

Eastern Illinois University

## The Keep

---

Fall 2021

2021

---

Fall 8-15-2021

### ENG 4901-600: History of the English Language

Angela Vietto

*Eastern Illinois University*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://thekeep.eiu.edu/english\\_syllabi\\_fall2021](https://thekeep.eiu.edu/english_syllabi_fall2021)



Part of the [English Language and Literature Commons](#)

---

#### Recommended Citation

Vietto, Angela, "ENG 4901-600: History of the English Language" (2021). *Fall 2021*. 90.  
[https://thekeep.eiu.edu/english\\_syllabi\\_fall2021/90](https://thekeep.eiu.edu/english_syllabi_fall2021/90)

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the 2021 at The Keep. It has been accepted for inclusion in Fall 2021 by an authorized administrator of The Keep. For more information, please contact [tabruns@eiu.edu](mailto:tabruns@eiu.edu).

## English 4901: History of the English Language

Fall 2021

Prof. Angela Vietto

Office hours: By appointment, online or in the office: <https://calendly.com/vietto/30min>

Office landline 217-581-2428

Cell 217-549-3203 (feel free to text between 9 am and 9 pm)

**Course Description:** English is a living language, one that has changed over time and has developed many variations based on the global spread of the language. In this course we will explore the forces that act on languages to generate such changes, the specific history of English, and the political and social forces acting on it. We will pay special attention to the contemporary varieties of English in the United States and to the social and political debates surrounding our contemporary language. (The official course description from the catalog reads pithily: “Historical, geographic, and social dialects of English; phonological changes and other alterations in the structure and vocabulary of the English language.”)

**Texts:** We will have no texts from TRS. A variety of resources will be available in D2L. In addition, I will be relying on Baugh & Cable’s *A History of the English Language*, which I recommend as the best basic reference if you want one in your personal library. **Note about research sources:** While I will sometimes give you (carefully vetted) external sources found online, please be aware that there is a great deal of misinformation about language generally and English specifically available online. I’ll discuss a bit more about the problems here in the early weeks of the course. For now, just be cautious.

**Learning Objectives:** The course is intended to enable you to do the following:

1. Explain how and why a living language like English changes over time.
2. Describe major changes over time in English syntax, sound, and lexicon.
3. Analyze attitudes about language change and correctness in the context of historical and linguistic knowledge about the history of English.
4. Describe the history of the idea of a “standard” English and explain its relation to other varieties of English.
6. Describe the influence of other languages on English and provide evidence for the importance of that influence.
7. Apply your knowledge of the history of English to relevant current discussions, such as educational policy, pedagogical practice, social policy, or your own writing.

**Student Disability Services:** If you are a student with a documented disability in need of accommodations to fully participate in this class, please contact Student Disability Services (SDS). All accommodations must be approved through SDS. Please stop by McAfee Gym, room 1210 or call 217-581-6583 to make an appointment.

**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 Student Success Center:** Students who are having difficulty achieving their academic goals are encouraged to contact the Student Success Center ([www.eiu.edu/~success](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 McAfee Gym, Room 1301.

**The Electronic Writing Portfolio:** Any written project of 750 words or longer 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. *Note: The EWP requirement applies to undergraduate students only.*

**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.

**Writing Center:** I encourage you to use EIU's Writing Center located at 3110 Coleman Hall. This free service provides one-to-one conferences with writing center consultants who can help you with brainstorming, organizing, developing support, documenting your papers, and working with sentence-level concerns. The writing center is open to help any student from any major at any stage of his or her writing process, and its system of one-to-one conferences demonstrates value and respect for individual writers, all of whom can benefit from feedback about their works in progress. Scheduling information is provided via the Writing Center link on the home page of our course.

**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 online here: <https://www.eiu.edu/english/machform/view.php?id=19831>

**Graduate Students and Undergraduates:** This course is open to both upper-division students at the undergraduate level and to graduate students. Like all courses at the 4750- 4999 level, the course has some additional expectations for graduate students. Specifically, graduate students will be asked to make greater use of secondary research sources and, where appropriate, primary sources in exercises as well as in the final project (again, these additional requirements will be listed in the instructions for the individual assignments).

**Assignments, Deadlines & Extensions:** If an emergency arises and you must miss a deadline, please let me know, preferably by text message, before the deadline and simply ask for an extension. If you do this—again, before the deadline—there will be no penalty to your grade. I don't even ask why you need extra time; we all know that life happens, and I trust that you will only ask for extensions when you really need them.

### Grading & Assignments

Discussion postings	30%
Quizzes	10%
Exercises	30%
Final project	20%
Final exam	10%

### Final Grading Scale

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

### About the exercises (more detailed instructions will be provided in D2L)

**Exercise 1: Biography of a Word.** We will go beyond simple etymology, to consider the life-journey of a word, from birth to the present. We'll examine some models by linguists and students to help you see the possibilities, and use some tools for researching a word that might be new to you.

**Exercise 2: History of a Grammar Rule.** Here we will focus on the development of prescriptive grammar; for your given grammar "rule," you will seek its earliest formulation in print and explore its evolution and/or rising and falling fortunes over the centuries.

**Exercise 3: Exploring a Contemporary Variety of English.** You will select a contemporary variety of English and learn as much as you can in the short time available about the variety's special features (structure, morphology, and lexicon).

**Final project:** This will be your opportunity to do just about anything you want in the way of applying content (and additional related research) from our course in a way that is meaningful to you. I anticipate that most projects will fall into one of three categories: analytic, pedagogical, or creative. Additional guidelines and suggestions are provided in D2L.

### Schedule

*Note: Each module includes at least one video lecture, additional video or written resources, and possibly a quiz. For specific deadlines, see the checklist for the module or the course calendar.*

Week 1 Aug 23 – 29

**Module 1: Introductions, course, class members; basic linguistic terms and concepts**

**Module 2: PIE, the Indo-European language family, and Old English**

Week 2 Aug 30 – Sept 5

**Module 3: Norman Conquest, Middle English, and Exercise 1: Biography of a Word**

Week 3 Sept 6 – 12

**Module 4: Early Modern Era to 19<sup>th</sup> Century, and begin Exercise 2: History of a Grammar Rule (due Week 4)**

Week 4 Sept 13 – 19

**Module 5: English in the United States (17<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> centuries); Exercise 2 due**

Week 5 Sept 20 – 26

**Module 6: The 21<sup>st</sup> Century, and Exercise 3: Explore a Contemporary Variety**

Week 6 Sept 27 – Oct 3

**Module 7: Contemporary language issues, Common Core and HEL, implications for teachers and writers. Planning final project.**

Week 7 Oct 4 – 10

**Module 8: Final project**

Week 8 Oct 11 – 17

**Final project due by Oct 13; Final exam due by Oct 17**

**Surprised not to see November? This is an 8-week course. If you signed up without realizing that and are feeling a bit alarmed right now, talk with the instructor, who has good news for you.**