

ANT 320L: Invented Languages (31615)

Spring 2020

WCP 4.174

T/Th 2:00-3:20pm

Prof. Courtney Handman

WCP 4.124, x10059

chandman@austin.utexas.edu

Office hours: M 9-10a, W 1:30-2:30p

Course description

Although invented languages are currently associated with popular science fiction and fantasy genres, people have been inventing languages for at least the past 800 years. These invented languages have been part of religious projects of communicating with god(s), political projects of universal peace, or scientific projects of creating the language of truth. We will look at the different ways that linguists, hobbyists, or philosophers have understood language as “natural” rather than “man-made” phenomena and how debates about this question have had effects on projects of linguistic planning, reform, or invention. In this class we will pay particular attention to the 19th and 20th centuries because this is when European colonialism altered and exacerbated questions of universalisms, human communication, and radical social change that became central to projects of language invention. Topics will include: medieval Christian invented languages, Enlightenment projects of language reform, pidgin and creole languages, colonial linguistics, the International Auxiliary Language movement that advocated for global use of languages like Esperanto or Basic English, and contemporary “conlangs” associated with various science fiction and fantasy series.

Course texts

The following books are available at the Co-op, the Perry-Castañeda library, or in some cases available as e-books through links on the course Canvas site. The books are referred to in the syllabus by the primary author’s last name.

- Okrent, Arika. *In the Land of Invented Languages*. New York: Spiegel & Grau.
- Havel, Vaclav. *The Memo*. New York: Theater 61 Press.
- Smalley, William, Chia Koua Vang, and Gnia Yee Yang. *Mother of Writing: The Origin and Development of a Hmong Messianic Script*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Gilmore, Perry. *Kisizi (Our Language): The Story of Colin and Sadiki*. New York: Wiley.

All other readings can be accessed through the course Canvas site via the “Discussions” tab (see below on assignments for more information).

Schedule of readings, activities, and assignments

Tues, Jan 21

- Introductions

What is an invented language? What is a natural language?

Thurs, Jan 23

- Lo Bianco, Joseph. 2004. Invented Languages and New Worlds. *English Today* 20(2):8-18.
- Yaguello, Marina. 1984. *Lunatic Lovers of Language*, pp. 5-29

Tues, Jan 28

- de Saussure, Ferdinand. 1916. *Course in General Linguistics*, pp. 6-23, 31-32, 65-78;
- Boas, Franz. 1911. Introduction to the *Handbook of American Indian Languages*, pp. 63-69;
- Pinker, Steven. 1994. *The Language Instinct*, pp. 1-11

Thurs, Jan 30

- Joseph, John. “Natural Dialect and Artificial Language, from Varro to Chomsky.” *Limiting the Arbitrary*, pp. 141-168.

- OPTIONAL: Joseph, John. "Natural Grammar and Conventional Words: From Aristotle to Pinker." *Limiting the Arbitrary*, pp. 93-140.

A limit case: Is the Damin Initiate Language 'invented'? Is it 'natural'?

Tues, Feb 4

- Fleming, Luke. 2017. Artificial language, natural history: Speech, sign, and sound in the emergence of Damin. *Language and Communication* 56:1-18.

Is inventing a tradition the same as inventing a language? Play, creativity, and cultural innovation

Thurs, Feb 6

- Hobsbawm, Eric. 1983. Inventing Traditions. IN *The Invention of Tradition*, edited by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, pp. 1-14.
- Trevor-Roper, Hugh. 1983. The Invention of Tradition: The Highland Tradition of Scotland. IN *The Invention of Tradition*, edited by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, pp. 15-42.

Tues, Feb 11

- Huizinga, John. 1938. Nature and Significance of Play as a Cultural Phenomenon. IN *Homo Ludens*, pp. 1-27.
- Bateson, Gregory. 1972. A Theory of Play and Fantasy. IN *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*, pp. 177-193.

Thurs, Feb 13

- Sahlins, Marshall. 1992. The economics of develop-man in the Pacific. *Res: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, 21(1):12-25.
- Wilf, Eitan. 2010. Swinging within the iron cage: Modernity, creativity, and embodied practice in American postsecondary jazz education. *American Ethnologist*, 37(3):563-582.

The Invention of Logic

Tues, Feb 18

- Okrent, chapters 3-7. Wilkins.

Thurs, Feb 20

- Bauman, Richard and Charles Briggs. 2003. Language, Poetry, and *Volk* in Eighteenth-Century Germany: Johann Gottfried Herder's Construction of Tradition. IN *Voices of Modernity: Language Ideologies and the Politics of Inequality*, pp. 163-196.

