Introduction to English Linguistics

Term:	Winter 2025–2026	**Instructor:**	Dr P. S. Langeslag
Time:	Thu 10–12	**Office:**	SEP 2.306
Room:	VG 4.101	**Office hours:**	(send me an email)
Prerequisites:	none	**E-mail:**	planges@uni-goettingen.de

Course Description

This introductory course is intended to give an overview of the different fields of diachronic and synchronic linguistics (phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, lexicon and semantics), its terminology and methods. It introduces the basic terms and tools for analyzing and describing the central grammatical structures of Old, Middle and Modern English to make the basic principles of language development and language change visible.

Assessment

Your knowledge is tested by means of a 90-minute pass/fail computer **exam taking place in MZG 1.116 on Thursday 26 Feb at 4pm sharp**.

Textbooks and Resources

We will primarily draw on two textbooks:

Barber, Charles, Joan C. Beal, and Philip A. Shaw. *The English Language: A Historical Introduction.* 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

Mair, Christian. *English Linguistics: An Introduction.* 4th ed. bachelor-wissen. Tübingen: Narr Francke Attempto, 2022.

We'll use Barber from week 6 onwards, and the third edition of this book will be released five days before your first reading is due. If you intend to purchase it, please hold off until I have reviewed it, as it concerns a major revision which may or may not be in our interest. Until then, I recommend that you borrow the second edition from the SEP library (43 copies in the *Lehrbuchsammlung*). Mair, with which we'll start the term, had best be purchased right away in hardcopy or ebook format (third edition also acceptable). Additional readings, as well as slides, worksheets, and links to further resources, will be provided on StudIP.

Diversity Statement

This course is run with the understanding that students bring a variety of backgrounds into the classroom in such domains as socioeconomics, appearance, culture, religion, ability, prior knowledge, gender, age, family situation, and sexual identity. With different backgrounds come different needs and sensitivities. If you feel your needs or those of a fellow student require special attention or are being compromised, please feel free to make this known to me by whatever channel seems most appropriate. (For more serious concerns, the University has an independent office.) I will treat all requests seriously and with confidentiality, and will seek to make accommodations within my abilities and reason. At the same time, you too owe it to your fellow students to treat them with respect regardless of their background and identity. Do not stand in the way of anyone's well-being.

Schedule

You are not required to complete Mair's "Practice" exercises. Worksheets printed in regular weight are informational aids, requiring no action on your part, though I recommend you read them. Worksheets printed in **boldface** are exercises whose solutions we'll discuss collectively in the week for which they are listed. Don't submit your answers in writing; just bring them to class for discussion.

wk	date	topic	reading	worksheets to read/prepare (bold):
1	30 Oct	Introduction		
2	6 Nov	Phonetics and Phonology	Mair chs. 1–2 (32 pp.)	
3	13 Nov	Morphology and Word Formation	Mair ch. 3 (17 pp.)	Bound Morphemes; **Phonetic Description**
4	20 Nov	Grammar and Syntax I	Mair chs. 4–5 (27 pp.)	Terminology; **Morphology** (Modern English only)
5	27 Nov	Grammar and Syntax II	O'Grady ch. 5 (starting at §5.1.2; 39 pp.)	**Clause Analysis**
6	4 Dec	Language Change	Barber ch. 2 (25 pp.) (= ch. 1 of Barber³)	**Tree Diagrams**
7	11 Dec	Semantics and Lexicology	Mair ch. 6 (15 pp.); Hughes (11 pp.)	**Cognates & sound changes I**
8	18 Dec	Indo-European and Germanic	Barber chs. 3–4 (47 pp.) (= ch. 2 of Barber³)	**Semantic Change**; **Birthday Words**
9	8 Jan	Old English	Barber ch. 5 (32 pp.) (= ch. 3 of Barber³)	**Cognates & sound changes II**
10	15 Jan	Languages in Contact	Townend (25 pp.)	Summary of Sound Changes to 1000; **Old English Sound Changes**; **Paternoster I**
11	22 Jan	Middle English	Barber chs. 6–7 (48 pp.) (= ch. 4 of Barber³)	Summary of Sound Changes to 1350; **Paternoster II**
12	29 Jan	Early Modern English	Barber ch. 8 (26 pp.)	**Paternoster III**
13	5 Feb	Natural Language Processing	Real Python Podcast ep. 119 (59m, but at least 10:24–34:07)	**Language Identification**; and experiment with books.google.com/ngrams
14	12 Feb	Philology and Medieval Studies		*N*-Grams
	26 Feb	EXAM at 4 sharp in MZG 1.116		

Bibliography

Barber, Charles, Joan C. Beal, and Philip A. Shaw. *The English Language: A Historical Introduction.* 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

———. *The English Language: A Historical Introduction.* 3rd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2025.

Hughes, Geoffrey. "A History of the English Lexicon." In *A Companion to the History of the English Language*, edited by Haruka Momma and Michael Matto, 69–80. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2008.

Mair, Christian. *English Linguistics: An Introduction.* 4th ed. bachelor-wissen. Tübingen: Narr Francke Attempto, 2022.

O'Grady, William, and John Archibald, eds. *Contemporary Linguistics: An Introduction.* 7th ed. Boston: Macmillan, 2017.

Townend, Matthew. "Contact and Conflicts: Latin, Norse, and French." In *The Oxford History of English*, edited by Lynda Mugglestone, 61–85. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.