

## **Animacy, generalized semantic roles, and case variation**

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Animacy is regarded as a major factor in patterns of case variation (a. o. differential subject and object marking, impersonal passive, case syncretism, split ergativity) and contrasted with variation occurring from distinctions in semantic roles. The connection between the two factors is underestimated, in general, partly due to the fact that recent advances in semantic-role theory are not used in practice. The present talk will explore the connection between animacy and generalized semantic roles (e.g. Dowty 1991) in different domains of case variation (differential object marking, impersonal passive, case syncretism) and will propose an explanation for this connection which may contribute to a better understanding of the nature of semantic roles.