

Instructor: Stacy Bell

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Office: Humanities 105

Office hours: TTh 2:30-4:30; MW 12-1, and by appointment

Required Texts

Clark et al., *Language: Introductory Readings*

Crystal, *The Fight for English*

Fallows, *Dreaming in Chinese*

Truss, *Eats, Shoots & Leaves*

Williams, *The Teacher's Grammar Book*

Yagoda, *When You Catch an Adjective, Kill It!*

Miscellaneous assigned readings

Course Description

An overview of grammar instruction during the last century with a focus on the organic nature of language and how use varies based on socioeconomics, geography and "context," emphasizing the differences between formal (Standard) and non-Standard grammars or "Englishes; practice exercises, including but not limited to sentence diagramming; discussion/debate of the purpose and effectiveness of "prescriptive" grammar, based on group reading of a contemporary style manual; research of a current language controversy; deepening understanding of English structure through teaching.

Objectives

The student will master the vocabulary for describing the structure of Standard English. The student will demonstrate understanding of structure by diagramming sentences and by discussing and describing grammatical forms in class and in writing. The student will explore effective approaches to teaching grammar, while debating the purpose of teaching grammar at all. The student will examine the structure of English for the sheer joy and pleasure of developing a deeper understanding of the complexities of language, how its varied uses can help or hinder an individual in society, as well as how and why it naturally changes over time.

Assignments and evaluation:

Discussion leader: you will lead one class discussion of the readings or an assigned topic. You will sign up at the beginning of the semester for the day you will lead. You must meet me during office hours before your presentation to discuss your plan for class; on the day of your discussion, you must submit a minimum of five thoughtful discussion questions based in the readings. Leading discussion is 5% of your final grade. If you are absent without an excuse on your assigned day, you cannot make it up.

Grammar mini-lesson: you will teach a mini-lesson on a randomly assigned grammar structure. You can talk to me before class as you prepare your lesson, but I will not tell

you how to design it. Make sure that your lesson includes an opportunity at the end for assessment—did the class understand the lesson? You will be evaluated based on how effectively you explain the structure. The mini-lesson is 10% of your final grade.

Research essay: you will write a 1500-1800 word research paper, using a minimum of three scholarly and two popular sources, on a current language controversy or phenomenon. You will choose your topic based on class discussions of our readings, following at least two language blogs, and your own observation of language in use. The research essay is 25% of your final grade.

Short essays: you will write two short [350 word] essays on topics related to class readings or discussions, to be assigned throughout the semester. Each essay is 5% of your final grade.

Descriptivist-Prescriptivist dialogue: you will write a 1000 word dialogue response to an assigned linguistic situation, taking on the role of both prescriptive and descriptive linguist. The dialogue is 10% of your final grade.

Midterm Exam: 20%

Final Exam: 20%

Attendance: 5%

Business

Blackboard: Your class conference, including all information about assignments, your grades and your class syllabus, is available to you on Blackboard. You are responsible for knowing the information and materials posted there.

<http://ms-bell-s-english-185.posterous.com/>

Office Hours: Please sign up for an appointment. There will be a sign up sheet outside my door every week. If you cannot see me during office hours, speak to me after class to arrange an appointment.

Late Essays: Your essays are due at the *beginning* of class on the specified date. I will lower the grade for an unexcused late essay by one full letter grade for each day it is late; after one full week the essay will receive a grade of zero.

Attendance: I will not distinguish between tardies and absences. You may miss two days of class without penalty; after that, you will lose 10 points from your attendance grade for each absence.

Email: Use email for the following reasons:

- To cancel an appointment
- To notify me of an absence
- To ask a legitimate question about an assignment
- To say hello!

I delete emails requesting information contained in the syllabus. I delete emails about grades. Let's have those conversations in person; let me know and I will be happy to talk to you in my office. Your grades and averages will be available to you on our Blackboard site.

Plagiarism: The work you submit for class must be your own. You may not submit an essay more than once. If you use another author's words or original ideas in your writing, you must give credit to the author by using MLA documentation form. All papers suspected of plagiarism will be turned over to the Honor Council (*Oxford College Handbook*). If you are uncertain about what constitutes plagiarism, see me.

Electronic toys: Laptops are permitted when I require them for class. Silence your phone and put it away during class.

A Note about Printing: Blue and gold makes green! Print preliminary drafts on recycled paper, and print double-sided final drafts to save paper. You must turn in paper copies of all your essays, no exceptions.

JANUARY

- 18 Introduction and Objectives
Diagnostic "Quiz"
- 23 Why study grammar?
Phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, pragmatics
- 25 **Discussion leaders:**
Grammar: Phonology, Morphology
Language "Phonetics" Callary; "Mc-: Meaning in the Marketplace" Lentine & Shuy
- 30 **Discussion leaders:**
Grammar: Syntax, Semantics
Language "Syntax: The Structure of Sentences" Heny; "Bad Birds and Better Birds: Prototype Theories" Aitchison;

FEBRUARY

- 1 **Discussion leaders:**
"Pragmatics: Discourse Routines" Chaika; "The Tower of Babel" Pinker
- 6 Williams, Ch. 3, "Traditional Grammar"
Nouns and pronouns, verbs
- 8 Adjectives, adverbs, conjunctions, interjections, prepositions

13 **Discussion leaders:**
Yagoda *When You Catch an Adjective, Kill It!*
Short essay due

15 **Discussion leaders:**

20 Diagramming

22 Diagramming

27 Diagramming

29 Leap year party!
Discussion leaders:
Fallows *Dreaming in Chinese*

MARCH

5 Midterm Exam

7 **Discussion leaders:**
Crystal *The Fight for English* and Truss *Eats, Shoots & Leaves*
Short essay due

12 Spring Break—Class will not meet today.

14 Spring Break—Class will not meet today.

19 **Discussion leaders:**

21 No class; I will be attending a conference.

26 **Discussion leaders:**
Williams, Ch. 7, “Dialects”

28

APRIL

2 Descriptivist-Prescriptivist dialogue due

4

9

11 Research paper due

16 Mini-lessons

18 Mini-lessons

23 Mini-lessons

25 Mini-lessons

30 Review

Exam Schedule

Friday, May 4, 2-5:00