

Spring 1-15-2009

ENG 2901-002-003: The Structure of English

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ENGLISH 2901--The Structure of English

Dr. Buck, Professor

Office: Coleman Hall 3040

Telephone: Office: 581-5012 (Please leave voice mail if I'm not there)

Mailbox: English Dept Office, Room 3155 Coleman

Office Hours: 9:00-9:45 MWF and by appointment

Required textbook: *Understanding English Grammar* by Martha Kolln, 1994, 7th edition.

Please always bring your textbook and worksheets to class.

My office is on a busy hallway. If my office door is closed, please knock. My students always come first--if there is another faculty member in my office, please interrupt us.

Course Objective

This course offers a description and analysis of the Standard American English grammatical system. We will describe the difference between the grammar of speech and the grammar of writing from a cognitive perspective, so the class will focus on how the study of grammar reveals much about the workings of the human mind. In our discussion, we will integrate the effect of language attitudes on our understanding of grammatical systems. The main purpose of the course is to provide you with analytical tools that will allow you to think critically and independently about language and linguistic structures, and to help dispel myths about language and the study of grammar. Course readings are attached. Please note that we will go faster or slower depending on the needs of the class.

Course Evaluation

Grade for the course will be based on an average of 5 equally-weighted exams (see the attached sheet for approximate scheduling); each test has an in-class and take-home component. The take-home component must be typed and written in essay paragraph form with complete, well-developed sentences. It is the writing portion of the class; you will be evaluated on what you say (your logic and analysis) and how well you say it (clarity of expression). In addition, daily home assignments will be required. You must complete these home assignments by each class meeting, as we will be discussing them in class. All exams will be based on these home assignments. The home assignments are an integral part of this course. Periodically, I will collect homework assignments (unannounced). A student's final grade for the course will be lowered if a student is unprepared with home assignments two or more times. (An unexcused absence counts as being unprepared for class.) Please always feel free to meet with me during office hours (and by appointment) or call me if you would like more individualized discussion of your work and progress.

Tardiness

You are expected to be on time for class; habitual tardiness is disruptive and disrespectful of other class members. I will be taking roll each morning as soon as class begins. If you come in late, it is your responsibility to notify me after class so that I take your name off the

absence sheet. If you fail to notify me on the day you are late, you will be recorded as absent. Please do not ask me for a letter of recommendation if you are habitually tardy or absent from class or are unprepared with home assignments.

Active Attendance

You are expected to attend every class as scheduled because teaching/learning requires dialogue and without you we can have no dialogue. Our class work on the analysis of linguistic forms and structures is a crucial part of this course; occasionally, too, you will be doing some group problem-solving in class. Come to class ready to articulate your knowledge and formulate your questions for the class. Challenge yourself by attempting to answer the questions of the other students and volunteering at least one response at every class meeting. Please note that more than four unexcused absences in this course will result in failure of the course. Any student who misses three excused or unexcused absences must make an appointment with me to discuss whether withdrawal from the course is advised.

Definition, according to university policy, of an excused absence:

1. University obligation, in which case you will need to present me in advance with a letter explaining the purpose and date of your upcoming absence.
2. Emergency or medical illness, in which case you will need to notify me by leaving a message on my voice mail at 581-5012 (not email) before class begins on the day of your absence.

Only students with an excused absence on the day of any scheduled exam may take an alternative exam, of different format, within the week of the scheduled exam.

I will expect you to find out from someone in the class what you've missed so that you'll be prepared for the next class meeting. Worksheets will only be distributed once; it is your responsibility to photocopy assignments from another student if you are absent.

An absence policy is important so that I can be equitable to all members of the class and so that you will be successful in this class. I'm looking forward to working with you on our study of English syntax.

Information for Students with Disabilities

If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Coordinator of the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) as soon as possible. If you require extra time on timed in-class exams, you must present a documented letter from the Disability Office.

Grading Scale

Grading Scale in this course is always 100-90% = A; 89-80% = B; 79-70% = C; 69-60% = D; below 60% = F.

What to do in Case of Emergency

If we have an emergency in class, go promptly to inform Jean Toothman, Department Secretary (Room 3135) and Dana Ringuette, Chair (Room 3341) and dial 911.

Course Readings for English 2901

Week One: Introduction to the class. What is grammar? What is language? Kolln, pp. 3-14.

Week Two: How do we represent the internal structure of words and what does that representation tell us about the way words mean?

"Words and Word Classes," Kolln, pp. 239-241

"Morphemes," Kolln, pp. 242-253

Jan 19 Holiday

Week Three: What does the notion of word class contribute to our understanding of the form, function, and meaning of words?

"The Form Classes," Kolln, pp. 254-279

EXAM #1

Weeks Four, Five, and Six: Why are structure class words differentiated from form class words?

"The Structure Classes," Kolln, pp. 280-304

"Expanding the Main Verb," Kolln, pp. 60-69; 73-75

"Pronouns," Kolln, pp. 305-322

"Coordination," Kolln, pp. 223-237

Feb 13 Holiday

EXAM #2

Weeks Seven and Eight: What does the grammar of basic sentences reveal about the creativity and constraints of language? What grammatical subtleties suggest that the verb phrase is the powerhorse of the English sentence?

"The Grammar of Basic Sentences," Kolln, pp. 15-16

"Sentence Patterns," Kolln, pp. 17-59

Week Nine: How does the notion of transformations explain the feature of economy in our internal grammar?

"Transforming the Basic Patterns," Kolln, pp. 92-110 and 75-86

EXAM #3

Week Ten: Spring Break

Weeks Eleven and Twelve: What behavioral characteristics of adverbials make them troublesome to account for adequately?

"Modifiers of the Verb: Adverbials," Kolln, pp. 114-135

Weeks Thirteen and Fourteen: What variety of grammatical functions are performed by the English noun phrase?

"The Noun Phrase Functions: Nominals," Kolln, pp. 176-202

EXAM #4

Weeks Fifteen and Sixteen: How can knowledge of the different functions of adjectival phrases help us in our writing of more powerful sentences?

"Modifiers of the Noun: Adjectivals," Kolln, pp. 136-175

EXAM #5 (final exam to be given during finals week)

The discipline of English has many facets. Being an English major does not just mean liking to read. English majors are expected to become expert at analyzing literature, but they are also expected to receive training in critical theory, literary history and theory, pedagogical theory, composition and rhetoric, creative writing, and grammar and language theory.

WHY STUDY GRAMMAR AND LANGUAGE THEORY?

- 1. So that you are able to articulate the rules of your grammar.**
- 2. So that you are able to explain what you do when you produce/understand your language, rather than simply trying to rely on your intuitions.**
- 3. So that you have the terminology (vocabulary and logic) to talk about what you do.**
- 4. So that you have the tools to independently and critically analyze your own and other people's writing.**
- 5. So that you can explain to others why a particular form violates the rules of the grammar.**
- 6. So that you can edit and proofread your own writing, without having to delegate this to someone else, and so that you understand completely why you are making the changes you do.**
- 7. So that you can teach others.**
- 8. So that you can read, explain, understand, and analyze poetry better.**
- 9. So that you can read, explain, understand, and analyze complicated prose structure better.**
- 10. So that you know how the whole language system works, the name and function of all its intricate parts, and the relationship of all those parts to each other, so that you can fix it when things go wrong. (Like being able to fix your own car)**