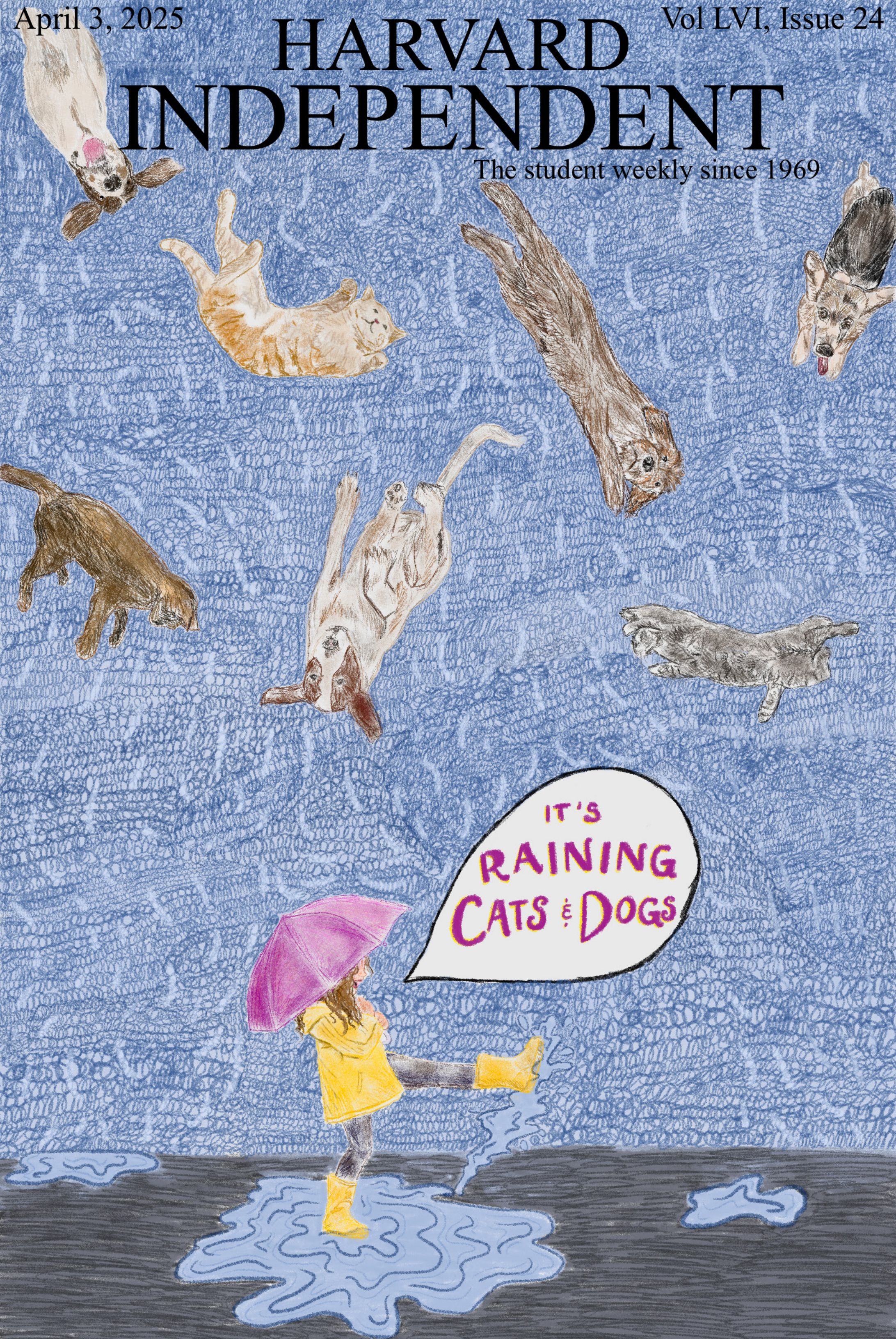


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HARVARD INDEPENDENT

The student weekly since 1969



CONTENTS

- 3. New Words and New Worlds**
by Caroline Stohrer '28
- 5. Interrupted Relief: Politics, Reform, and the Uncertain Future of USAID**
by Nashla Turcios '28
- 6. Canines, Community, and Connection**
by Marcel Ramos Castaneda '28
- 7. From Harvard Yard to Heartbreak Hill**
by Sophie Dauer '27
- 8. Ask Harvard: Recommendations For Your Schedule This Fall**
by Calvin Frank '28
- 9. Daylight Craving Time**
by Ishaan Tewari '28
- 10. Harvard Makes it Rain**
by Jocelyne Delgado '28
- 11. Comment if You Care**
by Wessal Bakry '28 and Pippa Lee '28
- 12. A Broad, Abroad: Lessons from Stress**
by Frances Connors '26
- 13. Not All Passports Are Equal**
by Frida López '27
- 14. Downpour**
by Riley Cullinan '27
- 16. Thoughts from New Quincy: Thursday**
by Luke Wagner '26
- 18. Exposé of EXposé**
by Sophie DePaul '27
- 19. Open 25/8**
by Kayla Reifel '26
- 20. Limited Color and Liminal Space**
by Lucie Stefanoni '27
- 21. Chaos and Comedy: A Review of Arcadia**
by Olivia Lunseth '28
- 22. Sanders Theatre: On Referentiality**
by Jules Sanders '28
- 23. Artmaking in Antarctica**
by Kya Brooks '25
- Paid Advertisement: Cerca**
by Kayla Le '28
- 24. April Showers, May Flowers To Sleep, Waiting, and Memory**
by Britney Ampadu '28
- 25. Paid Advertisement: Norse Organics**
by Ajax Fu '28
- 26. Indy Sportsbook: Form, Injuries, and Tactical Shifts from Bournemouth to Boston**
by Alejandro Sanchez '26 and Andrew Morrissey '26
- 27. Harvard Men's Soccer Takes Italy and Germany**
by Alexandra Otto '28
- 28. Raindrops**
by Nina Berkman '27 and Fred Klein '28

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As Harvard College's weekly undergraduate newspaper, the *Harvard Independent* provides in-depth, critical coverage of issues and events of interest to the Harvard College community. The *Independent* has no political affiliation, instead offering diverse commentary on news, arts, sports, and student life.

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New Words and New Worlds

Students taking rare language courses are learning more than just vocabulary.

BY CAROLINE STOHRER '28

Willkommen! Bienvenue! **الْبَحْرَم!**
ยินดีต้อนรับ! Ivy Day has recently passed, and many excited high school seniors have just received their Harvard acceptances. Now comes their next hurdle: graduating. An essential component of Harvard College's liberal arts curriculum is the foreign language requirement. While it can be quickly fulfilled by scoring a 5 on any Advanced Placement Language exam, many students choose to take a language course anyway to engage in a different culture or dialect. The College offers over 80 foreign languages and language tutorials from across the globe, such as Scottish Gaelic, Yoruba, and Hittite.

Most undergraduates continue languages they pursued in high school—about 50% of American learners take Spanish in high school, while another 20% take French—yet some at Harvard are choosing to stray from these conventional paths and study lesser-known languages. Offering more than just an academic experience, these niche courses can be vital in preserving heritage and cultures that are either hard to connect with in an increasingly English-dominated world or actively being erased.

Keeping Found Family Strong

Currently enrolled in Swedish at the College, Cyrus Hamlin '27 turned to this foreign language to preserve and strengthen intergenerational bonds.

“Before my dad was born, a Swede named Carl Otto... came to the U.S. and spent a summer with my family,” Hamlin recalled. “Carl Otto and my family grew up and had children of their own, born at about the same time...when my dad was a teenager, he spent a summer in Sweden with Carl's teenage children. The next summer, they spent the summer with my dad.”

Hamlin himself became part of the tradition, visiting Sweden on alternating years just as Carl's family came and visited him. This familial connection deepened when, eventually, Hamlin's cousin married one of Carl's grandchildren and moved to Sweden.

Motivated by these ties, Hamlin has discovered vast resources to grow his understanding of the Swedish language and culture upon arriving in Cambridge. At Harvard, one professor teaches all levels of Swedish, Dr. Agnes Broomé, which ensures a consistent teaching style. The Scandinavian Studies Program also offers ample study abroad opportunities in the summer, such as Swedish immersion at Uppsala University or the Viking Studies course.

From his experience with Swedish, Hamlin has also learned the broader benefits of foreign languages. “It enables you to see the world from a different perspective and become cognizant of our normative English perspective and how that impacts our lives.”

Keeping a Language—and a Culture—Alive

For Tenzin Yiga '27, Tibetan is more than just a class—she sees her speech as inseparable from her identity.

“The Tibetan language is one that is actively under attack by the Chinese government,” Yiga explained. “Since Tibet's occupation in 1959, the once-independent country of Tibet has remained under Chinese control. And with the oppressive policies against the Tibetan people, our language, culture, religion, and very way of life is being destroyed.”

Although her family became even more isolated after immigrating to America, they were nonetheless determined to preserve their culture.

“We had the rule that at home we would only speak in Tibetan, in hopes of preserving and maintaining what I knew, and while I was at school I would speak and learn in English and Spanish,” Yiga said. “To this day, I'm so grateful for the opportunity to learn both languages at school and be able to communicate with others while still retaining my native tongue.”

Although Tibetan is her first language, she rarely gets to speak or practice it outside her family.

Upon arriving on Harvard's campus, Yiga explained how continuing her study of

Tibetan, now in an academic setting, has been vital to her linguistic development. “Having the opportunity to practice Tibetan in an academic setting has been crucial in not only retaining but improving in Tibetan,” she said. At the College, PhD candidate Yunyao Zhai is the Classical Tibetan instructor, Karma Gongde is the Colloquial Tibetan Instructor, and Leonard van der Kuijp is the Professor of Tibetan and Himalayan Studies.

Juggling English, Spanish, and Tibetan in high school first taught Yiga how to manage retaining her Tibetan while acclimating to the United States. Now at Harvard, Yiga continues to learn lessons that help her keep her heritage and spread its meaning: “Preserving the Tibetan language is not just a responsibility but a duty that I bear in order to keep my identity and the rich and vast cultural heritage of Tibet alive.” Ultimately, in a world where minority languages are disappearing, Yiga's decision reflects a broader movement of individuals using education to resist cultural erasure.

Polyglot and Polycultural Pal

Vandie Dumaboc '26 has taken an unconventional approach to language learning. She grew up bilingual, fluent in both Spanish and English, sparking her love of languages. In high school, she taught herself elementary Norwegian. When she arrived at Harvard, she decided to take Advanced Norwegian, along with the full progression of German classes.

Her immersion in multiple languages has both widened her perspective on foreign nations and introduced her to countless friends and connections.

“Because of knowing these ‘obscure’ languages, I have had the warmest interactions with people from cultures that are ‘deemed’ as cold,” Dumaboc said. “Yesterday, I was at an event from the Royal Norwegian Consulate in Boston, and I found myself greeting many people with hugs, being genuinely excited to see them, and even making new acquaintances.”

Beyond the bonds she has made between peers of similar linguistic interests or cultures, Dumaboc has also found that her study of these lesser-known languages has broadened her worldview about different cultures. “I am on the side that believes that language shapes culture more than the other way around,” Dumaboc said.

This connection between language and culture is why languages have given Dumaboc a more nuanced outlook on the world. “You learn that the order in which you think is not the only (or correct) way,” explained Dumaboc. She elaborated with an analogy about grammar: “When I speak Spanish, the noun takes precedence, yet in English we place the adjective first...when I speak German or Irish, I know exactly what role each compound of the sentence plays because of the cases, and so on.”

The Barriers to Language Learning in America

Learning languages not only teaches us something new about other nations and peoples but also binds us together as a community with our greater understanding. Preserving these cross-cultural bonds and knowledge, however, has become more difficult in recent years.

Just last month, President Donald Trump designated English as the official language of the United States. Historically a cultural melting pot, America was one of only five countries that did not have a national language. As a result of this new mandate, many organizations and communities have spoken out against this rebuttal of multilingualism.

Trump’s recent executive order, however, extends beyond

national policy. Rather, it also reflects a trend in American linguistic education, where the United States already lags behind other developed nations in foreign language education. From 2016 to 2021, foreign language enrollment at universities dropped by 16.6%, the steepest decline ever recorded.

All three interviewees also agreed that the U.S. is inferior to other countries in language education. “In many other countries—mainly European—they begin learning English in elementary school, and it becomes fairly developed as they continue it until graduation,” noted Hamlin.

Dumaboc’s sister, meanwhile, who attends an international school, takes classes in multiple languages: “All her classes are in Danish, except for French and English. She almost never speaks Spanish there, and her accent [for] all these languages is close to

native...The key was immersion and early exposition.”

In contrast, American schools often introduce foreign languages too late, often superficially, and fail to provide a consistent curriculum.

Hamlin found learning German difficult in high school

because of the unpredictable teaching quality. “My first year German teacher was amazing, but the second year teacher was really bad and had us just do an online program—she had an emergency certification and didn’t know German.”

Dumaboc believes that the way languages are taught in the U.S. presents a major challenge to learners. In her view, exposure from a young age is crucial for fluency, and U.S. schools do not foster a strong sense of connection to global

cultures. Moreover, she suggested that the grammar-heavy curriculum many American schools take could be improved on: “No human baby learns grammar first; it is simply unnatural to teach it that way.”

Yiga similarly believes that this disadvantage limits Americans’ ability to engage in cross-cultural exchanges. “In most countries outside the U.S., people learn two or even three languages on top of their native language. Americans have a huge disadvantage when it comes to cross-cultural exchange and communication with people from other parts of the world.”

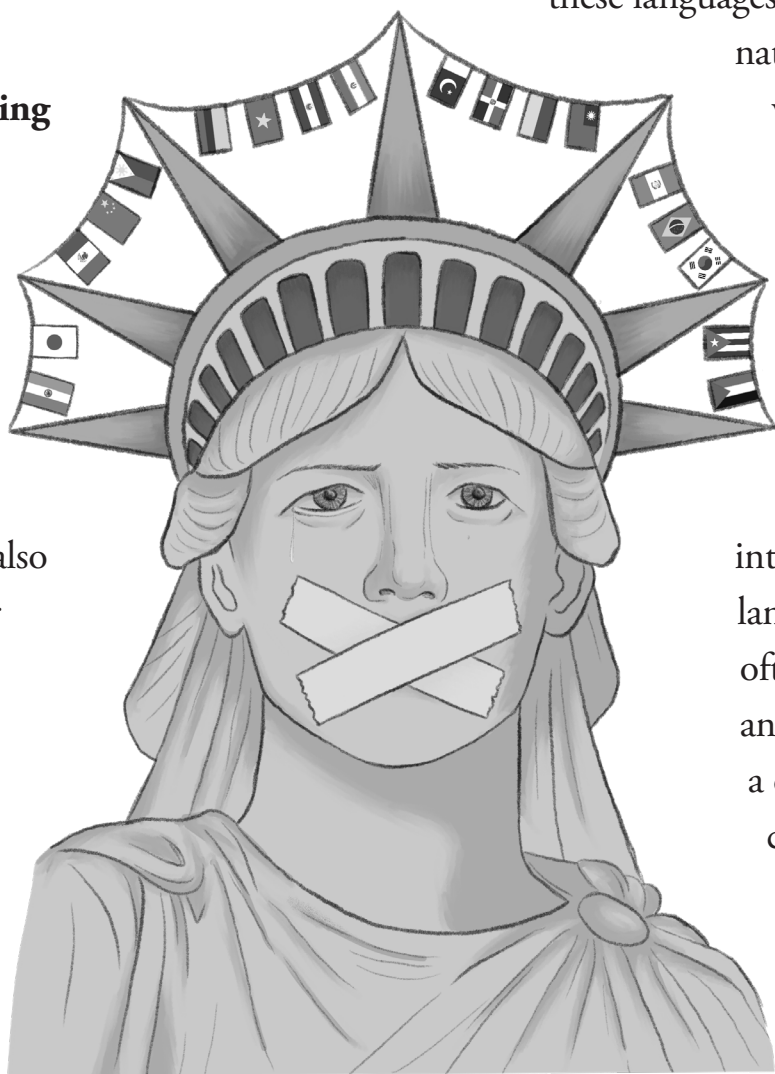
It does not help that English is now the *lingua franca*, or trade language, for much of the globe. “I’ve met U.S. citizens who have moved abroad for over 10 years and haven’t learned the language because ‘English gets them by,’” said Dumaboc.

Despite these challenges, Hamlin, Yiga, and Dumaboc are prime examples of the power of learning a foreign language. One of the most crucial parts of a Harvard, or even any liberal arts, education is the pursuit of learning for learning’s sake—academic transformation, as Dean Khurana calls it. Yiga put it best: “With a more globalized world, now more than ever, it is critical to learn other languages, especially at institutions like Harvard where there are expansive resources and opportunities to do so.”

Language is our most powerful tool for communication. As the world grows more afraid and begins to shut out that which they cannot understand, it is even more important to engage with different ways of life so we do not find ourselves bound to just one. The empathy and compassion that we can gain through learning languages are immeasurable. Every language, no matter how obscure, carries stories worth telling and traditions worth preserving.

