

YALE

ALUMNI MAGAZINE

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JAN/FEB 2026

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omnivore**

**How to build a
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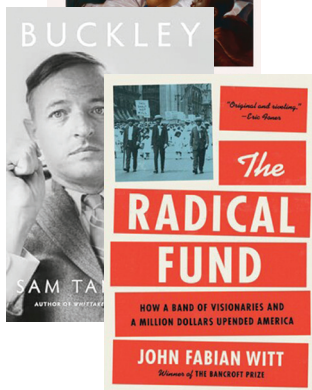
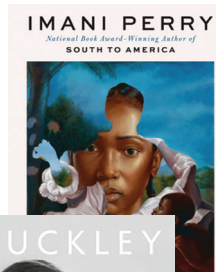
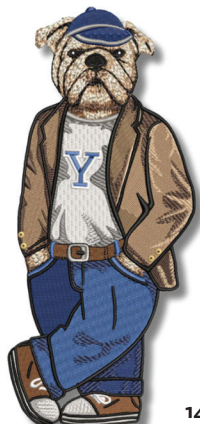
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from the editor

Curious, not furious

In October, social psychologist Jonathan Haidt '85 addressed a packed crowd in Battell for the second in 2025's Presidential Lecture Series. Haidt, founder of the Heterodox Academy and author, most recently, of the bestselling *The Anxious Generation*, examines social media's role in two hallmarks of the current moment: the decline of teen mental health and the rise of political dysfunction.

Haidt traced a line between social media virality—which kicked into gear after Facebook's "like" button and Twitter's "retweet" function caught on in the early 2010s—and a new posture of defensiveness he noticed in his students, a "disturbance in the force" that soon played out in public confrontations on campuses across the country (including NYU, where he teaches, and Yale). These well-publicized incidents eroded public trust in higher education, he argued, particularly among conservatives, beginning a shift in public sentiment that made possible today's heightened taxes on university endowments and potentially disastrous disinvestment in research. And yet, in my reading of his lecture, Haidt—who describes himself as a political centrist—seemed to be saying this so-called wokeness wasn't a political phenomenon at all. Rather, from a psychological standpoint, he called it the difference between coming to college in "defend mode" versus "discover mode."

Students were no longer arriving at universities "like a kid in a candy store," he lamented, but "scanning the horizon for threats." And social media—the way it encourages users to seek attention, the way it enables other users to shame them, and the way it both captures our attention and destroys our ability to pay attention to anything for very long—helped birth this new age of anxiety and division.

He urged the audience to delete addictive short video apps like TikTok from their phones—move them to your computer instead, he advised—and to reclaim their joy at the opportunities in front of them. At the end, he led the audience as we repeated together: "I will give less offense. I will take less offense. I will pass on less offense."

A month later, alumni volunteer leaders came together for Assembly. The two-day event, mandated by the founding documents of the Yale Alumni Association in 1972 to make sure alumni had a voice in their organization, precedes the last home game of the football season each year (and what a year this was—see page 52). I want to thank everyone who attended a breakout session about the magazine's future. It was wonderful to hear your opinions, and that you value what we do. Thanks, also, to the peo-

ple who responded to my request last issue to drop us a line, for publication or otherwise. Please keep doing so. We can't respond substantively to every email, but we are compiling it all as we prepare to refresh the magazine's editorial format and digital platforms.

Assembly included a discussion between Yale trustees Joshua L. Steiner '87, Marta L. Tellado '02PhD, and Carter Brooks Simonds '99. President Maurie McInnis had just addressed the crowd—describing some of the challenges facing higher ed—and as the three took questions, Steiner said something that struck me. When talking with Yalies and others, especially those who are upset about something, he reminds both them and himself to be "curious, not furious." It's a phrase borrowed from the title of a 2023 parenting book that advocates a "mindset shift" to help young people navigate a fast-changing world in which they often don't yet have the tools they need to succeed.

A mindset shift to help navigate a fast-changing world.

As I walked home, I thought about the sheer privilege of the past couple of days, in which I'd juggled a performance of music inspired by the poetry of William Blake, a Mory's lunch with a fascinating YAM supporter, and a tour of Beinecke. I thought about how I'd gone many hours surrounded by hundreds of people, not one of us staring at a phone. I thought about how so many of the people I'd spoken with over the previous two days had asked me a variation on the same question: Why did you come to Yale?

I'd thrown out a few answers, all true, yet none THE answer. Then I realized: I came here because I'm not done learning. I was searching for a community in discover mode. And I found it.

That, I believe and hope, is what unites us all. We're here on this earth to explore, to learn, to join, as Haidt phrased it, Yale's telos: the search for truth. We're curious, not furious. We rush to discover, not defend. Unless we're talking the goal line at the Bowl, of course. Boola boola!



Pippa Jack
editor@yalealumnimagazine.org

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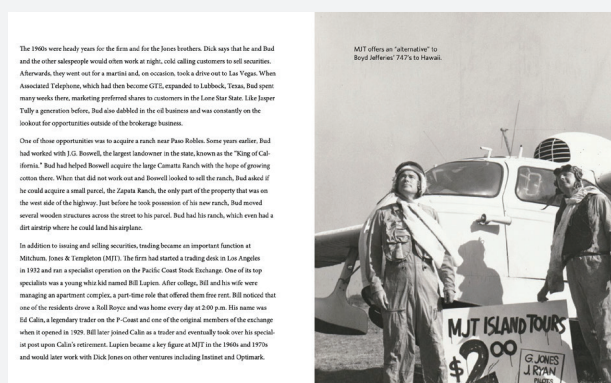
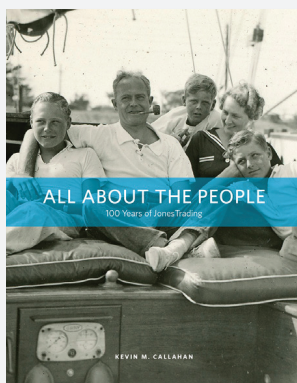
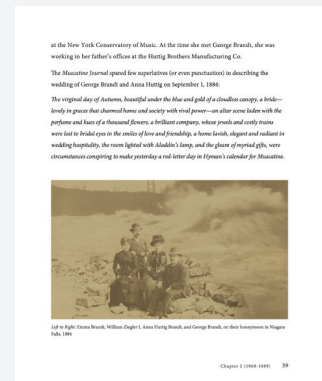
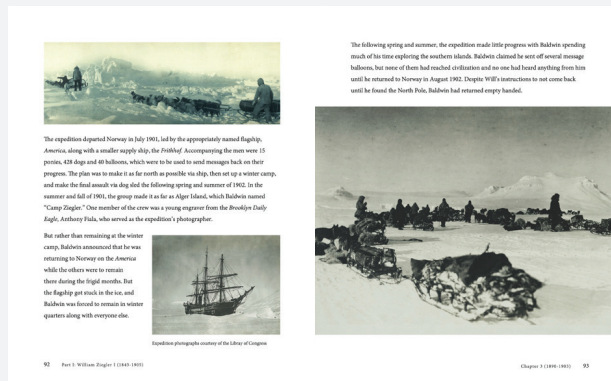
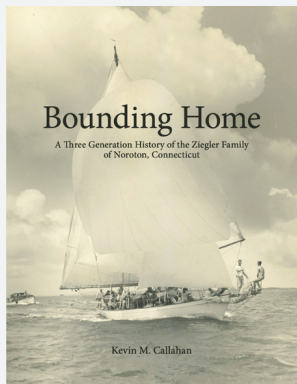
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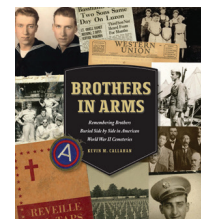
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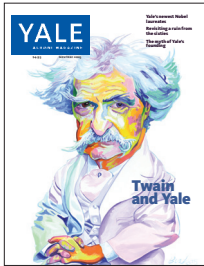
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letters

Mark Twain and Yale



Shelley Fisher Fishkin's article "Mark Twain's Adventures at Yale" (November/December) is *New Yorker*-quality writing. Its style and wit are a perfect tribute to its subject. "Sometimes, of course, Twain was just having fun." Yale did itself honor, as well as honoring Twain, with two honorary degrees.

Patrick Henry '67PhD
Waite Park, MN

The only hero I have left from my college days who hasn't proven to have had clay feet is Charles Ives, the composer, Class of 1898. So I was particularly interested in the coverage of Twain's close friendship with Joseph Twichell, Class of 1859. Twichell's son David was Ives's classmate and lifelong friend, and his daughter Harmony became Ives's wife and soulmate. In his biography of Ives, Jan Swafford quotes him as writing that "I heard Mark Twain say through his own mouth, nose, and cigar as he pointed across the room . . . to Mr. and Mrs. Twichell: "Those two blessed people—how greatly indebted I am to them."

Tom Erickson '71
Wallingford, PA

Earlier this year I read both the novel *James* by Percival Everett and Ron Chernow's book about Mark Twain. With that said, it came as a pleasant surprise to find even more insight into the character of Mark Twain upon reading your wonderful article. My enjoyment was right up there with the results of The Game.

Robert T. Hildebrand
Tyringham, MA

Thank you for the fine article "Mark Twain's Adventures at Yale" by Professor Fishkin. The style in which Twain skewered the bombastic and exposed "pretentious falsities" would have great application today were it to be employed in preference to the usual vitriol. And the author was quite clev-

er to include Twain quotations using the word "comet" no less than three times, foreshadowing his now-famous entry and exit with Halley's Comet.

David Perry '83JD
Nashville, TN

Another Yale link to Mark Twain, if a bit tangential, was the larger-than-life English professor William Lyon Phelps, who recounts in his autobiography the moment when, at age 12, he unwittingly shot some of Twain's prize ducks with his new shotgun but managed to escape detection. Twain was a familiar figure in his Hartford neighborhood.

Phelps was present at the 1901 celebration, and reports that Twain "received the loudest and most prolonged applause." He then met Twain in Italy in 1904 on the occasion of Clara Clemens's debut as a singer and had a long talk with him some days later. Twain, he reports, was strongly pro-Japanese in the Russo-Japanese war, and he seemed only grudgingly to accept Phelps's verdict that *Huckleberry Finn* was his best book. He does not mention any confession

of his transgression of a quarter-century earlier.

Roger Bagnall '68
St. Louis, MO

Finding the foam house

Regarding the foam house you featured ("In the Wild," November/December): In the late 1960s and the early '70s, the Yale cross country team used to compete on the golf course and practice on the trails surrounding it. We were prone to wandering (trespassing) on the water company and adjoining lands. I remember my bewilderment as a freshman encountering these bizarre structures. An upperclassman explained that they were an architecture school project. One of my favorite long runs on Sunday morning was to enter through the decrepit chain-link gate on Fountain Street and follow the trails past the foam buildings and then follow the trails back to the golf course and Edgewood back to Pierson.

Years later, I had the privilege of running those trails again when our daughters attended Yale. I was disappointed not to be able to find the two structures that are now



Chat

Every weekday, we post a photo on Facebook, Instagram, and our Daily Snap blog. In November, we spotted these students, who had moved their common room onto Cross Campus to enjoy one of the last mild late-fall afternoons. Readers on Facebook were impressed. "I am in awe of their efforts; some heavy furniture there," wrote Ron Sipherd '64. It was one particular detail that caught the eye of interior designer Elaine Griffin '86: "They brought the rug! The RUUUUUUUUG!!"

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MARK ALDEN BRANCH '86



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“I once heard someone quip that if there were only two people on Earth, there would be two religions.”

missing, but I enjoyed finding the remains of the one pictured. Thanks for the article; it is a shame those woodlands are not enjoyed by more people.

Dan Larson '73
Queensbury, NY

The president's message

Regarding President McInnis's address to the Class of 2029 (“Moments of Transition,” November/December): I found her words to be incisive, relevant, and appropriate for the occasion. She displayed the right tone in alluding to the problems of the day without elaboration or partisanship. I am a casual student of art, and I liked the way she succinctly interpreted the painting without getting overly didactic. Yale is blessed to have such a fine lady at the helm.

Henry Blumberg '67
New York, NY

In her recent Opening Assembly address, President McInnis pointed out that in this rapidly changing world, “The world we create depends on how we treat one another.” I totally agree. She went on to say, “In this moment of rapid transformation, our nation is divided on key values.” In some ways, our nation will always be divided. I once heard someone quip that if there were only two people on Earth, there would be two religions.

Differing opinions are an innate aspect of being human. If the notion of being different was not the unconscious security issue that it is, the tools that President McInnis suggested would naturally exist. However, the matter of security now attached to personal opinions is preventing our paradigm of government from dying peacefully. We may not be living in circumstances that fomented the French Revolu-

tion, but some 200 years later, recalling the dramatic changes in thought that resulted could help us now.

We've been trying to resolve problems using the same approach. Without changing how we address them, the differences in opinions at the root of our government's predicament is a fool's errand, or, as Einstein might say, the definition of insanity.

As President McInnis pointed out, “there is more than one way to get to your destination and . . . the well-worn trail isn't the only one worth taking.” A solution, as unconventional as it may be, does exist. The foundation lies in Thomas Merton's sudden awakening in 1958 to the fact that we are all one people—that separateness is an illusion, that only our brains perceive differences. While the idea of a spiritual revolution may seem radical, it would eliminate the unconscious security issues now pre-

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“The First Congregational Church treasures the table on which the founding books were placed and uses it as our communion table.”

venting healthy change. President McInnis's tools of “open-mindedness, and mutual respect for each other's dignity and humility” would no longer be a mere suggestion, but a reality.

Human beings will always have differing opinions. A spiritual revolution would remove the unconscious aspect of security from the opinions currently standing in the way of collaboration and healthy problem-solving.

Catherine Tuggle
Winona, MN

Ms. Tuggle is the widow of Kenneth J. Tuggle '62. —Eds.

The founding myth

With regard to your very interesting article on the founding of Yale (“How Firm a Foundation,” November/December), I sub-

mit that, as with many foundational stories of great institutions (such as Christianity, Judaism, et al.), it is the essential truth of the story as opposed to the historical details that is most important. The First Congregational Church of Branford treasures the table on which the founding books were placed and uses it regularly as our communion table.

William D. Hall '69
Branford, CT

“Old Yale” in the November/December issue recounts how the colonial General Assembly tried to gain control of Yale in 1763 by the disingenuous maneuver of sending a committee of visitation, and how Yale's then-president, Thomas Clap, saw the danger to Yale's independence this would create and headed off the proposed committee by means of a tale about Yale's origins that was

more myth than fact.

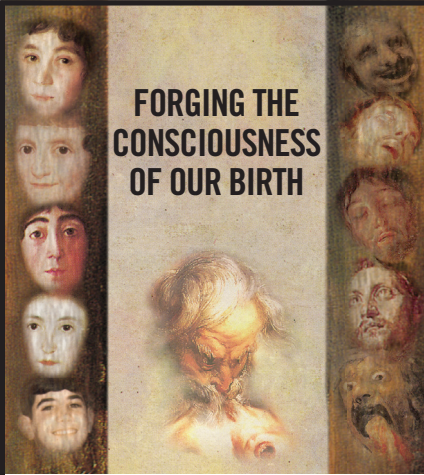
Or to put it more succinctly, Clap evaded the Assembly's trap by using a bit of clap-trap.

David Hoffman '80
Alon Shvut, Israel

The swim test

Stuyvesant Bearns's letter (July/August) about Yale's freshman swim test reminds me of mine in 1951. Not comfortable in any pool, I approached the test with trepidation. As I completed the requisite four laps, barely and with great effort, the instructor leaned down and proclaimed: “Kroloff, technically you passed, but I strongly advise you to take the freshman swim course.”

That was the best advice I received in my four years at Yale! For the past half century, I have done my laps three times a week. As a newly minted nonagenarian, I attribute



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“One thing I rarely see in public dialogue is intellectual humility.”

my longevity in some measure to that Old Eli regimen that began before I entered my first class at Yale.

Charles A. Kroloff '55
Westfield, NJ

The role of humility

Your latest issue mentions the founding of the Yale Center for Civic Thought. One thing I rarely see in public dialogue is intellectual humility—the expressed recognition that regardless of how much we know about a problem, we don’t necessarily have solutions which both solve the problem(s) and are collectively acceptable. People usually propose solutions or take positions, then support or defend them, rather than engaging those concerned to uncover issues and discuss possible solutions.

I wonder to what extent this intellectual blind spot is discussed in classes. This is a

meta-issue regarding all discussions.

Dennis Leister '68
Rockville, MD

It happened at Newnham

There’s a small item in your recent issue about how the new movie *After the Hunt* begins with the claim “It happened at Yale,” when in fact the movie was shot in England (Campus Clips, November/December). Yale readers may be interested to know that the film was shot at Newnham College, Cambridge—the educational establishment I went to when I graduated from Yale in 1978.

When I arrived at Newnham to continue my study of English, culminating in a PhD in 1984, I felt an immediate sense of belonging. I now wonder if it was in part inspired by the likeness in architecture. In any case, it’s pleasing to have an external endorsement of two places that have figured in my

personal history. I am a Newnham Honorary Associate, which means that I voluntarily provide coaching and mentoring to students and occasionally alumni as well as offering life skills workshops and leadership development to both students and junior fellows. I also offer mentoring to Yale alumni, which I very much enjoy. It’s nice to feel these two institutions have come together in this recent film.

Karin Horowitz '78
Cockayne Hatley, UK

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MARK ALDEN BRANCH '86

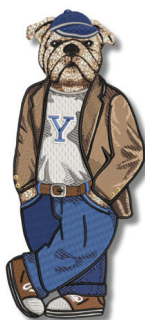
The northeast corner of Science Hill is a hive of activity this winter as the first phase of the Upper Science Hill Development plan begins to take shape. Now under construction are an addition to Wright Lab, a new Advanced Instrumentation Development Center, and a new parking garage to replace Pierson-Sage Garage, which was demolished last summer. A new Physical Sciences and Engineering Building, built into the hillside to support initiatives in quantum science, engineering, and materials, will be part of phase two.

