ENG 5091-001: Studies in Language and Linguistics

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Dr. Buck, Professor  
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Office Hours: 12:00-12:30 MWF and by appointment

Course Objective  
In this seminar, we will examine the history and origins of American English (the language of the early colonists, how American English in the eighteenth century differed from early Modern English in Britain, the development of Black English and Southern American, the language of westward expansion, and the role that Native American languages played in the context of a huge melting pot of languages that co-existed in our country as early as the seventeenth century). Then we will study in detail selected American dialects of today (African-American English, Chicano English, Appalachian English, Asian-American, among others) and build a construct of how these groups of speakers reflect divergent social identities and attitudes through their language. Since the class is graduate level, it is research-based and will be conducted in seminar style.

Textbooks  
1. Finegan and Rickford. Language in the USA: Themes for the Twenty-First Century (in TRS)  
2. Hoffman. Lost in Translation (in TRS)  
3. Handouts that I will give you.  
4. But most required readings are on reserve in Booth Library (lower level). Since this is a graduate seminar, you will be expected to spend much of your time each week in the library. If you are not able to do this, you should not take this class.

Course Evaluation  
Grade for the course will be based on 3 paper projects. You will also be required to informally present readings to the class since this is a seminar. You will not be graded on these presentations, but failure to come to class prepared adequately for 3 presentations will result in a lowering of the final grade by one grade. Your final grade will consist of the following weighted components:

- Paper Project I (Annotated Bibliography) 33%
- Paper Project II (Research Project--Includes Midterm Review Analytical Paper) 33%
- Paper Project III (Linguistic Autobiography) 33%

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

Show and Tell  
You are encouraged and expected throughout the semester to bring in examples of language (any kind of literacy) that you find relevant to the class: books, cartoons, children's (and other) literature; stories, folk tales, proverbs, idioms, slang, jargon, grammar rules, store signs, newspaper headlines, etc. that you find interesting and that extend our discussion in class.

Paper Projects  
A detailed description of the requirements and expectations and objectives of these projects is included in this syllabus. We will have much class discussion while working on these papers in process to help you with your thinking. Always bring in questions you have.

Presentations of Readings  
Since this is a graduate seminar, students will carry the discussion of the readings. You should always read slowly and carefully and take notes as you read so that you are prepared for class discussion. 1) Be able to summarize the main points and arguments of the text; 2) be prepared with a personal response, comment, critique of the reading; 3) bring a list of important terms and their definitions that come out of the reading; 4) be ready to discuss the importance of the reading in relation to other texts in your reading history (make connections, in other words, with other classes, books, articles, films, knowledge, you have been exposed to). You should come to class with detailed notes that you have taken from the readings.
Coming to class unprepared and with no notes will result in a lowering of your final grade. Since this is a seminar, you will also be doing informal presenting of your paper project progress with the rest of the class.

**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 is a crucial part of this course; you will be required, too, to do individual and group work in class. Come to class ready to articulate your knowledge and formulate your questions for the class.

An absence policy is important 1) so that I can be equitable to all members of the class and 2) so that you will be successful in this class. Please note that more than two unexcused absences in this course is grounds for failing this course. Leaving class early or arriving late counts as an absence.

Definition 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 call my voice mail at 581-5012 BEFORE class begins on the day of your absence. Notifying me after class begins will not be considered excused.

--If you must miss class, 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. Handouts will only be distributed once; it is your responsibility to photocopy assignments from another student if you are absent.

**Tardiness**
Please be on time for class; habitual tardiness is disruptive and disrespectful of other class members. I will be taking roll as soon as class begins. If you come in late, it is your responsibility to notify me immediately after class so that I take your name off the absence sheet. If you fail to notify me immediately after class on the day you are late, you will be recorded as absent.

**Late Assignments**
All written assignments must be submitted when due; no late assignments will be accepted. Papers are due when class begins on the designated dates. Make-up work will be permitted for excused absences only.

**Typing and Presentation**
All formal papers must be typed (double-spaced) in MLA format.

**Where to Go For Help with this Course**
Come to see me in my office in 3040 Coleman Hall during my office hours or by appointment.

**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.

**Plagiarism**
The English Department requires that instructors quote to all students the university's policy 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 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 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 Judicial Affairs Office.

This applies, of course, also to any appropriation of information found in electronic format.