Tues, Feb 25

- Okrent, chapters 13-17. Bliss.
- <https://archive.org/details/mrsymbolman> (we will watch some parts in class)

The Invention of Global Peace

Thurs, Feb 27

- Okrent, chapters 8-12. Esperanto.
- In class: Esperanto demonstration text

Tues, Mar 3

- Jespersen, Otto. 1931. "Interlinguistics." Available at: <http://interlanguages.net/IL.html>
- Sapir, Edward. 1925. "The Function of an International Auxiliary Language." IN H. N. Shenton, E. Sapir and O. Jespersen, *International Communication: A Symposium on the Language Problem*, London 1931, pp. 65-94. Available at: <http://interlanguages.net/sapir.html>
- Sluga, Glenda. 2013. "Apogee of Internationalism." IN *Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. Pp. 79-117.

Thurs, Mar 5

- Richards, I.A. 1943. *Basic English and Its Uses*. Preface, Ch. 1-2, 4. (pp. 5-7; 11-44; 71-90).

- Essay prompt (due in class on Mar 12): why have auxiliary languages failed? *You will need to answer in BASIC English. 850 words.*

Tues, Mar 10

- Havel, Vaclav. *The Memo*.

Thurs, Mar 12

- BASIC essay due in class. We will do an exercise based on your essays, so bringing them to class is mandatory.

SPRING BREAK – reminder: presentations begin after Spring Break

The Invention of New Worlds

Tues, Mar 24

- Okrent, chapters 23-26. Klingon.

Thurs, Mar 26

- Cheyne, Ria. 2008. Created Languages in Science Fiction. *Science Fiction Studies* 35(3):386-403.
- Samuels, David. 2005. Alien Tongues. IN *E.T. Culture: Anthropology in Outerspaces*, pp. 94-129.

Tues, Mar 31

- *Conlanging* movie (no reading, no presentations)

Thurs, Apr 2

- Romaine, Suzanne. 2011. "Revitalized Languages as Invented Languages." IN *From Elvish to Klingon*, Michael Adams, editor. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Pp. 185-225.
- Rudes, Blair. 2014. Giving Voice to Powhatan's People: The Creation of Virginia Algonquian Dialogue for The New World. *Southern Quarterly*, 51(4):28-37.

The Invention of Religion

Tues, Apr 7

- Higley, Sarah. *Hildegard of Bingen's Unknown Language*, pp. 13-33; 51-62, 79-100.
- SKIM THROUGH Plates 1-6 for images of the Bingen manuscript and also pp. 160-188 for the word list itself.
- In class: declare which of the two final assignment options you will be doing

Thurs, Apr 9

- Smalley, pp. 1-74.

Tues, Apr 14

- Smalley, pp. 86-102, 119-148, 164-182.

Thurs, Apr 16

- Garvía, Roberto. 2013. Religion and artificial languages at the turn of the twentieth century: Ostwald and Zamenhof. *Language Problems and Language Planning*, 37(1): 47-70.
- Halperin, Liora. 2012. Modern Hebrew, Esperanto, and the Quest for a Universal Language. *Jewish Social Studies* 19(1): 1-33.

The Invention of Colonialism

Tues, Apr 21

- Cohn, Bernard. 1996. The Command of Language and the Language of Command. IN *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge*, pp. 16-56.

Thurs, Apr 23

- Singh, Ishtla. 2000. *Pidgins and Creoles: An Introduction*, pp. 1-36.
- Mühlhäusler, Dutton, and Romaine. 2003. *Tok Pisin Texts* (look at any **five** texts from the following selection: texts 1-6, 31-37, 70, 72-73).
- "Language Notes" (phrasebook for colonial administrators in Papua and New Guinea), read section on "Pidgin" (pp. 1-12).

Tues, Apr 28

- Gilmore, Prologue + pp. 1-57.
- Reminder: are you opting to write an essay for your final assignment? If so you need to have your essay prompt/research question approved by me by May 5th.

