

Department of Linguistics and Philosophy

The Department of Linguistics and Philosophy divides into two sections consisting of 26 faculty members (four of them jointly appointed), 65 graduate students, approximately two dozen visiting scientists and scholars, an administrative officer, a student administrator, a network administrator, a lab manager, 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 (1995) National Research Council rating of graduate programs in the United States, Linguistics and Philosophy were ranked first and tenth, respectively, on faculty quality and second and seventh, respectively, on program effectiveness.

Research: Linguistics

The 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, 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 increasingly provided students and faculty with support for experimental research in language acquisition, acoustic phonetics, sentence processing and neurolinguistics. The department's MEG Lab in Building 24, upgraded in 2003, hosts interdisciplinary research conducted by groups from across MIT and the greater Boston scientific community.

Fieldwork on less-studied and endangered languages has become an increasingly important research emphasis for students and visitors. In the fall of 2004, two students from communities attempting to revive indigenous languages will begin an experimental SM program designed to aid these efforts. The department continues fund-raising efforts to solidify financial support for this initiative.

Research: Philosophy

Research in philosophy is not so neatly programmatic as in linguistics. It is best simply to say that topics currently pursued by philosophers at MIT include the following: theories of consciousness and the mind-body problem; causation and laws of nature; analysis of fundamental metaphysical concepts, such as substance, attribute, essence, set, identity, etc.; problems at the intersection of ethics and historical sociology; foundational questions of quantum physics; the nature and confirmation of scientific theories; applied aesthetics; the foundations of "possible worlds" semantics for modal and conditional logic; the identity across time of people and other physical objects; the principles of rationality governing ethical decision-making; and the role of evaluative thoughts in practical reasoning.

Publications

As in the past, the faculty on both sides of the department participated in a large number of colloquia and acted as keynote speakers at conferences and workshops in various parts of the United States and the world. In addition 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 2003–2004 include: Professor Noam Chomsky's *Hegemony or Survival* (Metropolitan Books, 2003) and *The Generative Enterprise Revisited: Discussions with R.Hhuybregts, H. van Riemsdijk, N. Fukui, and M. Zushi* (Mouton de Gruyter, 2004); Professor Irving Singer's *Three Philosophical Filmmakers: Hitchcock, Welles, Renoir* (MIT Press, 2004); and associate professor Edward J. Hall's *Causation and Counterfactuals*, edited with J. Collins and L. A. Paul (MIT Press, 2003).

Honors and Awards

Professor Chomsky received the Carl von Ossietzky Peace Award, Oldenburg, Germany; The Award of Excellence, United Nations Society of Writers; and honorary degrees from Central Connecticut State University, the University of Florence, and the University of Athens.

Leaves of Absence

Professor Sabine Iatridou was on sabbatical for the fall semester. Professor Stephen Yablo was on a leave without pay for the fall semester. Professor Alec Marantz was on sabbatical for the spring semester. Associate professor Daniel Fox was on a Junior Faculty Research Leave for the spring semester.

Personnel

Professor Judith Thomson retired from the philosophy section of the department as of January 16, 2004. Associate professor Sally Haslanger was promoted to professor. Associate professors Daniel Fox and Norvin Richards were both promoted to associate professor with tenure.

We have hired Rae Langton and Richard Holton as professors of philosophy. We have also hired Adam Albright as assistant professor of linguistics. They will all begin their tenure with us on July 1, 2004.

We currently have one minority and six women faculty members. We will continue our efforts to recruit qualified women and minority candidates to the faculty.

Alec Marantz

Head, Department of Linguistics & Philosophy

Kenan Sahin Distinguished Professor of Linguistics

Research Director, KIT/MIT MEG Joint Research Lab

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