A Plan for Jan
ANNOUNCING THE THIRD ANNUAL JANUARY@GSAS SERIES

The Graduate School of Arts and Sciences is pleased to announce that for the third year running, it will curate a flexible January series of seminars, workshops, and social opportunities, on January 9–20, 2012, designed to help graduate students get something valuable from the winter break.

GSAS students never really get a “break” from their research, but with teaching and grading responsibilities on hiatus, January creates good opportunities for skill-building and professional activities that may have fallen to the bottom of the list during term. And downtime — via a slew of cultural events and recreational outings offered by Dudley House — is also much encouraged, and perhaps more possible, during January. Programming, to be announced soon, is likely to focus on pragmatic issues of interest and concern to graduate students — topics including career preparation, digital tool-building, library skills, professional development (including writing skills), and financial planning.

Highlights of the planned programming include a talk and demonstration by Dr. Herbert Benson, a pioneer in mind/body medicine, who will explain how stress can be counteracted by eliciting the “relaxation response.” He’ll lead attendees through an exercise that will trigger the response — though no guarantees of how long that blissful state will last.

Another highlight: The Winter GIS Institute, a program designed for graduate students and faculty who want to learn spatial analysis and apply GIS methods in their research — applications of which are gaining a lot of attention these days. No previous GIS training is required to enroll in this workshop, offered by the Center for Geographic Analysis.

When You Need Help
NAVIGATING THE MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES AT HARVARD, AND COMING OUT STRONG ON THE OTHER SIDE BY BARI WALSH

ONE PHD STUDENT FINDS HIMSELF INCREASINGLY CONFLICTED as he tries to balance the assumptions of his scholarly discipline with his personal convictions, and with the philosophical structures that have long supported his family’s beliefs. He had questioned these structures himself, but he finds himself uncomfortable with critiques from others. Frustrated by efforts to negotiate “the tension between a commitment to one’s own ideas and affiliations, on the one hand, and scholarly neutrality and professionalism on the other,” he becomes deeply aware of an imbalance of power between faculty and graduate students in asserting or even trusting personal beliefs.

Another student, the mother of a young child, was pregnant with her second child when she received terrible news that called into question an important relationship in her life. Like other PhD students with family responsibilities, she is also struggling financially, and hasn’t been able to keep up with the unending nature of the work,” says Dr. Paul Barreira, who is the director of Behavioral Health and Academic Counseling (BHAC) at Harvard, overseeing offices including Mental Health and Academic Counseling (BHAC).

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Giving Thanks for (and With) the RAs...

Call it the most multi-tasking job you’ll ever love. Serving as facility liaisons, counselors, tour guides, mediators, and event planners, the Graduate School’s 16 resident advisors (RAs) help to create a vital sense of community among the 477 graduate students who live in the GSAS residence halls, many of whom may have little familiarity with Cambridge and Boston — or the United States, for that matter.

As a second-year RA in Perkins Hall and a G3 in psychology, Jennifer Sheehy-Skeffington is a veteran at handling the multitude of issues that residents bring to their RAs. “You never know what a resident’s e-mail will contain,” she says. “The requests can range from something simple, like where can I buy kitchen equipment, to as complex as concerns about the wellbeing of another resident. We try to work with first-year residents, who are often very sociable and keen to get residents together, and encourage everyone to get involved and have a voice in the process.”

One of the things I like about living in the residence halls is how well you get to know people,” says Donal Cahill, a second-year RA in Richards Hall, who is also a G3 in psychology. “You feel quite central in terms of the grad student community. Some residents are very outgoing, and they have opportunities to interact with others through floor social events, coming together to cook meals, and so on. You’re always running into people, and so you get to know your fellow students very well.”

One of the biggest and most anticipated events of the year is the Thanksgiving Lunch, which brings together residents from all the halls to celebrate on Thanksgiving Day (this year, November 24). Cahill, who co-coordinated the lunch last year, says it “provides a focus point for people who aren’t traveling home to hang out together and keep the social atmosphere going. Thanksgiving is a quintessential American celebration, so it provides the chance for those unfamiliar with the holiday to get a sense of what it’s all about. Many international students will attend, but American students do as well.”