Thurs, Apr 30

- Gilmore, pp. 58-137

The Invention of Our Robot Overlords

Tues, May 5

****Everybody must read the first piece by Brian Christian and then at least two of the other pieces.****

- Christian, Brian. "Mind vs. Machine" *The Atlantic Monthly*, Feb 9, 2011. <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2011/03/mind-vs-machine/308386/> (Links to an external site.)
- "Translation by the Numbers: Facebook AI Puts Words into Multidimensional Spaces." *Japan Times*, Oct 16, 2019. <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2019/10/16/business/tech/translation-numbers-facebook-ai-puts-words-multidimensional-spaces/#.XaiPaSV7n-Z> (Links to an external site.)
- Rockmore, Dan. "The Mechanical Muse." *The New Yorker*, Jan 7, 2019. <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/annals-of-inquiry/the-mechanical-muse> (Links to an external site.)
- Schuster, Johnson, Thorat. "Zero-Shot Translation with Google's Multilingual Neural Machine Translation System." *Google AI blog*, Nov 22, 2016. <https://ai.googleblog.com/2016/11/zero-shot-translation-with-googles.html> (Links to an external site.)
- Burgess, Matt. "Google's AI Just Created Its Own Universal 'Language.'" *Wired*, Nov 23, 2016. <https://www.wired.co.uk/article/google-ai-language-create> (Links to an external site.)
- McElwee, Kevin. "Facebook Invented a New Language for Machines to Solve Complex Math Equations." *Vice*, Jan 15, 2020. https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/4agw3q/facebook-invented-a-new-language-for-machines-to-solve-complex-math-equations

Thurs, May 7

- Review, any remaining presentations

Tues, May 12

- Final assignment due by 11:59pm, via Canvas

Assignments

Participation (10%): You are expected to come to each class session having read and thought about the reading assignment. You are expected to make contributions to class discussion. Discussion formats will vary over the semester. On certain days the class will split into two different groups. Each group will read a different article for the class, meet in your groups for a few minutes, and then take turns teaching the other group about the article you read. On other days you will meet in break out groups to discuss particular passages of the text and then report back to the class. Some days, class discussion will be more open-ended. Regardless of the format for the day, the class depends on you doing the reading and being prepared to discuss it.

In order to receive participation credit, you need to contribute (out loud!) to the class discussion with a content-related comment (asking when an assignment is due would not count, for example). I will be keeping track of which days in class each student contributes to discussion. Grading is as follows:

A range = participate at least once in 18 class sessions
B range = participate at least once in 13 class sessions
C range = participate at least once in 8 class sessions
D range = participate at least once in 3 class sessions

Participation includes elaborating on your reading questions and doing your presentation (see below).

Reading questions (30%): Once per week you will submit a discussion question to Canvas through the "Discussions" pages. Canvas has randomly divided the class into two groups (Discussion Group 1 or Discussion Group 2). Look at the Discussion page to see when you need to post a question. During the first part of the semester you will either need to post a question for Tuesday or Thursday. After Spring Break, you will switch – if you were posting for Tuesday, then you will now post for Thursday and vice versa. Questions are due at 11:59pm on the night before class. Each group will be asked to post questions 13 times over the semester.

Instructions on what constitutes a good question are available in the pinned discussion on the Canvas Discussion page. Questions will be used as the basis for discussion in class, and you should be prepared to expand upon or clarify your question in class. Questions are graded on clarity, capacity to generate discussion, and ability to make connections to other course readings or themes.

All students should take a look at the discussion questions prior to class. To help facilitate that, the easiest way to find out the reading assignment is on the discussions pages. For each day of class reading I have a separate discussion page that lists the syllabus entry for that day and links to the files you need to read.

Discussion questions are graded. I have set up Canvas so that discussion questions are assigned to you for every class but Canvas will drop your lowest 15 grades. That is, it will drop the 13 discussion grades that are assigned to the other group and it will drop 2 more in addition. That means you can skip the assignment on two occasions during the semester or just drop grades for questions that were not scored very highly. We will go through this in class on the first day. If it is still confusing after that, feel free to send me a message by email.

Mid-term short essay on BASIC (15%): due in class Thursday, March 12. You will be given an essay prompt on March 5 and you will have just over a week to write an 800-word essay on the failures of 20th century auxiliary languages. You will be graded based on the clarity and organization of your writing in addition to the quality of the ideas communicated. You will need to bring the essay to class, since we will engage in a short exercise using these essays.

Some sample essay grades:

Highly disorganized and unclear writing, poor understanding of material: D- to D
Disorganized and unclear writing, very basic understanding of material: D+ to C

Somewhat organized and clear writing, competent understanding of material: C+ to B
Organized and clear writing, solid understanding of material: B+ to A-
Well-organized and clear writing, an answer that goes beyond the essay prompt: A to A+

Presentation on an invented language (15%): After spring break we will have student presentations on invented languages at the end of each class session, usually 2 students per day. Presentations should be 10 minutes and include a power point. Introduce your invented language: who created it (if known), when, where, and why. What kind of world does it help to establish, or what political project is it a part of, or what sort of communication is it meant to facilitate? What features of the language's construction specifically point to that world/project/mode of communication? Has it been successful (and by what measure of success)?

