SYLLABUS FOR CLASSICS 120 (#20728)
ENGLISH WORDS FROM LATIN & GREEK

Spring 2015 Semester, San Diego State University
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1) COURSE DESCRIPTION

If you wish to increase your English vocabulary, you're in the right place. Since nearly 80% of the words we use are derived from Latin and Greek elements (prefixes, suffixes, and roots), there is no better way to compile a workable vocabulary than to learn these elements, for they enable us not only to improve our ability to understand what we read but also to express ourselves well through speaking and writing.

In this course, however, we're going to do more than merely memorize long lists of words, which results in our retaining a relatively small percentage of the words we've acquired in this manner. Rather, we're going to approach vocabulary acquisition from the ground up, learning building-blocks that enable us to "recognize" words we may never have encountered before. Once we've acquired a sufficient store of such building-blocks, it's amazing how many words we realize we already know before even knowing them yet!

But acquiring word-forms can be a tedious process if approached haphazardly, by merely memorizing long lists of roots. Thus, in this course we will adopt a thematic approach to learning word-roots, breaking them down into real-world categories to understand them better (Physical World, Mental World, Number, Actions, and Qualities). This adds a kind of narrative dimension to our etymological project, so that the roots (and, by extension, the words built from the roots) we learn over the course of the semester will arise in logical fashion, and by the end of the course our newly acquired inventory of word-roots will read like a kind of story we've understood and lived. Who said learning vocabulary can't be fun?

2) INTERNET COMPONENT

We’ll be making frequent use of the Internet, and in particular Blackboard and e-mail, to carry out various activities necessary for conducting this course. For that reason, to participate in it you must have access to the Internet (either on- or off-campus) and must check your e-mail at least once a day (in case I make changes or clarifications or the like) and your Blackboard account at least a few times a week or whenever an e-mail message I send you urges you to log onto it (for more on the integral role Blackboard will play in this course, see ASSIGNMENTS below). Then again, these days isn't requiring you to have regular Internet access like requiring you to breathe?

"This course is one of nine courses that you will take in General Education Foundations. Foundations courses cultivate skills in reading, writing, research, communication, computation, information literacy, and use of technology. They furthermore introduce you to basic concepts, theories and approaches in a variety of disciplines in order to provide the intellectual breadth necessary to help you integrate the more specialized knowledge gathered in your major area of study into a broader world picture."

H1-H4: “This course is one of four Foundations courses that you will take in the area of Humanities and Fine Arts. Upon completing of this area of Foundations, you will be able to:
1) analyze written, visual, or performed texts in the humanities and fine arts with sensitivity to their diverse cultural contexts and historical moments;
2) describe various aesthetic and other value systems and the ways they are communicated across time and cultures;
3) identify issues in the humanities that have personal and global relevance;
4) demonstrate the ability to approach complex problems and ask complex questions drawing upon knowledge of the humanities.”
3) OBJECTIVES FOR THIS COURSE

You will acquire a knowledge of 1) the most essential word-forms from ancient Greek and Latin, 2) hundreds of English words derived from these ancient Greek and Latin word-forms, and 3) the conceptual processes through which these word-forms were utilized to construct the English words built from them. On the two exams and five quizzes administered during the semester, you will be expected to provide, with a high rate of accuracy, the definitions of the English words encountered in classroom lectures and discussions as well as the meanings of the word-forms they were built from.

4) CLASS FORMAT

We’ll rely on both lectures (Powerpoint and old school) and classroom discussions to come to terms with the English words, and the Latin and Greek components they’re built from, that we learn in class. I expect you to come to class prepared, which means you’ve compiled the portion of your notebook pertaining to the previous week’s lesson and reviewed it BEFORE YOU COME TO CLASS (see item 2 under section 6 [ASSIGNMENTS/GRADING] below for information about this notebook you’ll be keeping throughout the semester and handing in at the end of it).

