

## **Intro to syntax**

(Koeneman & Zeijlstra)

Whereas the grammar of English (or other languages) might look like a rather chaotic set of different patterns, syntactic theory has revealed that these patterns can actually be understood as a result of a small number of grammatical insights. Unravelling these insights forms the start of understanding syntax. This course will offer students all the necessary tools to do this, without going in too much technical detail.

The course describes the state-of-the-art of syntactic theory by addressing how and why certain combinations of words are “proper” English sentences whereas other combinations are not. What is the mechanism behind that? Why don’t we all speak the same language? How is grammar related with meaning and with the way sentences are pronounced?

In course we guide students through a variety of intriguing puzzles, striking facts and novel ideas, and let them discover the beauty of syntactic theory. We start out by discussing what the general building blocks of grammar are and how those building blocks can be combined into full sentences, using the famous syntactic operation Merge. After that, we will show how Merge is further constrained in such a way that only good sentences and no bad sentence can be created by the syntax, and we will show briefly how syntax is related to other fields in grammar, such as semantics and phonology.