

## 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, two dozen or so visiting scientists and scholars, an administrative officer, a student administrator, network administrator, 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, the first two students from communities attempting to revive indigenous languages began an experimental SM program designed to aid these efforts. The department continues fundraising efforts to solidify financial support for this initiative.

### Research: Philosophy

Research in philosophy is not so neatly programmatic as in linguistics. Among the topics currently pursued by philosophers at MIT are consciousness and the mind-body problem; self-knowledge and self understanding; language and communication; mathematical logic, including formal theories of truth; "possible worlds" semantics for modal and conditional logic; the role of mathematics in science; causation and laws of nature; foundations of quantum physics; the nature and confirmation of scientific theories; the analysis of race and gender; applied aesthetics; rationality in thought and action; principles of moral deliberation; and the scope and limits of participatory democracy.

## Publications

As in the past, 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 2004–2005 include the following: Leon and Anne Goldberg professor Joshua Cohen's *Just Marriage*, ed. with Deb Chasman, Oxford University Press, 2004; Professor Donca Steriade's *Phonetically Based Phonology*, ed. Bruce Hayes and Robert Kirchner, Cambridge University Press; Professor Irving Singer's *Sex: A Philosophical Primer*, expanded edition, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2004; and associate professor Norvin Richard's "Perspectives on Phases," MIT Working Papers in Linguistics 49, coedited by Martha McGinnis, 2005.

## Honors and Awards

Professor Noam Chomsky received honorary DHL degrees from Ljubljana University and Bologna University, 2005, and the Boston Public Library Literary Lights Award, 2005. Institute Professor emeritus Morris Halle received an honorary doctorate of science degree from McGill University, 2005. Professor David Pesetsky received a MacVicar Faculty Fellowship for outstanding teaching of MIT undergraduates, 2005.

## Leaves of Absence

Professor Suzanne Flynn was on sabbatical leave for the fall semester. Associate professor Michel DeGraff was on a parental leave for the fall semester. Professor Irene Heim was on sabbatical leave for the spring semester.

## Personnel

We have hired Rae Langton and Richard Holton as professors of philosophy. We have also hired Adam Albright as assistant professor of linguistics. They began their tenure with us on July 1, 2004. Agustin Rayo will begin as associate professor of philosophy without tenure on July 1, 2005.

Edward J. Hall resigned as associate professor of philosophy as of June 30, 2005, for a position in the philosophy department at Harvard University.

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**

**Department Head**

**Kenan Sahin Distinguished Professor of Linguistics**

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