

English 2080D: Grammar and Style

Fall 2011 | TR 5:00-6:15 PM | WH 204
CRN: 81110 | 3 semester hours

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by appointment; 24/7 by email

1. Catalog Description: Prerequisite: ENGL 1102 or ENGL 1102H. An intensive review of English usage and syntax, including a study of selected stylistic principles and their rhetorical effects.

2. General Goals: English 2080 sets two goals. First, it will develop in students an advanced ability to analyze, describe, and discuss the grammar of English as it is actually spoken and written (in various dialects), including morphology (word classes), syntax (sentence structure), and discourse (multiple cohesive sentences). This portion of the course will be devoted to *descriptive* grammar.

Second, the course will develop students' ability to make linguistically sound and rhetorically effective choices as they compose and edit English prose for correctness (adherence to "standard" American English) and stylistic felicity. This portion of 2080 will be devoted to *prescriptive* and *rhetorical* grammar. The ability to describe English grammar supports the ability to make decisions about grammar in the composing process. For example, if a writer wants to know whether to write *everyday* or *every day*, he/she needs to know what adjectives and adverbs do; the first is an adjective, whereas the second is an adverbial. In short, the course asks the question, how does the English language work? On the basis of answers to that question, we also ask, what should writers and editors attend to as they write and revise English, and, tangentially, what should English teachers be teaching their students about grammar?

English 2080 is a *university* course in grammar: class members will be

challenged to learn some *new* methods and concepts concerning English grammar, which is an active, evolving study at the present day. We will employ a new way to diagram sentences, for example, as well as the traditional method (which only public school teachers use); we will study new classifications of the parts of speech, which did not remain unchanged in the previous century; we will investigate new approaches to English sentence structure; we will take some new perspectives on English usage that may well contradict edicts handed down by previous teachers. The course will ask members to learn and to unlearn. Such should be the nature of any university course. The study of grammar is no exception.

English majors and minors should possess an accurate and sophisticated understanding of the language they are majoring in; English 2080 is designed to provide them with the basis of such an understanding.

3. Educational Outcomes: Students who successfully complete English 2080 will

- i. demonstrate their computer skills as they complete assignments that require word processing and work with online instructional media (VSU general education outcome 3);
- ii. demonstrate their ability to write clearly, logically, and precisely (VSU general education outcome 4, Department of English outcome 2);
- iii. demonstrate the ability to analyze, evaluate, and make inferences as they are introduced to the way in which English grammar is studied and as they make stylistic and rhetorical decisions in their own writing (VSU general education outcome 7);
 - a. more specifically, demonstrate the ability to describe English grammar at the morphological and syntactic levels (word classes and sentence structures);
 - b. and demonstrate the ability to apply grammatical knowledge as they write and edit for stylistic and rhetorical effect;
- iv. demonstrate cross-cultural sensitivity to English language varieties besides standard (VSU general education outcome 2).

4. Texts: Three texts are required:

- i. *Understanding English Grammar*, 8th ed., by Kolln and Funk (Longman, 2009)—abbreviated here KF.
- ii. *Exercises for Understanding English Grammar*, 8th ed., by Kolln and Funk (Longman, 2009)—abbreviated here EX.
- iii. *Language Myths*, ed. by Bauer and Trudgill (Penguin, 1998)—abbreviated here BT.

5. Technology: English 2080 meets in a computer classroom, so it will take advantage of the online instructional medium VSU calls BlazeView. Students who are not familiar with this medium need to become so as quickly as

possible. Class members will post in-class exercises and written assignments to BlazeView and take their final exam on it as well. Members should be adept with Word and should bring to every class meeting a USB drive on which they can save their work.

The instructor will create a discussion board on BlazeView for the posting of announcements and general questions about the course. Keep your eye on this board throughout the semester. This syllabus will be available on both BlazeView and the regular WWW, where it is linked to the instructor's homepage.

6. Assignments: Class members will complete the following assignments:

- i. Thirty in-class practice exercises posted to BlazeView, 1 point each (30 points total): outcomes i, ii, iii
- ii. Eight out-of-class test exercises submitted in hard copy form, 4 points each (32 points total): outcomes ii, iii
- iii. Three written responses to language myths presented in BT, 5 points each (15 points total): outcomes i, ii, iii, iv
- iv. One reflective paper on one's own developing understanding of grammar and style, 5 points: outcome ii, iii
- v. One final exam taken on BlazeView, 18 points: outcomes i, iii

Thus, students can earn up to 100 points in the course.

