

**UNIVERSITY OF PUERTO RICO
RIO PIEDRAS CAMPUS
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH**

Instructor: Dr. Alicia Pousada. Office hours: Mon. & Wed., 3-6 pm (Ped 4); Fri., 12:00-3:00 pm (Ped 108). x2035 or x3641. pousada.a@gmail.com.
Appointments recommended to avoid scheduling conflicts with other students.

Course Title: Language in Science Fiction / Fantasy

Course Number: INGL 3017

Number of Credit Hours: 3

Course Description: This interdisciplinary course is dedicated to the exploration of language and linguistics in science fiction / fantasy (SFF) literature, including language as a determiner of worldview (Whorfian theory), invented languages, and language as a literary device in the genre of SFF. The course will utilize novels, short stories, television programs, and movies to explore some of the basic foundations of speculative literature and linguistics.

Course Objectives: By the end of the semester, students will be able to:

1. understand some of the basic foundations of speculative literature and linguistics
2. identify and critique basic fallacies related to language and linguistics in works of science fiction/fantasy;
3. demonstrate how the Whorf hypothesis regarding linguistic determinism and linguistic relativity underlies much of science fiction/ fantasy writing;
4. describe a number of invented languages and other means of communication in popular works of science fiction/fantasy;
5. explain how language is utilized as a literary device in the genre of science fiction/fantasy;
6. construct a language suitable for use in a work of science fiction/fantasy and translate a brief literary excerpt into that language;
7. develop their personal language awareness;
8. enhance their appreciation of speculative literature as a genre
9. utilize critical thinking in the completion of analytical reactions to readings assigned in class
10. utilize their Internet information skills in order to locate reliable and authoritative online information to aid them in creating their invented languages
11. post thoughtful and critical online responses to discussion questions posed by the instructor on the course website blog, and

12. utilize the course website to obtain the necessary readings and supplementary audio and video files needed to accomplish the other objectives

In addition, students will be able to:

13. contribute in an effective form to the inclusion of fellow students with special needs in the classroom;
14. make the necessary accommodations to include fellow students with special needs in group activities.

Course Outline: (all materials available at: <http://ingl-3017.weebly.com>. (PW: **2014ingl3017**) All readings should be done before session in which they will be discussed. Outline subject to change.

- (8/11, 8/13) **General introduction to course**—review of syllabus; explanation of assignments and final project; link between language and science fiction / fantasy; need to include linguistics among the sciences that SFF draws upon; language as a mechanism for solving humanity's problems; SFF as a laboratory for exploring linguistic issues

Reading: (reference textbook for semester)

Rosenfelder, Mark. (2008). *The language construction kit*. Available for download in 3 parts on the course website. [Students should print out or bring it electronically to all class sessions, as we will be consulting it constantly.]

Vance, Jack. (1958). *Languages of Pao*, Ch. 1-5.

Blog Question #1

- 8/18, 8/20 **Nature of human language**--how it differs from animal communication; how human languages vary; what we might expect of languages used by other species; what would be required for interspecies communication to take place; notion of exolinguistics

Readings:

Handouts on characteristics of animal communication and human language

Nunberg, Geoff & Wasow, Tom (20xx.) An Overview.
<http://www.linguisticsociety.org/resource/domain-linguistics-overview>

Hockett, Charles. (1955). How to learn Martian. *Astounding Science Fiction* (May), 97-106.

8/25, 8/27 **Whorf hypothesis**—Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf’s thinking in relation to Native American languages; linguistic relativity and linguistic determinism; appearance in SFF; relationship between cultural characteristics of species and types of languages they speak (Elvish, Klingon, etc.)

Readings:

Vance, Jack. (1958). *Languages of Pao*, Ch. 6-10.

Swoyer, Chris. (2003). The linguistic relativity hypothesis.
<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/relativism/supplement2.html>

Klingon Language Institute at: <http://www.kli.org>

Blog #2

9/1 No class—Labor Day

9/3, 9/8 **Language as part of social engineering in science fiction; *The Languages of Pao* (Vance), *1984* (Orwell), *Babel-17* (Delany); language control as criterion for dystopias**

Readings:

Vance, Jack. (1958). *Languages of Pao*, Ch. 11-21.

