Apr 7, Th Apr 9	polar, alternative, and polar-alternative questions	Han & Romero (2004)
Week 12 T Apr 14, Th Apr 16	semantics of questions, exhaustivity	Optional: Dayal (2016), Chapter 1
Week 13 T Apr 21, Th Apr 23	the syntax of answers	Holmberg (2015), Chapter 3 (p. 52-91)
Week 14 T Apr 28, Th Apr 30	negation & bias; tag and rhetorical questions	Dayal (2016), Chapter 9
Final paper/squib due	<b>Saturday, May 9th</b>	

[March 9th - 16th: spring break (~~from~~ for studying!)]

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PRIMARY READINGS: BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Cable, Seth. 2010. *The grammar of Q: Q-particles, wh-movement, and pied-piping*. Oxford University Press.
- Cable, Seth. 2012. "Pied-Piping: Introducing Two Recent Approaches." *Language and Linguistics Compass* 6.12: 816-832.
- Carnie, Andrew. 2002. *Syntax: A generative introduction*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Dayal, Veneeta. 2016. *Questions*. Oxford University Press.
- Grimshaw, Jane. 1979. Complement selection and the lexicon. *Linguistic inquiry*, 10(2), pp.279-326.
- Han, Chung-hye and Romero, Maribel., 2004. The syntax of whether/Q... or questions: Ellipsis combined with movement. *Natural Language & Linguistic Theory*, 22(3), pp.527-564.
- Holmberg, Anders. 2015. *The syntax of yes and no*. Oxford University Press.
- Kiss, K.É. ed., 1995. *Discourse configurational languages*. Oxford University Press on Demand.
- Richards, Norvin. 1997. *What Moves Where When in Which Language?*, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, MIT, Cambridge, MA.
- Watanabe, Akira. 2001. Wh-in-situ languages. *The handbook of contemporary syntactic theory*, pp.203-225.
- Zanuttini, Raffaella, and Paul Portner. 2003. "Exclamative clauses: At the syntax-semantics interface." *Language*: 39-81.

For your own papers/squibs, you will potentially have to look at a few more papers, which I can help you navigate. You will also select one paper for your Argument Map creation and presentation, which cannot be any of the primary readings. I can help you choose this paper as well.