

Seminar in English Language Arts

English 52000-01

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Hours: MWF 2-3 and by appointment

Course web site: <http://www.ithaca.edu/faculty/twomey/ELA>

F 204

T Th 4:00-5:15 p.m.

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SYLLABUS FOR FALL 2009

COURSE OBJECTIVES: The term English Language Arts is used by New York State to define the entire English curriculum. This course complements Educ 51100 (Practice and Pedagogy for the English Teacher) by concentrating on the linguistic elements of English Language Arts that teachers need to know in order to teach reading, speaking, and writing.

The main purpose of this course is to give you a broad and deep knowledge of concepts that you will need in order to teach. The readings are meant to be examined and considered, as well as learned. Where possible, I will introduce you to controversies regarding, e.g., teaching grammar, so that you can begin to formulate your own philosophy of and approach to teaching English. As English teachers, we must know what constitutes correct and incorrect usage, whether we define those poles as literate vs. illiterate, effective vs. ineffective, polite vs. rude, and so on. However, we must also determine effective teaching strategies for making our students into proficient readers, speakers, and writers. Accordingly, in this class you will practice your speaking and writing skills.

An additional purpose of this course is to enable you to continue your professional growth on your own. Since English teachers must be acquainted with many research and reference tools, I will devote class time periodically to topics such as dictionaries and handbooks, professional journals, and Web sites. To practice your skills with these tools and to explore one major topic in depth, you will make several short presentations, one of which you may revise into a term paper (or write your term paper about a different topic).

In short, this course introduces you to the knowledge you will need in order to:

- Plan and implement lessons about the English language;
- Teach the skills that are necessary for reading comprehension and for writing standard English prose as defined in the New York State learning standards;
- Read and evaluate students' writing for argumentation, grammatical correctness, usage, punctuation, and style.

SUMMARY OF TOPICS COVERED IN THIS COURSE:

Part One: Grammar, Syntax, and Punctuation

- Grammar: parts of speech, attitudes towards grammar (prescriptivism vs. descriptivism), modern rules.
- Syntax: clauses and phrases, types of sentences.
- Punctuation: brief history of punctuation, modern rules.

Part Two: Sounds and Words

- The sound system (phonology): organs of speech and sound production, consonants, vowels, stress and pitch, kinds of sound change, reasons for sound change, phonemes.
- The lexical system (morphology): morphemes as lexical units, kinds of morphemes (bound and unbound), word-formation.
- Vocabulary (lexicon): etymology and semantic change, sources of the lexicon and word-formation, structure of the lexicon (semantic fields, synonyms, antonyms, etc.), registers of usage (jargon, slang, taboo words, formal usage, social and personal variations), word formation (root creations, echoic words, ejaculations, compounds, affixing, clipped forms, aphetic forms, back-formation, portmanteau words, folk etymology, functional shift), sources of new words.

Part Three: Variation in and Varieties of English (will be completed before visit to FDA)

- Levels of usage: spoken vs. written, formal vs. informal, denotation vs. connotation, figurative language, voice, tone, diction, and other considerations of style.
- Regional varieties: intranational, national, and international Englishes, with emphasis on African-American English (Ebonics); a sampling of regional English; class and other influences on usage in American English.

Part Four: History and Development of English

- English as one of the Indo-European languages: relationship of English to the Germanic languages and to the other families of languages in the Indo-European group, stages in the development of English and distinctive features of each.
- Spelling rules in English: phonetic rules, morphological rules, origin and development of modern English spelling conventions.
- Foreign imports: contribution of French, Latin, Greek, and other languages to English and how they influence rules for spelling and word-formation, periods of importation in the history of English.
- Types of language change.

Part Five: Teaching Writing

- Form and audience: “creative” writing vs. expository writing, a sampling of forms (letter, newspaper article, essay, etc.).
- Tools for the writer and reader: dictionaries and other reference works.
- Argumentation: evaluating evidence, rhetoric, and reasoning (i.e., “critical thinking”).

