

History of the English Language (LIN-4060)

Florida A&M University

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Section: LIN-4060	Credits: 3 CR
Semester: Spring 2024	Time: 14:30-15:20 MWF
Campus: Tallahassee	Room: Tucker #118

*I rarely use the phone in my office. Please send me an email or, even better, come by to talk. ☺

Course Description

This course is an introduction to the linguistic history and development of the English language and focuses on fundamental understandings of 'linguistics' as a field of scientific inquiry, addresses issues related to descriptive and prescriptive approaches to language study, raises awareness of issues connected to English phonology and orthography, and ultimately foregrounds the origins and development of the language in terms of its Indo-European roots, conventionalized historical periods, internal and external influences, and phonological, syntactic, and semantic changes.

Purpose and Nature of the Course

The purpose of this course is to teach students to recognize, identify, and exemplify key events, concepts, and characteristics in the history of the development and spread of the English language. By the end of this course, students will be able to:

1. identify some of the fundamental understandings of linguistics as a science, including e.g. the modular levels of language, the notion of 'correctness,' and the distinctions among prescriptive, descriptive, pedagogical, and literary approaches.
2. describe the development of the English orthography and the genesis and usage of the IPA.
3. represent with reasonable accuracy the sounds of English through phonetic transcription.
4. define and exemplify the origins and development of the English language in terms of its Indo-European roots; conventionalized historical periods; internal and external influences; and phonological, morphological, syntactic, and semantic changes.
5. undertake two projects independently and successfully to apply the concepts from class, including e.g. synchrony/diachrony, (perceptual) dialectology, the value of dictionaries, and the interaction of language, power, and identity.

Required Readings

There is only one required textbook for this class. Please note that different editions might not contain all of the readings for this class, but you are certainly free to make this purchasing decision on your own accord. Any additional readings will be available on Canvas and listed as such on the schedule. Please understand that in-class lectures are not a substitute for—but, rather, a supplement to—the readings.

- Algeo, John and Carmen Acevedo Butcher. 2013. *The Origins and Development of the English Language*. Boston, MA: Cengage Learning. (TEXT)

Grading Breakdown

- **15%** of your grade will be determined by your daily attendance and participation. This includes not only coming to class on time, but also helping us construct our understanding of the text, practicing during in-class activities, asking questions where needed, and generally becoming a fully functional member of our academic community. Although I understand that some of us might be shy, we can all find at least a few opportunities in which we feel comfortable participating every session. If you find that you need to miss a session and have the appropriate medical and/or funeral-related documentation, please feel free to speak to me privately. Ultimately, the message is this: You can't learn the material if you aren't here; if you could, you wouldn't need me! 😊
- **10%** of your grade will be determined by your homework/exercises. Some will emphasize the basic principles of linguistic analysis, and some will correspond to the four major periods discussed (Old English, Middle English, Early Modern English, Present-Day English). These must be completed *individually* at home and submitted no later than the start of the session for which they are due.
- **15%** of your grade will be determined by your sociolinguistic interview, which will be five to seven pages in length. You will select someone from a different part of the United States or, if necessary, another country where English is widely spoken (e.g. Canada, England, Ireland, Scotland, South Africa, New Zealand, Australia, India, Pakistan, Nigeria, Jamaica). Next, you will conduct and record an interview of approximately thirty minutes with this individual, the findings from which you will write up in the form of a sociolinguistic report. We will discuss the specific requirements and procedure for this assignment in class. This must be completed *individually*.
- **15%** of your grade will be determined by your word history project, which will contain two different parts. Each student will select five different words in English (i.e. no student may repeat or cover any of the words as another student), track the history of the word and its meanings, and undertake a corpus-based study of that word. We will discuss and start working on this in class; thus, for that session, you want to make sure that you bring your fully-charged laptop. (NOTE: The software we will utilize will *not* work on a tablet, a phone, etc.) Ten percent (10%) of the grade for this assignment will come from your written submission, which should be approximately four to five pages in length; the remaining five percent (5%) will come from your in-class presentation, the length for which will depend upon the number of students in our class. This must be completed *individually*.
- **45%** of your grade will be determined by your performance on three exams. These will contain a variety of short answer and application questions, and there will be a choice of two essay prompts, one of which must be completed. The content on these exams will come from the readings and the in-class lectures. An optional review session will be offered before both exams, for which you should come prepared with your questions, as the review will be guided by your points of interest and confusion, i.e. a study guide will *not* be provided. (NOTE: There are no make-up exams offered, so ensure that you plan your schedule effectively.)

