

# JAL328H1S: Writing Systems

## *Syllabus, Winter 2022*

Instructor	Kiranpreet Nara ['ki.rən.pri:t, 'nə.ɾe]
Email	kiranpreet.nara@mail.utoronto.ca (see email policy below)
Lectures	Mondays 10am – 1pm (online-synchronous on Zoom until Jan 31 & in-person lectures in RW 117)
Office	Online (Zoom)
Office Hours	Tuesdays 12 – 2pm online and by appointment

## Course Description

*Prerequisites:* One of LIN100Y1, LIN101H1, LIN200H1, or ANT100Y1 (or equivalents)

This course surveys the diversity of different modes of writing throughout history, the mechanics of how writing can represent the phonological structure of language, and the social, political, and linguistic factors affecting writing system use. We will see how these latter factors condition change within a writing system over time, affect a language's shift from one writing system to another, or lead to multiple writing systems being used for a single language. We will cover writing systems from all over the world, from the best-known to the obscure.

## Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, you should be able to:

- analyze writing systems and identify and describe their characteristics
- explain how writing systems change over time
- explain how a writing system represents the language it is used for
- explain how a writing system may be adapted to represent a language it was not created for
- describe and assess the factors (cultural, political, etc.) that lead to a writing system being chosen to represent a language

## Required Textbook

Henry Rogers. 2004. *Writing systems: A linguistic approach*. Wiley-Blackwell.

The textbook is available at the U of T bookstore, online in ebook format, or second-hand.

## Course Website

The website is accessible through *Quercus* (<http://q.utoronto.ca>). You will need your UTORid and password to log in. Announcements, lecture slides, quizzes, and assignments will be posted there.

Please *do not* message me through Quercus, use email (see email policy below) instead to get in touch with me outside of class or office hours.

## Important Dates

---

January 10	Classes begin
January 13	Waiting lists for S courses close at end of day
January 24	Last day to enrol in S courses
February 21	<i>Family Day – no classes or office hours</i>
February 22–25	<i>Reading Week – no classes or office hours</i>
March 14	Last day to drop S courses
April 8	S courses end
April 11–29	Final assessment period

---

## Assessment

### Overview

---

Assignments ( $2 \times 12\%$ )	24%
Quizzes ( $3 \times 10\%$ )	30%
Final Assessment	40%
Participation	6%

---

### Assignments ( $2 \times 12\%$ )

There will be two assignments in the course, each worth 12% of the final grade. They will require you to synthesize and apply the material we have discussed in the course. These are individual projects: while you may discuss strategies for approaching them with other students, you should develop the solutions and write them up independently. Everything you submit must be your own work only; please read the policy on academic integrity below carefully.

Assignments will be posted on Quercus, and will be due by the beginning of the class (10am) on the dates noted in the schedule below. *Do not wait until the last moments before the deadline to attempt to submit your assignment!* Assignments submitted after 10am on the due date will be considered one day late. Late assignments without appropriate documentation will incur a penalty of 20% per day, and missed assignments cannot be redone. If proper medical documentation is provided for a missed assignment, the final exam will be increased in weight by 12% to make up for the missed assignment.

I expect all assignments to be submitted online on Quercus in PDF format. Assignments must be typed using a 11–12pt serif typeface (e.g. Times New Roman, Cambria, etc.). If you must write out any part of your assignment by hand, please write legibly and preferably in pen. Please ensure that all pages of your assignment are right side up and in order before you submit.

### Quizzes ( $3 \times 10\%$ )

This course will have three quizzes throughout the term rather than a midterm test. These quizzes will focus primarily on the material covered since the previous quiz, but prior concepts may appear as well. You will have a 6-hour window in which to start writing each quiz, between 12pm and 6pm on Mondays on the days listed in the class schedule below. We will end class at 12pm on the days you have a quiz. You cannot collaborate with anyone on

the quizzes. You may use your lecture notes (but no other sources), however, you should not plan to rely on them during the quizzes; you will not have time to look everything up, so you should have most of the course material committed to memory.

Make-up quizzes will not be offered. In the case of a properly documented medical absence, the final exam will be increased in weight by 10% to make up for a missed quiz.

### *Final Assessment (40%)*

The final assessment (date/time TBA) will cover all of the material discussed in the course, and it is worth 40% of your final grade. The final will take place on Quercus and will be 2 hours long. The assessment will be similar to the quizzes in terms of format and types of questions. You may use your notes (but no other sources) for the final, but as with the quizzes, you should not rely too heavily on them, as you will run out of time if you try to look up everything. More information about the content and structure of the final will be made available closer to end of the semester.