Wide world of torts

The crowd at New Haven's Scantlebury Park on November 22 was considerably smaller than the one at the Yale Bowl, but the players were part of their own sports tradition. Since the 1950s, the editors of the *Yale Law Journal* (shown here with "135" jerseys reflecting their latest volume) and the *Harvard Law Review* have faced off in an annual flag football game on the day of The Game. The Yale editors lost this one. But just wait till next year.



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Canine couture

As a sophomore on the Yale lightweight crew in the spring of 2023, Constantine Polychronopoulos '25 wanted the team's annual custom t-shirts to be more adventurous than usual. He and a friend sketched up an idea for a shirt embroidered with an insouciant bipedal bulldog holding an oar. "It was something that would identify you as a member of the team on campus," says Polychronopoulos, "but you could go to Boston or New York and nobody would put that together. It's more subtle and understated." The team loved it, and soon other Yale teams were asking for their own version. Before long, Polychronopoulos had a partner, Coby Wagonfeld '26, and a brand, Crew Dog.

Less than three years later, Crew Dog designs have expanded far beyond Yale to more than 90 college campuses, whose own mascots have been given the Crew Dog treatment (see above). And in recent months the company, which now has ten full-time employees, had been selling around four thousand shirts a month. For Polychronopoulos, what started as a side project has become his passion, at least for now. "We're sort of taking it as it comes," he says. "A year ago, what we're doing now would have seemed pretty unrealistic. I want to keep that in mind going forward: You really don't know what can happen."

Lipstick removed



After fifty years in relative peace in the courtyard of Morse College, one of Yale's most iconic sculptures had a tumultuous 2025. *Lipstick (Ascending) on Caterpillar Tracks*, a 1969 sculpture by Claes Oldenburg '50, was removed from Morse for conservation work in July, then returned to the college in late October with new paint and freshly treated surfaces. But it was removed again in early December after the letters "ATB" were found etched in the sculpture. Morse head of college Catherine Panter-Brick told students that the sculpture will have its permanent home in the sculpture garden of the Yale University Art Gallery. The sculpture garden also houses Alexander Calder's 1960 *Gallows and Lollipops*, which stood for years in Beinecke Plaza.

Quoted

"We want to catalyze a new era of health and well-ness by leveraging science, technology, and compassion to ensure and maximize well-being for all. We know human beings are not defined by their age and diagnosis."



—Miia Kivipelto, the Rodman Family Professor of Gerontology at the School of Nursing, at the launch event for the school's Center for Aging Well on October 29. Kivipelto is inaugural director of the center.

By the numbers: the endowment

11.1%

Return for year ending June 30, 2025

\$44.1 B

Value of endowment as of June 30, 2025

34%

Proportion of university budget funded by the endowment

\$4.5 B

Gains for 2024–25

8%

Rate at which endowment income will be taxed beginning in 2026–27

\$300 M

Estimated cost to Yale of endowment income tax beginning in 2026–27

Graduate School will limit enrollment



The Graduate School banner led the procession at the school's Matriculation Ceremony last fall. Starting this fall, **incoming classes of doctoral students** will get smaller.

In normal times, a 13 percent reduction in Graduate School enrollment in the humanities and social sciences—and 5 percent in STEM—would be dramatic and distressing news at Yale. But given the more dramatic cuts announced this year by some of the university's peers, the plan has led to some sighs of relief.

Harvard, for example, announced in October that it would slash graduate-student admissions by 75 percent in the sciences and 60 percent in the arts and humanities in each of the next two years. The University of Chicago is planning to reduce its PhD student enrollment by 30 percent by 2030–31, and many of its nonscience programs are admitting no new students in the coming year. Brown is cutting its PhD admissions by 20 percent next year, and Penn cut its by 33 percent in the last admissions cycle.

Those universities, like Yale, are responding to new financial headwinds, from increased taxes on endowment income depending on the institution's size and wealth (for Yale, the highest rate of 8 percent will be levied), to reduced research funding and deep uncertainty about future federal grant spending and reimbursement rates. But Yale's more measured approach is based on what has happened here so far. Larry Gladney, dean of science in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, says that Yale's grant funding for the current year ended up slightly ahead of last year in total dollars. "Right now, there's no fiscal justification for making drastic cuts," he says. "We may get to that point quickly; maybe we're a bad news cycle away."

In the humanities and social sciences, each PhD program has a target total enrollment size. Over the next three years, each program will be required to

limit admissions to reach a new, 13-percent lower enrollment target by 2028. The cuts will vary in programs that are above or below their current enrollment targets. In the sciences and engineering, enrollment will be reduced by 5 percent; however, some programs may decide on larger cuts based on anticipated reductions in federal research grants in their disciplines. Unlike past temporary belt-tightening measures pegged to economic downturns, this one is likely permanent, as no one expects the endowment income tax to go away.

"Nobody's happy admitting fewer students, including me," says Graduate School dean Lynn Cooley, the C. N. H. Long Professor of Genetics. "But we're facing budget realities that make it imperative to do that in order to keep supporting our students the way we want to."

That said, the cuts are coming after years of discussion about whether Yale and its peers are graduating too many PhDs, particularly in the humanities, where jobs in academia are getting harder to find. Administrators say that was not a consideration in the budget-driven decision, but Cooley acknowledges that "we want our students to be successful in their careers, and if it's getting that much harder, perhaps we should have fewer students."

Pamela Schirmeister '80, '88PhD, deputy dean of the Graduate School, says the school has been leading discussions with its various programs about "how we can support your program at a reduced size to maintain your excellence and your intellectual community." Among the areas under discussion are finding ways to help students reduce their time to degree, and building and strengthening of interdisciplinary conversation among smaller programs.

"Maybe we're a bad news cycle away" from deeper cuts.

Amid the cuts, Cooley says it's important to understand the loss that comes with training fewer graduate students. "I often try to remind people who are not embedded in an academic place like we are that when they read news about a discovery on campus, it's young people who are doing that," she says. "It's easy to think of the faculty as the stars of the show, which of course they are, but it's also young people—grad students and postdocs—who are pushing discovery forward." **Y** MARK ALDEN BRANCH '86

DAN RENZETTI

Campus Clips

IN A UNIVERSITY BUDGET UPDATE in December, senior Yale officials reported that more budget-reduction measures will be required to respond to an increased federal tax on endowment income and the prospect of reduced federal reimbursement for research costs. The university has reduced nonsalary spending across the board by 5 percent for 2025–26, imposed a 90-day hiring pause last summer, deferred some building projects, and offered a retirement incentive for some management and professional staff. The report says further reductions will occur over the next two years, and that “several units may need to meet their budget targets by reducing their workforce.” While they hope most personnel reductions will come through attrition, they said that “layoffs may be necessary, but university leaders are working hard to minimize them wherever possible.”

THE UNIVERSITY WILL HIRE an ombudsperson to “serve as a neutral advocate for fair treatment and processes,” President McInnis announced in October. The new position will report directly to the president, operating “under strict confidentiality,” to help “faculty, staff, and G&P students understand their rights and options based on all laws and university policies and procedures.” All the other Ivy schools have a similar position.

YALE’S POLICE UNION and the university agreed on a new contract on October 15, more than two years after the last contract expired. The Yale Police Benevolent Association had authorized a strike last summer when negotiations stalled, but the strike never took place. The new contract, which includes pay raises and expanded benefits, runs through June 30, 2028.

THE STATE OF CONNECTICUT is investing \$121 million in quantum technology, Governor Ned Lamont ’80MBA announced at a press conference at Kline Tower in November. The figure includes support for QuantumCT—a nonprofit collaboration led by Yale and the University of Connecticut—and its quantum incubator in New Haven.

A PACK OF DOGS—and a number of admiring humans—gathered on the lawn of the Yale Health Center in September to honor Heidi, a six-year-old yellow labrador retriever who has served as Yale’s public safety facility dog since 2020. The occasion? Heidi and her handler, Yale Police officer Rich Simons, were retiring. As described in a YaleNews article in 2021, Heidi’s job was “to be a calming, comforting presence for students, staff, faculty, hospital patients, and the community at large.” Handsome Dan XIX and many other dogs—some in uniform—attended.

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Catherine Skinner, 1931–2025

In her early 20s, master's degree from Radcliffe in hand, Cathy Wild Skinner set sail with her new husband, Brian Skinner (who later became the Eugene Higgins Professor of Geology & Geophysics at Yale), to his home country of Australia, leaving behind everything she knew to live and study on the other side of the world.

By the time of her death on July 30, at the age of 94, H. Catherine Skinner, senior researcher in the geology and geophysics department (now earth and planetary sciences) and a leading figure in the study of medical geology, had achieved prominence in a field long dominated by men. (Medical geology focuses on the relationship between natural geologic factors and human and animal health.) She had racked up notable firsts—including becoming the first woman to serve a full term



Among other things, geologist **H. Catherine Skinner** was the first woman to serve a full term as head of a Yale residential college.

as head of a residential college (Jonathan Edwards, which she led from 1977 to 1982), and the first woman elected president of the Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences. She had descended mine shafts in pursuit of her research and navigated the challenges of the 1977 campus strike that occurred early in her JE tenure.

"Nothing," says Thalassa Skinner '86, the youngest of Cathy and Brian's three daughters, "intimidated my mother."

While Brian taught at the University of Adelaide, Cathy completed her PhD in mineralogy. They returned a few years later to the United States and took jobs with the federal government, and Cathy came to Yale in 1967. Over the course of her career at Yale, in addition to her position in EPS, Cathy Skinner held affiliate positions at the Peabody Museum and in the Department of Orthopaedics and Rehabilitation at

the School of Medicine.

Skinner mentored scores of students and colleagues. Peter Jokl '64, '68MD, professor emeritus of orthopaedics and rehabilitation, credits Skinner, his thesis advisor during his residency, with teaching him "the rigors of well-documented and reproducible scientific research." Maureen Long, the Bruce D. Alexander '65 Professor of Earth and Planetary Sciences and current chair of EPS, remembers Skinner "both as an exceptional scientist and a supportive presence for her junior colleagues. Not only was she a trailblazer for women in science, but she was always open about both the challenges and rewards of combining a science career and family life."

A trailblazer for women in science.

Skinner deeply engaged with the local community. "My mother was in perpetual motion in both body and mind," Thalassa Skinner says. Cathy Skinner volunteered with the Connecticut Fund for the Environment and the New Haven YWCA. She created a professional women's group that met monthly for more than four decades, and she was a founding member of the Investors' Strategy Institute, which educated women on growing their financial futures. She was an avid gardener, kept bees, baked her own bread and granola, and loved to knit.

Most of all, her daughter says, "She always met people on their own level. She was intensely interested in you and your story and how she could help you. My mother opened doors for people who didn't even realize that there were doors to be opened."

Y RHEA HIRSHMAN

COURTESY THALASSA SKINNER '86

Remembered

ROBERT A. M. STERN '65MArch (left), dean of the School of Architecture from 1998 to 2016, died on November 27 at his home in Manhattan. He was 86. A prolific architect, Stern's portfolio **ranged from private homes to skyscrapers** around the world. At Yale, he and his firm designed Benjamin Franklin and Pauli Murray Colleges, the Schwarzman Center, and the Greenberg Conference Center. A remembrance will appear in our next issue.

KAI ERIKSON, the William R. Kenan Jr. Professor of Sociology and American Studies Emeritus, died in Hamden, Connecticut, on November 10. He was 94. A sociologist who

studied **how communities experience collective trauma** after disasters, Erikson taught at Yale from 1966 to 2000. In addition to his teaching and scholarship, Erikson edited the *Yale Review* from 1979 to 1989 and served as head of Trumbull College from 1969 to 1973.

Physicist **WERNER WOLF** died on September 16. He was 95. A native of Vienna, Wolf earned his doctorate in physics at Oxford and joined the Yale faculty in 1963, where he eventually became the Raymond J. Wean Professor of Applied Physics. In addition to his teaching and his **extensive research into magnetic materials**, Wolf took on a number of administrative roles in engineering and applied science, helping to keep the departments alive during the budget crisis of the 1990s.

ROBERT A. M. STERN ARCHITECTS



Honored

Three Yale seniors are among the 32 American students chosen this year as **Rhodes Scholars**. **ARUNA B. BALASUBRAMANIAN** '26 of Bala Cynwyd, Pennsylvania; **NOAH B. TIRSCHWELL** '26 of Dobbs Ferry, New York; and **AUGUST A. RIOS** '26 of Bluffton, South Carolina, were chosen for the scholarship, which offers funding for two to three years of graduate study at the University of Oxford.

Appointed

Two faculty members have been appointed **Sterling Professors**, the university's highest faculty honor. **STEVEN BERRY** is now a Sterling Professor of Economics. Previously the David Swensen Professor of Economics, Berry has taught at Yale since 1988. A scholar of industrial organization, he has served as chair of the economics department and as the inaugural director of the Tobin Center for Economic Policy. Former Law School dean **HEATHER GERKEN** has been named a Sterling Professor of Law. Gerken recently stepped down as dean after eight

years to become president of the Ford Foundation; she will remain on the Yale faculty as a professor emerita.

GEOFFREY S. CHATAS (right) became Yale's **senior vice president for operations** in November. Chatas, who succeeds Jack Callahan '80, comes from the University of Michigan, where he was executive vice president and chief financial officer for four years. Before that, he served in similar roles at Georgetown and Ohio State.



Elected

ELIAS THEODORE '27, a junior in Jonathan Edwards College, won the Democratic primary for the Ward 1 seat on **New Haven's Board of Alders** in September. Ward 1 is dominated by Yale students living on Old Campus and in eight residential colleges. Because there was no Republican challenger, he joins the board in January. Theodore, a New Haven native and graduate of Wilbur Cross High School, is majoring in urban studies. He defeated Norah Laughter '26.

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scene on campus

It takes a village

PHOTOGRAPH BY BOB HANDELMAN

In our July/August 2024 issue, we reported on the Divinity School's Living Village, an ambitious effort to achieve a new level of sustainability in building design. Now, it's up and running. This view from the tower of Marquand Chapel shows the Divinity Quadrangle's existing buildings at the bottom and the new Living Village residence hall and its courtyard at center left. To the right of the new building are a kitchen garden, a water garden where the building's water filtration process will be visible, and a hillside amphitheater overlooking East Rock. At the October blessing and ribbon ceremony, Divinity School dean Gregory Sterling said the project is "a countercultural call that emphasizes the role and value of a community at a time when the centrifugal forces of our society are pulling us further and further apart."





where they are now

Meet the rabbi

Born in Korea and raised in Tacoma, Washington, by her Korean mother and Jewish American father, Angela Warnick Buchdahl '94 was sixteen when she first dreamed of becoming a rabbi. After graduating from Yale, where she met her future husband, Jacob Buchdahl '94, she attended cantorial and rabbinical schools. And in 2013, the Jewish Korean-American broke the stained-glass ceiling to be named senior rabbi at New York City's Central Synagogue, the first woman in its 186-year history. In a new memoir, *Heart of a Stranger*, Buchdahl details her journey, offering spiritual reflections along the way.

SYLVIA BROWNRIGG: What are some qualities in you, or in the people that you met, that enabled you to turn your dream of being a rabbi into a reality?

ANGELA BUCHDAHL: In many ways, the hero of the book is my mom. She was one of my early guides for boundary crossing, having moved [from Korea] to America at age 35 with two young kids. I watched how she navigated being the other with a great amount of dignity. She also really taught me that I could be home wherever I created it, that you could create that sense of belonging wherever you were. And that, of course, is really the Jewish story, from Abraham and Sarah through one thousand years of being a diaspora people to even today.

SB: Yale plays an important part in your memoir: You met your future husband there, and all three of your kids have gone there as well.

**“When you sing together,
that is the magic.”**

Rabbi **Angela Buchdahl '94** (facing page), senior rabbi at New York City's Central Synagogue, leads services in Battell Chapel as part of a two-day Asian Jewish gathering last fall organized by Yale's Asian Jewish Union and the Slifka Center.

SYLVIA BROWNRIGG '86 is author, most recently, of *The Whole Staggering Mystery: A Story of Fathers Lost and Found*. This interview has been condensed and edited for clarity.

AB: I think the beauty of college is trying to figure out how you are, separate from the home that you grew up in. I remember thinking that I didn't fit neatly into any box and that my other roommates seemed to more clearly. One was a legacy and one of four daughters, she was very comfortable and confident and became immediately involved in the Women's Center at Yale. And then going to a meeting of Korean American Students at Yale—I mean I was born in Korea, it was my first tongue, and yet, I think as a biracial child I never felt fully comfortable in Korean spaces. But my Korean roommate was very involved and finally got me to go to a meeting.

In many ways I picked Yale because I wanted to be in a place that had a rich Jewish community and identity—and it really lived up to that. It was in the humor in my singing group, and people using Yiddish words, and hundreds of people showing up for high holidays on campus.

SB: One of the very challenging moments you describe is when you did a trip to Israel before your senior year, and there were times when your Jewishness was questioned.

AB: It was a series of rejections, both from strangers and from people I actually knew really well. I hit rock bottom, and I got to some point where I felt like it wasn't worth it to keep fighting this fight anymore. Like, why am I trying so hard to be counted as a Jew and to have people tell me you're not really, we don't accept you and forget about being a rabbi?

I thought Judaism was something that I could shed easily. I don't have a Jewish face, I don't have a Jewish name. And my mother—this is a very Buddhist response—said: Is that really possible? And I realized that it wasn't, that I didn't actually have a choice. Judaism was something deep inside me: It was the way I saw the world. It was who I had become. I wrote that the benefit of hitting rock bottom is that it is a form of landing.

SB: You were a cantor before you were a rabbi, and you describe that role as being a connector, and helping people to hear their own voices.

AB: I grew up in a home in which my parents expected musical literacy in the same way they expected me to learn to read and do math. It was just a given. Music was kind of a universal language of spiritual and human connection. While I went to synagogue from a young age, the first time I really felt, Oh, I belong here, was when the music teacher showed up and she was singing music in a way that made me feel: *I want to sing to God*. I want to express myself in this way. Once I had a taste of what that felt like, I wanted to both continue and give other people the opportunity to experience it.

