Hello everyone,

This is a reminder of the Friday Lunch Talk taking place tomorrow at noon in LingSem. Our speaker is Kevin van Bladel, from Yale's department of Near Eastern Languages & Civilizations. As usual we will meet just before noon for a light lunch.

Abstract: This short presentation summarizes the first part of a book I’m writing on the history of the Persian language. It connects the early evolution of Persian from its recognized “Old” to “Middle” phases, specifically the drastic morphological simplification that distinguish the two stages, with a demographic transformation consequent to the formation of the Achaemenian Persian Empire (circa 550-320 BCE). Using models from contact linguistics, particularly those articulated by John Holm, Peter Trudgill, Frans Van Coetsem, and especially John McWhorter (who has already addressed this problem in Persian directly), it becomes possible to arrive at an account of a remarkable language transformation that marries social history and diachronic linguistic theory. It also necessitates the careful culling of useful contributions from the fraught field of creolistics. The combination of applied contact linguistics and historical research presents an avenue of investigation beneficial to both areas. The long-documented life of Persian makes it an excellent candidate to illustrate a general linguistic phenomenon, which in turn makes better sense of the specific histories of the people who spoke Persian and who were called Persian in different senses in different periods.

Hope to see you all there!

Best,
Sammy, Sirry, and Randi