**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). If they are unavailable, use phone in the English Department office (Room 3135) or cell phones to dial 911.
English 5091 Graduate Seminar: Language and Linguistics--The History of American English

Finegan = Language in the USA (editor of your textbook)
Eva Hoffman = Lost in Translation (your textbook)
Handouts--I will give you
All other readings are on Reserve in Booth Library (lower level)
For each date listed, you should have read all the selections underneath it by the time you come to class on that date (even if we are behind).
The Story of English is a video on Reserve in Booth Library (4th floor). It is a multi-volume set. Please watch this during the semester at your leisure. It gives you an overview of the History of the English language from 449 a.d. to the present and includes a section on American English.

UNIT I: MULTILINGUAL APPROACH TO THE HISTORY OF AMERICAN ENGLISH

Aug 27
Introduction to the class
Introduction to Linguistics (language vs dialect; types of grammars; component parts of a grammar)
Language Attitudes
Film: American Tongues
Introduction to phonetics

Sept 3
Handout--Cable's Introduction to Phonetics
Handouts--Phonetics homework
Handout--Introduction to Pidgins and Creoles (Robert Hall, "Pidgin Languages" in Bailey and Robinson, Varieties of Present-Day English)
Chapter 1 (Maritime English)
Dillard: Chapter 2 (American Koine)
Dillard: Chapter 3 (Immigrants and Migrants) (skim)
Eva Hoffman, pp. 1-56

Sept 10
Handouts--Homework: Pidgins and creoles
Dillard, All-American English, Chapter 5 (Taking Stock, or Where is You Englishmans at?)
Case Study: Latino (Hispanic) English
Dillard: Chapter 6, All-American English (Puerto Rico: Bicolonialism and Bilingualism)
Handout--L. Alvarez, "It's the Talk of Nueva York: The Hybrid Called Spanglish"
Sept 17
Handout--Homework: Chicano English
Finegan, Chapt. 8 (Creole Languages) and **Louisiana Creole vs Cajun**
Case Study: **African American English and Gullah and the Southern Dialect**
  Finegan, Chapt 5 (African American English)
  Finegan, Chapter 23, "Linguistic Identity and Community in American Literature"
  Lerer, Seth. *Inventing English*. Chapter 16
Eva Hoffman, Part II: Exile

Sept 24
Case Study: **Native American Languages**
  Finegan, Chapter 9, "Native American Languages"
  Handout--Langacker, "Language and Thought"
  Handout--Whorf, "English and Nootka"
  Campbell, Chapter 1, *American Indian Languages*, pp. 3-25
Eva Hoffman, Part III: pp. 167-221

Oct 1
**Theory: Slang or Dialect?** Differentiating dialect from other features of language
  Finegan, Chapter 20, "Slang"
  Finegan, Chapter 26, "The Language of Cyberspace"
Wolfram and Schilling-Estes, *American English*
  Chapter 1, "The Reality of Dialects"
  Chapter 2, "Why Do Languages Have Dialects?"
  Chapter 3, "Levels of Dialect"
Case Study: **Asian American Voices**
  Finegan, Chapter 13, "Asian American Voices"
Eva Hoffman, Finish Part III: The New World

Oct 8
**Annotated Bibliographies Due**

Midterm Review--Analytical Paper
UNIT II: ORIGINS OF AMERICAN ENGLISH: THE ANGLICIST HYPOTHESIS

Oct 15
Settlement History
Algeo, The Cambridge History of the English Language, Vol VI: English in North America
Chapter 1, External History (Settlement History)
The Colonial Period (focus)
The National Period (focus)
The International Period (skim read)
Handout and audio listening--Selections of readings from The Colonial Period
Handout--Cahan, New Explorations of an American Self
Handout--Eaton, New Explorations of an American Self

Oct 22
Webster, Americanisms, and the Complaint Tradition: American English vs British English
(The National Period)
H.L. Mencken, The American Language, Chapter 1
Cmiel, Democratic Eloquence: The Fight over Popular Speech in 19th Century America, Chapters 1 and 2
Finegan, Chapter 2, "American English and its Distinctiveness"
Butters, Chapter 9, "Grammatical Structures," The Cambridge History of the English Language: English in North America.
Handout--Austin and Bonnin, New Explorations of an American Self

