

## Fall Semester 2015: Comparative Syntax

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### Course Outline

The course meets Tuesday 3.30-6.30; Thursday 9-11.50. I will generally be available for consultation on Wednesdays, before class on Tuesdays, after class on Thursdays and by arrangement.

The aim of the course is to present recent ideas that have emerged from the Rethinking Comparative Syntax project group, based in Cambridge (UK) (see [recos-dtal.mml.cam.ac.uk](http://recos-dtal.mml.cam.ac.uk)). The project aimed to break new ground in syntactic theory by reconceptualising the principles-and-parameters approach to comparative syntax, retaining its strengths and attempting to deal with its perceived weaknesses (see in particular Newmeyer 2004, 2005). The central idea is to organise the parameters of Universal Grammar into hierarchies, which define the ways in which properties of individually variant categories may act in concert; this creates macroparametric effects from the combined action of many microparameters. But there's much more to it than that ...

The introductory session(s) – this week – will set the general background, looking at P&P theory, its strengths and weaknesses, and outlining and motivating the new approach. After that, we'll look at word order and linearization (with special emphasis on the Final over Final Constraint), null subjects/arguments, incorporation/polysynthesis/head-movement, and alignment/GF-related parameters.

Assignment: write a short paper on some aspect of the issues discussed in class, or your favourite example(s) of interesting cross-linguistic syntactic variation.

Readings will be “assigned” as we proceed, but here are the essential ones. These are a combination of “classics” of P&P theory new and old (many of which will be familiar), and work by the ReCoS group. I can make unpublished material of various kinds available to you.

Baker, Mark. 1996. *The Polysynthesis Parameter*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Baker, Mark. 2001. *The Atoms of Language: The Mind's Hidden Rules of Grammar*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Baker, Mark. 2008. The macroparameter in a microparametric world. In *The Limits of Syntactic Variation*, ed. T. Biberauer, 351–374. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Theresa Biberauer, Anders Holmberg, Ian Roberts and Michelle Sheehan *Parametric Variation: Null Subjects in Minimalist Theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Biberauer, Theresa and Ian Roberts. 2014. ‘Contrastive Hierarchies in Phonology and Syntax: The Role of Third Factors (or: Why Phonology is *not* Different)’, Ms. University of Cambridge.

Biberauer, Theresa and Roberts, Ian (2015). ‘Clausal hierarchies’, in Ur Shlonsky (ed.), *Beyond Functional Sequence*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 295-313.

Biberauer, Theresa, Holmberg, Anders, and Roberts, Ian (2014). ‘A Syntactic Universal and its Consequences’, *Linguistic Inquiry* 45: 169-225.

Biberauer, Theresa, Holmberg, Anders, Roberts, Ian, and Sheehan, Michelle (2014). ‘Complexity in Comparative Syntax: The View from Modern Parametric Theory’, in Frederick Newmeyer and Laurel Preston (eds), *Measuring Linguistic Complexity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 103-27.

Boeckx, Cedric. 2014. ‘What Principles and Parameters got wrong’, in C Picollo (ed) *Linguistic Variation in a Minimalist Framework*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 155-176.

Chierchia, Gennaro. 1998. Reference to kinds across languages. *Natural Language Semantics*. 6:339-405.

Cinque, G. 2013. ‘Word Order Typology. A Change of Perspective’, in Theresa Biberauer and Michelle Sheehan (eds) *Theoretical Approaches to Disharmonic Word Orders*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 47-73.

Dresher, E. 2009. *The Contrastive Hierarchy in Phonology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Dryer, M. (1992) "On the Greenbergian Word-Order Correlations," *Language* 68: 81-138.
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- Haider, H. 2012. *Symmetry Breaking in Syntax*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Holmberg, Anders. 2010. 'Null Subject Parameters.' Theresa Biberauer, Anders Holmberg, Ian Roberts and Michelle Sheehan (eds) *Parametric Variation: Null Subjects in Minimalist Theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 88-124.
- Huang, C.-T. J and Ian Roberts. To appear. 'Principles and Parameters of Universal Grammar,' in Ian Roberts (ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of Universal Grammar*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Jaspers, D. (2012) Logic and colour. *Logica Universalis* 6:227-248.
- Julien, Marit. 2002. *Syntactic Heads and Word Formation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Kayne, Richard S. 1994. *The antisymmetry of syntax*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Kayne, Richard S. 2005. Some notes on comparative syntax, with special reference to English and French. In *The Oxford handbook of comparative syntax*, ed. Guglielmo Cinque and Richard Kayne, 3-69. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Kayne, Richard S. 2013. Comparative syntax. *Lingua* 130, 132–151.
- Longobardi, Giuseppe. 1994. Reference and proper names: A theory of N-movement in syntax and logical form. *Linguistic Inquiry* 25, 609–665.
- Massam, Diane. 2001. Pseudo noun incorporation in Niuean. *Natural Language & Linguistic Theory* 19, 153–197.
- McCloskey, J. (1996) "The scope of verb-movement in Irish," *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory*.
- Newmeyer, Frederick J. 2005. *Possible and Probable Languages*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Pollock, Jean-Yves. 1989. Verb movement, Universal Grammar, and the structure of IP. *Linguistic Inquiry* 20, 365–424.
- Ramchand, Gillian. 2008. *First phase syntax*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Roberts, Ian. 2010. 'A deletion analysis of null subjects', in T. Biberauer, A. Holmberg, I. Roberts and M. Sheehan *Parametric Variation: Null Subjects in Minimalist Theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 58-87.
- Roberts, Ian. 2012. Macroparameters and Minimalism: A Programme for Comparative Research. In C. Galves, S. Cyrino, R. Lopes, F. Sândalo and J. Avelar (eds) *Parameter Theory and Linguistic Change*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 320-335.
- Roberts, Ian, and Anders Holmberg. 2010. Introduction: Parameters in minimalist theory. In *Parametric Variation: Null Subjects in Minimalist Theory*, ed. Theresa Biberauer, Anders Holmberg, Ian Roberts, and Michelle Sheehan, 1–57. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
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- Sheehan, Michelle. 2014. [Towards a Parameter Hierarchy for Alignment](#). In R. E. Santana-LaBarge (ed.) *Proceedings of WCCFL 31*, 399-408. Somerville, Mass.: Cascadilla Press.
- Sheehan, Michelle. (To appear). 'Parameterising ergativity: an inherent case approach', To appear in J. Coon, D. Massam, and L. Travis (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Ergativity*, OUP