

SYLLABUS

ENGL 341: Invented Languages

Fall 2023

Instructor: James A. Berry, Ph.D. (he/him) **Email:** jberry@uwsp.edu
Office: CCC 441
Office hours: Mon/Wed, 2:00–3:00 p.m., Tue/Thu, 1:00–2:00 p.m., and by appointment
Class meets: Tue/Thu, 11:00 a.m.–12:15 p.m. **Classroom:** CCC 206

The University of Wisconsin–Stevens Point occupies lands inextricably connected to the Ho-Chunk people and their sacred language, Hoocqk, and to the Menominee people and their sacred language, Omāēqnoomenēw-wēqnaesen, since time immemorial. We must acknowledge the deep Ho-Chunk and Menominee love for their languages and honor all those who speak and care for the Indigenous languages of Wisconsin. These other languages include: Măʼeekuneeweexhowāakun (Mohican), Hulunīxsuwaakun (Munsee), Ojibwemowin/ Anishinaabemowin (Ojibwe), Ukwehuwehnéha (Oneida), and Bodwéwadmimwen/ Neshnabémwen (Potawatomi).

Languages are key to the past, present, and future well-being of Indigenous nations. Collectively, we share an exigent responsibility to arrest language loss due to settler-colonialism; to support revitalization efforts; and to seek linguistic justice for Indigenous peoples.

(Adapted from Enwejjig land and language acknowledgment, UW–Madison)

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 additional languages for special purposes probably since the beginnings of language itself, and invented languages are created to solve various communicative problems that so-called *natural languages* do not address. We will examine auxiliary languages (*auxlangs*, such as Esperanto) and artistic or literary languages (*artlangs*, such as Klingon) and learn why these languages are created, known, and used.





The second goal of the class is to understand and begin to apply the structural elements of all languages, both natural and invented. As a class, we will explore the *phonetics* and *phonology* (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 (as far as we know) **can** and **can't** happen in human language.

Most of the class will center on a semester-long project in which you will have an opportunity to create a basic language of your own, incorporating the structural elements. You will record your work in a series of mini-projects that will create a *descriptive grammar* of your invented language. In this way, the class is more like a creative writing class, and we'll use class time to workshop your ideas.

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 phonetics, phonology, morphosyntax, semantics, pragmatics, and lexicon.
- Construct an invented language system that incorporates such structural elements.

REQUIRED TEXTS AND MATERIALS:**Purchase**

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

Peterson, David J. *The Art of Language Invention: From Horse-Lords to Dark Elves, the Words Behind World-Building*. New York: Penguin Books, 2015.

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.

Other resources will be available on Canvas.

MY CLASSROOM PHILOSOPHY:

One of the reasons I was drawn to linguistics as a field of study is that it combines the *universality* and *diversity* of the human experience. Language, it is often argued, is what makes us human. Therefore, it is my intent that students from all diverse backgrounds and perspectives be well-served by this course, that students' learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, and that the diversity that the students bring to this class be viewed as a resource, a strength, and a benefit.

We will use materials and activities that are respectful of diversity: gender identity, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, nationality, religion, and culture. Your contributions are encouraged and appreciated—after all, language is something we all share and bring with us. Please question my assumptions and your own and let me know ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally or for other students.

I ask of you at all times to be respectful and thoughtful toward others; aggressive and disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. Our classroom will be a place where all involved can feel brave enough to exchange ideas. As a class we will work together to understand and appreciate a variety of viewpoints.

NOTE: If you have experienced a bias incident (an act of conduct, speech, or expression to which a bias motive is evident as a contributing factor regardless of whether the act is criminal) at UWSP, you have the right to report it using this [link](#). You may also contact the Dean of Students office directly at dos@uwsp.edu.

LATE WORK AND PROBLEM SOLVING:

If you cannot turn in an assignment by the deadline, please notify me **by email** as soon as you can (preferably before the due date) to discuss an extension. Deadlines exist for a reason, but we all know that **things happen**.

