

Selected Topics in Linguistics (01:615:471): Varieties of English, Yesterday and Today

Time: Monday & Wednesday 2:00-3:20pm
Location: Hardenbergh Hall A1 (College Ave. Campus)
WWW: hosted at `canvas.rutgers.edu`

Instructor: Peter Alrenga
Email: `peter.alrenga@rutgers.edu`
Office Hrs: Monday 4:00-5:30pm, or by appt.
(18 Seminary Place (Ling Dept.), Room 106; or online via zoom)

Course Overview and Learning Goals

In this class, we will investigate English—a language with which we are all familiar—as if it were an unfamiliar language. We will explore some of the central features of modern English phonology, morphology, and syntax from the perspective of generative grammar. While doing so, we will work towards the following goals. First, to understand how English came to take its current form: why does English look so different from even its nearest Germanic relatives? In what ways does the structure of modern-day English still reflect its Germanic roots? What are some of the major grammatical innovations that have shaped the language during its ~1600-year history, and how has it been influenced by neighboring languages? Second, to place English in a global perspective: what sorts of systematic differences exist across its numerous varieties? How did its standard variety develop? What are some of the methods that linguists use to study such a globally dispersed and varied language?

Students who successfully complete this course will:

- acquire mastery of the empirical patterns and generalizations that constitute modern Standard English at all structural levels,
- understand some of the parameters that differentiate varieties of English,
- understand how the structure of modern English has evolved over its history,
- appreciate how this variation and historical change can be understood using the analytical tools of generative linguistic theory,
- gain firsthand experience using these tools in the description of those phenomena that characterize modern English,
- (for majors and minors) add to your technical and conceptual repertoire in the field of Linguistics as you complete a (C-level) course for your degree.

Readings

There is no textbook for this course. Individual reading assignments will be distributed through the course website. All readings should be completed by the beginning of the listed class meeting.

Course Requirements

Reading: Unless explicitly stated otherwise, all readings are required and should be completed by the beginning of class.

Attendance & Participation: Regular attendance is required for a passing grade in this course, and active participation in class discussions is expected. If you expect to miss one or two classes, please use the University's Self-Reporting Absence Application to indicate the date and reason for your absence (<https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra>). An email will be automatically sent to me. Attendance and participation will constitute 10% of your overall grade.

If you are using an electronic device during class, it must be for a reason directly related to class. No surfing, social media, or texting.

Problem Sets: You will complete five problem sets during the semester. The problem sets will both test your understanding of previously covered material and also serve to introduce new topics that will be discussed in subsequent classes. Your solutions should be presented in coherent prose — groups of complete sentences that lay out your thinking in a clear, organized fashion. Together, the assignments will account for 35% of your overall grade.

Language Descriptions: You will submit two short language descriptions over the first ten weeks of the semester (roughly 3 pages each). Each language description should document some linguistically relevant aspect of English, noting any of its interesting, novel, or potentially significant features. Your descriptions may focus on Standard American English, but you are also encouraged to explore other varieties of English that are accessible to you. Your first language description must be submitted by **Monday, October 17**, while the second must be submitted by **Monday, November 7**. Together, the two language descriptions will constitute 30% of your overall grade.

Final Paper & Presentation: You will also write and present a final paper (7-10 pages), in which you further explore some aspect of the English language. The paper may be primarily descriptive, but you are also encouraged to engage in linguistic analysis. The paper can, but need not, be based on your previous language descriptions. During the final weeks of the course, each of you will briefly present your paper to the rest of the class. The paper itself will be due on **Wednesday, December 21**, and will constitute 25% of your overall grade.

Course Policies

Academic Integrity: I encourage you to discuss the course material with each other. However, each student must complete his/her written work independently, without reference to the written work of any other student. You are expected to abide by the University's Academic Integrity Policy (<http://nbacademicintegrity.rutgers.edu>). If you have not yet reviewed this policy, then you should do so now. Since students are expected to be familiar with this policy and its commonly accepted standards, ignorance of these standards does not suffice to establish lack of intent. If you are unsure of any aspect of this policy, please ask!

