Linguistics 103: Language structure and verbal art
fall 2009

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Office hours      M 12:30-2:00 & Th 11:00-12:30 or by appointment
Class time & place MW 3:30-5:00 Meyerson Hall B4
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÷Readings, Discussion Problems and Essay Instructions÷
will be available on-line through the course home page.

Course Requirements
÷ 5 short written homework problems.
◆ 3 essays (about 8 pages each)
❝❞ Class participation in discussion problems.

Generally speaking I will call on students randomly to answer discussion problem questions. If you are absent on a day when your name comes up, your grade is decremented by one-half a grade (e.g. A goes to A-). So not coming to class means that not only you miss material but you run the risk of not being there when called upon. If you need to be absent from class for some reason and need to be excused, simply email me in advance of class with an explanation of your situation.

Final Grade
÷ Short problems: 45 %
◆ Essays: 45 %
❝❞ Participation and discussion: 10 %

Policies
Collaboration. You may work together in preparing for class discussion problems. However, written assignments that you turn in must be your own work.
Extensions. With the exception of documented illness or family emergency, extensions will not normally be given for any written work. However, if you contact me (preferably by e-mail) at least 24 hours in advance of a due date, I will grant each student at most one extension for at most two days. Please do not abuse this privilege.
Holidays. Please notify me by the end of the second week of class if you plan to be absent in observance of a religious holiday.
Syllabus


0 9 Sept  W  Sense and nonsense. Form and meaning.

PART I. Meter: the tradition of temporally measured verse.

1 14 Sept  M  Discussion Problem: Hypotheses about iambic Pentameter. Introduction to Shakespearean meter.

16 Sept  W  Reading: short excerpts from Shakespearean plays.
Discussion Problem: Analysis of Shakespearean verse. A phonological approach to meter.

2 21 Sept  M  Discussion Problem 1 due: Shakespeare

Pronunciation of Chaucer’s Middle English. The provenance of texts: manuscripts and their genealogy.

3 28 Sept  M  Discussion Problem 2 due: Metrical variation.
Chaucer’s verse forms.

30 Sept  W  Reading: Excerpts from manuscripts of The Canterbury Tales
Discussion Problem: pronouncing Chaucer. Other meters: trochaic, anapestic and loose iambic verse; Blake, Yeats, Frost.

4 5 Oct  M  Discussion Problem 3 due: Chaucerian scansion
Form vs. meaning in the translation of poetry.

7 Oct  W  Reading: Excerpts from Dante’s Inferno.
Discussion Problem: Identifying meters of poems by Thomas Hardy. Translating Dante’s Inferno.

PART II. Rhythm and rhyme: sounds and syllables.

5 12 Oct  M  Reading: Excerpts from the Song of Roland.
The sounds of English. Syllables and transcription.

The history of rhyme in Europe.

6 19 Oct  M  Fall term break: no class held.

21 Oct  W  Imperfect rhyme in American popular music.

7 26 Oct  M  Essay 1 due: Comparing translations of the Song of Roland.
Text-Tune Alignment: Word stress and musical rhythm.

PART III. Verbal art and performance in oral cultures.

8  2 Nov  M  Reading: Papers by Grice and Austin. Speech Act Theory: How to do things with words. How to have a conversation.

4 Nov  W  Jokes and the rules of conversation.


11 Nov  W  Reading: Excerpts from *Beowulf*. Excerpts from *The Singer of Tales*. Beowulf: Old English pronunciation and poetic technique.


18 Nov  W  Reading: Papers by Creed and Magoun. Linguistic ‘carbon-dating’. Formulas that stop fitting, rhymes that stop rhyming, changes in sentence structure.

PART IV. Story and narrative structure


25 Nov  W  Wednesday before Thanksgiving.

12  30 Nov  M  Narratives of ordinary experience: how do people tell stories about their lives?


13  7 Dec  M  Reading: Paper by Labov & Waletsky. Tense and aspect: points and intervals of time.

9 Dec  W  Discussion Problem: Reportability vs. Credibility in Narratives. Narratives of ordinary experience (cont.)

An optional review session will be held some time after classes end.

Essay 3: Collection and analysis of a narrative of ordinary experience.