

English 3521: The American Language

Course Description

Why don't we sound like the English? By 1610, English settlers had established a permanent American colony in Jamestown, Virginia. As the British settled and reshaped America, new ways of speaking developed in the New World. By the Revolutionary War era, American English, was widely recognized as a distinct dialect. In the time since, American English diverged more and more from the English spoken across the pond.

In this course, we will examine the changing nature and variety of American English, especially in vocabulary and usage, its range, formal, informal, written, colloquial, and standard and dialectal variations. We will discuss the functions and effects of dialectal variation, and how factors such as geography, ethnicity, gender, social status, and other sociolinguistic variables contribute to variation. Adopting a multicultural perspective on the role of language in daily life, we will also explore how societal perceptions and attitudes and linguistic bias contribute to the differential valuation of American English varieties.

Textbooks:

Wolfram and Schilling-Estes. (2016) *American English*, **3rd ed.** Blackwell ISBN: 1405112662

Wolfram and Ward. (2005) *American Voices*. Blackwell. ISBN: 1405121092