

## English 513-01: History of the English Language

Fall 2005: Wednesdays, 6:30-9:20 p.m.

Instructor: Nancy Myers

334-5484 or [nancymyers@uncg.edu](mailto:nancymyers@uncg.edu)

Office: McIver 110

Office Hours: T 9-10, W 5:30-6, and Th 9-10 & 2-3 or by appointment

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. John 1.1

You taught me language; and my profit on 't  
Is, I know how to curse: the red plague rid you,  
For learning me your language!  
William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*

Political language—and with variations this is true of all political parties, from Conservatives to Anarchists—is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind.  
George Orwell

"It's a stupid name enough!" Humpty Dumpty interrupted impatiently. "What does it mean?"  
"Must a name mean something?" Alice asked doubtfully.  
"Of course it must," Humpty Dumpty said with a short laugh: "my name means the shape I am—and a good handsome shape it is, too. With a name like yours, you might be any shape, almost."  
Lewis Carroll

Linguistics becomes an ever eerier area, like  
I feel like I'm in Oz,  
Just trying to tell it like it was. Ogden Nash

### Focus

The overriding theme of this course is to understand language in play—linguistically, socially, psychologically, and historically—so, we play with language. This course examines both oral and print forms of English change through time, space, technology, and people. Learning more about the phonemic, morphemic, syntactic, and semantic aspects of English, we explore the language through linguistic, cultural, historical, and political lenses.

**Learning Goals for Undergraduate Students:** Through the readings, assignments, and class activities in this course, you will

- A. understand the cultural, political, linguistic, and technological influences on the English language and its British and American dialects across time;
- B. understand and analyze the different types of language changes operating in Old, Middle, Early Modern, and Modern Englishes;
- C. reflect on your idiolect and language development in relationship to the evolution of the English language and its British and American dialects;
- D. extend your understanding of English's diverse linguistic developments into various real-world contexts;
- E. know the distinctions among dialects, registers, and language varieties;
- F. establish relationships between language use, language history and theory, and language instruction.

**Learning Goals for Graduate Students:** Through the readings, assignments, and class activities in this course, you will

- A. understand the cultural, political, linguistic, and technological influences on the English language and its British and American dialects across time;
- B. understand and analyze the different types of language changes operating in Old, Middle, Early Modern, and Modern Englishes;
- C. reflect on your idiolect and language development in relationship to the evolution of the English language and its British and American dialects;
- D. extend your understanding of English's diverse linguistic developments into various real-world contexts;
- E. know the distinctions among dialects, registers, and language varieties;

F. establish relationships between language use, language history and theory, and language instruction;  
 G. research, synthesize, and communicate the relationships between British and American cultures and languages in a specific context, such as gendered language, dialect variations, electronic discourses, educational language standards, national and social identity, writing systems, multilingualism, naming, technical and professional languages, etc.

### Readings

Simon Winchester's *The Professor and the Madman*. Harper Collins, 1998  
 David Graddol, Dick Leith, and Joan Swann's *English: History, Diversity and Change*. Routledge, 1996  
 Online Articles (Available in BlackBoard under Ereserve—listed here in order of reading)  
 Stephan Gramley and Kurt-Michael Patzold. "English in America." *A Survey of Modern English*. 2nd ed. NY: Routledge, 2004. 250-271.  
 Dennis R. Preston. "The Story of Good and Bad English in the United States." Richard Watts and Peter Trudgill, eds. *Alternative Histories of English*. NY: Routledge, 2002. p. 134-151.  
 Scott McCloud. "From The Vocabulary of Comics." *Visual Rhetoric in a Digital World: A Critical Sourcebook*. Carolyn Handa. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2004. 195-208.  
 Irit Rogoff. "Studying Visual Culture." *Visual Rhetoric in a Digital World: A Critical Sourcebook*. Carolyn Handa. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2004. 381-394.  
 James Milroy and Lesley Milroy. "Two Nations Divided by the Same Language? The Standard Language Ideology in Britain and the United States." *Authority in Language: Investigating Standard English*. 3rd. ed. New York: Routledge, 1999. p. 150-160.  
 Juanita R. Comfort. "African-American Women's Rhetorics and the Culture of Eurocentric Scholarly Discourse." Clayann Gilliam Panetta, ed. *Contrastive Rhetoric Revisited and Redefined*. Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2001. p. 91-104.  
 Jason Jones. "Language and Class." *Language, Society, and Power: An Introduction*. 2nd ed. Linda Thomas et al. NY: Routledge, 2004. 134-155.  
 Online Texts for Exercises and Class Activities (Available in BlackBoard under Ereserve)  
 Zora Neale Hurston. "Spunk." *The Complete Stories*. NY: Harper Collins, 1995. 26-32.  
 Nick Cipollone, Steven Hartman Keiser, and Shrvan Vasishth, eds. "Language and Ethnicity: The Case of African-American English" *Language Files*. 7th ed. Columbus: Ohio State UP, 1998. 386-392.

**Attendance:** Since your course grade is influenced by your class participation and your preparedness, regular attendance seems the most logical approach. If you cannot make a class, let me know in advance. More than two absences will lower your course grade.

