

LIN 6932 Writing Systems

Spring 2018

MWF 7th period (1:55-2:45 pm) AND 0021

Section 2320

Canvas, <http://elearning.ufl.edu>

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Image: wen 'text', from <http://www.gai8.com/zidian/334.html>



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 to be able to recognize them in 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

1. **Rogers**, Henry. 2005. *Writing Systems: A Linguistic Approach*. Oxford: Blackwell. ISBN 978-0631234647.
2. **Robinson**, Andrew. 2009. *Lost Languages: The Enigma of the World's Undeciphered Scripts*. New York: Thames & Hudson. ISBN 978-0-500-28816-0.
3. **Articles and Book Chapters on online Course Reserves**, through UF Library, <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> 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 handling 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. **Research paper** (30%), 10-15 pages: This paper should address an issue related to script or orthography, and may include data analysis. The topic is completely up to you, but must be cleared by the instructor. Some past examples have included (a) script choice for computer-mediated communications (CMC) in a case where there is no established script or orthography, (b) history of orthography of a given language (e.g., Xhosa), (c) psycholinguistics of orthography in second-language acquisition, (d) whether cuneiform was a Sumerian invention, (e) representation of profanity in comics, and (f) Taiwanese Zhuyin wen as (anti)social practice.

Your paper will be evaluated along the following parameters:

- a. Organization and coherence
 - i. Topic is clearly stated in introductory paragraph. Subsequent paragraphs develop and support arguments that illustrate and explain the topic. Concluding paragraph provides summing up of major findings, and a statement of issues that remain for future research.
- b. Critical thinking
 - i. An interesting question(s) is posed, the answer(s) to which involves probing and varied inquiry that relies on scholarly sources, as well as your own observations, analysis, and conclusions.
- c. Data analysis
 - i. There is identification of relevant data; analysis is sound.
- d. Style and mechanics
 - i. Careful attention to word choice; sentences display complexity and ease of readability.
 - ii. Paper is free of spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors.
 - iii. Paper is double spaced, with 11 or 12-point fonts, and follows an established style (such as *Linguistic Inquiry*, see Files in Canvas).
- e. Deadlines
 - i. Submit **topic** to Assignments by Friday, **February 09, 2018**. Provide a brief description of your proposed topic, and a brief explanation of why you are interested in it. You are welcome to discuss possible topics with me at any time.
 - 1. This should be one paragraph in length.
 - 2. 02% of grade
 - ii. Submit **First draft** to Assignments on or before **Monday, April 2, 2018**. This draft must contain a list of References, at least three pages of writing, and an outline of plans for the completion of any unfinished portions.
 - 1. 03% of grade
 - iii. Submit **Final version** to Assignments by **Wednesday, April 25, 2018**.
 - 1. 25% of grade
 - iv. *Late submissions will be downgraded by 5 percentage points per day.*

5. **Exam (15%):** 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. Make-up Exams: Prior notification to awehme@ufl.edu, or 273-2961, and written documentation of illness or family emergency is required. Consult with instructor to schedule the make-up exam.

6. **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.

7. **Grades**

a. Exercises	15%
b. Group presentation	15%
c. Object paper	15%
d. Object presentation	05%
e. Exam 1	15%
f. Research paper	30%
i. Topic	02%
ii. 1 st draft	03%
iii. Final version	25%
g. Attendance and participation	05%

 - h. Grading scale:
 - i. 93-100 A, 90-92 A-, 87-89 B+, 83-86 B, 80-82 B-, 77-80 C+, 73-76 C, 70-72 C-, 67-69 D+, 63-66 D, 60-62 D-, 59 and below E

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/sccr/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> 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>. 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/>.

Daily Schedule

Date	Topic	Reading Assignment	Exercises/Presentations
Week 1 Key terms and Script types			
M 01/08/18	Introduction	Course overview	
W 01/10/18	Technical terms pertaining to scripts	Rogers, Chapters 1 and 2: Introduction, Theoretical Preliminaries, p. 1-19.	
F 01/12/18	Morphographic writing	Rogers, Chapter 3: Chinese, p. 20-49.	Exercises 1, 2, 3, p. 48-49 in Rogers.
Week 2 Script types: Morphography			
M 01/15/18	Martin Luther King Day	Classes suspended	
W 01/17/18	Learning to read a morphographic script	Shu, Hua et al. 2003. Properties of school Chinese: Implications for learning to read. <i>Child Development</i> 74:1, 27-47. R	
F 01/19/18	Writing a morphographic script	Read through "Chinese Writing Exercise Materials" on Canvas. R	In-class writing practice
Week 3 From morphography to phonography			
M 01/22/18	Morphographic and phonographic writing, Japanese	Rogers, Chapter 4: Japanese, p. 50-68.	
W 01/24/18	Languages that changed their writing systems: Hankul, an invented alphabet written in syllable glyphs;	Rogers, Chapter 4: Korean and Vietnamese, p. 68-74.	Exercise 4, p. 78 in Rogers.
F 01/26/18	Variation across national borders: Hankul Vietnamese adaptation of Chinese characters and roman alphabet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sohn, Ho-min. 1997. Orthographic divergence in South and North Korea: Toward a unified spelling system. In <i>The Korean alphabet: Its History and Structure</i>, edited by Young-key Kim-Renaud, p. 193-217. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press. Rogers, Chapter 4: Vietnamese, p. 74-76. 	
Week 4 Origins of writing			

