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# LING 465.01: Structure and History of English

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**Initial Agenda of Course** (a description of my preliminary objective):

Regarding history, intergenerational thinking is a significant notion in fields of study on the topic of Sustainability, whereby one envisages the impact a deed may have seven generations (150-175 years) after it has been undertaken. In consideration of this span of time, I propose a concept called **ancestrality**, whereby a fourth generation scrutinizes the preceding and succeeding three (a practice in biological examinations into sustaining habitations of organisms). My preliminary ancestral site (generation no. 4) is 1947, close on mid-point between 1933 (Bloomfield's *Language*) and 1957 (Chomsky's *Syntactic Structures*), two central publications in researching the structure of human language. English, a species of human language, serves as the organism to be examined; more principally, English **grammar** is by degrees regarded biologically, a life form subject to external forces (history) but mostly internal ones (structure). Structure entails a biogenetically fashioned blueprint that makes a language human, a learnable yet variable system.

**Learning Outcomes** (a description of your successful scholarship):

• **Structural**

- i) acknowledging advantages and limitations of a prescriptive grammar; understanding and practicing descriptivism (structural linguistic methods) on modern English in its present-day, later, late and early forms ('*direct observation*')
- ii) growing generally familiar with and modestly competent in methods of analyzing language ('*writing a grammar*') at sentence, word (and sound) levels, whose forms in human behavior imply a presence of sets of rules ('*systems*')
- iii) recognizing formations of language-levels by rule-sets as conceivably pure forms (i.e., lacking evident meaning); realizing meaning as a **predication** procedure assigning definite values to variables (structure as '**quasi-algebraic**')
- iv) distinguishing structure of rule-based systems from the lexicon, a store of denotative/connotative significations; simulating the systemization of significations in the form of a dictionary (lexicography as opposed to grammar)

• **Historical**

- i) identifying the origins and impetus of prescriptivism and the perceived needs for an English dictionary/grammar
- ii) ascertaining descriptive methods and the arithmetic (*qua* logical) perceptions of grammar in a prescriptivist age
- iii) explaining that prescriptions for language behavior must be informed to a certain degree by optimal descriptions
- iv) detecting central language-change processes during and pre-dating prescriptivism and typifying an English idiom
- v) noting critical language-contact processes during and pre-dating prescriptivism and epitomizing English cultures

**Exams:**

First-Quarter	Wednesday, 24 September (take-home & in-class portion, during class meeting)
Mid-Term	Wednesday, 22 October (take-home & in-class portion, during class meeting)
Final	Friday, 12 December (take-home & in-class portion, from 8:00 to 10:00 in our classroom)

**Course Materials:**

The readings for the course are classified by means of how they contribute to its two audiences:

• **Instructional**

Required course textbooks, sketching issues raised in lecture/discussion during class meetings

- ✓ Altenberg, E., & R. Vago (2010). *English Grammar*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- ✓ Culpeper, Jonathan (2005). *History of English*. Routledge (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition).
- ✓ Smith, Jeremy J. (1999). *Essentials of Early English*. New York: Routledge.

### • Pedagogical

Chiefly companions to the 1986 PBS program entitled *The Story of English - Episode 2: The Mother Tongue*; Sections from these texts designed to tutor native English-speaking students in the structure and history of English

- ✓ McCrum, R., W. Cran & R. MacNeil (1986). *The Story of English*. New York: Viking.
- ✓ McKay, J. H., & S. Cosmos (1986). *The Story of English: Study Guide and Reader*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt.
- ✓ Williams, J. M. (1975). *Origins of the English Language*. New York: The Free Press.

### • Supplemental (citations listed here do not restrict the course from other potential supplementary sources)

Passages from texts covering in detail English structure and history for more advanced exploration of the subject

- ✓ Barber, C. (1993). *The English Language: A Historical Introduction*. New York: CUP.
- ✓ Baugh, A., & T. Cable (2002). *A History of the English Language*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- ✓ Bloomfield, M. W., & L. Newmark. (1967). *A Linguistic Introduction to the History of the English Language*. New York: Knopf.
- ✓ Fries, C.C. (1952). *The Structure of English*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.
- ✓ Gleason, H. (1961). *An Introduction to Descriptive Linguistics*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.
- ✓ Gleason, H. (1965). *Linguistics and English Grammar*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.
- ✓ Hogg, R., & D. Denison. (2006). *A History of the English Language*. New York: CUP.
- ✓ Hussey, S. (1995). *The English Language: Structure and Development*. New York: Longman.

