**LSA.113 Introduction to Optimality Theory**  
John J. McCarthy, University of Massachusetts, Amherst  
jmccarthy@linguist.umass.edu  

**Description**

This course is, as the title suggests, an *introduction* to Optimality Theory. No prior knowledge of OT is required, though it is assumed that all participants are familiar with the goals of linguistic theory, the methods of phonological analysis, and standard approaches to generative phonology.

**Text** (purportedly available at MIT Coop in Kendall Square)

Because *ATGtOT* is (temporarily) out of print, the Coop wasn’t able to locate enough copies for everyone in this class. I’m hoping there will still be enough for everyone who wants and needs it.  
*ATGtOT* has a few important typographical errors and many minor ones. So be sure to get the (probably exhaustive) list of corrections from [http://people.umass.edu/jjmccart/errata.html](http://people.umass.edu/jjmccart/errata.html).  
There’s also a Korean translation of *ATGtOT*. I have a few copies to loan out.  
All other reading assignments are available on-line and are linked from the course website, [http://people.umass.edu/jjmccart/lsa113/lsa113.html](http://people.umass.edu/jjmccart/lsa113/lsa113.html).

**Current plan**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading Assignment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| June 27    | **Background, Origins, and Overview of OT**                          | • *ATGtOT* pp. 1-65  

**June 29**  
(Wed.)  
**Inventories and Distribution in OT**  

• *ATGtOT* pp. 66-91  

• Prince & Smolensky (2004), chapt. 9  

**July 6**  
(Wed.)  
**Effects of Constraint Interaction — Blocking, Triggering, Conspiracies, and Emergence of the Unmarked**  

• *ATGtOT* pp. 91-108  

• Prince & Smolensky (2004), chaps. 3 and 4  

**July 8**  
(Fri.)  
**Language Typology and Language Universals in OT**  

• *ATGtOT* pp. 108-137  

• Prince & Smolensky (2004), chapt. 6  

**July 11**  
(Mon.)  
**Learning**  

• Tesar & Smolensky (1998), sections 1-3.  

• Prince & Tesar (2004), sections 1-4.  


**July 13**  
(Wed.)  
**Slack/TBA**
I’m leaving July 13 open because we’ll surely be falling behind the plan by then. I welcome suggestions or requests for topics to cover, time permitting.

Course website

Handouts distributed in class will also be available in pdf format at the course website, http://people.umass.edu/jjmccart/lsa113/lsa113.html.

Formal requirements

Students who are officially registered for a grade need to do one written “assignment”: during the next three weeks, e-mail me an interesting comment or question based on the classes or readings. (My address: jmccarthy@linguist.umass.edu.) Be sure to sign your e-mail with your full name and affiliation, so I’ll know that you contributed. I will try to respond to your comments and questions directly or in the context of a later class.

Students who are just auditing don’t need to do anything.

References


