

**GSAS Workshops, Harvard Linguistic Circle, cohosted by MIT Linguistics**  
**Mini-course to be taught by**  
**Lisa Matthewson, University of British Columbia**  
**Date: November 1, 2018**  
**Time: 12:00 – 1:30 pm**  
**Location: 2 Arrow Street Room 420**

**Title: Finding semantic building blocks: Tense, aspect and evidentials**

According to von Stechow and Matthewson (2008), semantic universals will likely not be found at the level of umbrella categories such as ‘perfective’ or ‘accomplishment’. Instead, we should search for semantic building blocks: smaller pieces of meaning, which recur cross-linguistically and combine in different ways. In this mini-course we explore building blocks in the areas of tense, aspect and evidentials. We explore traditional larger categories like ‘past’, ‘perfect’, and ‘inferential’, and we identify recurring atoms such as existential quantification over times, changes-of-state, and reliance on prior reports. We discuss the new perspectives on cross-linguistic comparison which result from this approach.