### Oral and Written Requirements

The grades for the course for undergraduate students break out as follows:

Notebook/Exercises/Class Offering --- 40%  
 Personal Language Essay --- 30%  
 Individual Statement on Histories and Englishes --- 30%

The grades for the course for graduate students break out as follows:

Notebook/Exercises/Class Offering --- 25%  
 Personal Language Essay --- 25%  
 Individual Statement on Histories and Englishes --- 25%  
 Group Presentation --- 25%

### Notebook/Exercises/Class Offering

The objective of the notebook is to add your specific perceptions, reactions, and analyses to the readings, the handouts, and your class notes. It is due no later than **Tuesday, 25 November**. You can do this as a print document (like keeping a journal/scrapbook), an electronic document that you save on a memory key or CD, or an online document that you save in your UNGC network space.

**Section I—Reading Language:** For each week's reading assignments and for the graduate student presentations, you will be responsible for reflecting on issues of the readings and class time. Each week's entry should be at least 400 words. You may respond to discrete aspects of the assigned texts or larger issues; you may include personal experiences or explore the topics through a series of questions you work to answer. Moreover, as you read and reflect, include in this part your observations of language use around you. While

language play is acceptable and necessary in these responses, thoughtful and engaged reflection is the purpose. During the weeks of the presentations, you should respond to all aspects of them to the content and its means of presentation, the handouts or online materials, the activities, the annotated bibliography, etc. What did you learn; how did the material reinforce or contradict what you already knew; how did it extend or relate to other information you learned in this course across the semester; what is your reaction to that information and why? You can address each presentation individually for 200 words each or write about both of them together.

**Section II—Language Exercises:** For many class periods, we will be engaging in language activities. Sometimes these will be finished outside of class or done in preparation for the next session. Finishing what we start and offering a short written response explaining what you discovered is the objective of this section. There are 8 exercises assigned in the schedule, and you can find the directions for each in our BlackBoard course under Assignments.

**Section III—Class Offering:** Each class period will begin and end with one of you offering no more than a 5-minute segment on some aspect of language and/or language play. You will offer the example, explain it, and tell us why you chose it. It may be a short poem, a comic strip, an advertisement, a word and its etymology, a language story, etc. You may want to tie your offering to the reading material of the previous or current week, but it is not necessary. These segments are to remind us of the reciprocity between language and people. In this section then, you will include your Class Offering, along with your written statement as to what it means and why you chose it.

### **Personal Language Essay**

On 21 September, you will present a four-to-six page, word-processed text that examines, analyzes, and reflects on your practices and attitudes about language use, abuse, reuse, and/or excuse. On 31 August, we will discuss this in detail and generate ideas. On 14 September, we will share drafts/outlines/written notes and plans for the essay. You might want to watch for an attitude, belief, or metaphor that strikes you about your understanding of language in oral, print, imagistic, or electronic forms. On 21 September bring two print copies to class and attach your Word file in the BlackBoard Discussion Forum entitled "Personal Language Essay," using your essay title as the header for your thread.

### **Individual Statement on Histories and Englishes**

The course will conclude with your individual statement that captures your understanding of the histories and Englishes you have encountered across this course. You can see this statement as a comprehensive view of the course (all that you want to remember), a synthesis of your learning across the semester, or as an in-depth examination of some aspect of the history of the English language. What it should represent is how you see the relationship between this course and your use of language and future plans in English and/or education. In other words, what is the value for you in knowing about these histories and Englishes? This may be a personal statement or a professional one. No new research needs to be done for this assignment, but cite the sources you include in your statement. This statement may take the form of an essay/article, a series of PowerPoint slides, a website, a teaching unit, a letter, a series of focused diary entries, a comic book, a long poem or series of poems, a speech that you either audio or videotape, a Flash presentation, etc. However, graduate students may not just write up their presentations.

We will discuss this assignment on 5 October, and by 6 pm on 30 November you should attach your statement to the BlackBoard Discussion Forum entitled "Statements on Histories and Englishes." Also, on 30 November, bring to the dinner party some aspect of the statement to share by reading, explaining, or showing.

### **Group Research and Presentation (Graduate Students Only)**

During the second half of the semester, in groups of three, the graduate students will be making 45-60 minute, interactive presentations on the bi-directional influences of language and culture, particularly as these influences apply to English, its histories and dialects. Topics include dialectology, dialect variations, AAE or Ebonics, gendered language, electronic discourses, educational language standards, national and social identity, writing systems, multilingualism, onomastics/naming, technical and professional languages, English before 1607 CE, World English, the future of English, etc. Your purposes are to inform, to teach, and to delight, so you will have control over the organization, activities, and research of this presentation/workshop. Although you will have some choice over your topics, you will need to include a history component.

