Contemporary Usage
ENGL 219 – Spring 2003
University of Waterloo

Course Information:
Time: Tues. Thurs. 8:30 – 10 a.m.
Location: 305 RCH
Instructor’s Office Hours:
   Tues., Thurs. 10-11 a.m. or
   by appointment

Instructor:
Sheila Hannon
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or sheilahannon@mobile.rogers.com

Course Description:
The undergraduate course calendar gives the following description for English 219:

An in-depth, applied study of the conventions governing contemporary English grammar, punctuation, syntax, diction, spelling, and sentence structure. In addition, the course will examine variations and changes in conventions; the question of the determiners of correct usage; and the impact of dictionaries, textbooks, journals, large publishing houses, and international wire services on accepted English usage in general and on Canadian usage in particular.

The English language, which is constantly changing and evolving, both affects, and is affected by, its social environment or context. This course will examine how language is used, how that usage is affected by its context and how language conventions change. This course is about more than just grammar, and looks at the rhetorical aspects of language and what language can do. By developing an awareness of the choices available, writers can develop a better understanding of the effects of their words.

This course will examine language from both a critical and an applied perspective. The class will consist of lectures, student presentations, discussions and group work.

Texts
Required
Kolln, Martha. Rhetorical Grammar: Grammatical Choices, Rhetorical Effects. 4th ed.

Course Reader (Available at bookstore)

Recommended:
Assignments and Tests
Test on conventions 20 %
Usage Presentation and Report 20 %
Journal 20 %
Research Essay (Due July 29) 40 %

Plagiarism
Plagiarism is the use of another’s ideas without proper credit or attribution. This is a serious academic offence that carries severe penalties. Please ensure that you are aware of the expectations and standards regarding the appropriate acknowledgment of sources. The following may help you understand what constitutes plagiarism.

According to the University's Policy 71 (Student Discipline), plagiarism is defined as “...the act of presenting the ideas, words, or other intellectual property of another as one's own. The use of other people's work must be properly acknowledged and referenced in all written material....Use of [source material] without complete and unambiguous acknowledgement...is an offence under this policy.”

The following note on the avoidance of academic offences has been passed by the Arts Faculty Council (April 13, 1999):

All students registered in the courses of the Faculty of Arts are expected to know what constitutes an academic offence, to avoid committing academic offences, and to take responsibility for their academic actions. When the commission of an offence is established, disciplinary penalties will be imposed in accord with Policy #71 (Student Academic Discipline). For information on categories of offences and types of penalties, students are directed to consult the summary of Policy #71 which is supplied in the Undergraduate Calendar (section 1; on the Web at http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infoucal/UW/policy_71.html). If you need help in learning how to avoid offences such as plagiarism, cheating, and double submission, or if you need clarification of aspects of the discipline policy, ask your course instructor for guidance. Other resources regarding the discipline policy are your academic advisor and the Undergraduate Associate Dean.

If you are in doubt about what constitutes plagiarism, please consult this web site:

Course Policies
• No extensions, deferrals, or make-ups will be allowed without good reason and (if possible) prior approval. Assignments will be penalized 2% for each weekday that the assignment is late. If you have a valid reason (medical, legal or compassionate), please contact me by email before the assignment is due (whenever possible) to make arrangements for an alternate due date.
• Class discussion is an important aspect of learning in this course. Students are expected to attend all classes, to come with journal entries completed and to be prepared to discuss the assigned readings.
• If you are absent from class, it is your responsibility to find out what material has been covered, to obtain any materials that have been handed out and to determine what preparation is required for the next class. Please try to make arrangements with a fellow student to bring you up to date, if you are away.
My role is to help you achieve success in this course. If you have any questions, concerns or other things that you may wish to talk about, please contact me before or after class or during my office hours. I am also available by phone or email.

Assignments

Journal (20%)

The purpose of the journal is to let you start thinking about the ideas we will be covering in class, and to let you make connections between each week’s readings.

This journal is a public space where you can respond to the readings, raise questions or relate the readings to a usage that you have encountered in your daily life. We will exchange journals in class, allowing other students to read and comment on your entries. The journal entry will form the basis for class discussion of the readings or issues raised.

You should complete a journal entry of between 300-600 words (no more!) on the readings in each of the 13 topic areas. In most cases, I will provide questions or ideas to help guide your entry. The journal entry should be completed prior to the date on which the topic is scheduled for class. Bring your journal entries (all of them) to every class. Journal entries should be computer-generated or typed to ensure that others can read them easily. (You will be allowed to miss one journal entry. Therefore, your completed journal should contain 12 entries. However, for your own benefit, you should ensure that you complete the readings for all topics.)

The journals will be marked for completeness, thoughtfulness and relevance. I will check during the course to ensure that entries have been completed on time and will collect the journals for marking at the midway point of the course and at the end. I will provide more specific details in class on how the journal should be assembled for submission.

Test (20%) July 22 In class

This in-class test will assess your knowledge of the usage conventions we have studied.

Usage Presentation and Report (20%) Various dates

In this assignment, you will be asked to explore an example of a current usage. Each student will choose a text that illustrates an interesting aspect of contemporary usage and give a 10-minute presentation on it to the class.

In your presentation, you should identify the usage features that interest you in the text, explain their significance by relating them to concepts you have studied in class, and raise further points for discussion.

The text may be an instance of new usage, changing usage, or incorrect usage, or it may be some other usage feature that you find interesting.
You can draw upon almost any source for your text. These could be books, magazines, newspapers, advertising, music or even television or movies. But you must be able to bring the example to class so the other students can examine/see it. The example should be relatively current and of a size which is suited to the assignment.