**CAROLINE STOHRER ’28
(CAROLINESTOHRER@COLLEGE.
HARVARD.EDU) HOPES MORE
STUDENTS TAKE ADVANTAGE OF
HARVARD’S AMAZING LANGUAGE
OFFERINGS.**

**GRAPHIC BY
NESHAMA RYMAN ’28**



Interrupted Relief: Politics, Reform, and the Uncertain Future of USAID

The consequences of sweeping foreign aid cuts and what may come next for U.S. global leadership.

BY NASHLA TURCIOS '28

As part of a series with Harvard's Center for International Development on global economic growth, the Institute of Politics's John F. Kennedy Jr. Forum led a conversation on March 25 exploring the repercussions of dismantling the U.S. Agency for International Development. The event featured three panelists discussing the future of U.S. foreign aid after the Trump administration's proposed budget cuts and reorganization plans; the stakes involved in such a policy change, and whether restructuring the nation's aid infrastructure is pragmatic or positive for development initiatives abroad.

The panel gathered leading experts in the international economic development sector—many of whom had previously collaborated on foreign aid initiatives in Washington, D.C. Speakers included Nisha Biswal, Deputy CEO of the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation; Paul Foldi, Vice President for International Development Affairs at the Professional Services Council; and Jonathan Nash, President and CEO of Blumont, a global humanitarian assistance nonprofit. CID Executive Director Fatema Z. Sumar moderated the discussion.

Founded in 1961 by President John F. Kennedy '48, USAID was intended to lead American efforts in international relief and development. Since its inception, USAID has invested in global health, economic advancements, and disaster aid—supporting everything from eradicating smallpox in the global south to rebuilding post-conflict societies like Rwanda after the 1994 genocide. Historically, it has enjoyed bipartisan support as an instrument of international stability.

However, over the past eight weeks, USAID has undergone significant funding reductions, leading to the termination of numerous programs worldwide—including food security initiatives in Africa, maternal health services in Southeast Asia, and democracy governance support in Eastern Europe and Latin America. These cuts have halted vaccine delivery, clean water infrastructure, educational development, and women's empowerment initiatives.

This dissolution comes as part of President Donald Trump's intention to drastically scale back foreign aid, which he has characterized as wasteful spending. Trump seeks to redirect these funds towards domestic priorities, such as border security, military spending, and infrastructure.

As of March 29, the cuts are reported to

have eliminated 18,908 U.S. jobs and 166,580 international positions. Ukraine faced the largest absolute fiscal aid reduction of \$1.4 billion. Meanwhile, countries such as Liberia, Afghanistan, and Somalia experienced losses of over 1% of their Gross National Income. In several nations—including Madagascar, El Salvador, and Nepal—over 95% of USAID programming has been eliminated.

When thinking of this drastic policy overhaul, Sumar posed a central question in this geopolitical dilemma from the American perspective: is this a “watershed moment in how we think about international development when the history books write this moment,” or is it merely a temporary disruption—“some changes the dust will settle.”

Nash was unequivocal in his response. Pointing to the upheaval of the past eight weeks, he argued the impact has been both historic and devastating. “I see this as a watershed moment—everything has changed,” he said.

“We could talk about the 10,000 people at USAID who were furloughed, and that's unfortunate, but tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands of people have lost their jobs abroad,” Nash continued. “These were folks who were providing life-saving, life-supporting assistance to a variety of communities, so this has major ripple effects.”

For Biswal, however, the dissolution of USAID could mark the beginning of a new chapter for American international relations and financing—one that rethinks its logistical frameworks and operational structures.

“Yes, it is a moment of acute disruption and perhaps accelerated change, but it is change that we have been seeing for some time, which is that we've known for some time that public sector finance was not keeping pace with global need,” Biswal said. “The poly-crisis environment in which we've been operating—USAID and other development institutions—were not able to bring the resources necessary to address both the crises and kinda the development goals and objectives of countries around the world.”

While acknowledging the disruption caused by recent events, she emphasized that many challenges facing U.S. foreign assistance long predate the current administration.

“On the one hand, it feels like this

is a consequential and watershed moment, but I think it is an acceleration of a journey we've been on for some time,” she continued. “Perhaps we can think about what can come next on this journey that will fill some of the gaps being created right now.”

Amid this accelerated change, however, concerns have emerged about the political motivations driving the agency's dismantling—marking a shift from a longstanding bipartisan

collaboration that American international allies have historically enjoyed. For instance, the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS

Relief, launched by President George W. Bush in 2003 with strong bipartisan backing, has been credited with saving approximately 25 million lives.

“My concern is that we are going to get to an inflection point where yet another aspect of America becomes a partisan issue. Where given the responses we've currently seen on the Hill, will foreign assistance—which apparently now we call international assistance—become a Democratic issue, and the Republicans want to shy away from it?” Foldi said.

However, the event's experts' views on this controversial matter varied. For instance, Biswal emphasized the importance of seeing beyond party lines in foreign policy.

“When we were on the Hill, it was the axiom that politics stops at the water's edge. I don't know that edge exists anymore,” she stated. “On the other hand, maybe we all need to resist the temptation to ascribe it as purely partisan and look for commonalities because many of the initiatives that have formed development assistance were born out of Republican administrations, whether you're talking about PEPFAR, MCC, DFC, etc. So I think we have to try to perhaps stop ourselves from looking at it through a partisan lens.”

Last week, Politico reported on a leaked policy proposal circulating within the Trump administration that outlines a major overhaul of the U.S. international fiscal contributions architecture. The proposal suggested renaming USAID to the U.S. Agency for International Humanitarian Assistance and integrating its core humanitarian work, democracy promotion, and women's empowerment programs within the State Department.



The panelists weighed in on whether the recent changes represent a genuine effort to reduce bureaucracy and improve the efficiency of U.S. foreign aid—or if, given the scale of recent layoffs, meaningful reform remains unlikely and difficult to implement.

Nash highlighted that the ongoing layoffs could hinder the implementation of proposed reforms, undermining efforts to reshape the foreign aid system.

“If you’re trying to be a good change manager, you come up with a proposal, shop it around, get input, and then make the changes,” Nash said. “What’s happened here is they’ve blown up USAID—people have left, so all the expertise that you would need to make this new arrangement work are gone, may or may not come back. We’ve lost trust with a lot of our partners in-country, which will also undercut our ability to implement this new model. The new model has, in my personal view, a lot of merit, a lot of good ideas—some of which have been in the works for years.”

Building on the discussion, Biswal argued that part of the challenge lies in how

foreign assistance programs are marketed to the public. Despite accounting for just 1.2% of the federal budget in fiscal year 2023, foreign aid is often portrayed in media narratives as excessive or wasteful spending—a perception she believes undermines public support of and distorts these programs’ true scope and impact.

“We have been very focused on how we think about and message development to our constituencies around the world, and less so to the individuals who, at the end of the day, are financing that—and that’s the American people and the American taxpayer,” she said.

Panelists agreed that this disconnect between public perception and the realities of foreign aid funding has further complicated efforts to build sustained institutional support for reform.

Ultimately, the Trump administration has emphasized its commitment to its campaign promise of Making America Great Again, with a series of recent executive actions framed as efforts to fulfill that vision. However, it is possible these sweeping cuts to foreign aid could have the opposite effect—

signaling a retreat from global leadership rather than a reassertion of it.

Fatema echoed this point: “I think the world will and is already moving to reshape around a new order that has not one major pole in the tent. If the U.S. is not the long pole in the tent, other poles will emerge.” These remarks highlight a growing concern that if the U.S. retreats from its leadership role in international development, a power vacuum could open the door for other nations to redefine global norms and influence.

Turning to the broader implications of these cuts, the conversation shifted to how they might impact America’s global reputation. “For an administration that wants to make America great again, I think we as Americans should be that long pole in the tent. I don’t think this is going to allow us to do that again because we will be viewed as turning things off needlessly,” Paul concluded.

NASHLA TURCIOS ’28 (NASHLATURCIOS@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) WRITES NEWS FOR THE HARVARD INDEPENDENT.

GRAPHIC BY REEVE SYKES ’26

Canines, Community, and Connection

A look into the significance of PBHA’s Pets as Therapy program.

BY MARCEL RAMOS CASTANEDA ’28

Among the many Phillips Brooks House Association programs, Pets as Therapy stands out as one of the few Harvard initiatives to unite animals and students to support those in need. Through carefully organized visits, undergraduate volunteers and trained therapy dogs head to the Cambridge Rehabilitation and Nursing Center to offer canine companionship and its associated comfort to residents.

According to the initiative’s leadership, the program brings 15 to 20 dedicated volunteers to the center once a week. The volunteers and their therapy dogs typically engage with 10 to 18 residents during each visit.

Thalia Stavropoulos ’28, a current volunteer and rising student co-director, joined Pets as Therapy out of her love for animals and commitment to service. “I joined as soon as I found out there was a program that allowed me to interact with dogs as well as individuals that are part of the elderly community, and play a role in spreading the joy that I know dogs can bring to people,” she said.

Fellow volunteer and incoming co-director Jason Kleehammer ’28 echoed Stavropoulos’s passion for animals and neighborhood impact. “I’ve personally recognized the deep emotional connections that working with animals can foster and how they can connect people on a very profound and life-changing level,” he said.

The interviewees noted that many of the nursing center residents’ demeanors shift positively upon interacting with the

dogs. Studies have shown that interactions with animals can lower stress levels, reduce feelings of loneliness, and even improve cognitive function among elderly populations.

Stavropoulos and Kleehammer’s volunteering experiences affirm such research. From an environment of often quiet isolation to one teeming with canine companions, through Pets as Therapy, these individuals in what can be a lonely environment get to enjoy the unconditional affection dogs provide.

Beyond the impact Pets as Therapy has on the retirement home community members, Stavropoulos also believes the program helps her get off Harvard’s campus, meet new people, and unwind. “Even though in Pets as Therapy we’re technically providing therapy for others, I always tell people that it’s therapy for me, too,” she said.

For Stavropoulos, seeing the same people each week allows her to form deep connections, learning about their life stories, families, and the wealth of knowledge they have to share—stories that might otherwise go unheard.

“These people have so much to share that, honestly, they really don’t get to when they’re kind of stuck at this rehabilitation center,” she said. “[We get] to learn about their life stories, to learn about their families, where they’re from... It really feels like they’re some of our closest friends.”

However, this work is not without its challenges. Language barriers often hinder the volunteering process for students involved with Pets

as Therapy. “[We’re] really trying to get students who speak a variety of languages to join us so that those residents don’t feel isolated,” Stavropoulos explained.

With this goal and others in mind, both Stavropoulos and Kleehammer hope to expand the program. Currently, Pets as Therapy is only partnered with one nursing center, but they believe collaborating with other student groups and organizations could help broaden its reach. One of their key ideas is introducing an on-campus Pets as Therapy program that would meet bimonthly, providing a more accessible space for students and staff to interact with the dogs and connect.

Pets as Therapy fosters connections that they believe are very important. “To look at another human being, and to open up to them, to have genuine conversations, and to connect with them on an emotional level,” he said. “Creating those genuine emotional connections and really beneficial relationships between whether it’s humans or animals is super important, and it can benefit everyone, no matter who you are or what walks of life you come from.” Kleehammer notes.

Stavropoulos emphasized the importance of raising awareness about such programs, urging fellow students to explore the opportunities available through PBHA. “I’d really just urge Harvard students at the beginning of the year to check out the fair at the beginning of the year,” she said. “Research the different PBHA programs, and if one calls to you, just apply. More often than not, we’d love to take you.”

MARCEL RAMOS CASTANEDA ’28 (MRAMOSCASTANEDA@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) IS COMPING THE INDEPENDENT.

GRAPHIC BY KAYLA LE ’28



From Harvard Yard to Heartbreak Hill

Hear from student-runners as they prepare to cross the Boston Marathon finish line.

BY SOPHIE DAUER '27

On April 21, Boston will celebrate its annual marathon, an event characterized by tradition, hard work, and enthusiasm for the runners who boldly take on the 26.2-mile course. With hundreds of volunteers offering refreshments to athletes and thousands of spectators lining the race path with encouraging signs, Marathon Monday is a highlight for many city residents, regardless of whether they are racing or watching.

The qualification process for the 2025 Boston Marathon was especially competitive, with a cutoff time of 6 minutes, 51 seconds—all accepted athletes had to have run a previous marathon at least 6:51 faster than the qualifying standard for their age group. For instance, women between the ages of 18 and 34 had to have run a 3:23:09 race to qualify. With 36,000 applicants, only 24,000 were accepted. The remainder of the 30,000 available spots were reserved for charity runners, sponsor entries, and special invitations.

Considering the high volume of participants, runners begin the marathon in waves, with the first group starting at 6 a.m. The race starts in the suburban town of Hopkinton, 25 miles west of Boston, and ends in Copley Square. Along the way, runners will move along Route 135, confront the notoriously challenging Heartbreak Hill, pass through Fenway Park and Kenmore Square, and ultimately reach the Boston Public Library.

The 30,000 participants in this year's event are quite diverse, with representatives from 118 countries and all 50 states. This expansive group also includes a number of Harvard community members. While balancing busy academic hours with tight training schedules, these student runners have unique thoughts about their months of preparations and personal motivations in anticipation of the big day.

Bridget Kondrat '26 is one of these students. Raised in Cohasset, Massachusetts, Kondrat is accustomed to watching the local race. "I grew up watching the Boston marathon with my whole family, because I'm from the Boston area... It's just the most insane experience. I really think that everybody should go see it at some point in their life," Kondrat said.

Running has also served as a way of connecting Kondrat with her mother, who has run the Boston race numerous times. "I've been running [with my mom] since I was in fourth grade. It was something we always did together," Kondrat stated. "I'm just so inspired by her and everything I've seen in her," she added.

Getting her feet wet during her senior year of high school, Kondrat decided to join her mom in running the Newport Marathon. Given that Kondrat only decided to participate in the Rhode Island race two weeks prior to the event,

the upcoming event reflects her first marathon with what she referred to as "the full-term cycle" of training.

This year, she will run in collaboration with the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, a Boston cancer center that treated her grandmother for 14 years before she passed away in 2022. Considering that Kondrat used to watch the marathon alongside her grandmother, she knew she wanted to use this very fitting chance to fundraise in her memory.

As a student and coxswain on the women's heavyweight rowing team, Kondrat has had a lot to balance as she prepares for this month's race. A typical day for her includes morning practice, an hour-and-a-half-long run, and then afternoon lift. Using an online training plan with the training app Runna, Kondrat is currently on week 16 of a 20-week program. Her week includes three or four 10-mile runs, two speed workout days, and one long run.

With race day quickly approaching, Kondrat reflected on this arduous yet fulfilling process. "It's such a rewarding experience... Being able to push your body and being able to fundraise for something that I really do care about," Kondrat commented.

Similar to Kondrat, Julia Torrey '27 also grew up in the Boston area, participating in the excitement of this annual city event since childhood. "There is nothing like Boston on Marathon Monday... Every time I watch the marathon, I am literally in tears," Torrey said. She has watched the event almost every year and often loses her voice from screaming so loudly.

Torrey has been running cross country since sixth grade and has considered participating in the marathon since she turned 18, the minimum age requirement for entry. This year, she was accepted to run as a member of the Stepping Strong team. The initiative is in commemoration of the life-saving treatment the Brigham and Women's Hospital provided for Gillian Reny, a young girl who was injured during the tragic Boston Marathon bombing in 2013.

Torrey was drawn to the cause not only because of its connection to Boston but also due to her own research with the Brigham and Women's Hospital.

As she continues with her training process, Torrey has found certain tricks to help her stay consistent. "I start really slow and then end pretty fast," Torrey explained, in reference to her 20-mile runs. To do this, she has found it helpful to listen to a relaxing podcast for the first 10 miles and then switch to a super upbeat playlist for the remaining 10. "The first half is just getting there...the second half is the race."

Torrey's biggest piece of advice for others who are considering running a marathon was to "listen to your body." Although it can be hard to

give yourself a break when pushing for a specific goal, Torrey believes that one of the bravest things is to give yourself grace and rest when necessary.

Torrey strongly encourages her classmates to watch the marathon, highlighting the Boston Athletic Association Racing App as a way to keep track of all of the athletes.

Maggie Chiappetta-Uberti '26 will also be running her first marathon in a few weeks. Similar to Kondrat, Chiappetta-Uberti's motivation for participating in the event comes largely from her mother's history of running. Inspired by her mom's high school records, Chiappetta-Uberti decided to join the track team in middle school. Although she initially struggled with the sport, she stuck it out because of her mom. "She really pushed me and motivated me to continue in the sport," Chiappetta-Uberti said. "I found some of my lifelong friends through sport, and it's just...an incredible experience."

When Chiappetta-Uberti was a freshman in high school, her mother was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease. With this difficult news, exercise gained a new layer of importance, as her mother has started walking four miles every morning since her diagnosis. Her mother's resilience and positivity in the face of battling a debilitating disease has served as an inspiration for her. "I don't know how she does it, and she does it with a smile on her face," Chiappetta-Uberti reflected.

Chiappetta-Uberti will be running as part of Team End ALZ alongside 25 other runners selected to represent the Alzheimer's Association. Upon learning she would be running for the organization this year, she was elated to be able to connect with a group of people with similar experiences.

