Cooperation, Independence, and Agency in Answers to Polar Questions
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In this talk, I will focus on the range of ways that speakers provide confirming answers to polar questions. Drawing primarily on English but also on cross-linguistic work on answering practices, I will outline the basic taxonomy of answering practices. For instance, in response to a question such as: Can Peter join us tomorrow? Answer practices range from Yeah or Of course to He can join us or He can to He can join us Thursday. Since all of these practices involve confirming, what additional communicative work do speakers accomplish through them? In this talk I will offer an overview of what I term the “answer possibility space.” I will argue that by considering not just 2 answer types but the full range of possibilities, we gain insight into the social-relational work that speakers are concerned with a focus on issues of cooperation, independence, and agency.