LIN 4784 Writing Systems
Spring 2018

MWF 7th period (1:55-2:45 pm) AND 0021
Section 0016
Canvas, http://elearning.ufl.edu

Instructor: Ann Wehmeyer
Office: 320 Pugh
Office hours: T 5th-6th period, R 5th period, and by appointment
Contact: awehmeye@ufl.edu
Office phone: 352-273-2961

Course overview

This course examines all of the types of human writing systems worldwide, from the earliest to the most recent. The following topics will be explored in some detail:

- Typology
  - Units of writing and what they represent
  - Deep versus shallow orthographies
- Scripts and learnability
  - Learning to read
  - Neurolinguistic phenomena such as agraphia, alexia
- Cultural aspects of scripts
  - Typefaces, calligraphic styles, and their associations
  - Signage and linguistic landscape
- Decipherment of unknown scripts
  - Complicating factors
  - Methods
- Social aspects of scripts in context
  - Deviant orthography and linguistic play
  - Identity display, Performance of gender
  - Innovative symbols such as emoji

Course objectives

You will be able to explain how and where writing first originated, how those scripts changed over time, and how the scripts influenced the development of writing in other contexts. You will discover the difference between morphographic and phonographic scripts, and the differences between abjads, abugidas and alphabets. You will have practice writing each type of script, and will build sufficient knowledge of each type in order be able to recognize them into the future. The relation of script and orthography to the sounds of language can be messy and indirect; as such, you will be conversant in some of the challenges learning to read and write cross-linguistically. You will gain greater appreciation for the public face of script and orthography, and their communicative power in the social context, whether in the landscape or in the digital forms of new media.
Required texts:

3. Articles and Book Chapters on online Course Reserves, through UF Library, [http://web.uflib.ufl.edu/](http://web.uflib.ufl.edu/) or via button on Canvas. These readings are indicated by “CR” in the Daily schedule.

How to access:

- Select “Course Reserves” from left menu, log on, select “Main Menu,” and click on course number for readings. Select assigned reading to read online, save, or print.
- If you are off campus, you need to log into the UF VPN Client first, before accessing the internet. See [http://www.uflib.ufl.edu/login/vpn.html](http://www.uflib.ufl.edu/login/vpn.html) for information on downloading and installing the VPN Client. If you don’t access via the VPN Client, course reserves link will try to charge you money to use each article.

4. Articles and Book Chapters on Canvas, in Readings folder: For some exercises and other items, access through the course website. These are indicated by “R” in the Daily schedule.

Assignments and Grading:

1. **Exercises** (15%): These are nine exercise sets related to scripts discussed in Rogers, or other. Prepare along with the assigned readings, and submit to instructor at the end of class on the date the assignment appears in the Daily schedule. In addition, there are other exercises to be done in class, as indicated on the Daily schedule.

2. **Group Presentations** (15%): Select one of the following topics based on your L1/L2 expertise or interests, to present the main points of the assigned reading.

   a. You should illustrate, critique and add to those points by introducing supplementary materials and information.
   b. Sign up for your selection by going to “People” and then selecting “Presentation Groups” on Canvas. Each group should have 2 members.
   c. Submit one copy per group of the slides or other visual support to Assignments in Canvas at least one hour prior to your presentation.
   d. **Topics**
      
      i. 02/07/18 Egyptian hieroglyphs
      ii. 02/16/18 Hebrew
      iii. 02/21/18 Arabic
      iv. 03/28/18 Indian devanagari script (Sanskrit)
      v. 04/16/18 Use of emoji
   
   e. **Evaluation**: Your presentation will be evaluated according to these parameters.
      
      i. Engagement with assigned reading
         1. Key concepts are clearly identified
      ii. Provision of new and supporting material
         1. New data that enhances our understanding of the script and/or issues in question
iii. Exposition and style
   1. All members of the group participate
   2. Visual aids are clear, interesting, and creative
   3. Presentation flows well
iv. Posing and handing questions
   1. Group members pose questions that stimulate class discussion
   2. Group members respond to questions and moderate effectively