You know, I have an incredibly diverse congregation, politically, demographically, racially. But I would say that part of my ability to hold this community together is because of the music. The music transcends what makes us separate. When you sing together, or serve together, that is the magic that enables us to see each other as human beings and to create genuine community, even when we don't always agree on everything. **Y**



Captive congregation

By Mark Alden Branch '86

On May 8, 1926, after a year of heated campus debate, Yale's trustees announced that they were putting a stop to a feature of student life that they said "does not advance the interests of vital religion." Were they going after speakeasies? Jelly Roll Morton records? No,

fling of feet. Dogs, snakes, and roosters occasionally found their way into the chapel. One of the few things students enjoyed was "bowing out" the president as he left the chapel at the end of the service. Only seniors were afforded this honor; they lined up and bowed at the waist as the president passed through, making a game of seeing how close they could come to their leader without touching him.

Students began agitating for an end to the chapel requirement as early as the 1880s; Harvard made attendance voluntary in 1886. Opponents of compulsory chapel argued that it was a relic of the past and that it did little to inspire religious devotion (and maybe did the opposite). Defenders relied less on a religious argument than on the unifying value of gathering the entire college population together once a day. The debate was raised again and again over the next four decades.

In 1923, for the first time, the *Yale Daily News* began editorializing against compulsory chapel. Several factors militated against the requirement in the 1920s. Older students who had served in World War I felt that such compulsion was infantilizing, and students increasingly wanted to spend weekends in New York City instead of going to Sunday chapel.

But what finally brought matters to a head in the fall of 1925 was a recurrence of the space problem. The college had grown to the point where the whole student body could not fit in Battell Chapel, so that year classes went to chapel on alternating days. The division dealt a blow to the strongest argument for compulsory chapel: that it brought the whole college together. That fall, the *News* started campaigning

Until 1926, Yale College students were required to attend chapel services every day.

hard against the policy, conducting a survey in which 1,681 students opposed compulsory chapel and only 241 wanted to keep it.

The administration appointed a faculty committee to consider the question. Their solution was to drop the requirement for Sunday chapel but keep daily

MARK ALDEN BRANCH '86 is executive editor of the *Yale Alumni Magazine*.



Battell Chapel (above) was home to Yale's daily chapel services from 1874 to 1931. After this photo was taken, it was expanded in 1894 to seat 400 more people.

A blurry snapshot (facing page) of the **last compulsory chapel service**, on June 5, 1926, was sent anonymously to President James Rowland Angell in 1928.

the trustees ended the requirement that Yale College students attend daily morning chapel services.

Ever since Yale's founding in 1701, students had been compelled to pray together. In the early years, there were morning and evening prayer services in the college every day, plus two additional services on Sunday at the local meetinghouse. In 1757, President Thomas Clap, dissatisfied with the preaching at New Haven's First Church, established Sunday services on campus and built a suitable chapel four years later.

As the college grew, Yale had to build a larger chapel in 1824 and again in 1874, when Battell Chapel was dedicated. And as the college's religious mission began to fade in importance, chapel became a dry, unloved institution. An alum from the 1860s later recalled in the *Yale Alumni Weekly* that students viewed daily chapel as "an arch foe and a weapon of discipline rather than a spiritual agency." He described how faculty monitors kept an eye on students from raised boxes in the chapel: "A student who dropped his head to the rail of the seat in front—save during actual prayer—was officially asleep and so marked. But if he closed his eyes sitting upright . . . he was officially awake and exempt from penalty. This bonused upright slumber as a fine art."


Students rebelled against their confinement—especially when preachers began to run long in their homilies—with a rash of coughs, sneezes, and shuf-

PHOTOS: MANUSCRIPTS AND ARCHIVES

chapel compulsory for all but seniors. But when the whole faculty considered the proposal, they voted 29 to 12 to eliminate all chapel requirements. The trustees ratified the decision, and the last compulsory chapel service was held on June 5. The next fall, in his matriculation sermon, President James Rowland Angell declared that “For the first time in its two and a quarter centuries of history, Yale holds its Sunday chapel services with no student present who does not come of his own free will.”

With student religious life now optional, the university for the first time appointed a chaplain to oversee daily chapel and Sunday services. In that first fall, daily chapel attendance attracted an average of 250 students, less than ten percent of the undergraduate body. Daily chapel continued in Battell Chapel until 1931, when it was moved to Dwight Chapel and continued until 1960 or later. Sunday worship evolved into the University Church in Yale, which calls itself an “ecumenical Christian community.”



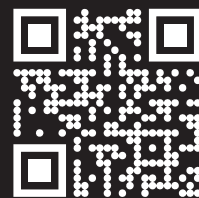
But daily worship hasn't completely disappeared from Yale life. Up on Prospect Hill, the Divinity School offers services every weekday at 11:30 a.m. in Marquand Chapel. 



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AI at Yale



The Yale Alumni Magazine publishes a short interview with **President Maurie McInnis '96** PhD in every issue. In this one, the president discusses artificial intelligence with Editor Pippa Jack.

It feels like AI is everywhere. Please share some campus developments.

In 2024, Provost Scott Strobel convened the Yale Task Force on Artificial Intelligence to determine Yale's vision for AI. I would encourage anyone interested to read it online. It points out that the research underpinning today's AI has been happening at Yale for decades. But the last couple of years have brought exponential growth—and urgency.

There are three major buckets for how AI is used, studied, and developed on campus: in the research space, in pedagogy and teaching, and in operational matters. We want to harness AI to open new horizons for research and scholarship. But we also want to keep AI honest by creating frameworks for using it responsibly.

All these ambitions require engaging with AI. So, Yale has committed more than \$150 million to support our faculty, staff, and students as they explore AI, including building a portfolio of graphics processing units (GPUs) with the power to analyze dizzyingly huge data sets.

We also launched Clarity, a chatbot that offers access to a variety of AI models. Inputted data is sealed off with private, encrypted connections. Yalies can use it to build fluency with AI and to experiment with more advanced applications. That's a skill everyone will need, myself included.

What's being done to mitigate AI's energy hunger?

AI uses an enormous amount of power, and we don't want expanding AI to shrink our commitment to tackling climate change. Many of our new GPUs will be installed in a data center with LEED Platinum certification, the highest level for energy efficiency.

But there's another way to think about this: AI can support our researchers who are developing more energy-efficient technologies, like low-energy chips. And we're already seeing Yale researchers use AI to meet environmental challenges. Two Yale-related projects just won \$2 million each from the Bezos Earth Fund. One is using AI to model removing carbon from the ocean, and the other is using AI to figure out how to reduce emissions from livestock.

Please talk about guardrails to make sure AI doesn't do students' learning for them.

One of the most important reasons for higher education to engage with AI is so that we can critique it. Our jobs don't depend on the financial success of a particular platform. We can evaluate its possibilities and pitfalls objectively.

AI is likely to rewire our brains on a massive scale. I think we all get that. But there's a key question that's raised in the Yale Task Force report: Where does the thinking happen? In other words, in any given assignment, which parts are about rote memorization and which parts engage critical thinking? If we can use AI to decrease the drudgery and increase the creativity, we'll be using it the right way. And our faculty are already doing exactly that.

The Poorvu Center for Teaching and Learning offers guidelines and consultations, and Yale faculty are using AI in spaces that your readers might not expect. One example is my dissertation advisor, Edward Cooke. He asked his students to use ChatGPT to cre-

AI is likely to rewire our brains on a massive scale.

CHRIS BUCK

ate labels for various ceramic objects in the Yale University Art Gallery. Then he asked them to critique those outputs, so they could see what AI misses. And two Yale faculty members—Theodore Kim and Julián Posada—are launching an interdisciplinary certificate in computing, culture, and society.

Will there be enough jobs for new graduates? And how does Yale prepare humanities majors for jobs that involve collaborating with intelligent systems?

Previous technological transformations have brought booms in job creation. History isn't always predictive, but it seems clear that the tricky part is navigating the transition between the old world and the new. For example, the printing press meant no more monks hand-illuminating manuscripts. But if you learned how to typeset, new work was opened to you.

The fundamental skills that foster professional success are perennial. I recently returned from a conference at which people discussed a softened focus on technical skills and an increased focus on students' critical thinking and creative skills, their adaptability and grit—things that are a hallmark of a Yale liberal arts education. We have no idea what new jobs will be created. At the start of my career, I could've never imagined a job like “influencer.” But we do know that even an influencer—perhaps especially an influencer—needs to understand how to engage creatively with the world. All of which is to say, I'm confident there will be jobs for all majors. **Y**

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August Sander, *Bauernfamilie* (Farming Family), 1912, printed 1990s by Gerd Sander. Gelatin silver
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Adjusting to a shifting reality

How do we learn? How do we make sense of the changing world? These are the elemental questions that George Dragoi is trying to answer. An associate professor of psychiatry and neuroscience at the School of Medicine, Dragoi explores how brains construct reality, and how they adjust when that reality shifts.

In a study published in *Nature Communications*, Dragoi and his colleagues have delineated precisely how the brain adapts when navigating an altered route. The researchers found that key parts of the brain switch rapidly between accessing existing mental maps and analyzing

the new environment. Dragoi says this “mental flickering,” as he calls it, may be a fundamental characteristic of how we learn. “There’s this cycling between what we already know and what we are experiencing now, this bouncing back and forth between those two things,” he says.

The researchers studied rats as they found their way through a maze to a food reward. Once the rats had mastered the maze, the scientists changed the configuration, forcing the rats to identify a new route. During the process, the researchers measured activ-

ity in the rats’ hippocampi, the brain region that plays a central role in learning and memory. They found that particular neurons fired in a specific, repeatable sequence, indicating the rats’ brains were making use of preexisting cognitive maps. When the new route was introduced, they alternated. The researchers argue that this back-and-forth indicates that the rats’ brains were trying to integrate the unfamiliar terrain into the prior cognitive map.

New information gets integrated.

Scientists had previously known about these memory-related firing sequences. But Dragoi and his team went further, showing for the first time exactly how the existing pattern alternated with the new one when the situation shifted. In Dragoi’s view, this dynamic interplay, between past knowledge and present reality, may be central to how we learn. “When you speak, you pull words from your existing vocabulary,” says Dragoi, “but you don’t always say the same thing.”

Y DAVID KOHN

Pink slime alert

A growing number of websites mimic the look of traditional news outlets and purport to be produced by journalists who are grounded in fact. But they often aren’t. Much of the content is created by artificial intelligence (AI) and promotes a political agenda. What do readers think?

A new study led by Kevin DeLuca, an assistant professor of political science at Yale, finds that almost half of readers actually prefer these algorithmically generated sites over traditional ones.

The sites take on the look and feel of legitimate local newspapers—even adopting names like the *Detroit City Wire* or *North Boston News*. But their stories are laced with partisan messaging and are often funded by political campaigns. Unlike outright fake news sites, many of their stories draw from real press releases, but they also publish partisan content that suits their ends. The phenomenon has been called “pink-slime journalism.”

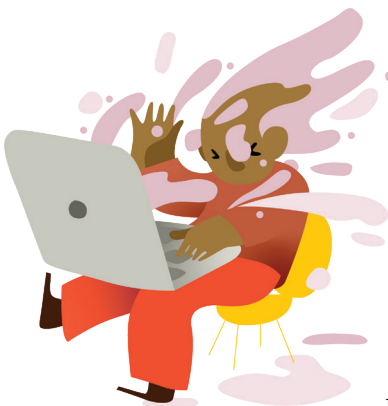
DeLuca, whose research focuses on elections and

media, wanted to know if people could tell the difference between human-produced and algorithmically produced news sites. The researchers were also interested in identifying whether a media literacy intervention could help. In the study, participants were shown both types of websites, with some participants receiving a “tip sheet” detailing how to spot credible sources by checking bylines and finding information about the news site.

The researchers found that the intervention worked as intended: Participants who received the tip sheet used the cues. But it didn’t necessarily change what they preferred. Even after reading the tip sheet, 41 percent still favored the algorithmically generated site, down from 46 percent in those who hadn’t.

The findings suggest that convenience, familiarity, and confirmation of readers’ existing beliefs often outweigh concerns about authenticity. Pink-slime outlets also may be more appealing than real news sites because they generally don’t have to include intrusive ads that can disturb the reading experience.

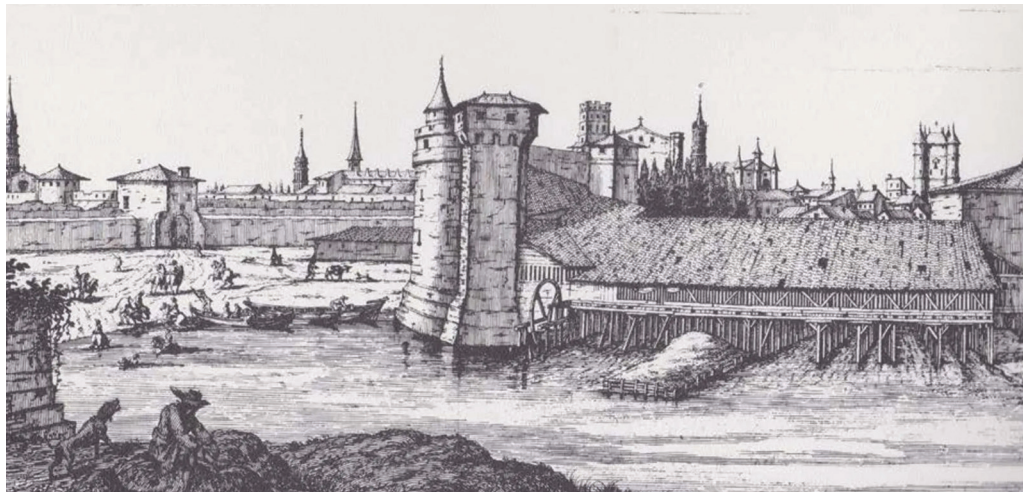
Y TYLER HARVEY ’20MPH, ’31MD/PHD



It's a long story

Up early on a Saturday, you've been to your Jazzercise class. With a Starbucks hot chocolate secured in the cup holder of your Ford, which you had serviced yesterday at JiffyLube, you're on your way to your local Home Depot. On the way home, you'll pick up cat food at Petco, check to see if your glasses are ready at Pearle Vision, and grab some bagels from Bruegger's Bagels for

insects, birds, and bats all developed the ability to fly through independent evolutionary paths), the researchers note the emergence of corporate forms from a variety of sources. They show that what we recognize as the current publicly traded corporate form—a legal entity that allows people to purchase and transfer shares while limiting shareholder liability—is identifiable in enter-



COURTESY YALE SOM

■ The **Société des Moulins de Bazacle** in Toulouse, France, a milling company founded in the twelfth century.

tomorrow's brunch.

Welcome to corporate America.

"Most of the world's business takes place in the form of corporations," says William N. Goetzmann, Edwin J. Beinecke Professor of Finance and Management Studies at the Yale School of Management. "How did such a powerful economic force arise?"

Recent research by Goetzmann and two French colleagues has upended the convention that joint stock companies (JSCs)—precursors to the modern corporation—suddenly appeared at the turn of the seventeenth century in northwestern Europe with the emergence of the English East India Company in 1600 and the Dutch East India Company two years later.

Instead, Goetzmann says, the team presents a thesis of multiple, independent JSCs developing centuries earlier. "The need for a stable structure that would allow for the raising of large amounts of capital was present way before the seventeenth century," Goetzmann says.

As with the biological theory of convergent evolution, where similar adaptations appear in unrelated species (they use the example that

prises including mills in twelfth-century Toulouse in southern France and polders (low-lying land reclaimed from the water and protected by dikes) in twelfth-century Holland.

The practice of dividing assets, rooted in Roman inheritance law, was a foundation for the emergence of JSCs, allowing, Goetzmann notes, "for the inheritance of shares rather than having to split up the castle."

Corporations go way back.

The paper was published in *Business History*. Goetzmann says corporations are likely here to stay, but expects to see different corporate forms develop over time. "The corporation is a tool that can be used for good or bad," he says. "At their worst, corporations have perpetrated evils from slavery to deadly pollution. At their best, they are mechanisms for generating and sharing in economic growth."

Y RHEA HIRSHMAN

Noted

IV HYDRATION SPAS claim that their treatments—injecting vitamins, minerals, and a variety of chemicals directly into the bloodstream—can do everything from relieving hangovers to boosting the immune system and combatting the effects of aging.

Don't believe the hype, say Yale researchers. For a recent study, the team reviewed state regulatory policies related to IV hydration spas, examined websites for spas in every state and DC, and developed a "secret shopper" survey with an investigator posing as a consumer who queried 102 spas across the country.

They found that the spas operate with little oversight, offering costly procedures that are potentially risky, rarely administered or overseen by trained clinicians, and show little clinical evidence to support their claims. Their investigation, they say, provides insights into the need for more stringent oversight of industries that operate adjacent to the mainstream health care system.

CONTRARY TO LONG-HELD notions about the intractability of focal treatment-resistant epilepsy (FTRE), an epidemiologic study by Yale and other researchers has found that patients can experience seizure relief.

Over three years, the team monitored seizure frequency and treatment regimens for 126 FTRE patients, all of whom had tried at least four drugs but still had at least two seizures per month. They found that about 68 percent experienced fewer seizures in the latter part of the study compared with the beginning, while some individuals remained totally seizure-free for periods ranging from three months to a year plus.

Researchers are still analyzing whether the improvements can be attributed to new or existing treatments or whether seizure frequency can wane on its own. Meanwhile, the documenting of these improvements in FTRE patients underscores the need for ongoing medical management and additional rigorous and controlled studies.



ILLUSTRATIONS: ALEX EBEN MEYER.



i, chatbot

Student use of AI is ubiquitous, disruptive, and irreversible. Now what?

Cast your mind back to Thanksgiving dinner of 2022, and imagine one of the guests asking the table when an AI you could talk to would get to a million users. The guesses might have covered the usual range—widely adopted AI might be two years away, or ten, or twenty—but none of those answers would have been anywhere near right because, that Thanksgiving, the right answer for million-user AI was “a week from Monday.”

OpenAI dropped ChatGPT 3.5 on the last day of November; by December 5 it had a million users, going on to a hundred million in 2023 and closing in on a billion now. The neural network, the technology underlying large language models like ChatGPT, had been around for decades. OpenAI had been founded in 2015, and the research paper that introduced the current generation of such networks, called transformers, appeared in 2017. (GPT is a general-

ized pre-trained transformer, trained in advance to answer a wide range of questions.) Given the long lead time, why didn't AI use grow gradually, instead of exploding in late 2022?

