

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), 72 graduate students, two dozen or so visiting scientists and scholars, an administrative officer, a student administrator, network 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 (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, 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 to the department 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 in language acquisition, acoustic phonetics, sentence processing and neurolinguistics. This research is partly in collaboration with colleagues from Brain and Cognitive Sciences and other MIT units, and takes place in various labs, including the department's own magnetoencephalography lab in Building 24.

Fieldwork on less studied and endangered languages has become an increasingly important research emphasis for students and visitors. An experimental SM program, begun in the fall of 2004, now has several graduates from communities attempting to revive indigenous languages. 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. 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; the nature of freedom of choice; the analysis of race and gender; applied aesthetics; rationality in thought and action; principles of moral deliberation; and the evaluation of consequentialist moral theories.

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 2005–2006 include Sally Haslanger and Elizabeth Hackett's *Theorizing Feminisms*, published by Oxford University Press; Professor Haslanger and Roxanne Marie Kurtz's *Persistence*, published by MIT Press; and Edward Gibson and F. Wolf's *Coherence in Natural Language*, also published by MIT Press.

Honors and Awards

Professor Noam Chomsky received honorary degrees from the University of Cyprus and the Santo Domingo Institute of Technology. Professor Donca Steriade gave the keynote address at the 19th Linguistics Symposium on Romance Languages in March 2006, at Rutgers University. Laurance S. Rockefeller professor Robert Stalnaker was invited to give the Josiah Royce Lectures at Brown University in 2006, which were sponsored by the American Philosophical Association.

Leaves of Absence

Associate professor Michel DeGraff was on sabbatical leave for the fall semester. Assistant professor Caspar Hare was on half-time parental leave for the spring semester. Professors Haslanger, Irving Singer, and Stephen Yablo were on sabbatical leave for the spring semester.

Personnel

We hired Agustin Rayo as associate professor of philosophy without tenure. He began his tenure with us on July 1, 2005. Roger White will begin his tenure with us as associate professor on July 1, 2006.

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.

Robert Stalnaker
Department Head
Laurance S. Rockefeller Professor of Philosophy

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