

# History of English

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LING 390 58515

College of Staten Island, CUNY

Fall 2020

**Instructor:** Joseph Pentangelo

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\* Please include "LING 390" in the subject line of any emails to me.

**Office hours:** Tuesdays, 3:30–4:30pm

\* Email me to set this up. (Last minute is fine.) I can then send an invite to a video call; if that doesn't work, we can set up a phone call.

**Meetings:** Wednesdays, 6:30 onward

**Website:** <https://ling390fall20.common.gc.cuny.edu/>

**Classroom:** <https://meet.google.com/nop-sdai-iax>

## Catalogue description:

4 hours; 4 credits. How the sounds, grammar, spelling, and words of English came to be the way they are. For English majors and minors, this is designated as a linguistics course. Prerequisite: ENG 151.

## Class expectations:

This course examines the development of the English language, from its prehistoric Indo-European roots through to today. Topics we'll cover include:

- Anglo-Saxon runes and once-common letters like ð, þ, ȝ, and ƿ
- Old English riddles and legends
- Middle English & the Anglo-Norman influence
- Early Modern texts, like witch-hunting pamphlets and Shakespeare's plays
- Different varieties of English today

We will discuss elements of phonology, syntax, morphology, and historical linguistics, but no background in linguistics is required for this course.

After a sufficient introduction to a range of topics in the development of English, students will choose one to explore in greater depth as a research topic. Students will chronicle their research with a series of blog posts on this site, culminating in a final research paper.

## 1. Course Requirements

### Required reading:

Algeo, John. 2009. *The Origins and Development of the English Language*, 6<sup>th</sup> edition. Boston: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning.

Additional materials will be provided for you on the course website.

### Grade breakdown:

- Blog posts (60%)
- Research paper (30%)
- Active participation (10%)

### Grade key:

A	93%+
A-	90–92%
B+	87–89%
B	83–86%
B-	80–82%
C+	77–79%
C	70–76%
D	60–69%
F	<60%

### Blog posts:

After a sufficient introduction to a range of topics in the development of English, you will choose one to explore in greater depth as a research topic. This topic will be the subject of your blog posts and your final research paper. (If you have trouble deciding on a single topic, let me know and I'll help you choose.)

You will make six blog posts on this topic, each worth 10% of your grade. Each blog post should make substantive progress towards your final research paper. It might introduce a new source,

document a change of direction in your research, or set a few sources in opposition to one another. Each blog post should have a length of at least 300 words.

Blog post assignments will be given in class on Wednesday and due by 11:59pm on the following Friday (i.e. two days later). Posts will be made on the course website. Instructions on logging in and posting can be found on the site. If you have any trouble, email me.

**Research paper:**

Your research paper will be on the same research topic as your blog posts, and should be based in large part on the content from your blog posts. It should be of sufficient length to explore your topic in detail. Your research paper will be submitted to the class website.

**Participation:**

I hope that all of you will participate actively in the class's virtual meetings. That being said, I recognize that this may not be a possibility for all of you. If you explain your situation to me in advance, make all six blog posts on time, come to office hours at least twice, and turn in the final research paper on time, you will get full marks for participation.

## 2. Class Policies

**Class meetings:**

Class will be livestreamed using Google Meet at 6:30pm on Wednesdays. Please connect to the livestream and participate. Meetings will not be recorded, but any slides I use will be posted to the class website within 24 hours.

**Office hours:**

I will hold office hours weekly on Tuesdays from 2:30 to 3:30. Email me (last minute is fine) and I'll send you an invite to a video call, or, if you prefer, we can set up a phone call. If you are having any trouble with the materials, have a question, or want to talk linguistics, you are encouraged to participate in office hours. Office hours can also count towards your participation grade.

**Syllabus:**

This syllabus is subject to change. Any changes will be made clear to all students, and an updated syllabus will be made available on the course website.

