

This course is going to dwell upon the issues of the cross-linguistic expression of negation and all those expressions that are dependent on it. We are going to study the so-called n(eg)-words, by examining their syntactic and semantic status, as well as their relation to sentential negation, i.e. why certain languages exhibit double negation readings (where different negative expressions seem to cancel each other out, so that the sentence finally conveys a non-negative meaning), whereas others do not (in Negative Concord languages the presence of multiple negatively marked expressions yields readings with only one logical negation). Another major topic of our interest is going to be Negative Polarity Items, the sensitivity of these expressions to the (logical) properties of the context they appear in and the various forms that they take. When discussing a cross-linguistic array of neg-words and NPIs, we are going to look at different syntactic and semantic 'animals': indefinites, minimizers, modals, coordination markers, focus particles. Approaches to negation and polarity sensitivity that rely on the exhaustification (elimination) of alternatives, semantically, and on feature-checking, syntactically, are going to be presented. Special attention is going to be given to the difference between the exhaustification that relies on an alternative-sensitive operator 'only' and the one that relies on an 'even'-like treatment of alternatives.