The Problem. Grammatically speaking, a passive construction serves to promote the patient of a transitive verb to subject position and demote the agent to an oblique case or entirely omit the agent. Prior research on passives has focused on syntax and typology, but less has been done in terms of detailed analysis of the pragmatics within a single language (Givón 1994, Marín Arrese 1997, Myhill 1997); this paper therefore aims at analyzing the use of passives in German, specifically in more formal spoken and written contexts. Furthermore, I will examine how information status relates to the choice of a passive construction by drawing on several methods of analysis for Givenness and topicality (Marín Arrese 1997, Prince 1992, Walker, Joshi, and Prince 1998).

Examples. This paper distinguishes between sentences with both an agent and a patient, such as


*On the last constitutional law professor day-DAT Berlin in October 1957 is by one of the speakers-DAT the statement-NOM made.*

worden, es gebe keine Vorbehaltsgebiete der Regierung. 

PASS-PAST there would be no reserved areas-ACC der cabinet-GEN

“At the last meeting of constitutional law professors in Berlin in October 1957, on of the speakers claimed that there were no areas reserved to the cabinet.”

sentences with a patient and no expressed agent, such as

[2] das, was ich Ihnen vorhin vorgetragen habe, ist das, womit ich ausgerüstet bin. 

*that-NOM what I-NOM you-PL-DAT before presented have is that with which I-NOM provided* 

PASS-PAST be

“I have presented to you all the information that I was given.”

and sentences with neither an agent nor a patient, such as


*but tomorrow will be negotiated.*

“But there will be negotiations tomorrow.”

Methodology. In order to determine the various passive functions in German (especially in formal registers), this paper will examine the status of agents and patients in the passive constructions found throughout the address of a German politician at a press conference and an essay from the *Zeitschrift für die gesamte Staatswissenschaft* (“Journal of Institutional and Theoretical Economics”). I will
highlight several theories of Givenness and topicality. These include analyzing agents and patients in terms of hearer and discourse status (Prince 1992), Attention Flow (Marrín Arrese 1997), and Centering Theory (Walker, Joshi, and Prince 1995).

**Significance.** In discussions of English passives, it has been stated that the majority of such constructions are agentless and promote the patient of a transitive action to subject position. However, the data used here finds a majority of passives with either an agent and a patient or neither an agent nor a patient. Although reasons for using a passive construction in German are similar to those in other languages, the difference in distribution points to the fact that functions may differ cross-linguistically.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY.**