Student Resources

- [Writing Resource Center](#)
- [Office of Counseling Services](#)
- [Center for Disability Access & Resources](#)
- [Center for Academic Advising](#)
- [Military and Veteran Affairs](#)
- [Victim Advocate Program](#)

General Policies

Commitment to Open Inquiry, Viewpoint Diversity, and Constructive Disagreement

In a nutshell, quality of thought and mode of engagement matter. In order to create a classroom environment that supports respectful, critical inquiry through the free exchange of ideas, the following principles will guide interactions among students and professors in this class:

1. Treat every member of the class with respect, even if you disagree with their opinion.
2. Treat every opinion as open to examination, even if it comes from someone with more experience or expertise than you.
3. Reasonable minds can differ on any number of perspectives, opinions, and conclusions.
4. Some perspectives, opinions, and conclusions are unreasonable or based on prejudices and should be identified as such. **Thus, hate speech of any kind will NOT be tolerated.**
5. Because constructive disagreement sharpens thinking and deepens understanding, it will factor into your participation grade.
6. All viewpoints are welcome.
7. No ideas are immune from scrutiny and debate.
8. You will not be graded on whether your professor or peers agree with your opinions.
9. You will be graded on the evidence and reasoning that leads to those opinions.

Non-Discrimination Policy

“It is the policy of Florida A&M University that each member of the University community be permitted to work or attend class in an environment free from any form of discrimination including race, religion, color, age, handicap, disability, sex, marital status, national origin, veteran status, and sexual harassment, as prohibited by state and federal statutes” (Regulations of Florida A&M University 10.103). For a more detailed explanation of the Non-Discrimination Policy and Discrimination and Harassment Complaint Procedures, consult section 10.103 under “University Regulations” on the [FAMU website](#). All related questions and concerns should be directed to the Office of Equal Opportunity Programs.

Attendance/Participation

Punctual attendance is incredibly important to your success in life more generally *and* in this course specifically. If you arrive up to fifteen minutes late to class, you will be marked as late for that session. Beyond the first fifteen minutes, however, you will be marked as absent *even though* you are there. Two lates are equivalent to one absence, and four or more total absences per semester will result in a failing grade for attendance/participation. Because we will begin every day by looking at our agenda for that session and issuing reminders for assignments, missing the first few minutes of class can actually be quite detrimental to your overall performance.

After you have arrived, please make sure to remove any unnecessary distractions from your learning environment, including cell phones, laptops, and tablets. If you find that you will miss a session, need to leave early, must take a phone call during class, or are having other difficulties, please inform me as

soon as possible. I will be your strongest advocate/cheerleader this semester, but you need to meet me halfway. Although all readings and assignments must be completed before the relevant session, I reserve the right to implement graded reading quizzes if in-class discussions do not demonstrate that students have completed the readings.

Time Management, Missed Classes, and Late Assignments

Because it can be quite stressful to take college-level courses, particularly if you are the first in your family to pursue a university education and/or if you also have a full- or part-time job, I would strongly recommend—if possible—that you try to stay one or two sessions ahead of the schedule, especially because a three-credit course requires between six to nine hours of independent study/work outside of the classroom. Furthermore, you may consider sharing contact information with a classmate in the event that you do have to miss a class, as I, unfortunately, will not have enough time to respond to emails asking questions like the following: “I missed last class. Did I miss anything?” or “I couldn’t come to class yesterday. What did I miss?” The syllabus and your classmates are your first line of defense! Additionally, the schedule listed at the end of this syllabus contains an additional column, so that you can ‘check off’ each session after it has passed.

Office Hours

Individual office hours of twenty-minute (20) blocks can be scheduled. If I am in my office and not currently with a student, you can (and should!) feel free to knock on the door and enter. Otherwise, all office hours can be scheduled online through the link available on our Canvas page. Some possible activities during office hours may include prewriting/brainstorming activities, feedback on rough drafts, discussions about ways to improve your grade, mentoring and/or conversations about your long-term career objectives, etc. **Although neither required nor graded, I encourage all students to register for office hours at least once during the semester.**

Academic Accommodations / Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Policy

The Florida A&M University Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Policy Statement states the following: “Individuals who need a reasonable accommodation must notify the Office of Equal Opportunity Programs at 599-3076.” It is the responsibility of the FAMU Equal Opportunity Programs (EOP) Office, through the ADA Coordinator, to ensure the Florida A&M University is in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. If you have any questions, please contact your Academic Advisor or the University EOP Officer, Equal Opportunity Programs, 674 Gamble Street, Tallahassee, FL 32307, (850) 599-3076.