"It's really awesome being able to connect with a room of people who can relate in this way," she noted.

As she nears the end of the demanding training process, she continues to find inspiration from her mother. "She can't choose how her body is changing, but I can choose to get up and run," Chiappetta-Uberti said.

For many of the 2025 Boston Marathon runners, the event serves as more than a race, but as an opportunity for philanthropy and activism. As Chiappetta-Uberti shared: "There's something very sad and beautiful about the fact that everyone is running for a cause that matters to them."

SOPHIE DAUER '27 (SOPHIEDAUER@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) ENCOURAGES EVERYONE TO CHECK OUT THE RACE IN A FEW WEEKS TO CHEER ON CLASSMATES AS THEY REACH THE END OF THIS DEMANDING PERIOD IN PURSUIT OF POWERFUL CAUSES.

GRAPHIC BY SOPHIA RASCOFF '27



Ask Harvard: Recommendations For Your Schedule This Fall

Harvard affiliates share a series of recommended courses before Fall 2025 registration.

BY KALVIN FRANK '28

Most Harvard undergraduates will take 12-20 courses for their chosen concentration, three classes that fulfill general College writing, language, and quantitative reasoning requirements, four general education courses, and three divisional distributions of arts and humanities, social sciences, and science and engineering across their four years on campus. This does not account for the many students pursuing double or joint concentrations or the option to take on a secondary field of study. With Fall 2025 course registration having opened on April 2, the stress of finding a place for these requirements has hit students across Harvard's campus. Undergraduates find themselves overwhelmed by the over 3,700 courses (not including the courses available for cross-registration).

Some will default to filling their four or five slots with easier classes, known as "gems," to lighten the burden of often strenuous undergraduate schedules—a practice Harvard tries to eliminate through grade standardization. Others will seek out courses they feel help build their intellect and character. And most will have to find ones that also fulfill their graduation requirements. However, regardless of which category or combination of such groups a student falls under, almost all look to their peers for advice on which course may fit them best.

Arguably one of Harvard's most popular courses is Psychology 1: "Introduction to Psychological Science," taught by Professor Daniel Gilbert in Fall 2025, and Professor Jason Mitchell in Spring 2026.

"First off, I've got to say, take Psych 1 with Professor Gilbert," Emmanuel Edwards '27 suggested. "[It's] just one of the most engaging classes I've ever been in."

Edwards was not the only student who suggested Psych 1. Gaia Negrini '27 also had positive things to recommend about the course. "I think everybody, low-key, should take that class, because it just gives you an idea and an insight into people's brains that is useful for everyday life," said Negrini.

Negrini, a Psychology and Math concentrator, also recommended Math 25: Theoretical Linear Algebra and Real Analysis (I and II) as a good introductory course to the math department. "If you're interested in math...[choose] Math 25. I loved it. It was a great community," added Negrini.

Edwards also recommended General Education 1046: "Evolving

Morality." "I'm a full-fledged Christian, so some of the points that were touted in that class I don't necessarily agree with, but it is just a super fascinating class," he said. "Just to hear a pretty complex analysis of how morality can arrive from what they're trying to frame is a completely secular perspective."

For Prish Sheth '28, Computer Science 182: "Artificial Intelligence" was one of the highlights of his first fall at Harvard. "[I recommend this class] for freshmen in CS who want to take an advanced CS class without taking 124 because of the large time-consuming nature of [CS 124]," commented Sheth. "I think the teaching staff is wonderful. They do a lot and genuinely want the best for their students."

Stella Maymin '28 shared her praise for English

CNFR. Creative Nonfiction: Workshop. "You do a writing sample, we have three

writing projects, and then we do workshops," Maymin shared. "You read five people's pieces before class, and then workshop them in class." After taking this class, Maymin has found a passion in the Creative Writing department. "It's my first creative writing class here. I want to take more."

Beyond the College, Harvard students have the unique opportunity to cross-register for classes at the University's graduate schools and partner schools, like Brown, Tufts, and MIT. Ferial Terras '26 and Mitja Bof '26 highly recommend taking advantage of such expanded offerings outside the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. "There's a lot of stuff that doesn't get taught at the College, but you would benefit a lot from taking [graduate courses]," Bof said.

According to the FAS website, Harvard College students are allowed to take an unlimited number of cross-registered courses, which can contribute to concentration and general college credits. However, such course grades are not included in GPA calculations unless a student receives a failing grade or petitions the course to be included. Regardless of this process, Terras likewise believes instruction outside the College is worthwhile.

"There can be so many things that are super relevant to the things you want to learn about that aren't necessarily offered in a very rigid academic [structure]," said Terras, who is taking a class at the Harvard Kennedy

School. "There's always a value to just lurking on my.harvard and finding stuff that's really connected to what you want to learn the most."

Fellow students aren't the only valuable perspective when seeking out classes. After hearing reflections from students and professors during her tenure as a proctor at the College and research associate at the Harvard Business School, Catherine Huang HGSE '22 has gathered her own course recommendations. In Huang's experience, General Education 1033: "Conflict Resolution in a Divided World," taught by Professor Daniel Shapiro, has been a favorite among students. However, the class hasn't been taught since 2022, as Shapiro is currently on sabbatical. Huang hasn't only heard about this course from students; "I got to TF for it!" said Huang.

SEARCH COURSES



Because of her and others' fantastic experience with the class, Huang suggested Gen-Ed 1033 to all students. She further shares that undergraduates should "keep an eye out" if it is offered again in Fall 2025. "It was the top-rated class in the Q-Score for 10 years in a row...and literally, people will say, it changes their lives," Huang continued.

Outside of advice from peers, students may struggle to decide what to take from Harvard's expansive course offerings. The College likewise provides helpful resources from the standard my.harvard course search syllabus explorer, like Q-reports, the Peer Advising Fellow (PAF) system, and first-year and concentration advising programs. There is plenty available for getting more personal advice on enrolling in future courses.

With thousands of options, all undergraduates curating a perfect schedule can be overwhelming. However, as students plan for their next semester, many recommend stepping outside one's academic comfort zone—the best experiences could come from the unexpected.

KALVIN FRANK '28 (KFRANK@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) WILL PROBABLY REGISTER FOR CLASSES ON THE LAST POSSIBLE DAY.

GRAPHIC BY MIRANDA CHAO HWANG '28

FORUM

Daylight Craving Time

Should we keep cranking the clocks an hour backward every winter?

BY ISHAAN TEWARI '28

If you polled college students, most would claim that their favorite time of year arrives during spring break, the winter holidays, or the last few weeks of school. For me, it's the day that daylight saving time begins.

Daylight saving time begins in early March when the clocks jump forward an hour and ends in early November when they reset. The practice started in World War II as a strategy to conserve energy and has persisted ever since. Daylight saving time pushes summer sunsets later and keeps winter sunrises early.

The night before the clocks spring forward by one hour, I make sure to be tucked into bed by midnight to secure a full nine hours of sleep. After my usual morning routine of stumbling out of bed in search of a matcha latte, I spend this day reveling in the outdoors as much as possible.

With birds chirping overhead, the soft melody from my headphones filling my ears, and the cool, early-March breeze brushing against my skin, I feel truly content.

Having lived in the Boston area since I was eight, I've endured ten winters with sunsets before 4:30 p.m. Each time the clocks roll backward and we lose an hour of sunlight, I genuinely feel that my quality of life declines—not by a large amount, but by a measurable one.

During the late months of high school winters, there were days when I boarded the school bus just after sunrise and returned home long after dark. For an entire week, I never saw the sun above the horizon. Through every Boston winter, days felt longer, productivity became challenging to muster, and feelings of sadness lingered for greater periods. It even feels sad to write this down.

For me, the end of daylight saving time signals the start of what I call “daylight craving time.” If you asked around Harvard's campus, you'd be hard-pressed to find anyone who cherishes the hour gained more than I do. Likewise, you'd struggle to find someone more disappointed on the day we lose an hour of afternoon daylight.

And yet, despite my deep disdain for what I consider an unnecessary and utterly

contorted practice, I've recently concluded that making daylight saving time permanent might not be the best solution.

The term “daylight saving time” suggests that we somehow save more daylight from March to November. Who could argue that more daylight is a bad thing? Now that the sun sets after 7:00 p.m., students can enjoy precious daylight after classes. This means more picnics in Harvard Yard, trips to Newbury Street, and, overall, more good vibes.

Spending more time outdoors offers an array of benefits. Increased outdoor activity is associated with greater levels of physical exercise and lower levels of sedentary behavior, both of which reduce the risk of health issues, from diabetes to cancer and heart disease. It also correlates with improved mental well-being.

In 2022, the United States Senate passed the Sunshine Protection Act, aiming to enshrine daylight saving time permanently year-round. While the bill never made it out of committee in the House, it did raise the question: if daylight saving time encourages individuals to spend more time outside, what could be the harm in making it permanent?

Experts caution, however, that there are many hidden risks in making this switch that might not be immediately obvious. Scientists generally agree that shifting the clocks forward year-round would disrupt our circadian rhythms—our internal 24-hour clocks—aligned with the external day-night cycle. While we would gain an extra hour of afternoon sunlight, the long-term effects on sleep could be detrimental.

Even more startling is the potential link between permanent daylight saving time and higher cancer rates among Americans. Although the research is still ongoing, researchers have found that circadian misalignment could increase the risk of various cancers, including breast and lung. Melatonin, a hormone key for regulating sleep and associated with the circadian rhythm, plays a role in fighting tumors and may be impacted by this disruption.

It may come as a surprise that this information isn't more well-known. It certainly is to me. However, Harvard's own Charles Czeisler '74, a Professor of Sleep Medicine at Harvard Medical School and “Gen-Ed 1038: Sleep” instructor, offers a convincing explanation for the

phenomenon in an article in the *Harvard Gazette*.

“We are affected by light in ways we don't think about,” he said. “We want to be able to decide when we do things, when we sleep, when we wake. But we are not as

far removed from nature as we might like to think.”

In fact, we've already attempted to remove ourselves “from nature” before.

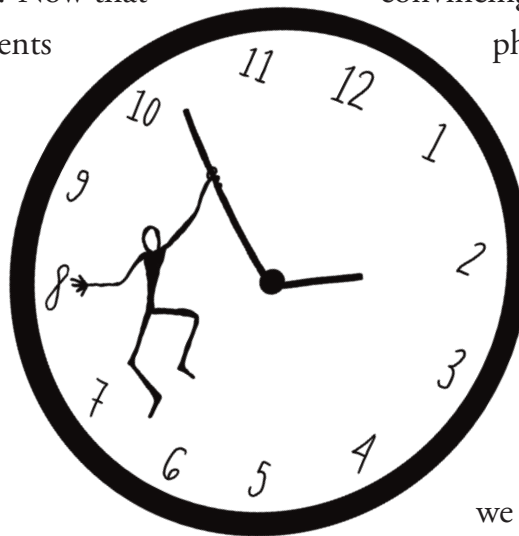
In 1974, the United States implemented year-round daylight saving time to reduce energy costs. However, just 10 months later, support for the policy plummeted from 79% to 42% after Americans experienced the dark mornings of early February. The policy was ultimately repealed, and the intended goal of reducing energy consumption was also not achieved. It was a massive failure.

I relish the extra hour of afternoon sunlight that daylight saving time brings in March. It's no exaggeration to say that it has had a significant positive impact on my life. But as I reflect on it now, I realize that the harms of shifting all the clocks forward—from disruptions to sleep quality and the increased risk of life-threatening diseases—far outweigh the benefits.

In a few months, I'll once again have to do my best to fight my way through “daylight craving time.” For now, I'll savor every extra hour of afternoon sunlight I can get until November.

ISHAAN TEWARI '28 (ITEWARI@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) CAN NOW BE FOUND AT THE BOSTON PUBLIC GARDEN AT 7:00 P.M.

GRAPHIC BY KERRIE ZHU '28



Harvard Makes it Rain

Harvard College expands its financial aid, but does it really make Harvard more accessible?

BY JOCELYNE DELGADO '28

Harvard College just made a game-changing announcement: it's expanding its financial aid. If your family makes \$100,000 or less per year, congratulations—you get to attend Harvard for free! If your family makes \$200,000 or less, do not worry—you still get a piece of the pie, because your tuition will be fully covered. For a lot of students, this means college may be easier to navigate. This expansion marks a significant step towards a more inclusive Harvard, rendering it more affordable to more students than ever before. Sounds amazing, right? Well... yes, but not entirely.

Harvard's 3.2% acceptance rate makes getting in the hard part—until it isn't. What happens after the confetti settles and you step foot on campus? For many low-income students, tuition isn't the only barrier. The real challenge lies in the hidden costs—those that financial aid doesn't cover—that make navigating higher education more complicated. It's about tackling imposter syndrome in lecture halls, competing with classmates who always seem ten steps ahead, figuring out where you belong in a sea of overachievers, and learning how to fit in at a place that relies on networking. Getting in is one thing, but figuring out how to *thrive*? Well, that's a whole different challenge.

Yes, Harvard will cover your classes, dorm, and dining hall meals, but assuming that's all it takes to succeed is naïve. Money can't fix everything. The social and academic gaps between low-income, public-school-educated students and their wealthy, private-school counterparts are real. The latter arrive on campus with an inherent advantage: insider knowledge on how to navigate elite institutions, built-in networking connections, and years of preparation for the academic rigor Harvard demands.

Harvard offers resources to help students succeed, but the reality is that many students don't know they exist or feel too uncomfortable asking for help. For those struggling with imposter syndrome, reaching out can feel like admitting defeat, especially in an environment where self-sufficiency isn't encouraged—but expected.

But beyond academics, there's the social side of Harvard—one that can be just as challenging to navigate. Harvard isn't just about its

rigorous coursework; it's also about finding your place in an elite social ecosystem that wasn't necessarily designed for everyone. Students from wealthy, private school backgrounds often arrive with built-in cultural capital—the unspoken knowledge of how to network, move through elite spaces, and fit in. Not to mention, many private school students come in knowing at least one other person, whether it be a sibling or a friend who had gone to the same preparatory school. Meanwhile, many low-income students often navigate these spaces alone with an underlying fear of exclusion, constantly aware of the invisible barriers that make belonging feel just out of reach.

Even after crossing this social divide, many low-income students never feel completely at ease. The financial barriers remain—sometimes in ways that are harder to see but just as difficult to navigate. Social events, extracurricular clubs, and networking activities often come with hidden social costs that aid doesn't always cover: club dues, professional conference fees, or the price of a dinner out with friends. At the end of the day, economic disparities still shape student life, subtly reinforcing divisions between those who can afford to fully participate and those who can't.

That being said, Harvard's robust financial aid program has been transformative. Doors that were before shut to many students are now finally pried open, and the possibility of attending an elite institution—once unimaginable for some—is now a reality.

Currently, about 55% of Harvard undergraduates receive financial aid and roughly 25% attend on full aid. With the program's recent expansion, even more incoming and current students will receive financial assistance. According to an article in the *Harvard Gazette*, "The expansion will enable approximately 86 percent of U.S. families to qualify for Harvard College's financial aid."

The expansion's main goal is to promote diversity and inclusion. "We know the most talented students come from different socioeconomic

backgrounds and experiences, from every state and around the globe," stated William R. Fitzsimmons '67, Harvard College's Dean of Admissions and Financial Aid, in an interview with the *Gazette*.

However, Taylor Thorne '28 questions the effectiveness of this expansion: "I don't think that this initiative is completely meeting their goal of trying to expand the diversity here [Harvard] and allow more opportunities for

different groups of people, because expanding the financial aid is just going to benefit those people who already had an opportunity and an awareness that they could get into the school in the first place," she stated.

The students this financial aid expansion is *supposed* to target—those from underfunded public schools where overworked counselors (if they even exist) struggle to provide college guidance—are left behind before applications even open up. These are the students who never even looked toward Harvard because no one told them it was within their reach. By the time financial aid even enters the conversation, the real gatekeeping has already occurred. No amount of tuition coverage can undo the years of lost opportunities that keep these students from applying in the first place. The real barriers to higher education aren't just tuition costs; they are years of systemic inequalities in education that determine who even sees Harvard as an *option*.

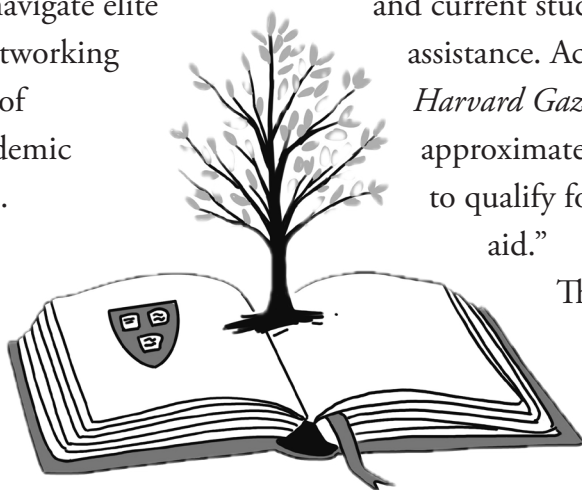
If Harvard truly wants to make its education accessible and ensure that all students thrive, it needs to address more than just affordability—it must consider the student experience as a whole. Programs like the First-Year Retreat and Experience pre-orientation and the Harvard First Generation Program offer mentorship and resources to help first-generation and low-income students navigate the transition to an elite college. These are important steps, but they are not enough.

