

This is also a Facebook event: <https://www.facebook.com/events/1730459537189104/>



ARTO ANTILA*

Associate Professor,
Stanford University



“FINDING RHYTHM
IN PROSE AND POETRY”

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2016 @ 1:00 PM



BU SAR (635 Commonwealth Ave.), ROOM 102

Abstract: Speech and writing are rhythmically structured in ways that vary across individuals, styles, and genres. In metrical verse, the natural rhythm of speech is set against a conventional meter that is recognized by hearers and readers, creating a tension the poet manipulates for artistic effect. For example, the 10-syllable sentence "*I can't believe that Anne forgot her keys*" is easily recognizable as iambic pentameter *ws/ws/ws/ws/ws/* whereas another 10-syllable sentence "*It rains almost always when I visit*" is not (Steele 1999). In this study, we asked whether standard phonological and metrical constraints proposed by phonologists and metricists can reliably identify arbitrary lines of text as (metrical) verse vs. (non-metrical) prose, focusing on five English and five Finnish authors. To analyze the dataset we used Prosodic (Heuser, Falk, and Anttila 2010-2011), a software package that provides a phonological analysis and metrical scansion for raw text. We discovered that prose and verse differ phonologically in the same way in both languages, suggesting that the phonology of genre is universal, whereas the verse traditions in the two languages differ in the expected ways.

This talk is the result of collaborative work with Ryan Heuser.

*Sponsored by the BU Linguistics Program

<http://ling.bu.edu>