

Grammar and Usage
English 280, Spring 2008
Tu Th 9:30-10:45 (REND 211)

Dr. Thomas Klein
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Office hours: M W 10:30-12:00;
T 12:30-1:30 (Rendezvous Court)

“The question is,” said Alice, “whether you can make words mean so many
different things.”
“The question is,” said Humpty Dumpty, “which is to be master, that’s all.”
--Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass*

When I tell people that I am an English professor, the usual reaction is a groan. “Ooh—I’d better watch my grammar,” they say. If you have ever groaned (or been groaned at), this course is for you. This course intends to give you the tools to make informed decisions about your own written grammar and usage—“to be master,” as H. D. says.

Our study of Rodby & Winterowd’s *The Uses of Grammar* will develop our conscious understanding of the structures underlying the language we use everyday. Our sense of structure—which should appeal to the logical and analytical parts of our brains—will enable us to analyze more deeply issues of grammar. At the same time, our discussion and reading of popular (!) usage books—Lynn Truss’s *Eats, Shoots and Leaves* and Strunk & White’s *Elements of Style*—will bring us into the social realm of language, where questions about correctness, formality and elegance inevitably arise.

We will try to get at the heart of problems of grammar and usage, from misplaced commas and apostrophes, to old bugbears like split infinitives and dangling prepositions. But we will also try to explain why people feel so anxious about their mother tongue, and what constitutes a genuine problem, and what does not. The backbone of grammar is our own intuitive sense of what is correct—so I’m hoping for lots of vigorous debate.

Required Readings:

Judith Rodby & W. Ross Winterowd, *The Uses of Grammar* (Oxford, 2005)
Lee Strunk & E.B. White, Maira Kalman *The Elements of Style, Illustrated*, (Penguin, London, 2005).
Lynne Truss, *Eats, Shoots, and Leaves: The Zero Tolerance Approach to Punctuation* (Gotham Books, 2006).

Course Grade Components:

30%	First and Second Tests	10%	Moodle Forum and any Quizzes
15%	Review of <i>Eats, Shoots and Leaves</i>	10%	Class Participation
15%	Notes on <i>Elements of Style</i>	20%	Final Exam (Third Test)

Graded Work: Papers are due at the beginning of the class assigned. Unless you talk to me in advance of the day that a paper is due, a late paper will lose 5% for every week day it is not turned in. Quizzes, tests, and forum postings exams cannot normally be made up. I will do my best to return graded work to you within two weeks.

Participation & Attendance: Students who show up to class having read the material and ready to discuss it *will receive high marks for class participation*. You needn't talk every class but you ought to convey your engagement.

It is reasonable to miss a few classes due to illness, weddings, wakeful kids, elk season, angst. However, *missing more than three classes* seems to this instructor excessive, so that's when it begins to tell on your participation grade by 10% per missed class, and missing more than six may be grounds for failure.

Forum Postings: Part of the course grade (10%) will come from less formal postings to forum questions on the course Moodle website. Some of these will simply be for credit—later assignments may be graded.

E-mail accounts: I will have occasion to contact the class regarding assignments, changes in the schedule, and so on. You therefore ought to maintain and check regularly an ISU e-mail account, or at least have messages forwarded to your other account.

Running the class: Please remember to turn off your cell phone. Students sometimes bring friends or children to class. If you do, please ensure that they will not be disruptive. If you use a laptop, please do not check your e-mail or the internet during class.

Office Hours: The work of the course promises to be wide-ranging and challenging, and I encourage you to stop by if you have questions or concerns—I'll be glad to see you, and will do my best to help. I am happy to meet at other times, preferably by appointment. Since my office is far from the classroom, I will also be sitting in the central court of Rendezvous for an hour on Tuesdays.

Plagiarism: The penalty for plagiarism is up to the instructor, but in my classes usually the first offense will lead to an F (0%) for that particular paper, and the second failure in the class. If I encounter a plagiarized passage or paper, I will usually attempt to contact you to discuss what happened (see "E-mail accounts"). If I am not able to contact you, I will simply proceed with the grading scheme described above.

Message from ADA Disabilities & Resource Center: Our program is committed to helping all students achieve their potential. If you have a disability or think you may have (learning, psychiatric, hearing, visual, or other) which may need an accommodation, please contact us in Gravely Hall, Room 123, 282-3599, as early as possible.

English 280 Schedule—subject as always to revision in light of actual events.