Harvard must also recognize that social integration is just as critical as academic success because students need to feel a sense of belonging to excel; the two go hand in hand. Yes, Harvard's financial aid expansion was a necessary game-changer for a lot of families and students, but it does not guarantee success once a student sets foot on campus. If Harvard truly wants to level the playing field, it needs to invest in outreach programs for students in disadvantaged high schools and provide more funding for social integration programs.

Until Harvard fully addresses the social, academic, and structural challenges that first-generation and low-income students face, financial aid will remain a band-aid solution to a much deeper systemic problem. This expansion is an important step in the fight for true accessibility—but it cannot be the last.

JOCELYNE DELGADO '28 (JIDELGADO@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) IS VERY HAPPY TO SEE HARVARD'S EFFORTS TOWARDS ACCESSIBILITY.

GRAPHIC BY KELLY TUNG '27



Comment if You Care

Can Instagram comments emerge as social currency?

BY WESSAL BAKRY '28 AND PIPPA LEE '28

“So beautiful OMG.” “OBSESSED WITH YOU!” “Sickkk!”

Scroll through any college student’s Instagram, and you’ll find comment sections overflowing with enthusiastic displays of praise.

But look closer, and you’ll see a microcosm of college social dynamics. From heart emojis to sarcastic one-liners, Instagram comments can reveal not only how users seek validation but also how they perform friendship, community, and status.

The way we comment on each other’s posts also reflects deeper gender dynamics. In our experience, female-identifying students often engage in an unspoken ritual of affirmation, exchanging enthusiastic praise with each other as a form of social bonding. Male-identifying students, on the other hand, tend to rely on humor and casual banter, reinforcing camaraderie without overt sentimentality—and often feeling less pressure to comment on other males. Comments mean more than just two fire emojis; they mirror cultural expectations about self-expression and self-worth.

Instagram comments offer certain clear benefits for users. For some, they serve as a measure of validation and visibility. “I think it’s an overall positive thing. I feel like I can notice a very noticeable uptick in my ego and self-perception after I post, mainly because all the girls that come and flock, are hyping me up in the comments,” said Idalis McZeal ’27.

McZeal also acknowledged the downsides of analyzing comments. “I feel like when one of my posts flops, and I get less comments than usual, then I’m like, ‘Oh, do I look bad in this?’” she explained. But despite these concerns, she affirmed her belief that “the positives outweigh the negatives.”

This reveals how comments—especially the number of comments—bear significant weight for some users. The tension between the desire for validation and the pressures of social comparison underscores a key element of Instagram’s comment culture: the need for external approval often competes with genuine self-expression.

However, this tension between validation and social comparison is only part of the picture. We have noted that the distinct ways men and women engage in the comment section are equally telling. These differences go beyond online behavior; they reflect broader social norms that shape how we interact, both on Instagram and in the real world.

“I always [comment] the same thing. It’s like, ‘Oh my god,’ ‘beautiful,’ ‘amazing,’ ‘perfect,’ ‘girlll, you’re beautiful.’ It’s always the word ‘beautiful,’ and then some expansion on that,” McZeal said.

On the other hand, male Instagram users seem to approach comments differently. “When

I post, all my comments from my best friends are really funny comments,” Keenan Zeidan ’28 explained. “They’re bringing up an inside joke or something funny we said, a month ago, or related to one of the pictures.”

Tim Langenbahn ’28 shared a similar perspective. “To be honest, it’s just basically funny to comment on other people’s posts, like friends’ posts,” he said. “I don’t feel pressure to do so. I just think it’s a nice gesture.” For him, commenting isn’t about fulfilling an expectation, it’s about keeping things casual and lighthearted.

When asked about the difference between how girls and guys interact in the comments, Zeidan observed a distinct dynamic. “The whole purpose is to try to make the girl feel better and feel really good about herself, and just, like, glazing her for an hour,” he said. “Like, always [commenting] ‘prettiest girl in the world.’”

McZeal also pointed out the difference in how guys and girls engage with members of the same gender on Instagram. “I would definitely say that guys don’t feel the need to affirm people on their posts. Maybe because they don’t tie their worth to Instagram comments, and that’s why they don’t see the need to do that for other people, to build them up,” she explained.

For some women, the obligation to compliment extends beyond genuine admiration for the post itself. “Sometimes I’ll see a post, and I don’t really think they look that amazing, but like, ‘oh my god,’ ‘amazing,’ ‘perfect.’ I’m gonna build you up and be a girls-supporting-girls type-person... it’s kind of like a requirement,” she added.

As two female college students writing this article, we’ve noticed that when opening the app and seeing a friend’s post, we instinctively head to the comment section to type some variation of the same compliment. And from what we’ve observed, we’re not alone—this reflex has been socially ingrained in many of us.

This tendency extends beyond close friendships. According to McZeal, girls don’t exclusively reserve compliments for those they are close to. “I feel like girls, even if it’s someone I don’t really know that well, but they look good, I’m like, ‘Oh my god, girl, you ate.’ And I feel like a guy wouldn’t do that,” she said.

In contrast, Langenbahn expressed his discomfort with the idea of commenting on posts of people he doesn’t know well. “I would feel kind of uncomfortable,” he said. “I can’t really explain why, but the thing is, if I know the person, it’s something different. But I don’t really like random people seeing my posts or commenting on my post,

so that’s why I set my account to private.”

This difference in commenting styles also influences our perception of comments. Since many men do not typically engage in the same level of effusive praise as women, their comments—when they do appear—often carry more weight.

A simple fire or heart emoji from a guy can stand out precisely because it’s unexpected. As a result, when a man comments on a woman’s post, it can take on greater significance, often sparking speculation about his intentions.

Unlike the routine outpouring of support among female friends, a guy’s comment might be read as flirtatious or particularly meaningful, simply because it breaks from the norm of male engagement.

This heightened significance of male comments speaks to the broader social dynamics that shape Instagram interactions. Yes, some comments can serve as a source of validation; however, overall, comments reinforce unspoken social hierarchies, dictating who gets attention and how that attention is interpreted. A platform so heavily used such as Instagram shouldn’t value some voices over others.

For some, this pressure—to both give and receive comments—can become overwhelming, transforming social media from a space for genuine connection into a performance. McZeal, who periodically deletes Instagram, also acknowledged her discomfort with the platform—particularly its toxic nature. “My best friend goes to Yale, right? And...for her, it was immediate love. I feel like for me, my love for Harvard came second semester of freshman year, more so, because that’s when I got close to my friends,” she explained. “It felt like shit, because I would always look at her spam, her with her friends having fun, partying, and...I’d be in my room alone. I wasn’t sure if it was actually making me feel less happy about myself, but then I deleted it, and I felt so much more content with my life.”

Ultimately, Instagram comments are more than just fleeting words of praise or humor. They reflect social patterns that shape how individuals navigate friendship, validation, and self-worth. Whether they’re a source of affirmation or frustration, the role of comments is undeniably powerful—particularly in shaping how students experience social media, and, in turn, how they view themselves.

PIPPA LEE '28 (PIPPALEE@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) STRUGGLES TO COME UP WITH UNIQUE COMMENTS. WESSAL BAKRY '28 (WESSALBAKRY@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) COMMENTS “I FEEL UPLIFTED BY THIS” ON EVERY POST.

GRAPHIC BY EL RICHARDS '26



A Broad, Abroad: Lessons from Stress

What drawing in a park taught me about the role of stress in our lives.

BY FRANCES CONNORS '26

Despite my love for Eliot Dining Hall, I spent much of sophomore fall hopping between different Houses' dining halls—not for camaraderie, but for answers to Stat 110 p-sets. Each week, hours of my life disappeared in crowded office hours, hovering around a teaching fellow in hopes of getting a single question answered about probability, Bayes's Theorem, or the Monty Hall problem. I lived in the library the week before the final. Without a doubt, Stat 110 was the greatest academic challenge I have faced in my life.

Thankfully, my pass/fail Paris schedule has proven much calmer. But last week, I felt a familiar pressure—one that rivaled those Stat 110 office hours. This time, though, I wasn't in Quincy's basement, but in a park on a sunny Wednesday morning. And it wasn't an upcoming Information Theory midterm or forty-minute French presentation that elicited this feeling. It was a drawing. A drawing for my studio art class that, while graded, is purely for elective credit.

My grade didn't hinge on how perfectly I captured Place des Vosges, a classic Parisian park, yet I internally felt a duty to something—myself, to the act of drawing, to the park itself—to render it just right. The stress mounted the moment I put pen to paper; without a pencil, there was no room for error. It peaked in the final fifteen minutes of class as I frantically added in the countless bricks of the buildings, my teacher and classmates watching, waiting to wrap up. A sense of relief washed over me as I set my pen down and held the drawing up to the view to admire my work.

That relief mirrored the feeling of walking out of a

three-hour math final. And that shocked me. Why was drawing—something I've always found calming—suddenly causing me such stress? The short answer was perfectionism. But the real question, the more interesting one, was this: why do we see stress as something to avoid? These days we're so focused on reducing stress that we might miss out on the good that comes from it. Researchers have found that certain levels of stress push us to achieve our optimal cognitive and behavioral performance. In these instances, stress makes us alert, and alertness makes us perform at our best. Maybe, the discomfort is worth the increased focus.

Yes, my chest tightened as I tried to perfect the angle of every line descending to the vanishing point in my drawing, but in exchange for a little discomfort, I was laser-focused for two and a half hours. Nothing else existed. I was stressed because I cared, and that care led to a finished product I was proud of. Sitting on that park bench, I gained a newfound respect for artists whose entire livelihoods depend on the precision and beauty of their work. And,

in turn, my fantasy

of dropping everything to become a painter in the French countryside diminished a little bit. I realized that

in any path you

choose, you can't escape challenges and the stress that comes from them. When something matters to you or if you're working towards something, there will always be some amount of stress that can motivate you or prove that you care. And that's not necessarily a bad thing.

While my workload in Paris is lighter than at Harvard, I would by

no means call it a stress-free time. I've swapped problem sets and tests for the challenges of language immersion and living abroad. Harvard tested me, and so has Paris—just in different ways. And from both, I've gained so much.

Thinking back to that Wednesday morning in the park, I remember how intensely I studied the fountain, the trees, and the buildings before me—obsessed with capturing every detail. But because of that, I truly saw my surroundings. Throughout the class, I had those moments of deep appreciation for being in Paris. My stress had manifested itself into both focus and gratitude—two things I'd gladly welcome more of in my life. I might not become a full-time artist, but I still plan to challenge myself creatively and embrace both the struggle and the satisfaction that comes with caring deeply about my work. I look back with different types of pride on my finished problem sets and artworks, but it's hard to put one over the other.

When considering what you want to do in the future, the real question isn't how to avoid stress, but what kind of stress is worth choosing. After graduation, you can take on the challenges of long hours in finance, the rigor of graduate school, or the uncertainty of starting your own business. At the right level, stress is motivation to do better, and it pushes us to achieve our dreams. No path is free of hardship, but stress can be a beautiful thing—a sign that something matters, a sign that you care. The real privilege is not avoiding sacrifice, but deciding what's worth sacrificing for.

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LOTTERY GOES HER WAY.**

GRAPHIC BY ANNA SHAO '28



Not All Passports Are Equal

How passport privilege shapes the Harvard international student experience.

BY FRIDA LÓPEZ '27

Much has been said about the challenges faced by international students at Harvard, but perhaps the most significant obstacle of all is the visa. The visa, along with the restrictions it carries, can be a significant burden on its holder. However, the difficulty of the process varies greatly depending on the passport you hold.

A visa is a permit to enter the U.S. In the case of international students, a specific type of visa is needed—an F-1 visa—that allows them to study in the U.S. When it comes to obtaining a visa, the experience is not the same for everyone. For some, it is simply a quick errand, a process that does not take more than a few days. For others, it consists of significant waiting times, long commutes, and the uncertainty of approval, rendering the process difficult and stressful.

This was the case of Abdullah Shahid Sial '27, an international student from Pakistan. He had to drive for five hours to the nearest U.S. consulate after waiting over a month just to secure an appointment for his student visa. While waiting for his interview, Sial observed around 10 people ahead of him whose F-1 visa applications were rejected. “With a Pakistani passport, it is really hard to get a student U.S. visa, you only get it if you get into an Ivy or big brand name school,” Sial said.

Santino Marial '27, an international student from South Sudan, faced similar challenges in his visa application. Because U.S. visas cannot be processed in his home country, he had to travel to Nairobi, Kenya, for his visa appointment. He also mentioned that getting a visa approved is no small feat. “Most people get their visas denied. If you are at the embassy and you see the people’s visas get approved, you see them celebrating. That’s how you know it’s difficult,” he explained.

However, getting your visa approved is just the beginning of the difficulties that come with being an F-1 visa holder. For instance, visa expiration dates vary from passport to passport. As a Mexican passport holder, my visa expires exactly on the graduation date indicated by the Harvard International Office. After that, I would need to leave the country or adjust my status. On the other hand, some of my European friends have visas that remain valid for a year, or even longer, after graduation, allowing them more opportunities, such as taking a gap semester without the need to apply for a new visa.

There are also some extreme cases, like Marial’s situation. As a South Sudanese passport holder, his visa lasts only three months and

allows for just two entries. This means that once his visa is issued, he has only three months to enter the U.S. Once in the U.S., he can only leave and come back one time within those three months. But once that time frame has passed, if he leaves the country, he would need to reapply for a visa to return. According to Marial, reapplying for a visa is more difficult than it seems. This is because not every city has a U.S. consulate and many consulates have long waiting times for appointments.

Additionally, the application fee for a student visa is \$185, which is nonrefundable—even if the visa is denied.

“I don’t have the mobility, I don’t have the freedom to move outside the U.S. because of that,” Marial said. As a result of these restrictions, Marial is forced to carefully plan when he leaves the country, which for him, is only possible during the summer. However, given the current political climate in the United States, even that may no longer be an option.

Staying away from home for so long is hard, especially during winter break. During this time, the campus is empty, and typically only students with financial or visa constraints stay. It can be a difficult time to spend the winter season, which is typically seen as a season to spend with your family, far away from home. It is especially difficult when everyone else around you leaves, the temperatures are below freezing, and the sun doesn’t come out. For students who are completely restricted from returning home because of their visas, college breaks can be an alienating and lonely experience.

With President Trump’s proposal of a travel ban targeting 43 countries, many international students are now hesitant to leave the U.S. This was a concern for Sial as well, who, along with other Harvard international students from Pakistan, is part of the board for the Harvard Pakistan Trek—a peer-led trip to Pakistan during spring break, organized by the Harvard College Pakistani Student Association. Just days before the trip, they received news about the proposed travel ban and spent the days leading right up to departure discussing whether or not to cancel the trip. After much hesitation and stress, they decided to proceed, hoping not to disrupt participants’ spring break plans. Fortunately, they returned without issues, as the travel ban had not yet passed. However, the anxiety surrounding summer travel plans persists.

Marial, however, has already abandoned his summer travel plans. “It’s going to be more difficult for somebody from my country to come in. It’s more risky for me now to leave the U.S. because the current administration can just ban the country and then I would not be able to come back,” he said. He had originally planned to spend his summer in Nairobi, but due to the possibility of the travel bans, he has now decided against it.



In addition to these challenges, international students often face difficulties securing housing during breaks, as Harvard has denied housing in the past. This issue will

be especially problematic during the summer, as housing is expected to be extremely limited. Marial himself was denied summer housing last year. For this summer break, it is critical that Harvard addresses these issues and ensures that all international students who need housing have access to it.

In light of recent U.S. politics, international students are not only contending with the usual obstacles but also with the added uncertainty created by the current presidential administration. This climate of unpredictability only exacerbates their struggles. In response to this, the Harvard International Office sent an email regarding international student concerns. The email read: “The Harvard International Office (HIO) has received requests for advice regarding support for our valued international community” so they decided to organize “an information session...for all Harvard international students and scholars who have concerns.”

When I arrived as a first-year and participated in the First-Year International Program as my pre-orientation, they told me being an international student was “like a fifth class.” They said this to mean that it is an extra responsibility that comes with significant extra work and sometimes emotional burden. Now, almost two years later, I see this as true, but more than that: being an international student can be not only a significant burden—but also a big risk.

FRIDA LÓPEZ '27 (FRIDALOPEZBRAVO@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) IS HOPING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS WILL NOT HAVE TROUBLE GETTING SUMMER HOUSING.

GRAPHIC BY KELLY TUNG '27





Thoughts from New Quincy: Thursday

BY LUKE WAGNER '26

I. You left early, like always. Same time you do every day. The buildings hadn't lit yet. The sky was a pale gray, the kind that can't commit to any particular kind of weather. You hadn't checked the forecast before you left this morning, so you didn't bring gloves.

Your headphones were in before you locked the door—the same shuffled mix. The song was already halfway through, like it had started without you. You felt your fingers tense with pain as you turned the first corner.

