

Origins and Nature of English Vocabulary

CLASSICS 185: Summer Session A, 2017 — DRAFT Syllabus

INSTRUCTOR:	Hans Bork (hsbork@ucla.edu)
CLASS MEETINGS:	TR, 10:45am–12:50pm, in Public Affairs 1264
TEXTBOOK:	None! Assigned readings will be posted to CCLE.
OFFICE HOURS:	TBD, in Dodd 2 (Classics TA office)
GRADING:	10% = Attendance and class participation 25% = 3 in-class quizzes 20% = 3 take-home homework assignments 15% = Class project 30% = Cumulative, 3-hour final examination (last day of class)

CLASS OVERVIEW:

Classics 185 is a GE-level course about (from the catalog description), “*the origins and nature of English vocabulary, from Proto-Indo-European prehistory to current slang. Topics include the Greek and Latin component in English, the alphabet and English spelling, semantic change and word formation, vocabulary in literature and film.*”

In other words, this class is intended as a broad introduction to the various ways that vocabulary (especially English vocabulary) originates, develops, and spreads. It will introduce students to the fundamentals of historical linguistics, lexicography, and sociolinguistics. In our discussions we will consider language and words of every kind, and from every kind of media. In addition, the class will teach students about where to find and how to use various lexicographic and linguistic resources, so that after the class is finished they will be able to expand upon what they have learned on their own.

Most importantly, the class will be fun! While the approach to the material will be rigorous and will involve a variety of readings and projects, the history of English vocabulary is fascinating, and affects every aspect of our modern language. I hope that the class will be a springboard to the larger world of Linguistics, etymology, and the secret history of words!

CLASS STRUCTURE AND SCHEDULE:

The exact schedule of the class is flexible, and will depend to some degree on the abilities and needs of the students. In general, however, each day’s class will be unequally divided into a *lecture* and a *discussion* section. The lecture will introduce essential concepts, examples, and other explanatory material. The discussion portion, which will be in the latter half of T/R class, will be a more hands-on engagement with course readings, problem sets, and examples.

During the course, I will distribute detailed weekly syllabi that will include specific details on each week’s readings, quiz or HW topics, class lectures, and so on. However, the “narrative” that the course will follow will be something like the following:

Provisional Course Schedule:

- WEEK 1 — *Language Origins and Language Change*: the principles of historical linguistics; the Indo-European languages and their relationship; how languages develop, thrive, or die; kinds of words and their origins; how vocabulary develops.
- **HW Assignment #1**: *Exploring the backgrounds of different roots, words, and phrases.*
- WEEK 2 — *How Words are Made, and Where they Come From*: introduction to phonology and morphology; the “recipe” that words follow; kinds of words, and where they come from (or not!); the lifespan, spread, and death of words; language and identity.
- **Quiz #1**: *On all foundational concepts from the first 1.5 weeks.*
- WEEK 3 — *What Makes English...English? The History of English*: compact history of the English language; influences and ingredients of English; regional and social varieties of English; when is a language not the same language?; introduction to English lexicon.
- **HW Assignment #2**: *Exploring how languages change.*
- WEEK 4 — *Is Lexicon the Language? English Vocabulary In-Depth*: sources of English vocabulary and lexicon; identifying parts of English words; why are there so many words in English?; who decides what goes in the dictionary?; how to find the history of a word, and why it isn’t always clear.
- **HW Assignment #3**: *Exploring different influences on English words: roots and suffixes.*
 - **Quiz #2**: *On all foundational concepts from the prior two weeks.*
- WEEK 5 — *That’s Not Real English! Varieties of Language*: introduction to sociolects, dialects, and register variation; technical languages and their origins; when does a made-up word become a “real” word?; introduction to slang, “irregular” language, and idiolect.
- **Quiz #3**: *A cumulative quiz, with problem-sets.*
- WEEK 6 — *Sum-Up and Review*: bringing it all together; where to go from here, and how to use what you have learned; reviewing for the final exam.
- **Final Exam**: *Cumulative for everything covered in the course.*
 - **Final Project Due**: by Friday of Week 6.

Please note that the above schedule is very provisional, and will likely change significantly before the start of the course. The material included below is intended only to give a sense of what the course will cover.

- **NB**: The “Class Project” is intended to replace the midterm grade that quarter-long courses usually include. Specific instructions for the project will be distributed in Week 1 of the course, but in general, it will be a data-driven exercise that will cover various aspects of English vocabulary. It will include a short written portion, but is not a paper as such. *It is also designed to be fun, and will allow for a great deal of student choice in how it is set up and completed.*

POLICIES:

1. The format of the course requires students to attend every class session. Unexcused absences *will* affect a student's grade. Please note too that *no makeup homework, quizzes, or exams* will be accepted *except when excused beforehand, or in cases of documented emergencies*. I do understand that unforeseen problems occur, so if you have an emergency please contact me as soon as possible and I will try to help as I can!
2. Three take-home homework projects will be assigned throughout the course. The nature of the homework assignments will change as we progress through the quarter, and specifics of each assignment will be explained in individual sheets. Each project will be a type of "practicum" exercise, and will require students to engage with specific concepts and materials that are covered in the lecture portion of the course.
3. Bi-weekly quizzes and a final exam will comprise half of each student's grade. Students may earn half-credit "redemption points" on their lowest quiz and homework grades. (That is, students may resubmit for grading one quiz and HW assignment *with their (accurate) corrections* in order to reclaim up to 50% credit on the points that they lost in the initial grading.)
4. While enrolled in this course students are expected to conform to all of the policies outlined in the UCLA Student Conduct Code. Any students who require accommodations for a disability or other special need should contact CAE (the Center for Accessible Education) and arrange for their official support. I will then make proctoring arrangements directly with CAE.
5. I ask that students not use cell phones during class time.