

Instructor:  
Email:  
Website (for Homework, Handouts, etc.):  
Location:  
Class Hours:  
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Barker Center 218 (Fong Room)  
TuTh 9:00–10:00 AM  
TBD

## Writing Systems and Language Conservation

Week 2: The History of Writing – Due Tuesday February 15, 9:00 AM

### For Consideration in the Readings

**This question is for consideration; there is no need to write it down, these are simply prompts to help with close reading and for discussion on Tuesday.**

**For Bird 1999:** Given the kinds of tone marking possible for a language (explicitly marking all tones, ‘stable’ tone marking, only marking to avoid ambiguity, not marking at all, etc.), what do you think would be the best way to mark tone in an African tonal language? Does this line up with the conclusion of the various case studies? How so? Does this reflect on our discussion about the differences between vowel representation in alphabets, abugidas, and abjads, if so, how?

**For Anderson et al. 2005:** What kinds of restrictions that Unicode suggests are specific to certain kinds of scripts (ie. cursive scripts like arabic, bicameral vs. unicameral scripts, etc.)? Are these restrictions technological in nature, or historical (as in, by accident of who encoded what kind of writing system first?

**For Swadesh 1948:** What do you take from Swadesh’s message? Do you think that the intellectual climate that required him to defend unwritten languages is still present in some ways? How so?

### Creative Work

Please do this question on your own. Make a rebus of your name completely out of pictorial symbols (as in, no letters). Please describe what pictures/symbols you chose. Was the way that you positioned the pictographs in relation to each other (A left of B vs. B left of A, A above B, etc.) crucial to the understanding of the rebus? How so? How easy do you think it would be for someone to tell that this rebus represents your name?

## Analytical/Descriptive Work

Please choose two of the following scripts and do some research on them. Describe the script (what kind of script, is it unicameral or bicameral, what language(s) it is used with, etc.). Do you find anything interesting about the script's history, its use, or how it represents the phonology of the language it represents? How do the two scripts that you chose compare to one another? Can you imagine them being easily used to write English? Why? How do you feel about the aesthetics of the script?

- (1)
  - a. N'Ko script
  - b. Lepcha script
  - c. Pahawh Hmong script
  - d. Osage script
  - e. Ogham script