

## *The Halliday Centre for Intelligent Applications of Language Studies (HCLS)*

### **Seminar Title: Linguistic patterning in the legitimation of war**

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Date: 4 December 2018 (Tuesday)  
Time: 10:30 am – 11:45 am  
Venue: B7603, 7/F, Lift 3, Blue Zone  
Yeung Kin Man Academic Building  
City University of Hong Kong

#### **ABSTRACT:**

War emerged as a consequence of the agricultural revolution, as humans settled into farming and herding in villages, around 5000 years ago (Eckhardt 1992). But war in the modern (ie post-Enlightenment period) has become more and more lethal, and as such, requires more and more semiotic energy for its legitimation (Malešević 2010). This paper examines the lexical item war, to show how its centrality to modern society is reflected in its linguistic characteristics. I consider the lexical item with respect to its dictionary definition and thesaurus location, its absolute and relative frequencies (relative to related concepts, such as violence) in both multi- and mono-generic corpora, its typical collocations, and some of its colligational affordances (for instance, its preference for an intransitive semantics). The findings (set out in Lukin, in press) confirm the ideological saturation of lexis (as argued for by e.g. Vološinov, Firth, Halliday), and the coercive nature of microgrammar. In other words, when speakers “choose” the lexical item war, they invite into their discourse a host of semantic tendencies, which largely affirm our ongoing commitment to war as a legitimate form of human action, despite the evidence of its brutal, inhuman consequences.

#### **BIO-SKETCH:**

Annabelle Lukin is Associate Professor in Linguistics at Macquarie University, Sydney. Her research interests include ideology, the text-in-context relation, political and media discourse, and stylistics. She is author of a new book about to be released, titled *War and its Ideologies: A Social-Semiotic Theory and Description* (with Springer).

All are welcome. No registration required