Surprisingly, the increase in use wasn't tied to an increase in quality. Versions of OpenAI's GPT3 had been around for months with no real uptake. The big change in late 2022 came from the Chat part, not the GPT part. The addition of the chat interface allowed users to bring a lifetime of conversational habits to bear. Instead of explaining what a large language model was, user orientation for ChatGPT became “Just talk to it.” It is almost impossible to resist treating software that talks as something that also thinks. This tendency lulls users into granting the tools an unearned sense of authority, consistency, and even care. If you talk with an AI like you text with your friend, it tends to make AI seem like your friend.

The training of large language models involves considerable human feedback about which sorts of answers we prefer. This “reinforcement learning through human feedback” embeds human preferences deep into the models. It is a way to make the answers feel more responsive and helpful, but unfortunately humans prefer confident and flattering answers over mere accuracy.

All of this is just to say that the arrival of AI as an automated tool rewarding humanlike interaction is a cultural challenge for universities even more than it is a technological one. This is a matter of special urgency to me, as I am the person most particularly tasked at New York University with helping faculty and students adapt to new digital technologies in the classroom.

GETTING CHATTED UP

The choice to make chat the interface through which users interacted with ChatGPT was a fateful one, because of all the expectations that come along with our experience of conversation. When we talk with another person, we extrapolate a wide range of characteristics and capabilities based on the fact that the only other entity we know of that can talk is another person. If a child can speak in complete sentences, they can also tell you about their extended family. If an

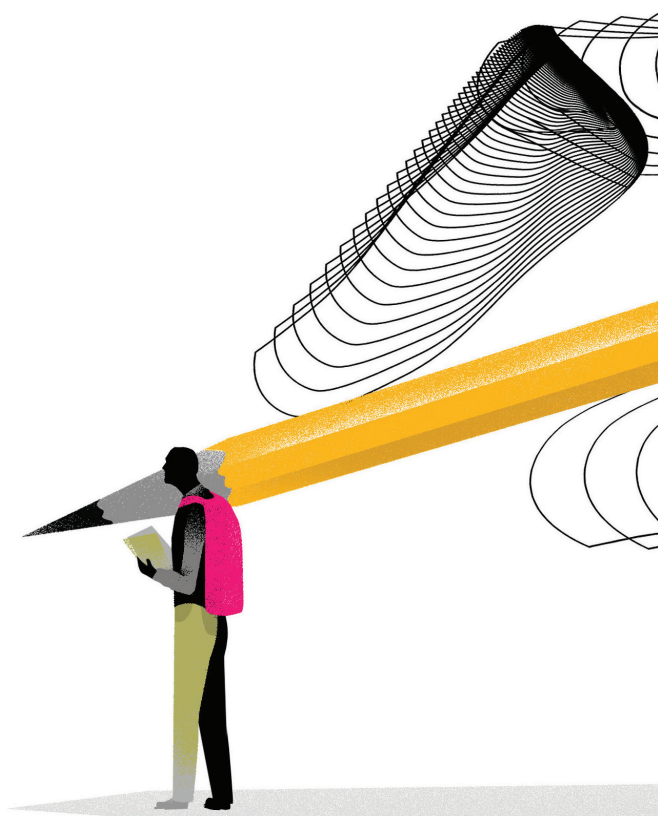
adult uses the word “cohort,” they probably have a college degree, and so on. These inferences work well for people, because we have such deep and rich experience of inferring human context from a few clues. However, those same inferences work quite badly for AI, because we overestimate the range and depth of skills an AI must have, based on some of those same clues.

Now you can just tell AI to “describe the effects of new technology on the Crimean War.”

This is the source of the breathless confusion between “An AI can pass the LSAT!” and “An AI can be a lawyer.” I asked one of my lawyer colleagues about the LSAT story; he replied, “I cannot convey to you how little of my day is like answering a question on the LSAT.” The LSAT, like most written tests, is a proxy for a whole bundle of human capabilities; when a person does well on the LSAT, you can also infer things about their ability to persevere at difficult work, or to manage stress. When a large language model does well on

THE HARD WORK OF LEARNING

the LSAT, you can infer only that it can do well on the LSAT. This is a *particular* problem for higher education, because of our special requirements around student effort, not just student output.



newly available walking directions on her phone. Offered what looked like a shortcut, she took a route that directed her across a four-lane highway with no shoulder, crosswalk, or traffic lights. While crossing, she was struck by a car and badly injured. She sued the provider of the directions; the court ruled against her,

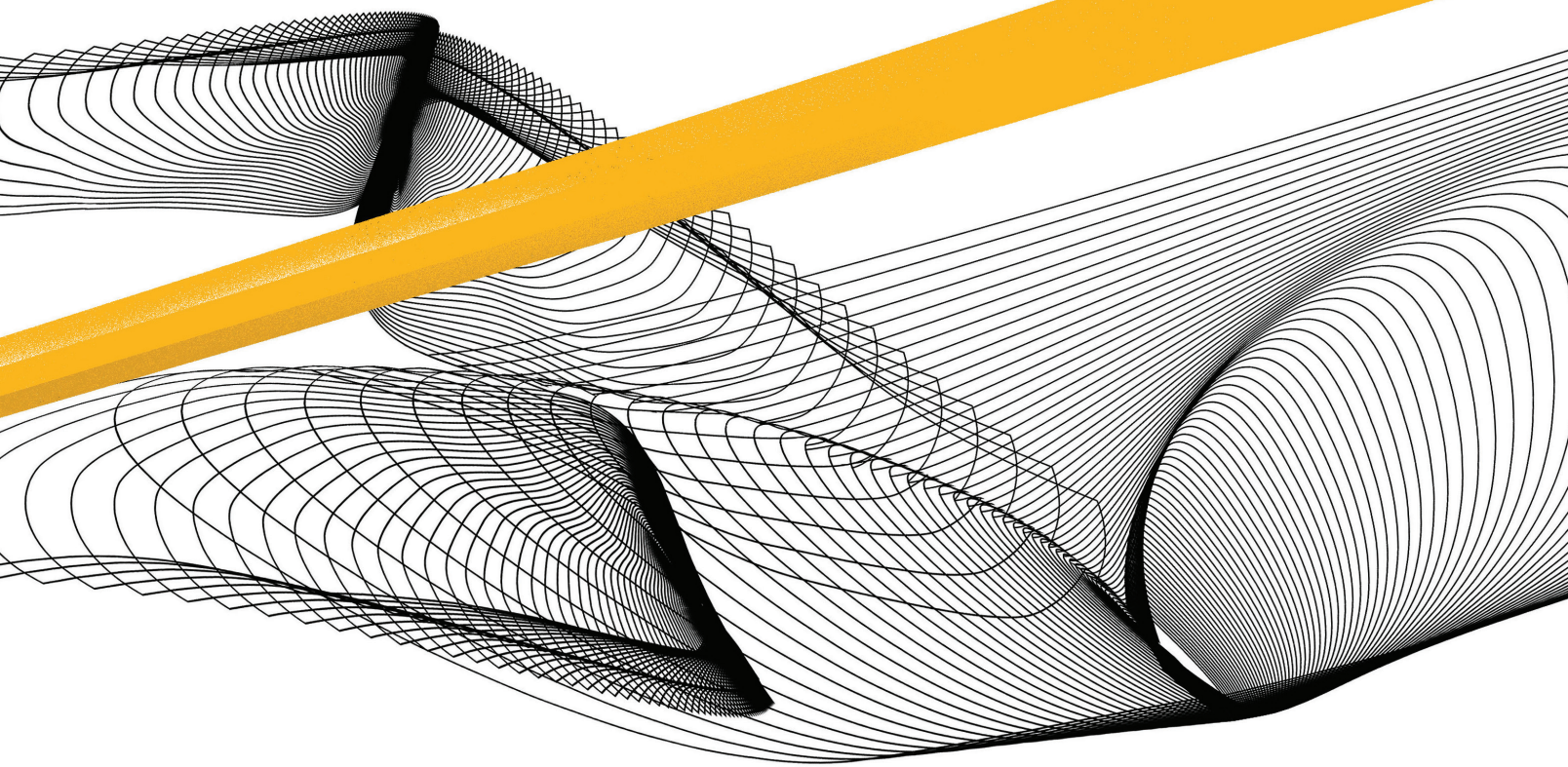
CLAY SHIRKY '86 is New York University's vice provost for AI and technology in education as well as associate professor at the Arthur L. Carter Center of Journalism and associate arts professor in Tisch School of the Arts's Interactive Telecommunications Program.

on the grounds that providers of directions could not have anticipated anyone would cross a four-lane highway without looking for cars.

Yet she did, on the advice of her phone. Although that incident was extreme, it was not unique in the annals of GPS use. One person drove into a swamp; another into a river, another still into a lake. (All survived.) This phenomenon goes by several names, including automation-induced complacency, the tendency of a user to underestimate a system's potential

the effects of new technologies on the Crimean War" (one of my test prompts). The machine will write a competent essay faster than a human could write one. The machine will write a competent essay faster than a human could *type* one.

For many professions, spinning up a piece of writing from a few notes and requests is a blessing. A psychiatrist friend (also Morse '86) reports using it to write letters to insurance companies after uploading her case notes. But in higher education, the effect of AI



for error. It takes a lot of complacency to drive into a lake, but it happens.

Asking what sort of AI-induced complacency might come for our students means asking what human activity it saves us from. One answer is clarity—the need to be precise and detailed about creating something. Do you need to produce an essay, charts or graphs, a presentation? Making those things used to require an iterative, detail-oriented approach—here are the things the essay should include, but in what order? With how much detail? Should the tone be exploratory or assured? Now you can just tell an AI to “describe

is far more mixed, in part because for us, asking students to write is a way of requiring them to think.

If you observe a factory and see that the output is tires, you can then assume that the worker's effort is there to create the tires. However, if you take that intuition to a history class and conclude that the output is history papers and that the students' effort is there to create the papers, you have not just misunderstood the situation, you have it backwards. The important output of that classroom is not history papers, it's historians; the papers are there to create student effort, not vice versa.

INESCAPABLE AI

This would not be such a big issue if adoption of AI had not been so fast and complete. A recent 16-country survey by the Digital Education Council found that five out of six students are using AI in their coursework. The tools have become so widely adopted so quickly that there is a generation gap already forming, with students quickly achieving a facility with generative AI that is not yet matched by faculty updates of curriculum or assessment strategies.

Yale's Poorvu Center for Teaching and Learning, created in 2014, had become so widely trusted among faculty by the time ChatGPT appeared that the center began getting calls for advice and help from faculty that December, just days after OpenAI dropped ChatGPT 3.5. Though Yale faces the same strains of rapid AI diffusion that all colleges and universities in the US do, the center's connection to both faculty and students has allowed it to tackle the generation gap by reaching out to both groups.

Jennifer Frederick '99PhD, Poorvu's executive director and the associate provost for academic initiatives, says student use of AI is sometimes driven by time pressures around extracurricular activities, which risks creating "a toxic situation where students using AI to buy themselves time create peer pressure for other students to do the same." The best place to reduce the risk of lazy adoption is in the classroom, both because faculty in different disciplines will have different approaches to AI, and because they are learning and communicating goals for their students.

Getting faculty up to speed on what AI can do, and when it is and isn't appropriate, is a precondition for deeper work on discipline-specific approaches to AI and curriculum, and yet faculty have typically been hired based on disciplinary expertise well outside the domain of AI use; while some faculty are experimenting with AI in the classroom and elsewhere, experimentation is not universal. Frederick notes that "if faculty are not self-starters with technology, the door they should go through to learn about AI is not obvious."

This creates a two-track problem common to most institutions of higher education at the moment: Both faculty and students need to become familiar with the tools, but while students often need to limit their use, faculty often need to expand theirs, even if just to gain enough of an understanding to formulate an AI policy. Frederick sees the issue as one of critical thinking about the tools themselves. "Students are using AI all over the place, and they benefit from guidance about how to consider or use AI in discipline-specific settings.

To provide that guidance, faculty need a foundational familiarity with the tools." This two-track problem is made more complex by disciplinary breadth—faculty and students in computer science, comparative lit, and chemistry are going to use the tools differently.

The common approach to disciplinary variability, at Yale, at NYU, and at most universities, is to defer downward to the departments, and within departments, to individual faculty, to make judgment calls about what uses of AI are and aren't in line with expectations. All of this is complicated by the relative inability to either prevent or perfectly detect use of such tools.

Many of the undergraduates in my classes say that they could not get their work done without AI.

There are a number of common approaches to this problem: guidelines for students about when to use AI and when not to; guidelines for faculty about how to talk with students about AI use in the classroom; sample syllabus statements for faculty to modify and use; training for both groups. But even that relatively broad set of adaptive options is only a partial response to a change this enormous, in which assessing student output is no longer a good proxy for measuring student insight.

In the interest of helping students and faculty, Poorvu is asking them to help each other. The center has hired a number of "student AI liaisons" (SAIL), who work with faculty to help them do things like revise exams or design assignments that emphasize learning and thoughtfully integrate or avoid AI use. Frederick says that with the SAIL program, "the students' expertise with AI is less important than the fact that students and faculty are trying something hands-on together." This intergenerational approach to adapting to AI takes advantage of the fact that conversation, the exchange of ideas, between students and faculty is a core function of higher education.

LEARNING TO FAIL

On one hand, the integration of AI into the academy has been dizzyingly fast. I have been studying the dynamics of technology adoption and cultural change for decades, and I have never seen anything get adopted this quickly. This has led to a deepening of the generation gap, not just between students and

Maybe AI won't take your job. Or maybe it will.

If you are among the more than 70 percent of Americans asking whether artificial intelligence is plotting to hijack your job, Martha Gimbel, executive director of the Budget Lab at Yale, says that the answer is “No.”

Or at least, “Not yet.”

In a study conducted jointly with the Brookings Institution, Gimbel and her Budget Lab colleagues examined how US employment has and has not changed in the 33 months since ChatGPT was released in November 2022. They compared those changes to employment shifts at two other technological inflection points: the introduction of personal computers in the 1980s and the growth of the internet at the turn of the 21st century.

They found only a minor increase—about one percent—in the occupational shifts in the months after the release of ChatGPT compared to those generated by the popularization of the internet. “Overall,” the researchers write, “our metrics indicate that the broader labor market has not experienced discernible disruption since ChatGPT’s release . . . undercutting fears that AI automation is currently eroding the demand for cognitive labor across the economy.”

And the headlines about the disruptive effects of AI on the labor market? “Those,” says Gimbel, “are often based on statements from CEOs or tech leaders who are not working with labor market data.”

However, noting also that widespread technological disruption in the workplace usually occurs over decades rather than a few months or years, the team urges that the findings not be taken as predictive. They point out the data limitations in the study, citing the need for “comprehensive usage data from all the leading AI companies” at every level.

Additionally, Gimbel says, “I don’t think we know yet how different AI will be from other technological changes. Companies are still figuring out how to use it and what it might mean for their businesses. We are not necessarily good at guessing exactly how specific technological changes will affect the labor market further down the road.” The team plans to update their analysis regularly. —Rhea Hirshman

faculty, but between current students and even recent graduates. Many of the undergraduates in my institution will flatly state that they could not get their work done without AI, even though the NYU classes of 1836 through 2022 somehow managed.

A conversational partner 50% more flattering than humans.

On the other hand, integration of AI into university life has been relatively slow. Because these tools change the relationship between the ability to produce writing and the requirement to engage in the hard, messy work of thinking through something, changes as small as parts of individual assignments and as large as whole curricula are going to have to be adapted, and right now, the tools are not even in a stable enough state to be confident that any adaptation will hold. And so we

get some uses that are obvious and quick wins, and other uses that are making us rethink the nature of education.

The advantage of AI to people like my psychiatrist friend is precisely that it reduces the amount of thought required per unit of output, but that same effect is corrosive to learning. Students are already regarding ChatGPT as an authority, something it took the far more reliable Wikipedia over a decade to achieve. And the constant stream of flattery makes this worse—a recent thousand-user study with flattering and non-flattering AIs concluded that “sycophantic AI models have real capacity to distort people’s perceptions of themselves.”

Giving anyone a conversational partner that is, as another study concluded, 50 percent more flattering than humans, is uncharted territory, but early research suggests that the motivation we most have to worry about with our students is not laziness but anxiety about their work and the tendency to be relieved by tools that offer not just acceptable output, but unearned reassurance along the way. **Y**

Engineering matter(s)

Can mimicking nature unravel the mysteries of the immune system? Meet Anjelica Gonzalez, a bioengineer forging new paths, one cell wall at a time.

BY RANDI HUTTER
EPSTEIN '90MD

PHOTOGRAPH BY
CHRIS BUCK

Bioengineer Anjelica Gonzalez (facing page), seen here at Tsai CITY, works to understand “the environment that cells are in” and how outside pressures impact the way cells function.

The Davenport courtyard was bursting with activity, mostly from college students but also a few middle schoolers. The teenagers were there because the welcome-back picnic of 2023 coincided with head of college Anjelica Gonzalez’s twins’ birthday. On offer: food, music, Slip ’N Slides, and a range of other lawn games.

A bunch of party goers shoved themselves into human-sized inflatable spheres and bounced around like human beach balls bumping against each other. Powell Munro Holzner ’27, a Yale college sophomore at the time, crashed into Professor Gonzalez—who was also bubbled up—and sent her flying into the air and careening across the yard. “Eek, I’m 6’5” and knocked HOC G down!” Munro Holzner recalls thinking. (Gonzalez just laughed.)

The Slip ’N-Slides might have been for her students and the baseballs for her boys, but the enormous bubble bodysuits were fitting for Gonzalez, a professor of bioengineering who, among other things, investigates the impact of environmental collisions. In her scholarly endeavors, though, she examines forces on single cells, not hulking undergraduates crashing into teachers.

