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ENGL 315-01, The English Language, Spring 2009

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Engl 315 (29247)
Spring 2009
MW 3-4:15
PAL 210

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PAL 304
Office Hours: MW 9:30-11:00
and by appointment
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The English Language

I am not yet so lost in lexicography as to forget that words are the daughters of earth and that things are the sons of heaven. Language is only the instrument of science, and words are but the signs of ideas: I wish, however, that the instrument might be less apt to decay, and that signs might be permanent, like the things which they denote.

--Samuel Johnson, "Preface," *A Dictionary of the English Language*, 1755

Language can also be compared with a sheet of paper: thought is the front and the sound the back; one cannot cut the front without cutting the back at the same time; likewise in language, one can neither divide sound from thought nor thought from sound.

--Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, 1916

It's a damn poor mind that can think of only one way to spell a word.

– Andrew Jackson, 17th U.S. President

This course provides a survey of the historical development of English from the Anglo-Saxon period to the present, including a consideration of the concept of language, the Indo-European system, lexicography, and issues of American English. We will spend time discussing sociolinguistic topics such as "Standard" versus non-standard dialects of English and their relationship to power; pidgins and creoles; gender, race, and language; hate speech and taboo words; and English as a first, second, and foreign language. We will also discuss various rules for speaking, writing, and spelling English and how problematic they are.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

To become familiar with the structure of English

To learn the historical origins and development of English

To learn about change and variety in English

To be able to read brief passages in Old and Middle English

To understand concepts in English phonology, morphology, syntax, and lexis

To learn to read and evaluate linguistic arguments

TEXTBOOKS

- Albert C. Baugh and Thomas Cable, *A History of the English Language*, 5th ed.
- Thomas Cable, *A Companion to Baugh & Cable's History of the English Language*, 3rd ed.
- Handouts and articles on reserve.

GRADES AND GRADING POLICY

Participation	15%	Final Exam	15%
Observation Journal	15%	Short Paper (3-5 Pages)	15%
Midterm Exam	15%	Term Paper (10-12 pages)	25%

Participation There will be frequent homework exercises from the workbook. You should complete them on a separate sheet of paper, either a photocopy of the assigned exercises or a full transcription of them either neatly handwritten or typed. You will also be expected, individually or in pairs, to lead a 15-20 minute discussion on an article or essay important to the study of the English language; I will provide articles, though you are free to suggest a topic or article of your own. We will allocate days and topics during the second week of class. Your discussion should sum up the main points of the article and its argument, discuss its relevance to class and HEL, and then pose questions with the aim of generating further discussion.

Observation Journal You will keep an informal notebook in which you will seek to connect what we read and discuss in class to what you see happening in English around you. Language is one of the most fundamentally human things in which we engage, so I will grade you on how actively and creatively you engage the course material. I will occasionally prescribe a topic for inclusion, but overall you should aim to write for a minimum of 30 minutes 3 times a week. Please type all entries unless you know your handwriting is good; I will expect all journals to be kept in pocket folders for ease of carrying them.

Midterm and Final These will be identification, short answer, and essay questions drawn from the homework and class discussion.

Paper 1 "How English is Old English?" Based on your own experience with Old English, how critically has the Anglo-Saxon variety of English that we've studied changed your idea about what English is as a language? In what ways, if at all, has the study of it enriched your understanding of your own language? You should consider these and other questions along with all texts we have studied. You should cite examples from the linguists and the OE samples.

Paper 2 Develop and carry out a linguistic research project, ranging from an analysis of translations to independent examinations of, for example, American English dialects represented at Rhodes. If you are considering a career teaching, you might want to create a project relevant to that choice. The final paper must include a statement of the problem, a summary of research methods, an annotated bibliography, and both oral and written presentations. The first draft of the paper, with its bibliography, is due on March 25; I will return it to you with my comments for revision and further work. I expect this paper to contain not only a list of works cited following MLA style but a note of acknowledgment for any assistance you receive on the project. The final version is due on April 20. Please do not ask for an extension—it's a term project, so you should be able to plan accordingly. N.B. The term project can be conducted by a group of 3-4 students, but it must reflect the combined quality, if not quantity, of work required of each student in a 300-level course.

Ethical Guidelines for Term Projects:

Students must follow these ethical guidelines and explain them to everyone who volunteers to participate in their project:

- Obtain permission from every person recorded, interviewed, questioned, or surveyed for your project. The only possible exception is for anonymous, public, non-private utterances collected in the form of notes (notes you write on passengers' thank-yous and goodbyes to bus drivers, for example).
- Inform participants when they are being recorded.
- Destroy tapes and questionnaire after instructor returns them at the end of the semester.
- Offer a copy of your final paper to every participant.

