

**The Linguistics Department & The Center for Gesture, Sign, and Language
present:**



Markus Steinbach

**The semantics and pragmatics of response
particles in DGS**

**Thursday, November 14, 3:30pm
Rosenwald 015**

Response particle systems vary cross-linguistically regarding the number of particles and the discourse functions of the particles. Some languages have two particles (English yes, no), others have three (German ja, nein, doch). Traditional accounts of response systems distinguish truth-based and polarity-based systems. In truth-based systems, yes-type answers confirm the truth of the antecedent proposition. By contrast, in polarity-based systems, response particles signal the polarity of the response clause. Languages may also employ both systems. Languages with a three-particle system often have a dedicated response particle for rejecting negative propositions. Experimental investigations on spoken languages have called some of these proposals into question because they showed that there is significant inter-individual variation, which is not well understood. The impact of non-lexical marking strategies like intonation or gesture has not been investigated systematically but there are indications that these matter. When it comes to the visual-gestural modality, very little is known about response particles in sign languages. Sign languages are, however, of particular interest since they have multiple articulatory channels available which may simultaneously encode truth and polarity. In this presentation, I discuss an experimental data from a production experiment with 24 deaf native DGS signers, which explored responses to positive and negative assertions. The study provides evidence that DGS has both manual and non-manual response elements and favours a truth-based response system in both kinds of response elements.

Free and open to the public. ASL-English interpreting will be provided. Persons with disabilities who need an accommodation in order to participate in this event should contact Zena Levan at zena@uchicago.edu. Organized by The Linguistics Department and The Center for Gesture, Sign, and Language.