### **Course Grading:**

I assess final grades based on points accrued from activities, assignments, and exams. I gauge points earned in several ways: according to percentage (points earned divided by total points), percentile (points earned to be measured on a "curve"), and quartile (points earned as separated into fourths, e.g., top 25%, bottom 25%, etc.). Based on these measures, I make assessments that are represented by traditional letter grade and may also include a distinction made between + / - . THIS COURSE MUST BE TAKEN FOR A TRADITIONAL LETTER GRADE ONLY, NOT CR/NC.

If you are unsure what traditional letter grades represent, then please note these general descriptions:

A means excellent (above 90%)	C means competent (roughly 70% to 80%)
B means superior (roughly 80% to 90%)	D means below average (below 70%)

### **Coursework:** WEIGHTING

In-class activities (approx. 1-2 every week)	=	100 pts.
Out-of-class assignments (approx. 2-3 every two weeks)	=	225 pts.
First-quarter exam (take-home, approx. due date, 2/26)	=	125 pts.
Midterm exam (take-home/in-class, 3/26-28)	=	250 pts.
<u>Final exam (take-home/in-class, 5/13)</u>	=	<u>300 pts.</u>
Total	=	1000 pts.

### **Coursework:** DESCRIPTION

In-class activities typically derive from some historical and/or structural issue(s) sketched in texts read for that day; however, during several initial class meetings, exercises involving on-line in-real-time reading processes constitute activities directed at notions expressed in **INITIAL AGENDA** as an extended in-class activity (on **SUSTAINABLE ENGLISH**), in line with the weekly timetable for such activities identified in **Coursework:** WEIGHTING. Reading-process activities aim to instill a practice applied to course materials assigned for remaining classes: In planning for in-class activities, read material as directed by applying an apt reading pace to a given reading task, like **SCANNING** parts of two texts (e.g., from McKay & Cosmos 1986 & Hogg & Denison 2006) in order to identify one reference cited in each, and then **SKIMMING** surrounding portions of that citation only (saving the rest for pending class meetings as you manage skimmed portions for that day's meeting. Such reading-for-speed is intended to present a generic preconception of content for the class to discuss, after which a decelerated reading pace may be applied for extracting specific details that clearly relate to general concepts and perhaps ones attracting your own interests and addressing your own needs.

Out-of-class assignments arise from instructional mainly and pedagogical material recurrently (esp. Williams 1975), yet some of these involve exercises from workbooks complementing supplemental materials or other external texts, limited to coursework content currently in progress. At times, they concern material for the class meeting when due.

Exams resemble to a degree activities/assignments related to content covered in the course. The first-quarter exam combines a take-home/sit-down format, the former posted on Moodle (ca. 17 Sept.) and due a week later, the former done as an in-class activity, worth 10% of the exam. The final exam (12 December, 8:10-10:00) and midterm-exam (due 22 October also combines take-home/in-class formats administered in the same way as the first-quarter exam.

#### **Coursework:** THE GRADUATE INCREMENT

LING 465 is a **UG course**, enrolling undergraduate and graduate students who participate together; UG courses include graduate increments reviewed by UM's Graduate Council (the body overseeing UM graduate curricula). Graduate students in this course must therefore exhibit a more advanced competency in the coursework than the undergraduate students exhibit. This level of enhanced competence is principally gauged by the ensuing valuation procedure: Graduates students' point totals are calculated statistically (i.e., rated on a **bell curve**) with those of undergraduate students in gauging graduates' final grades (point totals for undergraduates **only** are similarly *curved* for +/- ratings); that is, total scored by specific graduate students must be of equal/greater amount of undergraduates to be considered for the same/similar grade. In addition, some graduate-students may lead a discussion on material chosen by the instructor covering content associated with *description* and/or *standardization* of English at a point around the fourth week of classes (when the first-quarter exam is posted) but before the midterm take-home portion is posted (mid-October).

#### **Coursework:** LATE POLICY

All activities, assignments or exams given to the instructor after its due-date are not guaranteed to be either graded (and entered into the grade record) or returned (i.e., students must keep track).

#### **Course attendance:** POLICY

Perfect attendance is desired but not expected; excessive absences typically intersect adversely with **late policy** and affect final grades. Students who miss the first two class meetings must drop the course (see URL presented below):  
(<http://www.umd.edu/catalog/acad/acadpolicy/default.html>, under attendance/absence).

