Department of Linguistics and Philosophy

Graduate Study

Master of Science in Linguistics
The Department of Linguistics (http://linguistics.mit.edu) and Philosophy (http://web.mit.edu/philosophy) has an Indigenous Language Initiative program leading to a Master of Science in Linguistics. For more information about this degree, visit the website or contact the program administrator (mitili@mit.edu).

Doctor of Philosophy in Linguistics
The Linguistics Section offers a demanding program leading to the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Linguistics. The normal course of study is five years, including the writing of the dissertation. The orientation of the program is highly theoretical, its central aim being the development of a general theory that reveals the rules and laws that govern the structure of a given language and the general laws and principles that govern all natural languages. The topics that form the core of this program are the traditional ones of phonology, syntax, and semantics, but the program’s interests also extend into questions of the interrelations between linguistics and other disciplines such as philosophy and logic, speech science and technology, computer science and artificial intelligence, and study of the brain and cognition.

Approximately eight students enter the program each year in a highly selective admissions process. The department does not require that applicants have taken any particular set of subjects or that they be trained in any particular discipline. Instead, applicants must present evidence that they are able to engage in serious scholarly inquiry of complex subject matter.

All students in the linguistics program must complete a set of required subjects unless they have acquired adequate preparation elsewhere. Before degree candidates begin their doctoral research, they are required to pass a comprehensive general examination, in conformity with Institute regulations, the second part of the examination is oral. It deals with topics treated in the candidate’s written examination, but is not limited to these and probes into the candidate’s competence in linguistics in general.

Before students begin their doctoral research, they are required to present a proposal of research and a dissertation committee. The program of courses in linguistics leading to the PhD has a theoretical component that must be balanced by a substantial empirical component. The empirical component is usually a study of language acquisition, language processing, or any other area of linguistics, so long as there is a substantial theoretical-linguistic component to the papers. In conformity with Institute regulations, the second part of the examination is oral. It deals with topics treated in the candidate’s written examination, but is not limited to these and probes into the candidate’s competence in linguistics in general.

For more information about the PhD program requirements (http://web.mit.edu/philosophy/PhDprogram.html), visit the website.

Doctor of Philosophy in Philosophy
The program of studies leading to the doctorate in philosophy provides subjects and seminars in such traditional areas as logic, ethics, metaphysics, epistemology, philosophy of science, philosophy of language, philosophy of mind, aesthetics, social and political philosophy, and history of philosophy. Interest in philosophical problems arising from other disciplines, such as linguistics, psychology, mathematics, and physics, is also encouraged.

To enter the doctoral program, students must have done well in their previous academic work and must be formally accepted as candidates for the degree by the Department of Linguistics and Philosophy. Although there are no formal course requirements for admission, applicants must satisfy the committee on admissions that their preparation in philosophy and allied disciplines is sufficient for undertaking the study of philosophy at the graduate level.

Before beginning dissertation research, students are required to take two years of coursework, including a proseminar in contemporary philosophy that all students must complete in their first year of graduate study. Students are also required to demonstrate

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24.942 Topics in the Grammar of a Less Familiar Language 12
24.949 Language Acquisition I 9
24.991 Workshop in Linguistics (two terms) 12
24.995 Linguistics Professional Perspective 1

Two additional subjects, including:

- An advanced subject with research paper requirement in syntax/semantics
- An advanced subject with research paper requirement in phonology/morphology

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competence in the following areas: value theory, logic, and the history of philosophy.

Interdisciplinary study is encouraged, and candidates for the doctorate may take a minor in a field other than philosophy. Options for minors include linguistics, psychology, and logic. Students who elect one of these options are expected to complete three approved graduate subjects in their minor field. There is no general language requirement for the doctorate, except in those cases in which competence in one or more foreign languages is needed to carry on research for the dissertation.

For more information about the PhD program requirements (http://web.mit.edu/philosophy/PhDprogram.html), visit the website.

**Inquiries**

Information regarding undergraduate or graduate academic programs, research activities, admissions, financial aid, and assistantships may be obtained from the Department of Linguistics and Philosophy, Room 32-D808, 617-253-9372.