5) REQUIRED READING

Although I welcome and encourage as much outside reading as you’d like to do to help you learn the material we cover in class and in our readings (for example, Wikipedia tends to do a pretty good job of providing you with background information about the figures and events we’ll be encountering in our readings), the only reading you will be expected to do before attending class each week is to review the portion of your class notebook you prepared from the week before so you’re equipped to do well should there be a quiz on the day in question (see item 2 under the “ASSIGNMENTS/GRADING” section below), as well as to retain the material for the next exam and to consolidate what you learn in class so it remains with you once the semester is over. As you’ll see in the next section (“ASSIGNMENTS/GRADING”), you’ll be compiling this notebook and will hand it in for credit at the end of the semester. So think of it as a kind of reverse textbook, a textbook you yourself will create and, hopefully, take with you into your post-college life and add to when you find new words you want to add to it. This is the sort of organic, homemade textbook most appropriate for a class of this sort, and I hope you’ll take pride in it and see the point in creating it as you fill it up with the hundreds of word-forms and words you'll be adding to it over the course of the semester. If you must be absent on a given day, have a friend take notes for you: although I will post on Blackboard each week a list of the word-forms and words we covered in the previous week, it will be less comprehensive than the lecture it corresponds to and the class discussion about the various topics we discussed.

6) ASSIGNMENTS/GRADING

Your grade for this course will be based primarily on your ability to demonstrate a mastery of objective information you’ve acquired from the lectures you’ve attended and discussions you’ve participated in throughout the semester. Due to the relatively small size of our class, we will have occasion to discuss many of the word-forms, words, and corresponding concepts that we’ll be covering in class, for it’s through experience with words rather than merely memorizing lists that we retain the words in our memory-bank for longer than the semester they’re learned in. To reflect the priority I give to this sort of class experience, 10% of your grade will consist of participation, as is normally the case in language courses. If you're planning on getting by in this course without attending class, let me assure you from the outset that it's highly unlikely you'll do very well, due to this participation component as well as the fact that if you don't come to class you'll have to depend on nothing more than lists of words to study from, which is much more difficult than relying on the lists to remind you of words you've already encountered in class, often quite extensively. Fair warning.
Here’s the breakdown:

1) 2 non-cumulative exams (including the Final) each worth 25% of your total grade and requiring both passive and active recall of the vocabulary you’ve learned in class in the following manner:

Passive: I provide you with a sentence containing a vocabulary word and ask you to a) define the word (“dictionary meaning”), b) break it down into its etymological elements, 3) define its etymological elements, and 4) explain how its etymological elements give it its meaning.

Active: I provide you with a sentence missing one specific word and you produce it. I provide you with the word's etymology (i.e., affix(es] and root(s]) and you recall the word via its etymology.

2) You'll keep a notebook throughout the semester which you'll bring to class EACH DAY and use to a) record ALL of the word-elements and words we learn in class, and (more importantly for your grade) b) construct a sentence using twenty of the words we learn in class each week (you may want to do three sentences a day, to spread out your work-load), so that by the end of the semester you will have constructed 260 sentences in this manner (there are 15 class-sessions in the semester, minus the first day of class and the day of the midterm, leaving 13 days x 20 sentences a day = 260 sentences). This notebook, which must be in hardcopy (i.e., not on disk or hard-drive or Blackboard, etc.) and which you will hand in on May 5, the day of the Final Exam, will be worth another 15% of your total course grade.

3) 25% of your grade will consist of weekly quizzes, which will include five questions each, requiring passive and/or active recall of the previous week's information. The format will be similar to that found on the exams (see item 1 above)

4) Last but not least, the remaining 10% of your grade will consist of participation, the effort you put into contributing to class, especially in discussions about how words mean what they do based on their etymological components (which usually involves some degree of subjectivity). I don't normally include participation in my grading, but this course (and language courses in general) cries out for it, for it's primarily by using the words we learn in class that our experience with them translates into the sort of understanding of them that leads us to retain them, not just for the semester in question, but for the rest of our lives as English readers, speakers, and writers. Word to the wise: this does not mean that the more you talk in class, the better your participation grade will be: quality will be more important than quantity in this respect. But rest assured: if you come to class regularly and contribute regularly to our discussions about the word-elements and words we learn, you should receive an easy "A" on this portion of your course grade.

So there it is: that makes 100%. Obviously (and predictably) the exams will weigh most heavily in your final grade, but by doing well in the other areas of the course you'll compensate for weaknesses on one or more exams. But keep in mind: the ultimate goal here is to learn; think of doing well on the exams and in other course assignments, not as your main motivation for doing well in class, but as a reward for doing well, as icing on the cake. It's the doing well itself that will benefit you in more than a grade-getting way: it will be reflected in your improved vocabulary and understanding of how words mean what they do that will, if you apply yourself in class, remain with you for the rest of your life!

7) STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES
If you are a student with a disability and believe you will need accommodations for this class, it is your responsibility to contact Student Disability Services at (619) 594-6473. To avoid any delay in the receipt of your accommodations, you should contact Student Disability Services as soon as possible. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive, and that accommodations based upon disability cannot be provided until you have presented your instructor with an accommodation letter from Student Disability Services. Your cooperation is appreciated.

8) ACADEMIC HONESTY
The University adheres to a strict policy regarding cheating and plagiarism. These activities will not be tolerated in this class. Become familiar with the policy
Any cheating or plagiarism will result in failing this class and a disciplinary review by Student Affairs. Examples of Plagiarism include but are not limited to:

- Using sources verbatim or paraphrasing without giving proper attribution (this can include phrases, sentences, paragraphs and/or pages of work)
- Copying and pasting work from an online or offline source directly and calling it your own
- Using information you find from an online or offline source without giving the author credit
- Replacing words or phrases from another source and inserting your own words or phrases
- Submitting a piece of work you did for one class to another class

If you have questions on what is plagiarism, please consult the policy (http://www.sa.sdsu.edu/srr/conduct1.html) and this helpful guide from the Library: (http://infodome.sdsu.edu/infolit/exploratorium/Standard_5/plagiarism.pdf)

9) CLASS SCHEDULE

**Tuesday, January 27**

LESSON ONE: roots (Sea, Water, Human, Body, Faith, Wisdom, Cause, First, Self, Push, Throw, Pull, Well/Good, Pleasing, New)

**Tuesday, February 3**

LESSON TWO: Affixes (Prefixes/Suffixes)

**Tuesday, February 10**

LESSON THREE: roots (God, Earth, Seed, See, Color, Watch, Number, Measure, Time, Lie, Stand, Take, Straight, Hate, Strong)

**Tuesday, February 17**

LESSON FOUR: roots (Birth, Life, Change, Watch, Hear, Touch, Time, Year, Bear, Hold, Carry, Chance, Bad, Heavy)

**Tuesday, February 24**

LESSON FIVE: roots (Earth, Place, Flint, Dust, Think, Power to know and think, Remember, Part/Share, More, Carry, Take, Have, Other, Like/Resembling, Bitter/Sour/Sharp)

**Tuesday, March 3**

LESSON SIX: roots (Thread, Sun, Fire, Smoke, Ask/Beg, Know, Bear Witness, Half/Middle/Between/Halfway, Put, Make, Fix, Small/Minute, Solid, Free)

**Tuesday, March 10**

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1 I reserve the right to change anything in this schedule—or, for that matter, in this syllabus as a whole—during the semester for whatever reason. If I do so, I’ll be sure to inform you of it via e-mail, Blackboard announcement, and in class at least twice, so you can make the appropriate changes to this syllabus.
MIDTERM EXAM  
Tuesday, March 17


Tuesday, March 24

LESSON EIGHT: roots (Head, Heart, Voice, Tooth, Declare/Call Out/Cry Out, Say/Declare, Speak, One and a Half, Two/Twice, Bend, Stretch, Turn, Please/Peace, Strength/Worth/Valor, Enough)

Tuesday, April 7

LESSON NINE: roots (Hand, Bone, Blood, Word, Point, Show, Declare/Warn, Two/Both, Many, Drive, Cut, Kill, Empty, Large/Excessive, Great)

Tuesday, April 14

LESSON TEN: roots (Nerve, Lung, Foot, Mother, Guard/Teach, Pledge/Answer, Create, Paint, Many/Much, All, Build, Shut, Lead, Large, False/Untrue)

Tuesday, April 21

LESSON ELEVEN: roots (Father, People, Sign/Mark/Seal, Write, Letters, All, Lead, Conquer, Send, Ball/Sphere)

Tuesday, April 28

LESSON TWELVE: roots (Race, Crowd, City, Sleep, Death, Work, Skill/Art, Rule, Power, Law, Right, Judge/Lawyer, Allow, Last, End, Step, Go, Flow, Wander, Come, Wash, New, Power)

Tuesday, May 5

FINAL EXAM (rather than on day officially designated for our Final in the “Final Exam Schedule”)