Speaker: **John McCarthy**  
University of Massachusetts, Amherst

Title: **Derivations: Optimal and Otherwise**

Date: Monday, April 17, 2006  
Time: 4:00pm  
Place: Rosenfeld Lecture Hall,  
(corner Temple & Grove Streets)

Abstract:

This talk will examine a modification of Optimality Theory that incorporates something analogous to the derivations of rule-based phonology. Standardly, OT’s GEN component compresses all phonological operations into a single derivational step, so [?uktub] (with two epenthetic segments) is among the candidates derived from input /ktub/ (in Arabic). In the proposed modification, which I’ll refer to as Incremental OT, GEN is limited to one operation at a time, so [?uktub] can only be reached by way of intermediate [uktub]. Since intermediate [uktub] as well as final [?uktub] must be selected by the grammar, Incremental OT can impose ranking requirements that are stricter than those of standard OT.

Three main results of Incremental OT will be presented: it is finite in its evaluations and derivations; it has a more limited capacity to perform global optimizations than standard OT, and this more limited capacity is a better fit with language typology; and it offers an approach to phonological opacity that can be linked with research on natural rule ordering in the period 1969-1975.