— Jennifer Doody

This year’s Thanksgiving Lunch in the Residences, to be held on Thanksgiving Day (November 24), will be coordinated by Hiro Yoshie (Child Hall basement RA and a G2 in East Asian languages and civilizations) and Mazen Elfakhani (Child Hall 2nd floor RA and a G3 in sociology).

Harvard’s 375th

It was one of the most memorable of Harvard’s many memorable moments. The announcement came early in the day on October 14. The big party in Harvard Yard, held to commemorate the University’s 375th anniversary, would proceed rain or shine. And rain it did, in drizzles and downpours throughout the evening. But while the weather distracted, it didn’t derail — and if you like wild outdoor festivals full of mud (think, Woodstock or Bonnaroo), this was top shelf. Students from GSAS and Harvard’s other graduate schools marched in parades into Tercentenary Theatre, in front of Widener’s disco-lit steps. Proudly, GSAS students held their line, in an amazing scene of energy, festivity, and not a little chaos.
Frank Lehman is a G-6 music theorist in the Music Department. His research focuses on the analysis and interpretation of film music, particularly for blockbuster film scores such as Star Trek: The Motion Picture or the Jaws franchise. He co-writes a blog, Unseen Symphonies, on non-canonical 20th-century symphonies, and his 2009 talk on A Beautiful Mind, “Transformational Analysis and the Representation of Genius in Film Music,” has been accepted for publication in Music Theory Spectrum.

In the mid 1970s, American film came to be distinguished by the emergence of the blockbuster—easily franchise-able, wildly popular movies whose soundtracks included not only a lot of music, but very prominent, complex music. And although film music is now some of the most recognizable music we share as a culture, music theorists don’t yet have the language to talk about it.

“It’s not art music, but that doesn’t mean it’s less interesting or sophisticated,” says theory graduate student Frank Lehman. “When you talk about film music, there are two strange truths: film music is powerful, recognizable, and decisive in how you experience the film. And film music is supposed to be not heard, it’s meant to not distract you from the film.”

Lehman has been analyzing the musical structures of movie scores, the way themes, keys, and orchestral gestures collaborate with visuals to generate meaning. He’s interested in creating a methodology for analyzing film music on its own terms in order to determine where harmonic patterns recur in music that have parallels in the action onscreen.

“I’m starting with movies I’m familiar with, like Spielberg or Lucas films—Jaws for example—the kind of films you’ll still see over and over late at night on TV. I start by doing an in-depth technical analysis, which isn’t as simple as it sounds. The physical materials I need to look at are either in studio libraries or in archives on the West Coast, or not available at all because they don’t exist. Movie scores are made for just one use: the composer goes into a studio, listens to nothing but the words of the film, and this music is the soundtrack. And film music is not always what has been written. It’s a rarity for musicians to perform a film score in a concert hall, which is why I’ve been going to the Boston Pops for fifteen years—John Williams is the exception. You can actually hear parts of his scores performed live; it’s not exactly the same as hearing it in a movie theater but it’s closer than others.”

“The dearth of final scores means Lehman spends long hours with the playback function on his computer, transcribing music from movie soundtracks by hand. Afterwards, he constructs analytic diagrams. He’s found Power Point is best for making diagrams and animating their transformational structure.

“I’m using transformation theory to analyze and diagram the music. This technique comes out of David Lewin’s work here at Harvard; he was the mastermind behind transformation analysis, or Neo-Riemannian theory.”

“Neo-Riemannian theory was a radical change in how we approached music. But so far it has been largely applied to a very localized repertoire, mostly 19th-century music and 19th-century chromaticism. And there has been some work done with pop and jazz, but nothing sustained. What’s great about the film music I’m working on is that it’s coming out of those 19th-century traditions but no one’s applied this theory to it yet. I’m testing transformation theory on music that has yet to be analyzed.”

