# Department of Linguistics and Philosophy

The Department of Linguistics and Philosophy divides into two sections consisting of 27 faculty members (three of them jointly appointed), 73 graduate students, two dozen or so visiting scientists and scholars, an administrative officer, a student administrator, a 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 reputational surveys of graduate programs in the United States, Linguistics and Philosophy were ranked first and seventh, respectively.

## 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 and computational modeling in language acquisition and language processing. This research is partly in collaboration with colleagues from the Department of Brain and Cognitive Sciences (BCS) and the Speech Communication Group in the Department of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science (EECS) and takes place in our phonetics lab and various BCS and EECS labs.

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

### Philosophy

Research in philosophy is not as neatly programmatic as in linguistics. Among the topics currently pursued by philosophers at MIT are consciousness and the mind-body problem; language and communication; self-knowledge and self-understanding; mathematical logic, including formal theories of truth; "possible worlds" semantics for modal and conditional logic; the nature of race and gender; the role of mathematics in science; and the analysis of free agency and free choice.

## 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 2007–2008 included Professor Wayne O'Neil's *Thinking Linguistically* (with Maya Honda; Wiley-Blackwell Publishing) and *Awakening Our Languages 2: Developing Materials and Activities for Language Learning* (with Maya Honda; Indigenous Language Institute) and Professor Irving Singer's *Ingmar Bergman, Cinematic Philosophy: Reflections on His Creativity* (MIT Press).

## Leaves of Absence

Associate professor Edward Flemming and assistant professor Caspar Hare were on a junior faculty research leave for the fall term.

Professors Richard Holton and Rae Langton participated in the MIT-Balliol Exchange Program and were at Balliol College for the spring term.

## Personnel

Agustin Rayo was promoted to associate professor with tenure. Norvin Richards was promoted to professor. Adam Albright and Caspar Hare were promoted to associate professors without tenure.

The Department currently has two minority and six women faculty members. Our efforts to recruit qualified women and minority candidates will continue.

**Stephen Yablo**
**Department Head**
**Professor of Philosophy**

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