7. Attendance: Because the study of grammar can be difficult, and because it rewards patient, steady study, faithful attendance is crucial. Each meeting will include a lecture and discussion section and/or an in-class practice exercise submitted to BlazeView (or submitted in hard copy form if a member has technical problems). Class lectures will be important because they will elucidate the texts. Practice exercises will prepare members to perform well on the out-of-class test exercises and on the final exam. *Practice exercises cannot be made up: if a member is not in class to do and submit the exercise from the classroom, he/she loses a point.*

Attendance will be taken and encouraged via the daily practice exercises. In accordance with VSU policy, students who miss more than 20 percent of class meetings (six times) may not pass the course. The instructor does not look at doctors' notes, obituaries, or letters from parents; there are no excused absences. But the instructor will also reward students for good attendance:

- 0-2 absences: 3 extra points
- 3-4 absences: 2 extra points
- 4-5 absences: 1 extra point

Contrary to popular belief, grammar is fun, interesting, and intellectually stimulating. Come to class and become one who appreciates that fact. The study of grammar is most definitely not designed to turn you into a schoolmarmish critic of everyone's grammar but your own.

8. Civility: Late arrivals, early exits, ringing cell phones, irrelevant web surfing, grumpy behavior, and rude comments are disruptive: arrive on time, do not exit early, turn off your cell phone ringers, *do not surf the Internet*, cheer up, and be civil.

9. Grading: Grading will be based on a four-point, GPA-like system according to which

1/1 or 4/4 or 5/5 or 18/18 = A+
.75/1 or 3/4 or 3.75/5 or 13.5/18 = B
.5/1 or 2/4 or 2.5/5 or 9/18 = C
.25/1 or 1/4 or 1.25/5 or 4.5/18 = D
0/1 or 0/4 or 0/5 or 0/18 = F

Final grades will be determined on a scale based on the four-point system:

100 = A+
87.5 = A-: cut-off for A
75 = B
62.5 = B-: cut-off for B
50 = C
37.5 = C-: cut-off for C
Anything below 37.5 = F

10. In-class Practice Exercises: The instructor will provide time in each class meeting for members to complete a relatively short, formative exercise from EX or KF. *In-class exercises cannot be made up*; they are designed (in part) to encourage attendance. They must be posted to BlazeView during class.

11. Out-of-class Test Exercises: Out-of-class exercises are summative assignments from EX that will test members' understanding of chapters just completed. They must be submitted in hard copy form at the beginning of class on the date they are due or lose one point for lateness. *Out-of-class test exercises will not be accepted at all after others handed in on time have been graded and returned in this or the other two sections of ENGL 2080 the instructor is teaching this semester.*

12. Written Responses to BT: BT addresses for a lay audience some common misconceptions about language that all English majors should be aware of. It also presents axiomatic concepts and ways of thinking that underlie

contemporary language study; again, English majors need to become familiar with the way professionals in linguistics think about language (KF presents the English language from the English major's perspective).

In order to consciously apply some of the lessons on English grammar to their own writing and editing, students will write three response essays to three myths discussed in BT (one from myths 1-7, one from 8-14, and one from 15-21). In Modern Language Association (MLA) style, these semi-formal essays will

- i. explain the myth and the corresponding truth about the linguistic point under consideration in the chapter a student chooses from BT,
- ii. discuss the significance of the myth and/or the truth by using examples and details from the student's own linguistic experience.

These response essays will need at least one work cited at their end—the chapter from BT being discussed, and they will need in-text citations of paraphrases or quotations. The works cited and in-text citations must be done in MLA format. Response essays should be between about 600 (minimal length) and 1200 words.

Students will post response essays to BlazeView discussion boards in attachments (Word—.doc or .docx—files or rich text format—.rtf—files), and the instructor will grade response essays on four major criteria:

- i. *thesis, development, and organization*: clarity, insightfulness, organization, and adequacy of the development of the essay's thesis;
- ii. *style*: word choice, phrasing (e.g., parallelism), and sentence structure, including punctuation of sentences (commas, semicolons, colons, periods, dashes, parentheses);
- iii. *mechanics* (e.g., agreement, verb and pronoun forms, reference, spelling, hyphens, apostrophes);
- iv. *format, citation, and documentation*: correctness of MLA layout, in-text citation, and list of works cited.

Each reading from BT constitutes about 60 pages: students need to note the weeks by which those readings must be completed (see below) and be prepared.

Students will be unable to submit response essays (and will lose all five points) when the instructor sits down to grade them and locks the discussion board.

