

Instructor:
Email:
Website (for Homework, Handouts, etc.):
Location:
Class Hours:
Office Hours:

Jack Isaac Rabinovitch
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Barker Center 215 (Fong Room)
TuTh 9:00–10:00 AM
TBD

Writing Systems and Language Conservation

Week 1 Assignment

For Consideration in the Readings

Coulmas discusses three properties of writing, namely visual perception, auto-indexicality, and conventionality. Do you feel like these properties are well defined? Do you think they are fair diagnostics for what is writing vs. non-writing?

Coulmas relates real writing to two ‘ideals’ of writing which many philosophers have discussed: language neutrality, and faithful transcription. What is the benefit of these ideals? Why are these ideals hard to meet?

Field Work

Go out for a walk and look for instances of some script other than the Latin alphabet. Take a picture of it and describe what kind of sign or message the writing contains. Can you tell what language it is? What is the reason that this sign is translated into this language, while others are not?

Creative Work

Please use emojis to communicate (translate, but I don’t think translate is the proper term here) the meaning of Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (English below).

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

What was your thought process in writing this down with emojis? How much of what you wrote influenced by English sentence or word structure? Do you think it is possible to communicate this concept without any influence from a specific language at all?