Linguistics 522
Modern English Grammar – Spring 2020

Course Administration

Instructor

Jim Blevins (jblevin6@gmu.edu)

Schedule

Lectures: Asynchronous delivery via Blackboard Collaborate/Ultra, Monday

Office Hours

Via Blackboard Collaborate Ultra/WebEx/Zoom TuTh 2–3, and by appointment

Required Text (ONE of the following versions)

- Swan, Michael. 2017. *Practical English Usage*, 4th edition. Oxford University Press. ISBN: 978-0-19-420243-5. (**Not** the more expensive version with online access.)

- Swan, Michael. 2017. *Practical English Usage*, 4th edition. Oxford University Press. ISBN: 978-0-19-420246-6. (**International** version.)

Course content

Aims and objectives

• To provide a theoretically informed description of Modern English grammar.

• To clarify the typological position of English, identify diachronic biases in familiar descriptions of English, and trace the influence of English on theories of grammar.

• To contrast competing approaches and isolate substantive disagreements.

• To highlight points of contact between grammar and other linguistic domains.

Learning outcomes

• An understanding of the major features of the English grammatical system.

• Familiarity with different grammatical descriptions and descriptive traditions.

• The ability to organize a theoretically-informed course on English grammar.

Transferable skills

• The ability to follow and evaluate linguistic arguments.

• The ability to construct clearly-motivated linguistic analyses.

• The ability to navigate, understand, and summarize descriptive and theoretical literature.

Course schedule

Week	Topic	Assignments	Due Dates
1	**Lesson 1:** Overview of English Grammar	• **Read:** pp. xx-xxx and §28 • **Participate:** online post introducing yourself and response to some other post	**Task 1 Due:** 6/5 **Discussion:** • Initial Post by: 6/5 • Replies by: 6/7
2	**Lesson 2:** The English nominal system	• **Read:** §§11–14 • **Task 1:** error analysis • **Participate:** online discussion	**Task 2 Due:** 6/12 **Discussion:** • Initial Post by: 6/12 • Replies by: 6/14
3	**Lesson 3:** Verbs, tense, aspect and periphrasis	• Read §§1–5, 7 • **Task 2:** grammatical analysis • **Participate:** online discussion	**Task 3 Due:** 6/19 **Discussion Task** • Initial Post by: 6/19 • Replies by: 6/21
4	**Lesson 4:** Gerundive and infinitival constructions	• **Read:** §§8–10 • **Submit: midterm exam** • **Participate:** online discussion	**Midterm Due:** 6/24 **Discussion Task** • Initial Post by: 6/26 • Replies by: 6/28
5	**Lesson 5:** Adjectives, adverbs and prepositions	• **Read:** §§15–17 • **Task 3:** error analysis • **Participate:** online discussion	**Task 4 Due:** 7/3 **Discussion Task** • Initial Post by: 7/3 • Replies by: 7/5
6	**Lesson 6:** Argument structure, voice and valence	• **Read:** §§6, 19–24 • **Task 4:** grammatical analysis • **Participate:** online discussion	**Task 5 Due:** 7/10 **Discussion Task** • Initial Post by: 7/10 • Replies by: 7/12
7	**Lesson 7:** Word formation	• **Read:** TBC • **Task 5:** error analysis • **Participate:** online discussion	**Task 5 Due:** 7/17 **Discussion Task** • Initial Post by: 7/17 • Replies by: 7/19
8	**Lesson 8:** Discourse structure and pragmatics	• **Read:** §§25–27 • **Submit: final exam** • **Participate:** online discussion	**Final exam due:** 7/24 **Discussion Task** • Final Post by: 7/24

Grading policy

Assignments (20%)

There are two sets of assignments. In weeks 2, 5 and 7 there are self-assessed error analysis tasks that provide practice in recognizing and correcting common errors. In weeks 3 and 6 there are instructor-assessed grammatical analysis exercises that help to develop skills in pattern recognition and problem solving. Only the grammatical exercises will be graded.

Class participation (20%)

The weekly exercises provide the basis for interactive discussions on the Discussion Board. For full grades, students should complete two of the following tasks **each week**:

1. **Ask** a question in the Course Discussion Board on Blackboard, and **either**
2. **Answer** a question posed in the Course Discussion Board **or**
3. **Comment on** an answer in the Course Discussion Board.

Midterm exam (30%)

There will be a take-home midterm exam due at the end of week 4. The exam format will include a combination of true-false, multiple choice, short answer, and/or matching questions, all based on material drawn from the required readings and class lectures.

Comprehensive Final (30%)

The final exam will be due at the end of week 8. The exam will be comprehensive, covering topics from weeks 1–8. It will have the same format as the midterm, with true-false, multiple choice, short answer, and/or matching questions, based on the readings and lectures.

General Notices

Academic Integrity

Students are reminded of their obligation to adhere to the GMU Honor Code. All class work should clearly acknowledge the source of ideas and materials, and direct quotations must be explicity identified and properly cited. If you are in any doubt, please contact me **before** submitting your work. The Pledge and full text of the Honor Code are available at:

`https://oai.gmu.edu/mason-honor-code/full-honor-code-document/`

Disability Services

GMU is committed to providing equitable access to students with disabilities. Students who require accommodations should register with Disability Services: `https://ds.gmu.edu/` **as early as possible**, since accommodations/grade adjustments cannot be made retroactively.

Student services

Online Education Services/University Libraries: `https://library.gmu.edu/for/online`

Writing Center: `https://writingcenter.gmu.edu`

Counseling and Psychological Services `https://caps.gmu.edu`