3. Writing object essay and presentation (15%), 1-5 pages.
   a. We will visit the Harn Museum of Art on Friday, February 9, during the class time. The purpose of the visit is to view selected objects from different countries and scripts that contain writing on them.
      i. If you miss this session, you will be able to schedule an individual viewing time, or you will be able to select other objects currently on display that contain some kind of text.
   b. Select one object for your study, and inform me of your selection before you leave the Harn.
   c. Questions to ask as you view the object and research some aspects of it:
      i. What is the object?
         1. Is it a part of an identifiable genre within that culture?
         2. Provide some background on the object type.
      ii. What is the script that appears on the object?
      iii. Script and text: main or subordinate?
         1. Is the writing the main focus of the object? If so, what sort of text is it?
         2. If the writing serves a supporting role on the object, explain what the writing contributes in the context of the other images and subject matter of the object.
      iv. Analyze the form of the graphemes.
         1. As applicable, what is the script style?
         2. How does the script style and format contribute to the overall impression and meaning of the object?
      v. Analysis of text.
         1. As applicable, transliterate all or a portion of the text, and translate to English.
      vi. Any other aspects of script and its contribution to meaning.
         1. Different colors of graphemes
         2. Different sizes of graphemes
   d. Write up your findings, and submit to Canvas.
      i. Evaluation will be based on:
         1. The thoroughness of your response to the questions in (c) above.
         2. Evidence of research on background of object type or other aspects of object.
            a. Use https://scholar.google.com. Input anything as a search term, and related scholarly studies will appear. If you start with http://www.google.com, you will get a hodgepodge of material, some of which is unreliable, and some of which is solid. It’s better to go for scholarly first, and then supplement with more general public-facing types of information.
   3. Style and mechanics
      a. Careful attention to word choice; sentences display complexity and ease of readability.
b. Essay is free of spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors.

c. Paper is double spaced, with 11 or 12-point fonts, and follows an established style (such as Linguistic Inquiry, see Files in Canvas).

e. Present your findings to the class in a 10-minute presentation. (5%)
   i. Submit slides to Canvas on the day of your presentation.

f. Submit to Canvas by 04/23/18. Late submissions will be downgraded by 5 percentage points per day.

4. Exams (45%): There will be three exams at roughly 4.5 week intervals. The exams will focus on key concepts and scripts. Question types may include multiple choice, true-false, matching, essay, and data analysis.
   a. Exam 1: 02/05/18
   b. Exam 2: 03/16/18
   c. Exam 3: 04/25/18 (Last day of class)
   d. Make-up Exams: Prior notification to awehmeye@ufl.edu, or 273-2961, and written documentation of illness or family emergency is required. Consult with instructor to schedule the make-up exam.

5. Attendance and participation (5%): Attendance will be recorded at each class meeting, and participation in class discussion is expected.
   a. Read the assigned texts carefully ahead of time, and be prepared to discuss them on the date that they appear in the Daily Schedule.

6. Grades
   a. Exercises 15%
   b. Group presentation 15%
   c. Object paper 15%
   d. Object presentation 05%
   e. Exam 1 15%
   f. Exam 2 15%
   g. Exam 3 15%
   h. Attendance and participation 05%

   i. Grading scale:

Policies and Expectations

a. You are expected to abide by the Student Conduct and Honor Code: We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity. On all work submitted for credit by students at the university, the following pledge is either required or implied: "On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment." All sources of information, including print, digital, and verbal, must be acknowledged. Verbatim materials must be indicated as such with quotations marks, and cited. This includes your own work, which should not be duplicated to serve dual purposes. See https://www.dso.ufl.edu/scrc/process/student-conduct-honor-code/ for elaboration of this code and an explanation of what counts as a violation.
b. **Special Accommodations**: Please let me know about any concerns regarding submission of assignments, testing, or other class requirements. You are welcome to visit during office hours, catch me after class, phone, or email. Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the Instructor when requesting accommodation. See [https://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/students](https://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/students) for an outline of how to start this process.

c. **Gator Rater**: Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at [https://evaluations.ufl.edu](https://evaluations.ufl.edu). Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at [https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results/](https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results/).

