THE COLLEGE OF NEW JERSEY
COURSE APPROVAL/CHANGE FORM

Items in italics have “drop down” menus. Please click on the box to select a response. Shaded boxes are live.

Course name: American English

Course number: LNG 3xx (If NEW, # to be assigned by Academic Services) (with prefix)

Term effective date: Fall 2004 School: Culture and Society

Course level: 300 Undergraduate 500 Graduate

Proposed Units: 4 Sem. Hour *(If other than 1.0 Unit or 4 SH please explain in Comment Box)

Is course repeatable for credit? Yes No If yes, how many times?

Are there pre-requisites? Yes No If Yes Specify:

One of the following: LNG 201, 202, 211 or permission of the instructor.

Select grade type: Normal Pass/Fail Special: Describe:

Offering schedule: Fall Spring Fall & Spring

Summer All Terms Occasionally

Activities code for primary activity: Lecture

Activities code for secondary activity: Guided Study Group

Cross listed: Yes No If yes, with what course number and name?

Does this replace a previous course? Yes No

If yes, indicate Course number:

Faculty weighted hours: (To be assigned by Deans) CAP = 28

*Comments:

To be offered spring semester every other year in a cycle with two other 300 level LNG courses.

Approvals:

____________________/________________ Program Faculty Date

____________________/________________ Appropriate Comm. Date (Optional)

____________________/________________ Dean Date
Course Description: Traditional histories of the English language taught in English departments in North America, the United Kingdom, and Australia tend to focus on the development of literary varieties of English. If they do address spoken dialects, they do so as entertainment for students, presenting dialectal varieties as objects for distraction, not as objects of inquiry. American English will examine linguistic variation, looking to American dialectology as a crucible for the development of ethical and engaged linguistic theory.

Prerequisites: One 200-level linguistics course in the English Department or permission of the instructor. The course is designed with the following assumptions about student proficiency: students will be able to distinguish between “linguistics” and “prescriptive grammar”; students will know the linguistic subsystems; students will be relatively comfortable with the basics of IPA transcription; students will be comfortable conducting interviews.

Learning Goals: The course will contribute to departmental efforts to develop student “understanding of the history, structure, and artistry of language” at a more advanced level than existing linguistics courses in the English department. Students will be expected “to read critically, write and speak with clarity and grace, reason intelligently, and argue thoughtfully and persuasively” in multiple genres related to linguistic research: exposition of existing research, arguments based on secondary research, interpretation of data, and research proposals. As a result, students will have an enhanced understanding of the way in which discourse about linguistic research influences decisions concerning language policy, particularly in the United States. Students’ enhanced understanding of the interplay between institutional, community, and educational values concerning language will prepare them to engage and foster “genuine cross-cultural interaction” as educators, writers, and researchers.

The course provides an opportunity for (although does not necessarily require) community-based research in language that would support students’ development as competent and ethical researchers who “will know, understand, and practice current conventions for writing and researching in the disciplines articulated in the Department’s ‘Core Values.’” Students will “be expected to construct, integrate, and critique cultural” and linguistic frameworks for the study of the English language in the United States. Specifically, the course will have the following goals. Students will:

- show an understanding of language acquisition and development as they relate to American English;
- demonstrate how reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing, and thinking are interrelated;
- recognize the impact of cultural, economic, political, and social environments upon language in the United States;
- show a respect for and an understanding of diversity in language use, patterns, and dialects across cultures, ethnic groups, geographic regions, and social roles;
- show an understanding of the evolution of the English language and the historical influences on its various forms in the United States;
- demonstrate an understanding of English grammars;
• demonstrate an understanding of discourse, pragmatics, semantics, syntax, morphology, and phonology as they relate to variation in American dialects;
• demonstrate their comprehension of and ability to critique scholarship concerning American dialects;
• and demonstrate their ability to design, execute, and interpret field-based linguistic studies.

