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ENG 4901-001: History of the English Language

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ENGLISH 4901--History of the English Language

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Course Objective
The objective of this course is to help students consider different approaches to the study of language change. Even though the focus of the course will remain on the internal history of the English language (its sounds, grammar, and vocabulary), external social and political factors will be investigated in order to help account for these internal changes, whenever possible. Why do languages change? What particular factors (grammatical, social, political, etc.) contribute to language change? What effect do language attitudes have on language change? When we attempt to describe the history of the language, what precisely are we in fact describing? These are a few of the questions we'll be pursuing during the semester. We will read and analyze excerpts from Old English, Middle English, Renaissance English, and Early Modern English in addition to texts in various contemporary dialects (West African pidgins, Black English, and Chicano English, among others). Primary teaching methodology will be informal lectures and class discussion of daily reading assignments and of assigned problems.

Textbooks (available at TRS)
--A few Booth library reserve readings (main floor, north entrance); see syllabus and attached list.

PLEASE ALWAYS BRING YOUR WORKBOOKS AND HANDOUTS TO CLASS.

Course Evaluation
Grade for the course will be based on 3 exams, a presentation, and a paper project which consists of several parts in process (see the attached schedule for precise dates). You will also be required to do home problem assignments which we will discuss in class. Your final grade will consist of the following weighted components:

Exams 1-3--55%
Paper 1--25%
Presentations and home assignments--20%

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

Paper Project (Scope: 8 pages)
You may pursue any type of project you like related to the history of the English language (this includes English, any type of world English, American English standard and non-standard dialects). Bibliographic
sources are listed at the end of each chapter and in the footnotes of Baugh and Cable. In your paper, you might consider 1) investigating a particular question you have; 2) developing a practical application; 3) analyzing a particular linguistic phenomenon; 4) responding to your research reading in such a way that you show how it is significant to an understanding of issues in the field. You will early on in the semester be asked to turn in a detailed paper project proposal in which you 1) describe the topic that interests you, 2) discuss a particular angle or approach you are going to use as a way of focusing your thesis, 3) include a preliminary bibliography on your focused topic.

In the final weeks of the semester you will be asked to present your paper (do an extracted reading) to the class.

Your final paper will be evaluated on form as well as content. Documentation should be in MLA format following the guidelines of The MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, 3rd or 4th edition (you can request a copy that is kept behind the desk in the reference room of the library). I expect a clear introduction in your paper, an explicit thesis, and conclusion, with a body that consists of carefully selected details to support your thesis. If you can, try to include specific linguistic phenomena (sample sentences, words, morphemes, sounds, discourse sequences) to support your points. The most important word in all this is selected information that is organized meaningfully around an intelligent argument. I do not want to know everything you've learned in this class. Information that is not relevant but is included in your paper or information that is highly relevant to your argument but not included in your text will weaken your response. This balancing act is the challenge of any worthwhile research paper.

Chapter Presentations
Once during the semester you will be asked to introduce a chapter or portion of a chapter to the class (30-minutes). You should come to class with a study sheet for us that highlights important points, lists questions for us to reflect on, and includes possible paper topics that might come out of this unit (questions that students could further investigate and read about). In addition, you should do some extra library reading on your chapter. You should try to read a few original sources pertaining to the chapter mentioned in Baugh and Cable or you should read more about your area in another book on the History of the English language. Feel free to present the material to the class in any way you wish.

Attendance
I will expect you to attend every class because teaching/learning requires dialogue and without you we can have no dialogue. Please note that with more than five unexcused absences a student fails the course. According to university policy, an excused absence is due to a university obligation, medical reason, or emergency. If you must miss class, please leave a message on my voice mail (581-5012) before or on the day of your absence in order for your absence to be counted as an excused absence. I will assume that you are finding out from someone in the class what you've missed so that you'll be prepared for the next class meeting (note that worksheets will only be distributed once; it is your responsibility to photocopy worksheets from another student if you are absent). Also, please be respectful of other class members by coming to class on time.
Only students with an excused absence on the day of any scheduled exam may take an alternative exam within the week of the scheduled exam.