The walk to class took twelve minutes. It had been for months. You know the exact number of steps it takes to reach the crosswalk from your room. You've counted them before, though not recently. You put your head down and kept moving forward.

You passed the Harvard Book Store. The windows were dark. Trash bins sat out like they had the night before. A bottle rolled across the sidewalk. The same man with the same dog passed you near the fire hydrant.

The cement near the first intersection from your dorm was cracked in the same places it had been yesterday. Your shoe caught the edge. Just enough to register. You didn't break stride.

You glanced to your left, then looked away. There was a bird, cold and motionless, on its side beneath the bus stop outside Lamont. With averted eyes, you wondered how long it had been there, if it would still be there tomorrow.

The light changed as you crossed. You noticed, but you didn't slow down.

You reached the same building at the same time. The same construction workers stood outside, holding iced coffees. You took out your headphones before walking in and didn't pause the music. You let it keep playing in your pocket, quietly.

The stairs made more sense. The elevator always took too long. You reached the classroom and sat in your usual seat.

Only three classmates are there. No one looks up. You don't expect them to.

II. After class, you left the building without saying anything to anyone. You weren't planning to stop. But when you saw the chalkboard sign on the sidewalk and the smell of ground coffee, you stepped inside without thinking.

The shop was too warm. You pulled your scarf off slowly, like you had time. A couple near the window spoke in low voices, but you couldn't quite make out what they were saying. You try to. You ordered the same thing you always do. No room for cream.

You waited by the register, scrolling. Nothing new. The barista pronounced your name incorrectly, even though it's been in the Bible for a few thousand years. You didn't correct her.

Outside, the light had gone flat. Not dark, just dulled. You took your first sip before the door closed behind you. It tasted burnt. You kept drinking it anyway.

The walk back to your dorm was as familiar as your headaches are—dull, predictable, and slightly nauseating. You passed the same lamppost, the same torn flyer for an event that already happened.

A friend texted you, "How was class?" You didn't answer. You put your phone on silent and slipped it back into your pocket.

When you reached your dorm, your key got stuck in the lock.

Inside, your room was too quiet. You didn't turn on the overhead light. You dropped your bag by the foot of your bed and sat down in your beanbag without taking off your coat.

You finished the coffee too fast. It made your chest feel hollow and your stomach ache.

You looked around at your things: a pile of laundry, a dead plant on the windowsill, the spoon you'd left in your cereal bowl that morning.

You peered out the window. People walked by aimlessly. You crack open the window, move over your beanbag.

You sat there a while. Not tired. Not awake. Just sitting.

You open your laptop and stare at the screen until it asks you for your password.

III. You turned the water on before undressing. The tile under your feet was cold. You let the water run longer than necessary. You told yourself it was to warm the room, even though you don't mind the cold.

You folded your clothes on the closed toilet lid. Pants on top of a sweatshirt. Underwear on top of your shirt. Same way you've done it your whole life, with no rhyme or reason.

You stepped into the shower slowly. The water wasn't hot enough, and then all of a sudden, it was too hot. You didn't adjust it. You told yourself it would even out. It didn't.

There was shampoo left in the bottle, but not enough to fill your palm. You used it anyway. It didn't lather. You washed your hair twice. The second time wasn't any better.

You scrubbed harder than usual. Behind your ears. The inside of your elbows. The bottoms of your feet. You imagined the bird, folded into itself on the concrete. You imagined the sound it didn't make.

You stood under the stream with your eyes closed. The water hit the back of your neck, then your spine, then the back of your knees. It pooled at your feet before sliding down the drain. You listened to it go.

You pressed your forehead to the wall. It felt cooler than the rest of the room. The image of the bird was still there, behind your eyelids now. You tried to blink it out. It was just a bird. Scrub the memory away.

It's stuck, though.

You stayed like that for a while. Long enough to forget what time it was. Long enough to feel embarrassed, standing there with nothing to say to yourself.

The music from your phone echoed in the corner of the room, muffled and directionless. Something ambient. You couldn't remember pressing play.

There was nothing urgent waiting for you when you got out. No meetings. No people. Just the soft sound of the pipes settling.

You dried off slowly. You sat on the

edge of the tub in your towel, legs crossed like you were waiting for someone to knock.

You don't feel clean. You don't feel dirty.

IV.

You left your room without really deciding to. You hadn't eaten. You hadn't finished your reading.

You told yourself the library would help, that the act of going somewhere would mean something.

Outside, the sky was still the color of dishwater. The kind of day that never quite becomes anything.

You walked slowly. Not out of fatigue. Just no real reason to rush.

At the crosswalk, there were no cars. Still, you stopped. You waited for the signal because it felt wrong not to.

A bus passed behind you. You felt the air shift around your coat but didn't turn.

Someone stepped up next to you and crossed. You still waited. You weren't sure why.

Across the street, a second-floor curtain twitched. You looked up at it for too long. You wondered if someone was watching. You wondered how often they left that room.

A child passed on a scooter, sobbing without restraint. Not loud, just constant. He didn't care who heard him. You admired that, in a way. The sound followed you for half a block.

As you crossed the street, you checked your phone. No new texts. Three unread emails. You didn't open them.

The light changed again at the next intersection. This time, you crossed right away.

You passed a shop window and caught your reflection. You looked like someone on their way to do something important. You weren't. You just looked the part.

You reached the library, sitting next to a seat near an outlet. You opened your laptop and stared at the screen without typing.

You told yourself you would focus this time. No distractions. No Netflix. Just work.

It felt like you'd been staring for hours. Tabs opened. Tabs closed. You couldn't remember what you were looking for.

V.

You poured cereal into a chipped bowl taken from the dining hall. No milk. You didn't have any.

You sat on your bed, criss-cross-applesauce. You looked up at your window. Lamps flickered, and bodies blurred.

Your phone buzzed. It was a photo of the dog from your mother. She said, "Look who misses you." You stared at it. You typed "Aww" and deleted it. Then "cute." Then nothing. You just loved the image.

The bowl was half empty. Or half full. Either way, you weren't hungry anymore.

The faucet dripped. You counted seven drops before scrolling on your phone again.

There was an email from a professor. A calendar invite you couldn't remember accepting. A coupon for laundry detergent.

You wrote a note on your phone: "Finish social studies readings." Then, you deleted it.

You stand up, wash the bowl, and leave it idly on your desk. You turn off the light and stand there a moment longer, in the dark.

VI.

You opened your laptop without really thinking about it. The show picked up where you left off. Midseason, mid-episode, mid-conversation. Someone was saying something urgent in the kitchen. You couldn't remember their name. You didn't rewind. You just threw your computer on the bed.

You turned the volume down to barely audible, not muted, just quiet enough to forget. The light from the screen flickered across the room. The corners stayed dark.

You picked up a pen from the desk. You turned to a blank page in the notebook, the first one. The light from your computer illuminated the pages just enough. The pages were soft at the edges.

You started to draw—a box, then another. You shaded them in, not neatly. You drew a hand, then hated it. You weren't sure if it looked like a hand or if it just looked tired.

The scene on the screen changed. Now, someone was crying in a parking lot. You checked your phone. No new texts. You hadn't responded to anything in a few hours. You didn't want to scroll up to re-read them.

You tried to write something in your notebook. A single line. Then another. You crossed out the second one. You looked at the first. You couldn't tell if it meant anything or not. You circled one word and

stared at it for a while.

You got up to get water. You didn't drink it. You came back and sat down with the exact same slouch.

The room felt smaller after 10 p.m. Not physically. Just smaller.

The episode ended. Netflix asked if you were still watching. You answered. Started the next episode.

You flipped through the pages of your notebook. Some had lines. A few had fragments you didn't remember writing. One said, "Get new socks." Another, "Respond." You went to the next page.

The pen started to dry out. You looked at your desk and picked up a few POSCA markers. You wanted to draw, you just didn't know what.

Outside, a car door slammed. You didn't look out the window. At night, you could hear even the faintest honk. You were always kept up because of it.

The show kept playing. You left it on.

Eventually, you closed the notebook. You didn't put it away. Just placed it gently on top of a pile of clothes in the corner of your room.

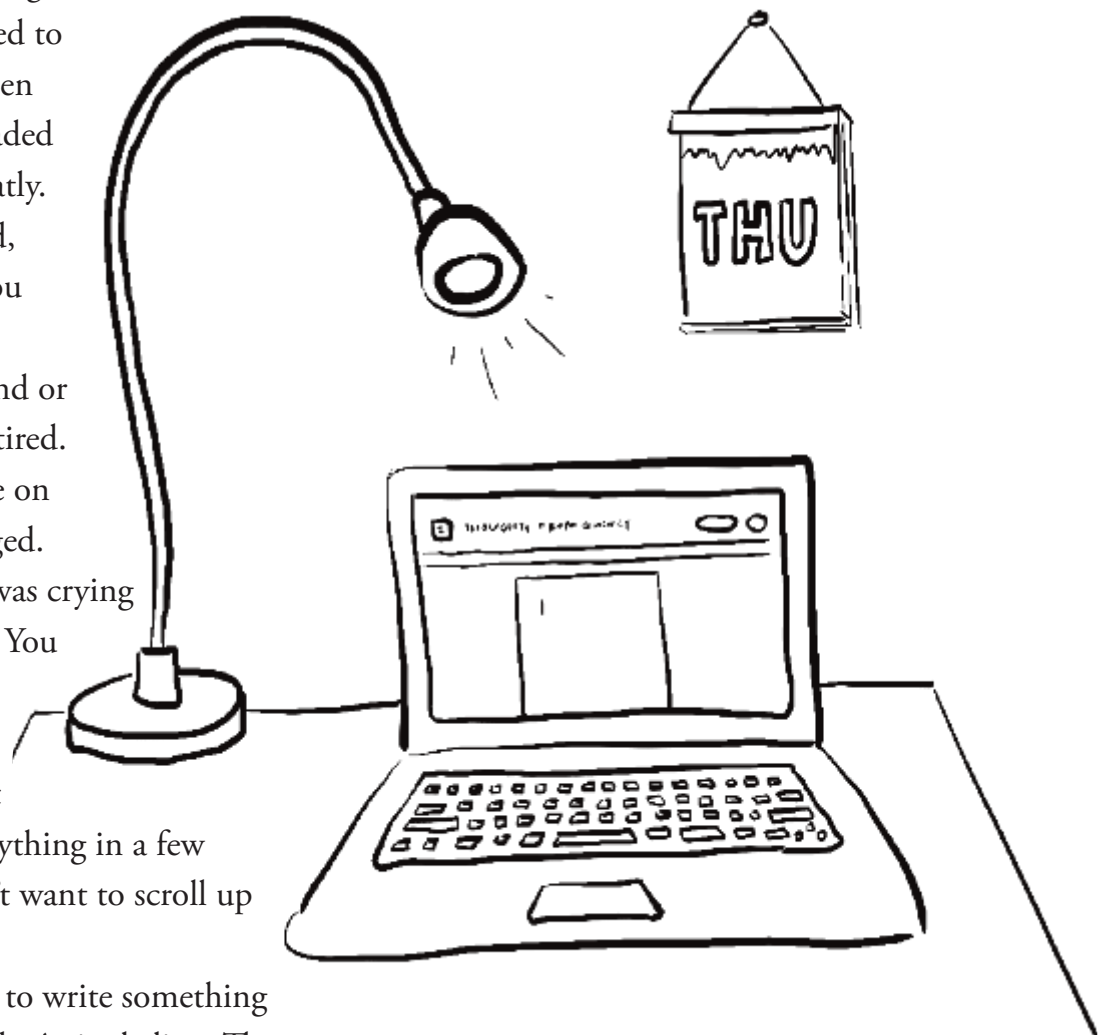
You sat there a little longer, not waiting for anything. Just sitting. The screen lit your face in intervals. The cursor blinked on a blank page.

You didn't type.

You let the silence stretch.

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GRAPHIC BY KERRIE ZHU '28



Exposé of EXposé

An inside look into the Expressions Dance Company spring showcase.

BY SOPHIE DEPAUL '27

On Saturday, March 29, the Harvard hip-hop group Expressions Dance Company put on their spring showcase, EXposé, in Lowell Lecture Hall. The show was an hour long and featured seven distinct and powerful performances.

Founded in 1978, Expressions Dance Company is a student-operated dance group showcasing hip-hop dance.

Their 'Direx,' EDC's current board of directors, manage the company's operations, including ticket sales, semesterly auditions, and leading production efforts for each show.

This group is led by executive director and Editor-in-Chief of the *Harvard Independent* Layla Chaaoui '26. Joining Chaaoui in leadership are Amaya Butler '27, Addason Harris '26, Rachelle Estinvil '27, Ronni Fleming '28, Carly Gelles '27, Amy Morrissey '28, and Della Williams '27.

The show opened with "Food Fight," an energetic routine choreographed by Cruz Allison '28, featuring what emcee and *Independent* Video Director Ryan Irving '27 dubbed "food-fight-themed music." This dance was characterized by bright, colorful lights and excerpts from food-related songs like "Milkshakes" by Kelis and "Sweet Yamz" by Fetty Wap, and ended with "Sticky" by Tyler, the Creator. "Obviously my piece's theme was a little sillier than the others but I think that's kind of what I was going for," Allison explained. "A fun, silly, experience. Plus I really wanted to dance to Sweet Yamz and I had no idea on how to do that seriously."

Next came "Miss Possessive," a four-person dance embodying the boldness and sass of Tate McRae's new song, co-choreographed by Morrissey and Fleming. Following that was "Good Grief," a powerful routine choreographed by Harris, which explored the five stages of grief through five distinct song excerpts.

"This show was a bit new for me because it was my first time creating art I knew would be

displayed for other people," Harris said. "It was a pretty vulnerable feeling, but I am proud of the piece and grateful for the experience."

Following "Good Grief," Williams and Gelles, who also hold the title of EXP co-captains, performed a co-choreographed duet titled "Big Drip Energy" focusing on the "three P's:" power, presence, and play. EXP, the competitive and performance

subset of EDC, takes part in various performances and competitions around the Boston area.

This duo certainly brought the energy—the two danced with an intentionality and vigor that could be felt throughout all of Lowell Lecture Hall. "Being

co-captains with Carly brings me so much joy. I truly look forward to every single rehearsal," Williams commented.

After a brief intermission, nine dancers performed "Confident," choreographed by Alyssa Rubio '28.

"Choreographing for Expressions was absolutely amazing this semester!" Rubio wrote to the *Independent*. "Being in the studio, every Wednesday with those girls really reminded me why I love dance, and why I've devoted so many years of my life to the art of dance."

"[This dance] is all about what it is like to be a #girlboss!" Irving added.

Her dance was followed by "Dir-EXtraL," a short and energetic excerpt featuring the Direx of Expressions, choreographed by Estinvil. Before the final act performed, Chaaoui invited the Direx and choreographers to the stage, expressing gratitude for their dedication and hard work. She also thanked the production team, presenting each member with a rose as a token of appreciation. The showcase culminated with "EXP: Your Loss" choreographed by Williams and Gelles,

featuring the entire EXP team. The dancers donned red jerseys and danced to a mashup of hype songs like "6 Foot 7 Foot" by Lil Wayne and "10 Freaky Girls" by Metro Boomin.

"The two of us work super well together and really inspire each other when it comes to creating and choreographing," Gelles noted, on her experience co-choreographing with Williams. "Being able to see our work come to life with the team has been such a rewarding experience."

Expressions Dance Company welcomes dancers of all levels, from beginners to professionals. The company's semesterly auditions are no-cuts and designed to be a fun, inclusive experience for anyone interested in performing. "For some people who participate in Expressions, it's their first time dancing, and I couldn't have been more happy to bring something that has been so special to me for years to them!" Rubio explained. In addition, the company offers welcome workshops each semester, led by current Expressions members, creating opportunities for all to get involved. So, whether or not you can pull off the stunning moves we saw on stage Saturday, there's always room for enthusiastic dancers to join the fun.

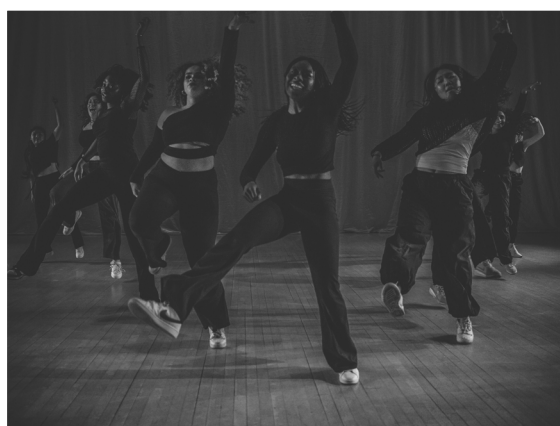
And the EDC community greets newcomers warmly. "I had never danced before last semester, so the enthusiasm and the acceptance of everyone in the show was such a comforter when it came to performing," Allison said.

Expressions Dance Company's spring 2025 show was perfect

for anyone who wanted to see an exciting, dynamic dance show at Harvard. The showcase blended upbeat dances with popular hip-hop songs, featuring eye-catching, high energy moves. The showcase was a great fit for everyone looking for a lively and entertaining performance.

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PHOTOS COURTESY OF JORDAN WASSERBERGER '27



Open 25/8

Arts organization Behind VA Shadows curates an exhibition space in Harvard Square that dissolves boundaries between art, labor, and the public.

