

Department of Linguistics and Philosophy

The Department of Linguistics and Philosophy is divided into two sections consisting of 30 faculty members (three of them jointly appointed), 67 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 who are 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 Brain and Cognitive Science (BCS) and the Speech Group in Electrical Engineering and Computer Science (EECS) and takes place in our phonetics lab and in BCS and EECS labs.

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

Research: Philosophy

Although research in philosophy is not as neatly programmatic as in linguistics, the department at MIT is characterized by a rigorous analytic approach. Among the topics currently pursued 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 throughout 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. Publications in academic year 2010 included: Professor Alex Byrne, *Disjunctivism: contemporary readings* (edited with Heather Logue), MIT Press; Professor Norvin Richards, *Uttering Trees*, MIT Press; Professor Judith Thomson, *Normativity*, Open Court Publishing Company.

Honors and Awards

Professor Richards was named a MacVicar Faculty Fellow. Professor Kai von Fintel's article "CIA Leaks" (with Anthony S. Gillies) and associate professor Agustin Rayo's paper "Vague Representation" were selected among the top 10 articles in philosophy in 2008 by *The Philosopher's Annual*. Professor Sally Haslanger was invited to give the Carus Lectures at Columbia University. She received the Distinguished Woman Philosopher Award from the American Philosophical Association and the Levitan Teaching Award from the MIT School of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences. Professor Stephen Yablo was invited to give the Locke Lectures at the University of Oxford. Professor Rae Langton's book *Sexual Solipsism* was chosen for a symposium at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem Faculty of Law. Professor Donca Steriade held the Edward Sapir Chair at the Linguistics Institute of the Linguistics Society of America.

Leaves of Absence

Professor Vann McGee was on sabbatical leave during the fall and professors Alex Byrne and Sabine Iatridou were on sabbatical leave in the spring. Associate professor Rayo was on a professional leave with pay for the year. Assistant professor Bradford Skow was on a junior faculty research leave during the fall and an Old Dominion leave in the spring.

Personnel

We would like to note that associate professor Martin Hackl was hired in the Linguistics section of the department and assistant professor Julia Markovits was hired in the Philosophy section of the department, both commencing their tenure with us on July 1, 2009. We would also like to note that Adam Albright was promoted to associate professor with tenure.

Currently there are two minority and seven female 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 this department can be found at <http://web.mit.edu/philos/www/> and <http://web.mit.edu/linguistics/www/>.