“Jerry Goldsmith’s score for Star Trek: The Motion Picture fills his film score with progressions from the 19th century that had associations with the unanny and wonder. Seen through the lens of transformation theory these major third chord progressions create a six-sided symmetry—a hexagon. The movie visuals are also strongly defined by six-sided things. What can these musical transformations tell us about experiencing the film? How do we take abstract musical ideas and put them in a film to evoke this perfect resonance? Goldsmith probably wasn’t thinking ‘I need something with six sides’, but it’s eerie the way they correspond.”

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—FRANK LEHMAN
Three GSAS students are among the 48 total winners in a new fellowship competition from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute that awards full-time funding to exceptional international students in the third, fourth, and fifth years of their graduate programs in science and engineering. Offered for the first time this year, the HHMI’s International Student Research Fellowships will allow these talented students to devote their full attention to research at a critical time during their professional development.

The awards serve a particularly important role, according to the HHMI, since much of the available funding for graduate education is reserved for US citizens.

Meet the new HHMI fellows from GSAS.

— Joanna Grossman

◗ Nataly Moran Cabili

For Nataly Moran Cabili, an Israeli computational biologist and PhD student in the systems biology program, winning the HHMI Fellowship will provide “an opportunity to contribute to the development of interdisciplinary research in biology.” Cabili’s main interest is in genomics, specifically in studying the function of a new set of genes called long intergenic non-coding RNAs (lincRNAs). Over the past two years, she has been working with John Rinn, an assistant professor of stem cell and regenerative biology, to characterize a large fraction of lincRNAs expressed in human cells. Cabili is also a member of the Regev Lab at the Broad Institute of MIT and Harvard, which studies biological circuits, gene regulation, and evolution. Her research has most recently been published in *Genes and Development.*

◗ Mehmet Fisek

Mehmet Fisek, from Turkey, is a PhD candidate in neuroscience who works in Associate Professor Rachel Wilson’s lab in the Department of Neurobiology at Harvard Medical School. Fisek’s research focuses on understanding how sensory information is processed by the olfactory system of the fruit fly, which is “remarkably similar to vertebrate olfactory systems in anatomy and physiology, but is smaller and simpler,” Fisek explains. By studying these simple brains, Fisek hopes to gain insights into similar problems in more complex brains and to contribute to the greater picture of how information flow is organized in neural circuits in general. “I’m very glad that this funding opportunity exists for international students, who are often ineligible for other fellowships,” he says.

◗ Le Cong

Le Cong, who came to Harvard from Beijing, is a PhD candidate in the Biological and Biomedical Sciences program in the Division of Medical Sciences, GSAS’s interfaculty program with Harvard Medical School. His main research interest is in developing novel synthetic biological tools and technologies for engineering the human genome and epigenome. Cong hopes to combine these tools with stem cell and optogenetic technologies to model neuropsychiatric disorders such as bipolar diseases, autism, depression, and schizophrenia. Cong works in Professor George Church’s lab at Harvard Medical School. “Being granted this fellowship has been one of the most encouraging moments for me since coming to the US,” says Cong. “I feel that this is not just a recognition of my work at Harvard, but more importantly, it reflects a commitment to support researchers with a genuine interest in helping others and who can contribute to biomedical research, regardless of nationality.”

A Community of Women Scientists

Harvard Graduate Women in Science and Engineering kicked off the formal part of its academic-year programming with a welcome lunch in Cambridge, at Dudley House, on September 19. The group also held a welcome lunch in Longwood, the base of many of its activities and much of its membership. HGWISE — a GSAS-funded student group — provides community, friendship, mentoring, and professional development opportunities for women scientists in PhD programs at Harvard. More information: www.hgwise.com. From left HGWISE board members Risa Kawai (biophysics), Tess Williams (physics), and Allison Nishitani (neuroscience) gather at the Cambridge luncheon.
Dudley Arts Chamber Music Initiative  
SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 5, 4 P.M. This experimental concert will be held at the Lily Pad gallery in Inman Square, and the program will feature musicians from Harvard, the New England Conservatory, and the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Reception to follow. ◆ Contact Thomas Wisniewski (twisniew@fas.harvard.edu).

