



THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

Second Language
Acquisition & Teaching

Graduate Interdisciplinary Program

SLAT COLLOQUIUM SERIES

February 10, 2023
4:00 - 5:00 pm
(Arizona time)

Signaling Without Saying: The Semantics and Pragmatics of Dogwhistles

—
Dr. Robert Henderson
The University of Arizona

*To attend the colloquium, please
go to this Zoom link:*

[https://arizona.zoom.us/j/81280
276260](https://arizona.zoom.us/j/81280276260)

*If you have trouble accessing the
Zoom link on the day of the event,
please email*

GIDP-SLAT@arizona.edu.

A dogwhistle is a piece of language that sends one message to an outgroup while at the same time sending a second (often taboo, controversial, or inflammatory) message to an ingroup. We propose an analysis of dogwhistles in the setting of social meaning games that treats them as signaling the persona of the speaker, and in some circumstances enabling an enrichment of the conventional meaning of the expression. We compare this account with views in terms of conventional implicature, invited inference, and classical gricean implicature. We further show how this formal framework allows, not just an account of dogwhistles, but opens up a way to analyze a variety of sociopragmatic phenomena involving trust, reliability, ideology, standpoints, etc. from a probabilistic game-theoretic perspective.



Dr. Robert Henderson is an Associate Professor of Linguistics and affiliated with the Second Language Acquisition and Teaching (SLAT) Ph.D. program at the University of Arizona. His research is in formal semantics and pragmatics. Dr. Henderson's special focus is on the indigenous languages of Mesoamerica (especially Mayan languages), of which he has done many years of fieldwork. He works to describe, document, and analyze these languages in their own right, while also discovering what they can tell us about how human languages work in general.