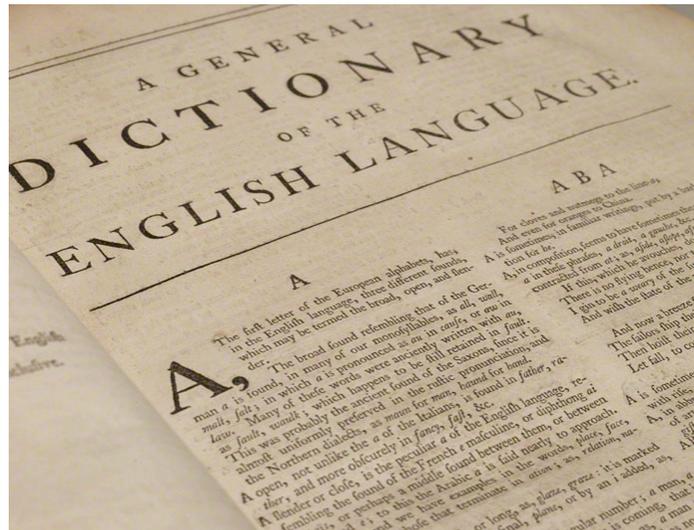


English 433: Modern Grammar

Summer Session I, Rhode Island College



Dr. Russell A. Potter
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Tuesday / Thursday 4-5:50 Whipple 106B

This course, despite its official name, is not strictly speaking a course on grammar, though grammar will not be neglected. What it really is is an introduction to issues in the study and teaching of the English language today, including (but not limited to) such matters as modern usage, the idea of the "standard," perceptions of "accent," the history of the language, and its inner mechanics. Throughout the course, by demonstrating that there is in fact a history to many aspects of our language -- particularly to the usage perceived as "correct" at different times and places -- we will be able to demystify some of its more arcane and troublesome features. We will also pay special attention to current issues in the teaching of English, language development, and the ways in which new technologies of communication (satellite television, the Internet, texting) have affected patterns and perceptions about speech.

COURSE SCHEDULE:

Week I

Tuesday May 16 – Introduction to course.

Thursday May 18 – Workshop on phonetics; the International Phonetic Alphabet.

Week II

Tuesday May 23 – From Old English to Middle English.

Thursday May 25 From Early Modern English to Today. Exercise #1: Practice etymology, handed out.

Week III

Tuesday May 30 – Exploring the English Lexicon: From dictionaries and corpora to Google's nGram.

Thursday June 1 – Exercise #1 due; in-class presentation and discussion of results. "Coining words and minting phrases": how language grows

Week IV

Tuesday June 6 – Grammatical Myths: Why most of the "rules" of English aren't.

Thursday, June 8 – Of pronunciation and prestige: A history of accents and the myth of non-accent. Exercise #2, "Accent analysis," handed out.

Week V

Tuesday June 13 – Tools for accent analysis: The Speech Accent Archive; the “Accent Tag.”

Thursday June 15 – Language in society: from “Ebonics” to Spanglish.

Week VI

Tuesday June 20 – Exercise #2 due; in-class presentations and discussion.

Thursday June 22 – The future(s) of English. Final review

REVISION

Either of the exercises may be revised and re-submitted if desired, and if the grade improves, the new grade will cancel out the previous grade – but please note that the earlier, graded version of the exercise should accompany any revision.

IN-CLASS POLICIES

Please turn off **all** cellphones, PDAs, laptops, etc. and refrain from using them in class unless part of a class exercise.