**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.

**English 4901 Course Schedule**
Please understand that this schedule is only a guide; we are likely to spend more or less time on individual topics depending on the needs and interests of the class.

**Unit 1**
Aug 25  Introduction to the course; Introduction to language (Chapt 1)
Aug 27, 29  Phonetics--Workbook, pp. 1-8
Sept 1  Labor Day--No class
Sept 3  The Indo-European Family of Languages, Baugh, Chapter 2, and Workbook, pp. 16-19
Sept 5  West Germanic languages, Grimm's Law, Workbook, pp. 10-15

**Unit 2**
Readings: Baugh, Chapter 3, workbook pp. 20-46; McCrum (on Reserve), skim Chapt 2, look at pictures and maps
Sept 8  Introduction to Old English (external history, Old English dialects), Baugh, pp. 41-51
Sept 10, 12  Old English phonology and orthography
Sept 15-17  Old English morphology
Sept 17-19  Old English lexicon and syntax
Sept 22  Old English readings for analysis

**Test #1**

**Unit 3**
Sept 26  Foreign influences on Old English
Baugh, Chapt 5; Workbook, pp. 47-52
Sept 29  Linguistic Consequences of the Norman Conquest 1066-1200
Readings: Baugh, Chapter 5; Workbook, pp. 53-55
Oct 1  Reestablishment of English 1200-1500, Baugh, Chapter 6
Middle English phonology, problem of spelling, Baugh, Chapter 7 and Workbook
Oct 3  Middle English morphology
Oct 6  Middle English semantics and syntax
Oct 8  Middle English readings for analysis
Unit 4
Oct 13 PAPER PROPOSAL DUE
Introduction to Early Modern Renaissance English 1500-1650 (advent of printing and influence on orthography, dictionaries, doctrines of usage); Baugh, Chapter 8 and Workbook; McCrum, Chapt 3, skim and look at maps, pictures
Oct 15 Renaissance pronunciation, Great Vowel Shift, stress changes
Oct 17 Out of town on university business--no class
Oct 20 Early Modern inflections, syntax, semantics
Oct 22 Early Modern English readings for analysis
Test #2

Unit 5
Oct 27 Modern English (1650-1800) (developing language attitudes, advent of prescriptivism, Johnson's dictionary and language reform), Baugh, Chapter 9
Oct 29 Modern English syntax
Readings: Baugh, Chapter 9 and hand-outs; Jonathan Swift--Chapter 2 from Proper English (folder on Reserve)
Oct 31 Modern English 19th and 20th cents (external history's influence on the lexicon)
Baugh, Chapter 10 and Workbook
Nov 3 English as a world language, pidgins and creoles, notion of standard dialect
Nov 5 video (possibly), Story of English, "World Englishes"
Nov 7-10 Out of town on university business--no class
Nov 12, 14 Variations in Contemporary American English (social vs geographic dialects, sp. stigmatized American English, Chicano English, Black English), Baugh, Chapter 11
Nov 17 video (possibly)--American Tongues
Nov 19 Language in Transition--language and gender
Bodine, "Androcentrism in Prescriptive Grammar"
Test #3
Nov 24-28 Thanksgiving Break
Dec 1-8 Reading of Papers
Dec 8 Paper due
Dec 10 & 12 Exit individual conferences

Items on Reserve
Algeo and Pyles, The Origins and Development of the English Language
Bodine, Ann, "Androcentrism in Prescriptive Grammar" from The Feminist Critique of Language (folder at desk)
McCrum, Robert, William Cran and Robert MacNeil, The Story of English
Swift, Jonathan, "A Proposal for Correcting, Improving, and Ascertaining the English Language" in *Proper English*, Tony Crawley, ed. (folder at desk)

Williams, Joseph, *Origins of the English Language* (folder at desk)

**Films on reserve in SMC**

1. The Story of English (programs #1-9) PE1075.S86x v.1-5
2. American Tongues PE2841.A54 1986x vid