

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

## A Conversation on Uniformitarianism in Genetic Creolistics

*Convened by Salikoko S. Mufwene*

**April 4 – 6, 2019**

**Center for the Study of Race, Politics, and Culture  
5733 South University Avenue  
Chicago, IL 60637**



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**CHICAGO**

center for the study of race, politics, and culture

**CSRPC**  
at the university of chicago

**A Conversation on Uniformitarianism in Genetic Creolistics  
4-6 April 2019, at CSRPC, 5733 South University Avenue**

THURSDAY, 4 APRIL 2019

9:00 AM: **Salikoko S. Mufwene** (*U. of Chicago*): Introduction: What is UNIFORMITARIANISM and how does it apply to evolutionary linguistics?

9:30 AM: **Konstanze Jungbluth** (*U. of Frankfurt*): *Brokers on the move*: Encounters between Europeans and Africans in the seaborne Portuguese Empire

11:00 AM: **Don Walicek** (*U. of Puerto Rico at Río Piedras*): Social history and the theorization of creole language origins: A focus on Anguilla between 1600 and 1850

12:30 PM: LUNCH BREAK

1:45 PM: **Sandro Sessarego** (*UT Austin*): Adding a legal dimension to the ecology of creole speciation: The legal hypothesis of creole genesis

3:15 PM: BREAK

3:30 PM: *Linguistics Colloquium* by Enoch Aboh

5:00 PM: *Tea, at the Department of Linguistics*

7:00 PM: *Dinner for the speakers at Sali's apartment*

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FRIDAY, 5 APRIL 2019

9:00 AM: **Damian Blasi** (*U. of Zurich*): Testing the creole profile hypothesis: What statistics can and can't do for us

10:30 AM: **Kofi Yakpo** (*U. of Hong Kong*): Creole speciation: Genealogical and areal aspects

12:00 PM: LUNCH BREAK

1:30 PM: **Margot van den Berg** (*U. Utrecht*): Restructuring and innovation in the spatial language of creoles

3:00 PM: **Marlyse Baptista** (*U. Michigan at Ann Arbor*): How distinct language ecologies can shed light on language variation and human cognition

4:30 PM: **Salikoko Mufwene** (*U. of Chicago*): How interpreters delayed the emergence of pidgins

5:45 PM: ***End of the session***

7:00 PM: ***Dinner at a restaurant***

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SATURDAY, 6 APRIL 2019

9:00 AM: **Ilil Baum** (*Tel Aviv University*): The ecology of language evolution: A comparative view of Jewish languages and creoles

10:15 AM: **Daniel Lam** (*U. of Chicago*): Determiner-noun fusion in Haitian Creole: A statistical learning approach

11:30 AM: **Enoch Aboh** (*U. of Amsterdam*) & **Michel DeGraff** (MIT): So young and so mature: The case of some Atlantic Creoles

12:45 PM: LUNCH BREAK

1:45 PM: ***Visit "Caravans of Gold" at the Block Museum***, Northwestern University, Evanston.

7:00 PM: ***Bye-bye dinner at a restaurant***

## Biosketches:



**Enoch O. Aboh** is Professor of Linguistics at the University of Amsterdam and, this spring semester 2019, a Visiting Professor at Yale. He investigates the learnability of human language with a special focus on comparative syntax, language creation, and language change. His publications include *The Emergence of Hybrid Grammars* (CUP 2015) and *The Morphosyntax of Head-Complement Sequences* (OUP 2004). His empirical focus lies on Kwa (Niger-Congo), Romance, Germanic, Atlantic creoles, and sign languages. In the spring 2008, he taught at MIT as visiting professor. He has also taught at several summer schools, including the LSA Institutes at MIT/Harvard (2005) and at the University of Chicago (2015), and, since 2009, the African Linguistics School (of which he is a founding member and a co-organizer). He is strongly engaged in working toward a better transfer of knowledge from the Global North to the Global South.