Assignment #1: Analyze the list provided by your professor of the neologisms or coined words in *The Languages of Pao*. Provide their probable meanings. Classify them into groups, and comment on why you think the author invented them. (2-3 pages) Due 9/10

Videos: Excerpts from “Enemy Mine” and “Vox Sola” (STTNG)

9/10, 9/15, 9/17 **Language & gender in speculative literature--** Suzette Hayden Elgin’s *Native Tongue*; importance of linguists in future societies; creation of a woman’s language (Láadan); role of language in feminist literature; how language acquisition theory is interpreted in SFF

Readings:

Elgin, Suzette Hayden. (1985). *Native Tongue*. Ch. 1-10.

Elgin, Suzette Hayden. (1985). *Native Tongue*. Ch. 11-24.

Handouts on structure and vocabulary of Láadan

Blog #3

9/22, 9/24
9/29, 10/1 **Language as the basis of fantasy worlds**—Tolkien as philologist and historical linguist; Tolkien’s Middle-earth languages; how constructed languages led to writing of narratives

Readings: Excerpts from *The Lord of the Rings* (Tolkien)

Handouts on Quenya & Sindarin (Elvish)

Excerpt from Noel, Ruth S. (1980). *The languages of Tolkien’s Middle-earth*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Video excerpts from “TLOR: The Fellowship of the Ring”

Audio recording of Tolkien reading “Namarie”

Final project (Phase 1): Sound system for your constructed language due 9/29

10/6, 10/8,
10/15, 10/20 **Other ways in which language issues are resolved in science fiction / fantasy;** universal translators; telepathy; empathic communication; sign language; bilingual interpreters; problems presented by time travel; talking robots and androids

10/13 **No class—Discovery of America**

Readings:

Excerpt from: Ursula Le Guin’s *Left hand of darkness*.

Excerpt from: Robert Heinlein’s *The moon is a harsh mistress*.

Video: *Star Trek Next Generation*: “Loud as a whisper”

Final project (Phase 2): 50 words of different word classes in your invented language due 10/15.

Assignment #2: Written reaction to metaphoric language used in STNG: Darmok episode (due 10/22). [Episode available at: http://www.cbs.com/shows/star_trek_the_next_generation/video/9wxVwBc3oADLwIIA35f3ZKLe0ueu7mSY/star-trek-the-next-generation-darmok/.] (Disable ad blockers for video to run.)

10/22, 10/27
10/29 **How language functions as literary device;** role of language in developing setting, characterization, plot, theme, conflict, point of view, etc.; how good speculative writers utilize language to enhance plausibility; the linguistic structure of science fiction stories

Readings:

Handouts on structure of short stories and novels and different types of SFF (utopias vs. dystopias)

Niven, Larry. (1976). The words in science fiction. In Bretnor, R. (Ed.). *The craft of science fiction* (pp. 178-194). NY: Harper Row.

11/3, 11/5, 11/10 **Review of common linguistic myths perpetuated by science fiction / fantasy literature;** how to spot them; why they occur; “hard” vs. “soft” SFF

Final project (Phase 3): Preliminary grammar for constructed language due 11/10

11/12, 11/17 **Conclusion of course;** summation of what we’ve learned;
11/24, 12/1 individual consultations on final projects

11/26 No class—professor traveling

Final project (Phase 4): Final version of constructed language (Phases 1-3 plus literary text translation combined in one cohesive report) due 12/1

Teaching Strategies: Lecture, discussion, active fieldwork

Note: Those students who receive services from Vocational Rehabilitation should communicate with the professor at the beginning of the semester to plan the reasonable accommodation and the necessary equipment according to the recommendations of the Oficina de Asuntos para las Personas con Impedimento (OAPI) of the office of the Dean of Students. In addition, those students with special needs that require some type of assistance or accommodation should communicate with the professor.

Resources and Equipment Required:

Required texts:

- Elgin, Suzette Hayden. (1985 / 2000 reprint). *Native Tongue*. NY: The Feminist Press at CUNY, \$16 (new), \$3-\$9 (used).