**Student Assessment:** The principal modality for assessment in the English major is writing assessment. Students will be given a grading rubric at the beginning of the semester that reflects the expectations for written discourse (thesis driven research-based argument, written in Standard Written English) based on a standard A-F grading scale. Since the English major focuses on written demonstration of understanding, all examinations will also be writing-intensive, using primarily short answer, identification, essay, or other written responses instead of machine gradable examination methods. The English department also values oral communication, so students will be expected to participate actively in small and large group discussions, which will be incorporated into the final assessment of student performance. For purposes of programmatic assessment, student performance in this course will provide important information on our program’s success in teaching critical thinking and writing, as well as in encouraging the study of “the history, structure, and artistry of language.” Moreover, this course will require students to develop specific skills in argumentation and exposition necessary to interpret and present quantitative and descriptive data, a skill not usually fostered in our segment of the curriculum.

**Learning Activities/ Pedagogy:** All learning activities in this course will encourage students to demonstrate understanding of linguistic concepts and extend these concepts beyond their original instructional context. Included in the following list are representative activities that might be employed in addition to traditional lecture:

• In 200-level linguistics courses in the English department, students focus their writing on reflective and discursive exercises that ask them to examine their own linguistic histories or their preconceptions about language. Writing exercises in this course will ask students to develop their sophistication in use of linguistic terminology, their understanding of linguistic theory, and their presentation of linguistic data. For example, students may be asked to write brief reviews of current scholarship in American linguistics, principally in scholarship that explores dialect variation. They may be asked to examine the thoroughness of the scholarship, situate it in its critical history, and analyze its potential applicability to their own areas of interest. Such exercises would encourage them to engage with scholarly discourse in the field, to evaluate its predictive and explanatory power, and to become familiar with scholarly conventions— as well as the diversity of styles and domains of scholarship within the field.

• Since one of the goals of this course is to “design, execute, and interpret field-based linguistic studies,” students will be asked to engage in projects that require them to formulate and execute such research. For example, students may be complete a semester-long project in an area school (or other public-service setting) that engages the issue of linguistic diversity in the classroom (or service location). Students would be divided into groups, where they would collaborate on a series of projects: first, they would be asked to observe a classroom or other school environment (including
while this course asks students to read about dialect diversity, it must also ask them to internalize the idea of dialect diversity in a meaningful way in order to be successful. Students will be assigned tasks that encourage them to interpret and act upon the results of field research they conduct. Students who would engage in classroom observations would be asked in a follow-up assignment to discuss the linguistic tensions they observed in the location and summarize the problems that they saw emerging from these linguistic tensions. Since scholarship demonstrates that students who speak non-standard varieties frequently have difficulty in the early stages of reading (and have other difficulties later on in school, as well), students would then be asked to design a set of materials either for use in the classroom by students or for teacher-training.

**Student Outcomes of Learning Activities:**

Students come to linguistics courses with a number of misconceptions about language. All of our learning activities will address these misunderstandings, particularly misunderstandings about the nature of dialect. For example, students usually believe the following about language and dialect:

- Language does not change;
- Language only changes in the domain of the lexicon (vocabulary);
- Adults "teach" children to use language;
- Writing is language, not a technology that represents language;
- There is only one correct version of English that people ought to use;
- Dialects of English only differ in pronunciation or vocabulary;
- Dialects are geographical and socially stable;
- Non-standard dialects are communicatively deficient;
- Non-standard dialects are the product of or related to cognitive impairment in their speakers;
- Linguistic resources (such as dictionaries or usage manuals) are non-ideological documents.

Moreover, students will develop a number of skills and knowledge sets that will prepare them for and enhance their experiences in other courses. For example, students will:

- Cultivate an understanding of dialect diversity that will prepare them for literature taught in their "Multicultural Literature" requirement or build upon what they've learned in "Multicultural Literature";
- Foster analytic reading skills, familiarity with scholarly discourse, and sophistication in research methods that will prepare them for their upper-level seminars;
- Transfer their understanding of linguistic variation to their understanding of literacy and literacy education;
- Transfer that understanding of dialect diversity to their experiences in education courses and educator preparation (if they are preparing for certification);
- Transfer their understanding and appreciation of American dialect diversity to their study of American literature, particularly that of writers who use dialect extensively in their fiction (such as Mark Twain, William Faulkner, Zora Neale Hurston, or Toni Morrison);
• Transfer their understanding of the contingent and arbitrary nature of language to their study of critical theory;
• Transfer their ability to analyze and interpret quantitative data to other writing tasks in business, the sciences, or public policy.
Syllabus LNG 3xx: American English

Course Description: In your 200-level courses (Introduction to the English Language, History of the English Language, or Understanding English Grammar), you probably talked a little bit about dialect. But dialect itself was most likely not the primary object of inquiry. In this course, we will examine linguistic variation, looking to American dialectology as a crucible for the development of ethical and engaged linguistic theory.

