

**Politics, Identity, and Grammar in Modern English
Language & Grammar Studies — ENGL 3335-23554**

MWF 1:00-1:50 pm in Irby 312

Dr. Katherine E.C. Willis

Three Ways to Contact Me:

Email: kwillis@uca.edu

- I only reply if you use basic etiquette (salutation, legible grammar, signature)
- Allow 12 hours for a response

Meet with me in Irby 317D:

- Stop by my office hours on **MWF 10-11, 12-1** or **T/Th 10:00-10:45**
- Schedule an appointment through the Calendly app: <https://calendly.com/katherinewillis>

Phone: 501-450-5100

Course Description & Objectives:

This course is an exploration of how people use varieties of modern English everyday in real life. That includes a diverse array of social and geographic variations. Our approach will be descriptive rather than prescriptive. In other words, we will learn how people actually use language rather than learn “correct” grammar. We will learn about a few major categories of linguistic study and relate those concepts to current issues, such as the relationship between language and identity, the influence of technology on language, how language affects others’ perceptions of us, and how language variation can create complex situations in social and professional settings. In order to broaden our understanding of what English includes, we will look at American Sign Language, African American English, and global Englishes.

This is an upper-division class, and the material will be challenging. Much of what we do will be more “left-brained” than other English classes. You will need to keep pace with the dense and technical material. You do not have to have prior experience with linguistics to succeed, but you do need to be prepared to study regularly, take detailed notes, and be active in class.

OBJECTIVES:

- ✓ appreciate the complexity and diversity of the English language
- ✓ explain the sociopolitical implications of language variation
- ✓ understand the cultural and historical contexts of language use

- ✓ make sophisticated and informed connections between academic concepts and real life situations
- ✓ analyze English descriptively using major concepts and tools of linguistic study
- ✓ understand and apply the basics of phonology, morphology, semantics, and pragmatics

UCA CORE: This course is designated **C** which means it satisfies your **Communication** component of the **Upper Division Core**. Communication courses promote effective communication: the ability to develop and present ideas logically and effectively in order to enhance communication and collaboration with diverse individuals and groups. For more info, go to <http://uca.edu/core>.

Assignments and Grading:

10% Participation: Come to class each day prepared to write and to discuss. Our success as individuals and as a group depends upon your consistent, active, and vocal participation. Good participation means being regularly present and active in class, engaging with me and your classmates in generative, constructive discussion, and being prepared for each day. See the rubric online for more info.

15% Observation Journal: The goal of this assignment is to encourage you to make sophisticated, analytical connections between what we do in the classroom and life outside the classroom. You will submit 3 journal entries (300-500 words each) this semester. The due dates are as follows:

Journal entry #1 — **Mon. Feb. 11**

Journal entry #2 — **Mon. March 11**

Journal entry #3 — **Mon. April 15**

For each journal entry, start with something you have recently observed in real life that our class relates to. The observation might come from a conversation, an article, a part of a tv show/movie, an activity in another class, etc. For example, suppose you notice that a friend has a unique pattern of using certain discourse particles in text messaging. Your journal entry would describe what you had observed, offer some linguistic analysis, and explain its significance. What is most important is that you demonstrate an intellectual curiosity about the world around you and a rich comprehension of the relevant linguistic concepts. See the rubric online for more info.

15% Problem solving meeting and presentation: Once during the semester, you will come to my office and solve a single-question problem. The topic for the problem will be drawn from the material we've covered up to that point in the semester. You will be graded on the quality (not necessarily the correctness) of your answer as well as on the quality of the conversation you have with me after. This is meant to be a learning experience, so it's most important that you engage attentively and proactively with the problem and with me. The class period after our meeting, you will present what you learned to the class. Your presentation should only take 5-6 mins. You'll recreate the problem on the board, describe your original solution, explain the

correct answer, and summarize your learning experience overall. The goal of this presentation is to make what you learned individually useful for the whole class. It will also help you better understand the topic. Your presentation will be graded on its clarity and accuracy. See the rubric online for more detail.

