

Oct. 2, 2025

HARVARD

Vol. LVII Issue 6

INDEPENDENT

The student weekly since 1969



Oktoberfest

CONTENTS

About the *Independent*

3. **Conservatism, Christianity, and Control: Former Vice President Mike Pence at the IOP**
by Layla Chaaoui '26
4. **Somerville: A Tale of Two Mayors**
by Philipos Alebachew '29
5. **Bavaria: Barker-Style**
by Claire Chung '29 and Audrey Wu '29
6. **Inside Trump's Hold on Power: A Conversation with Maggie Haberman**
by Nashla Turcios '28
7. **"Who am I...to Tell You What You Should Put in Your Body?"**
by Julia Bouchut '29 and Abby Li '29
8. **What is it Like to Be a Republican Student at Harvard?**
by Katherine Chung '29
9. **Memories of Oktoberfest**
by Oktoberfest Alcoholic
Anonymous

10. **Better Beer**
by Dang Lin '29
12. **Thoughts from New Quincy: Getting Experimental**
by Luke Wagner '26 and Sir Galahad
14. **The Hunt for Oktoberfest**
by Weiner and Schnitzel
15. **Christina Kim: Threads of Time**
by Mia Wilcox '28
16. **Spooky Stories for the Halloween Season**
by Eden Bridge-Hayes '29
17. **Does Youth Fade When the Sun Goes Down?**
by Noah Basden '29
18. **From Spain to the Stadium: My First American Football Game**
by Laura Cremer '29
19. **Fantasy Roundup: Week 4**
by Tyler Dang '28
20. **Oktoberfest**
by Fred Klein '28 and Cameron Bernier '29

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.

For general or business inquiries, contact president@harvardindependent.com. Address Letters to the Editor, op-eds, or comments regarding content to editorinchief@harvardindependent.com. To subscribe to bi-weekly mailed print issues, email subscriptions@harvardindependent.com.

We belong to no one but ourselves.

MASTHEAD

EXECUTIVE BOARD

Katie Merriam '26, *President*
Layla Chaaoui '26, *Editor-In-Chief*
Luke Wagner '26, *Managing Director*
Jonah Karafiol '26, *Managing Editor*

EDITORIAL BOARD

Sara Kumar '27, *News Editor*
Rania Jones '27, *Forum Editor*
Meena Behringer '27, *Arts Editor*
Kate Oliver '26, *Sports Editor*
Kalvin Frank '28, *Editorial Comp Director*
Caroline Stohrer '28, *Associate News Editor*
Pippa Lee '28, *Associate Forum Editor*
Raina Wang '28, *Associate Arts Editor*
Alejandro Sanchez '26, *Associate Sports Editor*
Jules Sanders '28, *Editor-at-Large*
Mia Wilcox '28, *Columns Editor*
Tyler Dang '28, *Associate Editorial Comp Director*
Fred Klein '28, *Game Designer*
Courtney Hines '28, *Copy Editor*
Megan Legault '28, *Copy Editor*
Nashla Turcios '28, *Copy Editor*

BUSINESS BOARD

Mia Tavares '27, *Business Director*
Keith Hannon '27, *Operations Director*
Tomas Arroyo '27, *Advertising Director*
Ella Bikoff '27, *Marketing Director*
Frances Connors '26, *Programs Director*
Sophia Gonzalez '28, *Business Comp Director*
Anusha Kadiyala '27, *Associate Business Director*
Anya Govil '28, *Associate Operations Director*
Whitney Ford '28, *Associate Advertising Director*
Clara Thiele '28, *Associate Marketing Director*
Breagh Bridge '27, *Associate Programs Director*
Caroline Bae '28, *Community Chair*
Santiago Kelly '26, *Community Chair*

MULTIMEDIA BOARD

Patrick Sliz '27, *Multimedia Director*
Daniel Rosario '27, *Website Director*
Ryan Irving '27, *Video Director*
Natalie Blanchfield '28, *Social Media Director*
Jordan Wasserberger '27, *Photo & Podcast Director*
Josie Whelan '28, *Multimedia Comp Director*
Bautista Martinez '27, *Associate Multimedia Director*
Janelle Souro '28, *Associate Website Director*
Janelle Wang '28, *Associate Video Director*
Wessal Bakry '28, *Associate Social Media Director*
John Sogutlu '28, *Associate Photo & Podcast Director*
Hudson Byrd '28, *Archivist*

DESIGN BOARD

Kayla Le '28, *Design Editor*
Angie Li '28, *Design Editor*
Clara Lake '27, *Covers Editor*
Amelie Lima '27, *Art Director*
Emma Crago '28, *Associate Art Director*
Neshama Ryman '28, *Design Comp Director*
Kerrie Zhu '28, *Design Comp Director*