Plagiarism in any form (including from online sources), presenting someone else's work as your own, and other academic misconduct will not be tolerated.

Late Policy: It is your responsibility to stay abreast of our course's submission deadlines, and to bring any potential scheduling conflicts to my attention promptly, so that alternative arrangements can be made. We will often discuss some portion of the assignment on the day that it is due. For this reason, late assignments will not be accepted unless prior arrangements have been made.

Instructor Communication: Please contact me via my Rutgers email address (peter.alrenga@rutgers.edu). I will reply to emails within 24 hours during weekdays. Emails sent over the weekend may not receive a reply until the following Monday, but I will try my best to communicate promptly.

Technical Support: For help with Canvas, please contact the Office of Information Technology (OIT) at <https://it.rutgers.edu/help-support>.

Student Resources: The faculty and staff at Rutgers are committed to your success. Students who are successful tend to seek out resources that enable them to excel academically, maintain their health and wellness, prepare for future careers, navigate college life and finances, and connect with the RU community. Resources that can help you succeed and connect with the Rutgers community can be found at <http://success.rutgers.edu>, and nearly all services and resources that are typically provided in-person are now available remotely.

Grading: Your overall course grade will be assigned according to the following scale:

Grade	Range
A	90 – 100
B+	85 – 89
B	80 – 84
C+	75 – 79
C	70 – 74
D	60 – 69
F	Below 60

Extra Credit

You will have the opportunity to raise your final grade by up to 2 points through experimental participation:

- Some faculty and graduate students in the Department of Linguistics perform experimental research on language. This research depends on the participation of undergraduate participants.
- You have the option of participating in Linguistics experiments during the semester. Each experiment usually takes between 20 and 45 minutes.
- You will get **1 point credit for every half hour** of experimental participation. It does not matter what subfield of Linguistics this experiment is in, but it must be in Linguistics.
- Experiments are offered through the Department's experiment management system Sona (<http://rutgerslinguistics.sona-systems.com/>). Towards the beginning of the semester, your name and email will be added to the experiment system. You will be issued an anonymous ID to participate in experiments through this system. Once Linguistics experiments are posted, you can sign up online. (Note that this system is different from the Psychology pool, and you should not use a Psychology ID to log in to the system.)
- Any student enrolled in a Linguistics undergraduate course is eligible to participate in Linguistics experiments, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, language status, or impairments, disorders, or disabilities (as long as their instructor provides the opportunity). You cannot be denied participation for any of these reasons.
- You have the right not to participate in experiments to earn extra credit. You may speak with me about possible research alternatives, such as reading a pre-approved scholarly article and writing a 2-page paper summarizing it.
- If you are taking multiple Linguistics courses that allow for experimental participation to count towards extra credit, you are responsible for making sure you have assigned the credit correctly through the experiment system online. This is not your instructor's, the experimenter's, or the experiment system administrator's job!
- If you sign up for, but fail to show up for, two or more experiments, you may be barred from further participation and restricted to research alternatives as described above. Please note the time and location of your experiments, and take your schedule and transportation time into account. Many experiments have restrictions on how late you may cancel online.

Preliminary Schedule (subject to change as the semester proceeds)

WEEK	DATE	CLASS TOPIC	READINGS	ASSIGNMENT
1	W 9/7	The Growth of English; Variation & Standardization; English in the United States	Minkova, Chap. 1; Wolfram & Schilling, Chap. 4	
2	M 9/12		Optional: Wolfram & Schilling, Chap. 2	
	W 9/14		Giegerich, Chap. 2	
3	M 9/19	Consonantal Phones, Phonemes & Allophones	Giegerich, §8.1-8.3 Optional: Minkova & Stockwell, pgs. 36-42	
	W 9/21	English Vowel Systems	Giegerich, Chap. 3 Optional: Minkova & Stockwell, pgs. 29-36	
4	M 9/26		Hammond, §2.1-2.2	HW1 due (F 9/30 @ 5pm)
	W 9/28			
5	M 10/3	Syllabification & Syllable Structure	Carr, Chap. 7; Hammond, §3.1-3.2	
	W 10/5			
6	M 10/10	Stress, Rhythm & Metrical Structure	Carr, Chaps. 8 & 9 Optional: McCarthy 1982	HW2 due
	W 10/12			
7	M 10/17			
	W 10/19	Two Kinds of (Morpho-) Phonological Rules	Harley, §6.1-6.5, §9.12	
8	M 10/24	-n't: Contraction vs. Inflection	Zwicky & Pullum 1983	HW3 due
	W 10/26	Verbs, Verb Phrases & Sentences	Greenbaum & Quirk, Chaps. 3 & 4	