Week 1

T Jan 15 Introduction

R Jan 17 Survey of Knowledge

Week 2

By noon on Monday—respond to Forum Discussion 1 on Moodle[†]

T Jan 22 read Judith Rodby & W. Ross Winterowd, *The Uses of Grammar*, Ch.1, “The Uses of Grammar,” pp. 1-13 (ideas about where grammar comes from)

R Jan 24 read Rodby & Winterowd, Ch. 2, “Getting Started: Some Important Concepts,” pp. 14-29 (grammaticality, subject & predicate, parts of speech)
also prepare Ex. 2.2 for class* (p. 21)

Week 3

By noon on Monday—respond to Forum Discussion 2

T Jan 29 read Ch. 3, “The Forms of Words: Morphology” & Ch. 4 “Basic Sentence Types”, pp. 30-42 (sources of English words, classifying sentences)
also prepare Ex. 4.1 for class (p. 39)*

R Jan 31 read Ch. 5, “Verbs: Tense, Auxiliary Verbs, and Modals,” pp. 43-51 (defining verbs)
also prepare Ex. 5.1 for class (p. 50)*

Week 4

By noon on Monday—respond to Forum Discussion 3

T Feb 5 read Ch. 5 cont., pp. 52-63 (tense, auxiliaries, modal verbs)
also prepare Ex. 5.2 & 5.3 for class (pp. 57, 61)*

R Feb 7 read Ch. 17, “Using Grammar,” pp. 250-260 (questions about correctness; levels of usage)

Week 5

T Feb 12 **First Test**

R Feb 14 read Lynn Truss, *Eats, Shoots & Leaves*, from preface up through “That’ll Do, Comma” (pp. xvii-102)

[†] Questions for forum discussions will be posted on the course Moodle site on the preceding Thursday.

* We will go over the exercises in class. While these will not be collected, your preparation for them will be reflected in your participation grade, and the tests will be drawn directly from them.

Week 6

- T Feb 19 read Truss to the end (pp. 103-204); **Truss Review Due**
- R Feb 21 read Ch. 6, "Verbs: Perfect and Progressive Aspect," pp. 64-72
also prepare "For Discussion," p. 70, Ex. 6.2 & 6.3 for class* (pp. 70, 71)

Week 7

By noon on Monday—respond to Forum Discussion 4

- T Feb 26 read Ch. 6 cont., pp. 72-77 (auxiliaries as a defining feature of verbs)
also prepare Ex. 6.4 & 6.5 for class* (pp. 73, 75)
- R Feb 28 read Ch. 7, "Negative, Interrogative, Imperative, Passive," pp. 78-86
also prepare Ex. 7.2, Challenger, & 7.3 for class* (p. 85)

Week 8

By noon on Monday—respond to Forum Discussion 5

- T Mar 4 read Ch. 7 cont., pp. 86-93 (passive voice in verbs, stative verbs)
also prepare Ex. 7.4 for class* (pp. 90-91)
- R Mar 6 read Ch. 8, "Nominals: Nouns and Noun Phrases, Nonfinite verbs," pp. 94-105 (means
of defining nouns, common and proper nouns)
also prepare Ex. 8.1 for class* (p. 103)

Week 9

By noon on Monday—respond to Forum Discussion 6

- T Mar 11 read Ch. 8 cont., pp. 105-118 (singular and plural, count and non-count, present
participles, gerunds, infinitives as nouns)
also prepare Ex. 8.4 and passage B.1. for class* (pp. 115, 117)
- R Mar 13 read Ch. 9, "Nominals: Pronouns," pp. 119-127 (cases, compound personal pronouns)
also prepare Ex. 9.1 for class* (p. 121)

Week 10

- T Mar 18 read Ch. 9 cont., pp. 128-137 (reciprocal, demonstrative, interrogative, indefinite, relative
pronouns; *it* as a slot filler)
also prepare Passage for Analysis for class* (p. 136)
- R Mar 20 **Second Test**

Spring Break Mar 20-28

Week 11

- T Apr 1 read William Strunk & E.B. White, *The Elements of Style*, pp. 1-62
- R Apr 3 conclude Strunk & White (pp. 63-124); **Strunk & White Notes Due**

Week 12

- T Apr 8 read Ch. 10, "Nominals: Noun Clauses," pp. 138-147 (clauses, indefinite relative pronouns)
also prepare Ex. 10.1 & 10.2 for class* (pp. 140, 144)
- R Apr 10 read Ch. 10 cont., pp. 148-154 (words used to introduce noun clauses, clauses within clauses)
also prepare Ex. 10.4 for class* (p. 150)

Week 13

- T Apr 15 read Ch. 11, "Adjectivals: Adjectives, Nouns, Prepositional Phrases," pp. 155-162
(definition of adjectives, adjectives in sentences)
also prepare Ex. 11.1 for class* (p. 159)
- R Apr 17 read Ch. 11 cont., pp. 163-169 (other adjectivals, interrogative adjectives); also scan Ch. 12, "Adjectivals: Clauses," (170-187)
also prepare Ex. 11.5 for class* (p. 165)

Week 14

- T Apr 22 read Ch. 13, "Adverbials: Adverbs, Prepositional Phrases, Nouns," pp. 188-200 also
prepare Ex. 13.1 & 13.3 for class* (pp. 191, 196)
- R Apr 24 read Ch. 14, "Adverbials: Clauses and Adverbial Conjunctions," pp. 201-212
also prepare Ex. 14.2 for class* (p. 205)

Week 15

- T Apr 29 Review
- R May 1 Review
- R May 8 7:30-9:30 a.m. **Final Exam** (Third Test)