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Words in English:

Structure, History, Use

Linguistics / English 215

Fall 1998

Prof. [Suzanne Kemmer \(http://www.ruf.rice.edu/~kemmer/\)](http://www.ruf.rice.edu/~kemmer/)

General Information

Meetings : MWF 9:00–9:50, Sewall Hall 305

Instructor contact :

Office : Rayzor Hall 104

Tel.: 713–527–8750 ext. 2454

Email : kemmer@ruf.rice.edu (<mailto:kemmer@ruf.rice.edu>)

Office hours : Mondays and Thursdays 3:00–4:00 and by appt.

Informal accessibility : At Sid Rich (Resident Associate)

TA : Carlos Nash, Jones College (O.C.); carlosn@rice.edu

Course Information

This course applies linguistic principles to the study of the English vocabulary. We will examine the rich stock of morphemes, or meaningful elements, in English words, and observe how these combine to derive much of the vocabulary of English. Other topics investigated include the development of the English vocabulary, derivational processes, pronunciation (articulatory) processes, etymology (word histories), sound change and meaning change, the linguistic relations of English, sources of new words, usage and variation, and slang. No previous experience with Linguistics is required.

As far as possible, students will be encouraged to make their own investigations and discuss their findings and questions about words in class. Students will work to increase their mastery of English vocabulary from the technical, literary, scientific and other domains by acquiring recurrent morphemes and words incorporating them; and by generally increasing their awareness of the structure, history, and use of English words.

Course Objectives : By the end of the course, the student should:

- have an awareness of the internal structure of words and of the systematic relationships among words in English
- have a basic understanding of the history of the English language, with particular reference to the major periods of vocabulary expansion that it has undergone and how those periods are reflected in the modern lexicon
- understand some basic principles of language change that have affected the English language, including principles of sound change and meaning change
- know the basic stock of Classical roots and affixes that recurrently appear in English words; be able to interpret newly encountered words incorporating elements of that stock
- be familiar with a wide range of words and their origins, meanings, and domains of use; be able to apply the knowledge gained so as to be able to say something about the origin and/or meaning of unfamiliar words
- understand how the study of words can be used as an access point into knowledge and history of an entire culture, and be able to further pursue such knowledge via the study of words
- have a good working knowledge of the incredibly rich lexical resources available in the English language, providing a basis for increased mastery of the spoken and written language

Text : Keith Denning and William Leben, English Vocabulary Elements, Oxford University Press 1995.

Reference : The American Heritage Dictionary or other good college-level desk dictionary (not pocket dictionary).

On-line Reference : [Oxford English Dictionary \(http://riceinfo.rice.edu/oed\)](http://riceinfo.rice.edu/oed), Online Edition. Accessible to the Rice community.

On-line Reference : [Webster's Online Dictionary \(http://www.m-w.com/dictionary.htm\)](http://www.m-w.com/dictionary.htm). Guide to using this dictionary is at [Using the Dictionary \(http://www.m-w.com/help.htm\)](http://www.m-w.com/help.htm). Includes things like how to do wild-card searches, using search results, etc.

Note: On-line dictionaries do not give sufficient information on etymologies to be used as the source for etymologies presented in class. Use the American Heritage or other large desk dictionary for this purpose. See also [Online and Other References \(http://www.ruf.rice.edu/~kemmer/Words/sources.html\)](http://www.ruf.rice.edu/~kemmer/Words/sources.html)

Course Requirements:

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Midterm #1 (in class)

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20%

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Midterm #2 (in class)

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25%

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Word Quizzes

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5%

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Final Exam (self-scheduled)

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35%

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Word Journal

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10%

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Participation /oral performance

|

5%

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[Extra Credit \(http://www.ruf.rice.edu/~kemmer/Words/extracredit.html\)](http://www.ruf.rice.edu/~kemmer/Words/extracredit.html)

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up to 6%

A note on "Participation": Because of the physical layout of the room, it was not really possible to have a discussion format. Students would be talking to the backs of each others' heads, and the acoustics are so bad I could hardly hear speakers in the FRONT of the room, where there is no resonance (no, I'm not going deaf).

My solution is to make the baseline score for participation 4 out of 5 points. The 5th point is earned by those who asked questions and made comments.