M 01/29/18	The earliest writing system	Rogers, Chapter 5: Cuneiform, p. 79-96. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. R <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Film: "Before the Alphabet" (26 min.), in class 	Exercise: Cuneiform Assignment in Canvas.
Week 5 Hieroglyphic script			
M 02/05/18	Exam 1	In class, on all materials through 02/02/18.	
W 02/07/18	Hieroglyphs	Rogers, Chapter 6: Egyptian, p. 97-114. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rogers, Exercise 6.12, p. 114, for in-class discussion. 	Group Presentation 1: Egyptian hieroglyphs
F 02/09/18	Writing on objects	Class will meet in the Harn Museum. See http://harn.ufl.edu/visit/plan for bus routes, and protocols (e.g., backpacks must be checked, only pencils are allowed for writing).	Topic for Research paper due. Select an object and inform instructor of your selection.
Week 6 Hieroglyphs to abjads			
M 02/12/18	Hieroglyphic writing: grapheme types	Collier, Mark and Bill Manley. 1998. Chapter 1: Hieroglyph. <i>In How to Read Egyptian Hieroglyphs</i> , p. 1-30. Berkeley, California: University of California Press. CR	Exercises 1.1, 1.2, 1.3m 1.4, p. 10-12 in Collier and Manley.
W 02/14/18	Decipherment of Egyptian hieroglyphs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. Group Presentation 2: Hebrew
Week 7 Semitic abjads			
M 02/19/18	Identity display in Hebrew	Vaisman, Carmel L. 2014. Beautiful script, cute spelling and glamorous words: Doing girlhood through language playfulness on Israeli	

		blogs. <i>Language & Communication</i> 34, 69-80. CR	
W 02/21/18	Arabic abjad, variant letter forms	Rogers, Chapter 7: Semitic (Arabic and others), p. 132-144.	Exercise 2, p. 143-144 in Rogers. Group Presentation 3: Arabic
F 02/23/18	Public and social face of Arabic abjad	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Petretta, Julia. 2014. Arabic sign design: Right to left and left to right. <i>Information Design Journal</i> 21:1, 18-33. CR • Allehaiby, Wid H. 2013. Arabizi: An analysis of the Romanization of the Arabic script from a sociolinguistic perspective. <i>Arab World English Journal</i> 4:3, 52-62. CR 	
Week 8 Development of alphabets			
M 02/26/18	Abugida in a Semitic language	Meyer, Ronny, 2016. The Ethiopic Script: Linguistic features and socio-cultural connotations. <i>Oslo Studies in Language</i> 8:1, 137-172. CR	
W 02/28/18	Linear B The Phaistos Disk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rogers, Chapter 8: Greek, p. 145-153. • Robinson, Chapter 2: Linear B, p. 74-103. • Robinson, Chapter 11: The Phaistos Disk, p. 297-315. 	
F 03/02/18	Development of alphabetic systems; Linear B script	Rogers, Chapter 8: The Greek Alphabet, p. 153-169. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rogers, Exercise 2, p. 168, for in-class discussion. 	
Week 9, Spring Break 03/03 – 03/10/18			
Week 10 Cyrillic, Roman alphabets			
M 03/12/18	Fit of orthography to phonemes of a language	Kerek, Eugenia and Pekka Niemi. 2009. Russian orthography and learning to read. <i>Reading in a Foreign Language</i> 21:1, 1-21. CR	
W 03/14/18	Orthographic depth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rogers, Chapter 9: The Roman Alphabet, p. 170-184. • Robinson, Chapter 5: The Etruscan Alphabet, p. 157-181. 	
F 03/16/18	Exam 2 Undergrad course	(Exam 1, in class, on all materials from 02/07/18 through 03/14/18)	Free day
Week 11 Spelling and punctuation			

M 03/19/18	History of English orthography	Rogers, Chapter 10: English, p. 185-198. Exercises 2, 3, 4 p. 198 for in-class discussion.	
03/21/18	Regularities in English orthography Punctuation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Achiri-Taboh, Blasius. 2017. The 'ph' of English orthography: A digraph or a sequence of separate phonemes? <i>English Today</i> 132, Vol 33:4, 47-49. CR Cop, Michael and Hunter Hatfield. 2017. An athletes [sic] performance: Can a possessive apostrophe predict success? <i>English Today</i> 131, 33:3, 39-45. CR 	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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recommended: Sproat, Richard. 2014. A statistical comparison of written language and nonlinguistic symbol systems. <i>Language</i> 90:2, 457-481. CR 	
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: Devanagari script (Sanskrit)
F 03/30/18		Pandey, Pramod. 2007. Phonology-orthography interface in Devanāgarī for Hindi. <i>Written Language and Literacy</i> 10:2, 145-162. CR	
Week 13 Maya glyphs			
M 04/02/18	Thai script	Winkel, Heather and Kanyarat Iemwanthong. 2010. Reading and spelling acquisition in Thai	First draft of research paper due.