80s Party  
SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 5, 9 P.M., Dudley House. Come relive the joy of 80s fashion and dance (moonwalk, anyone?) at the Harvard-MIT 80s party. Free entry. ◆ Contact dudley.social@gmail.com.

Faculty/Student Dinner  
THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 17, RECEPTION 5:30 P.M.; DINNER 6 P.M., Graduate Student Lounge, Common Room. Treat your advisor or other favorite faculty member to a gourmet three-course meal. Free tickets available at the House Office. ◆ Contact dudhouse@fas.harvard.edu.

An Evening with the Orchestra  
FRIDAY NOVEMBER 18, 8 P.M. The Dudley Orchestra in concert at the Lowell Lecture Hall, performing Wagner, Tchaikovsky, and Beethoven. Tickets $5 for students, $10 for non-Harvard affiliates.

Writing and Study Bootcamp  
NOVEMBER 19-20, 9 A.M.–4 P.M.; DECEMBER 3-4, 9 A.M.–4 P.M. Café Gato Rojo. Need a weekend dedicated to your academic work? Get details and sign up in the House Office or by calling 617-495-2255. ◆ Contact dudley.literary@yahoo.com.

Winter Formal  
SATURDAY, DECEMBER 3, 8 P.M. Dress to impress as you dance the night away, accompanied by the Dudley House Orchestra. Hors d’oeuvres, desserts, and drinks included in ticket price. $10 at Dudley House Office starting November 22. Contact dudley.social@gmail.com.

What Cheer!  
A Holiday Concert of Carols and Classics by the Dudley House Choir. SUNDAY, DECEMBER 4, 7 P.M., Dudley House Main Dining Room. Free admission. ◆ Contact Elizabeth Craft (craft@fas.harvard.edu).

2012 Dudley House Ski Trips  
JANUARY 16-19 AND JANUARY 19-22. Come up to Sugarloaf Resort in Maine for one of two 3-day trips. Enjoy more than skiing—luxury condos, hot tub & pool access, snow-shoeing & ice-skating, and dinners are all included. Sign-ups begin Tuesday, November 8, at 9 a.m. at the House office. Tickets sell out very quickly. ◆ Contact Anna (alesbins@fas) or Pan-Pan (pjiang@oeb).

Dudley House Celebrating 20 years as the Graduate Student Center  
Lehman Hall, Harvard Yard ◆ www.dudley.harvard.edu ◆ 617-495-2255
Students preparing their case at last summer’s MIT vs. Harvard Case Competition, organized by the HGCC.

A University-wide organization of more than 600 Harvard graduate students and postdoctoral researchers, the Harvard Graduate Consulting Club (HGCC) creates significant opportunities for career exploration and development in consulting—a field whose importance as a career opportunity for PhD researchers is increasing.

The HGCC—which is one of more than 50 GSAS student organizations—was founded in 2006 by a group of graduate students who wanted to practice cases together to prepare for interviews at consulting firms. The club’s programs now include on-campus networking events, an annual case competition between Harvard and MIT, a mini-MBA program, and opportunities to participate in consulting engagements through the HGCC Volunteer Consulting Group. All Harvard-affiliated graduate students, post-doctoral fellows, and scholars are eligible to participate in HGCC events.

For the two GSAS students who are HGCC co-presidents—George Ye, a fourth-year PhD student in the School of Engineering and Applied Science, and Nikiheo Chand, a fifth-year PhD student in molecular and cellular biology—leading the organization evolved out of their own professional interest in consulting. “When I first heard about the club in 2006, I thought it was a great opportunity to learn more about the profession and gain some leadership and organization skills,” Ye says. “As the years have gone by, I feel that I have benefited tremendously from this role, both in terms of personal development and expanding my professional network.”

“Consulting firm recruiting events on campus piqued my interest in consulting as a career,” says Chand. “HGCC helps students prepare for careers in consulting through a variety of activities geared towards developing their skills and establishing connections with professional firms that recruit on campus. For example, our popular mini-MBA program invites professors and industry professionals to give lectures on basic concepts in business, and we have over 100 participants from several different schools at Harvard and even some from MIT. In addition, the MIT vs. Harvard Case Competition (held each summer) allows students to work together as a team, examining real-world consulting problems over the course of 10 days and testing their mettle against their peers.”

