Ling 148 The Linguistics of Constructed Languages

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Description

What's "wrong" with English, or French, or Chinese, or any one of the 6,000+ languages spoken natively by humans today? Why invent a language like Esperanto to be a common tongue among all people, or invent a "calculus of thought" to "perfectly" express pure meaning? Why is it hard to sound romantic while speaking Klingon? What are the benefits of Lojban's attempt to rid the world of confusion and ambiguity?

This course explores the design of and motivation for constructed languages from a modern linguistic point of view. Constructed languages are those that are the result of some conscious and deliberate design rather than ones occurring naturally. We will explore the different motivations for language construction, from the desire to create a "perfect language", to fictional worldbuilding, to fostering global harmony. In characterizing the different types of invented languages, students will develop familiarity with the basic tools of linguistic theory, focusing on phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics. Languages analyzed in detail include Klingon, Esperanto, Heptapod B, Lang Belta, Lojban, Dothraki, Valyrian, Elvish, and various philosophical languages.

Course Info

Course Number	L44 Ling 148
Semester	Spring 2023
Time	TR 11:30am-1pm
Location	McDonnell 362
Office	January 206
Office Hours	TBD
Homepage	https://wustl.instructure.com/courses/106394

Goals

Throughout this course, students will:

- Explore and evaluate motivations for inventing new languages
- Compare and contrast invented languauges to natural human languages
- Characterize and analyze the types of existing invented languages
- Become familiar with the fundamental tools of modern linguistic theory

Special covid-related policies

This course is taught in person, meaning all lectures occur live, in person, in the scheduled time and place. Lecture recordings, if made, will not be available by default, but this may change.

Because there is still an ongoing pandemic, I expect there to be a lot of excused absences. Please respect all health guidelines this semester, and put your own health and the health of your peers above your academic obligations. I am happy to work with you. Please keep me notified of any health related absences, and if there are many, we will figure out a way to make it work for the class. Please read the section on covid health protocols carefully.

Required Materials

There are no required textbooks. All readings will be made available as PDFs on Canvas. That being said, a fair amount of material comes from the following books, and you are encouraged to seek out the full books if you are looking for more detailed coverage:

- Arika Okrent (2009). *In the Land of Invented Languages*. New York: Spiegel & Grau. 342 pp. ISBN: 978-0-8129-8089-9 (ILIL)
- Michael Adams (2011). *From Elvish to Klingon: Exploring Invented Languages*. New York: Oxford University Press. 294 pp. ISBN: 978-0-19-280709-0 (FEtK)
- Mark Rosenfelder (2010). *The Language Construction Kit*. Yonagu Books. 292 pp. ISBN: 978-0-9844700-0-6 (LCK)
- David J. Peterson (2015). *The Art of Language Invention: From Horse-Lords to Dark Elves, the Words Behind World-Building*. Penguin Publishing Group. 306 pp. ISBN: 978-0-14-312646-1 (ALI)

Grade

The grade breakdown is shown below.

Category	Pct
Weekly Responses	30%
Participation	10%
Writing Prompts	40%
Final	20%

Weekly Responses

Each week, there are a series of questions based on the assigned readings. These are (usually) due at Wednesday at midnight, as the submissions will be incorporated into Thursday's class. (On weeks with holidays, make sure you check Canvas for the due dates.)

Participation

In addition to being expected to participate in class, there are a number of graded participation assignments. These include surveys and occasional group work. All details will be given on Canvas.

Writing Prompts

There are 3 short writing prompts, and one final paper. The writing prompts are due the first Sunday of each month, at midnight. Details are given on Canvas. Each is worth 50 points. As general rules, each prompt should be either in MLA or APA format, with 12pt serif font, 1" margins on all sides, double-spaced. You are strongly encouraged to use the resources of the Writing Center here at Wash U. More details are given below.

The final paper is due during finals period. However, you are encouraged to read the description for the final paper and get a head start, especially if you wish to incorporate material from books, movies, or television shows.

Letter grades

Letter grades are assigned based off the following scale. Numerical grades are **not** rounded.

$100 \geq A+ \geq 98$	$80 > C+ \geq 77$
$98 > A \geq 93$	$77 > C \geq 73$
$93 > A- \geq 90$	$73 > C- \geq 70$
$90 > B+ \geq 87$	$70 > D+ \geq 67$
$87 > B \geq 83$	$67 > D \geq 63$
$83 > B- \geq 80$	$63 > D- \geq 60$

If you are taking this class pass/fail, you must receive at least a C- (70%) to pass.

If you believe there has been an error in grading, I am happy to discuss it with you. However, you must bring it up to me within one week of the graded assignment being returned to you. After this, the grade is considered final.

Late policy

Unexcused late work incurs a 5% penalty per day late. If you anticipate a problem submitting work on time, please email me **before the due date** and we can work something out.

Schedule

The exact schedule is likely to change as the semester progresses. Please see Canvas for all up-to-date readings and assignment due dates.

