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TOPICS

Ask an American: College Life in the U.S., all but, specialty vs. speciality, to cut someone off, Don't be a..., moonshine

GLOSSARY

class size – the number of students in one class; the number of students taught by one teacher

* It's not fair to teachers to keep increasing class size without giving them more support and help.

roughly – approximately; close to what it is, but not exactly

* I'm not sure how many guests stay in our hotel each weekend. I would say roughly 50.

As a matter of fact... – a phrase used to introduce additional information that emphasizes an idea or point that has just been made

* Sheila had a terrible time on our ski trip last weekend. As a matter of fact, she said she never plans to ski again!

vast majority – large majority; mostly; much more than 50%

* A vast majority of Americans eat too much junk food and are overweight.

ghetto – poor part of town, usually with a lot of crime

* If you think this is a bad neighborhood, you should see the ghetto I grew up in. It was much poorer and more dangerous.

arena – sports stadium; a large place where athletes play sports in the center and people sit in rows on all sides to watch

* All of the fans in the arena stood up and cheered when the two teams came onto the field.

military base – a place owned by the government where military people live and work

* Be sure to have your military ID with you if you want to get onto the military base.



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student loans – money students borrow from the bank to pay for college or university costs

* My biggest concern after I finish graduate school is paying off my student loans.

to pay back – to return money that is borrowed, usually by making small payments regularly over time

* When I pay back my car loan, I plan to sell my car and buy a motorcycle.

all but – everything or everyone except; all things are possible or acceptable but not this

* All but Cathy is here for the meeting, and she should be here any minute.

specialty (British English: speciality) – an area of study or skills that one is an expert at

* We always go to this bakery because their specialty is lemon cake, and that's my favorite.

to cut someone off – to stop someone before they are finished; to move quickly and dangerously in front of another car while driving

* Dora wouldn't stop talking and I finally cut her off so that other people could give their opinions.

Don't be a... – Don't behave like a (something or someone), usually something or someone undesirable or disliked

* Don't be a slob. Clean up after yourself and don't make a mess.

moonshine – alcohol that was illegally made or made at home

* Come over to my house tonight and you can help me make moonshine in my bathtub.

Prohibition – a law from 1920-1933 that made it illegal to make or to sell alcohol

* Prohibition made it difficult for bars and many restaurants to remain in business.

Appalachia – a part of the eastern U.S. along the Appalachian Mountains

* They bought a small house in Appalachia so that they could enjoy living in the mountains.



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WHAT INSIDERS KNOW

Aaron Copland's Appalachian Spring

Aaron Copland is a famous American “composer” or writer of music. He wrote many different types of music that combined modern music with American “folk” (traditional) styles. He was born in 1900 and lived until he was 90-years-old. He was well known for writing music that was performed in “concerts” (performances in front of an audience) as well as for movies.

One of his most well known musical works was the “score” or music for a “ballet” (a type of classical dance) called Appalachian Spring. He wrote it in the early 1940's and it “premiered” (was first performed for the public) in 1944.

Appalachian Spring tells the story of American “pioneers” or people who were the first to explore or go to live in different parts of the United States. The main characters are a group of pioneers, including a young married couple and a religious preacher, who travel to a part of Appalachia to start a new life and to live. Even though the ballet isn't performed very often now, the music is still very popular for “orchestras” (a large group of musicians playing instruments).

Aaron Copland's music for Appalachian Spring won a Pulitzer Prize for Music in 1945. The Pulitzer Prize is one of the most important and prestigious prizes given for the arts, including music, in the United States.

He is also known for many other musical works, including the Fanfare for the Common Man. This is a short piece written for “brass” (musical instruments made of brass that you play by blowing into it) and “percussion” (musical instruments played by hitting them with your hand, with sticks, or with other things). This is his most popular work, and it is also one of the most recognizable pieces of music written in the “20th Century” (the years 1900-1999).



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COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast's English Café, episode 66.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast's English Café, episode 66. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, wishing you a very happy New Year on this first week of the new year, 2007.

Because it's a new year, we have some new things for you here on the English Café. We thought we would do some experiments and try some new things. We've received lots of suggestions, and one of those suggestions is to try to get other voices on the podcast to listen to, and today we're going to do a little bit of that.

