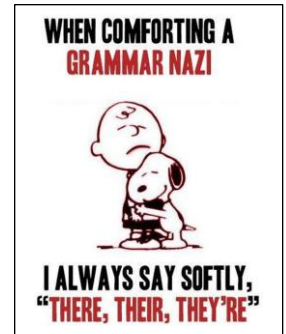


WRPR/LNGT 110- English Grammar: Concepts and Controversies (Spring 2019)

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Course Overview

The first half of the course is devoted primarily to learning about the structure of English. We will learn to analyze English sentences using grammatical terminology, and students will be assessed on their knowledge and application of concepts. We will also engage various perspectives on the question, Why does grammar matter? Students will be asked to draw on their existing knowledge of and experience with English grammar instruction and usage.

The second half of the course explores complex issues related to English grammar, such as...

- Language regulation, policy, and standardization
- Prescriptivism, moralism, “verbal hygiene,” and linguistic prejudice
- The role of grammar in English education (both in the US and abroad)
- Censorship, political correctness, inclusive language

We will explore these issues through course readings, class discussion, and written essays. Near the end of the course, we will focus on synthesizing and building on what has been learned in the semester. Each student will complete an empirical research project, drawing on original data, which will be presented to the class in a short oral presentation, as well as in a written report. (See details later in the syllabus).

Required Reading List (All books are available at the Middlebury bookstore.)

1. Morenberg, M. (2014). *Doing Grammar* (5th Ed.). Oxford University Press.
2. Curzan, A. (2014). *Fixing English: Prescriptivism and language history*. Cambridge University Press.
3. Cameron, D. (2012 or earlier edition). *Verbal Hygiene*. Routledge.

Recommended additional texts:

- Kolln, M., and Funk, R. (2011/2012). *Understanding English Grammar* (9th Ed). Pearson.
- Shea, A. (2014). *Bad English: A History of Linguistic Aggravation*. Perigree/Penguin Group

Expectations

Academic community is an important aspect of this course; cultivating that community requires the active presence and participation (including both speaking and listening) of each member. Unexcused absences and late or missed assignments will be penalized. In the event of illness, please notify me via email or phone *before* the class that you will be missing. Multiple absences could have an adverse effect on your final course grade. While I do not have a specific policy about use of technology in the classroom, I expect you to be mindful about using devices in a way that allows you and your peers to remain present and engaged.

I also expect that you will organize yourself so that you are prepared for class and can submit assignments on time. This includes

- Making time to do the readings before class, focusing in particular on terminology
 - Having a folder/notebook in which to keep homework, course handouts, and other materials
 - Using multiple strategies (e.g., Google Drive, OneDrive, Dropbox) to back up your work
- Note: A computer crash is NOT an excuse for late work!

I also expect you to take ownership of your own learning. You will have frequent homework assignments to reinforce your understanding of grammar structures and terminology. *You are encouraged to work with others on these shorter assignments, but you should also attempt some exercises on your own, to ensure that you are learning the material.*

Grading Breakdown

- ❖ Participation (online and in-class, including 1x co-facilitating discussion) = 10%
- ❖ HW (exercises from Morenberg, periodic self-evaluations, and other small assignments) = 10%
- ❖ Quizzes (two) = 20% total (Quiz dates are on course calendar).
- ❖ Paper 1 (Grammar Autobiography- ~3pp): 15%
- ❖ Paper 2 (Position paper, 4-5 pp.)= 20%
- ❖ Independent Project (5-6 pp. report on original research, plus in-class mini-presentation) = 25%

Formatting for Written Work

Unless specified otherwise, written assignments should be double-spaced, 12-point font (Times New Roman), with 1-inch margins. APA citation style is preferred, but other formats may be accepted upon student request. All work submitted should include the Honor Code statement: "*I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid on this assignment,*" with your signature. If you have worked with anyone other than a tutor (or Prof. Shapiro) on an assignment, please note that as well.