		children. <i>Reading and Writing</i> 23:9, 1021-1053. CR	
W 04/04/18	Maya Glyphs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 Other Mesoamerican scripts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Johnson, Scott A. J. 2013. Chapter 1: The Nature of the Script (skim to p. 25, and then read more carefully to end). In <i>Translating Maya Hieroglyphs</i>, p. 15-57. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press. CR • Robinson, Chapter 9: The Zapotec and Isthmian Scripts, p. 245-263. 	Exercise 1.8 Syllabic spellings, p. 53.
Week 14 Sociolinguistic aspects of script and orthography			
M 04/09/18	Invented scripts Methods of classifying writing systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. 	
W 04/11/18	Sociolinguistic approaches	Sebba, Mark. 2009. Sociolinguistic approaches to writing systems research. <i>Writing Systems Research</i> 1:1, 35-49. CR	
F 04/13/18	New written registers	Tagliamonte, Sali A. 2016. So sick or so cool? The language of youth on the internet. <i>Language in Society</i> 45:1, 1-32. CR	
Week 15 Sociolinguistic aspects of script and orthography			
M 04/16/18	Innovation: emoji	Stark, Luke and Kate Crawford. 2015. The conservatism of emoji: Work, affect and communication. <i>Social Media + Society</i> July-December 2015:1-11. CR	Group Presentation 5: Use of emoji—real examples. Do they support perspectives of Stark and Crawford?
W 04/18/18	Script Mimicry	Sutherland, Paul. 2015. Writing system mimicry in the linguistic landscape. <i>SOAS Working Papers in Linguistics</i> 17, 147-167. CR	Exercise: Find an example of script mimicry in a local sign, take a photo and analyze it.
F 04/20/18	Writing objects presentations	Class member presentations	
Week 16 Conclusion			

M 04/23/18	Writing objects presentations	Class member presentations	Writing object essay due. Submit to Canvas.
W 04/25/17	(Exam 3) Undergrad course.	(Exam 3, in class, on material from 03/10/18 through 04/23/18.)	Final version of research paper due.

Basic References on Writing Systems in UF Libraries

- Baurmann, Jurgen, Hartmut Gunther, and Otto Ludwig, eds. *Schrift und Schriftlichkeit: ein interdisziplinäres Handbuch internationaler Forschung = Writing and Its Use: an interdisciplinary handbook of international research*. Z40 .S27 1994, v. 1-2
- Brown, Michelle P. *The British Library Guide to Writing and Scripts*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. 1998
- Cook, Vivian and Benedetta Bassetti, eds. 2005. *Second Language Writing Systems*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters. P 118.2 .S438 2005
- Coulmas, Florian. 2003. *Writing Systems: An Introduction to their Linguistic Analysis*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Coulmas, Florian. 1996. *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Writing Systems*.Z40 .C67 1996 Reference section
- Coulmas, Florian. 1989. *The Writing Systems of the World*. P211 .C67 1989
- Daniels, Peter T. and William Bright, eds. 1996. *The World's Writing Systems*. P211 .W714 1996**
- Downing, Pamela, Susan D. Lima, and Michael Noonan. 1992. *The Linguistics of Literacy*. P211 .L69 1992
- Gelb, I. J. 1963. *A Study of Writing*. Revised Edition. Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press. 1963
- Nakanishi, Akira. 1982. *Writing Systems of the World: Alphabets, syllabaries, pictograms*. Rutland, VT: Tuttle. Z40 .N2613
- Ong, Walter J. 1982. *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*. P35 .05 1982 c. 2
- Pontecorvo, Clotilde, ed. 1997. *Writing and Development: An Interdisciplinary View*. P118 .W75 1997
- Sampson, Geoffrey. 1985. *Writing Systems, An Introduction*. P211 .S341 1985b
- Senner, Wayne M., ed. 1989. *The Origins of Writing*. P211 .075 1989
- Sproat, Richard. 2000. *A Computational Theory of Writing Systems*. P211.4 .S67 2000
- Taylor, Insup and David R. Olson, eds. 1995. *Scripts and Literacy: Reading and Learning to Read Alphabets, Syllabaries, and Characters*. P211 .S42 1995
- Watt, W.C., ed. 1993. *Writing Systems and Cognition: Perspectives from Psychology, Physiology, Linguistics, and Semiotics*.
- Woodard, Roger D., ed. 1994. *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the World's Ancient Languages*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1994