

# Linguistic Perspectives on Language: **Invented Languages**

**Course:** 01:615:190:01

**Term:** Spring 2016 (online, asynchronous, 1.5 credits)

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**Office hours:** online and by appointment

## **1. 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 is an online, asynchronous course exploring the design of and motivation for invented languages from a modern linguistic point of view. Invented 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 invention, 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, Lojban, Valyrian, Elvish, and various philosophical languages.

## **2. Goals**

Throughout this course, students will:

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

## **3. Materials**

Two books are **required** for this course:

- Adams, Michael (ed.). 2011. *From Elvish to Klingon*. Oxford University Press: New York. (FEtK)
- Rosenfelder, Mark. 2010. *The Language Construction Kit*. Yonagu Books: Chicago. (LCK)

Both of these books are relatively inexpensive and will be available at the campus bookstore.

All other required reading is under the Resources page on the official Sakai site. Those readings that are required are indicated as such on the weekly lesson plan (see Sakai > Lessons) and on the schedule below.

**Recommended** reading: If you are interested, the following books offer an expanded view of the material in this course; however, the purchasing of these books is not necessary:

- Okrent, Arika. 2009. *In the Land of Invented Languages*. Spiegel & Grau: New York. (ILIL)
- Peterson, David J. 2015. *The Art of Language Invention*. Penguin Books. (ALI)

#### 4. Schedule

Below is a brief version of the schedule for this course. You are expected to follow along at the designed pace. Managing the workload of an online course requires responsibility beyond what is normally needed for an in-person course. The Reading Quizzes (RQs) are only open for a set period of time each week. Check the Test and Quizzes module on Sakai for the exact times. Also, please see the Lessons module on Sakai for the latest and most informative schedule and lesson plans. All information on the Sakai site itself supersedes any information below in case of a conflict.

	Topic	Readings	Due
<b>Week 1</b>	Introduction	SL Unit 1	RQ 1
<b>Motivations and Classification</b>			
<b>Week 2</b>	Why invent languages? What kind of invented languages are there?	SL Unit 2 Bianco 2004 FEtK ch. 1	RQ 2
<b>Linguistic Structure</b>			
<b>Week 3</b>	Klingon and the study of sounds	SL Unit 3 LCK "Sounds" FEtK ch. 5	RQ 3
<b>Week 4</b>	Esperanto and building words	SL Unit 4 LCK "Word Building" LCK "Grammar" pp. 57-78 FEtK ch. 2 pp. 31-40	RQ 4
<b>Week 5</b>	Lojban and the structure of sentences	SL Unit 5 LCK "Grammar" pp. 78-91 WIL Ch. 1 Sections 1-15 & Ch. 4 Highlighted sections	RQ 5 Assignment 1
<b>Week 6</b>	Philosophical Languages and meaning	SL Unit 6 ILIL "John Wilkins..." FEtK ch. 2 pp. 20-31 LCK "Semantics" pp. 92-97	RQ 6
<b>Additional Topics</b>			
<b>Week 7</b>	Elvish and writing systems	SL Unit 7 LCK "Writing systems" FEtK ch. 4	RQ 7 Assignment 2
<b>May 9, 10, 11</b>			Final Exam

Abbreviations in table: SL = Sakai Lessons module, FEtK = *From Elvish to Klingon*, LCK = *The Language Construction Kit*, ILIL = *In the Land of Invented Languages*, WIL = *What is Lojban?*, RQ = Reading Quiz

#### 4.1. *Navigating this Course*

You are expected to follow along with all material as the semester progresses. You should follow the checklist below at the start of each new unit:

- ✓ Read the corresponding Lesson in the Sakai Lessons module
- ✓ Read the assigned readings from the textbooks and/or posted PDFs.
- ✓ Post or answer study questions in the Forums module of Sakai.
- ✓ Take and submit the corresponding Reading Quiz in the Sakai Tests & Quizzes module.
- ✓ Check the schedule for upcoming Assignment due dates and plan accordingly.
- ✓ Take a break!

This course is **asynchronous** in the sense that there is no set hour during the week where you must be online. However, all students will follow the same week-by-week schedule of readings and assignments. How you plan your week is completely up to you, but the times that the Reading Quizzes are online are the same for all students.

### 5. Grading

Your final grade for the course consists of four elements: the reading quizzes, weekly participation, two projects and a final.

Assessment		% of Grade
Reading Quizzes	x7	30%
Participation	x7	20%
Assignments	x2	30%
In-person Exam	x1	20%

All work is expected to be completed by the dates indicated. As the dates are posted well in advance, there should be no excuses for late work. You should contact me as soon as you can about any potential conflicts or cases of illness. Unexcused late work cannot be accepted.

#### 5.1. *Reading Quizzes*

Each week, you must take a short quiz based on the readings and lesson materials. The quizzes are located in the Tests & Quizzes module of the Sakai site. Unless otherwise indicated, you can submit the quiz only **once**, and you must work on this alone. Once you start, you will have 90 minutes to complete the quiz! The lowest quiz grade is dropped. Each week's quiz becomes active on Monday at 6am and must be completed before that Saturday at 11pm.

#### 5.2. *Participation*

Participation is mandatory, graded, and fun. Because this is an online course, participation in the online tools (forums) is expected and required to best recreate the type of learning

environment present in a physical classroom. This is for the benefit of everyone involved, including you, your classmates, and me!

The entire class will be split into two groups, Group A and Group B (see below). Unless otherwise noted, each week you will be expected to post **one** discussion question OR **two** answers to other students' discussion questions, depending on which group you are in. The questions should be designed to elicit interesting discussion, and should not be yes/no or simple factual questions. The Sakai Lesson for that particular week will indicate the participation goals.

- Students with last names A through M: Group A
- Students with last names N through Z: Group B

### 5.3. *Assignments*

The two Assignments are worth 30% of the course grade. Each project is weighted equally (15%). The assignments are designed to let you use the tools and information learned in class in a creative way. All assignments are in the Sakai Assignments module. Assignments **must** be submitted as PDFs and all hand-drawn portions **must** be scanned. Libraries around campus have scanners available for students to use if you do not have your own.

### 5.4. *Final Exam*

The final exam is the only part of the course that cannot be completed online. The exam must be taken in-person at a Rutgers computer lab on the New Brunswick campus. The exact dates/times and place will be provided by the second week of the course.

## 6. Academic Integrity

Every student is expected to adhere to the Rutgers Academic Integrity Policy and Code of Student Conduct. Adherence to the Academic Integrity Policy is especially crucial in an online setting. All submitted work should be 100% the original work of the student. Collaborating with other members of the course is prohibited unless explicitly stated otherwise in the assessment instructions. This obviously excludes the online discussion and participation, where collaboration is essential and, in fact, the goal. The full policy can be found at the following link:

<http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-policy/>

## 7. Office of Disability Services

Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation:

<https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines>. If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus's disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. To begin this

process, please complete the Registration form on the ODS web site at:  
<https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form>.

Acknowledgements: This course was developed with assistance from Crystal Akers, Eric Bakovic, Veneeta Dayal, Jane Grimshaw, Paula Houghton, and Diti Bhadra.