

TAKE-HOME FINAL EXAMINATION:**“WHY THE [BLEEP]
WE SHOULD CARE ABOUT LANGUAGE HISTORY”**

Your take-home examination, which should be an essay of at least four pages, is due by 1:30 p.m. on Wednesday 16 December at Turnitin.com.

There are three main elements to the essay:

I. Title/Footnote:

Your title should be “Why the [X] We Should Care about Language History,” with the [X] being a word of your choosing. Your [X] word should be a word that sheds some kind of interesting light on language history.

Although MLA guidelines generally discourage footnotes and endnotes, in this case Dr. B. wants you to include a footnote that explains why you have chosen your [X] word, and how that word is related to the study of language history.

If you wish, your title may include a subtitle that suggests more specifically what your essay will argue about the value of pursuing language history study.

II. “Why the [bleep] “:

Identify several specific reasons why it is valuable to study language history. Explain each reason in detail, and provide for each at least one very specific example or, preferably, several specific examples. For example, if you want to argue that studying language history helps us understand why modern English spelling is so inconsistent and confusing, you might examine examples of several main causes of this, such as borrowing words from other languages without changing their spelling; pronunciation shifts over time, such as the Great Vowel Shift or the Northern Cities Vowel Shift; regional variations in pronunciation; etc.

You should quote at least occasionally from sources you have encountered in this course, including assigned readings, sources you used for your HLRP project, and possibly new sources you have identified for use in this exam.

You may want to think about the value of language history study for specific constituencies. Some of the more obvious constituencies who might benefit include:

- ❖ Language arts teachers
- ❖ ESL teachers
- ❖ Teachers of languages other than English
- ❖ Literary scholars
- ❖ College English majors
- ❖ History majors
- ❖ Linguists
- ❖ Speakers of English

- ❖ Tutors
- ❖ Journalists
- ❖ Creative Writers
- ❖ Parents
- ❖ Immigrants learning English
- ❖ English speakers learning other languages

You should also think about the ways in which learning about language history can help inform contemporary debates about language policies and practices in education systems. Some of these debates include English-only, bilingual, or dual-language approaches for English Language Learners; the use of Ebonics in teaching Standard Written English; the achievement gap between white and non-white students in U.S. schools, etc.

III. Advice for Future HEL Students:

In a separate section of your essay entitled “Advice for Future History of the English Language Students,” provide some concrete advice for future HEL students who wish to survive, and thrive in, this difficult course. Among other advice, you might include strategies for keeping up with the reading and reading effectively, choosing an HLRP topic, writing the HLRP Essay, teaching the HLRP session, working effectively in small groups, etc.

Ideally, your essay as a whole should make connections between Part II (“Why the [bleep]”) and Part III (Advice for Future Students). You want to provide future students with incentives for dedicating themselves to language study in ways that will help them excel in completing the course.