**SYLLABUS**

**ENGL 395/595-1: Invented Languages**

**Fall 2016**

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**Instructor:** James A. Berry, Ph.D. **Email:** jberry@uwsp.edu

**Office:** CCC 426 **Office phone:** 715-346-2385

**Office hours:** Mon/Wed, 12:00-1:00 p.m.

Tue/Thu, 10:00-11:00 a.m.

and by appointment

**Class meets:** Mon/Wed/Fri, 1:00-1:50 p.m. CCC 106

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**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

This course has two related but distinct goals.

The first is to study the broad phenomenon of invented languages (also known as constructed languages or *conlangs*). Humans have created languages for special purposes probably since the beginnings of language itself. Invented languages are, however, languages that are created to solve various communicative problems that so-called *natural languages* do not address.

Some of the best-known invented languages are Esperanto and Volapük, constructed in the late nineteenth century; they were created for use as auxiliary languages in real-world situations (and are sometimes referred to as *auxlangs*). Modern Hebrew is another example of language creation and management that has been successful on a large scale. Others were created for imaginary worlds, such as artistic use in literary and film applications; Klingon (from the *Star Trek* universe), Dothraki (from *Game of Thrones*) and the Elvish languages (from Tolkien’s Middle-Earth) are probably the most popular of these.

The second goal of the class is to understand and begin to apply the structural elements of language construction. As a class, we will explore the important parts of language, including the *phonotactics* (sound system), *morphology* (word structure), *syntax* (sentence structure), *lexicon* (vocabulary), *semantics* (meaning), *pragmatics* (intent), and *orthography* (written form) of language. We will take a typological approach, examining what can and can’t happen in language as we know it. You will then have the opportunity to create a basic language of your own, incorporating the appropriate structural elements.

**COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES:**

Upon completing this course, students will be able to:

* Discuss the phenomenon of constructed or invented languages in recorded history, including the purposes and goals of such languages.
* Examine the known parameters of human language and describe how these parameters have influenced the development of invented languages.
* Understand the structural underpinnings of language, such as phonology, morphosyntax, and semantics.
* Construct a rudimentary language system that incorporates such structural elements.

**TEXTS AND MATERIALS:**

***Purchase:***

Adams, Michael. *From Elvish to Klingon: Exploring Invented Languages*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Okrent, Arika. *In the Land of Invented Languages: Adventures in Linguistic Creativity, Madness, and Genius*. New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2010.

Rosenfelder, Mark. *The Language Construction Kit*. Chicago: Yonagu Books, 2010.

***Optional:***

Rosenfelder, Mark. *Advanced Language Construction*. Chicago: CreateSpace, 2012.

Rosenfelder, Mark. *The Conlanger’s Lexipedia*. Chicago: CreateSpace, 2013.

***Library reserve:***

Greenberg, Joseph H. *Language Universals*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 1962.

***Online resources:***

Conlang Wikia. <http://conlang.wikia.com/wiki/Portal:Main>

Language Creation Society. <http://conlang.org>

Omniglot (links). <http://www.omniglot.com/links/conlangs.htm>

Reddit Conlangs. <https://www.reddit.com/r/conlangs/>

Other readings will be assigned.

**ASSIGNMENTS AND ASSESSMENT:**

Over the course of the semester, there will be two quizzes and a semester project (broken up into mini-projects) in which you will create your own language (see below). You will present the project to your classmates and submit a written grammar and dictionary of your language at the end of the semester. Attendance and participation will also play a role in your grade.

***Quizzes:***

The quizzes for this class will focus on the history of invented languages and on the terms and concepts of language study.

***Semester project/mini-projects:***

This will be an applied project in which you utilize the concepts and rules we discuss in class to create your own language. The project will have multiple parts, and we’ll start on these in class and through homework assignments. Although this is inherently creative, it must also be anchored by sound linguistic principles.

You will need to create the following elements in mini-project assignments:

1. a basic idea of the world where your language will be spoken, along with a description of the speakers;
2. a sound system (vowels and consonants) for your language;
3. an inflectional morphology (and a derivational morphology if desired);
4. a syntactic system for building phrases, clauses, and utterances;
5. a brief dictionary of (at minimum 100) important words, with equivalents (or approximations) in English;

There will also be an essay (due during finals week) in which you reflect upon and discuss the important structural elements of your language, including any influences.

***Reading assignments:***

You will be assigned readings that are to be completed before class. If I am concerned that students are not reading, I reserve the right to give reading quizzes, which will be graded.

***Attendance and participation:***

Because so much of your learning will take place in class, you must attend on a regular basis. I will take attendance every class period. For this class, “attendance” means being present, on time, and prepared for the entire class period. A student who is chronically late to class, leaves early, or is not prepared to participate in the day’s classwork will not receive attendance and participation credit.

You will have two (2) “freebie absences” for the semester, excluding the final exam period. Use them carefully. If you miss more than two scheduled classes, each subsequent missed class will result in the loss of ***one grade*** (e.g. from A– to B+) from your attendance total.

