

## 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), 69 graduate students, approximately two dozen visiting scientists and scholars, an administrative officer, an academic administrator, a systems administrator, and five support staff members. Each section operates independently, yet there is a significant overlap of intellectual interests in education and research spanning the faculty, graduate students, and visitors.

### Research: Linguistics

Research by MIT linguists continues to develop and test accounts of the representational and computational properties of the languages of the world. The department's overarching research goal is to understand the human capacity for language. Important questions include: Which properties of language are uniform across the human species and which play out differently in the languages of the world? How are they different? What does the interplay of uniformity and diversity in language structure teach us about language acquisition and learning? How do the properties of language interact with other cognitive systems? Specific, testable 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.

The department also provides students and faculty with support for experimental research and computational modeling in language acquisition and phonetic, syntactic, and semantic processing. Research on semantic processing is a particularly notable new initiative of the section. Facilities within the department include the [Experimental Syntax and Semantics Lab](#) and the Phonetics Lab. Experimental research is also conducted in collaboration with colleagues from the Department of Brain and Cognitive Sciences and the speech group in the Department of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science.

Fieldwork on less studied and endangered languages is an increasingly important research emphasis for many students and visitors. A feature of this research is a simultaneous emphasis on documentation and specific scientific questions of linguistic interest. Recent dissertations reflecting these twin goals have reported findings on languages as diverse as Tlingit (Na-Dené, Alaska), Chol and Tseltal (Mayan, Chiapas), Quechua (Colombia), and Zulu (Bantu, South Africa). In addition, 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 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; ethics and practical rationality; 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 2013 included associate professor Agustin Rayo’s *The Construction of Logical Space* and associate professor Caspar Hare’s *The Limits of Kindness* (both published by Oxford University Press).

## Honors and Awards

Professor David Pesetsky was named a fellow of the Linguistics Society of America and professor honoris causa at the University of Bucharest. Professor Sally Haslanger was elected vice president (president-elect) of the American Philosophical Association’s Eastern Division and selected to be a member of the board of directors of the Stanford Humanities Center. Professor Stephen Yablo was awarded the American Council for Learned Societies Fellowship and the Guggenheim Fellowship, and he was invited to give the John Locke Lectures at Oxford University. Professor Rayo was invited to present the Gaos Lectures by Mexico’s Institute for Philosophical Research. Professor Rae Langton was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

## Leaves of Absence

Professor Yablo was on sabbatical leave during the fall and administrative leave with pay in the spring. Associate professors Roger White and Michel DeGraff were on sabbatical leave in the spring. Professor Daniel Fox was on leave without pay in FY2013. Associate professor Bradford Skow was on administrative leave with pay during FY2013.

## Personnel

Julia Markovits 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 continues.

**Richard Holton**  
**Department Head**  
**Professor of Philosophy**