

## Universals Workshop

**Sarah Murray (Cornell)**

**Friday, November 18, 3:30-5pm**

**Boylston 105**

### The Semantics of Evidentials

Evidentials are the linguistic encoding of source of information. This talk presents a compositional, truth-conditional, crosslinguistic semantics for evidentials set within a theory of the semantics for sentential mood (e.g., declarative, interrogative). Central to this proposal is the distinction between what propositional content is at-issue, roughly primary or proffered, and what content is not-at-issue. Evidentials contribute not-at-issue content, more specifically what I will call a not-at-issue restriction. Evidentials can also affect the level of commitment a sentence makes to the main proposition, interacting with the semantic contributions of sentential mood. Building on recent work on evidentials and related phenomena, the proposed semantics does not appeal to separate dimensions of illocutionary meaning. Instead, I argue that all sentences make three contributions: at-issue content, not-at-issue content, and an illocutionary relation. At-issue content is presented, made available for subsequent anaphora, but is not directly added to the common ground. Not-at-issue content directly updates the common ground. The illocutionary relation uses the at-issue content to impose structure on the context, which, depending on the clause type, can trigger further updates. Empirical support for this proposal comes from Cheyenne (Algonquian, primary data from the author's fieldwork), English, and a wide variety of languages that have been discussed in the literature on evidentials.