



Honors 300: When Bad Words Happen to Good People: A Study of Swears, Slang, Slurs, and other Syntactical Sins

Course Information

Course Identification:	Honors 300: When Bad Words Happen to Good People
Number of Credits:	4.0 credits
Delivery Mode:	Face to face
Course Schedule:	MW 2:00-3:15, Blair 115

Faculty

Professor:	Mike Mattison, Ph.D. Writing Center (Library)/Recitation Hall 208 mmattison@wittenberg.edu , 937-327-7922 Drop-In Hours: Tuesday and Friday, 9:00-11:00 (Writing Center), and by appointment. https://wittenberg.mywconline.com/
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Course Description

How does a swear word become a swear word? Does it start out decent and then take a wrong turn, or was it notorious from the start? And why do we react so strongly to a certain grouping of letters? It's just a word, isn't it? This class will embark on a historical, cultural, and etymological journey to discover how our dirty words got that way, and what effect they can have on us, our health, and our relationships. This class will (not surprisingly) contain mature language and themes.¹

Course Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, you should be able to:

1. Describe the history of language categorized as swear words and slurs.
2. Artibus course supports both of the following LOs for the

Connections Curriculum:

LEARNING OUTCOME 2 (LO2)

Students will write effectively, considering audience and purpose

LEARNING OUTCOME 10 (LO10)

Students will analyze problems, issues, or representations using knowleg0 ions using knowleg0 ions usione(s)-5(u



Required Textbooks and Materials

Adams, Michael.



Lexical Investigation 30%

For your final project, you will choose some aspect of language use that intrigues you – mostly likely it might start with an interest in a single word, but we can discuss possibilities for topics in class. Then, you will need to research that area of interest, eventually composing a ~2000 word article written for a general audience (our writing style will likely follow that of the authors we read this term, although I am open to other possibilities).

You will need to combine a range of research activities for this assignment, and consider the perspectives of different constituencies: students, faculty, and administrators. Though you might be investigating a question of language in general, it should be grounded in our context here at Witt (or in Springfield, or in your own family).

We will talk more in class about this assignment and the criteria, but it will be scaffolded and include drafts as well as an annotated bibliography. (CO 2, 3)

Peer Response 10%

For both the Swearing Profile and the Lexical Investigation assignments, you will be asked to provide detailed feedback to your peers. (LO2)

Grades

Are you graded on what you know? What you learned? How well you complete assignments? All of the above? Gr



Technology

Technology can be an asset, but also a distraction. Do not let your phone or other devices distract you

keeping you (or others) from

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Attendance

Quite simply, you are expected to be in class (our class time accounts for less than 1.5% of your week). If you cannot make it to class, let me know as soon as possible. In a course like this, more than two absences would be a cause to worry, and we should sit and have a conversation.

We will also have two scheduled conferences this term (one of which might be a group conference) you can, though, always schedule a time to meet with me.

Course Outline, Schedule, and Due Dates

Readings are in italics; assignments in bold.

M=Moodle

<i>Date</i>	<i>What to Do</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>What to Do</i>
Aug 28	Offensive Material Pinker on Swearing (M)	Aug 30	Pinker, Ch. 7 (handout) Read, (M) The Science of Swearing (M) Letter of Expectations (9/1)
Sept 4	No Class: Labor Day Benefits of Swearing (M) Does Swearing Make You Likeable? (M)	Sept 6	All Introductions: Adams Bergin McWhorter Mohr Vingerhoets (M)
Sept 11	Mohr, Ch. 1-2	Sept 13	Mohr, Ch. 3-4
Sept 18	Mohr, Ch. 5-6	Sept 20	Early Midterm (9/22)
Sept 25	Adams, Ch. 1-2	Sept 27	Adams, Ch. 3
Conferences!			
Oct 2	Swearing Profile Draft	Oct 4	Swearing Profile Peer Responses
Oct 9	Adams, Ch. 4 & Coda	Oct 11	Midterm (10/13)
Oct 16	No Class: Fall Break	Oct 18	Swearing Profile Revision (10/20)
Oct 23	McWhorter Interview (M) McWhorter, Ch. 1-3		



Oct 30	McWhorter, Ch. 7-9	Nov 1	Lexical Investigation (Annotated) List of Sources
Nov 6	Bergen, Ch. 1-3	Nov 8	Bergen, Ch. 4-5
Nov 13	Bergen, Ch. 6-8	Nov 15	Bergen, Ch. 9-11 & Epilogue

Nov 20



Accessibility and ADA Accommodation

Wittenberg University strives to make all learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers based on a disability (including mental health, learning, chronic health, physical, hearing, vision and neurological, or temporary medical conditions, etc.), please let me know