Preliminary Schedule (subject to change as the semester proceeds)

WEEK	DATE	CLASS TOPIC	READINGS	ASSIGNMENT
9	M 10/31	Verbs, Verb Phrases & Sentences (cont.)	Greenbaum & Quirk, Chaps. 3 & 4	
	W 11/2	Historical Development of the English Verbal System	Santorini & Kroch, Chap. 6 Optional: Kroch 1989, §3	
10	M 11/7	Microsyntactic Variation	Yale Grammatical Diversity Project, eWAVE websites	Lang. Desc. 2 due
	W 11/9	V2 Word Order in the Modern Germanic Languages	Santorini & Kroch, Chap. 14	
11	M 11/14	V2 Word Order in the History of English	Fischer & van der Wurff, §3.5	
	W 11/16			
12	M 11/21	Subjects & Subject Positions		HW4 due (+ final paper topic)
	W 11/23	No Class (Friday schedule)		
13	M 11/28	Negative Concord	Martin & Wolfram 1998, §1.4.1-1.4.2	
	W 11/30	Ellipsis & Related Phenomena	Greenbaum & Quirk, Chap. 12	
14	M 12/5		Optional: Potsdam 1997	HW5 due
	W 12/7	Student Presentations		
15	M 12/12	Student Presentations		
	W 12/14	Student Presentations		
Final Paper due (W 12/21 @ 11:59pm)				

Reading List

- Carr, Philip. 1999. *English Phonetics and Phonology*. Malden: Blackwell Publishing. (eWAVE) The Electronic World Atlas of Varieties of English. Available at: <https://ewave-atlas.org>.
- Fischer, Olga & Wim van der Wurff. 2006. Syntax. In *A History of the English Language*, R. Hogg & D. Denison (eds), 109-198. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Giegerich, Heinz. 1992. *English Phonology: An Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Greenbaum, Sidney & Randolph Quirk. 1990. *A Student's Grammar of the English Language*. Essex: Longman.
- Hammond, Michael. 1999. *The Phonology of English: A Prosodic Optimality-Theoretic Approach*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Harley, Heidi. 2006. *English Words: A Linguistic Introduction*. Malden: Blackwell Publishing.
- Kroch, Anthony. 1989. Reflexes of Grammar in Patterns of Language Change. *Language Variation and Change* 1: 199-244.
- Martin, Stefan and Walt Wolfram. 1998. The sentence in African-American Vernacular English. In *African-American English: Structure, History, and Use*, S. Mufwene et al. (eds), 11-36. London: Routledge.
- McCarthy, John. 1982. Prosodic Structure and Expletive Infixation. *Language* 58: 574-590.
- Minkova, Donka. 2014. *A Historical Phonology of English*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Minkova, Donka & Robert Stockwell. 2008. Phonology: Segmental Histories. In *A Companion to the History of the English Language*, H. Momma and M. Matto (eds), 29-42. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.
- Potsdam, Eric. 1997. NegP and Subjunctive Complements in English. *Linguistic Inquiry* 28: 533-541.
- Santorini, Beatrice & Anthony Kroch. 2007-. *The Syntax of Natural Language: An Online Introduction Using the Trees Program*. Available at: <http://www.ling.upenn.edu/~beatrice/syntax-textbook>.
- Wolfram, Walt & Natalie Schilling. 2016. *American English: Dialects and Variation* (3rd ed.). Malden: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Yale Grammatical Diversity Project—English in North America. Available at: <http://ygdproject.yale.edu>.
- Zwicky, Arnold & Geoffrey Pullum. 1983. Cliticization vs. Inflection: English *n't*. *Language* 59: 502-513.