

Ling 390: History of English

The College of Staten Island, CUNY

Fall 2025

Day/Time: Mondays, 6:30–9:50pm
Room: 2N 108
Website: <https://ling390fall25.commonscsi.cuny.edu/>

Instructor: Joseph Pentangelo
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- Please don't send emails to "cix.csi.cuny.edu" — I won't see them.
- Please include "Ling 390" in the subject of any emails for this class.

Office Hours: Mondays, 5:30–6:30pm, 2S-225 (in-person)
Email me to set up remote office hours.

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. NOTE: Not open to students who have already completed ENL 425. Enrollment Requirements: Prerequisites: ENG151. Requirement Designation: Regular Liberal Arts.

I. Requirements

I.1. Readings

The principal textbook for this course is *The Origins and Development of the English Language*, 6th edition, by the late John Algeo. Other texts are listed on the course calendar. Expect to read about 20 to 40 pages per week in this class.

In addition to the textbook, you will be reading works from four different stages of the English language—Old English, Middle English, Early Modern English, and Modern English. All readings will be made available for you to download on the course website.

I.2. Grading

Your grade breakdown is as follows:

- Participation: 30%
- Quizzes: 20%
- Midterm: 25%
- Final: 25%

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

I.2.1. Participation

Active and engaged participation is essential. You are expected to attend class regularly and participate in class discussions and in-class exercises. It is essential that you do the readings in order to participate actively in class discussions. Participation is worth a full 30% of your overall grade, so be sure to participate substantively at least every other week.

1.2.2. *Quizzes*

There will be a total of 12 quizzes, one given at the start of each class, on subject matter related to the reading due that day. Each quiz is graded out of a maximum of 2 points (i.e. 2% of your overall grade). The two lowest-scoring quizzes will be dropped, giving you a possible maximum of 20 points for your quiz grade. Quizzes are closed book.

1.2.3. *Exams*

There will be two exams: a midterm and a final. Each of these will be graded out of a maximum of 25 points (i.e. 25% of your overall grade), adding up to 50% in total. The midterm will cover materials relating to Old and Middle English, and the final will cover materials relating to Early Modern and Modern English. The final is not cumulative.

Both exams are open book for any printed materials (including readings, slides, your notebook, textbook, etc.), but you may not use your cellphone, laptop, or any device with internet connectivity during either exam. You also may not share printed materials with others in the class.

2. Policies

2.1. *Reading*

Expect to read between 20–40 pages (or about 30 minutes to two hours, depending on your reading speed) before each week's class. You are required to do all of the assigned readings. You will be quizzed on each reading at the start of class, and your participation grade depends upon you having read what you were assigned.

2.2. *Attendance*

You are expected to attend each class meeting. If you know that you will have to miss a class (due to illness, family emergency, etc.), let me know ahead of time or as soon as possible and you'll be granted an excused absence. With an excused absence, you will be able to make up that day's missed quiz during my office hour.

In the case of an unexcused absence, your quiz grade for that day will be a 0. Three or more unexcused absences will lead to a 0 for your participation grade in the course (meaning that the highest you can get in the class, if you do perfectly on everything else, would be a C).

In the case of any absence, excused or otherwise, you are responsible for doing any missed readings and being caught up on course materials.

2.3. *Artificial Intelligence*

The use of ChatGPT or similar artificial intelligence software to help you understand the reading materials is permitted. The use of this technology to generate your submission for academic work, including your responses to quizzes or exams, is completely prohibited and will result in a grade of 0 for the assignment. A second offense will lead to an F in the class.

2.4. *Academic Integrity, Plagiarism, and Cheating*

In short, there is a zero-tolerance policy for plagiarism or cheating. You are referred to the College of Staten Island's Academic Integrity Policy, found here:

<https://www.cuny.edu/about/administration/offices/legal-affairs/policies-resources/academic-integrity-policy/>

2.5. *Statement on Accommodations for Students with Disabilities*

You are referred to the CUNY Procedures for Implementing Reasonable Accommodations and Academic Adjustments, found here: <https://www.cuny.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/page->

[assets/about/administration/offices/legal-affairs/policies-resources/reasonable-accommodations-and-academic-adjustments/Reasonable-Accommodations-and-Academic-Adjustments-2016.pdf](#)

3. Course Calendar

On the below calendar, readings are to be done *before* the class in whose row they're listed. (For example, you should read pp.78–86 in John Algeo's textbook before class on September 15th.)

Readings in the calendar are abbreviated by author's name as follows:

- Algeo = *The Origins and Development of the English Language*, 6th ed. (2005) by John Algeo.
- Cockayne = *Leechdoms, Wortcunning, and Starcraft of Early England*, vol. 2 (1865) edited by Thomas Oswald Cockayne.
- Chaucer = *The Canterbury Tales* (c.1400) by Geoffrey Chaucer, digital edition on Harvard's Geoffrey Chaucer website.
- Hariot = *A briefe and true report of the new found land of Virginia* (1588) by Thomas Hariot.
- Jorden = *A briefe discourse of a disease called the suffocation of the mother* (1603) by Edward Jorden.
- Kempe = *The Book of Margery Kempe* (c.1436) by Margery Kempe.
- Webster = *An American Dictionary of the English Language* (1828) by Samuel Webster.

No.	Date	Topic	Quiz	Reading
1	September 8 th	Course introduction		
2	September 15 th	Old English	1	Read pp.78–86 in Algeo.
No classes on September 22 nd .				
3	September 29 th	Old English	2	Read pp.86–96 in Algeo and approx. 10 pages in Cockayne (to be assigned by group in class).
4	October 6 th	Old English	3	Read pp.96–108 in Algeo and approx. 10 pages in Cockayne (to be assigned by group in class).
5	October 14 th (Tuesday)	Middle English	4	Read pp.112–119 in Algeo and lines 1–162 in Chaucer's General Prologue.
6	October 24 th (Friday)	Middle English	5	Read pp.119–128 in Algeo and a selection from Chaucer (to be assigned by group in class).
7	October 27 th	Middle English	6	Read pp.128–136 in Algeo and lines 130–188 from Kempe.
8	November 3 rd	Midterm		Study!
9	November 10 th	Early Modern English	7	Read pp.139–152 in Algeo and ten pages of Hariot (to be assigned by group in class).
10	November 17 th	Early Modern English	8	Read pp.156–170 in Algeo and Cap. 1 and 2 in Jorden (16 pp.)
11	November 24 th	Early Modern English	9	Read pp.170–179 in Algeo and approx. 10 pages of Jorden (to be assigned by group in class).
12	December 1 st	Modern English	10	Read pp.181–193 in Algeo and selections from Webster.

13	December 8 th	Modern English	11	Read pp.193–202 in Algeo and selections from Webster.
14	December 15 th	Modern English	12	Selections of Modern English prose or poetry of your choice, to be brought into class to share.
15	December 22 nd	Final		Study!