In class, we will talk more about academic integrity, including ways use sources appropriately, as well as when and how to collaborate with peers on particular assignments. For now, please remember that plagiarism usually involves using someone else’s words or ideas as if they were your own. It can have very serious consequences, including academic suspension or even expulsion. For more information on what plagiarism is and how to avoid it, please visit https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/using_research/avoiding_plagiarism/is_it_plagiarism.html

For a self-guided tutorial about academic integrity at Middlebury, visit [go/ait](#).

Communication and Support

Communication and respect are very important to our course. I attempt to return all phone calls and emails within 24 hours, and expect the same of my students. Your feedback is essential to the success of this course. I will give you opportunities to tell me how the course is going, both in-class and anonymously, but I appreciate hearing from you at any point about your needs and experiences. If you encounter difficulties with any course material or assignments, please contact me early and often, so that I can help support you.

If you have a disability or learning issue of any kind that might impact your studies, please communicate with me as soon as possible. For formal accommodations, please be sure to contact Student Accessibility Services (formerly “ADA”), directed by Jodi Litchfield- (litchfie@middlebury.edu) See <http://www.middlebury.edu/campuslife/diversity/ada/> for more information.

We also have a Peer Writing Tutor, Will O’Neal (woneal@middlebury.edu) who has a solid knowledge of English grammar, as well as some background in sociolinguistics, and can help you with your written work in this course. You may also work with other peer or professional tutors from CTLR- see [go/writingcenter](#) for info. (You can use [go/appt](#) to make an appointment with a professional tutor).

OVERVIEW OF MAJOR ASSIGNMENTS (more details on each assignment will be provided in-class)

Quizzes

Each quiz will assess your understanding of course terminology and concepts. Quizzes may include fill-in-the-blank, matching, and short answer questions, as well as error analysis and other application activities. . Quiz 1 will be taken in class and quiz 2 is take-home and open-note. You will be given a list of terms and skills to focus on for each quiz, but the best way to prepare is to be present and engaged in class, and to complete all homework assignments. In the weeks before each quiz, you’ll be asked to do a written self-evaluation, discussing what terms and skills you are most confident with, which you have improved on, and which still need more work.

Papers

I. “Grammar Autobiography” (3-4 pages)

Describe your past experiences with learning and using prescriptive grammar, and your current views on the topic. Questions you might explore in your paper:

- Have you studied English grammar explicitly? What was the experience like for you? (If not, do you regret it?)
- Did you have any teachers (or friends/family members) who were “sticklers?” What impact did they have on your views about prescriptive grammar?
- Have you ever experienced linguistic insecurity in regards to spoken or written grammar?
- Do you ever judge people for improper use of grammar?
- Where do you fall on the “prescriptivist” vs. “progressive” spectrum re: grammar?

II. Position Paper (4-5 pages)

In this paper, you will take a position on a controversial question that has arisen in our readings and/or class discussion, and will support your position with course readings and/or outside sources, if needed. Possible questions include:

1. Are grammar prescriptivists (and/or “pundits” or “sticklers”) right to place such a high emphasis on grammatical correctness? Is judgment based on grammar/language use ever justified?
 2. How important is standardization of spelling, grammar, etc.? Does (Can) linguistic variation lead to inability to communicate?
 3. How much emphasis should be placed on teaching prescriptive grammar in public schools?
 4. Is texting (or another media trend) ruining the English language?
 5. How important and useful is politically-correct and/or gender-inclusive language?
 6. When is censorship (e.g., of profane or obscene language) justified?
- (You could also take a position on one of the other arguments made by Curzan or Cameron.)

