

Intermediate English Conversation

Spring 2007

Professor: Gord Sellar

Class Description: This course is an intermediate-level course in English conversation offered to students within the Department of English Language and Culture.

It is therefore assumed that all students taking this course have an intermediate level of competency in terms of conversational and speaking ability, and have some experience with conversational English courses.

The content of the course will be tailored to the needs of the particular group of students, though of course class size will determine how personalized the adjustments can be. This course will in general involve occasional large-group discussions, frequent discussions among smaller groups, reading and explanation of texts, and regular question-and-answer sessions led and directed by students.

Course Objectives: This course will focus on the development of whatever conversational skills students lack in general. While this varies from group to group, common issues at this level include approaches to interpretation, clarification, reporting and explanation of others' speech, maintenance of conversational flow, and approaches for registering, negotiating, and working through disagreement, as well as awareness of cultural expectations within the context of English-language conversation.

Students will also have the experience of rapidly assimilating the knowledge and vocabulary necessary to lead a discussion in English on a previously unfamiliar topic (or at least, a topic unfamiliar in English). Each student will do this at least once, though the discussion may occur in a smaller group or even with multiple groups in sequence.

Class Activities: Student discussions will focus on small-to-medium sized group work, though some pair or large group formats will also sometimes be used. Students will be expected to participate in discussions actively and memorably if they wish to do well in this class.

Assessment:

30% - In-class participation

10% - Homework

15% - Discussion Leadership Day

20% - Midterm Exam

25% - Final Exam

Textbook: We will not be using a textbook in this class, but we will use occasional handouts, newspaper articles, and other materials. Students are encouraged (and may perhaps be required as part of homework) to contribute some discussion materials as well. Please feel free to approach me if you would like recommendations of worthwhile texts for supplementary reading.

My contact information:

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Course Outline:

The following is extremely tentative and subject to changes at any time, but it should give you an idea of what I'm planning for you. These topics will dominate our exercises on the 2-hour meetings, while student-led discussions will take up the bulk of our 1-hour meetings from about week 3 onward.

Week 1: Introductions & Preparations

Week 2: Who Are You, Really?

Week 3: Life Balance

Week 4: Transformations

Week 5: The Terrorist Attack and the Bank Robbery

Week 6: Technology and Change

Week 7: Families

Week 8: Midterm Examinations

Week 9: Religion and Politics (And Other Forbidden Topics)

Week 10: Anything You Can Do I Can Do Better: Gender Equality Today

Week 11: Loves Me, Loves Me Not

Week 12: This Island Earth

Week 13: Universities and Students

Week 14: Worries, Warts and All

Week 15: Quirks and Oddities

Week 16: Final Examinations