You will be asked to submit a brief written report (300 words) summarizing your points. This is due on the day of your presentation.

It would be beneficial for you to consult with the instructor prior to your presentation to ensure that your selected usage is appropriate for the scope of the assignment. If you need audio-visual equipment, this must be arranged a week prior to the class in which it is needed.

**Research Essay** (40%) Due July 29

This essay will allow you to explore an area of usage in depth, using primary and secondary sources. The paper may involve analysis of usage in a particular text or it may explore some contemporary usage issue. I will provide more details in a specific handout as well as possible questions that you may follow. You are also welcome to develop your own topic, in consultation with me. MLA format is required.

The essay is due **Tuesday, July 29** by 4 p.m. in the English department drop box in Hagey Hall.

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### Schedule and Readings
Other readings may be assigned throughout the course and will be provided or placed on reserve.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Kolln</th>
<th>Course Reader</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. May 6</td>
<td>What's English Usage?</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 8</td>
<td>Development of Language Ch. 1</td>
<td><em>The English Language – An Owner’s Manual</em></td>
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| 2. May 13      | Coming into Language | "Giving Things Names” S. I. Hayakawa  
                   |                                           | "When Language Came Into My Life” Helen Keller  
                   |                                           | "Language and Thought” Susanne Langer       |
| May 15         | Ch. 2        |                                                    |
| 3. May 20      | What’s Standard about English? Ch. 3 | "The Language Mavens” Steven Pinker  
                   |                                           | "The Prescriptive Tradition” David Crystal  
                   |                                           | "Tense Present: Democracy, English and the Wars Over Usage” David Foster Wallace  
                   |                                           | "Black Child, Black Speech” Dorothy Seymour |
| May 22         | Ch. 4        |                                                    |
| 4. May 27      | Writing Well Ch. 5 | "Simplicity” Strunk and White  
                   |                                           | "Words” Zinsser  
<pre><code>               |                                           | &quot;The Grammatical Backbone” R.L.Trask          |
</code></pre>
<p>| May 29         | Language and Responsibility | &quot;Politics and the English Language” George Orwell |</p>
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<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Chapters</th>
<th>Reading Notes</th>
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| June 3     | Media                                   | Ch. 6    | "How to watch TV News" Neil Postman  
|            |                                         |          | "Selection, Slanting, and Charged Language" Newman Birk  
|            |                                         |          | "Infatuation with Foul Language" Michael Medved  
|            |                                         |          | "Invasion of Vulgarians"  
|            |                                         |          | "Talk Shows" Tom Shachtman  
| June 5     |                                         |          |               |
| June 10    | Language and Prejudice                   | Ch. 7    | "Language as a Weapon of Hate" Rae Moses  
|            |                                         |          | "The Language of Prejudice" Gordon Allport  
|            |                                         |          | "Meanings of Words" Gloria Naylor  
|            |                                         |          | "Words with Built in Judgments" Hayakama  
| June 12    |                                         |          |               |
| June 17    | Propaganda, Doublespeak, Euphemisms     | Ch. 8 & 9| "Propaganda - How Not to be Bamboozled" Donna Cross  
|            |                                         |          | "World of Doublespeak" William Lutz  
|            |                                         |          | "Euphemisms" Hugh Rawson  
| June 19    |                                         |          |               |
| June 24    | Language and Identity/Culture           | Ch. 10   | "Shakespeare in the Bush" Laura Bohannan  
|            |                                         |          | "Endangered Language" Katharine Whittemore  
|            |                                         |          | "The Language We Know" Simon Ortiz  
|            |                                         |          | "Brit Speak"  
|            |                                         |          | "Mangled Words"  
|            |                                         |          | "Oh Canada! Oh Quebec!" Mordecai Richler  
|            |                                         |          | "It's About Respect"  
|            |                                         |          | "Stop the Presses"  
| June 26    |                                         |          |               |
| July 1     | Canada Day Holiday – No Class           |          |               |
| July 3     | Advertising                             | Ch. 11   | "I can sell you anything" William Lutz  
|            |                                         |          | "The Hard Sell History of Advertising" Bill Bryson  
|            |                                         |          | "What's Natural about Natural Products?" Sarah Federman  
| July 8     | Gender                                  | Ch. 12, 13| "Gender Wars in Cyberspace" Nathan Cobb  
|            |                                         |          | "I'll Explain it to you" Deborah Tannen  
|            |                                         |          | "Read all about it but don't believe it" Caryl Rivers  
|            |                                         |          | "Sex Differences" Ron Macaulay  
|            |                                         |          | "A-Z of Non Sexist Language" Margaret Doyle  
|            |                                         |          | "A Case in Point: Sexism" Bolinger  
|            |                                         |          | "Gender Benders" Jack Rosenthal  
| July 10    |                                         | Ch. 14   |               |
| July 15    | Wired Language                          |          | "The Software We Deserve" Geoffrey Nunberg  
|            |                                         |          | "Hackers"  
|            |                                         |          | "The Recycling of Words in Cyberspace" Alleen Pace Nilsen  
|            |                                         |          | "The Other Side of E-Mail" Robert Kutner  
|            |                                         |          | "Internet Changes Language" Amy Kramer  
| July 17    | The Evolving Nature of Language         |          | "English Belongs to Everybody" Robert MacNeil  
|            |                                         |          | "An ecology of Language" Bolinger  
|            |                                         |          | "Can Words Cure Cancer?"  
| July 22    | Test on Usage Conventions, in class     |          | Wrap-up  
| July 23-25 | Essay consultations – Please arrange an |          | an appointment  
| Tuesday, July 29 |                     |          | Research Essay Due  

Enjoy the rest of your summer.