

DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY
McAnulty College & Graduate School of Liberal Arts

History and Structure of the English Language

ENGL 433/561
Sarah Wright, Ph.D.
Mondays 6:00–8:40

How does *The horse raced past the barn fell* function as a grammatically correct sentence? Where do the nine pronunciations of the combination *ough* come from? Why do we spell the word *receipt* with a *p*? In this course, we will answer such questions through an exploration of grammar, linguistics, and the history of English. We will begin by reviewing modern English grammar, which will help us develop a shared vocabulary that we can apply to our diachronic study of the English language. We will then examine how culture, political power, and geography affected spelling, grammar, and pronunciation from the Anglo-Saxon period to today. In so doing, we will debate what constitutes “standard” English, consider the impact of language guides (such as grammars and dictionaries), discuss the influence of recent technologies on the way we communicate, and explore how language defines our selves and our world.

ENGL-ED requirement