

Linguistics 203: English Words

Course information:

- Tuesdays 7:00–9:00
- Location: Alumni Hall 100
- course Blackboard website accessible via <https://portal.utoronto.ca>

Instructor: Aaron Dinkin

- email: aaron.dinkin@utoronto.ca
- office hours: Tuesday 2:00–4:00, Thursday 12:00–2:00
- office location: Sidney Smith Hall 4077

TAs and tutorials:

- Liisa Duncan liisa.duncan@mail.utoronto.ca
Tutorial 5201: Tuesday 6:00, Sidney Smith 2111
- David Logue david.logue@mail.utoronto.ca
Tutorial 5104: Tuesday 5:00, Sidney Smith 2128
Tutorial 5204: Tuesday 6:00, Sidney Smith 2128
- Daniel McDonald daniel.mcdonald@mail.utoronto.ca
Tutorial 5101: Tuesday 5:00, Sidney Smith 2111
- Patrick Murphy p.murphy@mail.utoronto.ca
Tutorial 5202: Tuesday 6:00, Sidney Smith 1084
- Yining Nie yining.nie@mail.utoronto.ca
Tutorial 5102: Tuesday 5:00, Sidney Smith 1084
- Maida Percival maida.percival@mail.utoronto.ca
Tutorial 5203: Tuesday 6:00, Sidney Smith 1070
- Élodie Thomas elodie.thomas@mail.utoronto.ca
Tutorial 5103: Tuesday 5:00, Sidney Smith 1070

Course description:

The vocabulary of English is astonishingly rich, incorporating words from languages around the world. We will be looking at the history of English to learn how the vocabulary has developed and will study the processes by which words are formed. A particular focus of the course is English words of Latin and Greek origin; we will learn Latin and Greek roots that are often used to build English words, so that you will be able to easily recognize and analyze unfamiliar words.

Required reading:

- Keith Denning, Brett Kessler, & William R. Leben (2007). *English Vocabulary Elements*, 2d edition. Oxford University Press.
- You should also own or have access to a **dictionary of English** with good **etymologies** (word histories). I recommend the *Canadian Oxford Dictionary* (2d edition) or the *American Heritage Dictionary* (5th edition).

Course requirements:

- Read each chapter of the textbook before the corresponding lecture.
- Attend all **tutorials**, and participate in any discussions or group activities. Tutorial **attendance and participation** will be worth 5% of your final grade.
- There will be 2 short **quizzes** conducted **during the tutorials**. These will be collectively worth 10% of your final grade.
- There are two **writing assignments**, **each** worth 10% of your grade.
- The in-class **midterm exam** will be worth 25% of your grade.
- The **final exam** will be worth 40% of your grade.

Marking conforms to the University Assessment and Grading Practices Policy.

Things you will learn in this course:

- the different sources of English vocabulary, and how they are used.
- how to analyze the morphological structure of English words.
- how to describe the sounds of English, and how they affect word formation.
- how words' meanings relate to each other and change over time.
- the history of English, and how it is related to other languages.
- the Latin and Greek roots that make up the technical vocabulary of English.

Morpheme sets:

As noted, one of the goals of this class is for you to **memorize** a lot of the Latin and Greek roots that are used to make up the technical vocabulary of English—so that if you come upon an unfamiliar technical word, you'll have a pretty good shot at guessing what it means.

Most chapters of the textbook end with a list of Latin and Greek "**word elements**" that you will be expected to know. These will be on the quizzes and exams, so make sure you're familiar with them!

Quiz 1 will assume you know morpheme sets 1 and 2; the midterm, through chapter 5; Quiz 2, through chapter 8; and the final exam, all of them. (The quizzes and exams will **also** cover material from lectures and the textbook **other** than the morpheme sets, of course.)

Written assignments:

A goal of this course is to help students develop successful writing skills; there will be two short essay assignments of 1–2 pages; these will be due in tutorial a week after they're assigned.

Linguistics 203 has been chosen for an Arts and Science initiative to provide support for student writing. You won't be graded differently than you would otherwise, but your TAs will participate in special training to help mark your writing assignments. Later in the year you may be given the chance to take a survey or be part of a focus group to comment on your writing experience in the course. Students tell us that this initiative is an effective component of the course, and our statistics confirm that their writing improves measurably.

Dictionaries:

A good dictionary is indispensable to the study of words. The most comprehensive dictionary, and the accepted authority on the evolution of the English language, is the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED), considered the greatest dictionary of any language ever produced. It treats words from a historical perspective, providing quotations from a wide range of sources to detail how the meanings and usage of words have changed over the past thousand years. The OED is available online through the University of Toronto library system, via <http://www.oed.com.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca>.

The OED provides detailed **etymologies**—i.e., the histories of how words came to exist in English—in addition to descriptions of their evolution within English; but they can be a little dense or opaque and are not always up to date. This is why I recommend you own an **up-to-date general-purpose dictionary** with good and clear etymologies, such as the *Canadian Oxford* or the *American Heritage*. (The *American Heritage* is especially valuable because it traces the histories of English words as far back as possible, to the **earliest reconstructible prehistoric** ancestor of the English language.) The Online Etymology Dictionary (<http://etymonline.com>) can also be useful for etymologies in a pinch, but it is not as reliable as a quality published dictionary.

Calendar of topics and assignments

September 9: Introduction

*The **first tutorials** will be September 16.*

September 16: History of English

Quiz 1 in tutorial September 23.

September 23: Morphology

September 30: Allomorphy

Writing assignment 1 due October 7.

October 7: Phonetics

October 14: **Midterm exam**

October 21: More allomorphy

October 28: Polysemy

*November 3 is the **last day you can drop** this class.*

November 4: Variation

Quiz 2 in tutorial November 11.

November 11: Latin and Greek morphology

November 18 is a day off of some kind

Writing assignment 2 due November 25.

November 25: Prehistory of English

December 2: Sound changes in French, and wrapup