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**Daily Schedule**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading Assignment</th>
<th>Exercises/Presentations</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Week 1 Key terms and Script types</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>M 01/08/18</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>Course overview</td>
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<tr>
<td>W 01/10/18</td>
<td>Technical terms pertaining to scripts</td>
<td>Rogers, Chapters 1 and 2: Introduction, Theoretical Preliminaries, p. 1-19.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F 01/12/18</td>
<td>Morphographic writing</td>
<td>Rogers, Chapter 3: Chinese, p. 20-49.</td>
<td>Exercises 1, 2, 3, p. 48-49 in Rogers.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Week 2 Script types: Morphography</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>M 01/15/18</td>
<td>Martin Luther King Day</td>
<td>Classes suspended</td>
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<tr>
<td>F 01/19/18</td>
<td>Writing a morphographic script</td>
<td>Read through “Chinese Writing Exercise Materials” on Canvas. R</td>
<td>In-class writing practice</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Week 3 From morphography to phonography</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>M 01/22/18</td>
<td>Morphographic and phonographic writing, Japanese</td>
<td>Rogers, Chapter 4: Japanese, p. 50-68.</td>
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<tr>
<td>W 01/24/18</td>
<td>Languages that changed their writing systems: Hankul, an invented alphabet written in syllable glyphs;</td>
<td>Rogers, Chapter 4: Korean and Vietnamese, p. 68-74.</td>
<td>Exercise 4, p. 78 in Rogers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F 01/26/18</td>
<td>Variation across national borders: Hankul</td>
<td>• Sohn, Ho-min. 1997. Orthographic divergence in South and North Korea: Toward a unified spelling system. In The Korean alphabet: Its History and</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 4</td>
<td>Origins of writing</td>
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</table>
| **M 01/29/18** | The earliest writing system | Rogers, Chapter 5: Cuneiform, p. 79-96.  
  - Rogers, Exercise 3, p. 96, for in-class discussion. |
| **W 01/31/18** | Undeciphered script | Robinson, Chapter 7: The Proto-Elamite Script, p. 201-217. |
| **F 02/02/18** | Grapheme type identification | Reading a cuneiform text: See Cuneiform Exercise on Canvas.  
  - Film: “Before the Alphabet” (26 min.), in class |