“Feedback from our events suggests that participants benefit tremendously from our programs and feel more prepared for careers in consulting,” Chand says. “We are in the process of developing an extensive network of alumni from our club.”

This fall—a traditionally the busiest time for recruiting—the HGCC has held workshops on how to practice cases and prepare for interviews, as well as regular meetings of its Business Knowledge Development Seminar Series. The organization also includes a Volunteer Consulting Group, which provides pro-bono consulting to real-world clients. And it collaborates with the Office of Career Services on its popular Nanocase program, which allows GSAS students to work on a simulated case in a team environment, learning to conduct interviews with clients and to synthesize vital information necessary to solving a case. —Jennifer Dudy

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Want to Consult? Consult an Expert

GSAS STUDENT GROUP PROVIDES VALUABLE CAMPUS-WIDE CAREER PREP

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Biotech Career Fair

The GSAS Harvard Biotechnology Club hosted its annual career fair, which it calls the biggest career event for life science PhDs, MDs, and postdocs at Harvard, on September 29. The fair drew leading names in the biotechnology industry, (Biogen Idec, Vertex), in consulting (BCG, Campbell Alliance, Clearview Healthcare, Health Advances, LEX Consulting), in patent law (Clark & Ebbing, Finnegan, Hamilton Brook Smith Reynolds, Lando & Anastasi, Wolf Greenfield), and in pharmaceuticals (Pfizer, Merck), among other interested affiliates. The Biotech Club’s mission is to bridge the gap between industry and academia by building relationships with companies operating in the biotechnology and healthcare spheres. At right, Vicky Zhou, a PhD student in genetics, greets a Pfizer representative.
“One of the biggest mistakes students make is waiting too long before seeking help, which is often due to thinking the problem is either too big or too small. Help is available for every problem regardless of its size.” — Ellen Fox

Services and the Bureau of Study Counsel. “Law students are out in three years, most HBS students are out in two. Other Harvard schools have a built-in time limit. GSAS doesn’t.” Many students manage to sustain productivity and focus, but as responsibilities shift from class work to teaching and potentially lonely years of research and writing, some students struggle.

When difficulties mount to the point where one’s work, daily habits, and interactions with others are all compromised, it’s time to get help. But students may hesitate for a variety of reasons: They may fear that word will get back to their advisors; they may think that their problem is insignificant and that they should know how to handle it; they may think that their problem is so complex it has no solution; or they may come from a culture or country where seeking psychological treatment is stigmatized.

“Out of the bigger mistakes students make is waiting too long before seeking help, which is often due to thinking the problem is either too big or too small,” says Ellen Fox, the GSAS director of student services, who provides front-line assistance to students in need of a variety of help. “Help is available for every problem regardless of its size.”

In Barreir’s experience, feelings of embarrassment and shame are the prime barriers to people seeking help. “But no one should feel that way,” he says. “And no one should make you feel that way.”

The math is simple, he continues. “If you ignore emotional problems, they get worse. Getting help will always make it better.”

For Fox, that equation has been proved time and again over her long career at GSAS. “In my experience of talking with many students about a wide range of issues, I have seen the great relief that comes with sharing the problem. Seeking help is a major step in resolving whatever the issue may be.”

Frustration with one’s academic progress and difficult interactions with one’s advisor are among the common problems GSAS students bring forward. The latter — problems with one’s advisor — are particularly daunting for students, Fox says. She works with them to uncover “the sources and nature of the tension and explore possible approaches to diffuse the tensions, which can include doing a role-play about a conversation that she could have with her advisor. With the student’s permission, I may confer with Garth McCavana [the GSAS Dean for Student Affairs] and may suggest that the student speak with the Director of Graduate Studies in her program.”

“In situations where it seems clear that the relationship with an advisor cannot be improved, it may be necessary to change advisors, in which case I would explore possible options with the student.”

Such moments of crossroads can feel hopeless, Fox says, “but it is always possible to find a way to improve the situation.”