Florida A&M University values inclusion and seeks to create a climate of respect and the full participation and access for all students. It is the University’s policy and practice to provide reasonable accommodations for students with properly documented disabilities according to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. Students who have questions about these university services or have a disability are encouraged to visit the Center for Disability Access and Resources (CeDAR), where they can register with and provide documentation before bringing to the instructor the letter that outlines the required accommodations. More information can be found [here](#) electronically.

CeDAR uses an online accessible information management portal called AIM which allows students to apply for services, request accommodations, set up testing appointments and more. To submit accommodation requests, students should simply visit <https://www.famu.edu/students/student-resources/center-for-disability-access-and-resources/index.php> and use their FAMU login to submit requests. Faculty will receive an email notification with the next steps.

NOTE: If you do not qualify for accommodations but find yourself struggling, please do not hesitate to reach out to me. I understand that college is simultaneously an exciting and difficult time in our lives, and, although our primary goal is academic growth, this should not come at the expense of your overall wellness.

Academic (Dis)honesty

Florida A&M University is committed to academic honesty and its core values, which include scholarship, excellence, accountability, integrity, fairness, respect, and ethics. These core values are integrated into this academic honesty policy. Being unaware of the Academic Honesty Policy is not a defense for violations of academic honesty. Additional detail on FAMU Academic Honesty Violations are provided in University Policy 2.012 (10.)(s). If you have any questions, please see your Academic Advisor.

All work formally submitted for evaluation by the instructor must be prepared individually, i.e. with honesty and integrity. According to the guidelines set forth by the university, this means you will not engage in plagiarism, fabrication, cheating, the unauthorized distribution of copyrighted materials, etc. As a result, academic dishonesty of any kind will not be accepted, and the consequences for this are at the discretion of the professor, which may include a grade of 0% on the assignment and formal reporting at the university level. For further explanation and illustrations, refer to the university's official policy on academic dishonesty available online [here](#). Following the Academic Honesty Policy of Florida A&M University, violations include—but are not limited to—committing any of the following:

1. Giving or taking information or material wrongfully to aid yourself or another student in academic work.
2. Plagiarism to include copying work created or published by others, paraphrasing, or using ideas from a source without proper attribution.
3. Looking at or copying another student's work, or allowing another student to look at or copy your work.
4. Talking or otherwise communicating with another student during quizzes, tests or writing assignments, unless instructed to do so.
5. Removing test materials or attempting to remove them from an examination room or office or elsewhere [to include copiers and printers], stealing, buying, selling, or referring to a copy of an examination before it is administered.
6. Having others edit or rewrite your assignments, except with instructor approval.
7. Using work from other classes without prior approval from the proper instructor.
8. Using copyrighted stories, pictures, graphics, logos and other content without proper permission, including from the Internet, even if these works have been modified by the student.
9. Using electronic devices for plagiarism, cheating, deception or collusion (a secret agreement between two or more persons for a deceitful purpose).
10. Falsifying records or giving misleading information, oral or written.
11. Assisting in any academic honesty violation.
12. Receiving any materials or information from a fellow student or another unauthorized source during examinations.
13. Obtaining, distributing, or referring to a copy of an examination, which the instructor or Department has not authorized to be made available.
14. Any act which impedes the ability of other students to have fair access to materials assigned or suggested by the instructor, i.e. removing or destroying library or other source materials.
15. Tampering with another student's work.
16. Altering grades or any other records related to the academic performance of students.
17. Submitting false records or information in order to gain admission to the University.
18. Falsifying or inventing information, data, or citations.
19. Any other form of academic cheating, plagiarism, or dishonesty.

Plagiarism Prevention Tool Notification: A plagiarism prevention service is used in evaluation of written work submitted for this course. As directed by the instructor, students are expected to submit or have their assignments submitted through the service in order to meet requirements for this course. The papers may be retained by the service for the sole purpose of checking for plagiarized content in future student submissions.

