

FWIS 174 001 – Spring 2019
Invented Languages: From Esperanto to Dothraki

Time and Location: MWF 3:00 – 3:50 p.m., HNZ 207

Instructor: Dr. Naomi Enzinna (pronouns: she/her)

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Office Hours: By request (I am often on campus and available to meet!)

Description

In recent years, invented languages (also known as constructed languages or “conlangs”) have achieved heightened visibility and popularity, through their appearance in prominent films and TV shows—such as *Avatar* (Na’vi), *Game of Thrones* (Dothraki, Valyrian), and the film adaptations of *Lord of the Rings* (Sindarin, Quenya, and others). However, conlangs are not new. Conlangs have a long, rich history, and have been constructed for a wide variety of reasons—such as finding God, uniting nations, aiding the disabled, and communicating with computers. In this course, students will learn about both past and present conlangs: their histories, goals, grammars, storylines, and more. Additionally, students will think critically about the linguistic arguments motivating these conlangs’ storylines. For example, a common motivating argument is that language influences thought (e.g., Heptapod B in *Arrival*)—a highly-debated topic in the field of linguistics and beyond. These subjects will be explored through oral and writing assignments aimed at teaching students how to form and build an argument.

Learning Outcomes

The goals for learning in this class are twofold. This course is a class to practice writing, and thus the goals for learning about conlangs and linguistics are built on a framework of writing development. By the end of the course, students should be able to:

- Read, understand, and critically analyze a variety of sources, including academic articles;
- Integrate information from various sources to form a coherent argument;
- Defend arguments with evidence from academic sources, using correct citation and quotation techniques;
- Critique both their own writing and the writing of their peers, ranging from copy-edit revisions to organization to argument structure;
- Work towards developing a personalized writing process that applies broadly across their academic career.

This course also provides an introduction to the scientific field of linguistics, going through the side door of constructed languages. By the end of the course, they should have a basic understanding of:

- The history of constructed languages;

- The phonology, phonetics, morphology, syntax, and sociolinguistics of natural and constructed languages;
- Current scientific debates that influence the goals and forms of constructed languages.

Readings

Access to the following four books is required. Three of the four books are available in the Rice bookstore. One of the books is not, but is fully available online (linked below and on Canvas).

- *The Art of Language Invention* by David J. Peterson (ISBN: 978-0143126461)
- *In the Land of Invented Languages* by Arika Okrent (ISBN: 978-0812980899)
- *They Say/I Say* (3rd ed.) by Gerald Graff & Cathy Birkenstein (ISBN: 978-0393935844)
- *A Writer's Reference* (7th ed.) by Diana Hacker & Nancy Sommers (ISBN: 978-0312601430)

Writing and Oral Communication Requirement

There are seven essays, two assignments, and one oral presentation required in this course. The due dates for the final drafts are listed in the calendar below; however, there may be planning, drafting, and revision assignments added to the calendar, as needed. All essays and assignments must be submitted to Canvas by the time class starts (3:00 pm) on the due date, unless otherwise noted. On some occasions, I will ask you to print your essays in addition to submitting them to Canvas. Papers can be submitted in PDF, Word, or Pages format. All essays must be double spaced and in a 12-point serif font (e.g., Times New Roman font). Please be aware that your writing may be read by other students in this class during a revision process. If you are uncomfortable sharing your topic with other students, please use a different topic.

Conference Requirement

Students are required to meet with the instructor individually once this semester, as noted on the calendar below. However, I encourage all students to schedule meetings and to seek advice/answers whenever necessary throughout the semester.

Attendance & Participation

Class participation (which includes attendance) is part of your grade. When you are in class, you must participate in class discussions, activities, etc. If you must be absent or tardy, it is your responsibility to find out what you missed from your peers. I will not be able to provide you with notes. Excessive tardiness or absences *will* impact your grade. Note: I will not be taking attendance in class, but I will notice and remember if you are excessively tardy.