BY KAYLA REIFEL '26

Tucked just off Massachusetts Avenue on Linden Street sits a narrow glass art display that was once a Bank of America ATM. Illuminated and on view to passersby around the clock, the display space is aptly named the “25/8 artspace.”

The display space features a rotating exhibition by local artists, with an emphasis on work by artists also employed by museums. The space is operated by an art collective called Behind VA Shadows, an organization dedicated to providing community and opportunities for museum employees to showcase their creative work. Behind VA Shadows initially existed as an online community without a physical space until a partnership with Denise Jillson, the Executive Director of the Harvard Square Business Association; the partnership allowed them to open the 25/8 artspace for exhibitions in Harvard Square in the summer of 2023.

Boston-based artist and museum employee Yolanda He Yang founded Behind VA Shadows in late

2022. At the time, Yang was working as a Visitor Assistant at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston, hence the acronym “VA” in the project’s title. Visitor Assistants are the frontline museum employees who greet patrons and keep watch over the art. Yang stated that she initially formed Behind VA Shadows not out of some grand vision but out of necessity, seeking to maintain community with her fellow VAs at a time when COVID-19 measures made it difficult. Yang shared that masking and social distancing made museum work challenging for frontline employees such as Visitor Assistants.

“All the frontline staff, social workers, were facing a big issue, which [was the] pandemic, and people were not able to, of course, not able to have the masks off, and at the same time, they [had] to provide [the] same quality and same time duration of time in the gallery,” Yang explained. Despite the physical separation between Yang and her colleagues, the pandemic was actually when she began to feel a strong community with her fellow Visitor Assistants.

“Maybe for the first time, I felt a sense of belonging to be part of the VA family, because the nature of the Institution really consumes frontline staff,” Yang said. “I think it is definitely a challenge, but also [an] opportunity for us to bond together even tighter than before.”

When asked where she got the idea to start Behind VA Shadows, Yang replied, “It was not an idea. I think it was [about how] when you really cherish something, you just really want to hold it.” When she immigrated to the United States in 2019, it put the community she had built at the ICA in jeopardy. “I was facing my visa issues back at the time, and I was not able to find other ways that I could hold all the

friends I met in my VA family, except doing something together,” she explained. Thus, Yang began Behind VA Shadows.

Although it began as just an avenue for museum workers to find community and a creative outlet, the project has now expanded into a critical vehicle for visibility; additionally, it has transformed into an innovative project that works to remove institutional barriers between art and the public.

Behind VA Shadows expanded its vision of community, with members now collectively agreeing that the project serves other important purposes, such as complicating the line between labor and art. “I think labor usually is a topic that people don’t really dissect, such as, what kind of people, what kind of groups, would face what kind of labors, and then what are the labors that really are on scene,” Yang said.

Under the current political administration, spotlighting these workers has become critical to Yang. “I think visibility is definitely a big reason or mission that we want to enhance, especially under this very strict and very—it’s not even strict, like, anti-humanity administration,” Yang explained. This community of artists and museum workers has always been largely composed of vulnerable minorities from different parts of society. “How can we protect this community? When I say ‘this community,’ it’s people who really contribute their time and their labor to the art and cultural sector,” Yang said. “This community is overlapped with so many marginalized groups, such as students [or] LGBTQ+ groups.”

The current exhibition is a perfect example of the space thoroughly fulfilling its primary missions of visibility and community. The exhibit, titled “After Flood” by Eben Haines, takes an interest in the effects of climate change on affordable housing. The exhibit showcases various pieces of furniture, all eclectically arranged. A sheer layer of white paint, gradually increasing in size, coats the bottom slivers of each window, intended to represent rising water levels and, in turn, the drastic effects of floods.

Yang noted that the exhibit is highly site-specific. “[The artist] wanted to make it almost monumental in such a linear and narrow space,” Yang said. She then explained that having such a unique public-facing art space in Harvard Square challenges artists to experiment with ways they can use the display area to convey their message.

Behind VA Shadows forces us to question the definition of creative labor. Where most artists cannot survive on an income from their art alone, they flock to arts-adjacent jobs, such as ushers, museum positions like Visitor Assistants, and more. Behind VA Shadows is a unique project that allows creatives to reconcile

their dual identities as both artists and arts workers.

Furthermore, the highly accessible nature of the space allows for art to reach individuals who may not normally be able to view art in an institution like a museum. On Oct. 28, 2024, Behind VA Shadows shared an Instagram post about how an unhoused person sitting by the 25/8 artspace told the artist how much he enjoyed the art on display.

“The cool thing about public art is that it reaches people who might otherwise not go to a museum or gallery space,” the caption read. “It’s been a pleasure to have these more traditionally indoor pieces be displayed in such [a] public manner.”

It is clear that the 25/8 artspace thoroughly achieves its goals of making art more accessible to the public while also helping the identities of traditionally obscured community members and laborers, such as museum workers, to become more visible. By allowing art to exist in a controlled environment yet be constantly on display for the public, the space acts as a beautiful compromise to the perpetual struggle between preservation and accessibility that exists in traditional museum institutions.

Yang shared a highly hopeful outlook for the future of Behind VA Shadows. She cited the initial disembodied, unlocalized nature of the organization as the source of her confidence in the longevity of the project. Yang is confident that Behind VA Shadows will expand beyond and outlive the 25/8 artspace should that particular space no longer be available in the future.

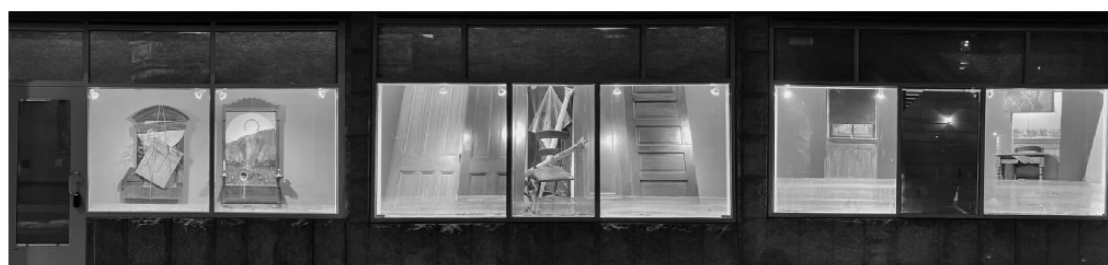
“I think, for the future, the physicality of this space is not defined by any architectural hosts. It’s defined by who [is] in this community, [and] who is doing something in this community, which are all the museum workers...I’m not very worried about when they will lose this space,” Yang said.

Behind VA Shadows maintains an open call for any artists interested in getting involved or showcasing their work. They are also working on their first “Catalog,” an annual publication for which they are currently seeking submissions and collaborators. More information can be found on the Behind VA Shadows website and Instagram.

After Flood, Eben Haines Solo Show curated by Yolanda He Yang at Behind VA Shadows Gallery



Programming Day of *After Flood* with Shelter In Place Gallery



KAYLA REIFEL '26 (KAYLAREIFEL@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) THINKS THE 25/8 ARTSPACE IS BEST CONTEMPLATED ON A LATE-NIGHT WALK HOME WITH A SLICE OF PIZZA IN HAND.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF BEHIND VA SHADOWS AND WENBIN HUANG

Limited Color and Liminal Space

How Nikita Ivaniuta '28 uses art to express memories and uncertainties of a home and warzone, and transposes them to the conflict in Sudan.

BY LUCIE STEFANONI '27

When art emerges from the debris of war, it carries memories, lingering with cold uneasiness. On March 29, Nikita Ivaniuta '28, a first-year student from Ukraine, opened a solo art exhibition at the Signet Society, Harvard's arts and letters society. Through his work, Ivaniuta reflects on the devastation caused by the ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine, examining how the destruction of architecture erases cultural identity. The dimly lit living room of the Signet Society served as a fitting backdrop for the installation, where Ivaniuta's team created an atmosphere that deepened the seriousness of the exhibition's themes of memory and liminal space.

Spectators, including Ivaniuta's friends from Harvard, loved ones from Ukraine, and intrigued art enthusiasts, navigated a narrow path winding around his works. Each artwork, rendered in charcoal and towering eight feet tall, was attached to one side of a four-sided rectangular prism structure. Ivaniuta explained the reasons for this large-scale immersive setup. He intended to evoke an atmosphere of architectural structures similar to Ukraine's current, war-ridden urban landscape.

"All the pieces are structured as if [they are] buildings and architectural sort of installations," he shared in an interview with the *Independent*. The configuration encouraged viewers to trace connections between the related pieces: a progression of scenes that built a cohesive narrative. "It feels like you're in this sort of, not necessarily warzone, but a place of architecture and urban sort of environment," Ivaniuta said, underscoring his intent to recreate the unsettling atmosphere through the exhibition's layout.

Reflecting on how this show differs from previous work he has done, Ivaniuta shared, "It's become a reflection of self for me because a lot of my work essentially reflects ideas of memory, ideas of how liminal space connects to

the idea of memory and how it slows it down."

Ivaniuta's aim to define such themes meant depriving his work of color, hence his use of black and white medium. "I don't want people to be influenced by certain emotions right away and then going, so like seeing a red and then feeling anger, or seeing a blue and feeling some sort of melancholy," Ivaniuta explained.

Whether bringing forth transitional memories from his home country to coming to the States or illustrating a fragile bridge between war zone destruction and glimpses of civilization, Ivaniuta's work grapples with the concept of liminal space. Liminal space—explored in many mediums of art—refers to a threshold or transitional space, often evoking feelings of ambiguity and unease.

His pieces were first drawn from personal memories of living in Ukraine before they shifted to more abstract compositions of the ongoing Civil War in Sudan—a conflict he learned about through a close friend from Sudan. By juxtaposing these experiences, Ivaniuta investigates how memory—or lack thereof—shapes the subjective depiction of a warzone he has not witnessed. He represents



this through empty spaces and erasure layered over objective renderings in his artwork.

"While I can present the sort of objective reality, or as close to it as possible, of Sudan, I can't delve deeper into the ideas of memory and what happened in the past," Ivaniuta explained.

This distinction is evident from some of the artworks in the installations, where pieces representing this specific conflict are more loosely sketched, contrasting with the realistically rendered scenes of the Ukrainian war zone. Intense erasure over previously rendered work defines these empty spaces,

evoking unease. The exhibit provides an intriguing reflection on making authentic and palpable art based on people's lives, whether or not the artist shares their experiences.

When asked how he began having solo art exhibitions, Ivaniuta explained that his journey started with selling his artwork to raise money for charity. As curiosity in his artwork grew with the help of interested buyers who helped him reach out to more prominent names, so did his opportunities. His first solo show took place in high school, where he rented out a space with his school's support.

"They let me use a big auditorium to help with all the art," Ivaniuta recalled. "But then the mayor of the town that I presented my first show [in] invited me to close down the theater and then have a solo art show there as well."

He went on to do three more solo shows before coming to Harvard, one in his hometown, Kyiv, Ukraine; then one in Brussels, Belgium; and a third in London, England.

For such large-scale exhibitions, one might wonder how a Harvard first-year manages to find the space to create and store such massive drawings. Ivaniuta completed all the works for his solo show in the Carpenter Studio, a space designated for Art, Film, and Visual Studies concentrators. He shared that his current introductory AFVS class has been lenient in allowing him to focus on his independent project—this solo show—which he began just a few months ago over winter break.

"It's the most work I've done, I think, probably in my whole career," Ivaniuta reflected, acknowledging the grueling effort that went into completing the large-scale pieces in such a short time. He also expressed gratitude for the invaluable critiques and feedback from his professor, Rin Johnson, his TF, and PhD classmates, which contributed to the fine-tuning of his show.

"The reason my show changed is because of these critiques," he shared. Ivaniuta finds that critiques are essential for his future development and ultimately only improve his work as part of the creation process.

**LUCIE STEFANONI '27
(LUCIESTEFANONI@COLLEGE.HARVARD.
EDU) HOPES IVANIUTA IS IN HER NEXT
AFVS CLASS.**

**PHOTOS COURTESY OF NIKITA
IVANIUTA '28**

Chaos and Comedy: A Review of Arcadia

How the Harvard Radcliffe Dramatic Club brought Tom Stoppard's tale to life on the Agassiz Theatre stage.

BY OLIVIA LUNSETH '28

The Harvard Radcliffe Dramatic Club's recent production of "Arcadia" masterfully intertwined intellect and emotion, showcasing the dedication and talent of the cast and crew in four shows from March 27 to March 30. The events of the play unfolded in Sidley Park, an English estate, shifting between the early 19th century and the present day as characters grappled with love, knowledge, and the passage of time.

On opening night, I took my seat in the front row of Agassiz Theatre, eager for the performance to begin. The stage was arranged with a backdrop of warm yellow walls, flanked by doors on either side. In the middle of the stage stood a wooden table, the play's symbolic centerpiece, that would bridge the two timelines over the next three hours.

The audience first meets 13-year-old Lady Thomasina (Natalie Bernstein '28), a mathematics prodigy, and her 22-year-old tutor, Septimus Hodge (Jack Griffin '25) in the 1809 timeline. The two were seated at the wooden table as Lady Thomasina questioned Septimus about her math assignment, an opening scene that immediately established their intellectual dynamic.

Ben Arthurs '27, the first-time director of "Arcadia," shared that the table, and clutter on it, was one of the "little details" that was so "intentionally thought out." While seemingly just a piece of furniture, the table served as a crucial link between past and present as characters from both timelines find themselves seated around the table.

Yet, as Arthurs emphasized, these carefully placed details are only part of the production's impact. "The most important thing is that [the audience] gets the emotions happening on stage and the relationships between the characters," he told the *Independent*. "We really try to make it as much about the characters and people as much as possible."

The production's focus was clear through the actors' performances. It was especially evident in the opening scene of the 1809 timeline: Ezra Chater (Vander Ritchie '26), the poet-biologist, burst into Thomasina's lesson to confront Septimus for sleeping with his wife, Lady Croom (Micah Anderson '28), who was clearly the authority figure on the estate.

The interaction was packed with humor, with the actors fully embracing their roles through dramatic door slams and exaggerated expressions of outrage. Their energetic performances kept the scene lively, earning more than a few chuckles from the audience as Septimus smoothly charmed Mr. Chater out of his fury and into good spirits.

As the scene from 1809 faded, the audience was thrust into the present with the slam of a door and the chatter of two new voices. From discussions of modern technology and the contemporary attire of Chloë Coverly (Megan Blonigen '28), it was immediately clear that we were no longer in the 19th century.

Both the writing and directing clearly

communicated shifts from one timeline to another. From fading candlelight to the gunshot echoing in the background as the scene changes, the crew put in much effort to make sure that the timing of these details was perfect.

In the present timeline, we learned that the estate is home to the Coverly descendants. They have welcomed two competing researchers into their home: the reserved Hannah Jarvis (Anna Fitzsimmons '25) and the ambitious Bernard Nightingale (James Farr '25). As they chase different leads regarding the scandals that are happening on the estate in the 1809 timeline with witty dialogue, the two researchers set about combing through the letters and books left behind at Sidley Park.

Fitzsimmons's composed delivery reinforced Hannah's no-nonsense demeanor, while Farr infused Bernard with enthusiasm and animated gestures, and rapid-fire delivery to amplify his character's self-assured energy.

As the present-day timeline progressed, we were introduced to Gus Coverly (Ames McNamara '28), the youngest of the modern-day Coverly descendants. Later in the play, McNamara reappeared in the 19th-century timeline as Augustus,

a parallel that deepened the connection between the two eras. "I was kind of the bridge between the two timelines," McNamara said, as the only character that was double-cast in this play.

A key distinction between McNamara's parallel characters is that Gus is mute, while Augustus is not. This presented an unusual challenge for McNamara. "It was a pretty unique acting challenge to play a character that doesn't have any lines, so you have to figure out ways to express the emotions without words," he shared.

As Act Two began, one of the most impressive moments came in Scene Five. Bernard delivered a lecture on the estate's past while Valentine Coverly (former *Harvard Independent* Editor-in-Chief Andrew Spielmann '25), Hannah, Chloë, and Gus all watched. Valentine would eventually be the one to realize that Thomasina had been a genius, having discovered the Second Law of Thermodynamics decades before its official formulation in the 1850s.

"It starts out very funny, and then gets very intense, and I think it's just very well written," Arthurs said. "And it was so much fun to watch the cast do that scene."

I agree with Arthurs—the scene was comical as the characters made snide comments about Bernard's speech. Lighting changes complimented every interruption, taking the focus off of Bernard and putting it on whoever was interjecting. However, later in the scene, the interruptions escalated into a heated argument and the tension quickly overtook the earlier comedic mood.

That scene was just one of many that displayed the cast's ability to master dialogue. Technical, scientific, and mathematical terms were featured in many scenes. "That dialogue is so complicated, and so everything is timed so precisely," Arthurs said.

"The cast did such an amazing job with [the show]. I'm lucky to have them," he added.

As the play neared its end, the audience was able to witness that precise timing Arthurs discussed. In this scene, characters from both timelines are present on stage, but not interacting with each other. They all stay in their own timelines, carrying on with their regular conversations and requiring the actors to speak in between each other's lines.

