

Paper Two: Philology

In this paper, you will explore the *semantic field* of a word. Over time, words change their meanings. A word that was positive might become more negative. For example, Old English *sælig* meant glad or happy, while today's ancestor of that word, *silly*, has a pejorative sense of losing self-control. A word that signified a large group of things can be narrowed in meaning. For example, *cattle* once meant all moveable property (thus its cousin, *chattel*), and now refers only to cows and bulls. And the same word can mean different things in different countries. *Cowboy* in the US usually has a romantic, rugged connotation, while in Britain it connotes an incompetent person.

1. Choose a word that appears in **three or more works** that we have read. The word must be a noun or verb.
2. **Look up** the word in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, and in the *Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology*. You may also be able to find scholarly articles on your word.
3. Describe the various meanings of the word throughout time.
4. Then, explain how one of those meanings is appropriate to **one** of the works from number 1. You may compare and contrast with the other works you chose.

Worth 15%, due **9 May**.