Date	Week	Module	Languages
1/17/2023	1	Natural vs. Constructed Languages	Esperanto
1/24/2023	2	Real-world motivations	Esperanto, Volapük
1/31/2023	3	Fictional worldbuilding	Dothraki, Elvish languages, Klingon
2/7/2023	4	Constructing a language	Dothraki, Klingon
2/14/2023	5	Alien Languages	Klingon

Date	Week	Module	Languages
2/21/2023	6	Extreme Regularity	Esperanto
2/28/2023	7	Form over Function	Star Wars
3/7/2023	8	Language and Thought	Heptapod B
3/14/2023	9	Break	
3/21/2023	10	Logic & Ambiguity	Loglan/Lojban
3/28/2023	11	Philosophical Languages	Language of John Wilkins
4/4/2023	12	Language Change & Evolution	High Valyrian, Lang Belta
4/11/2023	13	Nativization & Revitalization	Esperanto, Lang Belta, Modern Hebrew
4/18/2023	14	Writing Systems	Elvish languages
4/25/2023	15	Meaning & Metaphor	Tamarian

Additional Resources

The Writing Center

The Writing Center offers free writing support to all Washington University undergraduate and graduate students. Staff members will work with students on any kind of writing project, including essays, writing assignments, personal statements, theses, and dissertations. They can help at any stage of the process, including brainstorming, developing and clarifying an argument, organizing evidence, or improving style. Instead of simply editing or proofreading papers, the tutors will ask questions and have a conversation with the writer about their ideas and reasoning, allowing for a higher order revision of the work. They will also spend some time looking at sentence level patterns to teach students to edit their own work. The Center is open Sunday through Thursday from 11:00 am to 9:00 pm and Friday from 11:00 am to 5:00 pm. Students are seen primarily by appointment, but walk-ins will be accepted as the schedule allows. To make an appointment, go to https://writingcenter.wustl.edu.

Questions should be sent to writing@wustl.edu or call 314-935-4981.

The Speaking Studio

The Speaking Studio provides free, one-on-one tutoring for any member of the Washington University in St. Louis community (students, faculty and staff) for any public speaking project. They can help speakers at any stage of the process from generating ideas to developing a speaking outline to planning visual aids. Speakers can also practice their presentations, with one of our trained tutors serving as their audience. Speakers are welcome to bring in any work in progress, including class assignments, conference papers and presentations for student groups. In public speaking much of the revision process takes place while practicing the presentation. By listening to a practice session, our tutors can help speakers revise to clarify their ideas and better connect with

their audiences. To make an appointment, or to get more information, please email writing@wustl.edu or sapijut@wustl.edu.

COVID-19 Health and Safety Protocols

Exceptions to course attendance policies, expectations, and requirements because of a COVID-19 diagnosis, symptoms consistent with COVID-19, or exposure to a person with a confirmed or suspected COVID-19 diagnosis that requires quarantine or isolation will be made in collaboration between the student and instructor. In these cases, please notify your instructor as soon as possible to discuss appropriate accommodations.

While on campus, it is imperative that students follow all public health guidelines established to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission within our community. The full set of University protocols can be found at https://covid19.wustl.edu/health-safety. This includes:

- **Completing a self-screening using the WashU COVID-19 Screening app every day before coming to campus or leaving your residence hall room.** If you do not receive a green check and pass the screening, you are not permitted to come to campus or leave your residence hall room. You must contact the COVID Call Center (314-362-5056) or the Habif Health and Wellness Center (314 935-6666) immediately. Note: In addition to the symptoms listed in the screening tool, everyone also should pay attention to symptoms that are new or different for you, including things like headache and congestion, particularly in combination with diarrhea. These can also be signs of COVID-19. Call the COVID Call Center or Habif to report these symptoms.
- **Complying with universal masking.** All individuals on campus must wear disposable masks or cloth face coverings while occupying indoor public settings, including: multi-person offices, hallways, stairwells, elevators, meeting rooms, classrooms and restrooms. Masks are encouraged but not required for outdoor activities, particularly at large events or in crowded settings. Students with disabilities for whom masked instructors or classmates create a communication barrier are encouraged to contact Disability Resources () or talk to their instructor for assistance in determining reasonable adjustments. Adjustments may involve amplification devices, captioning, or clear masks but will not allow for the disregard of mask policies.
- **Maintaining physical distancing as needed.** While distancing requirements have been removed for vaccinated students, those who are not fully vaccinated are strongly encouraged, for their own health, to maintain a distance of 6 ft from others in the classroom. If you are not able to be vaccinated or have conditions that may put you at increased risk of failed immunity and classroom activities would bring you in frequent proximity to other students, contact your instructor to discuss alternatives.
- **Practicing healthy personal hygiene**, including frequent handwashing with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds and/or using hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.

Academic Integrity

This course adheres to the university's Academic Integrity Policy, and takes cheating and plagiarism very seriously. All work completed online must be done alone unless instructed otherwise, and no resources not approved by the instructor may be used during exams.

ADA Compliance

Washington University is committed to providing accommodations and/or services to students with documented disabilities. Students who are seeking support for a disability or a suspected disability should contact Disability Resources at 935-4153. Disability Resources is responsible for approving all disability-related accommodations for WU students, and students are responsible for providing faculty members with formal documentation of their approved accommodations at least two weeks prior to using those accommodations. I will accept Disability Resources VISA forms by email and personal delivery. If you have already been approved for accommodations, I request that you provide me with a copy of your VISA within the first two weeks of the semester. Please see more information at http://cornerstone.wustl.edu.

Sexual Assault Resources

The University is committed to offering reasonable academic accommodations (e.g., no contact order, course changes) to students who are victims of relationship or sexual violence, regardless of whether they seek criminal or disciplinary action. If you need to request such accommodations, please contact the Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Center (RSVP) at rsvpcenter@wustl.edu or 314-935-3445 to schedule an appointment with an RSVP confidential, licensed counselor. Information shared with counselors is confidential. However, requests for accommodations will be coordinated with the appropriate University administrators and faculty. Please see more information at https://students.wustl.edu/relationship-sexual-violence-prevention-center.

Last updated: January 12, 2023