Beneath particular analyses and theories, some fundamental concerns continually animate Generative Grammar. What is the nature of linguistic knowledge? How is it acquired? What kind of explanations are sought by linguistic theories? How closely correlated are meaning and form – under the word-level and up to the sentence level? How can one reliably distinguish universal features of language from parochial ones? In this course we will read some foundational texts of the field that address such questions, combining methodological discussions with empirical test cases. To appreciate the arguments for the fundamental assumptions of generative grammar, we will compare it to some of its alternatives (descriptive, functional and usage-based linguistics).

Philosophical and methodological foundations
Language acquisition from a biolinguistic perspective
Lexical decomposition
Typology and universals in generative grammar
The syntax-semantics interface

Assignments: 40%
Final home assignment: 60%


