

Course Number

16:615:670:01 *Seminar in Learnability and Linguistic Theory*

Class Time and Place

Spring 2014

Time:

W3 (11:30 am - 12:50 pm)

F4 (1:10 pm - 2:30 pm)

Classroom: SEM 108 (18 Seminary Place), CAC

Contact Information

Instructor: Dr. Bruce Tesar

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Phone: 848-932-0492

Office: SEM 302

Office Hours: Mondays 11:30 am - 12:30 pm, or by appointment

Topics

This seminar will examine work on language learnability within Optimality Theory. The focus will be on the formal structure of the learning problems, the nature of algorithms that have been proposed to solve them, and the role played by the structure of linguistic theory in those proposed solutions. The empirical focus will derive primarily from linguistic data (rather than, e.g., child language production data). The course will start with an overview of relevant concepts from learnability theory. The core theory behind the learning of Optimality Theoretic constraint rankings will then be examined. Major topics in learnability to be examined include restrictive distributions ("the subset problem"), the learning of lexical representations, and computational complexity. Particular attention will be paid to the learning of phonological underlying forms, as an instance of lexical/grammatical interaction in learning.

Text

Readings will be made available during the semester.

Course Sakai Site

The Sakai site for this course is **16:615:670:01 Sp14**. Course-related materials will appear on this site as the semester progresses.

Requirements

Term Paper: the majority of the grade will be based upon a term paper. A good paper topic would be a detailed analysis of the learnability problems posed by some interesting linguistic phenomenon, perhaps in some grammatical system of independent interest to the student; other types of paper topics may be proposed to the instructor for consideration.

Proposed topic is due: March 7

First draft is due: April 9

Final paper is due: May 2

Weekly Participation: students are expected to participate in class discussion. For each week in which a new reading has been assigned, each student should e-mail at least one question about the reading to the instructor. The question is due by 5 pm on Tuesday.

Occasional Small Assignments: occasional small assignments may be given during the semester as well.

Anonymous Comments to the Instructor

Students may send anonymous comments to the instructor via the Anonymous Comments tool on the course Sakai site. Students are welcome (but not required) to use this any time during the semester. The Anonymous Comments tool uses a ScarletDocs form (part of Rutgers ScarletApps).