INDEPENDENT STAFF

Adedoyin Adebayo '26, Abril Rodriguez-Diaz '26, Ilana Feder '26, Annelise Fisher '26, Anthony Goenaga '26, Heidi Heffelfinger '26, Sachi Laumas '26, Andrew Morrissey '26, Kayla Reifel '26, El Richards '26, Alma Russell '26, Gauri Sood '26, Reeve Sykes '26, Gary Zhan '26, Isabella Andrade '27, Christie Beckley '27, Riley Cullinan '27, Sophie Dauer '27, Sophie Depaul '27, Madison Krug '27, Frida Lopez '27, Nicholas McQuilling '27, Matthew Moore '27, Han Nguyen '27, Emily Pallan '27,

Sophia Rascoff '27, Brooklyn Sandridge '27, Lucie Stefanoni '27, Kelly Tung '27, Britney Ampadu '28, Maddie Bailey '28, Sofia Branco '28, Tilly Butterworth '28, Amanda Campos '28, Marcel Ramos Castaneda '28, Miranda Chao Hwang '28, Natalie Cooper '28, Paige Cornelius '28, Cara Cronin '28, David Daniel '28, Jocelyne Delgado '28, James Dyalchand-Ericson '28, Ahmed Eldeeb '28, Ocean Feng '28, Ajax Fu '28, Eliza Glaeser '28, Tyler Hogan '28, Helen Hou '28, Ben Kaufman '28, Megan Legault '28, Olivia Lunseth '28, Alicia Moy '28, Blake O'Donnell '28, Alexandra Otto '28, Sidney Regelbrugge '28, Joshua Rodriguez Ortiz '28, Kyler Rno '28, Antonia Melina Salame '28, Anna Shao '28, Jackie Stjernfeldt '28, Filip Vujanic '28, Ishaan Tewari '28, Joye Wingard '28, Allyson Xu '28, Jeffrey Yeo '28, Keenan Zeidan '28

THE SUSTAINERS

The Sustainers are a group of Independent alumni committed to supporting our mission by funding one month of office rent each year for at least five years.

MARK SHIELDS '70
JIM VASEFF '71
DAVID SMITH '75
RANDY BUCKLIN '82
MARK PELOFSKY '84
JULIE DAM '93
WILL RECKLER '99

Conservatism, Christianity, and Control: Former Vice President Mike Pence at the IOP

Pence and Harvard Kennedy School Professor Archon Fung took the John F. Kennedy Jr. Forum stage on Sept. 30.

BY LAYLA CHAARAOUI '26

"Christian, conservative, Republican—in that order."

On Sept. 30, former Vice President Mike Pence described himself with these words as he took the John F. Kennedy Jr. Forum stage for a conversation entitled "The Future of Conservatism and American Democracy." The discussion was moderated by Professor Archon Fung, Director of the Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation at Harvard Kennedy School.

Pence's career in public service has spanned across various forms of government and elected positions. Before becoming Vice President, Pence represented Indiana's 2nd congressional district in the House of Representatives from 2001-2013 and was the governor of Indiana from 2013-2017. Prior to the Forum event, Pence joined Governor Eric Holcomb, who succeeded Pence as governor of Indiana and currently serves as one of the Institute of Politics' Fall 2025 residential fellows, for an off-the-record study group session.

At the beginning of his panel, Pence reflected on how his Christian faith shapes his political choices, referencing his response to losing the 2020 election and his decision to respect the outcome in the wake of the Capitol insurrection.

"I'll always believe it was by God's grace that I did my duty that day. The Bible says he keeps his oath even when it hurts," Pence explained.

"What was a day of tragedy...became a triumph of freedom, because as the world watched, our Congress reconvened the very same day and completed our work in a peaceful transfer of power."

Pence received sharp criticism from President Donald Trump during the Jan. 6, 2021 Capitol attack for refusing to block certification of the 2020 election results.

As rioters stormed the Capitol, some roamed the halls of Congress chanting "hang Mike Pence." Pence later received the JFK Profile in Courage Award for protecting the will of voters despite personal risk.

Pence then reflected on the differences between the 2020 Trump administration and his observations of the current White House, with a particular focus on trade policy.

"In our administration, we use tariffs and the threat of tariffs to lower trade barriers, to negotiate the opening up of markets," Pence said. "I was speaking to some agricultural leaders yesterday out in the heartland, and our farmers are hurting right now—really hurting—and the bailouts that are being talked about in Washington, D.C. will be a pittance of the losses that family farmers are facing because of the tariffs and restrictions on trade and exports."

According to Pence, Trump's heavy reliance on tariffs is triggering global retaliation, driving up costs for American consumers, and hurting small businesses.