Prerequisites: One 200-level linguistics course in the English Department or permission of the instructor. I've designed this syllabus with the following assumptions about your proficiency in topics that you should remember from your 200-level courses: you are able to distinguish between "linguistics" and "prescriptive grammar"; you know what the linguistic subsystems are and how they differ; you are relatively comfortable with the basics of IPA transcription; and that you will be comfortable conducting interviews (although I recognize you probably have developed this skill over a number of courses).

Course Objectives:
This course has three major objectives. Students will:
• Discuss linguistic systems, language development, and change;
• Demonstrate understanding of major linguistic processes; and
• Use textual and field research for linguistic analysis. In other words, students will learn to use interviews with native speakers and examinations of literature as evidence for linguistic arguments; as a result, students should also learn to use linguistic evidence to serve arguments about literature, culture, and education.

Course Outcomes: By the end of the course, students will:
• show an understanding of language acquisition and development;
• demonstrate how reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing, and thinking are interrelated;
• recognize the impact of cultural, economic, political, and social environments upon language in the United States;
• show a respect for and an understanding of diversity in language use, patterns, and dialects across cultures, ethnic groups, geographic regions, and social roles;
• show an understanding of the evolution of the English language and the historical influences on its various forms in the United States;
• demonstrate an understanding of English grammars;
• demonstrate an understanding of discourse, pragmatics, semantics, syntax, morphology, and phonology as they relate to variation in American dialects;
• demonstrate their comprehension of and ability to critique scholarship concerning American dialects;
• demonstrate their ability to design, execute, and interpret field-based linguistic studies.

Texts:
Electronic Reserve Texts

**Additional Materials:**
- Portable cassette recorder
- Zip disk or H:/ drive access
- Computer access
- IPA chart: [http://www.arts.gla.ac.uk/ipa/ipa.html](http://www.arts.gla.ac.uk/ipa/ipa.html) (print this out so that you have it handy)

**Grading and Requirements:**
Minimum requirements are: 1) satisfactory work and progress on weekly assignments related to semester-long project; 2) satisfactory performance on exams (a midterm and final); 2) satisfactory work on three 4-6 page (double-spaced) article reviews papers (in two drafts); and 5) regular attendance and class participation. This class will be graded on a thousand point scale.

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<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Homework problems/ feedback responses</td>
<td>200</td>
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<tr>
<td>Two in-class examinations</td>
<td>100 each (200 total)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Three article reviews</td>
<td>100 each (300 total)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Semester-long project</td>
<td>200</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-evaluation</td>
<td>50</td>
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<td>Group-evaluation</td>
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**Unit I: Introduction to Linguistic Variation and the Nature of Dialect**
Readings: Wolfram and Schilling-Estes, pp. 1-89 [Topics include definitions, myths, method, explanations, and registers]

Model Unit Assignments: Since linguists who study dialect must contend with a number of popular misconceptions about dialect, students will be asked to engage with and respond to the same misconceptions. They will be asked to survey ten of their fellow students (and two faculty members) about their understanding of the term “dialect.” They will then be asked to examine TCNJ’s library catalog and its holdings related to dialect and address the audience and apparent purpose of those holdings. They will write a brief (one-page single-spaced) account of each of these activities, summarizing the insights they gained. This will also give them an opportunity to develop their interviewing skills before they begin the semester project in earnest.