III. Independent Research Project (5 minute “mini-presentation,” plus 4-5 page report)

The goal of this project is to give you an opportunity to deepen your course learning through primary research. NOTE: This is **NOT** a library research project, in which you summarize findings from secondary sources (other people’s research/argument). Rather, it requires that you **gather original data** via **one** of the following methods:

- Survey (minimum 10 participants)
- Interviews (minimum 3 participants)
- Corpus of existing original data (see [BYU’s list of online corpora](#)) or social media corpora —e.g. <http://www.trumptwitterarchive.com/archive> (or other [searches on Twitter](#))

The goal of your data collection/analysis will be to answer a *specific question* about grammar usage or attitudes among Middlebury students, faculty, or staff.

[NOTE: An alternative option is to analyze data collected from another site or community, although this is a much more challenging endeavor, and should not be undertaken without **extensive consultation** with me.]

We will discuss a number of possible topics and approaches for this topic. Some students do investigations focused a particular grammar structure or error—e.g., *who vs. whom*, *split infinitives*, *missing articles*, *ending sentences in prepositions*, *incorrect spelling*, *use of “textese,” punctuation errors* (e.g., comma splice), *grammos* (e.g., its vs. it’s). Other students investigate broader sociolinguistic issues, such as those explored in the Position Paper (see above).

In your individual written report, you will answer the following questions:

1. What did you do for your research and Why? (Rationale and Methods)
2. What did you expect to find? (Hypothesis)
3. What did you actually find?
4. What are the implications of your findings?
5. What did you learn overall from doing this project? (Reflection)

Tentative Course Schedule (Spring 2019)

NOTE: Daily HW assignments from Morenberg (2014) may change, but major deadlines will not.

Feb 12 (T)- Course introduction and overview. Begin discussing key terms: *prescriptive vs. descriptive grammar*, *grammarians vs. linguists*, *linguistic insecurity*, *rhetorical grammar*.
Self-assessment of basic grammar terms (e.g., in Morenberg Ch 1).

Feb 14 (Th)- Morenberg Ch 1 (pp. 1-21) and 1st part of Ch 2 part 1 (pp. 22-35)

HW: pp. 19-20, ODD #s only: Label NP and VP, and add verb type.

Fun/challenge: do p. 36 “Try This”

Review of basic grammar terminology, focusing on verbs and sentence types.
Discuss Paper 1: “Grammar Autobiography”

Due Sun Feb 17 (on Canvas): Draft of Paper 1: Grammar Autobiography (~3 pp.)

Feb 19 (T)- Finish Morenberg Ch 2, focusing on 3 types of diagrams (pp. 42-43).

HW: pp. 19-20, Diagram 1 sentence with each verb type, using tree structure OR Morenberg’s “short version” (or do all ODD #s). Also do p. 51 “Thinking Critically”

In class: Compare 3 approaches to diagramming sentences.
Discuss themes and revision strategies for Short Paper 1.

Feb 21 (Th)- Morenberg Ch 3. **HW:** p. 73 all (#1-5) pp. 74-75, find 1 sentence with each of the 8 combinations (see pp. 69-70 for reference). Diagram all 8 of your sentences with tree structure or “short version”.

In class: Practice labeling and creating sentences with verb types and combinations.
Begin drafting self-evaluation #1.

Due Sun Feb 24: Self-evaluation #1 (1-2pp., Canvas)

Feb 26 (T)- Morenberg Ch 4. **HW:** Review list of terms—find 2 examples of each within sentences on pp. 95-96. In class: Review for Quiz 1.

Feb 28 (Th)- **Quiz 1.** Preview future readings (bring Curzan and Morenberg to class).

Due Sun Mar 3 (if needed) Revised draft of Short Paper 1 (email to Prof S. along with Writer’s Memo).

Mar 5 (T)- Morenberg Ch 5. **HW:** p. 126 ODD #s. p. 130 ODD #s. Fun/challenge: p. 133-4 “Thinking Critically.” Also browse “stickler websites” (on Canvas).

Mar 7 (Th)- Morenberg Ch 6. **HW:** Exercises I and II pp. 153-154. Label dependent clauses (type and function) in p. 156 #1-20. Also read Curzan Intro and Ch 1. (Theme- What is prescriptivism, and why should we care?)

