

English 329

Kirk Hazen, ENGL 329, Fall 2000, Topics in the English Language

Variety in Language

Instructor: Dr. Kirk Hazen

Office: 360 Stansbury

Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday, 1:30 to 2:30 and by appointment

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Purpose: The purpose of this course is to direct you in rigorously studying the workings of the English language and the social function of English in the United States. We will cover the following five topics:

- * Introduction to Language
- * Synchronic Variation
- * Diachronic Variation
- * Language in the Schools
- * Language in the Media

Course Objectives:

- * To confront the assumptions of traditional prescriptivism.
- * To develop respect for human language.
- * To develop a non-patronizing respect for diachronic and synchronic language variation.
- * To explore the modern concepts of the mental grammar.
- * To follow the process of scientific inquiry with respect to language.
- * To demonstrate the nature of linguistic argumentation.
- * To acquire skills in phonetic transcription
- * To acquire analytical skill in morphology, phonology, syntax, historical linguistics, and sociolinguistics as they relate to literature, creative writing, and professional writing and editing.

Texts: American English. Walt Wolfram and Natalie Schilling-Estes. 1998. Blackwell. Available at Stillwells Bookshop and other not-so-fine bookstores.

Attendance: There is no attendance policy for this course. I believe that the course, the assignments, and the material will be interesting and difficult enough to keep you in class in order to learn and pass. If you are not in class on a regular basis, passing will become nearly impossible. If you miss class, it is fully your responsibility to find out what was missed and complete any assignments by their due date.

Advice: If you feel lost or even the slightest bit confused, contact me. Email me or come by during office hours. If you cannot make office hours, we can set up a time to talk. The quicker you get your questions straightened out, the better off you will be.

Grades:

- * One research paper: Consisting of an interview, a typescript, a paper analyzing one sociolinguistic variable, graphs, bibliography.
- * One presentation of research findings.
- * Four Exams.

The Numbers:

First Exam 15%

Second Exam 15%
Third Exam 15%
Final Exam 20%
Presentation: 5%
Research paper: 30%

In this class I assign pluses and minuses. The official percentages are 100-97 = A+; 96-93 = A; 92-90 = A-; 89-87 = B+; 86-83 = B; 82-80 = B-; 79-77 = C+; 76-73 = C; 72-70 = C-; 69-67 = D+.

Exams: There will be three exams in this class. The first two will be during the semester and will not be cumulative. The final exam will be cumulative. Each one will probably consist of identifications (i.e. define and give an example), problems to solve, short answer questions, and an essay. There will be no quizzes in this class.

Social Justice Policy: West Virginia University is committed to social justice. I concur with that commitment and expect to foster a nurturing environment based upon open communication, mutual respect, and non-discrimination. Our university does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, age, disability, veteran status, religion, sexual orientation, color or National origin. Any suggestions as to how to further such a positive and open environment in this class will be appreciated and given serious consideration.

If you are a person with a disability and anticipate needing any type of accommodation in order to participate in this class, please advise me and make appropriate arrangements with Disability Services (293-6700).

Preliminary Class Plan

August 21: Introduction and discussion of language and language variation.
August 23: Chapter 1 and the research project.
August 25: Chapter 2 and attitudes towards language variation.
August 28: A small introduction to linguistics.
August 30: A small introduction to linguistics continued.
September 1: A small introduction to linguistics finished.
September 4: No school (labor day).
September 6: No class (journal research day).
September 8: Levels of language variation (chapter 3).
September 11: Levels of language variation. First journal summary due.
September 13: Interviewing techniques.
September 15: Diachronic language variation
September 18: Chapter 4.
September 20: Chapter 4 and attitudes of correct English from the EModE period till today.
September 22: More attitudes of correct English from the EModE period till today.
September 25: Regional dialects (chapter 5).
September 27: Regional dialects.
September 29: Regional dialects. Transcript Due.
October 2: Social dialects (chapter 6).
October 4: Social dialects.
October 6: No class (journal research day).
October 9: AAVE.
October 11: AAVE. Second journal summary due.
October 13: Appalachian English
October 16: Appalachian English
October 18: Language and gender (chapter 7).
October 20: Language and gender.
October 23: Language and gender; style (chapter 8).
October 25: Style.