The discussion being held in the past timeline was Thomasina asking Septimus to waltz with her in honor of her 17th birthday being the next day. This was a chilling line to hear: earlier in the play, Hannah had mentioned that Thomasina died in a fire the night before her 17th birthday.

The final moments of the play were beautiful but carried a weight of dread as the audience knew what would soon happen to the girl waltzing on the stage. While Septimus and Thomasina continued their waltz, blissfully unaware of her tragic fate, the characters in the present-day timeline began a waltz of their own.

Gus approached Hannah, silently extending his hand in invitation. After a moment of hesitation, she accepted, stepping into the dance unfolding around her. As she moved, the past and present intertwined—Hannah waltzing in the modern timeline while, in the 1809 timeline, Thomasina and Septimus danced in parallel, bridging the two eras.

The play's ending powerfully reinforced its themes of love, loss, and the passage of time. "The way the timelines start overlapping is really just brilliant," shared Arthurs. "There is some really great emotional content and some genuinely satisfying twists."

The cast, crew, and production team delivered an outstanding performance of Tom Stoppard's "Arcadia." I don't believe I'm the only one with this opinion—as the cast took their final bow on stage, the crowd in the Agassiz was on its feet, applauding them.

"Ben Arthurs did a fantastic job. This was his directorial debut, and to tackle a play of this length and intensity is a huge challenge, and he absolutely killed it," McNamara shared. "And I think I can say I speak for all the actors when I say we really enjoyed working with him."

OLIVIA LUNSETH '28

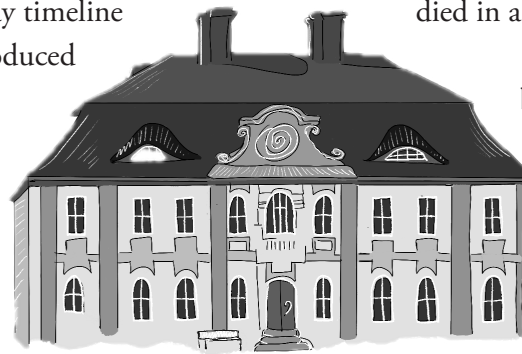
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HARVARD.EDU) WRITES ARTS FOR

THE INDEPENDENT.

GRAPHIC BY CHRISTIE BECKLEY '27

ARTS | 21



Sanders Theatre: On Referentiality

The *Independent's* resident polymath discusses what an essay has taught him about referentiality.

BY JULES SANDERS '28

My favorite essay of all time is “Simone Weil” by Susan Sontag, from her watershed 1966 essay collection “Against Interpretation.” Here’s the first line, for a taste:

“The culture-heroes of our liberal bourgeois civilization are anti-liberal and anti-bourgeois; they are writers who are repetitive, obsessive, and impolite, who impress by force—not simply by their tone of personal authority and by their intellectual ardor, but by the sense of acute personal and intellectual extremity.”

At a Barnes & Noble in Manhasset, N.Y., my brother Adam picked “Against Interpretation” off the shelf, handed it to me, and instructed me to read that first line back to him. Halfway through, he interrupted me and finished it himself from memory. He watched me intently as I paged through the rest of “Simone Weil.” When I put “Against Interpretation” back on the shelf next to “On Photography,” he told me I must not have read the essay closely enough. If I had, he said, I would have had a more noticeable reaction.

If I remember correctly, this happened last summer, or maybe in the spring. Either way, looking back, I situate my only cursory glances at Sontag’s essay somewhere in the seemingly infinite, indivisible time frame between Ivy Day 2024 and the onset of my first fall semester. Those five months, fused by their aimlessness and interminability, could not have clashed more tonally with Sontag’s essay. I would have to wait until freshman spring for “Simone Weil” to gain real salience with regard to my course readings and, to the chagrin of my friends, everyday discussion.

In History & Literature 90ER: “The Gilded Age,” I was presenting to my seminar about

neurasthenia in Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s “The Yellow Wallpaper.” I was suddenly struck by a distant memory of another line of the first paragraph of “Simone Weil.”

“Ours is an age which consciously pursues health, and yet only believes in the reality of sickness.”

Oh, my god, that was so many quotation marks.

I won’t go into why that’s relevant to Gilman’s short story (if you’re interested, find me and inquire directly). A friend of mine came up to me after class and called my point “heady,” and I took that as a compliment. What’s important, however, is that at that moment, Sontag’s essay began to seep into conversation.

That night, I went back and reread the full essay. Twice.

Shortly after, at Annenberg Brain Break, something somebody at my table said caught my attention. I have no recollection of what they said, but minutes later, I was summarizing the first paragraph of “Simone Weil.” The next

day, in a discussion about Augustine’s “Confessions” for Humanities 10b: “A Humanities Colloquium from Homer to Joyce,” I reluctantly (who am I kidding?)

It wasn’t reluctant)

brought up a point from that essay—that every truth “must have a martyr.” I didn’t specify Sontag as the origin—rather, I implicitly attributed that idea to the literary ether.

My friend Elise pointed out to me recently that much of my humor is referential. That’s true. Nothing sparks more joy for me than weaving two or three disparate threads of thought into one succinct joke, except for perhaps the laughter of those around me after a successful delivery. For the next few days, I made overly convoluted associations between the goings-on in my friends’

lives and bits of Sontag’s wisdom, to much admiration and applause.

For whatever reason—maybe I just wanted to be meta about myself—I began to wonder what underlay the humor of the callback. Perhaps referentiality is the hallmark of a humanities education—from elementary school, we’ve been taught to read books not in a vacuum but in dialogue with other texts. Referentiality is a universal skill unconsciously inculcated within us by even our earliest English classes, and the ability to channel it into humor is a natural outgrowth of that education.

“The White Lotus” and “30 Rock,” two shows replete with nods to literature, culture, and even themselves, are as renowned as they are in part due to their referentiality; they make the viewer feel accomplished for understanding callbacks when the viewer hasn’t actually done all that much. No matter the media—literature, film, historical writing—we’re trained to identify and appreciate moments when consumption of other works is necessary to grasp the breadth of whatever point is being made. Put simply, we like it when books make us feel smart.

Yet referentiality is defined by the restriction of its audience; with every allusion, there’s an in-group and an out-group. Perhaps my choice not to mention Sontag in Humanities 10b was the right decision—identifying her by name would only have made my point less accessible. Why name-drop needlessly? Moderation is key—the best references, I’ve learned, clarify rather than obscure; they democratize rather than preclude.

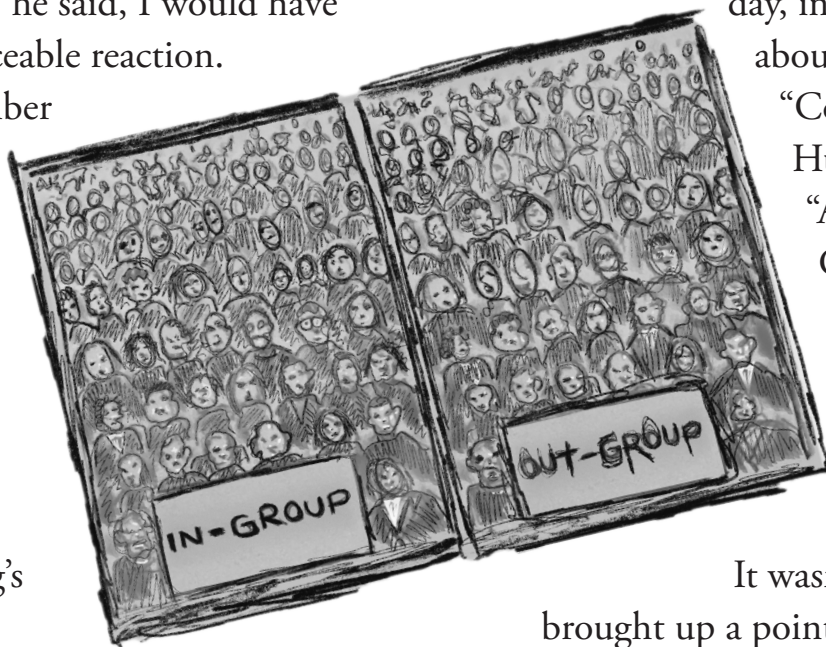
IN: Susan Sontag

OUT: Blood Oaths

Now that’s how you do a reference.

**JULES SANDERS '28
(JULESSANDERS@COLLEGE.
HARVARD.EDU) WISHES THAT
THERE WERE A COURSE OFFERED
AT HARVARD ON THE ESSAYS OF
SUSAN SONTAG.**

GRAPHIC BY AMELIE LIMA '27



Artmaking in Antarctica

A poem inspired by my senior thesis.

BY KYA BROOKS '25

I invite you to traverse the ancient desert; that southern wintry world, wherein I cut my teeth on the icescape, scrambling up rocky moraine, journal and camera in hand.

I sat in the shadow of a glacier; partitioned the ether in my mind's eye, drank up the liquid landscape, inhaled the burning cold; carved myself a petite slice of sky, beset with cosmic jewels.

I waded through the galactic blue; the lyrical darkness of polar night, the continental silence: a lullaby, the stillness of monastic; seeing beyond the horizon white jewels all the way down.

I shadow-bathed in the black void until the arrival of the austral sunrise dismantled the cobalt architecture of night. Gazing into the pale machinery of day, our complements materialize in the blinding white,

some parallel version of ourselves.

My unraveling commenced on the frozen plateau, cons trapped beneath me. Here lies an archive of deep time, a timekeeper of geological ages. The past resonates through this plane, held captive in prehistoric ice cores, awaiting extraction at the behest of scientists. I felt ephemeral amid this madness.

The universe spoke in polyphony, a thousand voices howling in the squall. These aural delights did please the ear. I wanted to overwinter and hear them all. If I could see from all eyes, the sensory overload would shatter me, but this loud quiet might repair my soul.

In a paroxysm, I amassed the artifacts of death: leg and wing bones, pelvises, breastbones, and two skulls; the sun-bleached remains of Adélie penguins and limpet shells discarded on



beaches. I deposited my treasures in a makeshift repository, an artful pile—aiming to bring meaning to bone.

I am the luminary, my cloak stitched in sunshine, come to shed light on this matter: How do we bring art to Antarctica?

KYA BROOKS '25 (KYABROOKS@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) WROTE A SENIOR THESIS TITLED "BUILDING THE ANTARCTIC IMAGINARY: TOWARD A METAPHYSICAL HISTORICISM OF ANTARCTIC ART."

GRAPHIC BY MADISON KRUG '27



April Showers, May Flowers

A reflection on the pudding remains of the semester.

BY BRITNEY AMPADU '28

Drip. Drip. Drip.

After a downpour, remnants of the rain dribble from the trees to the ground, and the earthy smell of petrichor fills the humid air. At last, the rain has paused for a brief moment. The dark skies slowly lighten, rays of sunshine seeping through the breaks in the clouds as glimmers of hope. However, we still sit at the cusp of spring; it is only a matter of time before rainfall begins once more.

Walking through campus, it sometimes seems every path I could potentially take, every turn I attempt to make, is full of puddles and debris and obstacles. I envy those who always have their umbrellas at hand and their rain boots on, ready for whatever may be in the forecast.

Often, I wonder if I am ill-prepared for Cambridge weather, for my clothes are too frequently soaked, and my shoes are drenched in mud. Just when the storms seem to be winding down, lightning strikes, and the intensity doubles. Even so, there is no weather that I'd rather live in.

I speak not of physical rain—though, that, too, will be of high frequency for the next few weeks—but rather the rain of life.

My first year at Harvard has been highly fulfilling thus far, more so than I could have possibly fathomed. But it has also been demanding. There are so many opportunities and experiences that I desire to pursue, but finding a balance between which to focus on and when to do so is not easy. They are raindrops, pelting me without pause, and before I decide whether to wipe or absorb one, twenty more have already struck me. Alongside the constant trickle of recurring obligations—flashcard after flashcard in preparation for exams, projects, problem sets, club

comps, organization work, community service, and even socializing and rest—I frequently feel as if I am drowning in the downpour, desperate for just one gasp of air.

I have many, many more good memories than bad of my time here thus far. I feel at home. Everything I am doing, coursework and extracurriculars alike, is by my own will, to appease my own interests. I am thriving more than ever, and I wouldn't change any of my circumstances given the chance. But I would be lying if I said that I am already completely comfortable in such an environment.

This is the reality of many first years at Harvard. Everything is so new, so different. Sacrifices of time and energy must be repeatedly made. "Figuring things out" is simpler than it sounds because, ahead, visibility is low, and what is coming next is unpredictable. I feel as if I am running a marathon through this monsoon at full speed, on my chosen trajectory and alongside my peers. Yes, I worry about my clothing, but if an unforeseen flood lies ahead, preservation will be the least of my worries, and I will be swept away before I know it.

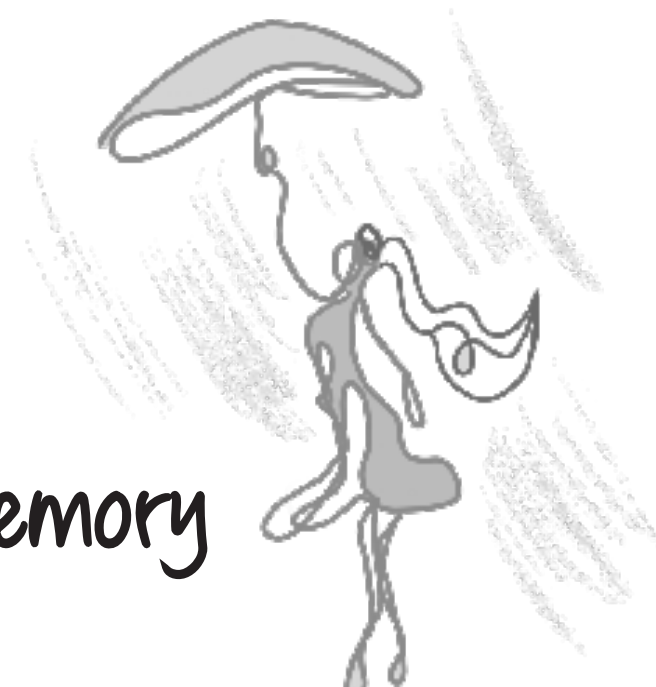
However, we often fail to appreciate how lucky we are to be wearing these clothes in the first place. Soiled garments can be washed and dried, muddied shoes scrubbed back to perfection. The rainy season is naught but a period of nourishment, for May is approaching; soon, flowers will be in full bloom. Soon, the sun will shine brightly and boldly and endlessly. And even now, though not visible to the blind eye, those flowers are seeds awaiting to sprout from the soil, fertilized by the efforts of those who planted them, and the sun shines just as brightly behind those clouds.

I, for one, cannot wait to pick a bouquet of self-planted flowers, tended to for seasons on end. I cannot wait to feel the warmth of the sun on my skin, engulfing me in bliss, in the feeling of success. But for the time being, I must make efforts to appreciate feeling the rain on my skin as well. And it all can be a bit invigorating. Finishing the last sentence in an essay. Making new friends, and meeting unique people left and right. Discovering newfound passions. Going to sleep after a long, long day.

Incessant rain can be tiring, but we should immerse ourselves in the showers and dance through the drops, taking in every single second. We cannot let the clouds of stress and the mud of internal turmoil diminish our positive encounters. For every decision we make, a new seed is planted, and these seeds will only flourish with the passage of time. Before we know it, they will be flowers, priceless demonstrations of our perseverance.

BRITNEY AMPADU '28 (BRITNEYAMPADU@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) NEEDS A MUCH BETTER PAIR OF RAIN BOOTS.

GRAPHIC BY ANGIE LI '28



To Sleep, Waiting, and Memory

Reflecting on three old friends.

BY AJAX FU '28

I still can't bear to wipe away the tears and constellations you painted across my face

All I see in the mirror is the unfinished painting you made of me:

Untitled

Sleep

The best sleep is the kind you sneak away with My illicit affair

She creeps up from behind and surprises me I'm stolen, surrendered

Like a guilty pleasure

I crave her for a few more minutes when she's here But she leaves in a hurry and me in regret

I never know how long she'll be— minutes, hours, a day?

Stay!



Waiting

My unwilling companion at the train, the bus,

in my inbox, or by the phone or by the door

A loud sort of *Anticipation!*

Enveloping like

waves on an abandoned sand castle Pacing back and forth between the halls of dread and eagerness quivering, shaking like windy roads in the twilight hills

Let me go!

Memory

I met Memory at a garage sale. He was a kind-looking old man with glasses and a moustache that curled at different angles on each side. He was moving away, he said, and it seemed he was selling whatever he could.

Everything must go!

Mickey Mouse watch, stopped at 3:11 - \$5

Empty picture frame - \$10

Still life of a set dining table - \$5 (\$2 extra for the frame)

Fake cactus - \$5

8" x 10" used canvas (painted over with white) - \$15

Unused planner - \$3

Padlock (missing key) - \$1

DVD player - \$20

Black and white friendship bracelet - \$3

On an impulse, I bought the Mickey Mouse watch and the planner. There was a table with a box for going-away notes. I ripped out a page from my new planner and scribbled.

