

Department of Linguistics and Philosophy

The Department of [Linguistics](#) and [Philosophy](#) is divided into two sections consisting of 29 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.

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 AY2011 included: Irving Singer, professor of philosophy, *Modes of Creativity: Philosophical Perspectives*, MIT Press; Caspar Hare, associate professor of philosophy, *The Limits of Kindness*, Oxford University Press.

Honors and Awards

Professor Michael Kenstowicz was appointed as coeditor of the *Journal of East Asian Linguistics*, (Springer Publications). Professor Irene Heim was awarded the Preis des Zukunftskollegs, Universität Konstanz senior fellowship. Professor David Pesetsky was elected a fellow to the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Professor Rae Langton's book, *Sexual Solipsism*, was chosen for a target paper for the American Philosophical Association "Author Meets Critics" session. Professor Stephen Yablo was invited to give the Kant Lectures at Stanford University. Associate professor Agustin Rayo was elected to the Academic Council of the Universidad Gestalt de America.

Leaves of Absence

Professor Donca Steriade was on sabbatical leave during the fall and professor Suzanne Flynn was on sabbatical leave in the spring. Professor Norvin Richards was on parental leave for the spring. Associate professor Martin Hackl and assistant professor Julia Markovits were on junior faculty research leave for the spring.

Personnel

We would like to note that Caspar Hare was promoted to associate professor with tenure and Bradford Skow was promoted to associate professor without 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