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### English 270: Textbook section / Paper #1: A Smattering of Linguistics

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## Textbook section / Paper #1: A Smattering of Linguistics

One of the ideas behind this reimagined course is that students work together with the instructor to co-create learning materials that can be used for future sections (and maybe even similar courses at other universities).

So it was pretty perfect when I found most of a textbook online that the writer, a linguist named Karl Hagen, was letting anyone use and add on to (and copy over to our Commons site, with permission, which I did)—and the parts of the textbook that are there align well with the way I teach this course.

So, rather than having the paper assignments I used to have in this course, this semester, I'm experimenting with having students write up "Textbook Sections" which will form the basis of the textbook on our commons site, particularly for the missing pieces in the textbook.

The first missing section is in Chapter 2, "A Smattering of Linguistics." You can find it on the Commons site, <https://yorksyntax.commons.gc.cuny.edu>. You go to "Collaborative Textbook on English Syntax" on the left, and then to Chapter 2. The beginning is there, but then there are a number of sections that aren't complete. The idea of each of these sections is to give students a basic understanding of one of the subfields of linguistics, especially as it relates to syntax.

So here's your task: to write a missing section of the textbook, about 800-1200 words. You'll send me a proposal, then a draft of a particular section on a particular topic of your choosing, I'll give you comments, and you'll revise it and submit a final draft, just like a regular paper. Then, I'll select portions of these to add to the textbook on the Commons site, so that students in the future can use them. (That's the idea, at least—I've never tried this before).

### Guidelines:

There are four missing sections, and you should choose part of one, and propose an outline for that section:

- 1) Phonology (what is the sound system of English, and how does it relate to syntax?)
- 2) Speech vs. Writing (what are the properties of each, and how does this relate to syntax?)
- 3) Morphology (what is morphology (especially in English) and how does it relate to syntax?)
- 4) Lexical Semantics (what is lexical semantics in English, and how does it relate to syntax?)

**What the section should look like:** There should be a brief introduction, and you should divide your topic into subsections. The information should be geared toward students like you. The key here is to do your research, and source your information. Think about how textbooks are written, and why they are written that way—try to make sure you give a solid overview of a topic, without getting lost in the details. You'll need 4-6 sources, so get on that sooner rather than later—finding good quality sources to draw on is going to be a large portion of the work here.

**A note on plagiarism:** Textbooks use other people's ideas, but not their direct words (unless they're directly quoting, and this is \*very rare\*) This will be an exercise in paraphrasing other

sources (i.e., putting that source's idea in your own words—not just changing a few words), and even better, reading and building your own understanding of a topic and summarizing the knowledge you've gained from multiple sources (rather than summarizing a particular source). Do not plagiarize on this assignment—see the syllabus for details and links about plagiarism, and please feel free to ask me if something would be plagiarism.

**What about Wikipedia?** Wikipedia's a great place to build a general understanding of a topic, and I would even suggest you start learning about your topic there (with, e.g., the page on "Phonology of English"). It's going to be way too much detail, though, and you should not use sentences or phrases that come directly from the Wikipedia article (or any other source! That's plagiarism!). One of the best things about Wikipedia, though, is that it will point you to other sources, and that's definitely one way to find new sources. Don't forget about library resources as well (I'll do a small demo in class on 9/2).

**What about other textbooks?** That's a great way to get an idea of the sorts of things you should cover. But again, there's a line between inspiration and copying—your sections and text should come from your own understanding of the topic, rather than from some other textbook.

#### **Details on what's due and when:**

**Proposal and outline, due Wednesday, 9/9, 11:59 PM on Blackboard:** The proposal should be about a page in length and indicate:

- 1) which of the four topics you intend to cover.
- 2) the sources you will be drawing upon to write your section (there should be 4-6 of these, and they should be high-quality, reliable, ideally academic, sources) List these in MLA format, like they would be on a Works Cited page.
- 3) a proposed outline for your section. You might have a brief introduction and then break the section down in to 3-4 relevant subsections. You will not necessarily need a conclusion.

**Draft, due Wednesday, 9/23, 11:59 PM on Blackboard:** This should be a full draft of your section, with sources cited in-text and at the end in MLA format.

**Final, due Wednesday, 10/7:** This is the final draft of your section, and will be graded and considered (in part or in whole) for inclusion in the textbook. *On the final draft, please indicate whether you would like to be credited by your name, an alias or 'nom de plume', or whether you would like your contributions to remain anonymous.*