Dear Memory,

You promise you'll stay with me forever

But you quietly slip away from my turned back

Little by little, then altogether

AJAX FU '28 (AJAXFU@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) FINDS IT EASY TO SLEEP, HARD TO WAIT, AND IMPOSSIBLE TO REMEMBER.

GRAPHIC BY ANNELISE FISHER '26

Leading Naturopath Shares Breakthrough Arctic Acne Treatment

-Natural acne treatment with results that outperform Accutane

By Kimberleigh Tessendorf - March 25, 2025, Boston

Dermatologists, doctors, and even the biggest skeptics—mothers—were astonished last month when an unknown Norwegian skincare brand, Norse Organics, dramatically reduced acne within days. Participants in recent studies reported astounding results—acne vanished, redness diminished, and even acne scars seemed to lighten.

Initially, experts in the field were skeptical, as Dr. Laurel Ash, a board-certified Naturopathic Physician, exclaimed. However, the high success rate across a range of participants with different types of acne has piqued global interest. One participant reported clearing 10 years of chronic acne in just 6 days. In fact, multiple users observed visible results within days, describing their skin as "the best it's been in years."

Dramatic Results in Less Than 7 Days

The potency of the trio of balms is derived from a unique combination of Arctic herbs and beeswax. Dr. Ash emphasizes the importance of "anti-inflammatory

herbs like lavender, marigold, and calendula." Scientific evidence shows that these herbs replace the skin's natural oils, which are lost during cleansing.

Most acne products are laden with chemicals that strip the skin of its natural oils, damaging the skin barrier—essential for preventing acne recurrence. While most products promise gradual results, 97% of study participants reported significant improvements within the first 7 days of using Norse Organics' Acne and Redness Killer.

Subjects suffering from decades of chronic acne, who had spent thousands of dollars on various medications, including Accutane, were extremely emotional about the changes they saw. "38 year old breast survivor here who is in chemical menopause, who has been struggling with constant breakouts since finishing chemo back in 2020... When I tell you it has already, just two days later, made a huge difference in my skin! My coworkers even took notice of the change today" said Laura Faye Roberts.

Trusted by Over 500,000 Users Worldwide

Developed after 10 years of research, the Norse Organics formula has helped over 500,000 users worldwide transform their skin naturally. "I'm on day 5 with Norse, and the redness is completely gone. The pimples that formed previously are healing, and so are my acne scars. Amazing product," said Betty, an early Norse Organics user.

All Arctic plants are hand-harvested on Norwegian mountainsides and shipped to Philadelphia, where they are mixed and packaged. Since launching in the U.S. in January 2024, Norse Organics has expanded into Europe, Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, and Malaysia.

In the past twelve months alone, this cult favorite has sold out 12 times, leaving acne sufferers, who have read glowing reviews, on waiting lists for what many are calling the future of acne treatment.



SPORTS

Indy Sportsbook: Form, Injuries, and Tactical Shifts from Bournemouth to Boston

A combination of picks to save your weekend until Yardfest.

BY ALEJANDRO SANCHEZ '26 AND ANDREW MORRISSEY '26

Get ready for a weekend of exciting sports action, with picks that will keep you on the edge of your seat. From the Premier League to the NBA, we have a combination of predictions to help you make the most of your weekend and decompress after grueling midterms. Whether you are rooting for Bournemouth's counter-attacking flair, Manchester City's tactical evolution, or Liverpool's dominance at the top of the table, we have the analysis you need to make your picks. Plus, we have a couple of solid NBA bets to round out your weekend sports plan. As the season winds down, now is the time to get your picks in before teams start benching their stars and throwing off your sports betting calculus.

English Premier League

Bournemouth: +120

After a solid performance in the FA CUP Quarter-Finals, Bournemouth is our favorite to beat West Ham this weekend. Despite bad results against Brentford, bottom-table Wolves, and table-leaders Liverpool, they have been in great form the past two months with a phenomenal showing against Nottingham Forest and Newcastle. Their direct play style has been exciting, with Antoine Semenyo and Dango Ouattara quick to counter-attack at every opportunity. Bournemouth is swift to switch its tactics against mid-to-low-table teams. They dominate possession while looking for balls to their overlapping wing-backs, Ola Aina and Neco Williams.

Moreover, West Ham has been struggling to return to form, particularly with the depth of injuries. Over the past year, West Ham has struggled to fill the No. 9 role (center forward) and looked to Niclas Füllkrug, the former Borussia Dortmund striker, to do so. However, Füllkrug's hamstring injury and Michail Antonio's broken leg have forced Tomáš Souček and Lucas Paquetá to play out of position and Jared Bowen and Mohammed Kudus to cover these gaps. The lack of a true nine has negatively impacted West Ham's output as they have only scored two or more goals in three of their last 16 matches. Kudus or Bowen will not break down Bournemouth, and West Ham's five-back will not withstand Bournemouth's

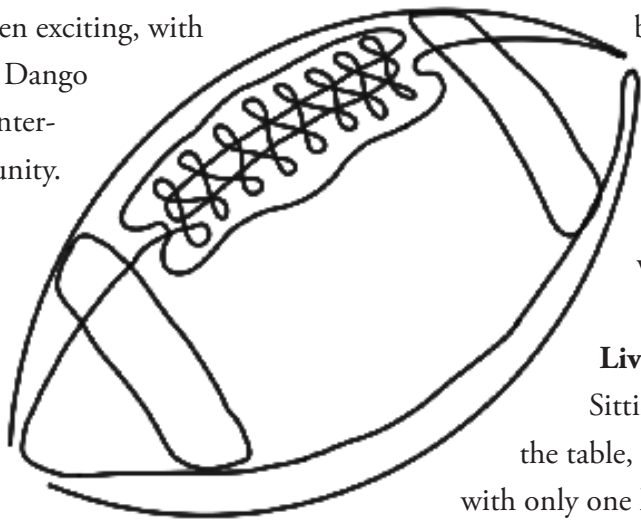
constant pressure in build-up play or counterattack.

Manchester City: +105

The victor is obvious for this weekend's Manchester Derby. Despite City lacking the dominance they have displayed since 2012, their recent win over Bournemouth in the Quarter-Final of the FA Cup was necessary for their return to form. Manchester United has also been severely weakened by the injuries of Amad Diallo, United's second goal and assist leader, and Kobbie Mainoo, who dominates possession in the center of the pitch. Moreover, Omar Marmoush, the recent transfer from Eintracht Frankfurt, has added more variety to City's attacks, relieving the burden on Erling Haaland.

This season, Haaland isn't running past defenders as often as he used to, leading to criticism that he is becoming too easy to defend against. This transition in his movement is Haaland trying to conform to City's possession-dominant playstyle, but his runs in behind are when he is the most threatening. Marmoush has often been making the first deep run to stretch defenders, allowing

Haaland to make the second run and not being marked by both center-backs. This small change has allowed Haaland to return to his preferred playstyle, which Manchester United's back line will be unable to keep up with.



Liverpool: -120

Sitting comfortably at the top of the table, Liverpool is our clear favorite with only one loss and seven draws the entire season. Although Liverpool drew against Fulham at Anfield in December of 2024, Andrew Robertson received a red card in the 17th minute, forcing the Reds to play defensively. Moreover, Liverpool's Mohamed Salah, the league's goal and assist leader, has dominated all season; no team has been able to shut him down. Arne Slot's flexible tactics have decimated the league as Liverpool sets up in a 4-2-3-1 but changes formation depending on the opponent's press, looking to create overloads throughout the pitch to maintain possession.

NBA

Boston Celtics: -250

The last time the Celtics met the Suns, Boston came away with a dominant 132-102 win without the help of their star player, Jayson Tatum. Kristaps Prozingus led the way for Boston with

30 points and eight rebounds. The Celtics shot 22 for 55 from the distance with an overall field goal percentage of 50.6%. With Jayson Tatum back on the court, Phoenix will have an even harder time defending the reigning champions. The Suns had 13 turnovers in their last matchup and shot just 31% from beyond the arc. With Tatum's length and elite defensive skills, Boston should be able to put more pressure on Durant, who led the Suns with 30 points last time, while alleviating stress for Holiday and Brown on the defensive end. That's money in the pocket.

Denver Nuggets: -140

The upcoming Nuggets vs Warriors game will be a good one. The Nuggets lead the season series 2-0 this year: edging out Golden State 119-115 on their home court in early December, and securing a definitive 114-105 victory in the Chase Center on March 17. While the Warriors have been the better defensive team this year, allowing just 110.7 PPG compared to Denver's 116.7, the box scores suggest the Nuggets have found a strategic advantage. Notably, MVP contender Nikola Jokić was not playing the last time these two met on the Warriors' home court. Jokić is averaging a triple-double on the season, at 29.3 points, 12.8 rebounds, and 10.2 assists per game. Without a stellar defensive performance from Draymond Green, this week's game looks more like a beatdown than last time.

This weekend's clashes offer a fascinating look at how form, injuries, and strategy collide to shape outcomes. Whether you are looking to unwind after midterms or gear up for Yardfest, let this slate of bets guide your way to a winning weekend. What ties these games together is not who wins or loses—it is how teams evolve. These storylines remind us that betting smart is not about chasing odds but about reading the game beneath the scoreline. That is what makes a weekend like this not just one for fans but for students of the game.

ALEJANDRO SANCHEZ '26 (ALEJANDROSANCHEZ@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) IS A CITYZEN EAGER TO WATCH UNITED GET DESTROYED. ANDREW MORRISSEY '26 (AJMORRISSEY@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) LOVES WATCHING THE CELTICS IN THEIR PEAK FORM.

GRAPHIC BY MIRANDA CHAO HWANG '28

Harvard Men's Soccer Takes Italy and Germany

The team looks back at a memorable spring break filled with cultural experiences.

BY ALEXANDRA OTTO '28

This year, while many spring breakers traveled to Puerto Rico, Miami, and the Dominican Republic, the Harvard men's soccer team took a 10-day trans-Atlantic excursion to Italy and Germany. The trip took place from March 14 to 23 and included stops at Milan, Como, Düsseldorf, and Dortmund, as well as three matches against Italian and German youth teams.

"I was super excited to find out about the trip because we were going to my home country," said Tim Langenbahn '28, a defender on the team from Germany. For center-back Juan Pablo Fregoso '28, the trip was an entirely new experience: it was his first time traveling to Europe.

The trip started in Milan, where the team watched football club AC Milan take on Como in the San Siro stadium. At a reception, they had the opportunity to connect with Harvard alumni.

"It was very impressive for me to see the Harvard soccer family worldwide, especially in such obscure places like Milan and Dortmund," said defender Alex Castel '28. "It's also great to see how Harvard alums have reached successful levels in their careers that they can help fund a trip like this for us and help us have great experiences like touring the AC Milan facilities and getting VIP access on game day."

For sightseeing, the team took a boat tour of Lake Como, which ended up being one of the highlights for many of the players. "It was super pretty," defender Nayan Das '28 recalls. "And then we saw the city of Como, it was a lot of fun." Another memorable experience for the team was visiting the Duomo di Milan. "The sites we got to see were for sure going to be some highlights of my college experience, even though it's barely my first year in college," Fregoso said.

On the field, Harvard played against AC Milan's U18 team and Como's U19 team.

"It was really interesting playing these youth academies, because playing in the United States your entire life, you get accustomed to a certain level. Playing against these teams, we were shown a new style of playing and a different level," forward Xavier Tanyi '28 said. "The competition was so much higher than what we're used to playing. Playing high competition, your weaknesses become more apparent, and you realize the things you need to work on and realize how better of a team that you possibly can be."

Wrapping up their time in Italy, the team went to see the UEFA Nations League quarter-final between Italy and Germany at the San Siro stadium. "It was super electric," Langenbahn said. "The German fans were amazing. The atmosphere in the stadium was unmatched."

The second leg of the trip took place in Germany, where the team played against Dortmund's youth team. Moreover, the team got the opportunity to train with a Footbonaut, a technology used by Dortmund's youth academy to train the player's reaction time. "This taught us how quick football is and how technical you have to be to perform on such a high level," Langenbahn said.

On their final day in Düsseldorf, the team had a day of exploration, strolling through the streets, window shopping, and trying a variety of local food and drinks.

"One of my own personal takeaways I got from the trip was based off playing these three games, and it helped me realize that I need to improve my technical ability on the ball. Seeing these younger guys and seeing these Academy guys play made me realize that there's still so much of the basics that I need to master before I can really become a better soccer player," Tanyi said.

More than just being beneficial to their gameplay,

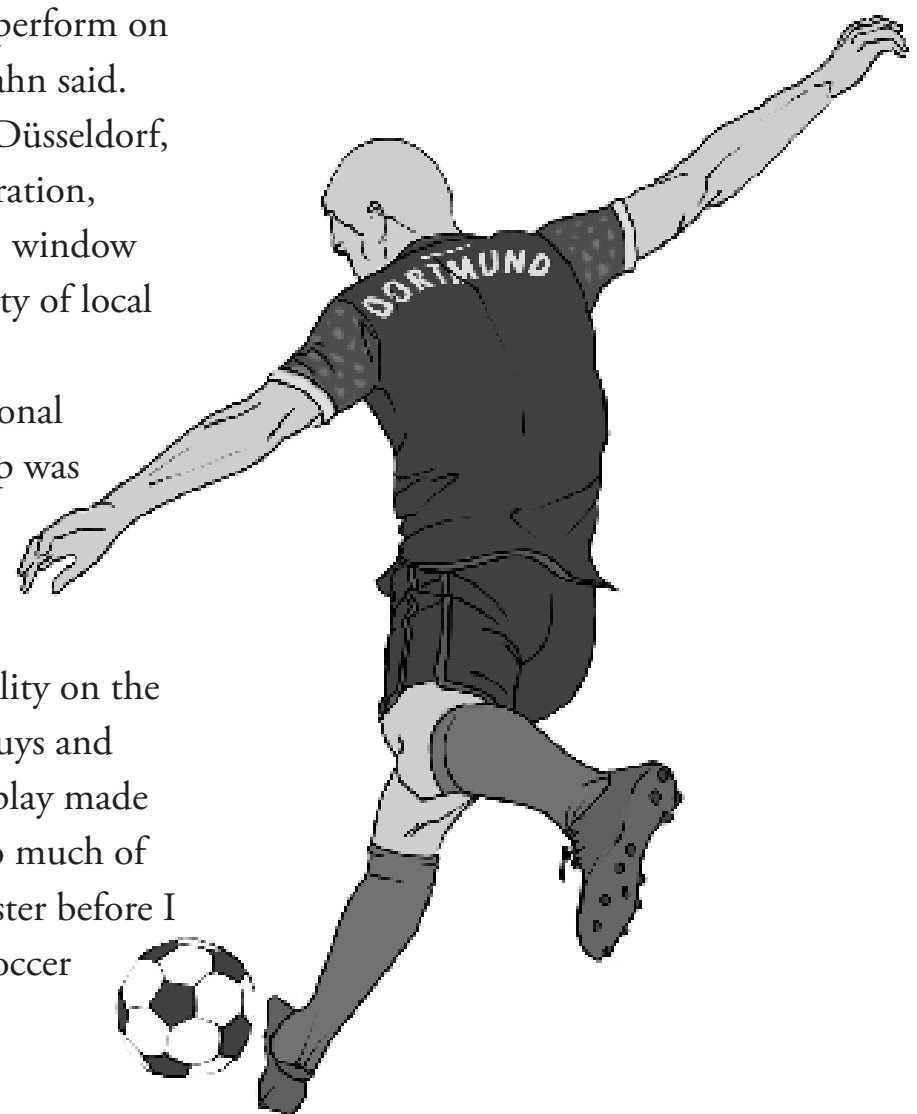
according to Langbahn and Das, the trip brought the team much closer together. Although the first-years had already bonded with the rest of the team, their time spent in Europe especially helped them strengthen their relationships with upperclassmen. "Each and every player was lifting the other up, and even though being physically tired, we all pushed each other to give it our all," Fregoso said.

"I just wanted to thank all the people who helped make this happen, including the staff, the alums, our tour guide that has been a special part of our experience, and obviously the boys as well for making it an amazing trip," Das said.

After a trip full of unique experiences and strengthened connections, the team is well-prepared for their three final games of this season against Bentley, UMass, and Boston College.

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Latic Meriam Layla (Clarson)

OPINIONS OF FORUM PIECES BELONG ONLY TO THE WRITER AND DO NOT REFLECT THE VALUES OF THE INDEPENDENT

Raindrops

By Nina Berkman '27
Design by Clara Lake '27

Across:

- 1. April showers can be a part of
- 6. Tea time
- 7. Laughing
- 8. See eye to eye
- 9. Roller coaster cries

Down (pour):

- 1. Use to sip a summer drink with
- 2. Chicken piece
- 3. "___ Ben Johnson": literary epitaph
- 4. Actress Zellweger
- 5. Parcels (out)



Missing Link

By Fred Klein '28

Each raindrop contains two words—one at the top and one at the bottom. Find the word that fits in the middle, completing two separate two-word phrases: one with the top word and one with the bottom word.

NEWS

MAN

RAIN

KICK

REPORT

STOCK

WEATHER

ANIMAL

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