Due Sun Mar 10: Self-evaluation #2 (1-2pp., Canvas)

Mar 12 (T)- Morenberg Ch 7 - **HW** pp. 176-177 I and II. Label reduced clauses on p. 180 #36-50 (use answer key for #1-25 as reference if needed). Also Curzan Ch 2. (student led discussion)

Mar 14 (Th)- Prof. Shapiro away- **ONLINE CLASS**- Curzan Ch 3 and 4. (Theme- Codification of prescriptivism in dictionaries and grammar guides).
NOTE: Make time for HW due on Tues 3/19.

Mar 19 (T)- Morenberg Ch 8 and 9. **HW (5 things!):** p. 186 “Try This”, p. 204 Ex II; p. 213 “Try This”, p. 226 (label/analyze- be prepared to discuss in class), p. 229 Ex II (#1-5). Preview Ch 10, practice error analysis.

Mar 21 (Th) Morenberg Ch 10. **HW:** p. 249 “Try This” and p. 252 Ex I (post sample plus 1-2 paragraph analysis to online discussion. Review for quiz 2.

*******Mar 25-Mar 29: SPRING BREAK*******

Due Sun Mar 31st - Quiz 2 (take-home, submit on Canvas).

Also prep for debate/role play on Tues 4/2.

Apr 2 (T)- Curzan Ch 6 and 7. (Theme- Resistance/Reappropriation and “So What?”; possible student-led discussion). In-class debate/role-play #1: Grammar “Prescriptivists” vs. “Progressives”

Apr 4 (Th)- Cameron Preface and Ch 1. (Theme- What is “verbal hygiene,” and why is “hygiene” a useful metaphor for grammar?) **HW:** Bring 3 hard copies of Intro to Position Paper.

Apr 9 (T)- Cameron Ch 3. (Student-led discussion. Theme- Grammar education in the U.K.).
Debrief from quiz 2.

Apr 11 (Th)- 2 articles on Canvas: Kolln & Hancock and Delpit (Student-led discussion. Theme- Grammar education in the U.S.) **HW:** Be prepared to discuss your own educational experiences.

Due Fri (midnight): Out-of-class peer review of position papers (written or audiorecorded feedback, plus writer’s response).

[NOTE: Fri Apr 12: SPRING STUDENT SYMPOSIUM- extra credit opportunity!]

Due Sun Apr 14: Full draft of Position Paper (Canvas).

Apr 16 (T): Cameron Ch 4 OR Curzan Ch 5 (Jigsaw reading; student-led discussion. Theme- Political Correctness/Inclusive language).

Apr 18 (Th): Readings on Canvas (Student-led discussion. Theme- Censorship/profanity).
HW: Come with ideas for final project (will discuss in class).

***All week: Meetings w/ SS and/or peer tutor re: Position Paper.

Due Sun Apr 21: Final draft of Position Paper, plus Writer’s Memo (Canvas)

Due before class on Tues 4/23: Tentative Proposal for Final Project- individual or pair (Canvas)

Apr 23 (T)- Cameron Ch 5 OR alternate readings on canvas (Jigsaw reading; Student-led discussion. Theme- Gender and Language.).

Apr 25 (Th)- Readings on Canvas. (Student-led discussion. Theme- Media/Technology).
***Meetings w/ SS this week re: Independent Project

Apr 30 (T)- Catch-up day (and/or Grammar Meme Share!!!). Possible short reading TBD.

May 2 (Th): Cameron Ch 6. In class: Role-play #2 (Curzan, Cameron, Morenberg?, Truss? Others...)

Due May 5 (Sun): Draft of Independent Project Report (Canvas)

May 7 (T)- Student mini-presentations . Course response forms. (If needed: finish role-play)

May 9 (Th): Finish mini-presentations. Course wrap-up

***Meetings available with SS and/or peer tutor re: Independent Project

Due May 13(Mon): (Extensions available upon request). Final draft of Independent Project Report