

## **Department Talks**

**Julie Legate (University of Pennsylvania)**

**March 3 @ 4:00 p.m.**

**Location: Boylston Hall 105**

**Title: On Passives**

### **Abstract**

What does it mean to be passive? In this talk I discuss results from an ongoing research program into the syntax, semantics, and typology of passives and related phenomena. I analyze the passive as demotion of the thematic subject, not through a generalized head/process that demotes arguments, but rather through existential closure applying on the Voice head that introduces the thematic subject itself. This correctly predicts that a passive-like alternation may apply to the Appl head that introduces the applicative object. It also correctly predicts that passive cannot apply to passives or to unaccusatives. Finally, the passive agent may be partially projected adjoined to the Voice head, but the passive contrasts with related impersonal and object voice constructions in that the agent may not be fully projected in the specifier of VoiceP. Illustrations from multiple languages are provided.