### *Participation (6%)*

Attendance and active participation is beneficial to your success in the course. Please attend lectures and be prepared to engage with the material and ask questions where appropriate. Each lecture will have in-class response questions, and a short questionnaire on Quercus at the end of each class with a practice question and room for feedback. These questionnaires will be available until 1:30pm Mondays because they will be directly related to the lecture of the day. These responses will be used in addition to your contributions in class to determine your participation mark. Visiting office hours to ask questions can also count towards your participation (although I do not require you to do so).

## Class Schedule

Date	Lecture	Readings	Assessment
January 10	Introduction	Ch. 1, 2	
January 17	Cuneiform	Ch. 5	
January 24	Ancient Egyptian	Ch. 6	
January 31	Abjads I: The rise of abjads, Aramaic, Hebrew	Ch. 7	Quiz 1
February 7	Abjads II: Arabic and other abjads	Ch. 7	
February 14	Into the Mediterranean and Alphabets I	Ch. 8, 9	Assignment 1
READING WEEK			
February 28	Alphabets II and Abugidas I: Ethiopic and Indic scripts	Ch. 7.6, 8, 9, 11	
March 7	Abugidas II: Tibetan and Burmese	Ch. 11	Quiz 2
March 14	Chinese and Japanese I	Ch. 3, 4	
March 21	Japanese II, Korean, Vietnamese	Ch. 4	Assignment 2
March 28	Mayan, Aztec, and other Mesoamerican writing	Ch. 12	Quiz 3
April 4	North American scripts, Polygraphia, Reasons for writing;	Ch. 13	

## Basic Course Resources

### *Lectures*

Lectures for JAL328 will be held 10am-1pm every Monday, beginning on January 10 to April 4 (there will be no lecture during the Reading Week on February 21). As per university guidelines, the lectures will be online and synchronous until January 31. The online lectures will be held on Zoom (see the course Quercus website for access information). Lectures will *not* be recorded.

Please leave your audio off for most of class. You may leave your video off or on, whichever you prefer. If you have a question in the middle of lecture and want clarification on something, please type 'question', 'Q', or something similar in the chat. When you are called on, unmute yourself (and turn on your video, ideally), and ask your question. If you prefer to type your question in the chat, that is fine, too, but as much as possible, it would be nice to hear and see you, to help simulate live in-person communication as much as possible. Please leave the chat clear from off-topic conversation, so that questions can be seen.

I will do what I can to promote a vibrant, interactive learning environment, but there are limitations to what's possible in an online class of this size. There may be occasional opportunities for small group work in breakout rooms and for general conversation and activities in the main room. Please take full advantage of these!

In the event that we move to in-person teaching, the lectures will be held at the above scheduled day and time in RW 117.

### *Office Hours*

You are greatly encouraged to attend my office hours if you have any questions or concerns about the course material or your performance in the course. Please do not wait until the last or second-last week of the course to tell me you're lost or confused! It is also a good opportunity to ask questions after looking through the homework and attempting to work on it. Starting early on your work is a great way to ensure success! We will be covering a lot of material, so if you're feeling overwhelmed or you're falling behind, I'm happy to answer any questions or clarify concepts from the lectures during office hours. These are Tuesdays 12–2pm online on Zoom (access information available on Quercus); if you can't make it then, or would like to meet at another time, feel free to email me and we'll find a time.

### *Technology Requirements*

The University recommends certain minimal technical requirements for being able to adequately engage in an online course like this one. See the following URL for recommendations: <https://www.vicereprovoststudents.utoronto.ca/covid-19/tech-requirements-online-learning/>.

Specifically for this course, you will need reliable access to technology that is sufficient for you to:

- download and open course files, such as PDFs
- access Quercus for uninterrupted periods of specific online time in order to complete timed coursework (quizzes, assignments, and final exam); phone/tablet access is not recommended
- attend synchronous lectures on Zoom

### *Accessibility Services*

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. In particular, if you have a physical or mental health consideration or a disability that may require accommodations (e.g., extensions on coursework, more time to write tests, note-taking support), please get official documentation of your accommodation needs from Accessibility Services as soon as possible, because you cannot receive appropriate accommodation without it. In particular, if you need accommodations for a specific assignment or quiz, *at least one week's notice is needed*. For more information, visit Accessibility Services website at <https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/departments/accessibility-services/>.