Gonzalez’s perspective is unique. Many scientists study the cell. As a bioengineer, she is intrigued by everything around the cell—and in particular, how those outside pressures impact the cell’s ability to do its job. Her focus is the immune system. “It’s not just about the biology and understanding the cells,” she says, “but understanding the environment that the cells are in. Part of that environment is the experience of the cells, which can be mechanical.” This is where her engineering expertise comes into play.

The ramifications are vast. Her basic science explores what drives immune cells to



move faster or slower toward their targets. Already, her studies have solved mysteries about the body's defense system that have dogged researchers for generations. Collaborations with other bioengineers, as well as physicists, biologists, pulmonologists, dermatologists, and immunologists, are paving a way to create new tools to treat a wide range of ailments, including stroke, lung disease, and cancer. If scientists understand the details of the immune response, they can devise ways to modify reactions that are too strong (autoimmune diseases), too weak (diseases that lead to impaired healing) or dysregulated (sepsis, which is massive and often deadly inflammation).

In addition to serving as head of college, professor of bioengineering, and mother of twin boys, Gonzalez is also faculty director of the Tsai Center for Innovative Thinking and the inventor of PremieBreathe, a low-cost mobile respiratory device for newborns in under-resourced countries. She credits her mother, a blackjack dealer, for instilling her with the math and people skills to forge ahead.

Gonzalez watched her mother, a blackjack dealer, listen, charm, and deal with difficult customers.

Gonzalez grew up in Nevada, the older of two children. Between her shifts at the casino, Gonzalez's mother would sit at the kitchen table with a deck of cards in her hand and explain addition and probability to her grade-school daughter. "You have to know that there are fifty-two cards in a deck and you're not going to see an eight of hearts in every hand, so what is the probability based on the whole that you will get a certain card?" she quizzed. She also explained the odds of getting to twenty-one depending on which cards you already saw. The upshot: Gonzalez learned that numbers mattered.

Casino lessons extended far beyond arithmetic and statistics. Gonzalez's mother modeled how to work well with a wide range of people. Every now and then Gonzalez accompanied her mother to work and watched how her mother listened, charmed, and dealt with (and literally dealt to) difficult customers. "She could disarm people who were being sexist, or racist, or rude and demeaning by making them laugh, or making the other players

at the table laugh at their offense," says Gonzalez. When Gonzalez turned eight, her parents divorced; she and her younger brother moved in with their grandfather, who lived about an hour outside the city in the sparsely populated farming community of Moapa Valley. Her mother soon joined and the three of them moved to a trailer nearby.

But with her mother commuting long distances to work, Gonzalez was often under the tutelage of her grandfather, who quickly became another motivating influence. "He told me your education is the one thing no one will ever take away from you," says Gonzalez. Her grandfather, who had a third-grade education and eventually ran the irrigation system in the area, brought her into the fields and explained the mechanics that connected water to the desert farms. She saw firsthand that understanding engineering had immediate impacts on a community. Gonzalez also helped on the family farm. "When you go to the grocery store and see those onions bundled in rubber bands, I know there was a person doing that because at one point, I was that person," she says. Her grandfather insisted that hard work, good grades, and a college scholarship were her ticket out of poverty.

JOURNALISM? MAYBE. SKIN CARE? NOPE.

The first time Gonzalez earned money for college was in ninth grade when she entered a contest at her local newspaper, the *Las Vegas Review Journal*. The paper awarded \$1,000 toward college tuition for a student whose article they published. In Gonzalez's winning entry, she wrote that local minorities often made headlines for crimes committed, but rarely for their positive impacts on the community.

Though journalism seemed like an appealing career, by the time Gonzalez started college—she earned a full scholarship to Utah State University—she deemed engineering the most practical choice for earning a steady income. Gonzalez majored in biological and irrigational engineering with plans to return to Moapa Valley and devise an automatic water monitoring system. She had spent enough summers with her grandfather as he manually checked water levels in the brutal 100-plus-degree heat of the Nevada desert.

But the summer between her junior and senior

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CHRIS BUCK

year transformed her career trajectory. Gonzalez was accepted to the nine-week Baylor Medical College SMART (Summer Medical and Research Training) program for undergraduates. She worked in a laboratory that explored how the diaphragm impacts lung function in muscular dystrophy. “They appreciated my understanding of the mechanics and my engineering knowledge,” she remembers.

When she returned to college, she switched her focus to bioengineering instead of irrigation. Encouraged by mentors at Baylor, she applied and was accepted to a doctoral program in structural and computational biology and molecular biophysics, work that straddles engineering, biology, and physics.

Specifically, she explored neutrophil migration. The neutrophils, the most abundant white blood cell, are the first responders to injury or infection.

But these mighty defense cells are shockingly short-lived, proliferating when needed and dying shortly thereafter. They are also hyper-fragile to any kind of mechanical insult, like brushing up against the blood vessel wall. That makes studying them a challenge. Gonzalez helped develop tools to track the movement of these elusive microscopic protectors in the lab.

As she was finishing her dissertation, she attended a lecture by a visiting scholar, Yale’s Mark Saltzman, now the Sterling Professor of Biomedical Engineering and a professor of chemical engineering and cellular and molecular physiology. She was too scared to ask a question during his talk but approached him afterward. He encouraged her to apply for a job at Yale.

In 2007, Gonzalez arrived at Yale as a research fellow and has been here ever since. (She chose Yale over a job working in the cosmetics industry, using

Gonzalez, who created a low-cost medical device, uses her entrepreneurial chops to help students solve real-world problems as faculty director of the Tsai Center for Innovative Thinking.

her know-how to formulate collagen-boosting face creams.)

Since then, she has broadened her outlook to other immune cells. Immune cells, she explained, travel within blood vessels, yet at pivotal moments they leave the vessel to do their infection-fighting job. “As an engineer, my graduate work was on neutrophils and what they do once they are activated,” she says. At Yale, “I took a step back and said let’s build the vessel wall that they are flowing through.”

Her goal was to understand how the cell senses and responds to its ever-changing environment. What triggers these microscopic guardians to leave the vessel? Why do they exit at one particular spot and not another?

OF BIOMIMICRY AND BLOOD VESSELS

Of all the vessels in the body, Gonzalez’s fascination is not with the two main trunks (the large aorta that carries blood away from the heart and inferior vena cava that brings blood back), but with the tiniest twigs of the vascular tree. She eyes the microvessels that feed the skin, brain, and lungs—the ones that are so narrow, only one cell can pass through at a time. “That’s where we see the majority of high shear events,” she says, referring to the friction with the wall that can deform or destroy a cell.

Her team created a blood vessel in the Gonzalez Lab using multiple types of human cells. It was a huge engineering undertaking. That’s because a blood vessel wall is not simply a tube but has a complex lining of layers. The inner and outer layers of cells secrete material to make the inner cushy matrix. Think of the walls of your house, which aren’t single planks of wood, but two supportive layers with insulation in between. The innermost cell layer is made from endothelial cells; wrapped around them is another kind of cell, called the pericyte.

For years, most researchers studied the endothelial cells (the inner layer of blood vessels), epithelial cells (that form the outer surface of skin, airways, glands, and the stomach), and fibroblasts (that among other things make collagen).

But it was the pericyte, the ignored sibling of these cell types, that caught Gonzalez’s attention. “The pericyte,” she says, “is super important in stabilizing blood vessels and even more important to contributing to disease when the vessels fall apart.”

Gonzalez has been trying to understand how these cells perceive and then react to their environment. This process relies on integrins, an aptly named protein that integrates information from the outside of

the cell with the inside. Or, as Gonzalez put it, integrins serve as the cell’s eyes and hands.

She studies how pericytes and other cells toggle from doing one thing to another depending on what they perceive around them. A cell that is in the middle of the blood vessel, for instance, makes one kind of collagen. Once it leaves the vessels and senses different surroundings, it makes a different kind.

“Some of the most exciting work is when we can say not only is the pericyte no longer depositing collagen IV, but it’s shifted its internal profile to be more collagen I,” says Gonzalez. These changes can be good or bad, helping to heal or contributing to disease. You need collagen to repair injury, but too much can cause dangerous scars. An appreciation of these precise signals can lead to a better grasp of restorative processes and of disease progression, and to better ways to prevent or treat a wide range of ailments.

A LIFESAVING BREATHING DEVICE

Like any good scientist, Gonzalez is driven by the unknowns. “Oh my gosh! We know so little, I get so excited about this,” she says. “I say this to my 15-year-old twins and I say this in my classroom. What we read in textbooks is just the beginning of the knowledge that we have. We know so much less about biological systems than you think. The reason you’re here in this class is to build a foundation to see where we’re at. Our job as students in the classroom, as researchers, as professors and teachers, is to build the critical knowledge to ask questions.”

She thrives in an interdisciplinary environment, thrilled to learn from and work with clinician-scientists including Dr. Erica Herzog, professor of medicine and pathology. Together and from their unique perspectives, they are seeking new treatments for a rare and deadly lung disorder called idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis. At the Tsai Center, where Gonzalez serves as faculty director, students come together from all parts of the campus to solve real world problems in areas such as entrepreneurship, civic engagement, and the arts.

PremieBreathe is an example of team cooperation, an idea that emerged from conversations between Gonzalez and clinicians at the Yale Institute for Global Health. The doctors explained that in under-resourced countries, health workers have to jury-rig breathing devices from whatever is available, often using one oxygen tank with a few tubes to treat several babies at once and moistening the air with old Coke bottles filled with water. These precarious devices, which can be life savers, are also prone to

passing along deadly infections.

With a grant from the US Agency for International Development and further funding from the Blavatnik Fund for Innovation at Yale, Gonzalez worked with a team that included Yale undergraduates along with physicians from Yale and Ethiopia to create a low-cost device that delivered humidified air in a self-sterilizing piece of equipment. Unfortunately, the pandemic and funding cuts stalled implementation, but they are currently looking for ways to continue to fund the project. “This project brought all the things I love together,” says Gonzalez. “My undergraduate students working collaboratively with physicians here and abroad to bring out the best in their expertise and experiences to create something really cool.”

On top of everything she does at Davenport, in her laboratory on Science Hill, in her classrooms, and at Tsai CITY, Gonzalez says she always makes time for her boys. She served as Little League coach for her boys until they aged out of parent coaching. She was pleasantly shocked that parents were excited to have one of the few mom-coaches in a dad-dominated field—and she’s confident that served as an inspiration to the girls on the team.

How does she balance it all? She says balance sounds like you are doing everything equally all the time and that’s not how she operates: “I have to give my full attention to what is in front of me.” To do that, she relies on her “amazing” support staff, which

includes administrators, doctoral students, teaching assistants, and fellow scientists.

She has come a long way from the graduate student afraid to raise her hand when Professor Salzman gave a lecture. Nowadays, despite being a natural introvert, she tries to model behaviors that will encourage her children and her students to ask questions, to challenge themselves, and to discover.

“Your lived experience is a value in every space you go into.”

“I’m a reticent public speaker,” says Gonzalez. “I think about my mom’s background, and how she allowed me to learn how to talk to anyone, how I am now able to work with renowned Yale professors.” She also taught Gonzalez “the value of being able to understand where someone else is coming from and to make sure I’m communicating my goals clearly.” The result? “As opposed to building opposition, you can engender more good.”

This attitude, with its implicit message to appreciate both others and yourself, is one of her key lessons in the classroom. “I tell my students that your lived experience is a value in every space you go into.” ▣



In 2022, then-President Peter Salovey '86PhD (left), announced Gonzalez's appointment as **head of Davenport College**, with her twins Alex (second from right) and Jackson (right) in attendance.

Good Karma

Kathryn Lofton, Yale's Lex Hixon Professor of Religious and American studies, considers the experimental life—and faith—of her chair's namesake.

KATHRYN LOFTON

In a processing room of the Yale Divinity Library, several stacks of white boxes have handwritten labels that read SUFI, TIBETAN BUDDHISM, CHRISTIAN. A recent acquisition by Yale Special Collections, these boxes contain the papers of Lex Hixon '63, a spiritual curator of the American counterculture. Hixon was best known as the host of *In the Spirit*, a two-hour WBAI weekly interview radio show in New York City that from 1971 until 1984 introduced listeners to prominent religious teachers such as Alan Watts, Tarthang Tulku, Rabbi Zalman Schachter, and Ram Dass. Like later broadcasters Jay Shetty, Krista Tippett, and Oprah Winfrey, Hixon's success reflected his high-level communicative abilities and his wrestling with the spiritual questions he posed to others.

I learned about Lex Hixon first in 2003, when I was a doctoral student researching the 1893 World's Parliament of Religions and found that he spoke at the centennial parliament in 1993. "A sacred tradition is an entire sacred world," the proceedings record him saying. "Boundless in scope, inexhaustible in teaching and blessing." Many years later, when I became the second Lex Hixon Professor at Yale, his name came back to me, now connected to a workplace honor. Sometimes a faculty member receives a chair named

for a philanthropic family or a Yale teacher. The chair I occupy remembers a lifelong student of spirituality who died two years after he spoke at the 1993 World's Parliament, when his life was cut short by cancer.

"I've been trying to open up a space of truth," Lex Hixon repeated across many WBAI episodes. Opening a space of truth is something religions and universities say they do. Most early American colleges, including Yale, began as institutions for Christian leadership. The Hixon family hope that honoring Lex Hixon's legacy ensures that the comparative study of religion, rather than the proselytization of a particular religion, be protected. Occupying the Hixon chair has made me think more about what kind of space of truth this opens.

A core experiment of Hixon's life was his practice of what he described as "joint citizenship in parallel sacred worlds." He rejected the idea that practice of one religion required the abandonment of another. Raised a noncommittal Episcopalian, Hixon described his high school interests at Hotchkiss as booze, poetry, and philosophy. When he came to Yale, his roommate Sam was the son of an Sioux Episcopal archdeacon, Vine Deloria Sr., the first Indigenous person named into a top executive position by a major Protestant denomination, and the grandfather of renowned historian and American studies scholar

**ILLUSTRATION BY
JOE CIARDIELLO**

Philip J. Deloria '94PhD. Hixon's relationship with Vine Deloria Sr.—represented in the Hixon papers by a rich three-decade correspondence—changed his life. Driving around the South Dakota reservation, the two spoke extensively about Christianity, which led Hixon to rebaptize.

This was just one conversion that occurred during his time at Yale. In a comparative religions course,

he encountered *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, a book that claims it is a stenographic record of the conversations of a nineteenth-century Indian saint. Ramakrishna taught that every religion is true. He also taught that God, or Ultimate Reality, should be addressed and experienced as Mother. Hixon describes finding this book as a sensory enchantment, manifest in the smell of incense he reported his copy



Lex Hixon '63 (left), seen here in an illustration based on a photograph, wrestled with spiritual questions for 13 years on his public radio show *In the Spirit*.

Hixon became a sheikh, a member of the Eastern Orthodox Church, and, posthumously, a Zen master.

carried and in the radical ideas it conveyed.

An ordained monk of the Ramakrishna order, Swami Nikhilananda (1895–1973), translated *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* with help from Margaret Woodrow Wilson, daughter of President Woodrow Wilson. The younger Wilson was among the many American artists and intellectuals who studied at the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center on East 94th Street, a center founded by Nikhilananda in 1933. When Lex moved to New York in 1965 to study flamenco guitar with Carlos Montoya, he tracked the address for the Ramakrishna Center in his copy of *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* and visited the center for a Sunday talk with the hope he could study yoga. Among the students there he found his spiritual and intellectual community, and Nikhilananda became the godfather of his four children.

Nikhilananda encouraged Hixon to advance his learning through doctoral research. As a result, Hixon spent ten years studying at Columbia University. His dissertation explored a seventh-century Indian philosophical commentary on dream states. This research deepened Hixon's commitment to the Hindu tradition Nikhilananda taught, called Advaita Vedanta. Adherents to Vedanta understood the varieties of religions as different expressions of the same insight that the individual self is not separate from Ultimate Reality. Conflict among religions is, for Vedantists, an error deriving from ignorance and poor judgment. The religions of the world are many but the route to mental liberation is the same.

To prove this thesis to himself, Hixon practiced religion as a physical and mental adventure, using scholastic and social skills he evolved in elite New England education to understand vast metaphysical systems to a high degree of practical precision. He made the traditional Hajj to Saudi Arabia, he completed a full multiple year koan training, he made offerings at the Kalighat Kali Temple in Calcutta, India, and he audited classes at Saint Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary in Yonkers, New York. He published creative interpretations of Koranic verses, twelfth-century Sufi hadiths, eighteenth-century Bengalese

tantric hymns, selections from the Prajnaparamita Sutra, and meditations on the Zen classic *Transmission of the Light*, and he revised commentary on *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*. Whether engaging with Ramakrishna Vedanta, Vajrayana Buddhism, the Jerrahi Derivish order, or Eastern Orthodox Christianity, Hixon made religion something that occurred not only through revelation and ritual but also through experience, education, and translation.

In addition to being an initiate of Ramakrishna lineage, Hixon became a sheikh in the Halveti-Jarrahī Sufi Order and a member of the Eastern Orthodox Church, and he was honored posthumously as a Zen master. “Whoever receives even the most basic initiation in a sacred tradition, or citizenship in a sacred world, has the responsibility to uphold the dignity and sanctity of that tradition, to interpret it in the light of its own highest principles, to protect it against distortion, to maintain a critical view of its past and present manifestations,” Hixon wrote. He advocated that every human being learns from authentic teachers of sacred traditions through daily study of holy texts, thinking and writing about that work, and engaging in spirited dialogue with others. His 1978 memoir, *Coming Home: The Experience of Enlightenment in Sacred Traditions*, describes how he sought awakening among many traditions.

