

English 2080C: Grammar and Style

Spring 2012 | W 5:00-6:15, 6:30-7:45 PM | WH 203
CRN: 20286 | 3 semester hours

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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 might 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*, 9th ed., by Kolln and Funk (Longman, 2012)—abbreviated here KF.
- ii. *Exercises for Understanding English Grammar*, 9th ed., by Kolln, Funk, and Day (Longman, 2012)—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, one point each (30 points total): outcomes i, ii, iii
- ii. Ten out-of-class test exercises submitted in hard copy form, 3 points each (30 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, 20 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 (two times each meeting for the two sessions, 5:00-6:15 and 6:30-7:45). In accordance with VSU policy, students who miss more than 20 percent of these sessions (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 missed practice exercises: 3 extra points
- 3-4 missed practice exercises: 2 extra points
- 4-5 missed practice exercises: 1 extra point

Contrary to popular belief, grammar is fun, interesting, and intellectually stimulating (in the instructor's opinion). 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 *from the classroom during the class period*.

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*.

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. *Be sure to bring BT to class when essays from it are to be discussed.*

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 1000 to 1200 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 May 2 and 4.

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.

Jan 11: Introduction to the study of grammar and morphology

Read KF 1, KF 11

Post practice exercise 1

Post practice exercise 2

Jan 18: Words classed by their form and words classed by their role in sentence structure

Read KF 12-13

Post practice exercise 3

Post practice exercise 4

Jan 25: Pronouns

Test exercise 1 due: 12.4 in EX

Read KF 14

Read BT myths 1-7: *bring BT to class*

Post practice exercise 5

Post practice exercise 6

Feb 1: Words and phrases

Test exercise 2 due: 14.3 and 14.4 in EX

Read KF 2
Post practice exercise 7
Post practice exercise 8

Feb 8: Sentence patterns

Post first written response to BT by class time

Read KF 3
Post practice exercise 9
Post practice exercise 10

Feb 15 The English verb phrase

Test exercise 3 due: 2.4 and 3.6 in EX

Read KF 4
Post practice exercise 11
Post practice exercise 12

Feb 22: Sentence focus

Test exercise 4 due: 4.6 in EX

Read KF 5
Read BT myths 8-14: *bring BT to class*
Post practice exercise 13
Post practice exercise 14

Feb 29: Adverbials

Post second written response to BT by class time

Read KF 6
Post practice exercise 15
Post practice exercise 16

Mar 1: Midterm

Mar 7: Adjectivals

Test exercise 5 due: 5.7 and 6.4 in EX

Read KF 7
Post practice exercise 17
Post practice exercise 18

Mar 12-16: Spring break

Mar 21: Nominals

Test exercise 6 due: 6.5 and 7.7 in EX

Read KF 8
Read BT myths 15-21: *bring BT to class*
Post practice exercise 19

Post practice exercise 20

Mar 28: Sentence modifiers

Post third written response to BT by class time

Read KF 9

Post practice exercise 21

Post practice exercise 22

Apr 4: Coordination

Test exercise 7 due: 8.8 and 8.9 in EX

Read KF 10

Post practice exercise 23

Post practice exercise 24

Apr 11: Rhetorical grammar

Test exercise 9 due: 9.5 and 10.5 in EX

Read KF 15

Post practice exercise 25

Post practice exercise 26

Apr 18: Punctuation

Post reflective essay by class time

Read KF 16

Post practice exercise 27

Post practice exercise 28

Apr 25: Review—*last class meeting*

Test exercise 10 due: 16.3 in EX

Post practice exercise 29

Post practice exercise 30

May 2-4: Final exam

Complete final exam on BlazeView by 10:00 PM on F, May 4

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.