"Our administration in our four years embraced America's role as the leader of the free world... We negotiated the largest trade deals in American history—we expanded trade and exports in the country," he said. "What drew me into my brief but memorable campaign back in '23 was that I saw my old running mate and many in our party departing from those core ideals and principles."

The conversation then turned to concerns about the current state and future of democracy. Fung described his "nightmare scenario" in which Democratic winners in the upcoming 2026 midterm elections are prevented from taking their earned seats in the House due to Republican opposition. He pointed to early warning signs of such democratic erosion already unfolding—redistricting battles, federal requests for voter data, and disputes over the integrity of voting machines and mail-in ballots.

Pence offered reassurance by pointing to the "resilience" and "strength of our institutions," arguing that the right and the left have historically been capable of upholding democracy, even in times of immense unrest. "I have confidence in the days ahead that Republicans and Democrats will hew to those roots into that duty," Pence said.

This harmony brought Pence back to Christianity and a recent essay he co-authored with Heritage Foundation co-founder Ed Feulner: "Rediscovering Order in an Age of Populism." In the essay, Pence calls for preserving America's founding ideals—what he terms the "American experiment"—and urges the conservative movement to reclaim those principles while moving away from the current climate of division and right-wing populism.

"Our founding generation believed we were endowed by our Creator with certain unalienable rights," he said at the Forum. "That is the beginning of being a conservative who seeks to conserve and preserve what's best to this nation."

Fung then opened up the Forum to the audience, with students asking Pence questions about party politics and the global political landscape.

"Where do you think the future of conservatism is going to take us? Do you think that the Republican Party will ever revert back to traditional views? Or do you think this new age of Trump politics is going to continue into 2026, 2028, and beyond?" asked Caitlin Saxinger '29.

"They've changed the agenda—but I don't think they've changed the Republican Party," Pence said. "I have people come up to me all the time and say, 'I agree with your philosophy: fiscal responsibility, limited government, pro-growth, American leadership in the world.' So, I tend to think that anybody who ever considers voting Republican still holds those same common sense, traditional conservative views, and that when the next presidential election comes along, there'll be a fulsome debate."

Looking ahead, Pence voiced concern about the global rise of strongmen, pointing to Chinese President Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin as key threats.

"I think we're living in a very perilous time where America needs to be strong," Pence said, responding to a different student question on what his perspective has changed on during his political career. "We got a shot at a peaceful future. Failing that, I think the second half of the 21st century could look a whole lot more like the first half of the 20th century."



At the same time as the Forum, Trump broke the news to reporters at an Oval Office event that his administration is reaching a \$500 million deal with Harvard, alongside other agreements.

"As a South Korean citizen, a research assistant here at the Kennedy School, and an undergraduate, this does affect me in three ways and so many other people in this room," Hyunsoo Lee '28 said, who asked Pence for his reaction to the breaking news regarding the potential Harvard-Trump deal.

"There can be no tolerance in America for antisemitism on our campuses or in our public squares, and I appreciate the fact that Harvard conceded that there was an issue they had to deal with," Pence replied.

However, Pence also emphasized the importance of preserving higher education institutions.

"We rely on our research universities, whether it's in Indiana or storied institutions like Harvard and others, for an enormously important part of our national life," he said. "My hope is that there can be substantive and principled agreement reached so that we can move forward with the kind of support that will continue to underwrite the vital work of research universities."

Both Pence and Fung stressed how critical conversations like the one at the Forum are—dialogues that cross party lines and bring people together. "In these divided times, it's maybe more obvious to more Americans that we all got to start listening to each other a little bit better," Pence said.

"I really deeply believe that unless we get better at exercising those muscles as a country, as Americans, but perhaps all over the world, that is the first, best, and perhaps most important source of our democratic flourishing," Fung added.

In the end, Pence voiced confidence that, even amid political turmoil and polarization, the American people will ultimately sustain the strength of democracy. He paraphrased former United Kingdom prime minister Winston Churchill: "A careful study of American history shows that after they've exhausted every other possibility, the American people always do the right thing."

LAYLA CHAARAOUI '26 (LAYLACHAARAOUI@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) IS THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF OF THE HARVARD INDEPENDENT.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF MARTHA STEWART



Somerville: A Tale of Two Mayors

Examining two competing visions for a more affordable Boston suburb in the 2025 Somerville elections.

BY PHILIPPOS ALEBACHEW '29

Somerville residents headed to the polls on Sept. 16 to vote in the preliminary elections for mayor, councilor at large, school committee member for Ward Three, and councilor for Ward Seven. The city is divided into seven wards, each represented by its own councilor, in addition to the four councilors elected at large.

Somerville is home to many Harvard and peer university students. The city's next mayor will have a direct hand in shaping key issues such as housing, rent prices, and how universities engage with their host communities.