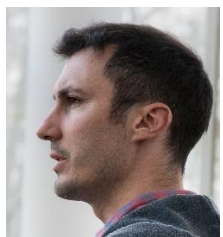
**Marlyse Baptista** is Professor of Linguistics and an affiliate of the Department of Afroamerican and African Studies at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor. She specializes in the morpho-syntax interface in pidgin and creole languages, combining corpus data with the use of theoretical and descriptive tools. More recently, she has collaborated on psycholinguistic experiments and agent-based models to identify more precisely the cognitive processes involved in contact situations. With a team of geneticists and linguists, she recently completed an 8-year project consisting in collecting speech and DNA samples from Cape Verdean individuals in an attempt to reconstruct the founding populations of Cape Verde islands. The first publication emerging from this collaboration appeared in *Cell Biology* in 2017. The applied side to her work considers literacy issues and orthographic choices confronting the representation of creoles in education, as in the case of her heritage language Cape Verdean Creole.



**Ilil Baum** earned her PhD from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (2018), which included two years as a visiting scholar at the University of Barcelona. During 2018-2019, she was a postdoctoral fellow at the Frankel Institute for Judaic Studies at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor. She is currently a postdoctoral researcher at Tel Aviv University, while also teaching at the Salti Institute for Ladino Studies at the Bar-Ilan University, Israel. Her research focuses on the interplay of language and identity among the Jews of Spain before and after the 1492 expulsion. She is particularly interested in the contact aspects of Jewish languages, in Jewish multilingualism in Christian Spain, and in the emergence of Judeo-Spanish (Ladino).



**Margot van den Berg** is a tenured Assistant Professor of linguistics at Utrecht University. Her general research interests are in the fields of sociolinguistics and contact linguistics, focusing especially on language contact in the Caribbean and West Africa in both the past and the present. She defended her dissertation on a historical reconstruction of Early Sranan, the main creole language of Suriname, at the University of Amsterdam in 2007, and subsequently published on related topics in various journals and books, including the *Atlas of Pidgin and Creole Languages (APiCS)*. She is the coordinator of the Suriname Creole Archive and contributor to the *Database of Early Pidgin and Creole Texts (DEPiCT)*.



**Damian Blasi** is currently a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Zürich and at the Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History. He investigates which aspects of collective and individual human behavior shape the structure of languages by leveraging data on present and past linguistic diversity, using observational data and statistical inference methods. Recent projects of his include studying transmission processes during the emergence of creole languages, regular sound-meaning associations appearing independently around the globe, and the influence of subsistence and behavior on the speech apparatus since the beginning of the Holocene.



**Michel DeGraff**, born in Haiti, is Professor of Linguistics at MIT, founder and director of the *MIT-Haiti Initiative*, and one of the founding members of the *Akademi Kreyòl Ayisyen*. His main research focus is on Creole languages, especially Kreyòl (*aka* Haitian Creole). He has demonstrated that Creole languages are structurally and developmentally on a par with non-Creole languages, notwithstanding age-old “Creole Exceptionalism” dogmas that consider Creole languages as lesser languages. In DeGraff’s analyses, these dogmas are a banal consequence of colonial power/knowledge systems. His *MIT-Haiti* team has developed a STEM-education framework for the incorporation of Kreyòl, modern interactive pedagogy and educational technology as three essential tools for quality education, sustainable development, social justice and dignified citizenship for all in Haiti. This framework is a model for disenfranchised communities throughout the world (some 3 billion people) that still lack access to education in their home or community language.



**Konstanze Jungbluth** is Senior Lecturer at the Europa-University VIADRINA of Frankfurt (Oder), in the Faculty (i.e., Division) of Cultural and Social Sciences, Pragmatics, and Contrastive Linguistics. She specializes in language contact and historical pragmatics, particularly in Romance languages (PhD Tübingen 1994). She is one of the leading PIs in the interdisciplinary research center B/OiM: *Borders and Orders in Motion*, and a co-director of a joint PhD program involving Brazil (CAPES & DAAD: EUV & UFF), Georgia (EUV & TSU: Tbilisi), and Poland (EUV & AMU: Poznan). She holds a unique position within the German academic community as one of the few researchers specializing in Portuguese, including the hitherto understudied language contact in Western Africa during the Early Modern Period.