## Course Policies

### *Names, Titles, & Pronouns*

Please just call me Kiranpreet (Professor Kiranpreet or Professor Nara is also fine if you wish to address me formally). I don't have my PhD yet, so Dr. is not the correct title! My grammatical pronouns are she/her.

Please tell me what to call you! If you prefer to be called by a different name than what is listed on Quercus, let me know, and please inform me of (or correct me on) your pronouns.

### *Lectures & Slides*

You should attend all lectures and arrive on time. I understand that three hours is a long duration for a lecture but it is necessary to cover all the materials without rushing through.

We will begin at 10:10 am. There will be two short breaks in each class, after every 50 minutes or so. At the end of the lecture, you will be required to complete a short questionnaire with a practice question (and with room for feedback) directly related to the lecture. The questionnaire will be available to you until 1:30pm. Lectures will contain material not covered in the textbook, and vice versa. You are responsible for all materials covered in assigned readings and lectures.

I will post all of the slides that you see in class, but I may discuss things in lecture that are not in the slides. You are expected to take your own notes.

### *Missed Tests and Assignments*

Students who miss a quiz or assignment for reasons beyond their control must contact me by email, preferably before the assessment takes place, and no later than 48 hours afterwards. No make-up quizzes or assignments will be given. An appropriate medical documentation is required to transfer the weight of the quiz or assignment to the final assessment.

### *Copyright and Intellectual Property*

Please note that, except where indicated, all course materials (this syllabus, lecture notes, assignments, quizzes, the final exam, solutions, other Quercus content, etc.), whether in hardcopy or electronic form, are the intellectual property of Professor Nara. You do not have permission to record the lectures or distribute any of these materials,

in whole or in part, in any form, to any person, website, or organization. In particular, do not post these materials to online repositories like Chegg, Course Hero, OneClass, etc., and do not give them to other students, now or in the future. Unauthorized distribution of protected course material is not only an academic offence but also a violation of the Canadian *Copyright Act* (RSC, 1985, c. C-42).

### *Grading Policy*

Assessment of course work adheres to the following policies set forth by the Faculty of Arts & Sciences and by the Department of Linguistics:

<https://governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/sites/default/files/import-files/grading8958.pdf>

<https://www.linguistics.utoronto.ca/undergraduate-programs/grading-policy>

Note that all course work is given raw scores, not actual marks. In most cases, these scores will translate directly into marks (e.g. a raw score of 85 would count as a mark of 85), but sometimes, it may be necessary to calibrate the raw scores before computing a final course grade to account for various issues (discrepancies between Graders in marking, assignments that were harder or easier than intended, etc.). Calibration will normally be a linear transformation which adjusts the value of scores without altering the underlying curvature.

### *Academic Integrity*

The issue of academic integrity is taken very seriously in this course, and there is zero tolerance for dishonesty. Please give full respect to the teaching team, yourself, the University, and the larger academic endeavour by adhering to the highest standards of ethical academic behaviour. Note that even unintentional violations are still unacceptable, so give your submitted work the care and attention necessary to guarantee that fair and accurate credit is given to all sources at all times.

Suspected lapses in your academic integrity will be pursued to the full extent of Department and University policy. For more information, please consult the Governing Council's Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters at the following URL: <https://governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/secretariat/policies/code-behaviour-academic-matters-july-1-2019>.

In particular, your work on the quizzes, assignments, and final assessment must be representative of your own independent knowledge and ability. Do not attempt to get answers or help from any unauthorized source, and do not give answers or help to any other students.

### *Email Policies*

- If you need to get in touch with me outside of lecture and office hours please only do so via email using my email address provided on the first page of this syllabus.
- Please only send emails from your UTORmail account, sign emails with your full name, and include "JAL328" in the subject line. All of this helps me sort and reply to your questions more easily.
- I will respond to email as soon as I can, but please allow up to three business days for a reply. I am unlikely to respond to email over the weekend.
- Extensive questions about course content should not be asked via email, but rather during office hours. Generally, if you think a reply will require more than a few sentences on my part, you should ask your question

in person.

- Before writing with an administrative question, please consult this syllabus, the course website, and the lecture slides to make sure your question has not already been answered.
- I will not be able to respond to evaluation-related emails that are sent less than 24 hours before the relevant evaluation. For assignments, this means 24 hours before the class where the assignment is due; for tests, this means 24 hours before the test is scheduled to take place. I highly encourage you to come to my office hours or send me an email before this cutoff if you have questions about assessments.