TEXT AVAILABLE AT THE BOOKSTORE:

- Burke, Jim. *The English Teacher’s Companion: A Complete Guide to Classroom, Curriculum, and the Profession*. 3rd ed. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann/Boynton Cook, 2003. ISBN-10: 0325011387.

TEXT TO BE ORDERED USED FROM AMAZON.COM OR OTHER SELLER ASAP:

- Crystal, David. *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, rpt. in paperback 1997. ISBN-10: 0521596556.

COURSE WEB PAGE: <http://www.ithaca.edu/faculty/twomey/ELA>

JIM BURKE'S WEB PAGE: <http://www.englishcompanion.com/>

THE ENGLISH TEACHER'S LIBRARY: These are additional books that you should own; they are available used and new from Amazon.com and other low-cost providers.

- *American Heritage Dictionary*. 4th ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2006. School or library binding (ISBN 0613361741), paperback (ISBN 0385335768), hardcover (ISBN 0395825172).
- Green, Tamara M. *The Greek & Latin Roots of English*. 3rd ed. Lanham, MD / Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003. ISBN 0742514668.
- *Webster's New World Roget's A-Z Thesaurus*. Webster's New World, 1999. ISBN 0028631226.
- **For years**, Cheryl Glenn et al., *Hodges' Harbrace Handbook*, has been a standard grammar and composition reference book for English teachers. However, I have noticed that the publisher (Thomson/Wadsworth) is continually reissuing it with only minimal updates and charging hefty prices for it each time. As of this writing, there is a *2009 MLA Update Edition* for \$76.50 and a 16th edition for \$80. Earlier editions are cheaper and still useful. We need a cheaper text!

ASSIGNMENTS: Your future students will be more responsive to learning from you if you model good habits about the English language. To get you in the habit of thinking about words, there are three kinds of regular homework that we'll do, and which I will do along with you:

- Alternate Tuesdays: Bring in a word or verbal phrase that you had to look up in your reading these past two weeks. Tell us the word, what it means, where you came across it, and where you found your definition. Only two people each class will present their words, but everyone will hand in the assignment to me. See the definitions of word, verbal phrase, and expression posted online; also see the schedule below.
- Alternate Tuesdays: Bring in an expression that you had to look up in your reading these past two weeks. Tell us the expression, what it means, where you came across it, and your definition. Only two people each class will present their expressions, but everyone will hand in the assignment to me. See the definitions of word, verbal phrase, and expression posted online; also see the schedule below.
- Occasional Thursdays: I'll assign one of William of Safire's "On Language" columns from the Sunday New York Times *Magazine* for discussion.

9/1: Word: Christa, Bryan.

9/8: Expression: Nicole, Miriam.

9/15: Word: Eleanor, Rachel.

9/22: Expression: Christa, Bryan.

9/29: Word: Nicole, Miriam.

10/6: No WOD or EOD assignment.

10/13: No class (FDA visit).
10/20: Expression: Eleanor, Rachel.
10/27: Word: Christa, Bryan.
11/3: Expression: Nicole, Miriam.
11/10: Word: Eleanor, Rachel.
11/17: Expression: Christa, Bryan.
12/1: Word: Nicole, Miriam.
12/8: Expression: Eleanor, Rachel.

Other assignments:

Besides daily attendance, participation, and the homework described above, the work for the class will be readings, oral presentations, prelims, and a researched essay of 10-12 pages.

PREREQUISITES: Students must be graduate students in good standing, or they must have the permission of the instructor.

POLICIES:

- Attendance at every class is expected. Absences must be for a very good reason and they must be negotiated with me. Since this is a professional-training course, the expectation is that you will not miss any classes.
- All work for this class must be done or turned in when scheduled. I will grant extensions and consider make-up assignments only for a very good reason and only if asked in advance. Otherwise, late submissions will be docked a letter grade per day late.
- Make an appointment for a conference with me three times during the course, once in September, once in October, and once in November.
- Final grade: homework = 20%; prelims = 35%; oral presentations = 25%; researched essay = 20%. I presume that you will participate voluntarily, since you are future teachers, so I will deduct 10% from your final grade if you do not participate regularly.
- Grading: A through F for prelims, presentations, the research paper, and the course; check plus, check, check minus for short assignments. Please note that in a graduate course leading to certification, a final grade of C+ or lower is unacceptable.