Scholarship in religious studies explains Hixon as a practitioner of liberal religion reflected in his spiritual advocacy of pluralism and asymmetrical social relationships drawn by class, race, gender, and national difference. Historians of US religion Matthew Hedstrom and Stephen Prothero have shown how central book publishing was to the advancement of liberal religion, bringing koan, meditations, and scriptures to large audiences of English-speaking Americans tied to the Protestant Christian tradition, who often identify explicitly as seekers. Scholars of Asian American religions like Thomas Tweed and Alexandra Kaloyanides '15PhD have observed how various American Christian interpreters have translated Buddhism, working to correct for the erasure of Asian cultures, and of Asian and Asian American people, in mainstream American Buddhism. One feature of this erasure is how few of the Buddhist texts sold in American bookstores are by

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authors familiar with source languages. Whether the 1892 collection *The Gospel of Buddha* by Paul Carus or Ursula Le Guin's reinterpretation of the *Tao Te Ching* published in 1997, English-language readers have learned about Asian religions from English-speaking authors, rendering invisible the specific cultural origins for these religious ideas. Hixon ranged widely in his religious study, reflecting in these undaunted efforts what he learned in comparative religious studies at Yale and Columbia and his social identity as a religious explorer. Among the papers donated to Yale are scores of condolence letters from major religious organizations, laypersons, and readers, testifying to Hixon's respect, knowledge, and infectious inquisitiveness.

Beginning in the late 1960s, Hixon, his wife and learning partner, Sheila, and their growing family spent summers with Swami Nikhilananda at the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center's seasonal location on the St. Lawrence River. A place for classes and conversations about religion, the center sits on the footprint of a Methodist camp that existed for generations. Methodist campgrounds are major features of the religious built environment in the United States, known for their plain vernacular architecture, revival piety, and populist dialogues about different religions. Over a century earlier the same campground hosted Sri Ramakrishna's disciple Swami Vivekananda, when he visited to deliver lectures there after his memorable presentation at the 1893 World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago.

Convened by a Presbyterian minister and organized by a Swedenborgian judge, the World's Parliament of Religions gathered Hindus, Buddhists, Jains, Jews, Protestants, Catholics, Unitarians, and adherents of Shinto and Zoroastrianism for a series of discussions that were equal parts diplomacy, education, missionization, and theater. I studied the Parliament as a paradigmatic event of US religious history because it was a Christian-designed event seeking to represent how strongly religious America was and how good religion is for the economic and democratic leadership of the United States. Its organizers said it united "all religion against irreligion."

This effort for unification was explicitly missionary, with many speakers arguing that America's unique role in history deserved special religious dispensation. Historian of religion Lucia Hulsether '20PhD demonstrates in her research how the Parliament was, by design, a promotional effort on behalf of expanding American territorial and economic power.

Across his published writings, Hixon argued that people could reconcile any difference through consciousness. Such an argument served his and others' adventurous pluralism and minimized the imperial power that supported it.

"There are, in this world, so many creations, so many beings of God, from whom we can learn," said Guru Bawa Muhaiyaddeen in his 1973 radio interview with Hixon. "Whatever it is that we see, from all those things we can learn." Listening to Hixon's radio interviews, one hears over and over again how hard he works to learn from the wide range of religious thinkers he engages. As Hixon fundraised for *In the Spirit*, he emphasized how rare it was to create space for meaningful discussion between people holding different views. Donors offered what they could to encourage the ongoing circulation of such public conversations. Hixon and other public radio programs offered rare instances where religious ideas and information could be debated and accessed by a broad public.

"Our contribution to the future is to become responsible citizens, or initiates, of several sacred worlds, bearing them carefully and harmoniously within our own conscious and superconscious being," Hixon said at the 1993 World's Parliament of Religions. A committed public convert to religions whose practitioners experienced bigotry in the United States, Hixon sought to represent the ideas religions shared as a

Sacredness, Hixon said, "springs only from free commitment and just community."

practice of countering the violence of wars and religiously informed hate. Religions systematize worship, and Hixon pushed against systems that encouraged worshipping prejudice and power ahead of curiosity and vulnerability. "Sacredness cannot flourish as an intellectual abstraction, a romantic nostalgia, or a socially imposed norm," he concluded in his talk at the World's Parliament. "It springs only from free commitment and just community." Future students will find in the papers of Lex Hixon a vivid account of how knowledge uplifts individual consciousness and can, through a deeply listening scholar, motivate others to awaken. **[Y]**

arts & culture

The Romanovs as a family Object lesson

The scene below depicts the Russian tsar Nicholas II—last of the Romanov emperors, who ruled from 1894 until March 1917—at table with the Empress Alexandra, their four daughters, Princesses Olga, Tatiana, Maria, and Anastasia, and their son and heir to the throne, Aleksei. They are shown in the dining room of their summer palace in Livadia, on the Crimea, enjoying a light meal after Holy

of their protagonists' impending fate: their brutal murder in 1918 by the newly installed Bolshevik rulers, engaged in a fierce struggle for power after revolution had toppled the autocratic old regime. Technically private citizens once Nicholas had abdicated the throne, the family remained symbols of power. At the time of this photograph, the dynasty already felt itself in danger. Before being energetically repressed, the Revolution of 1905 had challenged the tsar's absolute power and diminished his aura. Until the outbreak of war in 1914, the rituals, ceremonies, and prerogatives of the ruling house nevertheless persisted. The albums show the imperial family not in their public functions, however, but in their domestic lives—off-duty, so to speak. The images show, paradoxically, that private life was never really private but always staged, always under scrutiny. Some document the rare moments in which Nicholas was not wearing one kind of uniform or another.

The overall impression is one of cosseted luxury. Photos depict the royal figures in their numerous palaces, at the Finnish coast, in Crimea, on the imperial yacht. They are shown engaged in various activities—on the tennis court, on the beach, the women doing needlework, Nicholas at the hunt or shoveling snow, children sledding in winter, the tsarevich at play. Indeed, official court propaganda emphasized the image of Nicholas as “an ordinary man,” thus seeking to repair the breach widened in 1905 between the ruler and the mass of his impoverished subjects, whose faith in his divinely inspired authority seemed to be slipping away. Such ordinary people, with the exception of sailors on the imperial yacht, rarely appear in the photos. You do not see the hosts of servants who always surrounded the royals and who made their lives of luxury possible, on the public stage and in the boudoir.

PHOTOS: BEINECKE RARE BOOK AND MANUSCRIPT LIBRARY



The image of the Romanovs in the dining room (above) likely dates to 1909 and is one of hundreds included in the **Romanov albums** donated to the Beinecke Library in 1951. The photo taken in the countryside (facing page) shows the family at leisure, though both male figures are wearing clothing that signify their official identities.

Communion. It is one of hundreds of photographs depicting the imperial family at leisure, many taken by themselves, which they assembled in family photo albums. The image in the dining room was likely taken by Anna Vyrubova (1884–1964), a close confidante of the empress and herself a camera enthusiast. The date is probably 1909, when Aleksei would have been five years old. The album itself, along with five others, was salvaged by Vyrubova when she fled the country after 1917. She eventually sold them to Yale alumnus Robert D. Brewster '39, who later donated them to the Beinecke Library. Another Yale alumnus, Robert K. Massie '50, used the images in constructing *Nicholas and Alexandra*, his best-selling portrait of the imperial family in its final years, a story that has captured the imagination of millions of readers.

The images draw their pathos from our knowledge

Propaganda emphasized the image of Nicholas as “an ordinary man.”

In 1909, the tsar's subjects were still waiting in the wings. They made their appearance less than a decade later, bringing the Romanov story to its

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bloody end and with it, Nicholas and his family.

Today's Russian rulers hail the last tsar as a patriotic hero. Historians debate the extent to which Nicholas and Alexandra contributed, by weakness of character and poor statesmanship, to the collapse

of the empire. Should they be considered martyrs to ideological fanaticism or coauthors of the revolution that cost them their lives? Images of Nicholas as a "private man" do not resolve these essentially political questions. **Y**

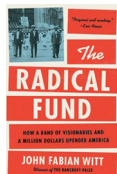
arts & culture

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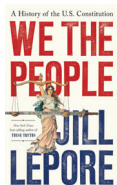
No More Tears: The Dark Secrets of Johnson & Johnson (Random House, \$32) — *Gardiner Harris '86*. At the start of the Civil War, 16-year-old Robert Wood Johnson was sent by his parents to work in a Poughkeepsie apothecary shop. He brought his brothers into the business

known as Johnson & Johnson, which has become not only the “largest healthcare conglomerate in the world,” notes the author, but a company “beloved for generations” and considered a “paragon of ethics.” Harris came to suspect “the company’s culture and its apple-pie image might be entirely at odds.”



The Radical Fund: How a Band of Visionaries and a Million Dollars Upended America (Simon & Schuster \$35) — *John Fabian Witt '94, '99JD, '00PhD*. In the early 1920s, an idealistic Wall Street scion named Charles Garland was convinced by author Upton

Sinclair and ACLU founder Roger Baldwin not to reject the fortune he was to inherit but to use most of the money to endow a foundation “to promote the wellbeing of mankind throughout the world.” The so-called “Garland Fund” did a considerable amount of good in its 19 years of helping bankroll “transformative social change,” says Witt. He offers a fascinating behind-the-scenes account of an organization that cultivated “progressive reformers.”



We the People: A History of the US Constitution (Liveright/W. W. Norton, \$39.99) — *Jill Lepore '95PhD*. As this country lurches towards its 250th birthday, the glue that has kept a disparate and often polarized “We the People” together is its Constitution, notes the author. In an examination of the “core rules, customs, and principles” that bind its citizens

“to their government by an act of consent,” historian Lepore demonstrates how the nation’s founders produced a guidebook “intended to be amended.”

To have your book, CD, podcast, or other work considered for Output, send a copy to Arts Editor, *Yale Alumni Magazine*, PO Box 1905, New Haven CT 06509; or email a copy or link to yam@yale.edu.



An Oral History of Atlantis: Stories (Random House, \$28) — *Ed Park '92*. Master storyteller Ed Park begins with a tale about an incompetent translator that includes the most aggrieved of questions: “Why not call a spade a spade—or, as the case may be,

a rubbery bathtub ornament a rubbery bathtub ornament?” In 16 stories, Park marries wit with a Korean magical realism to consider everything from a girlfriend named Tabitha Grammaticus, who “reviews science fiction for a living, which just goes to show you that America is still the greatest, most useless country in the world,” to a dystopian tale about New York City in the grip of a deadly virus known as MtPR—pronounced “metaphor.” From Yale’s Machine City to a conversation between a has-been actress and director, Park has produced fiction to savor.



Steal a Pencil for Me (Sono Luminus, 2024. Available on streaming services, or \$24.99 for a 2-CD set from <https://www.sonoluminus.com>) — *Gerald Cohen '82 and Deborah Brevort,*

composers. The new opera from composer Gerald Cohen is now available in a full new recording by Opera Colorado, conducted by Ari Peltó. *Steal a Pencil for Me* is based on the true story of a couple who met at a party then found themselves fellow prisoners in a concentration camp during the Holocaust. Much of Act 1 is set in a transit camp in the Netherlands, Act 2 mostly in the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. The score is sweeping and old-school operatic. The source material—letters between Ina Soep and Jaap Polak that find hopefulness and affection amid an environment of death and despair—previously inspired a book and a documentary.



Black in Blues: How a Color Tells the Story of My People (Ecco/HarperCollins, \$28.99) — *Imani Perry '94*. “Becoming Black,” writes Perry, is “both a parable and a process,” but the color that best exemplifies the metamorphosis, adds Perry, “is not black or brown or yellow or milky—all the colors Black people come in. It is blue, with its hues of melancholy and wonder.” In this amalgam of essays, the author provides a quilt of “loose threads and frayed patches”—the blues, enslavement, freedom, the indigo trade, a “traditional Black spiritual-medical-ethical-social” practice called hoodoo, and a wealth of blue-themed writers, musicians, and luminaries. They examine “the mystery of blue and its alchemy in the lives of Black folk.”

Calendar

ha ha ha ha ha ha ha
Yale Repertory Theatre
(203) 432-1234
yalerep.org

Estonian clown Julia Masli brings her original comedy show to the Rep, where each performance is different based on audience participation.

JANUARY 20 THROUGH FEBRUARY 7

Zhang Conducts Brahms and Tchaikovsky
Yale Philharmonia
(203) 432-4158
music.yale.edu/events

Seattle Symphony music director Xian Zhang guest-conducts this concert in Woolsey Hall in a program that includes the Brahms Violin Concerto and Tchaikovsky Symphony No. 4.

JANUARY 23, 7:30 PM.

La Bohème
Yale Opera
(203) 562-5666
www.shubert.com/events/detail/la-boheme

Metropolitan Opera conductor J. David Jackson leads the Philharmonia and cast in Yale Opera’s production of Puccini’s *La Bohème* at the Shubert Theatre in New Haven.

FEBRUARY 14, 7:30 PM; FEBRUARY 15, 2:00 PM

Unfolding Events: Exploring Past and Present in Artists’ Books

Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library
(203) 432-2977
beinecke.library.yale.edu/exhibitions-visiting/special-exhibitions

A display of artists’ books reveals a variety of surprising elements and formats, including embroidered fabric pages, landscape photography, maps, letters, and elaborate folding and foldouts.

THROUGH MARCH 1

Alumni Events Worldwide
Please check out this calendar for events near you: <https://alumni.yale.edu/events>

On behalf of everyone at the Yale Alumni Association and the Office of Undergraduate Admissions, and with profound gratitude for all that you have done and continue to do, congratulations to the alumni award recipients honored for their important volunteer work this fall!



YALE MEDAL

Robert Bildner '72
Donna L. Dubinsky '77
Akosua Barthwell Evans '90 JD
Jerry W. Henry '80 MDiv
William J. Poorvu '56

YAA BOARD OF GOVERNORS EXCELLENCE AWARDS

Yale Club of Beijing
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Yale Club of Los Angeles
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Yale School of Music Guitar Alumni
Yale Black Alumni Association
Yale Jewish Alumni Association
Yale Veterans Association
YaleWomen Hong Kong
YaleWomen Writers Group

YAA PUBLIC SERVICE AWARDS

Matthew J. Dolan '82
Katrina B. Dietsche '27 MD
Jason Weinstein '27 MD
Zaharaa Altwaij '25

ALUMNI SCHOOLS COMMITTEE AMBASSADOR AWARDS

Harry Rosenthal '76
Elenne Song '93 JD

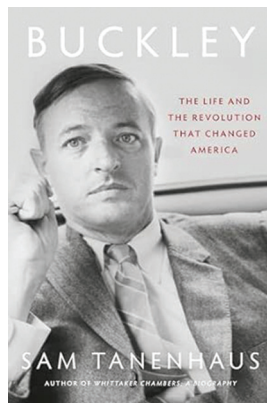
ALUMNI SCHOOLS COMMITTEE EXCELLENCE AWARD

Tulsa, Oklahoma, led by
Marycarol Page '83

Yale ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

alumni.yale.edu

Reviews



Buckley: The Life and the Revolution that Changed America

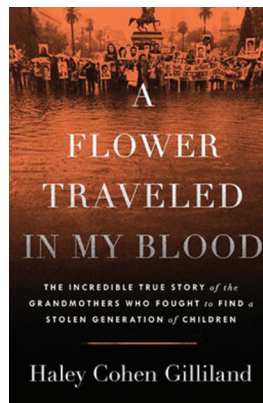
SAM TANENHAUS '78 MA
Random House, \$40
Reviewed by David Greenberg '90

In 1997, Sam Tanenhaus published a lauded biography of Whittaker Chambers, the eccentric conservative who in 1948 famously exposed Alger Hiss's espionage for the Soviet Union. Now arrives Tanenhaus's long-anticipated sequel of sorts, a lucid, engaging life of William F. Buckley Jr. '50—probably the most influential journalist in shaping the postwar political right. Possessed of a foppish demeanor, a theatrical transatlantic accent, and an instinct for newsmaking, Buckley burst on the scene with his 1951 polemic *God and Man at Yale* and, in 1955, by founding *National Review*, which for decades reigned as the flagship of the conservative movement. He died in 2008, at 82, before his brand of conservatism gave way to today's Trumpism.

Tanenhaus digs deeply into Buckley's early years, including at Yale when he led the *Daily News* and joined the Political Union and Skull and Bones. He shows Buckley's youthful politics to have been thoroughly—and, given his later persona, surprisingly—reactionary. Raised in wealth in Connecticut (as well as abroad), Buckley was a Catholic among WASPs, an antiwar America Firster among internationalists, and an apostle of what historians call "paleoconservatism." Tanenhaus details Buckley's closeness to Senator Joe McCarthy and spotlights overt racism that appeared in *National Review* in the 1950s.

For all his importance, Tanenhaus maintains, Buckley was never a systematic "theorist or philosopher" but a provocateur, debater, "publicist and advocate." Though he authored dozens of books, he never finished a long-contemplated philosophical opus. A master of the syndicated column and the television debate, Buckley won fame as much for hosting *Firing Line* and dispensing witticisms as for championing pet issues. The book's other key takeaway, left largely implicit, is that even as Buckley was mainstreaming conservative ideas, he also tugged conservative positions into line with the mainstream. In the 1960s, he broke with the extremist John Birch Society and in the 1990s called out onetime allies like Pat Buchanan and the Holocaust denier Joe Sobran for anti-Semitism. As for opposing the 1964 Civil Rights Act, Buckley admitted years later, "I was wrong." Today, Buckley protégés from George Will to Mona Charen to his son Christopher rank among the leading conservative voices criticizing the reactionary politics of Donald Trump.

DAVID GREENBERG '90, a historian at Rutgers University, is author, most recently, of *John Lewis: A Life*.



A Flower Traveled in my Blood: The Incredible True Story of the Grandmothers Who Fought to Find a Stolen Generation of Children

HALEY COHEN
GILLILAND '11
Simon & Schuster, \$30
Reviewed by Barbara Demick '79

On a rainy October afternoon in 1978, intruders stormed a toy and party supply store in a Buenos

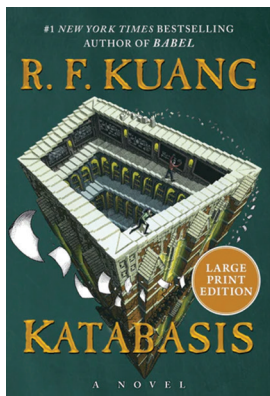
Aires suburb and punched the owner, José Manuel Pérez Rojo, into submission, clamped handcuffs on him and bundled him into a truck. The abductors sped off to Pérez Rojo's apartment, where the men grabbed his pregnant partner, Patricia Roisinblit, along with their 15-month-old daughter, Mariana.