- Vance, Jack. (1958). *The languages of Pao*. New York: Ace Books. Available in .pdf format on course website.
- Rosenfelder, Mark. (2008). *The language construction kit*. Available in .pdf format on course website.

Internet access (vital to course)

Methods of Evaluation:

- Weekly readings from assigned books and articles and active participation in class and online blog discussions of readings. (20%)
- Two short critical analyses of materials read/viewed during course, 20% each (40%)
- Final project [constructing sci-fi/fantasy language & brief translation of literary excerpt in four phases, 10% each] (40%)
- Differentiated evaluation of students with special needs

Grading System: A, B, C, D, F.

Bibliography: (utilized for preparing class)

Anderson, Poul. (1985). *The long night*. Tor Books.

Arnason, Eleanor. (1999). The grammarian's five daughters. *Realms of Fantasy*, 29, 38-65. Available at: Strange Horizons.
<http://www.strangehorizons.com/2004/20040329/grammarian.shtml>

Barnes, Myra Edwards. (1975). *Linguistics and languages in science fiction-fantasy*. New York: Arno Press.

Barnes, Myra Edwards. (1975). Using science fiction to teach linguistics. *College Composition and Communication*, 26 (4), 392-394.

Bell, Judy W. (1971). The language of J. R. R. Tolkien in *The Lord of the Rings*. In GoodKnight, Glen (Ed.). *Mythcon I: Proceedings* (pp. 35-40). Los Angeles: Mythopoeic Society.

Brooke-Rose, Christine. (1981). *A rhetoric of the unreal: Studies in narrative and structure, especially of the fantastic*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Carr, T. (Ed.). (1974). *Fellowship of the stars*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Carter, Raphael. (1994-2003). The Darmok dictionary. Accessible at: <http://rec.horus.at/trek/lists/darmok.html>

Cherryh, C. J. (1994). *Foreigner: A novel of first contact*. New York: Daw Books.

Delany, Samuel R. (1977). *The jewel-hinged jaw: Notes of the language of science fiction*. New York: Berkeley Publishing Corporation.

Elgin, Suzette Hayden. (1985). *Native Tongue*. London: Women's Press.

_____. (1987). Women's language and near future science fiction: A reply. *Women's Studies* 14 (2), 175-181.

_____. (1999). Waterships all the way down: Using science fiction to teach linguistics. In Wheeler, Rebecca S. (Ed.). *Language alive in the classroom*. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 157-166.

_____. (2004). We have always spoken Panglish. Available at: <http://www.sfw.org/members/elgin/Story-Panglish.html> .

Farmer, Philip José. (1978). *Tongues of the moon*. Jove.

Fauskanger, Hilge. (2007). Quenya course online. <http://www.uib.no/people/hnohf/qcourse.htm>

Flieger, Verlyn. (2002). *Splintered light: Logos and language in Tolkien's world*. Kent State University Press.

Foster, M.A. (1979). *Day of the Klesh*. New York: Daw Publishing.

Gerrold, David & Niven, Larry. (1971). *The flying sorcerers*. New York: Ballantine Books.

Haldeman, Joe. (1978). Anniversary project. In *Infinite dreams*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

Hardy, Sylvia. (2003). A story of the days to come: H.G. Wells and the language of science fiction. *Language and Literature*, 12 (3), 199-212.

Heinlein, Robert A. (1956). *Time for the stars*. New York: Ballantine Books.

_____. (1973). *Time enough for love*. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons.

_____ (1997). *The moon is a harsh mistress*. Orb Books.

Hockett, Charles. (1955). How to learn Martian. *Astounding Science Fiction* (May), 97-106.

Kay, Paul & Kempton, Willett. (1984). What Is the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis? *American Anthropologist*, 86 (1), 65-79.

Lapp, Ralph E. (1961). How to talk to people, if any, on other planets. *Harper's Magazine* (March), 58-63.

Lobdell, Jared. (2004). *The world of the rings: Language, religion, and adventure in Tolkien*. Open Court Publishing.