**Chi Dat Lam (Daniel)** is a second-year PhD student in Linguistics and Psychology at the University of Chicago. He is interested in how general cognitive mechanisms such as statistical learning and working memory support the evolution of human languages and birdsongs. His current project involves the ways in which statistical learning can explain the emergence of certain linguistic phenomena in Haitian Creole (HC), especially the fusion of the French article and noun in some HC words.



**Salikoko S. Mufwene** is the Frank J. McLoraine Distinguished Service Professor of Linguistics and the College at the University of Chicago, where he also serves as Professor on the Committee of Evolutionary Biology, on the Committee on the Conceptual and Historical Studies of Science, and on the Committee on African Studies. He is now the Interim Faculty Director of the Center for the Study of Race, Politics, and Culture. His current research is in evolutionary linguistics, which he approaches from an ecological perspective, focused on the phylogenetic emergence of languages and language speciation, especially the emergence of creoles and other forms of the indigenization of European languages in the colonies, as well as language vitality. His books include: *The Ecology of Language Evolution* (CUP, 2001), *Language Evolution: Contact, competition and change* (Continuum Press, 2008), and *Iberian Imperialism and Language Evolution in Latin America* (U of Chicago Press, 2014). He is the founding editor of Cambridge Approaches to Language Contact.



**Sandro Sessarego** is Associate Professor of linguistics in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese at the University of Texas at Austin, a former Marie Curie Junior Fellow at the Freiburg Institute for Advanced Studies, and a former HCAS Core Fellow at the Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies. He is also a member of the *Foro Latinoamericano de Antropología del Derecho*, of the *Institut Universitari de Drets Humans de la Universitat de València*, and of the Rapoport Center for Human Rights and Justice. He works primarily in the fields of contact linguistics, sociolinguistics, syntax and human rights. The linguistic study of the Afro-Latino Vernaculars of the Americas (ALVAs) —the language varieties that developed in Latin America from the contact of African languages, Spanish, and Portuguese in colonial times— and the sociohistorical analysis of their evolution form the main themes of his research program. In particular, his investigation combines linguistic, sociohistorical, legal and anthropological insights to cast light on the nature and origins of these contact



**Don E. Walicek** is Professor of English and Linguistics at the University of Puerto Rico at Río Piedras. He currently teaches at the Karl-Franzens University of Graz as Visiting Fulbright Professor of Cultural Studies. Walicek holds a BA in Social Anthropology and an MA in Latin American Studies, both from the University of Texas at Austin, and a PhD in English from the University of Puerto Rico. For the last decade he has served as Editor of the Caribbean Studies journal *Sargasso*. His publications in linguistics bring together insights from sociolinguistics, studies of language contact, and history to discuss languages such as Anguillian ('Anguilla Talk'), Samaná English, Chinese Cuban Spanish, and Papiamentu. Walicek's manuscript *Pathways of Language and Difference in Anguilla: Contextualizing Origins and Sociohistory* should be completed in 2019.



**Kofi Yakpo** is Associate Professor of Linguistics at the University of Hong Kong. He holds a Magister Artium in Linguistics, Social Anthropology and Political Science from the University of Cologne, an MBA from the University of Geneva, and a PhD in Linguistics from Radboud University at Nijmegen. His research addresses the complex interaction of genealogical, areal, typological, and social forces in the differentiation of contact languages, with a focus on the English-lexifier creoles of Africa and the Americas, and the Asian diaspora languages of the Caribbean. His publications include *A grammar of Pichi* (Language Science Press, 2019), *Boundaries and Bridges: Language Contact in Multilingual Ecologies* (De Gruyter 2017, with Pieter Muysken), and *Code-switching Between Structural and Sociolinguistic Perspectives* (De Gruyter 2015, with Gerald Stell), as well as articles and chapters on various topics in contact linguistics. At the moment, he is working on a monograph entitled *The English Creoles of Africa and the Americas: Contact, Differentiation, Expansion* (Routledge, 2020).