Robert Leonard

Director, Forensic Linguistics Program at Hofstra University

Hempstead, NY, US

Robert Leonard is best known for his work in forensic linguistics, the application of linguistic theory to the analysis of language evidence

Biography

Dr. Robert Leonard, professor of Comparative Literature, Languages, and Linguistics, is an expert in forensic linguistics, the application of linguistic theory to the analysis of language evidence. Prior to his academic career, Leonard was a member of the rock band Sha Na Na and performed at Woodstock.

Leonard founded and directs the graduate program in "Linguistics: Forensic Linguistics" at Hofstra University, where he is Professor of Linguistics.He previously taught at Columbia. The New Yorker wrote that Leonard "has emerged as one of the foremost language detectives in the country", and jocularly termed him "a Sam Spade of semantics." Newsday characterized him as "Professor Henry Higgins meets Sherlock Holmes." Leonard's forensic linguistic consulting clients have included the NYPD Hate Crimes Task Force, the FBI, Federal Public Defenders offices, and the Prime Minister of Canada.

Leonard was recruited by the Behavioral Analysis Unit of the FBI to train its agents in forensic linguistic analysis at Quantico, and he has trained British law enforcement units in London. He was Apple's linguist in its civil trademark cases against both Microsoft and Amazon. Salon pointed out that Leonard came from quite a different former career path: "'I like to say I'm one of the very few people in the world who have worked with the FBI and the Grateful Dead,' quips Leonard, who has trained FBI agents in how to analyze language for clues in solving crimes."

Leonard serves as a member of the editorial board of the Oxford University Press series Language and the Law.

Industry Expertise

Research, Education/Learning

Areas of Expertise

Woodstock music festival, Forensic Linguistics, Language and the Law, Linguistics and Threat Assessment, 1960s rock n roll

Affiliations

Leonard has been qualified as a Forensic Expert Witness in Linguistics and Language in a number of state and Federal courts. As a forensic linguist, Leonard has provided expert opinions to clients that include Apple, Inc., the Prime Minister of Canada, th

Sample Talks

Words on Trial: Forensic Linguistics in Criminal, Civil and Intelligence Investigations
2015 lectures at
University of Virginia
Columbia University
and Stony Brook University

Event Appearances

The Language Detective - http://www.mwany.org/2015/05/the-language-detective-comes-to-mwa-ny/
Mystery Writers of America (NY chapter) meeting

Education

Columbia University
Ph.D. Linguistics

Columbia University
M.A.

Columbia University
M.Ph.

Columbia University
B.A.

Accomplishments

Director of Hofstra's MA in Forensic Linguistics
Launched in 2010, Hofstra's MA in Forensic Linguistics was the first program of its kind in the United States. The study of forensic linguistics – the examination of language and the law – is increasingly being used as a tool of legal professionals, law enforcement, and the intelligence community. The only other forensic linguistics programs are in the U.K. and Spain.

Please click here to view the full profile.

This profile was created by Expertfile.