So begins *A Flower Traveled in My Blood*, a compulsively readable whodunit that offers so much more. Cohen Gilliland, director of the Yale Journalism Initiative, takes readers on a deep dive into the brutal politics of late-twentieth-century South America. Like many young intellectuals, José and Patricia had been swept up in the leftist resistance to the military dictatorship that ruled Argentina. Human rights groups estimated that up to 30,000 Argentines were kidnapped, tortured, pushed from airplanes, and otherwise "disappeared" from 1976 to 1983. Cohen Gilliland's elegantly written and meticulously reported book focuses on the relatives left behind.

Up to 30,000 were "disappeared."

Mariana, the toddler, was released by her parents' kidnappers and raised by relatives. Guillermo, the baby delivered in a military prison, shortly before Patricia was killed, was given for adoption by a military intelligence officer and didn't learn his true identity until he turned 21. The most compelling figure is the Jewish grandmother, Rosa Tarlovsky de Roisinblit, who helped start a group known as Grandmothers of Plaza de Mayo—known as the "Abuelas"—to look for the children and grandchildren taken away by the regime. Cohen Gilliland writes with nuance about the plight of the adopted children torn between the parents who raised them and their genetic kin. This is the very best kind of nonfiction—a narrative the reader can enjoy like a novel while emerging far better educated.

BARBARA DEMICK '79 is author, most recently, of *Daughters of the Bamboo Grove*.



Katabasis

R. F. KUANG '27PHD

Harper Voyager, \$32

Reviewed by Christina Baker Kline '86

R. F. Kuang's *Katabasis*—part fantasy, part allegory, part moral inquiry into the seductions and punishments of knowledge—is a work of genuine intellectual daring. Recasting the mythic descent into the Underworld as an academic

trial, Kuang imagines a universe in which scholarship itself becomes a metaphysical ordeal.

Her protagonist, Alice Law, a gifted student at Cambridge in the 1980s, commits an act of catastrophic hubris: A spell gone wrong destroys her mentor and derails her future. To salvage her academic career and her conscience, she must descend through the Eight Courts of

Hell, sacrificing half her remaining lifespan in the process.

Kuang's underworld is rigorous and imaginative, built from paradoxical logic, spectral libraries, and chambers of suffering, calibrated to questions of merit and pain. This inferno is a distorted reflection of the university, with its disputations and hierarchies raised to cosmic stakes. Each court enacts an intellectual sin: greed, pride, wrath. Moving through it all is Alice: shrewd, blinkered, and compelling in her need to find a reckoning she can live with.

If Kuang's earlier novel *Babel* explored the moral hubris of empire, *Katabasis* turns inward—toward the scholar's compact with ambition, envy, guilt, and the longing to transcend ordinary life through intellect. The novel occasionally courts excess, but Kuang is in full command of her material. A doctoral student at Yale, she writes from inside the world she anatomizes. *Katabasis* is a supple allegory of academic striving in which the pursuit of truth edges close to self-immolation. Beneath its cerebral scaffolding runs a sly current of humor, a recognition that Hell might look a lot like office hours that never end.

CHRISTINA BAKER KLINE '86 is author of the forthcoming novel *The Foursome*, due out this spring.



Photos by Randy Tunnell

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Haydn's *Creation* with Yale Schola Cantorum and Juilliard415

Yale Schola Cantorum and Juilliard415 will also perform Haydn's *Creation* throughout Italy in May 2026. Watch the website for details.



Yale

Football team shines in first postseason appearance



Running back **Josh Pitsenberger** '26 (above) ran 56 yards for the winning touchdown over Youngstown State in Yale's first-ever FCS playoff game.

Two days after Thanksgiving, the Yale football team found itself in uncharted territory. The team was trailing 35–7 at halftime in its first-ever Football Championship Subdivision (FCS) playoff game, and ESPN analytics gave Yale just a 1 in 200 chance of winning. Thirty minutes later, the Bulldogs had pulled off their biggest second-half comeback in 84 years—and their first FCS playoff victory.

The path to that miracle began in December 2024, when the Ivy League announced that its teams could compete in the FCS playoffs. An Ivy title would no longer be just the cap to an outstanding season, but a ticket to the 24-team tournament held yearly among the 129 FCS schools, one division below the powerhouses in the Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS).

To qualify, Yale first had to take care of business at the 141st playing of The Game: Harvard entered the Bowl ranked 8th in the country with an undefeated 9–0 record, while Yale was 7–2 with one Ivy loss. A Yale victory would not only give the Bulldogs a share of the Ivy title, but also the automatic bid to the FCS tournament. Adding to the story was a starting quarterback with a familiar last name. Dante Reno '28, son of head coach Tony Reno and a sought-after recruit nationally, transferred to Yale over the summer after playing at South Carolina.

Against Harvard, the younger Reno showed his elite-level potential, throwing for 273 yards and three touchdowns in a game Yale dominated from the start. The Crimson fumbled the very first snap of the game, helping Yale to an immediate 7–0 lead, and the Bulldogs quickly pushed the margin to 17–0 in the second quarter. Yale's stars led the way all afternoon. Captain

Josh Pitsenberger '26, the Ivy offensive player of the year, tallied 143 yards on the ground and three running touchdowns. The defense, including Ivy defensive player of the year (and next season's captain) Abu Kamara '27, held the Crimson to under 30 points for the first time all season in an eventual 45–28 win.

The next day, the Bulldogs learned they'd travel to Ohio to play Youngstown State in the FCS tournament's first round the following Saturday. At first, it appeared that the Bulldogs weren't quite ready for the postseason spotlight. The Penguins jumped out to a 21–0 lead, and Yale turned the ball over three times in a 35–7 first half in which nothing seemed to go right.

But one of the greatest moments in Yale football history unfolded after halftime. "The message in the locker room was, 'The scoreboard is irrelevant,'" says Pitsenberger. "We took it one play at a time, knowing that we're still in this game." Reno settled in and eventually threw for 260 yards and three second-half touchdowns. Two third-quarter scores made the score 42–22, but with time ticking away, the Bulldogs still needed big plays to dig out of their early hole. The spark came from a fumble forced by Inumidun Ayo-Durojaiye '26 and recovered by Kamara in Penguins territory. Then, Yale scored to make it 42–29, and momentum noticeably swung the Bulldogs' way. With under three minutes to go and Yale still down by six, Pitsenberger broke off a 56-yard touchdown run that put Yale ahead for good, 43–42.

From a deficit of 42–14, Yale scored 29 unanswered points to earn a first-ever FCS playoff win. In a career-defining performance, Pitsenberger racked up

A win in The Game sent the Bulldogs to the playoffs.

209 yards and three touchdowns of his own. "We talk all the time about it being Yale vs. Yale—about holding ourselves to our own standard of excellence—and today they showed just how deeply that commitment runs," said head coach Reno after the win.

After the thrilling win at Youngstown, the Bulldogs faced their second-round opponent, the Montana State Bobcats, who were ranked second among

EVAN FRONDORF '14 writes frequently about sports for the magazine.

For more on fall sports, go to yalealumnimagazine.org/articles/6146

FCS teams. Landing in Bozeman, nearly a mile above sea level, the Bulldogs were greeted by seven inches of snow and a fan base used to winning, including runs to the FCS championship game in two of the previous four years. Some prognosticators favored the Bobcats by more than 20 points, but Yale gave the home team all they could handle. On a cold afternoon in December, a stout Yale defense held Montana State to just one score and a 7-0 lead at halftime.

The Bobcats scored late in the third quarter to make it 14-0, but in an exciting final 15 minutes, it seemed like the Bulldogs might pull off another comeback. After Kamara forced a fumble with four minutes to play, Pitsenberger scored his 19th touchdown of the year, making the score 21-13. The defense forced Montana State to punt, giving Yale the ball back with the chance to tie with just 59 seconds remaining. Unfortunately, a strip-sack fumble followed by a final attempt at laterals with time expiring ended the game and the dream run for the Bulldogs.

The season took on added significance the next

FALL SPORTS RESULTS

Cross country (W)
5th at NCAA regionals,
2nd at Ivy Heptagonals

Cross country (M)
5th at NCAA regionals,
4th at Ivy Heptagonals

Field hockey
12-6, 4-3 Ivy (3rd)

Went to NCAA
Tournament for first time

Football
9-3, 6-1 Ivy (1st)

Soccer (W)
3-11-1, 1-5-1 Ivy (8th)

Soccer (M)
3-9-3, 2-4-1 Ivy (6th)

Volleyball
15-9, 10-4 Ivy (2nd)

day, when it was announced that Coach Reno would take a leave of absence to recover from an unspecified health issue he had been managing throughout the season. Head defensive coach Sean McGowan will be acting head coach until Reno's return.

For a first taste of FCS play, Yale made not just an appearance but a statement, and a preview of postseason runs to come. Ivy League traditions may die hard, but this new chapter of Yale football lore appears to have been worth the wait. **Y**

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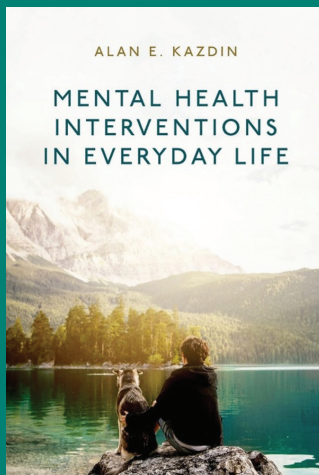
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ALUMNI AUTHORS

Alan E. Kazdin, MAH '89, PhD

Mental Health Interventions in Everyday Life



Alan E. Kazdin, Sterling Professor of Psychology (Emeritus) examines the scientific evidence behind several everyday activities to consider their ability to directly reduce the symptoms of mental disorders and other conditions that impair functioning. These interventions include physical activities, contact with nature, mind-body interventions (e.g., yoga, tai chi), diet, spirituality, volunteering, engaging in hobbies, contact with nonhuman animals, and a variety of digital and technology based interventions (e.g., virtual reality, socially assistive robots). The research allows us to go beyond common sense and anecdotally based recommendations about what one can do. The advantages of everyday activities as a complement to current treatments is that they avoid many of the obstacles (e.g., lack of insurance, stigma) that mental health services engender.

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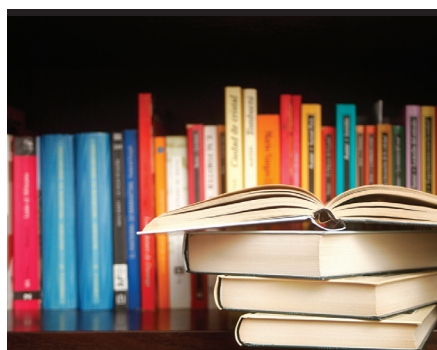
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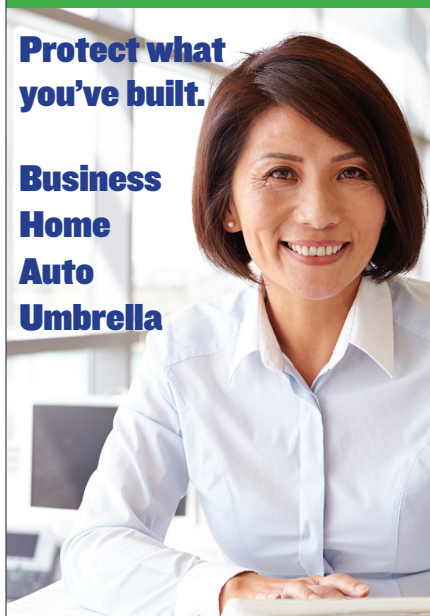
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school notes

A supplement to the Yale Alumni Magazine.



MARK ALDEN BRANCH '86

School of Architecture



Deborah Berke, Dean
architecture.yale.edu

Architect's photographs

Presenting a wide-ranging selection of Denise Scott Brown's photographs, *Encounters* is on exhibit at the Yale Architecture Gallery through July 3. The show explores the architect's crucial but little-studied photographic practice and raises broader questions about architectural research and pedagogy, the profession's interest in so-called ordinary places, and the social and political obligations of design. *Encounters* is based on a book by the same name, edited by Izzy Kornblatt '25MPhil.

Symposium on the feminist city

The feminist city is a work in progress.

Organized by Tatiana Bilbao and Annie Barrett '01 and dedicated to Dolores Hayden, the symposium *Domestic Revolutions and Feminist Cities* (April 9–10) will spotlight innovators from Europe, Latin America, and the United States who are reinventing urban infrastructure to recognize women as valued workers. Vienna has led the way by building a "Fair-Shared City" with safety for women in public places, housing projects that integrate childcare, playgrounds appealing to girls as well as boys, and streets named for women. Barcelona has expanded definitions of housing to experiment with kitchenless units, collective kitchens, and shared childcare. Bogota, Colombia, has provided dozens of "care blocks" to support women whose unpaid domestic work makes all paid work possible. Today, campaigns for more egalitarian cities are expanding across the globe. Speakers include Eva Kail from Vienna, Anna Puigjaner from Barcelona, Diana Rodriguez Franco

from Bogota, and many other distinguished architects, planners, and elected officials.

School of Art



Kymberly Pinder, Dean
art.yale.edu

Spring 2026 MFA thesis exhibitions

Please join us during the Spring 2026 semester for thesis exhibitions in all four areas of graduate study, alongside an undergraduate thesis show.

Graduating painting/printmaking MFAs begin the exhibition series with a show in two parts: Group 1 will be installed January 17–27 with a public reception on January 23; Group 2 will be open February 7–17, with a public reception on February 13. Sculpture MFAs follow with a two-part show, the first running

NOTE TO READERS: THE YALE ALUMNI MAGAZINE CARRIES THIS SUPPLEMENT IN EVERY ISSUE FOR NEWS FROM YALE'S GRADUATE AND PROFESSIONAL SCHOOLS, YALE COLLEGE, AND THE FACULTY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES. THIS SUPPLEMENT IS NOT WRITTEN BY THE MAGAZINE STAFF BUT PROVIDED BY THE DEANS.

February 28–March 9 with a public reception on March 6, and the second part March 21–29 with a public reception on March 27. The MFA Thesis Exhibition in Graphic Design follows, April 9–17, with a public reception on April 17. Then, the graduating art majors at Yale College stage their undergraduate show April 26–May 3, with a public reception on May 1. Finally, the graduating MFAs in photography will present their thesis work May 12–19, with a public reception on May 15.

The Yale School of Art Spring 2026 receptions are open to the public and take place on Fridays, 6–8 p.m. During all other gallery hours, exhibitions are open only to the Yale community (current ID holders) and their invited accompanied guests. Please consult our public events calendar at yaleart.org/publicevents for more information.

2026 open studios

The School of Art will host its annual graduate open studios on April 11 and 12. Featuring work from the departments of graphic design, painting/printmaking, photography, and sculpture, open studios offers the public the opportunity to witness firsthand the working processes of the students at the School of Art. Studios will be open to the public and are located across four buildings on Yale's campus in downtown New Haven. The two-day event is complemented by a series of community-organized programming; a full schedule will post on the 2026 Open Studios website when it launches in March at yaleart.org/openstudios.

Yale College



Pericles Lewis, Dean
yalecollege.yale.edu

OCS and YAA launch alumni career coaching

This fall, the Office of Career Strategy and the Yale Alumni Association introduced a program connecting alumni with 20 volunteer alumni industry experts across 18 fields for free virtual career coaching. Services include résumé reviews, networking tips, and interview

prep. Details are available on the Yale Alumni Association website.

Classic Whiffs keep singing

Fourteen Whiffenpoof alumni, spanning the 1960s to 2010s, performed in Trumbull College on October 18 at the invitation of head of college Fahmeed Hyder '95PhD. Known as the "Classic Whiffs," the group gathers annually to rehearse and perform, keeping alive arrangements from the Whiffenpoofs' 116-year history.

FOOT program thrives in 2025

This year, 668 first-years and 172 leaders embarked on 86 wilderness trips as part of Yale's FOOT (First-Year Outdoor Orientation Trips) program. Supported by 45 crew members, the trips kicked off Camp Yale in late August. In 2026, program director Cilla Leavitt '74, '81MFS, will celebrate her 42nd year leading FOOT.

Divinity School



Gregory E. Sterling, Dean
divinity.yale.edu

Large crowd celebrates Living Village opening

Nearly 500 people attended a blessing and ribbon ceremony in early October to celebrate the opening of the Divinity School's Living Village and its featured building, Carol B. Bauer Hall, a 50-bed student residence hall that gives back to the environment more than it takes (see photo, page 20).

Thirteen years in the making, the Living Village is the largest living-building residential complex at any university, using the most sustainable practices for water retention and reuse, generating all its power from the sun, and using only environmentally benign building materials. "The Living Village is a singular achievement and a beautiful addition to our campus," President Maurie McInnis said in her remarks at the opening celebration. "But even more than its beauty, what makes the village truly special is its purpose."

More coverage, including a video and news

story, can be found at YaleNews.

Divinity students engage their city through New Haven Pilgrimage

Now in its third year, the Divinity School's New Haven Pilgrimage (held September 12–14 this year) is a three-day program for students built around shared meals and interactions with New Haven faith and business leaders, social service providers, and community partners who open their doors and tell their stories. This year's pilgrimage included visits to the Downtown Evening Soup Kitchen; CitySeed, a food justice nonprofit; and Beulah Land Development Corporation, a faith-based housing developer. "We have many students who aren't sure about ordained ministry, but who are very curious about how to be of service in the world," said Alison Cunningham '84MDiv, director of professional formation at YDS. "The pilgrimage provides some good, firsthand examples of how to do that."

David Geffen School of Drama



James Bundy, Dean
drama.yale.edu

Bundy stages last production as dean

Yale Repertory Theatre closed out 2025 with a new production of Henrik Ibsen's masterpiece *Hedda Gabler*, translated from the Norwegian by Paul Walsh (faculty). Staged by James Bundy '95MFA—his last production while serving in his dual roles as Elizabeth Parker Ware Dean of David Geffen School of Drama and artistic director of Yale Rep—the show featured Austin Durant '10MFA, Marianna Gailus '17, Felicity Jones Latta, Stephanie Machado '18MFA, Max Gordon Moore '11MFA, Mary Lou Rosato (faculty), and James Udom '18CDR.

