**The Ablative of the Gerund versus the Present Participle : a Diachronic Corpus Study from Classical Latin to Medieval French**

In Classical Latin, the gerund and the present participle are two distinct forms with respect to their morphology, their morphosyntactic categorization and their semantic interpretation. In Late Latin, the semantic interpretation of the gerund changed in that it expressed ever more what the present participle expresses prototypically, viz. the circumstances that accompany the action expressed by its governing verb. In Old French, as a result of phonetic evolutions, the gerund and the present participle merged morphologically. Thus from Classical Latin to Medieval French, the gerund and the present participle merged both functionally and morphologically. Therefore the question arises to what extent it is possible to distinguish between the gerund and the present participle as two separate categories in Medieval French.

In my talk, I will present i) the main aspects of this evolution and ii) the theoretical framework I would like to adopt.