I encourage you to communicate with me **when things do happen**: reach out before or after class, during office hours, over email, or by appointment any time we are both available. Please discuss concerns with me at the earliest possible time—while we both have options. I am generous with students who consult with me while issues are concerns, rather than crises.

It's important for us both to recognize and understand when too much time has passed to recover an assignment, or even a semester.

Of course, if an emergency situation does arise, please let me know when you are able.

ASSIGNMENTS AND ASSESSMENT:

Over the course of the semester, there will be three quizzes, regular homework assignments, 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.

Conlang project

This will be an applied project, central to our semester, in which you utilize the concepts and rules we discuss in class to design and 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 sketch 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; and
5. a brief **dictionary** of 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.

Quizzes

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

Homework assignments

Homework assignments will focus on developing a word list for your language, organized by semantic categories. This list will be the basis of your fifth mini-project, the dictionary.

Reading assignments

You will be assigned readings that are to be completed before class.

Attendance and participation:

Much of your learning will take place in our classes, so you should attend on a regular basis. What, exactly, does this mean in the age of Covid? For this class, “attendance” means being in the classroom **when it is possible for you to do so**.

Three and a half years after the start of a pandemic, these continue to be unprecedented times. We’re trying to hold a “normal” class while our lives have changed in many ways.

I will take attendance with a sign-in sheet after the first week. Two important rules:

- 1. PLEASE FOLLOW ALL UNIVERSITY GUIDELINES WITH REGARD TO ANY DISEASE.**
- 2. PLEASE DO NOT COME TO CLASS IF YOU ARE ILL.**

Aside from illness or other significant event (family emergency, etc.), you will have **2 freebie absences**. You can take them without notifying me. If you miss more than 2 classes (again, aside from significant life events such as illness/family emergency), each missed class lowers your attendance grade (e.g. 3 missed classes = A–; 4 = B+; 5 = B; etc.).

Grading

Quizzes (3 @ 5% each)	15%
Mini-projects (6 @ 12.5% each)	75%
(including final reflection, lexicon HWs)	
<u>Attendance/participation</u>	<u>10%</u>
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-		

UNIVERSITY POLICIES:***Student academic disciplinary procedures:******UWSP 14.01 Statement of principles.***

The Board of Regents, administrators, faculty, academic staff, and students of the University of Wisconsin System believe that academic honesty and integrity are fundamental to the mission of higher education and of the University of Wisconsin System. The university has a responsibility to promote academic honesty and integrity and to develop procedures to deal effectively with instances of academic dishonesty. Students are responsible for the honest completion and representation of their work, for the appropriate citation of sources, and for respect of others' academic endeavors. Students who violate these standards must be confronted and must accept the consequences of their actions.

UWSP 14.03 Academic misconduct subject to disciplinary action.**(1) Academic misconduct is an act in which a student:**

- (a) Seeks to claim credit for the work or efforts of another without authorization or citation;
- (b) Uses unauthorized materials or fabricated data in any academic exercise;
- (c) Forges or falsifies academic documents or records;
- (d) Intentionally impedes or damages the academic work of others;
- (e) Engages in conduct aimed at making false representation of a student's academic performance; or
- (f) Assists other students in any of these acts.

(2) Examples of academic misconduct include, but are not limited to: cheating on an examination; collaborating with others in work to be presented, contrary to the stated rules of the course; submitting a paper or assignment as one's own work when a part or all of the paper or assignment is the work of another; submitting a paper or assignment that contains ideas or research of others without appropriately identifying the sources of those ideas; stealing examinations or course materials; submitting, if contrary to the rules of a course, work previously presented in another course; tampering with the laboratory experiment or computer program of another student; knowingly and intentionally assisting another student in any of the above, including assistance in an arrangement whereby any work, classroom performance, examination or other activity is submitted or performed by a person other than the student under whose name the work is submitted or performed.