In addition to assigned readings specified on the syllabus, students are responsible for reading class 'handouts' as they become activated on the web. Exams will cover readings, class discussions, and 'handouts'. Quizzes will cover the Morpheme Sets in the Appendix to the Denning and Leben textbook. See Syllabus for schedule of quizzes and exams.

Web "Handouts" (links will be added/activated as we get to them):

Course Information (this page)

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[Syllabus \(syll.html\)](#)

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Questions about Words in English

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Online and Other Resources

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[Word Journal Project \(journal.html\)](#)

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[Some Loanwords in English \(loanwords.html\)](#)

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Chronology of the English Language

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Genetic Relationships of Languages

[Anglo-Saxon Chronicle \(aschron.html\)](#)

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[Morphemes \(morphemes.html\)](#)

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Roots and Affixes

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Parsing

Some Affixes of English, Native and Borrowed

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Sound terminology

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Story of the Shibboleth

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Word Stories

[Classical morphology \(classmorph.html\)](#)

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The Latin Language

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Sir William Jones Quote

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Indo-European Family Tree

[Review Study Guide for Final Exam \(review2.html\)](#)

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Some External Links (for a fuller list, see the Online and Other

References Link above):

[World Wide Words \(http://clever.net/quinion/words/index.htm\)](http://clever.net/quinion/words/index.htm)
[Word.A.Day \(http://wordsmith.org/awad/index.html\)](http://wordsmith.org/awad/index.html)
[Word Detective \(http://www.word-detective.com/\)](http://www.word-detective.com/)
[Word Play \(http://www.wolinskyweb.com/word.htm\)](http://www.wolinskyweb.com/word.htm)
[Turns of Phrase \(http://clever.net/quinion/words/turnsofphrase/index.htm\)](http://clever.net/quinion/words/turnsofphrase/index.htm)
[Old English Links \(http://www.georgetown.edu/cball/oe/old_english.html\)](http://www.georgetown.edu/cball/oe/old_english.html)
[Parody: Hrodulf Hrandeo \(http://www.georgetown.edu/cball/oe/rudolph.html\)](http://www.georgetown.edu/cball/oe/rudolph.html)

Some Internal Links:

[Flashcards \(http://dacnet.rice.edu/projects/ling215/flashcards/index.html\)](http://dacnet.rice.edu/projects/ling215/flashcards/index.html)

As an additional resource, you can test yourself on the morphemes in each set by using Jenn Drummond's Morpheme Flashcards.

[New Words in](#)

[English \(http://www.owl.net.rice.edu/~ling215/NewWords/index.html\)](http://www.owl.net.rice.edu/~ling215/NewWords/index.html) A collection of new words (neologisms) begun in Fall 1996 from Word Journal entries by students in this class. Now a popular Yahoo site. Site maintained by Ling major Carlos Nash

[New Word Journal \(http://dacnet.rice.edu/projects/ling215/wordjournal/\)](http://dacnet.rice.edu/projects/ling215/wordjournal/)

Web interface. Designed by Jenn Drummond. Students can input their Word Journal entries via a form; the entries can be browsed or clicked on individually. See Extra Credit above.

Honor Code Issues:

To avoid unclarity about academic standards relating to use of the World Wide Web, these standards are posted on the following links:

- [New words guidelines \(http://www.ruf.rice.edu/~kemmer/Words/wordsguide.html\)](http://www.ruf.rice.edu/~kemmer/Words/wordsguide.html)
- [Using Web Sources: Basic Academic Standards \(http://www.ruf.rice.edu/~kemmer/Words/websources.html\)](http://www.ruf.rice.edu/~kemmer/Words/websources.html)
- [Creating Web Materials: Basic Academic Standards; Copyright Issues \(http://www.ruf.rice.edu/~kemmer/Words/creatingweb.html\)](http://www.ruf.rice.edu/~kemmer/Words/creatingweb.html)

Students should consult these before using the web to produce coursework (in this or any course!!)

Disabilities

Any student with a disability requiring accommodations in this class is encouraged to contact me after class or in my office. Contact also the Disabled Student Services office in the Ley Student Center to find out how they can be of further assistance.

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