Final project (30%): You have two different options for a final assignment. You can choose either one or the other of the two options – you should **not** do both! Due May 12th via Canvas.

1. Invent a language. Declare your intention to choose this option by April 7th. Give your language a name. You will need to include a phonological inventory, a partial morphological inventory for basic derivational and inflectional morphology, at least three phonological rules, at least three morphophonological rules, and at least three morphological rules. Provide basic syntactic description (word order, agreement, person/number marking, etc.). Provide a lexicon of at least 150 words. Provide a sample prose text of 50 words, with an interlinear gloss and a free translation. You can provide other elements as well – an orthography, a font, poetry, whatever would be useful in fleshing out the language you have created. In a 1000-word essay, describe the world, or political project, or mode of communication that this language is meant to help enact. Discuss specific features of the language that point to this goal.
2. Critically analyze an invented language or a situation related to an invented language. Declare your intention to choose this option by April 7th. The paper should be roughly 3000 words (about 10 pages). You will need to come up with an essay prompt/research question and have it approved by me no later than May 5th. The same grading criteria used for the mid-term essay apply to this assignment as well. Your essay should include an introductory section that outlines the research question and why it is interesting. It should also contain a thesis statement about how you answer your research question. The essay should have a background section that provides enough historical or contextual information to allow the reader to critically analyze your claims. The essay should then have one or more sections that discuss the main issue presented in your research question. This should take up at least half of the paper. There should also be a brief concluding section that reiterates your question, your thesis, and the main evidence you use to support your thesis. Possible issues to examine: how does a specific invented language helped to create a world, a political project, or a mode of communication? How/why do linguists separate out invented from “natural” languages and does this distinction hold? Why are people so scared of computers/robots inventing languages? Compare/contrast invented languages and other forms of speech play or verbal art.

Course Policies

Communicating with me: The best way to contact me is through my regular email address (chandman@austin.utexas.edu) or through the email messaging system on Canvas. I will respond to your email within 24 hours, and usually much more quickly than that. If I am in my office, I will answer my office phone: 512-471-0059.

Use of Canvas: I use Canvas (<http://canvas.utexas.edu>) to distribute course materials, to send messages to the whole class, to post grades, and to provide you with a place to electronically submit assignments. Rely on this site for the most up-to-date information about the course (not the printed syllabus). You can find support at the ITS Help Desk at 475-9400, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., if you are not familiar with it.

Grading Procedures: Final letter grades will be given according to the following scale:

92.6-100	A	72.6-77.4	C
90-92.5	A-	70-72.5	C-
87.5-89.9	B+	67.5-69.9	D+
82.6-87.4	B	62.6-67.4	D
80-82.5	B-	60-62.5	D-
77.5-79.9	C+	lower than 60	F

Religious Holy Days: By UT Austin policy, you must notify me of your pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, I will give you an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

Q Drop Policy: If you want to drop a class after the 12th class day, you'll need to execute a Q drop before the Q-drop deadline, which typically occurs near the middle of the semester. Under Texas law, you are only allowed six Q drops while you are in college at any public Texas institution. For more information, see: <http://www.utexas.edu/ugs/csacc/academic/adddrop/qdrop>

Student Accommodations: Students with a documented disability may request appropriate academic accommodations from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities, 512-471-6259 (voice) or 1-866-329-3986 (video phone). <http://ddce.utexas.edu/disability/about/>

- Please request a meeting as soon as possible to discuss any accommodations
- Please notify me as soon as possible if the material being presented in class is not accessible
- Please notify me if any of the physical space is difficult for you

Academic Integrity: Each student in the course is expected to abide by the University of Texas Honor Code: "As a student of The University of Texas at Austin, I shall abide by the core values of the University and uphold academic integrity." This means that work you produce on assignments, tests and exams is all your own work, unless it is assigned as group work. I will make it clear for each test, exam or assignment whether collaboration is encouraged or not. Always cite your sources. If you use words or ideas that are not your own (or that you have used in previous class), you must make that clear otherwise you will be guilty of plagiarism and subject to academic disciplinary action, including failure of the course. You are responsible for understanding UT's Academic Honesty Policy which can be found at the following web address: http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/acint_student.php

University Resources for Students: The university has numerous resources for students to provide assistance and support for your learning, use these to help you succeed in your classes

The Sanger Learning Center: Did you know that more than one-third of UT undergraduate students use the Sanger Learning Center each year to improve their academic performance? All students are welcome to take advantage of Sanger Center's classes and workshops, private learning specialist appointments, peer academic coaching, and tutoring for more than 70 courses in 15 different subject areas. For more information, please visit <http://www.utexas.edu/ugs/slc> or call 512-471-3614 (JES A332).