Commitment to integrity:

As a student in this course (and at this university) you are expected to maintain high degrees of professionalism, commitment to active learning and participation in this class, and also integrity in your behavior in and out of the classroom.

FERPA:

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) provides students with a right to protect, review, and correct their student records. Staff of the university with a clear educational need to know may also have to access to certain student records. Exceptions to the law include parental notification in cases of alcohol or drug use, and in case of a health or safety concern. FERPA also permits a school to disclose personally identifiable information from a student's education records, without consent, to another school in which the student seeks or intends to enroll.

Lecture materials and recordings for ENGL 341 are protected intellectual property at UW–Stevens Point. Students in this course may use the materials and recordings for their personal use related to participation in this class. Students may also take notes solely for their personal use. If a lecture is not already recorded, you are not authorized to record my lectures without my permission unless you are considered by the university to be a qualified student with a disability requiring accommodation.

Regent Policy Document 4-1

Students may not copy or share lecture materials and recordings outside of class, including posting on internet sites or selling to commercial entities. Students are also prohibited from providing or selling their personal notes to anyone else or being paid for taking notes by any person or commercial firm without the instructor's express written permission. Unauthorized use of these copyrighted lecture materials and recordings constitutes copyright infringement and may be addressed under the university's policies, UWS Chapters 14 and 17, governing student academic and non-academic misconduct.

EQUAL ACCESS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:

UW–Stevens Point will modify academic program requirements as necessary to ensure that they do not discriminate against qualified applicants or students with disabilities. The modifications should not affect the substance of educational programs or compromise academic standards; nor should they intrude upon academic freedom. Examinations or other procedures used for evaluating students' academic achievements may be adapted. The results of such evaluation must demonstrate the student's achievement in the academic activity, rather than describe their disability.

If modifications are required due to a disability, please contact the Disability Resource Center to complete an Accommodations Request form. Phone: 715-346-3365 or Room 108, Collins Classroom Center.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT:

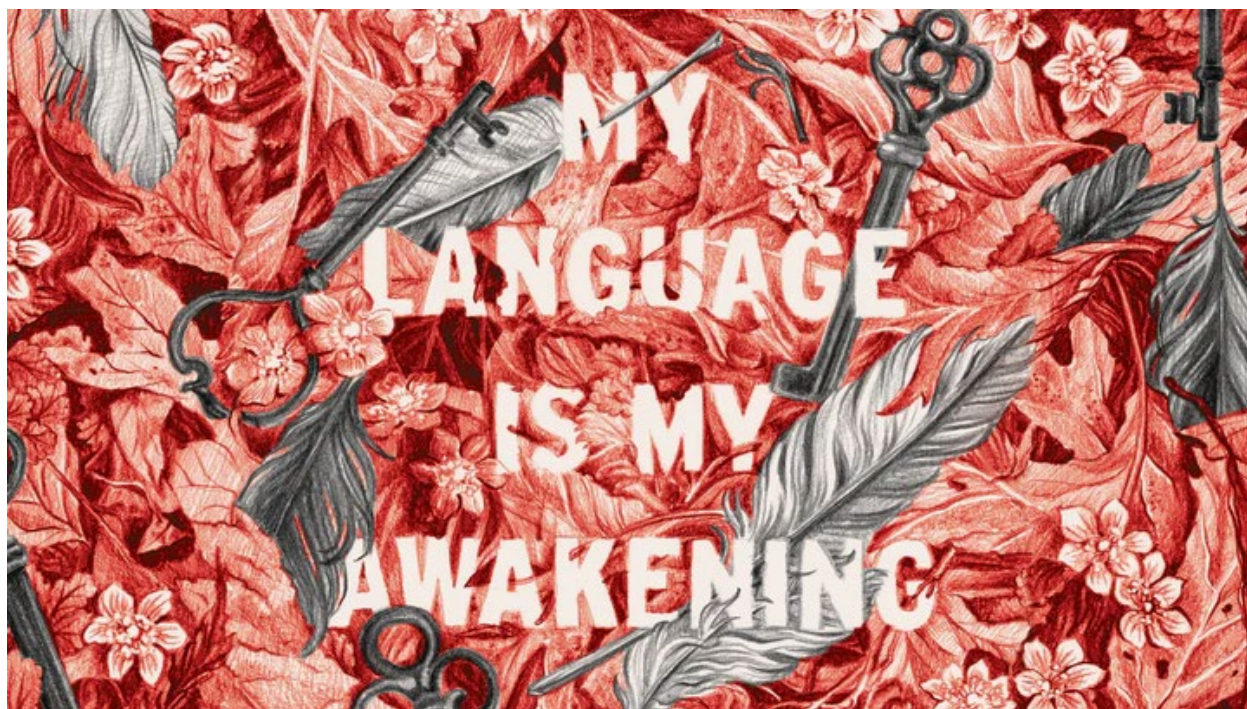
In the event of a medical emergency call 911 or use campus phone. Offer assistance if trained and willing to do so. Guide emergency responders to victim.