If you have a suggestion or a comment, you can email those to us at eslpod@eslpod.com. As always, you can download a Learning Guide for this podcast on our website, just go to eslpod.com.

Our topic today is going to be about college and college experiences in the United States, and as usual, we'll also answer a few of your questions. Let's get started.

Our first segment - our first part - today is going to be something that I'm going to call "Ask an American," where we interview or talk to someone and try to answer questions that you might have of an average or typical American - if there is such a thing as an average person in a country! This is a good way for you to get to hear other voices. It's also a way for you to ask questions, not just about language but other things that you want to hear about, and that's what we're going to do today.

One of the ways that we're going to do this is that I'm going to ask other people who have podcasts - different types of podcasts - some of these general questions.

Our first American that we're going to ask a question of is Rob, who is the host of a podcast about podcasting. He interviews other podcasts; he's also interviewed me on his podcast. If you go to our website and look under the "What's New" section, you can find the information to listen to his interview about me and ESL Podcast. So, I thought would be nice to interview Rob and ask him a question.



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The question that I asked Rob to answer is one that many people have suggested that I talk about on the podcast, and the question is tell me about your university experience - your college experience. What are some things you liked and what are some things that you didn't like?

Rob is going to tell us about his college experience. He's going to speak a little faster than I do normally, but don't worry about that. We're going to listen to it once, and then I'll go to back and explain some of the things he talks about.

He's going to talk about where he went to school; he's going to talk about what kind of school it was; who ran the school - who was in charge of the school. He's going to talk about what some of the famous things are of his university, and he's going to talk about some things he didn't like about his college experience. It is about a three and half - four minute answer, so we'll listen and then we'll come back and we'll talk about it. Here's Rob.

[start of recording]

Hello. This is Rob, host of the Podcast 411 podcast, and co-author of the book, "Tricks of the Podcasting Masters."

For my undergraduate degree, I went to the University of Dayton, which is in Dayton, Ohio. University of Dayton, while the name might not sound like it, is actually a Catholic university, and unlike most Catholic universities, it is not a Jesuit school. It is actually a Marianist school, although I can't really remember what the difference is between a Marianist school and a Jesuit school, other than to say Dayton is one of three or four major Marianist universities, compared to the hundreds of major Jesuit schools.

What I really loved about the University of Dayton was the size of the school and the class size. There's about 6900 undergraduate students, which is roughly about the same size as the University of Notre Dame, which meant the University was large enough that you didn't know everybody that went there, but small enough that you did know your professors.

At UD, which is what we call the University of Dayton, the average class size was roughly 15 to 18 students. As a matter of fact, the largest class anywhere on campus was a hundred (100) students. The vast majority of classes were 15 to 18 students, and I had a couple of engineering classes that were actually only three or four students, so you really got to know the professors.



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We would often have parties in the Ghetto, which is the off-campus area at the University of Dayton, and many of the professors would come down into the Ghetto and party with the students. It was a very social environment.

The real passion, however, at the University of Dayton is college basketball. The University of Dayton has one of the best college basketball arenas in the nation.

One of the other things the University of Dayton is known for is the large amount of government grants it gets for research and development. The University of Dayton is located close to Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, which is the largest Air Force base in the United States, and the Air Force base where they do all their research.

It's hard for me to think of anything I really did not like while at the University of Dayton. However, if I was to pick one thing, it would most definitely be the student loans I acquired while at the University of Dayton and had to pay back after graduating from UD.

This is Rob, from Podcast 411. You can go to Podcast411.com to hear my show where I interview other podcasters to find out what their shows are all about.

[end of recording]

I hope you were able to understand most of what Rob was saying. He did use some vocabulary that I think it would be good for us to talk a little bit about.

He tells us that he went to the University of Dayton, in Dayton, Ohio, which is in the eastern part the United States. He says that this is a Catholic university - a religious university - that is run by the Roman Catholic Church. This particular university, he says however, is somewhat special. He says:

[recording] "...and unlike most Catholic universities, it is not a Jesuit school. It is actually a Marianist school..."

