

Independent Study:

The Parts We Speak: A Taxonomy of English Grammar in Use

2 Units (This independent study satisfies the grammar requirement of the English and Writing Minor)

Course Objectives:

If the English language is comprised of parts of speech, we'll scrutinize those parts. But since English is—like all modern languages—a system *in use*, we'll complement our study in the textbook with investigation of grammar as it is written (and spoken). The course is a systematic (but not exhaustive) study of Modern English Grammar to cover these topics (among others):

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|---------------------------------|------------------------|
| • Sentences | • Adjectives & Adverbs |
| • Fragments, Splices, & Run-Ons | • Pronouns |
| • Words | • Agreements |
| • Nouns | • Phrases |
| • Verbs | • Clauses |
| • Verbals | • Punctuation |

Among these classes, we'll investigate some of their species. In the course of this investigation, we'll learn the “rules” of usage but also discover where the rules become questions of style.

Text:

Gordon, Karen Elizabeth. *The Deluxe Transitive Vampire: The Ultimate Handbook of Grammar for the Innocent, the Eager, and the Doomed*. New York: Pantheon, 1993.

Meetings:

We'll meet once a week, each week on a different topic/part of speech. Prior to each meeting, you should read the corresponding chapter (do it *early* in the week) and collect some specimens of these parts of speech in your notebook. Our meetings will involve review of the topic, some exercises, and discussion of your notebook entries. Our week 1 meeting will cover logistics. No meeting week 10 (instructor out of town). Week 15 you will present your semester project. No meeting week 16. *Do not miss any of our meetings.*

Annotated Notebook:

You'll keep an ongoing annotated notebook in which you will collect and comment on bits and pieces of grammar that this course will teach you to notice. Think of three types of specimens:

! Spectacular Uses

? Questions of Usage

Errors of Usage

Find your material *anywhere*: in your textbooks, in conversations, in the media, on posters, online, in your own writing.

Semester Project:

To complete the semester you'll write an essay (of at least 5 pages) that argues the virtues of a particular type of grammar. It might advocate for more use of an ignored aspect of grammar or it might celebrate a ubiquitous but unconsidered part of speech. Your essay should be well evidenced with examples, and in this your Notebook—well-filled throughout the semester—is your greatest resource.

Evaluation:

Meetings/Discussion/Exercises 40%

Notebook 30%

Semester Project 30%