

Department of Linguistics and Philosophy

The Department of Linguistics and Philosophy is divided into two sections consisting of 27 faculty members (three of them jointly appointed), 73 graduate students, two dozen or so visiting scientists and scholars, an administrative officer, an academic administrator, a systems administrator, and five support staff members. Each section operates independently, yet between them there is a significant overlap of intellectual interests in education and research spanning the faculty, graduate students, and visitors. In the most recent reputational surveys of graduate programs in the United States, Linguistics and Philosophy were ranked first and seventh respectively.

Research: Linguistics

Linguists continue to develop a cognitive account of natural language in terms of principles of computation and representation. Major research initiatives, including the Minimalist Program for Linguistic Theory, the Theory of Logical Form, Formal Pragmatics, Optimality Theory, and Distributed Morphology, provide a rich variety of approaches for such accounts. Proposals are explored, developed, and challenged by students, faculty, and visitors to the department pursuing research on syntax, semantics, pragmatics, morphology, phonology, phonetics, and the interfaces among these systems of natural language.

The department has also continued to provide students and faculty with support for experimental research and computational modeling in language acquisition and language processing. This research is partly in collaboration with colleagues from the Department of Brain and Cognitive Science (BCS) and the Speech Communication Group in the Department of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science (EECS), and takes place in our phonetics lab and various labs in BCS and EECS.

Fieldwork on less studied and endangered languages is an important research emphasis for many students and visitors. An experimental program begun in the fall of 2004 and leading to a master of science degree has already graduated several students from communities attempting to revive indigenous languages.

Research: Philosophy

Research in philosophy is not as neatly programmatic as in linguistics. Among the topics currently pursued by philosophers at MIT are consciousness and the mind-body problem; language and communication; self-knowledge and self-understanding; the analysis of free agency and free choice; the nature of race and gender; mathematical logic, including formal theories of truth; “possible worlds” semantics for modal and conditional logic; and the role of mathematics in science.

Publications

Faculty on both sides of the department participated in numerous colloquia and acted as keynote speakers at conferences and workshops in various parts of the United States and the world. A number of our faculty served as editors and/or members of editorial

boards for numerous journals both in the United States and abroad. They also published a large number of journal articles, book chapters, and reviews. Books published in 2008–2009 include Professor Richard Holton's *Willing, Wanting, Waiting* (Oxford University Press); Professor Rae Langton's *Sexual Solipsism: Philosophical Essays on Pornography and Objectification* (Oxford University Press); Professor Irving Singer's *Cinematic Mythmaking: Philosophy in Film* (MIT Press, 2008); *Philosophy of Love: A Partial Summing-Up* (MIT Press, 2009); *The Nature of Love Volume 1: Plato to Luther*, *The Nature of Love Volume 2: Courtly and Romantic*, and *The Nature of Love Volume 3: The Modern World* (with new prefaces by the author; MIT Press); Professor Robert Stalnaker's *Our Knowledge of the Internal World* (Oxford University Press); and Professor Stephen Yablo's *Thoughts: Papers on Mind, Meaning, and Modality*, (Oxford University Press). Professor Michael Kinstowicz edited the article "Data and Theory: Papers in Phonology in Celebration of Charles W. Kisseberth" in *Language Sciences*.

Honors and Awards

Professor Sally Haslanger was awarded the Levitan Teaching Award from the MIT School of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences. Associate professor Agustin Rayo was awarded the Burkhardt Fellowship from the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard University.

Leaves of Absence

Professors Daniel Fox, Michael Kenstowicz and Robert Stalnaker were on sabbatical leave for the fall semester. Associate professor Caspar Hare was on an Old Dominion leave for the fall semester.

Personnel

We would like to note that associate professor Martin Hackle was hired in the Linguistics section of the department and will begin his tenure with us on July 1, 2009. We would also like to note that Edward Flemming was promoted to associate professor with tenure.

Currently there are two minorities and six women faculty members in the department. Our efforts to recruit qualified women and minority candidates will continue.

Irene Heim

Department Head

Professor of Linguistics

More information about the Department of Linguistics and Philosophy can be found at <http://web.mit.edu/philos/www/> or <http://web.mit.edu/linguistics/www/>.