LeGuin, Ursula. (1977). *The left hand of darkness*. New York: Ace Books.

_____ (1974). *The dispossessed*. New York: Avon Books.

_____ (1979). *The language of the night: Essays on fantasy and science fiction*. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons.

_____ (2001). *Always coming home*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Lewis, C.S. (1965). *Out of the silent planet*. New York: Macmillan.

Mahoney, Elisabeth. (1995). Claiming the speakwrite: Linguistic subversion in the feminist dystopia. In Mills, Sara. (ed.). *Language and gender: Interdisciplinary perspectives* (pp. 121-131). London: Longman.

Meyers, Walter M. (1980). *Aliens and linguists: Language study and science fiction*. Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press.

Niven, Larry. (1976). The words in science fiction. In Bretmar, Reginald (Ed.). *The craft of science fiction* (pp. 180-on). New York: Harper Row.

Noel, Ruth S. (1980). *The languages of Tolkien's Middle-earth*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Okrand, Marc. (1985). *The Klingon dictionary*. New York: Pocket Books.

Okrent, Arika. (2009). *In the land of invented languages*. New York: Spiegel and Grau.

Panshin, Alexei. (1968). *Rite of passage*. New York: Ace Books.

Park, T. Peter. (2000). The "Language of Space". High Strangeness Reports. The Anomalist Website. Accessed at: <http://www.anomalist.com/reports/language.html>

Pohl, Fredrik & Williamson, Jack. (1965). *Starchild*. New York: Ballantine Books.

Post, Jonathan Vos. (1997). Me human, you alien: How to talk to an extraterrestrial. In *The handbook of UFO contact*. New York: William Morrow & Co.

Prucher, Jeff. (2007). *Brave New Words: The Oxford Dictionary of Science Fiction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Romaine, Suzanne. (1999). *Communicating gender* (pp. 323-355). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Rosenfelder, Mark. (2008). *The language construction kit*. Accessible at: <http://www.zompist.com/kit.html> .

Rosenfelder, Mark. (2010). *The language construction kit*. (Expanded version). Chicago: Yonagu Books.

Rosenfelder, Mark. (2010). *The planet construction kit*. Chicago: Yonagu Books.

Russell, Mary Doria. (1997). *The Sparrow*. New York: Ballantine Books.

Rye, Justin. (2002). A primer in SF xenolinguistics. Accessible at: <http://www.xibalba.demon.co.uk/jbr/lingo.html>.

Sapir, Edward. (1921). Language and Literature. In *Language: An introduction to the study of speech*. (Ch. XI). New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company.

SFF.net. Science Fiction Fantasy website. Available at : <http://www.sff.net>

Sisk, David W. (1997). *Transformations of language in modern dystopias*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

Stockwell, (2003). Introduction: Science fiction and literary linguistics. *Language and Literature*, 12, 195-198.

Stover, Leon E. (1973). Anthropology and science fiction. *Current Anthropology*, 14 (4), 471-474.

Torres, L. (2002). *Estrategias de intervención para la inclusión*. Río Piedras: Editorial de la Universidad de Puerto Rico.

_____ (2002). *Asistencia tecnológica derecho de todos*. Río Piedras: Editorial de la Universidad de Puerto Rico.

Vance, Jack. (1958). *The languages of Pao*. New York: Ace Books.

Weilgart, John W. (1962). *aUI: The language of space: Pentecostal logos of love and peace*. Decorah, Iowa: Cosmic Communication Co.

Wells, H.G. (1923). *Men like gods*. London: Cassell.

Whorf, Benjamin Lee. (1940). Science and linguistics. *Technological Review*, 42 (6), 229-231, 247-248. Accessed online at: <http://web.mit.edu/allanmc/www/whorf.scienceandlinguistics.pdf>

Wilhelm, Maria & Mathison, Dirk. (2009). *James Cameron's Avatar: An activist survival guide*. New York: HarperCollins.

Wolmark, Jenny. (1995). Cyborgs and cyberpunk: Rewriting the feminine in popular fiction. In Mills, Sara (Ed.). *Language and gender: Interdisciplinary perspectives* (pp. 107-120). London: Longman.