

English 842: Studies in the History of the English Language

Semester: Spring 2015 (Graduate Course)

Instructor: Dr. Krisda Chaemsaitong

Office Hours:

Office:

E-mail:

Classroom:

Course Description

As the name suggests, this class is about historical aspects of the English language, covering the period of approximately 1,500 years. Tracing a duration this long is indeed a daunting task, and a course like this must decide on what to focus on. Like a map, our class has to decide to one a particular scale or scope. If a large scale is chosen, we will have to ignore some details, while if a small scale is chosen, we tend to focus on some aspects, to the exclusion of others, therefore losing sight of the big picture. In addition, different maps are designed for different purposes: a map for tourists will focus on shopping areas, hotels, and other tourist attractions, while a map for geological purposes will offer information on rock formations and layers.

However, in contrast to a map, which uses a consistent scale throughout the area, we will occasionally deviate from this large scale and focus on some interesting details and topics.

The present course opts for both large and small scales. First we will provide an overall orientation of the subject, so that we see the origin and development of the language and so that everyone is well familiar with the basics of the subject. Then we will zoom in on the socio-historical background, the textual traditions and on the communicative needs of the speakers of the English language throughout its long history.

Structurally speaking, here is how we will approach the subject, in chronological order:

Large-scale:

- Overview of historical linguistics
- Old English
- Middle English
- Early Modern English
- Modern English
- English in the computer age

Smaller-scale:

- Socio- historical linguistics (third-person singular, pidgin-creolization of English)
- Historical pragmatics (speech acts, wills, address terms)

- Historical text linguistics and historical dialogue analysis (development of genres, cookery recipe, etc)
- Historical semantics (semantic changes)
- Historical syntax (word order; empty category)

Course Objectives

Upon completion of this course, students will acquire the following:

- Understanding of the external (social, historical, cultural) influences on English,
- Understanding of the internal mechanisms of language change,
- Awareness of how standard varieties are authorized and institutionalized, and
- Understanding of English as a global lingua franca and the implications of its influence

Text

To be selected

Course requirements

- Attendance/Participation: 10 pts
- Midterm: 30 pts
- Final: 30 pts
- Homework: 20 pts

There will be assigned readings for each week along with homework exercises from the textbook or on separate handouts provided to you. Any homework exercises you turn in will be graded. We will go over many of the exercises in class.

- Presentation: 10 pts

Grades

A+ 97-100	A 94-96	A- 90-93
B+ 87-89	B 84-86	B- 80-83
C+ 77-79	C 74-76	C 70-73
D+ 67-69	D 64-66	D-60-63
F <= 59		

Course schedule

Month	Date	Topic	To prepare BEFORE class
March	4	Introduction to class Language property and change	- Chapter 1
	11	Present-day English (review the basics)	Chapter 2 + PPT slides

	18	Language families and Indo-European	Chapter 4
	25	Language families and Indo-European	
April	1	Old English	Chapter 5
	8	Old English (cont.) and Old English literature	cont. and read “dream of the rood”
	15	Midterm	
	22	Middle English	Chapter 6
	29	Middle English (cont.) and Middle English literature	cont. and read Chaucer
May	6	Early Modern English	Chapter 7
	13	Early Modern English (cont) and Standardization	Chapter 7&8
	20	English around the world + American English	Chapter 9
	27	British English and Asian Englishes	Chapter 9
June	3	Review	

Grading criteria for homework problems

- Homework problems are intended to help you master the basic techniques and concepts of linguistic analysis
- Homework solutions may be handwritten or typed. However, legibility and neatness are important.
- You can work on the problems collaboratively with your friends. However, you must write out the solutions on your own. Thus, your homework cannot be a verbatim copy of anyone’s homework!
- Homework solutions will be evaluated on a scale from 0 to 4. A homework average of 4 is an A, 3 is a B, 2 is a C, etc. Occasionally intermediate values correspond to +/- grades.

Your work will be scored according to the following criteria (as relevant and applicable for the details of a specific homework assignment)

	Excellent (4)	Competent (3)	Needs work (2)	Unsatisfactory (1-0)
Accuracy and completeness	no or few errors in factual statements and formalisms	some errors but mostly on new material	many errors, especially on the data or familiar material	assignment incomplete
Insight	evidence of careful thought	some evidence of thought	analysis is superficial	No analysis or discussion given
Organization of content	information well organized	information mostly well organized	information presented in random order with little organization	insufficient information presented
Presentation (less weight)	neat and legible	mostly neat and legible	many scratch-outs; answers jammed together	illegible