**Unit II: History of American Dialects and Regional Variations**
Readings: Wolfram and Schilling-Estes, pp. 91-149 [Topics include American English in pre-revolutionary and colonial America and methodology for examining regional dialects]

TELJUR Project: [http://www.ling.upenn.edu/phono_atlas/](http://www.ling.upenn.edu/phono_atlas/)

Model Unit Assignments: Regional discussions of American English rely a great deal on ethnography, although they don’t openly say so. Students will be asked to research the pre-revolutionary, colonial, and nineteenth century ethnic history of their own hometown. They will report the results in a two-page single-spaced essay.
Unit III: Social and Ethnic Dialects; Gender and Language Variation; Dialects and Style
Development of social dialectology; social class and language; African American Vernacular English; gender and language variation; heteroglossia
Readings: Wolfram and Schilling-Estes, pp. 151-262

Model Unit Exercises: As the first component in their course-long project, students will be asked to observe an educational or social services environment and report on the linguistic variation they hear (and see). They will then formulate a group report that examines the following issues: regional dialects, social dialects, ethnic dialects, gender- or sexuality-based dialects, and style shifting. Their group report will be five to seven pages double-spaced.

Unit IV: Applications of Dialect Study and Dialect and Public Policy
Implications of dialect study on testing, educational policy, literacy education; Standard Written English; Methodology
Readings: Wolfram and Schilling-Estes, pp. 263-345
Labov, “Academic Ignorance and Black Intelligence”
Landau, Perils of Prescriptivism (selections)

Model Unit Exercises: Based on their observations, students would then be asked to design a set of materials either for use in the classroom by students or for teacher-training. Students will conduct library research on dialect and education, compiling an annotated bibliography, and producing materials for either students or teachers (or for clients or social-service workers). Groups will be given the option of completing either task.

Unit V: Dialects and Literature
Discussion of “eye” dialect; influence of dialect on literature; impact of dialectology on narrative theory
Readings: Ives, “A Theory of Literary Dialect”
Bowdre, “Eye Dialect as a Literary Device”
Preston, “The Li’l Abner Syndrome: Written Representation of Speech”
Macauley, “Coz It Izny Spelt When They Say It’: Displaying Dialect in Writing”
Preston, “Ritin’ Fowklower Daun Rong’: Folklorists’ Failures in Phonology”

Model Unit Exercises: Students will be asked to record a conversation that they have with a group of friends and then transcribe it as standard speech, recording all “filler words” and approximating pronunciation with spelling.

Other Assignments:
Article Reviews: I have compiled a list of articles in linguistics that I’ve divided into three categories: seminal (important foundational texts), corpora-based (important for the data they provide about linguistic methods), and theoretical (important for their contributions to linguistic theory). Choose one article from each category and write a review of the essay. I’ve also provided you with three model book reviews from linguistics journals so that you can see how a review works. When you read your articles, read with this set of questions in mind:
1. Who is the audience for this work?
2. What expertise or previous experience does the author imagine the audience to have?
3. What are the major problems that the article addresses?
4. What is the argument of the article?
5. What kinds of evidence does the author use to prove his or her argument?
6. Has the evidence been collected in a sound way that the author fully discloses?
7. By what methods has the data been collected and evaluated?

Once you've thought about these questions, write a review of the article. Your review should be 4-5 pages double-spaced. In its essence, a review is an evaluative argument that asks whether or not a piece of scholarship has succeeded in its expressed goals. The trick to writing a good review is, first, figuring out what the goals of the original scholarship were. Once you've done that, you can explore the limitations or virtues of the piece: how well it was written; how well it was organized; how well it explored the problem; and how much it inspired you to learn more about the topic.

**Self-Evaluation/ Group Evaluation**

Since much of the work we will be doing this semester is group-based, I ask you to write two evaluations: one of yourself and one of the group with whom you’ve worked. Your self-evaluation asks you to examine how well you have fulfilled the goals of this course and how well you’ve fulfilled your role within the group. You will then write an evaluation of your group as a whole, examining the performance of each of your group members. Your self- and group evaluations will be held in the strictest confidence, but I will use them in place of a traditional course participation grade. In other words, you will be held accountable for your performance within the group. If you fail to participate in a meaningful way, your course grade will suffer for it.