ACADEMIC HONESTY: Especially since you will one day become a teacher, it is important to guard against plagiarism. There are many sharable lesson plans out there; but you must develop your own course materials, because you will need to do so in your career as a teacher. If you have any questions about plagiarism, speak with me and consult Volume VII of the *Ithaca College Policy Manual* at http://www.ithaca.edu/attorney/policies/vol7/Volume_7-70104.htm. The penalty for plagiarism is a grade of F in the course, which I will mitigate to F on the assignment for students who agree to sign an admission of academic dishonesty.

New York State Learning Standards: English Language Arts
<http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/nysatl/engstand.html>

Standard 1: Language for Information and Understanding

Students will listen, speak, read, and write for information and understanding. As listeners and readers, students will collect data, facts, and ideas; discover relationships, concepts, and generalizations; and use knowledge generated from oral, written, and electronically produced texts. As speakers and writers, they will use oral and written language that follows the accepted conventions of the English language to acquire, interpret, apply, and transmit information.

Standard 2: Language for Literary Response and Expression

Students will read and listen to oral, written, and electronically produced texts and performances from American and world literature; relate texts and performances to their own lives; and develop an understanding of the diverse social, historical, and cultural dimensions the texts and performances represent. As speakers and writers, students will use oral and written language that follows the accepted conventions of the English language for self-expression and artistic creation.

Standard 3: Language for Critical Analysis and Evaluation

Students will listen, speak, read, and write for critical analysis and evaluation. As listeners and readers, students will analyze experiences, ideas, information, and issues presented by others using a variety of established criteria. As speakers and writers, they will use oral and written language that follows the accepted conventions of the English language to present, from a variety of perspectives, their opinions and judgments on experiences, ideas, information and issues.

Standard 4: Language for Social Interaction

Students will listen, speak, read, and write for social interaction. Students will use oral and written language that follows the accepted conventions of the English language for effective social communication with a wide variety of people. As readers and listeners, they will use the social communications of others to enrich their understanding of people and their views.

Suggested Classroom Activities for New York State Learning Standards in English Language Arts

Students will read, write, listen, and speak for:

Information and understanding

- Quizzes and/or tests for recollection and comprehension
- Writing assignments, including explication and literal understanding: comparison and contrast essays, cause and effect essays, etc.
- Research projects: work that involves synthesizing complex (perhaps even contradictory) information from diverse sources.
- Reports on historical background.
- Reports on interpretation of critics.
- Web sites that present research and background information.

Literary response and expression

- Students relate texts to their own lives.
- Study of social, historical, and cultural dimensions of literary genres from various cultural and historical periods; writing based on these.
- Focus on a wide range of literary elements and techniques; use of these in interpreting literature.
- Writing in a variety of literary forms and employing their conventions.
- Writing and/or performance for self-expression.
- In-class performances and readings.
- Reading aloud with expression, conveying meaning, tone, and mood.

Critical analysis and evaluation

- Study of various kinds of literary analysis; reading literary criticism.
- Multi-textual and inter-textual analysis.
- Study of theoretical perspectives.
- Formal oratory and debate.
- Students compare and evaluate their own and others' works.
- Students evaluate their different points of view, interests, and values.
- Students analyze issues, ideas, texts, and experiences in well-developed arguments.

Social interaction

- Classroom conversations requiring clear and thoughtful expression of ideas.
- Print and electronic forms used for communication by students.
- Student presentations: consideration of audience in written and spoken work.
- Study of social conventions and language conventions used by writers from different groups and cultures.
- Student-led discussions.