| Exercise: Cuneiform Assignment in Canvas. |

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 5</th>
<th>Hieroglyphic script</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>M 02/05/18</strong></td>
<td><strong>Exam 1</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| **W 02/07/18** | Hieroglyphs | Rogers, Chapter 6: Egyptian, p. 97-114.  
  - Rogers, Exercise 6.12, p. 114, for in-class discussion. |
| **F 02/09/18** | Writing on objects | Class will meet in the Harn Museum. See [http://harn.ufl.edu/visit/plan](http://harn.ufl.edu/visit/plan) for bus routes, and protocols (e.g., backpacks must be checked, only pencils are allowed for writing).  
  - Select an object and inform instructor of your selection. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 6</th>
<th>Hieroglyphs to abjads</th>
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| **M 02/12/18** | Hieroglyphic writing: grapheme types | Collier, Mark and Bill Manley.  
| **W 02/14/18** | Decipherment of Egyptian hieroglyphs |  
  - Robinson, Chapter 1: Egyptian hieroglyphs—decipherment, p. 51-73.  
  - Robinson, Chapter 4: The Meroitic Script, p. 141-155. |
| **F 02/16/18** | Development of abjad systems | Rogers, Chapter 7: Semitic, p. 114-131 (through Hebrew).  
  - Exercise 1, p. 142-143 in Rogers. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Week 7 Semitic abjads</th>
<th>Group Presentation 2: Hebrew</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td>Arabic abjad, variant letter forms</td>
<td>Rogers, Chapter 7: Semitic (Arabic and others), p. 132-144. Exercise 2, p. 143-144 in Rogers. Group Presentation 3: Arabic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Public and social face of Arabic abjad</td>
<td>Petretta, Julia. 2014. Arabic sign design: Right to left and left to right. <em>Information Design Journal</em> 21:1, 18-33. CR</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Week 8 Development of alphabets</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td>Linear B The Phaistos Disk</td>
<td>Rogers, Chapter 8: Greek, p. 145-153.</td>
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<td>Robinson, Chapter 2: Linear B, p. 74-103.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Development of alphabetic systems; Linear B script</td>
<td>Rogers, Chapter 8: The Greek Alphabet, p. 153-169.</td>
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<td>Rogers, Exercise 2, p. 168, for in-class discussion.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Week 9, Spring Break 03/03 – 03/10/18</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 10 Cyrillic, Roman alphabets</td>
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<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td>Orthographic depth</td>
<td>Rogers, Chapter 9: The Roman Alphabet, p. 170-184.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Event</td>
<td>Details</td>
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<tr>
<td>F 03/16/18</td>
<td>Exam 2</td>
<td>Exam 1, in class, on all materials from 02/07/18 through 03/14/18</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Week 11 Spelling and punctuation</td>
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<tr>
<td>M 03/19/18</td>
<td>History of English orthography</td>
<td>Rogers, Chapter 10: English, p. 185-198. Exercises 2, 3, 4 p. 198 for in-class discussion.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Exercise: Write down one spelling challenge for you in English (e.g., something you are likely to misspell or confuse with another word that sounds or looks like the word you want to spell) and one punctuation challenge (e.g., how to use, whether to use). |
| F 03/23/18 | Class suspended, Instructor away at conference |                                                                         |
|         | Week 12 Abugida scripts and their origins        |                                                                         |
| M 03/26/18 | Indus Valley script: undeciphered scripts        | Rogers, Chapter 11: The Indian Abugida and Other Asian Phonographic Writing (through Indus Valley writing), p. 199-203.  
• Robinson, Chapter 10: The Indus script, p. 265-295  
| W 03/28/18 | Abugida systems; Derivative abugida systems      | Rogers, Chapter 11: The Indian Abugida and Other Asia Phonographic Writing (from 11.3 Brāhmī and Kharoṣṭhī), p. 203-232.  
Group presentation 4: Devanāgarī script (Sanskrit) |
<p>| F 03/30/18 |                                                | Pandey, Pramod. 2007. Phonology-orthography interface in Devanāgarī for Hindi. <em>Written</em> |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 13</th>
<th>Maya glyphs</th>
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</table>
| W 04/04/18 | Maya Glyphs | • Rogers, Chapter 12: Maya, p. 233-246.  
• Exercise 1, p. 246 for in-class discussion.  
• Robinson, Chapter 3: Mayan Glyphs, p. 105-138. |
| F 04/06/18 | Reading and writing Maya glyphs  
• Robinson, Chapter 9: The Zapotec and Isthmian Scripts, p. 245-263. |

| Exercise 1.8 Syllabic spellings, p. 53. |

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 14</th>
<th>Sociolinguistic aspects of script and orthography</th>
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</table>
| M 04/09/18 | Invented scripts  
Methods of classifying writing systems | • Rogers, Chapter 13: Other Writing Systems, p. 247-268.  
• Exercises 2, 3, 4, 5 for in-class discussion.  
• Rogers, Chapter 14: Classification of Writing Systems, p. 269-279. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 15</th>
<th>Sociolinguistic aspects of script and orthography</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
**Group Presentation 5:** Use of emoji—real examples. Do they support perspectives of Stark and Crawford? |
Script Mimicry

Sutherland, Paul. 2015. Writing system mimicry in the linguistic landscape. SOAS Working Papers in Linguistics 17, 147-167. CR

Exercise: Find an example of script mimicry in a local sign, take a photo and analyze it.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>04/18/18</td>
<td>W</td>
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<tr>
<td>04/20/18</td>
<td>F</td>
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<tr>
<td>04/23/18</td>
<td>M</td>
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<tr>
<td>04/25/17</td>
<td>W</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Week 16 Conclusion

Basic References on Writing Systems in UF Libraries


Taylor, Insup and David R. Olson, eds. 1995. Scripts and Literacy: Reading and Learning to Read Alphabets, Syllabaries, and Characters. P211 .S42 1995