- 10% Exercises and Activities:** These will be chances for you to practice how to apply the concepts you're learning. Thorough and thoughtful completion will help you master the concepts and prepare for the exams.
- 15% Exam 1:** Expect a combination of multiple choice, matching, short answer, and linguistic analysis.
- 15% Exam 2:** Same as exam 1.
- 20% Exam 3:** Same as the previous two exams, but this will be cumulative and include an essay component.

Required Materials:

The following books are all available **for free through the library**. You can access them via the links below (also posted in Google Classroom). If you are off campus, you'll be required to log in. You are not required to bring the readings with you to class.

- **TATALOVICH**, Raymond. Nativism Reborn? The Official English Language Movement and the American States (2015).
- **MCCABE**, Anne. An Introduction to Linguistics and Language Studies (2011).
- **PLAG**, Ingo, et al. Introduction to English Linguistics (2015).
- **MCWHORTER**, John H. Talking Back, Talking Black: Truths About America's Lingua Franca (2017).
- **GREEN**, Lisa J. African American English: A Linguistic Introduction (2002).
- **BAKER**, Anne. The Linguistics of Sign Languages: An Introduction (2016).

COURSE SCHEDULE:

Our schedule is divided into units which are broken down into topics. There are not specific dates listed for the readings and textbook exercises. I will announce them in advance in class. The rationale is that this helps me keep a flexible pace which matches the classroom's needs. You will have plenty of advanced notice to complete the readings and assignments.

UNIT A — THINKING DESCRIPTIVELY ABOUT LANGUAGE

TOPICS	READINGS	TEXTBOOK EXERCISES
Descriptive vs. prescriptive study		
Social and geographic variation		
Global Englishes		
Language and identity: code-switching		
The "official English language" movement	Tatalovich introduction, ch. 7 (just the part about Arkansas), conclusion	

UNIT B — PHONOLOGY

TOPICS	READINGS	TEXTBOOK EXERCISES
Sound production	Plag ch. 2	
Phonemes and allophones		McCabe 2.28, 2.20-2.24
IPA		McCabe 6.15
Intonation		McCabe 2.38
Sound change and variation	McCabe ch. 6.9	

EXAM 1: Monday Feb. 18

UNIT C — MORPHOLOGY

TOPICS	READINGS	TEXTBOOK EXERCISES
Words and morphemes	Plag ch. 3	McCabe 4.2, 4.5, 4.8
Inflection and derivation		
Word analysis		McCabe 4.7, 4.10
Minor processes of word formation		

UNIT D — SIGN LANGUAGE

TOPICS	READINGS	TEXTBOOK EXERCISES
History and overview	Baker ch. 1	Baker ch. 1 “test yourself” and “assignment”
Lexicon	Baker ch. 8	Baker ch. 8 “test yourself”
Sign Language in education	Baker ch. 14.3	Baker ch. 14 “test yourself” #2-3 and “assignment” #3

EXAM 2: Wed. April 3

UNIT E — AFRICAN AMERICAN ENGLISH

TOPICS	READINGS	TEXTBOOK EXERCISES
History and backstory	McWhorter introduction; Green introduction (sections on naming and origins) and ch. 8	
Linguistic features	McWhorter ch. 1-2	
Lexicon, verbs, negation, preterite had	Green ch. 1, 2.2-2.3, 3.2, 3.6	Green ch. 2 exercises (all) and ch. 3 exercise #4
AAE in education		Green ch. 8 exercise #2 and #5

Study day: April 26

Final exam: Mon. April 29, 11:00 am - 1:00 pm

MY POLICIES FOR THIS COURSE:

STUDENT CONDUCT:

You are responsible for your conduct. I expect you to conduct yourself professionally and courteously in the classroom, in my office, and in your work. If your behavior seriously disrupts the learning experience of other students or my ability to teach, I will ask you to leave the classroom and/or the course.

