The James Geddes, Jr. Lecture Series presents a lecture by

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"Cross-Linguistic Semantics: Methods and Results"

Thursday, March 7, 2013 - 5:30 - 7:00 PM

Boston University - Kenmore Classroom Building (KCB, 565 Commonwealth Ave.), room 106

Abstract:

With the majority of the world's languages in danger of extinction, it is important to gather information about cross-linguistic diversity, while there is still time. In this talk I present a 'how-to' guide to conducting cross-linguistic semantic research. I outline the methodologies of cross-linguistic semantics, focusing on how one empirically tests hypotheses about meaning in a fieldwork situation.

In the second half of the talk I illustrate the methodologies and results of this cross-linguistic research program by means of a case study on modals. Drawing on data from St’át’imcets (Salish), Gitksan (Tsimshianic), and other languages, I show how cross-linguistic formal research is leading to an emerging formal typology of modal systems. This emerging typology allows us to make predictions about what modal systems can (and cannot) look like in natural language.

This is also a Facebook event: https://www.facebook.com/events/424522457631793/

Information about this event is also posted at http://ling.bu.edu/events.