

## Department of Linguistics and Philosophy

The [Department of Linguistics and Philosophy](#) is divided into two sections consisting of 29 faculty members (two of them jointly appointed), 70 graduate students, approximately two dozen visiting scientists and scholars, an administrative officer, an academic administrator, a systems administrator, lab manager, and five support staff members. Both sections operate independently, yet between them there is significant overlap of intellectual interests in education and research.

### 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? Which properties play out differently in the languages of the world, and how? What does the interplay of uniformity and diversity in language structure teach us about language acquisition and learning? How do these 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 & Semantics Lab](#) and the Phonetics Lab. Experimental and computational research is also conducted in collaboration with colleagues from the Department of Brain and Cognitive Science (BCS) and the Department of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science (EECS), especially the speech group and other colleagues focusing on language acquisition, variation, and change.

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; 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; perceptual knowledge; the nature of time; 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 2014 included professor David Pesetsky’s *Russian Case Morphology and the Syntactic Categories* (MIT Press), professor Stephen Yablo’s *Aboutness* (Princeton University Press), and associate professor Julia Markovits’s *Moral Reason* (Oxford University Press).

### **Honors and Awards**

Professor Sally Haslanger was invited to be the Spinoza Chair at the University of Amsterdam. She also received both the MLK Leadership Award this year and the Joseph B. Gittler Award for outstanding scholarly contribution in the field of philosophy for her book, *Resisting Reality: Social Construction and Social Critique*. Professor Shigeru Miyagawa was named the distinguished alumni of the year by the Christian University in Tokyo. Professor Robert Stalnaker was elected corresponding fellow for the British Academy. Professor Stephen Yablo was selected as the presenter of the inaugural lecture at the New York Institute of Philosophy. Associate professor Bradford Skow was awarded the Charles A. Ryskamp Fellowship by the American Council of Learned Societies.

### **Leaves of Absence**

For FY2014, Professor Haslanger was on a sabbatical leave and a Dean’s leave to serve as head of Women’s and Gender Studies. Professor Daniel Fox was on a leave without pay for the year. Professor Agustin Rayo was on sabbatical leave for the fall. Professor Yablo was on a professional leave with pay for the spring semester. Associate professors Caspar Hare and Edwin Flemming were on sabbatical leave for the spring semester. Associate professor Julia Markovits was on an Old Dominion Leave for the fall semester. Professor Bradford Skow was on parental leave.

### **Personnel**

Currently there are two minority and five female faculty members in the department. Our efforts to recruit qualified women and minority candidates will continue.

This year we have hired three faculty members whose tenures will begin on July 1, 2014. In Linguistics, Roger Schwarzschild has been hired as a senior faculty member. In

Philosophy, Kiernan Setiya has been hired as a senior faculty member, and Justin Khoo has been hired as an assistant professor.

Julia Markovits resigned her position as associate professor at MIT to work at Cornell University effective June 30, 2014.

**David Pesetsky**  
**Ferrari P. Ward Professor of Linguistics**  
**MacVicar Faculty Fellow**  
**Head, Department of Linguistics and Philosophy**