Course description
This course explores the ways in which writing has been conceptualized in social anthropology, anthropological linguistics and anthropological archaeology. The overall theme is to demonstrate that there is no natural tendency for writing systems to ultimately develop into alphabetic scripts. A comparative study of various forms of graphic communication, encompassing both non-glottic and glottic sign systems, is undertaken to better understand the nature of pristine and contemporary scripts around the world and to consider alternative models to explain the origins, the spread, and the obsolescence of scripts. The study of diverse scribal traditions from archaeological and ethnographic perspectives will allow us to explore the relations between writing, language, cognition, literacy, power, and the production of social memory. The course is library intensive and students are expected to conduct original research. It also fosters teamwork by engaging students in a group project, separate from their individual research paper, aimed at designing themes for the script for a documentary on writing.

Learning goals
The aims of the course are for students to realize the significance of writing as a cultural practice, and the societal implications that such specialized knowledge and its underlying technologies entail. In additions, the course helps students develop their synthesizing reading skills, their critical thinking, visual perception and analytical approaches, and in furthering their writing skills by building an argument and supporting it with empirical evidence.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sept W 3</td>
<td>Why writing?</td>
<td>None</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sept W 10</td>
<td>Semiotics and Writing</td>
<td>Harris 1995: Parts 1 and 2; Ingold 2007; Harris 2000, chapters 1-3</td>
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<td>Sept M 15</td>
<td>Semasiography</td>
<td>Harris 2000: chapter 6; Salomon 2001; Boone 2004; Jackson 2013</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sept M 22</td>
<td>Writing as visible speech: Possibilities and constraints</td>
<td>Holenstein 1983; Coulmas 1989: 37-54; Houston 2004a; Basso 1974</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sept M 29</td>
<td>Cuneiform technologies of writing</td>
<td>Walker 1987</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct M 6</td>
<td>The art of writing in ancient China</td>
<td>Keightley 1996; Bagley 2004</td>
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<td>Oct W 8</td>
<td>Early phonetic scripts in Mesoamerica</td>
<td>Justeson 1986; Rodríguez Martínez et al 2006; Houston 2004b; Burns &amp; Kelker 2009</td>
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<td>Oct W 22</td>
<td>Divine kings; divine scribes:</td>
<td>Lounsbury 1991; Houston 2000</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Social dimensions of the Maya scribal tradition</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Reading Material</td>
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<td>Oct W 29</td>
<td>Writing and empire: The Aztec case Film <em>Tlacuilo</em></td>
<td>Nicholson 1973; Dibble 1971; Boone 1996; Lacadena 2008</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov M 3</td>
<td>Aegean scripts and the invention of alphabetic writing</td>
<td>Kober 1948; Nakassis 2010 (Chadwick 1958, optional)</td>
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<td>Nov M 10</td>
<td>Workshop: working with undeciphered scripts</td>
<td>Urcid 2001 Chapter 3; Moser 1983</td>
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<td>Nov W 12</td>
<td>Workshop: working with undeciphered scripts</td>
<td>Chinchilla 2011</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov M 17</td>
<td>Workshop: working with undeciphered scripts</td>
<td>None</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov W 19</td>
<td>Script obsolescence</td>
<td>Houston, Baines, and Cooper 2003</td>
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<td>Nov M 24</td>
<td><strong>Group project</strong></td>
<td>Martin 1994; Trigger 2004</td>
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<td>Film <em>Sign, Symbol, and Script: Origins of written Communication and the birth of the alphabet</em></td>
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<td>Dec M 1</td>
<td><strong>Group project presentation</strong></td>
<td>None</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dec W 3</td>
<td><strong>Group project presentation</strong></td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec F 12</td>
<td><strong>Final paper due</strong> no later than 5:00 pm</td>
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**Students with extra challenges**

If you are a student with a documented disability at Brandeis University and if you wish to request a reasonable accommodation for this class, please see me immediately. Keep in mind that reasonable accommodations are not provided retroactively.

**Course credit**

This course can count towards a major or minor in Latin American and Latino Studies if the student writes the research paper on any topic dealing with the intersection of writing and Latin America (past or present) or the Latin American diaspora in the USA.

**Attendance policy**

Regular attendance to class is expected. Absence from classes will only be accepted in cases of medical or extreme emergencies, and should be timely notified in person or by email. No more
than one unexcused missed class will be accepted; otherwise the final grade goes down a third of a letter for each additional missed class.

Reading assignments
Reading assignments from the textbook and additional sources posted on Latte should be completed by the dates indicated above. Reading of these materials is essential for your participation in class. Participation in class counts for 10% of the final grade.

Written and Oral Assignments
There will be four assignments throughout the course:

- Monday September 22: submit a sentence in English written in rebus writing (5% of final grade).
- Wednesday October 15: submit an outline of your course paper.
- Monday November 24 through Wednesday December 3 (three classes) are sessions devoted to a class project. Attendance is obligatory so that the entire class, divided into groups, discusses and presents the themes for the documentary’s script.
- Friday December 12: Course paper is due no later than 5:00 pm.

The final paper should have between 12-15 pages of text (excluding the bibliography). Illustrations, diagrams, maps, and visual examples of inscriptions are encouraged, but should be limited to 5 or 6 additional pages. The term paper contributes 40% of the final grade, with 5% of the grade subtracted each subsequent day if the paper is submitted after the deadline. Papers are not accepted after Saturday December 15 at 9am.