Privacy of Academic Information

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA), as amended (also sometimes referred to as the Buckley Amendment), is a federal law regarding the privacy of student records and the obligations of the institution, primarily in the areas of release of the records and the access provided to these records. Generally the law provides that, with some exceptions, no information, applications, forms, letters, records, or transcripts may be released, whether orally or in writing, without prior written consent, dated and signed by the student, specifying the records to be released, the reasons for release and to whom the records are to be released. Please inform your parents that if they contact me I am not allowed to discuss your progress in the course or your grades. This is by law.

Important Dates

- **First Day of Classes:** January 8
- **Drop/Add Period Ends:** January 12
- **Last Day to Withdraw:** March 29
- **Last Day of Classes:** April 26
- **Final Exams:** April 29 - May 3
- **Commencement:** May 3
- **Final Grades Due:** May 6 at 17:00

Tentative Course Schedule

Listed below is the tentative course schedule for the semester, though changes may be made as necessary for our academic success. Each week is presented as a single unit, under which the topics and/or readings for our two or three sessions will appear. This means that you should come to class prepared with notes, comments, and questions, as any in-class discussions and activities depend on your having completed the readings. Furthermore, please understand that in-class lectures are not a substitute for—but, rather, a supplement to—the readings.

	DATE	READINGS / ASSIGNMENTS / IMPORTANT INFORMATION	✓
1	JAN. 8 (M)	Introduction to Course, Syllabus, and Professor Student Self-Introductions	
	JAN. 10 (W)	Brief Overview of (Structural) Linguistics	
	JAN. 12 (F)	“Studying the History of English” (CAN, pp. 1-28)	
2	JAN. 15 (M)	NO CLASS – MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. DAY	
	JAN. 17 (W)	“Language and the English Language: An Introduction” (TEXT, pp. 1-19)	
	JAN. 19 (F)		
3	JAN. 22 (M)	“The Sounds of Current English” (TEXT, pp. 20-34)	
	JAN. 24 (W)		
	JAN. 26 (F)		
4	JAN. 29 (M)	“Letters and Sounds: A Brief History of Writing” (TEXT, pp. 35-48)	
	JAN. 31 (W)		
	FEB. 2 (F)	Take Exam #1	
5	FEB. 5 (M)	“The Backgrounds of English” (TEXT, pp. 49-77)	
	FEB. 7 (W)		
	FEB. 9 (F)		
6	FEB. 12 (M)	“The Old English Period, 449-1100” (TEXT, pp. 78-111)	
	FEB. 14 (W)		
	FEB. 16 (F)		
7	FEB. 19 (M)		
	FEB. 21 (W)		
	FEB. 23 (F)		
8	FEB. 26 (M)	“The Middle English Period, 1100-1500” (TEXT, pp. 112-138)	
	FEB. 28 (W)		
	MAR. 1 (F)		
9	MAR. 4 (M)		
	MAR. 6 (W)		
	MAR. 8 (F)		Take Exam #2
10	MAR. 11 (M)	NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK	

10	MAR. 13 (W)	NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK	
	MAR. 15 (F)		
11	MAR. 18 (M)	“The Early Modern English Period, 1500-1800” (TEXT, pp. 139-180)	
	MAR. 20 (W)		
	MAR. 22 (F)		
12	MAR. 25 (M)	“Late Modern English, 1800-Present” (TEXT, pp. 181-205)	
	MAR. 27 (W)		
	MAR. 29 (F)		
13	APR. 1 (M)	“Words and Meanings” (TEXT, pp. 206-223)	
	APR. 3 (W)	“New Words from Old” (TEXT, pp. 224-246)	
	APR. 5 (F)	“Foreign Elements in the English Word Stock” (TEXT, pp. 247-268)	
14	APR. 8 (M)	“Why Dialects?” – Walt Wolfram and Natalie Schilling (CAN, pp. 27-58)	
	APR. 10 (W)	“Levels of Dialect” – Walt Wolfram and Natalie Schilling (CAN, pp. 59-95)	
	APR. 12 (F)	“Hella Nor Cal or Totally So Cal? The Perceptual Dialectology of California” – Mary Bucholtz et al. (CAN, pp. 325-352)	
15	APR. 15 (M)	“They Speak Really Bad English Down South and in New York City” – Dennis R. Preston (CAN, pp. 139-149)	
	APR. 17 (W)	“Perceptions of Appalachian English in Kentucky” – Jennifer Cramer (CAN, pp. 45-71)	
	APR. 19 (F)	Take Exam #3	
16	APR. 22 (M)	Student Presentations	
	APR. 24 (W)		
	APR. 26 (F)	Submit Sociolinguistic Interview Project & Word History Project	