13. Reflective Essay: Submitted at the end of the semester, the reflective essay is a summative review of a student's developing understanding of English grammar, style, and mechanics, as well as MLA conventions. It should reflect

on

- i. selected difficult, intriguing, challenging, or surprising points and concepts encountered in KF and BT;
- ii. the student's progress through the writing of the three response essays:
 - a. what were the student's specific problems (name and exemplify them) with standard edited English style, mechanics, and MLA conventions?
 - b. what progress has been made in addressing these problems, and what's the student's overall judgment concerning his/her developing knowledge of the field of English grammar, broadly defined?

The reflective essay should probably be somewhat longer than the average response essay—perhaps 1200 to 1500 words. It *should not* be self-congratulatory, laudatory of the instructor, or dismissive of the lessons in KF and BT, which are central to English language studies.

14. Final Exam: Students will take an objective, comprehensive final exam (covering both KF and BT) on BlazeView between December 7 and 9.

15. Schedule: The following schedule is tentative. Class members are expected to keep up with changes announced in class. Again, abbreviations of texts are as follows: Kolln and Funk's *Understanding English Grammar* is KF; *Exercises for Understanding English Grammar* is EX; Bauer and Tudgill's *Language Myths* is BT.

Aug 16: **Introduction to the study of grammar**

Read KF 1

Post practice exercise 1

Aug 18 and 23: **Morphemes and words classed by their form**

Read KF 11-12

Post practice exercise 2 Aug 18

Post practice exercise 3 Aug 23

Aug 25 and 30: **Words classed by their role in sentence structure and pronouns**

Read KF 13-14

Post practice exercise 4 Aug 25

Post practice exercise 5 Aug 30

Sep 1 and 6: **Words and phrases**

Test exercise 11.10 in EX due Sep 1

Read KF 2

Read BT myths 1-7

Post practice exercise 6 Sep 1

Post practice exercise 7 Sep 6

Sep 8 and 13: Sentence patterns

Post first written response to BT by class time Sep 13

Read KF 3

Post practice exercise 8 Sep 8

Post practice exercise 9 Sep 13

Sep 15 and 20: The English verb phrase

Test exercise 3.6 in EX due Sep 15

Read KF 4

Post practice exercise 10 Sep 15

Post practice exercise 11 Sep 20

Sep 22 and 27: Sentence focus

Test exercise 4.5 in EX due Sep 22

Read KF 5

Post practice exercise 12 Sep 22

Post practice exercise 13 Sep 27

Sep 29 and Oct 4: Adverbials

Test exercise 5.6 in EX due Sep 29

Read KF 6

Post practice exercise 14 Sep 29

Post practice exercise 15 Oct 4

Oct 6 and 11: Adjectivals

Test exercise 6.6 in EX due Oct 6

Read KF 7

Post practice exercise 16 Oct 6—*midterm*

Post practice exercise 17 Oct 11

October 13, 18, and 20: Nominals

Test exercise 7.9 in EX due online Oct 13

Read KF 8

Read BT myths 8-14

Post practice exercise 18 Oct 13—*no in-class meeting Oct 13: instructor at a conference*

Post practice exercise 19 Oct 18

Post practice exercise 20 Oct 20

Oct 25: Fall break

October 27 and Nov 1: Sentence modifiers

Test exercise 8.10 in EX due Oct 27

Post second written response to BT by class time Nov 1

Read KF 9

Post practice exercise 21 Oct 27

Post practice exercise 22 Nov 1

Nov 3 and 8: Coordination

Test exercise 9.5 in EX due Nov 3

Read KF 10

Read BT myths 15-21

Post practice exercise 23 Nov 3

Post practice exercise 24 Nov 8

Nov 10 and 15: Rhetorical grammar

Post third written response to BT by class time Nov 15

Read KF 15

Post practice exercise 25 Nov 10

Post practice exercise 26 Nov 15

Nov 17, 22, and 29: Punctuation

Read KF 16

Post practice exercise 27 Nov 17

Post practice exercise 28 Nov 22

Nov 24: Thanksgiving

Post practice exercise 29 Nov 29

Dec 1: Review

Post reflective essay by class time Dec 1

Post practice exercise 30 Dec 1—*last class meeting*

Dec 7-9: Final exam

Complete final exam on BlazeView by 11 PM on Friday, December 9

16. Access: Class members requiring classroom accommodations or modifications because of a documented disability should discuss this need with the instructor at the beginning of the semester. Class members who require assistance must contact the Access Office.