FOR THE STUDENT QUESTIONING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN his personal concerns and the scholarly community he’s now part of, lasting help has come from his interactions with Fox and with counselors at the Bureau of Study Counsel. He’s found it valuable to talk through his concerns in a context that was not explicitly a mental health one, and he’s enjoyed the continuity of his relationship with Fox, which has lasted for several years. But he explored other interventions, too, includ- ing Mental Health Services, and he endorses the “trial and error” approach, which allowed various resources to work in harmony with one another.

Paul Barreir, the director of BHAC, says each new patient is seen within 5-10 days, based on screenings that allow caregivers to triage the particular need of the caller and determine how quickly she needs to be seen. “Time to first appointment for less urgent cases can stretch a bit longer as the semester advances and patient volume increases. But urgent care is always available, Barreir says, and patients who present with conditions that require an immediate visit will receive the care they need. HUHS addresses its supply-and-demand problem by increasing its visiting staff in the semester proceeds.

Barreir wants to dispel the notion that a Mental Health Services treatment plan will result in a prescription. “In fact, the majority of students are treated with medication,” he says. And he also wants students to know that there is no visit limit at HUHS; the number of visits is based on medical necessity, as determined by the caregiver.

FOR THE STUDENT IN CRISIS OVER PERSONAL, FINANCIAL, and academic challenges, Ellen Fox assembled a team of people who helped in different ways. The student received family and individual therapy through Mental Health Services, she met with a counselor at the Bureau of Study Counsel, and she met with a financial aid officer. “Most importantly at that moment,” the stu- dent says, Fox “acknowledged that my situation was really hard, and that made me feel understood. She made me feel that the University really was willing to support me during this difficult moment of my life.”

“Despite all the things that are happening right now, the fact that I was here at Harvard and had been offered help has made a huge difference for us.”

Manage Your Stress — Right Now

According to Harvard, one strategy for managing stress in the moment, and for setting yourself on a positive long-term course for stress reduction, is the Stop-Breathe-Reflect-Choose technique. Try it the next time you encounter a stressful situation.

Stop. For a few seconds, stop what you’re doing, and stop the flow of negative thoughts about the situation.

Breathe. Take a deep breath, release tension in your body as you exhale.

Reflect. Consider what is really going on in the situation and whether it matters to you in two weeks? What action will you take in this particular situation?

Choose. You can make a choice about how you are going to react in a positive manner. Through this process you can begin to realize that you have the power to choose your actions in the face of stress.
Talk your Way into a Great Job
Tuesday, November 15, 1–2:30 p.m., 54 Dunster Street (OCS Conference Room). The best way to find the perfect job is to meet with and gather information from people already working in your field of interest. This workshop will demystify the process of networking and give you practical tips on how to actually get out there and talk your way into a fabulous job!

Preparing for the Academic Interview
Tuesday, November 15, 3–4:30 p.m., 16 Divinity Avenue (Biological Laboratories Building). GSAS students are invited to attend this workshop presented by Melanie Sinche, director of the FAS Office for Postdoctoral Affairs, to learn what to expect in an academic job interview. Sponsored by the HMS/HSDM Office of Postdoctoral Fellows and the FAS Office for Postdoctoral Affairs. To register, e-mail melanie_sinche@harvard.edu.

Preparing for Campus Visits
Thursday, November 17, 10–11:30 a.m., 54 Dunster Street (OCS Conference Room). You’ve aced the conference interview and been invited to campus. Find out what to expect and how to prepare for your job talk, teaching demo, conversations with faculty and deans, and social gatherings. Part of the “Becoming Faculty” series, cosponsored by OCS and GSAS.

Get Out!
EXPLORATIONS AND ADVENTURES OFF CAMPUS

Take the Hubway for a spin!
$7 will get you a one-day membership in Boston’s new bike-sharing program and an hour of riding; if you like it, join for $60 for the year. Bike stations in Allston and throughout Boston. More information: www.thehubway.com.

Job Talk
PERIODIC UPDATES ON CAREERS, PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT, AND LIFE AFTER GRADUATE SCHOOL

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