Latin and Greek Elements in English

Introduction to the Class

- Purpose of the Class
  - principally practical: to improve English vocabulary
    - not by memorization alone
    - but by understanding the history, development and essential components of English words
- focus on the impact of classical languages (Latin and Greek)
  - around 70% of English vocabulary
    - more than that if scientific/technical terms are included
  - in sum, a classical house built on a Germanic foundation

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Introduction to the Class

- the intended results of the class
  - to learn how to recognize the classical elements in English words
  - to be able to figure out the meaning of a word you've never seen before
    - a word from classical roots
    - and figure it out in context (i.e. a sentence)

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Introduction to the Class

- the nature of the class: lecture + practice
  - <u>lecture</u>: concepts and principles of language change
    - practical linguistics
    - e.g. assimilation of consonants, folk etymology, hybrids
  - <u>practice</u>: analysis of specific English words made up of classical elements
    - unfamiliar words, e.g. **iatraliptic** ("curing by ointment")
    - and familiar words, e.g. **consider** (to be "with the stars")
- <u>Homework</u>: preparation for in-class work
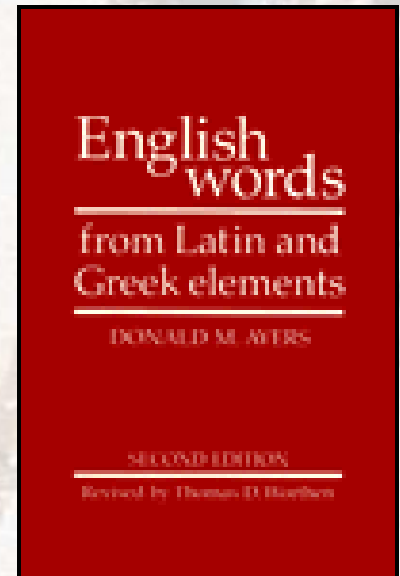 - read chapters, do exercises, memorize word elements

Latin and Greek Elements in English

Introduction to the Class

- Texts:
  - Ayers, English Words from Latin and Greek Elements (2nd edition, revised by Worthen)
  - a good dictionary, with etymologies
  - web site:
    http://www.usu.edu/markdamen/Wordpower/syllabus/coursedescription.htm

Latin and Greek Elements in English

Introduction to the Class

- <u>Grades</u>: 5 Quizzes + 2 Tests (Midterm, Final)
  - based on classwork, especially word analysis in context
  - also questions on the principles of language formation and change presented in the text and lectures
  - no finals before the assigned date/time
  - make-ups only with a proper excuse and within a week of the original date of the quiz/test
  - incompletes in strict accordance with university policy

Latin and Greek Elements in English

Introduction to the Class

- <u>Warning</u>: you must know parts of speech, in particular: noun, verb, adjective
  - noun: person, place or thing
    - e.g., king, palace, crown
  - verb: action word
    - e.g., rule, inhabit, crown
  - adjective: modifier or descriptor
    - e.g., royal, palatial, crowning
  - see underlined words on syllabus

Latin and Greek Elements in English

The Nature of the English Language

- difficulties inherent in the English language
  - bizarre spelling (often because of French influence)
  - convoluted grammar
    - How do you do?
    - impregnate vs. impregnable
- cf. foreigners' difficulties with English
  - USU exchange student: "I want a pizza and step on it."
  - laundry in Rome: "Ladies, leave your clothes here and then spend the afternoon having a good time."

Latin and Greek Elements in English

The Nature of the English Language

- cf. foreigners' difficulties with English
  - sign in Japanese hotel: "You are invited to take advantage of the chamber maid."
  - sign in Moscow hotel: "If this is your first visit to Russia, you are welcome to it."
  - sign in Zurich hotel: "Because of the impropriety of entertaining guests of the opposite sex in the bedroom, we suggest you use the lobby for this purpose."
  - sign in Norwegian bar: "Ladies are requested not to have children in the bar."

Latin and Greek Elements in English

The Nature of the English Language

- cf. foreigners' difficulties with English

  - sign in a Budapest zoo: "Please do not feed the animals. If you have suitable food, give it to the guard on duty."

  - traffic instruction in Tokyo: "When a passenger of the foot heave in sight, tootle the horn. Trumpet at him melodiously at first, but if he still obstacles your passage, then tootle him with vigor."

  - sign in Hong Kong tailor: "Ladies may have a fit upstairs."

Latin and Greek Elements in English

The Nature of the English Language

- immense vocabulary in English
  - OED lists ca. 615,000 words
    - granted, only 450,000 in current usage
    - but millions more, with scientific/technical terms
  - French has only 150,000
  - Russian has under 125,000
  - hence, the popularity of a thesaurus in English
    - vs. Italian

Latin and Greek Elements in English

The Nature of the English Language

- Why is there so much vocabulary in English?
  - native Germanic vocabulary is small – both in the number and size of the words
    - but these words make up 80% of any words on a page
  - the rest – and almost all the big words! – is mostly from Latin and Greek roots
    - with some input for other languages

Latin and Greek Elements in English

The Nature of the English Language

- Why is there such a large classical overlay?
  - the early history of England is full of conquest and domination by foreigners
    - ca. 1000 BCE: Indo-European Celts infiltrate Britain
    - ca. 40 CE: Romans
    - ca. 400 CE: Anglo-Saxons
    - 800's CE: Danish invasions
    - 1066 CE: Norman invasion
  - later, through colonization the English become conquerors
    - other languages influence English-speaking colonists

Latin and Greek Elements in English

The Nature of the English Language

- Solutions to learning the complexities of English
  - <u>Grammar</u>: be a native speaker;
    - he returned the **cherries uneaten** (all of them) vs. he returned the **uneaten cherries** (some of them)
    - in possession of (owning) vs. in **the** possession of (owned)
    - living with pain vs. living with **a** pain
    - Queen Mary vs. **the** Queen Mary
  - <u>Spelling/Vocabulary</u>: learn Latin and Greek
    - or understand as much as you can about them!

Latin and Greek Elements in English

Assignment for the next class

- <u>Textbook (Ayers)</u>: read pp. 1-14 (Introduction)
  - do all exercises on those pages; the answers to these exercises are available on line:

    http://www.usu.edu/markdamen/Wordpower/answers/intro.htm

  - print out the lecture outline for the next class and bring this handout to the next class:

    http://www.usu.edu/markdamen/Wordpower/answers/index.htm

  - <u>Homework to be turned in</u>: write down a word (or two) the etymology of which you've always wondered about
    - put the word/s and your name on a piece of paper and turn them in at the beginning of the next class