ENG 4901-001: History of the English Language

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ENGLISH 4901--History of the English Language

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Mailbox: English Dept Office, Room 308 Coleman
Office Hours: 9:00-9:30 MWF and by appointment

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 did the English language change? What particular factors (grammatical, social, political, etc.) contributed to this 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, African-American 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; 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 and a paper project. The paper project will consist of several parts in process (see the attached schedule for precise dates), and you will be asked to read your paper to the class. You will also be required to do home problem assignments and library assignments which you will need to be prepared to discuss in class. (Tests will be based on these home and in-class assignments.) Your final grade will consist of the following weighted components:
   Exams 1-3--25% each
   Paper --25%

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: minimum 8 pages, 10 sources; graduate students 15 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. Some topics lend themselves to argument, others to analysis--you may choose whichever approach you prefer. 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 a reading) to the class. This should be a completed draft, worked through logically to the end in terms of your argumentation. The class will give you feedback (after your reading) on ways to potentially think about revising the draft during the last few weeks of the semester.
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*, 4th edition. (You can request a copy that is kept behind the desk in the reference room of the library; we also have copies in the Writing Center.) 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. 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 or analysis. 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 or analysis but not included in your text will weaken your response. This balancing act is the challenge of any worthwhile research paper.

Attached you will find suggestions for research topics. Please feel free to modify them around your specific interests or to choose your own different topic entirely. The key is for you to find a topic that engages you and that you want to learn much more about.

**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). Please be respectful of other class members by coming to class on time. I take role as soon as class begins. If you are late, it is your responsibility to notify me immediately after class; otherwise you will be recorded as absent. 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 Department Statement Concerning 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 original work" (*Random House Dictionary of the English Language*)--has the right and the responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty, up to and including immediate assignment of a grade of F for the assignment and a grade of N/C for the course, and to report the incident to the Judicial Affairs Office.
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.

Week One
Introduction to the course, discussion of expectations, assignments, research tools
Read Baugh, Chapt 1
Introduction to Phonetics--Workbook, pp. 1-8

Week Two
Indo-European Roots
English as a Germanic Language
History of Britain (Celtic, Roman, and Anglo-Saxon)
Baugh, Chapter 2, and Workbook, pp. 16-19
Willson chapters (handout)
Also consult Baugh, Chapter 3, as needed; Graddol and Swann, pp. 95-109

Week Three
Old English
Phonology and Orthography
Baugh, Chapter 3 and Workbook, Chapter 3
Sept 4 Holiday
PAPER PROPOSAL DUE

Week Four
Old English
Morphology, Lexicon, Syntax
Graddol and Swann, pp. 110-120
Old English readings for analysis (handouts)

Week Five
Old English Readings for analysis
Test #1

Week Six
English as a borrower of Celtic, Latin, and Scandinavian Languages
Baugh, Chapt 4
Story of English Video

Week Seven
Language and Writing
Literacy and English Manuscripts
Graddol and Swann, pp. 41-71
PRELIMINARY BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE

Week Eight
The Norman Conquest and the Bayeux Tapestry
Transition to Middle English
English, French, and Latin in England 1066-1400
Baugh, Chapters 5 and 6
Week Nine
Middle English
Phonology, problem of spelling
Morphology, semantics, syntax
Middle English readings for analysis
Baugh, Chapter 7 and Workbook
Oct 20 Holiday

Week Ten
Early Modern English
The Invention of printing and influence on orthography, dictionaries, doctrines of usage
The Great Vowel Shift
The Language of Shakespeare
Baugh, Chapter 8 and workbook

Test #2

Week Eleven
Modern English
"Fixing" the language in the Eighteenth Century
Prescriptive vs. Descriptive grammar
Johnson's Dictionary
Baugh, Chapter 9 and hand-outs
Graddol and Swann, pp. 71-94
Jonathan Swift--Chapter 2 from Proper English (folder on Reserve)

Week Twelve
Modern English 19th and 20th cents
Expansion of the Lexicon
Baugh, Chapter 10 and Workbook
English as a world language, pidgins and creoles, notion of standard dialect
Video, Story of English, "World Englishes"
Graddol and Swann, pp. 180-186; 194-201; 206-212; 216-221

Week Thirteen
Variations in Contemporary American English (social vs geographic dialects, stigmatized American English, Chicano English, Black English)
Baugh, Chapter 11 and Workbook
Video--American Tongues
Language in Transition--language and gender
Bodine, "Androcentrism in Prescriptive Grammar" (folder on reserve)
Reading of Papers

Week Fourteen
Thanksgiving Break

Weeks Fifteen and Sixteen
Reading of Papers
FINAL PAPERS DUE Dec 8

Test #3