The University Writing Center: The University Writing Center offers free, individualized, expert help with writing for any UT student, by appointment or on a drop-in basis. Consultants help students develop strategies to improve their writing. The assistance we provide is intended to foster students' resourcefulness and self-reliance. <http://uwc.utexas.edu/>

Counseling and Mental Health Center: The Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC) provides counseling, psychiatric, consultation, and prevention services that facilitate students' academic and life goals and enhance their personal growth and well-being. <http://cmhc.utexas.edu/>

Student Emergency Services: <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/emergency/>

Important Safety Information

Senate Bill 212 and Title IX Reporting Requirements. Under Senate Bill 212 (SB 212), the professor for this course is required to report for further investigation any information concerning incidents of sexual

harassment, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking committed by or against a UT student or employee. Federal law and university policy also requires reporting incidents of sex- and gender-based discrimination and sexual misconduct (collectively known as Title IX incidents). This means we cannot keep confidential information about any such incidents that you share with us. If you need to talk with someone who can maintain confidentiality, please contact University Health Services (512-471-4955 or 512-475-6877) or the UT Counseling and Mental Health Center (512-471-3515 or 512-471-2255). We strongly urge you make use of these services for any needed support and that you report any Title IX incidents to the [Title IX Office](#).

BCAL: If you have concerns about the safety or behavior of fellow students, TAs or Professors, call BCAL (the Behavior Concerns Advice Line): 512-232-5050. Your call can be anonymous. If something doesn't feel right – it probably isn't. Trust your instincts and share your concerns.

Evacuation Information: The following recommendations regarding emergency evacuation from the Office of Campus Safety and Security, 512-471-5767, <http://www.utexas.edu/safety/>

Occupants of buildings on The University of Texas at Austin campus are required to evacuate buildings when an alarm or alert is activated. Alarm activation or announcement requires exiting and assembling outside, unless told otherwise by an official representative.

- Familiarize yourself with all exit doors of each classroom and building you may occupy. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when entering the building.
- Students requiring assistance in evacuation shall inform their instructor in writing during the first week of class.
- In the event of an evacuation, follow the instruction of faculty or class instructors. Do not re-enter a building unless given instructions by the following: Austin Fire Department, The University of Texas at Austin Police Department, or Fire Prevention Services office.
- Link to information regarding emergency evacuation routes and emergency procedures can be found at: www.utexas.edu/emergency

Guns: Pursuant to SB11 (<http://www.legis.state.tx.us/tlodocs/84R/billtext/pdf/SB00011F.pdf>) and UT- Austin Campus Carry Policy (<https://campuscarry.utexas.edu/>; <https://www.policies.utexas.edu/policies/campus-concealed-carry>), persons with a current legally valid Concealed Carry License may carry a concealed legal handgun on or about their person in this class. Please take note of several provisions:

1. All legal provisions associated with concealed carry on campus must be followed without fail at all times. In addition to SB11 and UT-Austin Campus Carry policy, please review at least the 84 pages of applicable law curated by TX DPS (<http://www.txdps.state.tx.us/InternetForms/Forms/CHL-16.pdf>).

Please take special note of two of the many legal provisions:

- a. Holstering requirements: "A license holder who carries a handgun on campus must carry it in a holster that completely covers the trigger and entire trigger guard area. The holster must have sufficient tension or grip on the handgun to retain it in the holster even when subjected to unexpected jostling" (UT-Austin HOP 8-1060, VII-A-2).
- b. "On or about your person means a person licensed to carry a handgun must carry a handgun in a manner that the handgun is close enough to the license holder that he or she can reach it without materially changing position" at all times (UT-Austin HOP 8-1060, IV).

2. A license holder may not carry a partially or wholly visible handgun on campus premises or on any university driveway, street, sidewalk or walkway, parking lot, parking garage, or other parking area. (SB11, Section 4 and Texas Penal Code, Section 46.035(a-1)). Violation is a Class A misdemeanor or a third degree felony.

If any legal requirement is violated at any moment, the person who witnesses the violation should leave the classroom and call 911 immediately without waiting to ask me for permission. Police will respond. This will disrupt the class and may create a dangerous situation for all of us. Violations may result in criminal penalties and sanction by the university.