Oct 29
Critique of the Field: Traditional and Current Research Methodologies
Montgomery, Chapter 3, "British and Irish Antecedents," The Cambridge History of the English Language
Case Study: Appalachian English
Finegan, Chapter 3, "Regional Dialects"
Finegan, Chapter 4, "Social Varieties of American English"
Finegan, Chapter 6, "The Dictionary of American Regional English"
Handout--Antin, New Explorations of the American Self

Nov 5
American Regional and Social Varieties (continued)
Case Study: Northern, Southern, Midland, Western
Rodriguez, Hunger of Memory
Nov 12

**American English and Cultural Identity**

Miller, "A Tongue, For Sighing" (Chapter 8 in Maybin and Mercer, *Using English*)

Finegan, Chapter 7, "Multilingualism and non-English Mother Tongues"

Finegan, Chapter 15, "Language Ideology and Language Prejudice"

Finegan, Chapter 16, "Ebonics and its Controversy"

Handout, Cunha, "Talking in the New Land"

Nov 19--Linguistic Autobiographies Due

Nov 26 Thanksgiving Break

Dec 3--Conferences/Reading of Papers

Dec 10--Conferences/Reading of Papers
**Paper Project I: Annotated Bibliography**

The first project is an annotated bibliography of at least 10 scholarly secondary sources (you may always do more), fully documented in MLA format, in which you explore a specific, very **narrowed** topic of your choice in the history of American English (around a specific research question you are asking) and find **current research** (journal articles and books) in the field (current is defined as sources from the last ten years only). Your annotation should include an account, in your own words, of the main argument of the text and how that argument gets supported. It should also include your commentary on the text—what is significant about the text in relation to the field that you have learned thus far and what response you have to the issue at hand or what position you take in relation to the argument.

Sample narrowed topic and research question from a Graduate Seminar in Language and Gender: How men and women talk about, through their language of conversation or written texts, where boundaries of intimacy lie within friendships of the opposite sex when they are already in a committed relationship (i.e., how they define a friendship, how they define a special friendship, whether they allow special friendships, how they define a betrayal, how they talk about intimacy in friendships when the boundary disallows sex, what kinds of talk are allowalbe (socially acceptable) but should perhaps be challenged in their dangers of betrayal, etc). This topic and the next are centered around "what we do with words," what subtle actions they perform at a subconscious level that we are often not critically aware of and that can often lead to unexpected consequences in relationships.

Another narrowed topic: How men and women conduct the language of flirting, the different roles the genders perform in the construction of early relationships through the language flirting, actions that take place through the language of flirting that are perceived in different ways by the genders, etc.

**Paper Project II: Research Paper Project**

In this project, you have freedom to design a paper project that relates to any aspect of the history of American English and that is based on your own interests and previous knowledge. The paper must be grounded in the readings of the course (in other words, must be an outgrowth of our studies in class). You must present an original and thought-provoking thesis and, of course, this means that you must start with a specific, very narrowed, intelligent and workable research question you are asking. You must also decide on what kind of data you will be examining and what kind of methodology you will be using. We will talk much more about this in class. Throughout the semester, we will be discussing possible research questions that could be pursued.

Your thesis must be a query for knowledge; your writing should aim to teach you and your audience about a very small issue you find important, but that you will develop and pursue in every possible detail in your paper. You and your audience should learn something new, in other words, from what you discover and articulate in your paper. You may not use papers you have written or are writing for another class. However you are certainly encouraged to find ways to develop this paper from your own research interests related to your Master's thesis requirement, if you find a connection. All sources must be cited in MLA format. Scope is 15 typed pages (longer papers always allowed).

Please note that your paper must be about some aspect of language (the lexicon, semantics, syntax, morphology, sociolinguistics, etc. of a linguistic issue). You may pick a literary text as a source of data, but your query must be centered on the language of the text.
Paper Project III: Linguistic Autobiography

Your final project, which will be due at the end of the semester but which you should be working on throughout the semester, is your own linguistic autobiography, a compilation of your linguistic background and mix of historical, social, cultural variables that explain your current idiolect, the individual language variety that you speak. You must assess and use in your paper all relevant sources from the readings for the course, all relevant theories, all relevant dialect details we read about to develop and explain your analysis. We will be discussing this requirement much further and I will be guiding you through the thinking process.