The Department of Linguistics
is pleased to present

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speaking on

Clitic position and clause structure in Old Occitan and early Old French
Friday, April 14, 2023
1:20 - 3:00 PM
in HUM 1 - 202

Abstract:
I discuss two incompletely understood cases of word order variation involving the placement of object/adverbial clitic pronouns in two closely related Gallo-Romance varieties, Old Occitan (OOc) and Old French (OF).

The first case, apparently limited to OOc, involves affirmative matrix declaratives with a preverbal subject. As seen in (1a) and (1b), in this context, object/adverbial clitics appear either in preverbal position (1a) or postverbal position (1b) with no apparent change in meaning (finite verb in SMALL CAPS; clitic(s) in bold).

(1a) E.N Constantis s’en ANET. ‘And Sir Constantine left.’ (OOc; Razo of 80,20 & 80,32, §8; Boutière 1964: 92)
(1b) E.N Guilhem ANET s’en. ‘And Sir Guillaume left.’ (OOc; Razo of 208,1, §34; Boutière 1964: 3)

The second case, attested in both Old Occitan and early Old French (prior to ca. 1200), concerns coordinated affirmative verb-first declaratives. Again, object/adverbial clitics can appear preverbally (2a-b) or postverbally (2c-d), with no apparent change of meaning (coordinated clause underlined).

(2a) É li poples ápluvéit de tutes parz é fud é se TENET od Absalon. ‘And people came in large numbers from everywhere and were with and stood with Absalom.’ (early OF; Li quatre livre des reis, Curtius, 1911: 86)
(2b) Adonc lo baiza e l’ABRASSA. “Then she kissed him and embraced him.” (OOc; Flamenc 2961)
(2c) Or ne fera mes plus; trop a avant alé, É PESOT li que tant en aveit trespassé. “From now on, he will not do more; he went too far, and he regretted having gone that far.” (early OF; Becket 1020)
(2d) Illi l’anet esgardar e TROBET lo passat. “She went to look at him and found him deceased.” (OOc; Douceline; Gout 1927: 46)

Arguing against previous accounts that suggest that this variation in clitic position is random (e.g., Jensen 1994; Romieu & Bianchi 2002) or simply a case of regional variation (e.g., Hinzelin 2007), I appeal to properties of the verb-second grammar of medieval Gallo-Romance, as well as notions of information structure and discourse coherence, to suggest that the position of the clitic reflects different clausal structures. The choice of clause structure, in turn, reflects discourse-pragmatic and semantic distinctions. Analyses are based on extensive analyses of five OOc texts and twenty early OF texts.