

<b>Veranstalter</b> .....	<b>Prof. Dr. Thomas Berg</b>
<b>Thema</b> .....	<b>Symmetry and Asymmetry in Language [ENG-4/a AA-V1ab, AA-V2ab, ENG-10, ENG-11, AA7, AA9, LAA8, LAA11, ENGAGE-M1, ENGAGE-M2, AA-W, AA-WB]</b>
<b>Art der Veranstaltung</b> .....	<b>Seminar II</b>
<b>Veranstaltungsnummer</b> .....	<b>53-515</b>
<b>Zeit</b> .....	<b>2st. Mi 14-16</b>
<b>Raum</b> .....	<b>Phil 1250</b>
<b>Beginn</b> .....	<b>05.04.2016</b>

**Course description:**

Symmetry and asymmetry are two design principles which seem to pervade all complex systems, both natural and man-made. For instance, they play a preeminent role in biological systems such as the human body (Why do we have one liver but two kidneys?) as well as architecture (The campus of the University of Hamburg has one “Hauptgebäude” which is flanked by two “Flügelbauten”). Language is also replete with symmetries and asymmetries. On the symmetrical side, we may note kinship terms (e.g. father – mother), phonological contrasts (e.g. oral vs. nasal) and coordination; on the asymmetrical side, phenomena such as gender marking (e.g. lion – lioness), differences in the behaviour of prefixes and suffixes, and many hierarchical syntactic structures spring to mind. While we understand some of the functions of symmetrical and asymmetrical designs, little is known about the relationship between the two principles, about their rates of occurrence or how the linguistic territory is meted out between them.

Previous work on asymmetry has figured under the rubric of markedness. This notion is quite theory-laden and endorses a rather limited perspective because of its exclusive focus on asymmetry to the neglect of symmetrical relationships.

This course will approach symmetry and asymmetry from diverse perspectives, covering all major levels of linguistic analysis. At the end of the term, we will have an idea of which of the two principles is the more important one and why this may be so.

Unfortunately, there are no relevant textbooks even though discussions of markedness are of course common.

**Requirements:**

- Regular attendance
- Oral presentation
- Term paper

<b>Sprechstunde in der Vorlesungszeit:</b>	<b>s. Sprechstundenliste</b>
<b>Sprechstunde in der vorlesungsfreien Zeit:</b>	<b>s. Sprechstundenliste</b>