

## Syllabus: The Phonology of English

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**Prerequisite:** Linguistics 200A and 201; discuss with me if you haven't had these.

### Requirements:

- For all enrollees:
  - Doing the readings.
  - Class participation
- For four-units enrollees.
  - a term paper
  - two short exercises (optional for two-unit enrollees)
  - Preliminary term paper **appointment** with me, graded credit/no credit, in which we talk about your term paper project. Due by end of 5th week. 5% of your grade, graded credit/no credit.
  - 2nd **appointment** with me, with preliminary run-through of your term paper. Please bring a handout. This should take place before the end of 10th week. 5% of your grade, graded credit/no credit.

### Description

English phonology, oddly, is underresearched. The language was at the center of the research agenda during the period of *The Sound Pattern of English*, as well as in the 1970's and 1980's with the advent of metrical and lexical phonology. Since then, English seems to have receded in importance and is understudied from the viewpoint of modern phonological research methods. The classical analysis were done on paper, without any kind of quantitative checking against corpus data. Moreover, with isolated exceptions the generalizations were not tested for their productivity using native speakers. So it makes sense to return to the study of this language: we can both reassess what was true in the classical work and perhaps also discover new phenomena. In addition, I hope that the skills practiced in the course will be useful to phonologists working on any language. Below are empirical areas and methods to be covered (tentative).

### Topics

**The system of phonemes and allophones.** Dialectal variation and emergent "semiphonemes" (Paul Kiparsky, Timothy Vance); consonant allophones marching in lockstep according to foot structure (Dan Kahn, Lisa Selkirk).

**Segmental phonotactics.** Classical work (Bloomfield, Selkirk); searching for new generalizations (Michael Hammond, Hayes/Colin Wilson/James White).

**The stress system.** Checking the classical generalizations from *SPE* and Liberman/Prince, gradient paradigm uniformity (Joe Pater), effects of nonstandard syllable weight (Deborah Nanni, Michael Kelly, Kevin Ryan)

**Morphology and the “Level I/Level II” contrast.** Classical work of *SPE* and Kiparsky, Donca Steriade’s discovery of lexical conservatism in *-able* adjectives, the relationship of levels to productivity.

**Segmental alternations:** Vowel Shift, Trisyllabic Shortening, Velar Softening and their productivity (John Ohala, R. Cena, Janet Pierrehumbert). The minor alternations in strong verbs (Steven Pinker, Albright/Hayes).

**Methods:** corpus grooming; checking generalizations with the corpus; experiments to test productivity, particularly using the Mechanical Turk