

言語

BABEL

NGÔN NGỮ

REO

언어

भाषा

**ORIGINS & ENDS
OF LANGUAGE**

زبان

IDIOMA

SPRÆC

TIL

语言

JAZYK

ΓΛΩΣΣΑ

ភាសា

LINGUA

भाषा

CÀNAIN

ULIMI

ЯЗЫК

ZIMAN

لغة

इंग्रजी

שפּראַך

LANGUE

שפה

SPRACHE

שפּראַך

'ŌLELO

TAAL

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 23RD10:00 – 10:50am Ayers 4th Floor Conference RoomFeatured Speaker: Dr. Keith Kahn-Harris

The unexpected value of not understanding languages: Nurturing the craft of incomprehension

At least as far back as the Babel myth, there is a broad and deep tradition of framing not understanding the language of others as problematic. Yet not only does linguistic incomprehension not necessarily lead to conflict, there are unexpected possibilities for coexistence inherent in the inability to speak the language of the other. As sociological perspectives on language have shown, humans have a remarkable capacity to maintain relationships in the face of incomprehension and misunderstanding. Drawing on a variety of examples - including 'astronaut talk' and the translation on warning messages on chocolate eggs - this lecture will suggest ways in which the craft of incomprehension might be developed as an aesthetic and empathetic practice.

Dr. Keith Kahn-Harris Senior Lecturer at Leo Baeck College, London, and Senior Research Fellow at the Institute for Jewish Policy Research

Well-Core Category: Intellectual Wellness

11:00 – 11:50 Ayers 4th Floor Conference RoomCities, Towers, and Lips: Scattered Ways of Reading the Babel Story

The story in Genesis 11:1-9 has multiple facets, and it has passed through many layers of development. I will explore what the story may have been doing in its earliest written context, its reorientation in the book of Genesis, its revision in the book of Jubilees, and its earliest translation into Greek. In each of these stages of development various facets like language, city-building, imperial power, and cultural transformation expand or contract and move into the foreground or background depending on how tellers are using the tale.

Dr. Mark McEntire School of Theology and Christian Ministry

Well-Core Category: Spiritual Wellness

1:00 – 1:50pm Ayers 4th Floor Conference RoomThe Monteverde Lecture Dr. Andrew Davis

BEING BETWEEN BODIES : some notes on the origin of language

The prevailing opinion among linguists and psychologists today is that the origin of language is unknowable and, moreover, is largely unimportant for the study of language. Following a path opened up by French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty in his work from 1945, *The Phenomenology of Perception*, I will argue that the origin of language is a philosophical problem, discuss why this problem matters, and suggest some things that might move us closer to understanding where language comes from and thus what in the world it might be. We do not need to scry into the depths of time but rather to pay close attention, perhaps uncomfortably close attention, to what children are doing as they learn language and then what exactly we are doing when we take up words rather than some other mode of behavior available to us.

Dr. Andrew Davis Philosophy Department

Well-Core Category: Intellectual Wellness

2:00 – 2:50pm Ayers 4th Floor Conference RoomFeatured Speaker: Dr. Sebastian RandOn the Individual and Historical Acquisition of Language

Humans, unlike other animals with language, must acquire their language, each individually, although it must be waiting there for us as a historical product of other humans, and we alter it in history, making it (the most?) prominent aspect of what Heidegger terms our thrownness (Geworfenheit), that is, how human beings are "thrown" into existence without a sense of where we come from or why.

Dr. Sebastian Rand Philosophy Department, Georgia State University

Well-Core Category: Intellectual Wellness

3:00 Opening Reception for Our Speakers4:00 – 4:50 Ayers 4th Floor Conference RoomConsciousness Putting on Its Own Show: The Language-Game of Talking to Myself

The Austrian philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein occupies a preeminent place as one of the most influential thinkers of the 20th century because of his work in the philosophy of language. One of his most significant contributions was the interpretive frame of language games. In this presentation, I focus on the 'talking to self' language game. I illustrate how language used in this manner differs from reading; distinguishing along the way, 'words just coming into my head,' from intentional inner dialogue and the complicated personal pronouns involved (I, me, my, you).

Dr. Ronnie Littlejohn Philosophy Department and Director of the Asian Studies Program

Well-Core Category: Intellectual Wellness

5:00 – 5:50 Ayers 4th Floor Conference RoomLarge Language Models are Stupid

The title is a double-entendre. On one hand, Large Language Models (LLMs) possess no theory of mind, cannot reason, and consume gargantuan amounts of data and energy for meager returns. On the other hand, the mad rush to deploy LLMs for applications in industry and government is stupid: ill-advised and dangerous. These systems simply cannot perform the critical roles for which they are being designated.

Dr. Scott Hawley Department of Chemistry and Physics

Well-Core Category: Intellectual Wellness

6:00 – 7:30 Ayers 4th Floor Conference RoomFeatured Speaker: Emmy Pérez

Transcending Borders through Language: The Poetry and Craft of Emmy Pérez

Emmy Pérez, Texas Poet Laureate of 2020, has lived in the Texas borderlands for 24 years. She is the author of the poetry collections *With the River on Our Face* (University of Arizona Press) and *Solstice* (Swan Scythe Press). Her latest collection, *Paper America: New and Selected Poems*, is forthcoming from TCU Press in 2025. Copies of *With the River on Our Face* will be available for purchase after the reading.

Emmy Perez Chair of Creative Writing, The University of Texas – Pan American

Well-Core Category: Cultural Wellness