October 27: Methodology (chapter 9).
 October 30: Methodology.
 November 1: Variants and Variables (Wolfram reading).
 November 3: Chapter 10: Language in the Schools. Draft Due of Research Paper.
 November 6: Chapter 10: Language in the Schools.
 November 8: Chapter 10: Language in the Schools.
 November 10: Chapter 11: Language in the Schools (correct English).
 November 13: Chapter 11: Language in the Schools.
 November 15: Chapter 11: Language in the Schools.
 November 17: That extra day you need when you have packed the syllabus too tightly with topics.
 November 20 — 24: No school.
 November 27: Presentations.
 November 29: Presentations.
 December 1: Presentations.
 December 4: Presentations.
 December 6: Presentations.
 December 8: Presentations (last day).
 December 12, 1:00 PM: Research project due.

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 Email/Web: khazen2@wvu.edu; <http://www.as.wvu.edu/~khazen/>
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- * To acquire analytical skill in morphology, phonology, syntax, historical linguistics, and sociolinguistics as they relate to literature, creative writing, and professional writing and editing.

Learning Outcomes:

- * Students will be able to analyze natural language and make descriptive accounts of its

structure

- * Students will account for the complex history of language development in dialects of English.
- * Students will examine and explain the intensive social pressures associated with vernacular varieties in the United States.
- * Students will demonstrate their knowledge of current theories about language variation and change.
- * Students will evaluate the complex debate about the role of language in primary education.
- * Students will be able to debate the role of correct English in the socio-educational context of modern America.

Sources:

Wolfram, Walt and Natalie Schilling-Estes. 1998. American English. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.
Lippi-Green, Rosina. 1997. English with an Accent. New York: Routledge (Both are available at Stilwell's bookshop).

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Web Assistance: This course has supplemental material linked through the student portal site at <http://www.as.wvu.edu/~khazen/>. The course is listed on the WebCT page. Every student will receive a user name and a password. This site should be used for discussion of homework problems, quizzes, and useful linguistic links. The system gathers for me what pages you look at, how long you spent on each page, your quiz grades, and your discussions. I expect you to use these resources.

Grades:

Homework: The homework will either be online quizzes about the reading or short response papers where you react to the stance taken by the authors we have read. Homework assignments are due on their due date. Your grade will be adversely affected if you turn your homework in late.

Exams: There will be three exams in this class. The first two will be during the semester and will not be cumulative. The final exam will be cumulative. Each one will probably consist of identifications (i.e. define and give an example), problems to solve, short answer questions, and an essay. There will be no quizzes in this class.

Literature Review and Proposed Research: Early on you should choose a topic that you want to research. I am not asking you to do any original research (I am actually asking you not to do original research). I am asking for you to review and summarize the literature of your topic. I also want to see a well thought out abstract for a potential research topic that would fill a gap in the literature that you have reviewed. We will discuss topics, but consider the chapter divisions as appropriate topics.

The Numbers:

Homework (cumulative) 30%
Midterm Exam 20%
Final Exam 25%
Literature Review 25%

In this class I assign pluses and minuses. The official percentages are 100-97 = A+; 96-93 = A;

92-90 = A-; 89-87 = B+; 86-83 = B; 82-80 = B-; 79-77 = C+; 76-73 = C; 72-70 = C-; 69-67 = D+.

Workload: I expect everyone to have the reading done for each class period. I also expect you to complete the assigned exercises. The workload may appear unwieldy at times, but the time involved will greatly benefit your education in this class.

Plagiarism: As noted in the Undergraduate Catalog, "West Virginia University expects that every member of its academic community shares the historic and traditional commitment to honesty, integrity, and the search for truth" (p. 49). As a professional academic and as a member of this university I concur with this statement, and accordingly, plagiarism will not be tolerated in this course. Please note the University definition of plagiarism, as explained in the Undergraduate Catalog: "To take or pass off as one's own the ideas, writings, artistic products, etc. of someone else; for example, submitting, without appropriate acknowledgment, a report, notebook, speech, outline theme, thesis, dissertation, or other written, visual, or oral material that has been knowingly obtained or copied in whole or in part, from the work of others, whether such source is published, including (but not limited to) another individual's academic composition, compilation, or other product, or commercially prepared paper" (p. 49). If you have any questions regarding plagiarism, collaborative projects, documentation of your sources, or related issues, please feel free to ask.

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Preliminary Class Plan

Introduction to Language: (4 weeks)

American English: Chs. 1, 2, 3, 9.

English with an Accent: Part I.

Diachronic Variation: (1 week)

American English: Ch. 4.

Synchronic Variation: (4 weeks)

American English: Chs. 5, 6, 7.

English with an Accent: Part III.

Language in the Schools: (2 weeks)

American English: Chs. 10, 11.

English with an Accent: Ch. 6.

Language in the Media: (3 weeks)

American English: Ch. 8.

English with an Accent: Chs. 5, 7, 8.