Description of the course/Objectives:

An important practical application of linguistics involves the analysis of literary texts. The purpose of this course is to give you the tools—the basic vocabulary and methodologies of modern linguistics—to carry out linguistic analyses of poetry, drama, and prose. The tools you will acquire will allow you to address the following types of questions—and many more:

♦ Why is Hawthorne’s prose referred to as descriptive?
♦ What linguistic features distinguish Faulkner from Hemingway?
♦ What makes a poem ‘feel’ ‘soft’/’harsh’/_____(fill your own adjective)?
♦ How are authors’ world views reflected in the language they use?
♦ How does a literary dialogue reflect a ‘real’ dialogue—or not?
♦ How do we know that an author is being sarcastic?

The course covers the areas of phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, pragmatics, and discourse analysis, and we will look at samples from these areas of linguistics as they are applied to the study of literary texts. We will look at different genres and will investigate the varying linguistic manifestations of the writers’ styles. A key premise of this course is the belief that understanding the linguistic features of a text leads to a deepened understanding of the text itself.

Required texts:


Selected articles (see a separate list).
Course requirements:  

- Regular attendance, completion of all the readings and assignments, and participation in class discussions: 10%  
- Presentations of the articles in the reading packet (Distribute study questions a week before your presentation): 10%  
- Presentation of a journal article selected by you: 5%  
- Exam on Carter et al., Simpson, and the lectures: 20%  
- A 200-word research paper abstract: 10%  
- Annotated bibliography for the research paper: 5%  
- An original, substantial research paper: 40%  

SYLLABUS (the syllabus is subject to change):

January 17: Introduction/Overview

January 24: Carter et al., Units 1: Signs and sounds  
            Carter et al., Unit 2: Words and things

January 31: Carter et al., Unit 3: Sentences and structures  
            Carter et al., Unit 4: Text and context: Written discourse

February 7: Carter et al., Unit 5: Text and context: Spoken discourse

February 14: Simpson, Introduction: Key concepts in stylistics (pp 1-48)  
             Simpson, Development: Doing stylistics (pp 49-96))

February 21: Manuscript research. Guest lecture by Professor Rob Adams.

February 28: Simpson, Exploration: Investigating style (pp 97-146)

March 6: Analyzing poetry. Guest lecture by Professor John Schwetman.  
         Email (for approval) your research paper topic & research question(s)  
         Simpson, Extension: Readings in stylistics (pp 147-223)

March 13: Spring break

March 20: Exam on Carter et al., Simpson, and the lectures  
          Email (for approval) the bibliographic information for the journal article you want to present.

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1 While there is no formal prerequisite, you are strongly urged to read one of the standard scholarly introductions to linguistics. Having taken either ENG 372 (Introduction to Linguistics/The English Language) or ENG 373 (English Grammar) also gives you the necessary background.
March 27  Presentation and discussion of reading packet articles.
Topic: On linguistic analysis of literature
   Jacobson
   Carter and Simpson
   Taylor and Toolan
   Fowler
   Noguchi

April 3   A 200-word research paper abstract due. Present briefly your research topic and your research question(s) in class.
Presentation and discussion of reading packet articles.
Topic: Linguistic approaches
   Rothwell
   Jucker
   O’Connell, Kowal & King

April 10  Presentation and discussion of reading packet articles.
Topic: Linguistic approaches cont.
   Östman
   Halliday
   Kennedy
   Also, read: Tan (1998). Advice on doing your stylistics essay on a dramatic text.

April 17  Presentation of journal articles selected by you.

April 24  Presentation and discussion of reading packet articles.
Topic: Genres (poetry and prose)
   Haynes
   Rodger
   Williams
   Simpson
   Toolan
   Annotated bibliography for the research paper due.

May 1   Presentation and discussion of reading packet articles.
Topic: Genres (drama)
   Culpeper, Short & Verdonk
   Short
   Cooper
   Bennison
   Freeman

May 8   Research paper presentations.

Research papers are due in hardcopies in 112 or my mailbox by 9 p.m. on the day of the final.
Grades will be filed by 9 a.m. May 19.