***Grading:***

Quizzes (2 @10% each) 20%

Mini-projects (4 @15% each) 60%

Final reflection essay 10%

Attendance/participation 10%

TOTAL 100%

***Grading scale:***

93-100% = A 87-89% = B+ 77-79% = C+ 67-69% = D+ 0-59% = F

90-92% = A− 83-86% = B 73-76% = C 60-66% = D

80-82% = B− 70-72% = C−

**LATE WORK:**

If you submit work late, your grade for that assignment will be lowered at least ***one full letter grade*** (e.g., A− becomes B−). If you run into problems, you must notify me ***by email*** at least 24 hours before the due date to discuss the possibility of an extension, although an extension is not guaranteed.

**university policies:**

***UWSP Community Bill of Rights and Responsibilities:***

The University of Wisconsin−Stevens Point values a safe, honest, respectful, and inviting learning environment. In order to ensure that each student has the opportunity to succeed, we have developed a set of expectations for all students and instructors. This set of expectations is known as the Rights and Responsibilities document, and it is intended to help establish a positive living and learning environment at UWSP. This document can be found at <http://www.uwsp.edu/dos/Pages/Student-Conduct.aspx>

***Plagiarism and academic dishonesty:***

Academic integrity is central to the mission of higher education and UWSP in particular. Academic dishonesty (cheating, plagiarism, etc.) is taken very seriously. ***Don’t do it!*** The minimum penalty for a violation of academic integrity is a failing grade (zero) for the assignment. For more information, see the UWSP “Student Academic Standards and Disciplinary Procedures” section of the Rights and Responsibilities document, found here: <http://www.uwsp.edu/stuaffairs/Documents/RightsRespons/SRR-2010/rightsChap14.pdf>

***Emergency management:***

For details on all emergency responses at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, see the UWSP Emergency Management Plan at [http://www.uwsp.edu/rmgt/Pages/em/default.aspx](https://email.uwsp.edu/owa/redir.aspx?C=GX1lGcFYhkOSArus6JRql6OQYVSrmdEIh67-MUQ24B2cn-30AayTmwdAplBEblCPBxVKj6XLvH4.&URL=http%3a%2f%2fwww.uwsp.edu%2frmgt%2fPages%2fem%2fdefault.aspx)

**Americans with disabilities act (ADA):**

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal law requiring educational institutions to provide reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. For more information about UWSP’s policies, check here:

<http://www.uwsp.edu/stuaffairs/Documents/RightsRespons/ADA/rightsADAPolicyInfo.pdf>

If you have a disability and require classroom and/or exam accommodations, please register with the Disability and Assistive Technology Center and then contact me at the beginning of the course. I am happy to help in any way that I can. For more information, please visit the Disability and Assistive Technology Center, located on the 6th floor of the Learning Resource Center (the Library). You can also find more information here: <http://www4.uwsp.edu/special/disability/>

**Classroom protocol:**

We will spend some of our class time in group work and discussions. A portion of some classes will also include lecture. Regardless of the class format, you are expected to be prepared, to listen, to contribute, and to participate in an appropriate fashion.

At all times you should be respectful toward others; inappropriate/disruptive behavior won’t be tolerated. Our classroom is a place where we all feel safe when exchanging ideas. Diverse opinions and concepts are a fact of adult life both in and beyond college. As a class we will work together to understand and appreciate different viewpoints.

In this class there will be only limited use of cellular phones or other similar electronic devices; please do not spend class time sending or receiving text messages on a regular basis. Such behavior is disruptive to me (as I will most likely see you) and can obviously affect others and yourself. Because we will work on language projects in class, you are welcome to bring your laptops or other similar devices. Please use these only when so directed.

*Failure to abide by any of these rules may result in being asked to leave the classroom, resulting in an absence for that day.*

**TENTATIVE SCHEDULE:**

**Week Assignments**

**1** Introduction to class

(9/7-9) A brief history Adams, Ch. 1; Okrent, Chs. 1-7

**2** Esperanto, etc. Adams, Chs. 2,8, Appendix 2,8;

(9/12-16) Modern Hebrew Okrent, Chs. 8-12

**3** Klingon, Elvish, etc. Adams, Chs. 4-5, Appendices 4-5;

(9/19-23) Okrent, Chs. 23-26

***Quiz 1***

**4** Creativity and Rosenfelder, Chs. 1-2

(9/26-30) world-building

**5** A typological approach Greenberg, Chomsky, and

(10/3-7) language universals

***Mini-project 1 due***

**Week Assignments**

**6** Phonotactics Rosenfelder, Ch. 3

(10/10-14)

**7** (continued)

(10/17-21)

**8** Morphology Rosenfelder, Ch. 4

(10/24-28) ***Mini-project 2 due***

**9** Syntax Rosenfelder, Ch. 5

(10/31-11/4)

**10** morphology and syntax together

(11/7-11) ***Quiz 2***

**11** Lexicon and semantics Rosenfelder, Ch. 6

(11/14-18) ***Mini-project 3 due***

**12** (continued)

(11/21-25) **(No class on 11/25 – Thanksgiving holiday)**

**13** Pragmatics Rosenfelder, Ch. 7

(11/28-12/2) ***Mini-project 4 due***

**14** Orthography Rosenfelder, Chs. 8-9

(12/5-9)

**15** ***Final project portfolio due; presentations***

(12/12-14) wrap-up

**Finals** ***Reflection essay due***

(12/21, 10:00 a.m.)