- If your project requires you to be vague to participants about its purpose, or if you use a distraction scenario, offer to be specifically informative after data collection.
- Use no identifying names of project participants in your paper.
- Do not discuss a participant's contribution to your study with anyone else other than group members, especially with a mutual acquaintance.
- Collect no personal information from your participants not essential to your project, even if they're willing to provide it. (If you're comparing amount and type of swearing between college-age men and women, for example, don't collect information about income just because you think it might be interesting. All you need to know about participants is whether or not they are of college age.)
- Don't ask participants to contribute to, look at, or listen to anything potentially offensive.
- Treat all information objectively; make no value judgments about participants; treat all linguistic behavior and all participants respectfully.

Absences and Tardies You are allowed **TWO** absences free-of-charge; use them wisely, because you will not be able to make up any work you miss unless I have already cleared it. I will expect you to let me know in advance if you need to miss class for any reason, and it is at *my* discretion whether I choose to excuse an absence. Because tardies are disruptive, I will count each tardy as an absence starting with the third tardy. *Missing FOUR or more classes is grounds for failing this course.*

Papers All writing should be typed and proofread. I will deduct 10 points from any paper with more than three typos that proofreading would have caught or one typo that spell-check would have caught, and I will fail an essay with more than five proofreading or spell-checking errors. You should use Times New Roman as your font, size 12 as your font size, and 1" margins. MLA is the default style unless otherwise indicated. You will need to turn in all essays in a folder.

Late Assignment Policy It is up to my discretion whether I will allow extensions or make-up of missed work; I am much more flexible if you let me know in advance that you will miss class or if you bring me documentation for an absence. I will not accept late homework assignments unless I have given you permission to turn it in late. For a late paper, your letter grade will drop *1/3 grade* for each 24-hour period it is late. Failure to complete any major assignment listed in the grade breakdown will result in failure of the course.

Academic Honesty All work must adhere to the honor code and be original; please be sure you ask me how to cite sources if you have any questions. If you wish to work on a topic in both this and another class or re-engage a topic from a previous class, you must get permission from me to do so.

GRADING STANDARDS

A: Exceptional. Excellent in every way, in thought and execution. Not just acceptable, not just good. Excellent.

B: Good; better than average in both substance and style. Clearly expressed and supported thesis, accurate and effective use of evidence, clear and inevitable structure, few errors in syntax or punctuation.

C: Average. Clear argumentative thesis, reasonable support, some logical flaws, weak evidence, shaky structure, poor unity, loose coherence. Numerous errors of syntax and punctuation.

D: Below average. Thesis stated but weakly supported. Poorly organized, unclear, with many grammatical errors. More than one sentence-level error.

F: Extremely poor. No thesis stated or no support for a stated thesis. Many errors.

SCHEDULE

You are responsible for reading all assigned texts for the day assigned, including all readings presented in student-led discussion. I will collect workbook assignments on the day they are due. This syllabus is subject to change.

(1) Jan. 14 Introduction

(2) Jan. 19 Martin Luther King, Jr., Day

21 Ch. 1, "English Past and Future"
Designate readings for student-led discussion.

(3) Jan. 26 Grimm's Law, the home of the Indo-Europeans
Workbook 0.1-0.5, pp. 1-8

28 Ch. 2, "The Indo-European Family of Languages"
Workbook, 2.2-2.3

(4) Feb. 2 Ch. 3, "Old English"

4 Pronunciation of Old English
Read Old English
Workbook, 3.2-3.4

(5) Feb. 9 OE nouns
Workbook, 3.5-3.7

11 OE adjectives, pronouns, verbs
Read OE
Workbook, 3.8-3.10

(6) Feb. 16 Ch. 4, "Foreign Influences on Old English"
Workbook, 4.2-4.3

18 Ch. 5, "The Norman Conquest." Ch. 6 "The Reestablishment of English"

(7) Feb. 23 Ch. 7, "Middle English," OE to ME, Pronunciation of ME
Workbook, 7.1-7.2.1

25 OE to ME, Pronunciation of OE (cont.)
Workbook, 7.2.2-7.5
Read Chaucer

(8) Mar. 2 **Paper #1 due**
ME morphology
Workbook, 7.6-7.10 (possibly 7.11-7.12)

4 Ch. 8, "The Renaissance"

(9) Mar. 9 **MIDTERM EXAM**

11 Great Vowel Shift
Workbook, 8.3-8.4

(10) Mar. 16 **SPRING BREAK**

18 **SPRING BREAK**

(11) Mar. 23 Renaissance Morphology and Syntax
Workbook, 8.5-8.7

25 **First Draft of Term Project Due**
Ch. 9, "The Appeal to Authority, 1650-1800"

(12) Mar. 30 Renaissance, 18th-c. dictionaries
Workbook, 8.2 and 9.2

Apr. 1 Ch. 10, "The Nineteenth Century and After"
Workbook, 10.2-10.4

(13) Apr. 6 Ch. 10, English as a world language

8 Ch. 10, Gender issues, OED and other dictionaries
Workbook, 10.7

(14) Apr. 13 Ch. 11, "The English Language in America"
Workbook, 11.5

15 Ch. 11, American Dialects
Workbook, 11.3-11.4

(15) Apr. 20 **TERM PROJECT DUE**
Presentations

22 Presentations

(16) Apr 27 Presentations

29 **FINAL EXAM**