**Plagiarism:**

Collaborating or forming a study group is encouraged, but this does not mean that you are allowed to copy one another's work. CSI's 2019–2020 undergraduate catalogue has this to say on plagiarism:

“Integrity is fundamental to the academic enterprise. It is violated by such acts as borrowing or purchasing assignments (including but not limited to term papers, essays, and reports) and other written assignments, using concealed notes or crib sheets during examinations, copying the work of others and submitting it as one's own, and misappropriating the knowledge of others. The sources from which one derives one's ideas, statements, terms, and data, including Internet sources, must be fully and specifically acknowledged in the appropriate form; failure to do so, intentionally or unintentionally, constitutes plagiarism. Violations of academic integrity may result in a lower grade or failure in a course and in disciplinary actions with penalties such as suspension or dismissal from the College. More information on the CUNY policies on Academic Integrity can be found in Appendix iii.”

**Statement on accommodations for students with disabilities:**

Students with disabilities will be accommodated to the full extent required by College policy. The 2019–2020 undergraduate catalogue notes that:

“The Office of Disability Services has responsibility for providing reasonable accommodations and services to students with a documented disability. The office also serves as a resource for faculty and staff in their work with CSI students with disabilities. To qualify for services, students must submit documentation to the Office and request services. All documentation is kept confidential and should be submitted directly to the Office. Services include pre-admissions counseling and accessibility information, advisement, priority registration, and testing accommodations. Assistive technology software, scientific calculators, audio recorders, and assistance in facilitating the use of alternate formats are also available. The Resource Center for the Deaf serves the specific needs of deaf and hard of hearing students providing interpreters and CART services to students who are hard-of-hearing. Interpreters are available for academic advisement, conferences with professors, and other College business. The College's policy for students with disabilities conforms to federal guidelines and the Office offers services mandated by federal and state law. All students with disabilities are encouraged to use the services of the Office. Services are also available to students who are temporarily disabled.”

### 3. Semester Schedule

**Remember: Blog posts are due by 11:59pm on the Friday after they are assigned.**

1. 26 August: Class introduction. Course expectations, getting to know each other.
2. 2 September: Overview of English and its history. Read Algeo, chapter 1, before class.  
**9 September: No class.**
3. 16 September: Sounds, sound change, and orthography. Read Algeo, chapter 3, before class. Help on IPA pronunciations will be found on our class website. **You will choose your research topic today. Blog post assignment 1 will be given today.**
4. 23 September: Early days in the North Sea: Germanic and Celtic. Read Bremmer 2012 and McWhorter 2009 before class. (Algeo chapter 4 and 5 are optional, but may help make some things clearer.)
5. 30 September: Old English riddles and literature AND How to conduct research. Readings to be read before class will be found on class website. **Blog post assignment 2 will be given today.**
6. 7 October: The Norman invasion and Middle English. Read Algeo, chapter 6, and Rothwell 1991 before class.  
**14 October: No class. Classes follow a Monday schedule.**
7. 21 October: Early Modern English. Read Algeo, chapter 7, and materials on the class website before class. **Blog post assignment 3 will be given today.**
8. 28 October: Magic words and monstrous names in Old, Middle, and Early Modern English. Read materials on the class website before class.
9. 4 November: The printing press and its influence on orthography, standardization, and culture. Read materials on the class website before class. **Blog post assignment 4 will be given today.**
10. 11 November: Late Modern English. Read Algeo, chapter 9, before class.
11. 18 November: Contemporary English and how to research it. Read Franco & Tagliamonte 2020 and sign up for a user account on English-Corpora.org (link and instructions on class website) before class. **Blog post assignment 5 will be given today.**  
**25 November: No class. Classes follow a Friday schedule.**
12. 2 December: Forces of change in English. Read Algeo, chapter 10. **Blog post assignment 6 will be given today.**

13. 9 December: Bringing it all together and final paper workshop.

**16 December: Final paper due by 11:59pm today.**