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ENG 2901-601: Structure of English

Angela Vietto

Eastern Illinois University

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Structure of English

Prof. Angela Vietto, cell: 217-549-3203 (9 am to 9 pm, please), arvietto@eiu.edu

Office hours (online; text or phone me at 217-549-3203 and we'll take it from there):
Mondays 9-10 am, Thursdays 5:30-6:00, and by appointment

About the course: This course is an introduction to the grammar of English. "Grammar" is a word that means something different to professional students of language (called linguists) than it does to most others. So we will explore what grammar is and how linguists, teachers, editors, and the general public think about and use the concept of grammar. Over the course of the semester, the objectives of the course are for you to learn to

- describe and analyze how sentences are constructed in English, using diagramming and other ways of representing sentences to demonstrate your understanding
- employ concepts and vocabulary related to grammar and linguistics
- recognize and appreciate varieties of English
- use grammatical and linguistic knowledge to make careful choices in your own speech and writing or in editing the writing of others and/or to improve your ability to teach oral or written English

For many of you, both the details of descriptive grammar and the approach to grammar that linguists take may be new. I hope this framework and these ideas will be exciting, enlightening, and useful, too. This is to say: expect some surprises in this course, and keep your mind open.

About our hybrid format: Except for our textbook, all of our course materials will be online, including short video lectures from me, quizzes and homework exercises, and readings other than the textbook. Each week, I will ask you to complete several activities before class, then attend class through videoconference during our regularly scheduled course time on Tuesday. On Thursdays, during our regularly scheduled meeting time, I will hold an optional second session when you can drop in to ask questions about material we've discussed earlier *or* the material we are working on for the following week. All video sessions will be recorded and will be available for review in D2L in case you have no choice but to miss a session, for whatever reason. I believe that this will actually be the best strategy for this course at this time, since it will allow us to do small-group and partner work, which all of us who teach this course have found essential. Should we need to meet in person at any point during the semester, we will still have a scheduled classroom at our regular meeting time that we can use for that purpose.

Note: **If you do not have access to a computer with a web cam**, there are several options: you can go to the Gregg Triad (take headphones along) to attend our synchronous sessions from there. (If you let me know in advance, I can ask them to reserve a terminal for you). Alternatively, I could reserve you a seat in one of the computer labs in the English Department (again let me know if you will need that as soon as possible). If none of these options works for you, let me know and we will find a plan that will work.

Textbooks from TRS

van Gelderen, *An Introduction to the Grammar of English*, revised edition

Students with disabilities: If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) as soon as possible.

The Student Success Center: Students who are having difficulty achieving their academic goals are encouraged to contact the Student Success Center (<http://www.eiu.edu/~success>) for assistance with time management, test taking, note taking, avoiding procrastination, setting goals, and other skills to support academic achievement. The Student Success Center provides individualized consultations. To make an appointment, call 217-581-6696, or go to 9th Street Hall, Room 1302.

Academic Integrity: Students are expected to maintain principles of academic integrity and conduct as defined in EIU's Code of Conduct (<http://www.eiu.edu/judicial/studentconductcode.php>). Violations will be reported to the Office of Student Standards.

The Electronic Writing Portfolio: Any written project of 750 words or longer (excluding fiction or poetry) written for this class would be suitable for submission to the EWP. Submissions must be made by the last day of finals week at the end of the semester. *Earlier deadlines apply for graduating seniors.*

Engagement and Active Learning: My ambition is for all of you to deeply integrate the content of this course—including basic ways of thinking about language, specific information about the structure of English, and a basic understanding of the social forces that work on and through language in the U.S.—into your ways of thinking about language, writing, editing, and/or teaching.

That is most likely to happen if you are thinking actively and critically during all learning activities and bringing your questions and observations about the course material to the attention of the whole class. Given the oddities of the fall 2020 semester, that might mean asking a question during a live meeting or on a discussion board or by text message, but I promise you that it will be worth the effort to ask questions, evaluate your understanding of the answers, and ask follow-up questions if things aren't clear.

English Teacher Education Majors: Students seeking Teacher Certification in English Language Arts should provide each of their English Department professors with a copy of the yellow form called "Application for English Department Approval to Student Teach" before the end of the semester. These forms are available in a rack outside the office of Dr. Melissa Ames (3821 Coleman Hall).

The English Department Statement on Plagiarism: Any teacher who discovers an act of plagiarism—"The appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and/or thoughts of another author, and representation of them as one's own original work" (*Random House Dictionary of the English Language*)—has the right and responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty, up to and including immediate assignments of a grade of F for the assigned essay and a grade of F for the course, and to report the incident to the Office of Student Standards. Respect for the work of others should encompass all formats, including print, electronic, and oral sources.

Grading and Major Assignments*

Homework and quizzes	55%
Analytic Project	15%
Idiolect Essay	15%
Final essay exam	15%

Final Grading Scale

A	90-100%
B	80-89.99%
C	70-79.99%
D	60-69.99%
F	59.99% and below

Quizzes & homework: Quizzes will be taken in D2L and homework will be submitted there; if there are exceptions, I will alert you.

Analytic Project: We will discuss this project in more depth as we approach the end of the descriptive grammar portion of the class, and a detailed assignment will be provided. Briefly, though, you will have several choices of texts to work with. The goal is to use the descriptive approach to grammar to analyze the texts to see what you can learn about how English grammar works “in the wild.”

Idiolect Essay: Again, we will discuss this project more fully later in the semester and a detailed assignment sheet will be provided. An “idiolect” is simply the variety of a language used by a single individual. After learning more about varieties of English, in this essay you will explore your own idiolect along with an in-depth consideration of the varieties of English that have influenced your speech and writing in English.

Final Exam: The final exam will give you an opportunity to do two important things: (1) demonstrate your understanding of the key concepts of the course, including the essential structures of the English language, the major varieties of U.S. English, and prescriptive grammar in relationship to levels of formality and (2) use your critical thinking to consider the implications of the content of the course for you, personally and professionally.

Schedule of Topics and Major Deadlines

Homework, online quizzes, and reading assignments will be announced in class and on D2L. Schedule is subject to change.

Aug 25, 27	Introduction: Ways of thinking about grammar; Nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs
Sept 1, 3	Prepositions, determiners, auxiliary verbs, coordinators, complementizers
Sept 8, 10	Phrases (noun, verb, adjective, adverb, preposition)
Sept 15, 17	Coordination and apposition
Sept 22, 24	Functions: subject, predicate, complements
Sept 29, Oct 1	Functions: adverbials (and prepositional and phrasal verbs); the verb group
Oct 6, 8	Clauses: finite (independent and dependent) and non-finite
Oct 13, 15	Clauses in NPs and AdjPs
Oct 20, 22	Varieties of English: Community and Power
Oct 27, 29	Varieties of English in Depth
Nov 5	Varieties of English in Depth (<i>Note: Nov. 3, Election Day, is a University holiday; no classes will be held, so our main meeting for the week will be on Thurs. Nov. 5</i>)
Nov 10, 12	Prescriptive Grammar: Common Core, Editing, Levels of Formality
Nov 17, 19	Prescriptive Grammar: Common Core, Editing, Levels of Formality
	<i>Thanksgiving Break</i>
Dec 1, 3	Prescriptive Grammar and Varieties of English
Dec 8, 10	Prescriptive Grammar and Varieties of English
Finals week	Final exam will be due by the last day of finals week, Thursday, Dec. 17