Each group member will be responsible for 10 sources, which per person may include no more than 2 websites, 2

media sources, and 2 interviews/lectures. However, those numbers can increase if the person has the minimum number of sources. Think of print and electronic sources as articles, essays, and chapters of books, not entire books; moreover, the texts for this course may be used for and in the presentations, but will not be considered part of the 30 sources. The 30 sources will be compiled in a comprehensive annotated bibliography (attached in BlackBoard). At the time of the presentation, one print copy of the bibliography will be given to me, and it should be posted in the BlackBoard Discussion Forum entitled "Presentation Materials." If you do a PowerPoint Presentation or use websites as examples/activities, those should also be attached in that Discussion Forum. You will need to make 26 copies of your handouts and print exercises, and to let me know at least one class period in advance about any audio-visual technology you wish to use including a computer lab so that I can make arrangements.

At 8:15 pm on 21 September, we will set the groups and topics, (bring a list of your three top choices/interests), discuss the annotated bibliography, and do a brief overview of how to research linguistics and language topics. At 9 pm on 12 October, we will set dates for the presentations and make audio-visual requests that you are aware of. The presentations are two a week from 26 October to 9 November with one group on 16 November.

### **Schedule for English 513: History of the English Language**

17 August: Communicating Englishes

Course Overview, About You, Food, Communications, and Offerings Sign Up Sheets, BlackBoard Materials and Instruction  
Exercise 1: Three Hears

24 August: Recording Englishes

Readings: *The Professor and the Madman*  
2 Class Offerings  
Exercise 2: Dictionary Madness in the Jackson Library

31 August: Americanizing Englishes

Readings: *English*, Reading A, Crystal p.29-32, Reading B, Webster, p.91-94, and p. 198  
online—Stephan Gramley and Kurt-Michael Patzold. "English in America." *A Survey of Modern English*. 2nd ed. NY: Routledge, 2004. 250-271.  
2 Class Offerings  
Titillating and Tempestuous Terms or Juggling Jargon (print out from BlackBoard under Course Information)  
Personal Language Essay discussion  
Exercise 3: Dialects

7 September: Judging Englishes

Readings: *English*, Chapter 9 only  
online—Dennis R. Preston. "The Story of Good and Bad English in the United States." Richard Watts and Peter Trudgill, eds. *Alternative Histories of English*. NY: Routledge, 2002. p. 134-151.  
2 Class Offerings  
Exercise 4: Attitudes or Realities?

14 September: Historicizing Englishes

Readings: *English*, Chapter 3 and Reading A also p. 3-7  
2 Class Offerings  
Drafts/Outlines/Written Notes or Plans for Language Essay due for group response

## 21 September: Personalizing Englishes

Personal Language Essay due

2 Class Offerings

Set Graduate Presentation Groups and Topics (Bring 3 choices on paper)

Researching Language and Linguistics and Doing Annotated Bibliographies

## 28 September: Writing Englishes

Readings: *English*, Chapter 2 and Reading A

2 online—Scott McCloud. "From The Vocabulary of Comics." *Visual Rhetoric in a Digital World: A Critical Sourcebook*. Carolyn Handa. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2004. 195-208.

—Irit Rogoff. "Studying Visual Culture." *Visual Rhetoric in a Digital World: A Critical Sourcebook*. Carolyn Handa. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2004. 381-394.

2 Class Offerings

Exercise 5: Image Nation

## 5 October: Nationalizing Englishes

Readings: *English*, Chapter 4 and Readings A & B

2 Class Offerings

Individual Statement Discussion

Exercise 6: Questioning History

## 12 October: Colonizing Englishes

Readings: *English*, Chapter 5 only

online—James Milroy and Lesley Milroy. "Two Nations Divided by the Same Language? The Standard Language Ideology in Britain and the United States." *Authority in Language: Investigating Standard English*

2 Class Offerings

Set Group Presentation Dates

Exercise 7: Delineation and Creoles

## 19 October: Juggling Englishes

Readings: *English*, Chapter 7 p. 270-283, Chapter 8 p. 310-324

2 online—Juanita R. Comfort. "African-American Women's Rhetorics and the Culture of Eurocentric Scholarly Discourse." Clayann Gilliam Panetta, ed. *Contrastive Rhetoric Revisited and Redefined*. Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2001. p. 91-104.

—Jason Jones. "Language and Class." *Language, Society, and Power: An Introduction*. 2nd ed. Linda Thomas et al. NY: Routledge, 2004. 134-155.

2 Class Offerings

Exercise 8: Codeswitching vs Borrowing vs Variation

## 26 October: Presenting Englishes

Group Presentation 1:

Group Presentation 2:

2 Class Offerings

## 2 November: Presenting Englishes

Group Presentation 3:  
Group Presentation 4:  
2 Class Offerings

9 November: Presenting Englishes

Group Presentation 5:  
Group Presentation 6:  
2 Class Offerings

16 November: Presenting Englishes

Group Presentation 7:  
2 Class Offerings  
Course Evaluations

22 November: Tuesday—final due date for notebooks

23 November: Feasting Englishes—Thanksgiving Break

30 November: Sharing and Celebrating Englishes

Statements Posted in BlackBoard by 6 pm  
Dinner Party at Nancy's home—Bring an aspect of your statement to share (read, explain, show, perform).