



LINGUISTICS

Department Colloquia

**The Department of Linguistics
is pleased to present**

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speaking on

Ambidirectionality and apparently expletive negation

Friday, March 7, 2025

1:20 - 3:00 PM

in HUM 2 - 259

Abstract:

Some constructions in some languages involve expletive negation (EN): negation that seems to not affect the truth conditions of the sentence, e.g. the Italian *A è più alto di quanto (non) sia B* ('A is taller than B (isn't)'). I follow others (Greco 2018, Halm and Huszár 2021) in assuming there are two kinds of EN. For me, this amounts to the fact that there are two different ways a negation can fail to affect truth conditions: 1) high EN involves negation that targets non-truth-conditional content, and 2) low EN involves negation that targets clauses that display what I call **ambidirectionality**: the property of being ambiguous between a proposition and its negation. In this talk I focus on the latter, arguing that ambidirectionality answers two urgent questions in the context of expletive negation: it explains why we only get (low) EN in scalar constructions (cf. Cépeda 2018); and it explains several subtle semantic differences between a given construction and its (expletive-) negated counterpart.