In the United States, as in other countries, there are many religious universities. Most of these, or many of these are run by - operated by - one part of the church, what we called the Jesuit, "Jesuit," order, which is a group within the Catholic Church.



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Rob says that his school was not a Jesuit school; it was run by a different group called the Marianist. He also said he doesn't know the difference, but he knows who owned the university.

Rob says one of the things he liked about his university was the class size. The number of students was not too big in each class, and the university was not too big. He says:

[recording] "There's about 6900 undergraduate students, which is roughly about the same size as the University of Notre Dame..."

So, there are 6900 - six thousand, nine hundred - students, which Rob says is roughly the size of the University of Notre Dame. Roughly, "roughly," when we talk about numbers means approximately - about the same. The University of Notre Dame is another famous Catholic university in the United States, most famous for its football team - its American football team.

Rob says he liked the small classes. He talks about the class size, and then he says:

[recording] "As a matter of fact, the largest class anywhere on campus was a hundred (100) students."

The expression as a matter, "matter," of fact is just another way of saying in fact, or here's another reason why this is true. You might say, for example, "Ohio is cold during the winter. As a matter of fact, it snows there." I'm giving you more evidence about how cold it is in the winter.

Rob then says:

[recording] "The vast majority of classes were 15 to 18 students..."

The expression vast, "vast," majority means mostly - most of the classes. A majority is more than 50 percent. A vast majority would be 78, 80, 90 percent.

Rob then talks about an area near the university, where there were a lot of restaurants and bars, that the students and the professors would go to socialize - to talk to each other - to have fun. He uses the verb to party. He calls this area "the Ghetto." Normally, a ghetto, "ghetto," is a poor part or a poor area of town.



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But I guess, in Dayton, Ohio, this is the word they use for the area near the university where there are lots of restaurants.

Rob then talk about what is most popular at the University of Dayton:

[recording] “The real passion, however, at the University of Dayton is college basketball. The University of Dayton has one of the best college basketball arenas in the nation.”

So, the passion or the excitement - the interest at the University of Dayton is in college basketball. He says that the university has one of the largest arenas. An arena, “arena,” is a big stadium - a big place, usually to play some sort of sporting game.

Rob then talks about another thing the university is famous for, and that is the money it gets from the government, what are sometimes called grants, “grants.” A grant is when an organization gives you money to do something, usually to a university or another community organization. Rob then gives the reason why the university gets so much money from the government:

[recording] “The University of Dayton is located close to Wright-Patterson Air Force Base...”

The university is located - that's where it is - right next to an Air Force base. A base, “base,” is a word we use to describe a military area. The U.S. Government spends a lot of money on military development, and some of that money goes to universities to do research for the government.

Rob then tells us one of things he most disliked about his college experience:

[recording] “...it would most definitely be the student loans I acquired while at the University of Dayton and had to pay back after graduating from UD.”

The universities are not free in the United States, even the government universities cost money. Sometimes it can be very expensive, especially if you go to a private, non-government university, like the University of Dayton where Rob went. And, in order to pay for your schooling, many students have to take out what are called student loans. These are special loans for college students; the interest rate - the amount you have to pay for the loan - is a little lower than normal. But, you still have to pay them back, and Rob says that he acquired,



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meaning he ended up getting many loans, and he had to pay the government, or pay the bank actually, back for his college education.

You might want to go back now, and listen again to what Rob said. I hope it will make more sense - it will be easier for you to understand.

I'm very interested in what you think about our new experiment with talking to other people - our "Ask an American" experiment. Please email me your comments or suggestions, and we will try to continue to make it better. Now we're going to answer a few questions.

Our first question comes from Thomas, in Malaysia. Thomas wants to know the meaning of the expression all but, "but." For example, in the sentence "It was all but certain that she would not marry him," the meaning here is the same as nearly. "It was nearly certain" means it was almost, but not 100 percent. Another example, "The assignment" - the job that he had - "seemed all but impossible." It wasn't impossible, but it was almost impossible - it was nearly impossible - very close to being impossible.

Our next question comes from China, I'm going to have to spell the name, "Xudiaoquan," and the question has to do with the word - or the spelling of the word, "specialty." The question is what's the difference between the spelling "specialty" and "speciality."