ATTENDANCE AND DROP POLICY:

Your attendance and active participation in each class meeting throughout the semester is the foundation of your whole grade in this course. I reserve the right to drop students who have an excessive amount of unexcused absences. For a MWF course, that begins at 3 unexcused absences. For a T/Th course, that begins at 2 unexcused absences.

As the Attendance section of the Student Handbook explains, "A student's official program is regarded as his or her obligation to the institution, full performance of which requires regular and punctual class attendance and active participation. A student is responsible for coming to class prepared, completing any missed work, and knowing the dates and places of required course examinations."

GRADING POLICIES:

If you are unable to submit work on time due to an excused reason, it is your responsibility to contact me as soon as possible to document your reason and to make timely alternative arrangements. As the Student Handbook specifies in the section on Attendance, "Make-up examinations and assignments are required only for valid absences as determined by the faculty member. Students who miss an examination or assignment without a valid excuse may receive a failing grade for that exam or assignment."

Excused reasons include (but are not limited to): official university-sanctioned athletic or organizational events (requires appropriate documentation), severe illness, death of a family member, court appearances, jury duty. For such excused reasons, late work will be accepted for full credit. However, be aware that some in-class activities may not be possible to make up.

Unexcused reasons include (but are not limited to): computer/printer malfunctions, traffic problems, family vacations/travel, or forgetfulness. For such unexcused reasons, I may be able to accept late work for partial credit, but you must discuss it with me first. The standard deduction for late work is one letter grade off per day.

EMAIL ETIQUETTE:

I will respond to your email within 12 hours. If you do not hear from me in that time window, contact me again. This means you should not, if at all possible, email last minute concerns. In addition, I only respond to emails that follow basic etiquette. That includes the following: a salutation line, readable grammar, and a signature line.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

As a general rule, you should know the policies described in the Student Handbook. The Sexual Harassment Policy and Academic Policies are especially important. You can find the current edition of the Student Handbook online here.

Academic Integrity: The University of Central Arkansas affirms its commitment to academic integrity and expects all members of the university community to accept shared responsibility for maintaining academic integrity. Students in this course are subject to the provisions of the university's Academic Integrity Policy, approved by the Board of Trustees as Board Policy No. 709 on February 10, 2010, and published in the Student Handbook. Penalties for academic misconduct in this course may include a failing grade on an assignment, a failing grade in the course, or any other course-related sanction the instructor determines to be appropriate. Continued enrollment in this course affirms a student's acceptance of this university policy.

Title IX Disclosure: If a student discloses an act of sexual harassment, discrimination, assault, or other sexual misconduct to a faculty member (as it relates to "student-on-student" or "employee-on-student"), the faculty member cannot maintain complete confidentiality and is required to report the act and may be required to reveal the names of the parties involved. Any allegations made by a student may or may not trigger an investigation. Each situation differs, and the obligation to conduct an investigation will depend on the specific set of circumstances. The determination to conduct an investigation will be made by the Title IX Coordinator. For further information, please visit: <https://uca.edu/titleix>. Disclosure of sexual misconduct by a third party who is not a student and/or employee is also required if the misconduct occurs when the third party is a participant in a university-sponsored program, event, or activity.

Americans with Disabilities Act: The University of Central Arkansas adheres to the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. If you need an accommodation under this Act due to a disability, please contact the UCA Disability Resource Center, 450-3613.

Building Emergency Plan: An Emergency Procedures Summary (EPS) for the building in which this class is held will be discussed during the first week of this course. EPS documents for most buildings on campus are available at <http://uca.edu/mysafety/bep/>. Every student should be familiar with

emergency procedures for any campus building in which they spend time for classes or other purposes.

Course Evaluations: Student evaluations of a course and its professor are a crucial element in helping faculty achieve excellence in the classroom and the institution in demonstrating that students are gaining knowledge. Students may evaluate courses they are taking starting on the Monday of the thirteenth week of instruction through the end of finals week by logging in to myUCA and clicking on the Course Evaluations task. This semester, course evaluations open on Monday April 8.