#### **Special accommodation:**

If you will need special accommodation in this course due to some learning challenge that has been verified by DSS, please see me early in the semester, and we can come up with some appropriate accommodation.

#### **Technology:**

You may, of course, take class notes on a laptop or iPad or the like. Aside from that, I expect that technology will not intrude during class time. Please turn your phones to "vibrate" or a similar setting that will not disturb the class.

**Do not plan to receive phone calls during the class period**

#### **Course Withdrawal:** POLICY

To know more information about [withdrawing from a course](#), see the URL below:

(<http://www.umd.edu/withdrawal/AlternateOptions.aspx>)

#### **Academic Honesty:**

All students must observe academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to academic penalty by the instructor of the course and/or a disciplinary sanction by the University. As a student in this course and at this university, you must be familiar with the [Student Conduct Code](#) (see URL presented below):

([http://life.umd.edu/vpsa/student\\_conduct.php](http://life.umd.edu/vpsa/student_conduct.php))

### **Course introduction:** ENGLISH STRUCTURE AND HISTORY IN QUOTATIONS

§ As English came to be used increasingly to translate the classics and as the primary language for scientific and philosophical writings, many Englishmen [sic] became uneasy over the fact that they had nothing like a grammar of Latin to settle questions of usage, no rules to guide those not entirely at ease in the language.

Joseph M. Williams, *Origins of the English Language* (1975, p. 94)

§ The spontaneous creativeness of Shakespeare, verbing [sic] it with nouns and adjectives, so to speak, sublimely indifferent to rules, untroubled by any considerations in language save those springing from a sure instinct, had given place to hesitation and uncertainty, so that a man like Dryden confessed that at times he had to translate an idea into Latin in order to decide on the correct way to express it in English.

Albert C. Baugh, *A History of the English Language*, 1st Edition (1935, p. 254)

§ Who climbs the grammar tree, distinctly knows / Where noun, and verb, and participle grows.

Line 583 from *Sixth Satire of Juvenal* (1693), translation by John Dryden

§ We have yet no prosodia [authority in pronunciation], not so much a tolerable dictionary, or a grammar, so that our language is in a manner barbarous.

from *Discourse concerning Satire* (1693), by John Dryden

I do here, in the Name of all the Learned and Polite Persons of the Nation, complain that our Language is extremely imperfect; that its daily Improvements are by no means in proportion to its daily Corruptions; and the Pretenders to polish and refine it, have chiefly multiplied Abuses and Absurdities; and, that in many Instances, it offends against every Part of Grammar.

from *A Proposal for Correcting, Improving and Ascertaining the English Tongue* (1712), by Jonathan Swift

I have laboured [sic] to refine our language to grammatical purity, and to clear it from colloquial barbarisms, licentious idioms, and irregular combinations.

Samuel Johnson, *The Rambler* (1752)

### **Course description:** AUDIENCE

Amid circulated titles for this course, some refer to teachers-in-training seeking an endorsement (e.g., minor, license, advanced degree) to teach English to native speakers: Such students enroll in this course expecting it will teach them classroom practices, or **methodology**; not every posting of the course's title identifies teachers as a target audience, so other students enroll in this course without any expectation of a specific brand of instruction that consists solely of applicable methodological matters.

As a result, this course gathers two audiences (neither one primary or secondary) for whom content must be proportionately suitable; selection and organization of course-content addressing the two general audiences becomes an imperative concern for designing a balanced curriculum.

### **Course description:** CONTENT

Pedagogy, the formal study of classroom practices, traditionally separates methodology (implementing techniques) from planning (selecting and organizing content, or syllabus design). Course-content chiefly concerns the latter, **what** English structure and history may find traction with native-speaking students, not merely **how** to teach English (with respect to language structure, classroom practice resembling **pedagogical** grammar, or lists of do's and don't's).

By distinguishing what (course planning) from how (methodology), teachers-in-training begin weighing each as they consider which historical and structural facets of English to teach, and, with their classmates, contrast particular features integral of a **prescriptive** grammar (prescribing standard usage/proscribing non-standard usage) from those of a **descriptive** grammar (characterizing speakers' usages regardless of whether they uphold a standard).

Content is inaugurated by the role of prescription in sustainability of human language, namely its grammar as a biological force, and continues concentrating on a grammar's function (mapping utterances onto interpretations) as a basic enterprise in modern linguistics, whose structural methods may sanction prescription as an external force.