Well first, let's define specialty. A specialty is something that someone is an expert in. A specialty can also be something you're just very good at. "The restaurant's specialty is its lasagna" - that its best meal - its best dish.

The difference between these two spelling is just US versus British English. In British English, there's an "i" after the "l," and in American English there's no "i." So, American English is "specialty," and in British English, it's "ity," but the meaning is the same.

The next question comes from Dmitriy, and Dmitriy is in the Ukraine, "Dmitriy." Dmitriy says that he wants to know the meaning of the expression don't be a square.

A square is a geometric shape - like a triangle, a circle. A square has four sides on it; we would say it has four right angles - that's what we call a 90 degree angle. But, this is a slang word - a slang use of this word. It means someone



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who is not very fun - someone who is boring - someone who is old fashioned who doesn't like to try new things; this would be a square. The expression then, don't be a square, means don't be like that.

The next question comes from Jaroslav, “Jaroslav,” in the country of Slovakia. Jaroslav's question is about the word moonshine, “moonshine” (one word).

There are actually two words inside of the word moonshine: there's moon, which is up in the sky. I think it's made of cheese; that's what they told me when I was a child! The moon - the earth and the moon - the moon goes around the earth. The other word is shine, “shine,” and to shine is when something is bright.

So, moonshine could be the light of the moon, but that's not the normal meaning. In American English, the normal meaning of moonshine is an illegal alcohol, when someone makes alcohol, like gin or beer or any other kind of alcoholic drink, and they do not have the permission of the government.

Now, the term actually has a couple of different associations. It's not a word you'll hear a lot in talking about today, but it is a word you will hear when people are talking about the 1920s in the United States. During most of the - or all of the 1920s - beginning in the year 1920 and ending in 1933, the United States had a national, or federal, law against selling alcohol. This was commonly called Prohibition, “Prohibition.” You should recognize - or may recognize the word to prohibit, “prohibit,” inside of this word. To prohibit means to tell someone they can't do something - to not allow someone to do something.

So, the United States had this 13 year period of Prohibition. People did not stop drinking even though alcohol was illegal to sell. Instead, what people did is they made their own alcohol, and that's where the word moonshine comes from, at least in this context. Moonshine is the name of the alcohol - the illegal alcohol that you make - probably because since it was illegal, people often made it at night - or worked on it at night when no one could see them.

The other association moonshine has in American culture is with the southern and particularly the Appalachia region of United States. Appalachia, “Appalachia,” is an area - a region in the United States - in the eastern part of the United States where there are the Appalachian Mountains. The two major mountain areas in the United States - what we would call the mountain ranges - are the Appalachian Mountains in the east, and what we call the Rocky Mountains in the west.



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In the Appalachian Mountains, there were a lot of people living in the hills - up in the mountains - and were somewhat isolated, and so there began this tradition of seeing the people who lived in this area as being somewhat backward - as being not very modern. Another term - mostly a negative term - to describe people who live in the hills would be a hillbilly, "hillbilly." Not a common term any more, but it does describe the people - in a negative way - that live in the mountains and the ideas that they are very backward, especially in this Appalachian region of the United States.

So, moonshine also has a connection with that community - that culture. Though, of course, these are negative representations, not necessarily factually correct, but it is an association that most people would make with the word moonshine.

Our next question comes from someone whose name I don't know, and I don't know where they're from, but I have their question. Sometimes people email me but they don't give me their name or where they're from, and this is an example. So, this is what we would call anonymous, "anonymous." When you don't know the name of some author or someone who wrote something, you would say it's anonymous.

So, this is a question from anonymous, and the question is what does the expression to cut, "cut," someone off mean, if you say, "I was cut off on the freeway today." To cut someone off means to interrupt them if they're talking, or if you're in a car, to go into their lane - go into their space - in front of them, making them slow down. It, of course, is dangerous to do that when you are driving, though here in Los Angeles, people are often very angry when they're on the freeway because it's so crowded, and so you will get people who cut you off. That's part of living in Los Angeles, I'm afraid!

That's all we have time for on today's Café. Remember, if you have a question you can email us at eslpod@eslpod.com.

From Los Angeles, California, I'm Jeff McQuillan. Thanks for listening. We'll see you next time on the English Café.

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