Grading Policy

Your final grade will be determined by the following:

- 10% Participation
- 5% Assignment 1
- 15% Assignment 2
- 10% Essay 2
- 10% Essay 3
- 15% Essay 4
- 20% Essay 5
- 5% Essay 6
- 10% Oral presentation

Each essay will be graded using a rubric, which you will be provided with. You will have the opportunity at the end of the semester to revise one essay of your choice. The revised grade will entirely replace the former grade for that essay. However, a new rubric will be given for that essay, as I will be assessing it based on the skills you've learned later in the course. The rubric will be provided at the end of the semester.

Late Assignments

Late assignments will receive a 10% grade deduction for every day the assignment is late. After five days, the assignment will no longer be accepted. If you are having personal issues/difficulties that are preventing you from completing assignments on time, please speak with me immediately (not at the end of the semester).

Instructor Response

Please allow up to 48 hours for the instructor to respond to your emails and two weeks for essay/assignment grades to be returned. I will always try to respond to emails and return grades as quickly as possible. However, there may be personal or professional reasons for my delay, so please be patient.

University Policies & Regulations

I respect and uphold University policies and regulations pertaining to the observation of religious holidays; assistance available to the physically handicapped, visually and/or hearing impaired student; plagiarism; sexual harassment; and racial or ethnic discrimination. All students are advised to become familiar with the respective University regulations and are encouraged to bring any questions or concerns to my attention.

Note to students with disabilities: If you have a documented disability that may affect academic performance, you should: 1) make sure this documentation is on file with Disability Resource Center (Allen Center, Room 111 / adarice@rice.edu / x5841) to determine the accommodations you need; and 2) meet with me to discuss your accommodation needs.

Honor Code

One of the purposes of FWIS is to help new students understand the Rice Honor Code and, more explicitly, to teach students the rules of paraphrasing and scholarly attribution, and the appropriate uses of different types of evidence. Accordingly, FWIS instructors will take an educational approach to transgressions of these rules and respond to errors in these areas foremost as issues for grading and opportunities to correct errors, rather than as instances of academic dishonesty. At the same time, all FWIS instructors retain the authority to treat instances of repeat or egregious violations as matters for the attention of the Rice Honor Council.

In this course, students are expected to do the actual writing of their assignments on their own, with no outside help from anyone else. However, students are strongly encouraged (and will sometimes be required) to collaborate on all other aspects of their coursework; including discussing assignments, reading each other's work, and making suggestions for editing and revision.

Center for Academic & Professional Communication

You are encouraged to make appointments with the peer consultants at the Center for Academic & Professional Communication (CAPC) for your assignments in this course. These consultants do not proofread or edit your work, but they will provide feedback on topics such as the organization of your paper or presentation, the coherence of your argument, appropriate sentence structure, and consistent grammatical errors. You can make an appointment at the Center's website: capc.rice.edu.

Calendar

Week 1, Jan 7–11

Introductions

READING: (due Fri, 1/11)

- *They Say/I Say (TS/IS)*: Preface and Introduction
- *The Art of Language Invention (ALI)*: Introduction

DUE:

- Post introduction to “Introductions” discussion forum on Canvas - due Fri, 1/11

Week 2, Jan 14–18

Sounds & “They Say”

READING: (due Wed, 1/16)

- *TS/IS*: They Say (Ch. 1–3)
- *ALI*: Sounds (Ch. 1: pp. 25-61 only)

DUE:

- Essay 1 (ungraded/diagnostic): Does language influence thought? – due Mon, 1/14

Week 3, Jan 21–25
Sounds & Planning

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- No class on Mon, 1/21, for Martin Luther King Jr. Day

READING: (due Wed, 1/23)

- *ALI*: Sounds (Ch. 1: skim pp. 61-87 and read Case Study)
- *A Writer's Reference (WR)*: Planning & Drafting (C1 & C2)
- Handout on writing e-mails

DUE:

- No assignments due this week.

Week 4, Jan 28–Feb 1
Words & Research

READING: (due Wed, 1/30)

- *ALI*: Words (Ch. 2: pp. 97–135)
- *WR*: Researching (R)

DUE:

- Essay 2: Expository emails to a professor and a friend – due Mon, 1/28
- Choose a conlang to report on for next 2 essay topics – due Fri, 2/1

Week 5, Feb 4–8
Words & Paragraphs

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- No class on Fri, 2/8, due to spring recess

READING: (due Mon, 2/4)

- *ALI*: Words (Ch. 2: pp. 136-158, including case study)
- *WR*: Writing paragraphs (C4)

DUE:

- No assignments due this week.