"I'm so happy to have been able to reach out to actors I admire and adore and have them all say yes," said Bundy. "Every Ibsen play is an opportunity to reclaim the power and scope of great drama, not as an historical or museum exercise but as an interpretive and craft-based investigation that is deeply human and theatrically satisfying." Bundy steps down as

school notes

A supplement to the Yale Alumni Magazine.

DGSD dean and the Rep's artistic director on June 30 after more than 20 years in the roles.

School of Engineering & Applied Science



Jeffrey Brock, Dean
seas.yale.edu

Professor wins Nobel for quantum research

Michel H. Devoret, the Frederick W. Beinecke Professor Emeritus of Applied Physics at Yale University, who has spent his career probing the intricate dynamics of qubits and quantum information, won the 2025 Nobel Prize in Physics for his groundbreaking work in quantum computing. He is currently on faculty at the University of California–Santa Barbara. Devoret, who is a founding member of the Yale Quantum Institute, shares the prize with John Clarke of the University of California–Berkeley and John M. Martinis of the University of California–Santa Barbara. The Nobel committee cited the trio's research together in the 1980s that “revealed quantum physics in action.”

Making materials with electrified vapor

Vapor-phase synthesis, a technique used to create very pure and scalable nanomaterials and coatings, has great promise for the electronic, optical, aerospace, energy and environment, and semiconductor industries. But the process can be tricky and requires pricey equipment that's difficult to maintain. A research team led by Professor Liangbing Hu has eliminated these complications by using a form of electrified vapor that instantly vaporizes and then rapidly cools the material. This results in pure nanomaterial products and thin films with excellent compositional and structural control. The outcome is a system that's quicker, cheaper, and more versatile.

Professor named Hrabowski Scholar

The Howard Hughes Medical Institute (HHMI) has named Cristina Rodríguez, assistant professor of biomedical engineering, a 2025 Freeman Hrabowski Scholar. The program recognizes

outstanding early career faculty who have the potential to become leaders in their research fields and to create lab environments in which everyone can thrive. Each scholar receives up to \$8.6 million over a potential ten-year period, which includes full salary, benefits, a substantial research budget, and funding for scientific equipment. Rodríguez develops novel advanced optical imaging technologies that allow scientists to visualize biological processes as they occur in living systems. These innovations enable her team to observe neuronal circuits in the rodent spinal cord in real time, revealing how neural networks process sensory information from the body.

School of the Environment



Ingrid C. “Indy” Burke, Dean
environment.yale.edu

The tiny threats facing the kings of the savanna

Lions are often celebrated as symbols of strength and resilience, but new research led by Yale School of the Environment scientists suggests that some of the most serious threats facing West Africa's critically endangered lions are too small to be seen with the naked eye. A study published in *Royal Society Open Science* offers the first comprehensive look at the parasites living in West African lions, a subspecies that now occupies just 1.1 percent of its historic range.

“Parasites are truly the unappreciated majority, a grand puppeteer that regulates behavior, immune responses, and even biodiversity,” said lead author Nyeema Harris, the Knobloch Family Associate Professor of Wildlife and Land Conservation. “Some might think there is little left to learn from such an iconically charismatic and well-studied species, but there is a dearth of understanding of the parasite communities that plague African lion populations.”

A new road map for urban tree planting

When summer heat intensifies in cities, the consequences extend beyond discomfort; they

affect public health, energy costs, and equity. A study coauthored by Yale School of the Environment research scientists offers a road map for making urban tree planting more strategic and equitable.

The study, published in *Urban Forestry & Urban Greening*, introduces a framework that could help cities decide where to plant new trees so they provide the most heat relief and other benefits to vulnerable communities. By pairing high-resolution heat data with demographic and land-use information, the team developed a prioritization tool that can guide city planners, nonprofits, and local governments in targeting the most impactful planting sites.

“In practice the tool offers specific guidance of where to prioritize tree planting to reverse the trend of increasing urban heat, to have the greatest impact on the most vulnerable communities,” said coauthor Colleen Murphy-Dunning, executive director of the Hixon Center for Urban Sustainability and the Urban Resources Initiative.

Faculty of Arts & Sciences



Steven Wilkinson, Dean
fas.yale.edu

Innovative new courses

FAS faculty taught numerous exciting, hands-on courses in the fall: Casey Dunn '05PhD, professor of ecology and evolutionary biology, taught a course about invertebrate biology out on Horse Island, a rugged piece of land just 12 minutes from New Haven. Nicholas Jones, associate professor of Spanish and Portuguese, and Todne Thomas, associate professor of divinity and religious studies, brought students to the Beinecke to examine its rare collection of tarot cards. And Alka Menon, assistant professor of sociology, cotaught a course about the ethical and social questions raised by the use of AI in medicine.

Discoveries and breakthroughs by science faculty

Our junior science faculty are making scientific breakthroughs, from cell biology to climate

change. Binyam Mogessie, assistant professor of molecular, cellular, and developmental biology, is shedding light on how female reproduction changes with age by creating a new method for simulating “aging-like” chromosome errors. Candie Paulsen, assistant professor of molecular biophysics and biochemistry, found a long-elusive mechanism in the body that sends pain signals. A project led by Elizabeth Yankovsky, assistant professor of earth and planetary sciences, won a worldwide climate solutions competition that will utilize artificial intelligence to improve technologies that remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and store it in the ocean.

Faculty recognized for outstanding careers

Three FAS faculty members were recently celebrated for their groundbreaking careers in the humanities and social sciences. Elijah Anderson, Sterling Professor of Sociology and African American Studies, was awarded the 2025 Edwin H. Sutherland Award by the American Society of Criminology for his pioneering ethnographic research on urban crime. Marcia C. Inhorn, William K. Lanman Jr. Professor of Anthropology and International Affairs, was honored with a 2025 Career Award from the Association for Feminist Anthropology for her lifetime accomplishments as a feminist anthropologist. And Matthew Jacobson, Sterling Professor of American Studies and History, received the 2025 Carl Bode–Norman Holmes Pearson Prize from the American Studies Association for his career and dedication to the mission and values of American studies.

Jackson School of Global Affairs



James A. Levinsohn, Dean
jackson.yale.edu

Former World Fellow wins Nobel

Venezuelan opposition leader and 2009 Yale World Fellow María Corina Machado won the 2025 Nobel Peace Prize in October. An outspoken critic of the authoritarian regime of

President Nicolás Maduro, Machado serves as leader of the Vente Venezuela party and was a member of Venezuela’s National Assembly in 2011–2014. She announced her candidacy for president in 2022 but was arbitrarily disqualified from public office for her role in anti-government protests. In spite of her disqualification, Machado has led massive rallies in Venezuela in opposition of Maduro and has become internationally recognized in the fight against authoritarian rule. “María Corina embodies the spirit of the Yale World Fellows—fearless in her convictions, steadfast in her pursuit of justice, and courageous in her deeds,” said Emma Sky, director of the World Fellows program.

Jackson faculty present research at UN

At a high-level session on early childhood development and peacebuilding at September’s UN General Assembly, Yale Jackson School anthropologist Catherine Panter-Brick presented scientific evidence showing how war trauma can alter gene expression and affect future generations. Joined by Jackson senior lecturer Bonnie Weir, Panter-Brick presented findings from her first-of-its-kind study on war and epigenetics among three generations of Syrian refugee families. The research, published in *Scientific Reports* in February 2024, found that women who experienced the violence of war during pregnancy showed altered epigenetic markings—and so did their children and grandchildren, even those who had never been directly exposed to conflict. “Violence leaves its mark on the human genome across generations,” said Panter-Brick, “which tells us that the legacy of war is not only social and psychological—it is biological.”

Graduate School of Arts & Sciences



Lynn Cooley, Dean
gsas.yale.edu

Data science fellows program to launch in spring

The new Peter Salovey and Marta Moret Data Science Fellows Program will offer

mentoring, professional development, and outreach opportunities for an interdisciplinary cohort of PhD students. The support will complement the students’ ongoing PhD training and encourage engagement with a wider community of scholars addressing the challenges facing science and society where data science plays a critical role.

The program will include about 20 PhD students, all of whom will be eligible for funding to support travel to conferences and workshops, participation in outreach events, and access to data storage and advanced research computing. A subset of participants will receive up to two years of stipend and tuition support. The program is a collaboration between the Graduate School and the Yale Institute for Foundations of Data Science.

New “Brains, Minds, and Machines” certificate offered

A new certificate program, offered by the Graduate School in partnership with the Wu Tsai Institute, will prepare the next generation of human cognition researchers through interdisciplinary training across biological, psychological, and computational sciences. The new certificate is one of 17 academic program certificates offered by the Graduate School, providing complementary training that broadens a student’s PhD work.

Alumna named 2025 MacArthur Fellow

Kristina Douglass ’16PhD (anthropology) is among the 22 recipients of the 2025 MacArthur Fellowship, a prestigious award known informally as the “genius grant.” Douglass is an archaeologist investigating how human societies and environments coevolved and adapted to climate variability. Her research focuses on coastal communities in southwest Madagascar, a biodiversity hot spot that is particularly vulnerable to present-day climate change pressures.

Find out more.

For more information on any of the stories in School Notes, visit the schools’ websites.

school notes

A supplement to the Yale Alumni Magazine.

Law School



Yair Listokin, Interim Dean
law.yale.edu

Number of full-tuition scholarships increases for 2025–26

The Law School awarded 96 students—more than 15 percent of the current JD class—its Hurst Horizon Scholarship for 2025–26. The number of students who receive the full-tuition, need-based scholarship has nearly doubled since the program's launch in 2022. Yale Law School is one of just two law schools in the US that offers financial aid based solely on need. The school spends more than \$20 million annually from its endowment to ensure that more than 70 percent of law students receive generous need-based financial aid packages.

Yale Law School Association honors two with Award of Merit

Pamela S. Karlan '80, '84MA, '84JD, and Sterling Professor Emeritus of Law Heather K. Gerken received the Award of Merit in October at the school's Alumni Weekend. Karlan serves as the Kenneth and Harle Montgomery Professor of Public Interest Law and codirector of the Supreme Court Litigation Clinic at Stanford Law School. Gerken served as dean of the Law School from 2017 until 2025, during which time she strengthened the school's tradition of academic excellence, fortified support for the student body, and launched innovative new programming. She was named the 11th president of the Ford Foundation in 2025. Since 1957, the Yale Law School Association has annually bestowed its highest honor, the Award of Merit, to graduates or faculty.

Women Faculty Forum recognition

Arthur Liman Professor of Law Judith Resnik received the 2025 Elga R. Wasserman Courage, Clarity, and Leadership Award from the Women Faculty Forum at Yale on September 16. The award was established in 2021 "to honor a Yale woman every year who has demonstrated tremendous courage, clarity, and leadership in their community service." Resnik is the founding director of the Arthur Liman Center for

Public Interest Law. She teaches courses on federalism, procedure, courts, prisons, equality, and citizenship.

School of Management



Kerwin K. Charles, Dean
som.yale.edu

Honoring a Yale titan's legacy

In September, SOM convened leading alumni and finance practitioners for a symposium honoring the late David Swensen '80PhD, who pioneered a new institutional investing model during his long tenure as Yale's chief investment officer. It was also the first major event hosted by the Swensen Asset Management Institute, a new SOM center that will build on Swensen's legacy of investment excellence and mentorship, and which recently named investment manager Erin Bellissimo as its executive director. "As investors in rapidly changing markets, it's more important than ever to have David's guiding principles," said Lei Zhang '02MA, '02MBA, during the symposium's closing remarks.

Traversing the globe for new business perspectives

During October break, students traveled around the world for weeklong immersions at leading business schools. The immersions, known as the Global Network Week, are one of the most popular programs of the Global Network for Advanced Management, a coalition of top schools that creates connections among the students and faculty in its 33 member institutions. This year's Global Network Week programs introduced students to emerging markets in China, social entrepreneurship in Brazil, sustainable development in Costa Rica, and digital finance in Ghana, among other offerings. "One reason I chose Yale SOM was its truly global reach—and that came to life during Global Network Week," said Malik Dent '26MBA, who studied entrepreneurial acquisition in Mexico.

Making dream internships possible

SOM's Internship Fund has begun its annual

work raising funds to ensure that students can pursue summer internships in the public and nonprofit sectors without financial constraints. The first of its kind among American business schools, the fund supports between 5 percent and 15 percent of each SOM class. Its fund-raisers, which include an auction night and a talent show, have become some of the SOM community's most anticipated events. "It has been inspiring to witness the school's strong tradition of generosity, and to know that our work directly helped classmates pursue social impact careers," wrote fund leaders Catherine Dai '26MBA, Cindy Gu '26MBA, and Libby Liu '26MBA.

School of Medicine



Nancy J. Brown, Dean
medicine.yale.edu

MBB professor appointed to named position

Wendy V. Gilbert, whose research focuses on regulatory elements in mRNA that control the cellular expression of the information stored in genetic code, was recently appointed the Maxine F. Singer '57PhD Professor of Molecular Biophysics and Biochemistry. Gilbert, who has appointments in Yale's Faculty of Arts and Sciences and Yale School of Medicine, joined Yale in 2017, having previously held a faculty position at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Her current projects, revealing the function of mRNA biogenesis, translation, and decay, have the potential to transform RNA therapeutics and help determine the biological roots of many cancers and diseases. In recognition of her scholarly contributions to her field, she received the RNA Society Early Career Award in 2017 and the American Cancer Society Research Scholar Award in 2014. She is also valued as an outstanding teacher and mentor who works to create pathways to science for people from all backgrounds.

Gift will fund research on pancreatic cancer

Daniel M. Koenigsberg, YC '62, vividly

remembers the compassionate care his late wife, Susan, received at Smilow Cancer Hospital while being treated for pancreatic cancer. He recognized this extraordinary patient care delivery by gifting \$1 million to Yale Cancer Center and Smilow Cancer Hospital.

Koenigsberg's philanthropy establishes an endowment that focuses on pancreatic cancer research. The fund will enhance multiple initiatives, including seed grants for pilot projects, the establishment of a fellowship in gastrointestinal cancers, the creation of a biorepository for tissue samples, and an annual lectureship. It will also provide support for faculty research endeavors and help to ensure sustained support for future initiatives.

The inaugural Dr. Daniel and Susan Koenigsberg Pancreatic Cancer Research Lecture series was launched on September 16, 2025, with a visiting professor from Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine addressing the role of vaccines in anti-tumor immune responses.

School of Music



José García-León, Dean
music.yale.edu

YSM hosts all-classes reunion

More than 150 alumni, spanning nearly 60 classes, returned to New Haven for the School of Music's all-classes reunion. The gathering—which took place from Friday, October 10, to Sunday, October 12—had one of the largest attendances of any YSM alumni event to date.

Yale music community comes together for new work

In November, the East Coast premiere of *Siddhartha, She*—a new work by composition faculty member Christopher Theofanidis '97DMA with libretto by Melissa Studdard—brought together Yale musicians from across generations, disciplines, and ensembles. The Yale Philharmonia, School of Music faculty artists, Yale Choral Artists, Yale Glee Club, and singers from Yale Opera and Yale Voxtet all performed under the direction of conductor Jeffrey Douma.

School of Nursing



Azita Emami, Dean
nursing.yale.edu

New center dedicated to better aging

The Yale School of Nursing has launched the Center for Aging Well, a new global hub for research and clinical innovation dedicated to better health and thriving at every age. The center reflects YSN's vision of nursing as a driving force in advancing wellness, prevention, and health equity. By merging nursing science, technology, and global collaboration, it will pioneer new approaches to whole-person care and redefine what it means to age well for everyone, in every community.

Strengthening global partnerships across East Asia

Dean Azita Emami recently returned from a sponsored multi-country trip to East Asia aimed at expanding YSN's global presence and collaborations. During her travels, she served as a keynote speaker at several international conferences in China, South Korea, Hong Kong, and Taiwan, highlighting the essential role of nurses as global health leaders. The visit included meetings with major universities, including Yonsei University College of Nursing, Central South University, Hong Kong University, and National Taiwan University, to advance student and faculty exchanges, research partnerships, and planetary health initiatives. The trip deepened YSN's connections with alumni and global partners, reinforcing the school's leadership in shaping the future of nursing education and wellness worldwide.

School of Public Health



Megan L. Ranney, Dean
ysph.yale.edu

Dean chats with head of YAA

Two years into her term as dean of the Yale School of Public Health, Megan L. Ranney sat


down with Yale Alumni Association executive director Alison Cole '99 for a wide-ranging discussion about the school's newfound independence, her priorities, and how Yale alumni can best support the school, its students, and public health.

During the 20-minute episode of Yale Afternoons with Alison, Ranney encouraged Yale alumni to be public health ambassadors in their communities. The YSPH website and social media platforms often provide information sheets and other resources about vaccines, firearm injury prevention, fluoride, and other public health topics to help people discuss these issues knowledgeably with their neighbors and friends.

Visit the YAA website to hear more of the conversation in this lively and informative episode of Yale Afternoons with Alison.

YSPH launches new health data platform

The Yale School of Public Health has launched a new online health data platform called PopHIVE that provides users with a broad array of near-real-time health data from multiple sources across the country. It's designed to help people—from policy makers and journalists to clinicians and public health workers—explore, understand, and act on public health trends. The public can use it to find out about health trends happening in their community.

PopHIVE, an acronym for Population Health Information and Visualization Exchange, was created by a team of clinicians, public health practitioners, scientists, and other collaborators. Drawing from such sources as the CDC, EPIC, and national virus and immunization surveillance systems, the platform provides detailed de-identified data on such topics as chronic and infectious diseases, respiratory diseases, and child immunizations. In the future, the platform will also include data on injury and overdose and on youth well-being. 

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yalealumnimagazine.org/school_notes.

last look

Top dog!

PHOTOGRAPH BY
DAN RENZETTI

Not only did Yale beat Harvard in the Yale Bowl, 45–28, to clinch a share of the 2025 Ivy League Championship. But then the Bulldogs went on to beat Youngstown State 43–42 the following weekend in their first-ever Football Championship Subdivision playoff game before falling to the number two–ranked Montana State Bobcats in Bozeman. (Catch up on the play-by-play on page 52.)