In the event of a tornado warning, proceed to the lowest level interior room without window exposure. See www.uwsp.edu/emergency/Pages/floor-plans.aspx for floor plans showing severe weather shelters on campus. Avoid wide-span structures (gyms, pools or large classrooms).

In the event of a fire alarm, evacuate the building in a calm manner. Meet 200 yards away from building. Notify instructor or emergency response personnel of any missing individuals.

Active Shooter – RUN. HIDE. FIGHT. If trapped, hide, lock doors, turn off lights, spread out and remain quiet. Call 911 when it is safe to do so. Follow instructions of emergency responders.

See UW–Stevens Point Emergency Procedures at www.uwsp.edu/emergency/Pages/emergency-procedures for details on all emergency response at UW–Stevens Point.



DAILY SCHEDULE (Note: subject to change)

<u>Date</u>	<u>Readings/Assignments</u>
Week 1 T/R 9/5-7	Introduction to course A brief history of invented languages (Okrent, Chs. 1-2; Peterson, Introduction)
Week 2 T/R 9/12-14	Auxlangs and arlangs (Okrent, Chs. 8-12; 23-26)
Week 3 T/R 9/19-21	World building Rosenfelder, Chs. 1-2, other handouts
Week 4 T/R 9/26-28	Mini-project 1 due Sound systems (phonetics/phonology) Rosenfelder, Ch. 3; Peterson, Ch. I
Week 5 T/R 10/3-5	Phonetics and phonology continued Designing your language
Week 6 T/R 10/10-12	Quiz 1 Phonetics and phonology continued Morphology Rosenfelder, Ch. 4; Peterson, Ch. II (first part)
Week 7 T/R 10/17-19	Mini-project 2 due Morphology continued ****NO CLASS OCTOBER 19****
Week 8 T/R 10/24-26	Quiz 2 Morphology continued
Week 9 T/R 10/31-11/2	Syntax Rosenfelder, Ch. 5; Peterson, Ch. II (second part)

<u>Date</u>	<u>Readings/Assignments</u>	
Week 10 T/R 11/7-9	Mini-project 3 due	Syntax continued
Week 11 T/R 11/14-16	Quiz 3	Syntax continued
Week 12 T/R 11/21-23		Lexicon and semantics Rosenfelder, Ch. 6 ***NO CLASS NOVEMBER 23***
Week 13 T/R 11/28-30	Mini-project 4 due	Semantics continued and pragmatics Rosenfelder, Ch. 7
Week 14 T/R 12/5-7		Pragmatics continued
Week 15 T/R 12/12-14	Mini-project 5 due	Presentations Course wrap-up
Finals Week R 12/21	Portfolio Final reflection	12:15 p.m.