Class project
The goal of the project is to develop themes for a script of a documentary on writing (25% of the final grade). Students work in groups and deliver in class a Power Point presentation

Exam
A take-home midterm is due Wednesday October 8 (20% of the final grade). The exam will involve writing one essay from two alternative questions aimed at fostering critical thinking by comparing and contrasting assumptions, statements, or theoretical issues discussed in class and based on the readings.

Summary of grading
- Participation in class - 10%
- Sentence in rebus 5%
- Midterm - 20%
- Term paper 40%
- Class project 25%
Use of laptops, tablets, and phones
Students are welcomed to use a laptop computer or a tablet in class provided it is used for note taking or for web searches specifically related to the topic being discussed. If a student is found using the devise for other purposes, his/her right to use it will be immediately suspended for the rest of the semester. The use of mobile phones is not allowed.

Academic Integrity
Academic integrity is central to the mission of educational excellence at Brandeis University. Each student is expected to be familiar with, and to follow, the University’s policies on academic integrity. Please consult Brandeis University Rights and Responsibilities (http://www.brandeis.edu/studentaffairs/srcs/rr/) for all policies and procedures. All policies related to academic integrity apply to in-class and take home projects, assignments, exams, and quizzes. Students may only collaborate on assignments with express permission. Allegations of alleged academic dishonesty will be forwarded to the Director of Academic Integrity. Sanctions for academic dishonesty can include failing grades and/or suspension from the university.

Textbook (online access available through Brandeis OneSearch)
Harris, Roy
2000 Rethinking Writing. Indiana University Press, Bloomington. (Hard copy P211.H3515)

Class readings in alphabetical order (available on Latte)
Bagley, Robert, W.

Baines, John

Basso, Keith

Boone, H. Elizabeth and Walter D. Mignolo (editors)

Boone, H. Elizabeth
Washington D.C.


Bruhns, Karen, and Nancy Kelker

Clement, Victoria

Chinchilla Mazariegos, Oswaldo

Coe, Michael


Coulmas, Florian

Dalby, David

De Francis, John

Dibble, Charles E.

Dixon, Judith

Driscoll, Stephen

Fossa, Lydia

Goody, Jack.

Harris, Roy

Holenstein, Elmar

Houston, Stephen


Houston, Stephen, John Baines, and Jerrold Cooper

Ingold, Tim

Jansen, Marteen
Justeson, John

Justeson, John, and L.D. Stephens

Keightley, David

Kober, Alice, E.

Kubler, George

Langley, James C.

León-Portilla, Miguel

Lounsbury, Floyd

Martin, Henri-Jean

Moser, Christopher

Nakassis, Dimitri
2010 Structuration and the State in Mycenaean Greece. In *Agency in Ancient Writing*,

Nelson, Jennifer, L.

Nicholson, Henry, B.

Ong, J. Walter

Pohl, John, and Bruce Byland

Quirke, S. and C. Andrews

Rodríguez Martínez et al.

Salomon, Frank


Sampson, Geoffrey

Scancarelli, Janine
Schmandt-Besserat, Denise
1992  *Before Writing: From Counting to Cuneiform.*  University of Texas Press, Austin.

Silberman, Neil Asher

Smalley, William A., Chia Koa Vang, and Gnia Yee Yang

Smith, Adam

Smith, E. Mary

Stuart, David and Stephen Houston

Taube, Karl

Trigger, Bruce, G.

Troike, Nancy

Urcid, Javier

Urton, Gary
1998  From Knots to Narratives: Reconstructing the Art of Historical Record Keeping in

Walker, C.B.F.

Additional readings of interest
Basso, Keith, H., and Ned Anderson

Chadwick, John

Coe, Michael
1999 Breaking the Maya Code. Thames and Hudson. (F1435.3 W75 C59)

Daniels, Peter, T. and William Bright (editors)

Englehardt, Joshua
http://site.ebrary.com/resources.library.brandeis.edu/lib/brandeis/docDetail.action?docID=10614718

Fisher, Steven, R.

Gaur, Albertine

Gelb, Ignace

Harbsmeier, Michael

Lawler, Andrew
Miller, Laura
2007 Reluctant Capitalists: Bookselling and the Culture of Consumption. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago. (online resource through LOUIS)

Parpola, Asko
1994 Deciphering the Indus Script. Cambridge University Press. (+PK119.5P37)

Pier, John,
1997 Roy Harris and writing without speech. High Beam Encyclopedia
http://www.ecyclopedia.com

Piquette, Kathryn, E., and Ruth D. Whitehouse (editors)

Pope, Maurice

Postgate, Nicholas, Tao Wang, and Toby Wilkinson

Robinson, Andrew
1999 The Story of Writing. Thames and Hudson, London. (P211.R6)

Salomon, Frank, and Sabine Hyland

Trolle Larsen, Mogens

Visicato, Giuseppe
2000 The power and the writing: the early scribes of Mesopotamia. CDL Press, Bethesda, Maryland. (DS69.9 V58)

Other Readings on Mesoamerican scripts
Berlo, Janet Catherine
Coe, Michael, and Justin Kerr

Cowgill, George

Houston, Stephen and David Stuart

Houston, Stephen, and Michael Coe

Justeson, John, and Terrence Kaufman

Justeson, John and Terrence Kaufman

Marcus, Joyce

Pohl, Mary E.D., Kevin Pope, and Christopher von Nagy

Stuart, E. George

Tavárez, David
Terraciano, Kevin

Urcid, Javier

Whittaker, Gordon