Week 6, Feb 11–15
Language Evolution & Flow

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- This class is canceled on Mon, 2/11.

READING: (due Wed, 2/13)

- *ALI*: Evolution (Ch. 3)
- *TS/IS*: As a Result (Ch. 8)

DUE:

- Assignment 1: Description of your conlang's grammar – due Fri, 2/15
- Schedule meeting with me for this week/next week to discuss Assignment 1

Week 7, Feb 18–22
History of Conlangs & “I Say”

READING: (due Mon, 2/18)

- *In the Land of Invented Languages (LIL)*: Nine Hundred Languages, Nine Hundred Years & John Wilkins and the Language of Truth (Ch. 1–7)
- *TS/IS*: I Say (Ch. 4–5 only)

DUE:

- No assignments due this week. Meetings continue.

Week 8, Feb 25–Mar 1
History of Conlangs & “I Say”

READING: (due Wed, 2/27)

- *LIL*: Ludwik Zamenhof and the Language of Peace (Ch. 8–12)
- *TS/IS*: I Say (Ch. 5–6 only)

DUE:

- Essay 3: Expository essay on your conlang's history/goals and grammar – due Mon, 2/25
- Print essay 3 and bring to class on Mon, 2/25, for peer editing

Week 9, Mar 4–8
History of Conlangs & Metacommentary & Poster Tutorial

READING: (due Mon, 3/4)

- *LIL*: Charles Bliss and the Language of Symbols (Ch. 13–17)
- *TS/IS*: The Art of Metacommentary (Ch. 10)

DUE:

- No assignments due this week.

Week 10, Mar 11–15
SPRING BREAK

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- No class this week due to spring break! No assignments/readings due.

Week 11, Mar 18–22
Conlang Conference Week!

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- Monday is an optional class. We will be watching the movie *Arrival* in class. You may watch it on your own or in class.
- On Wed & Fri, we will have a mock conference, where you will present posters on the conlang that you have been researching.

READING:

- No readings due this week.

DUE:

- Title and paragraph description of your poster topic – due Mon, 3/18
- Oral communication activity: ‘Conlang Conference Week’ poster presentations – due Wed & Fri, 3/20–22

Week 12, Mar 25–29
Language and Thought & Evaluating Arguments

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- For the next 3 weeks, we will be doing close readings of articles on the language-and-thought debate together in class. If you miss class, you must read the articles you missed and get notes from your classmates.

READING: (due Wed, 3/27)

- *LIL*: James Cooke Brown and the Language of Logic & The Klingons, the Conlangers, and the Art of Language (Ch. 18–26)
- *WR*: Academic writing (A)
- Handout on creating annotated bibliographies

DUE:

- Essay 4: Critique of your conlang – due Mon, 3/25
- *Arrival* worksheet – due Mon, 3/25

Week 13, Apr 1–5
Language and Thought & Integrating Sources

READING:

- Handout on creating annotated bibliographies (assigned last week)
- “The Great Eskimo Vocabulary Hoax” by Geoffrey K. Pullum – due Wed, 4/3

DUE:

- No assignments due this week.

Week 14, Apr 8–12
Language and Thought & Constructing Arguments

READING:

- *TS/IS*: I Take Your Point (Ch. 12)
- TBA

DUE:

- No assignments due this week.

Week 15, Apr 15–19
Closing Thoughts & Reflection

READING:

- No reading due this week.

DUE:

- Assignment 2: Annotated bibliography of in-class articles during weeks 12-14 – Mon, 4/15
- Oral communication activity: In-class language-and-thought debate – Wed, 4/17
- Bring rough draft of Essay 5 (argumentative essay on language-and-thought and constructed languages) to class – due Fri, 4/19

Exam period, Apr 24–May 1

DUE:

- Essay 5 – due Wed, 5/1
- Essay 6: Short reflective essay on what you learned this semester – due Wed, 5/1
- One revised essay (optional) – due Wed, 5/1