Somerville's 2025 municipal election cycle began in December 2024 with three mayoral candidates: current Councilors-at-Large Jake Wilson and Willie Burnley Jr., along with incumbent two-term Mayor Katjana Ballantyne. The preliminary narrowed the field to Wilson and Burnley Jr., setting up a general election between two sitting councilors. Somerville conducts municipal elections every two years, with a preliminary round before the general election on Nov. 4.

With 12,431 total ballots cast, Wilson emerged as the frontrunner in the mayoral race with 41.7% of the vote. Burnley Jr. fell just behind Wilson, capturing 33.6% of voters, and Ballantyne received just 23.5%, ending her bid for a third term.

A Focus on Affordable Housing

Somerville's housing market has become exceedingly unaffordable for new families. In 2024, the city's median home price crept above the \$1 million mark for the first time, coinciding with rising rents for multi-bedroom apartments.

The Winter Hill Urban Renewal Plan Civic Advisory Committee, consisting of city councilors and private citizens, convened throughout 2024 to discuss an ongoing housing development at 299 Broadway. The project, which first entered the city's planning pipeline in 2021 under the Somerville Redevelopment Authority, aims to replace the long-abandoned Star Market with a mixed-income residential complex that includes 3,000 feet of shared community space.

"I serve on the Winter Hill Civic Advisory Committee, and I know the tools that we used to unlock that project and make it happen at those levels. That includes a 20-year urban center housing tax financing program, basically a 20-year tax break," Wilson said in an interview with the *Harvard Independent*.

As of summer 2025, the 20-year tax increment agreement for the Winter Hill redevelopment has been secured.

Since becoming a councilor-at-large in 2022, Wilson has co-sponsored 600 pieces of legislation, including one that offers incentives for housing developers to build affordable Accessory Dwelling Units. "I live blocks away from 299 Broadway, the old Star Market," Wilson said. "That entire property is set to be redeveloped here with a groundbreaking mixed-use development."

Unlike Wilson, who emphasizes marginal victories through individual developments, Burnley Jr.—a fellow two-term councilor who has co-sponsored 391 pieces of legislation—argues that solving the housing crisis requires broad institutional change.

"We've already legalized city-wide accessory dwelling units, and

frankly, we have not seen much gain from that," Burnley Jr. said in an interview with the *Independent*. "I would like to create an Office of Social Housing so that we can bring together, interdepartmentally, the folks who know how to acquire more housing and develop more housing and partner with nonprofits, like Just A Start, which is based in Cambridge, so that we can have housing that's about what's considered 30% [Area Median Income: the midpoint of income levels across the city]."

On implementing the new office, Burnley Jr. said he would follow the model of former Mayor Joseph Curtatone, who established the Office of Housing Stability by hiring a single staff member to design a long-term housing strategy and gradually expanding the office's budget.

Burnley Jr.'s own experience with the growing threat of displacement, intensified by a pervasive affordability issue, has inspired his current priorities on tenants' rights.

"Back in 2017, my landlord raised my rent about \$400, and that was something I couldn't afford," Burnley Jr. said. "So, I've tried to do everything I can as a councilor to make life just a little bit easier [and] provide a little bit of relief. The first law I proposed was a tenant's rights law so that renters knew what their rights were, what resources were available. It changed zoning so that we could lower the cost of construction by removing some of the mandates that were required."

Another key issue in the campaign is how the city government should engage with local universities such as Tufts and Harvard. While Harvard is primarily based in Cambridge and Allston, it maintains regular communication with Somerville's government; as the largest landowner in Cambridge, its influence inevitably crosses over.

"I think that the mayor should work as well as they can with the Harvard administration to ensure that all policies are beneficial for both residents and students," Patterson Frazier '29 said to the *Independent*. "I believe that Harvard being in Somerville is an important asset in terms of economic and career progression [for] Somerville residents, but I also recognize that Harvard can have negative impacts."

Although Harvard is not a major landowner in Somerville, it does operate graduate housing there, including Beckwith Circle and parts of the Holden Green complex along the Cambridge-Somerville line. Fewer than half of Harvard's graduate students live in

University-owned apartments, leaving many to rent on the private market—where Somerville has become a popular choice.

"[When] we get the accountability report twice a year from Harvard and from Tufts, I take that opportunity every year to call attention to the fact that we need Tufts to build more dorms on campus," Wilson said. "It is one of the big stressors on our housing market here in Somerville, especially for families, where three- or four-bedroom units often get taken up by college students."

Both candidates have stressed the importance of open dialogue with constituents as a way to show their commitment to addressing residents' concerns.

Wilson's campaign website pledges he will be a mayor who is "transparent, effective, and actively listens to you."

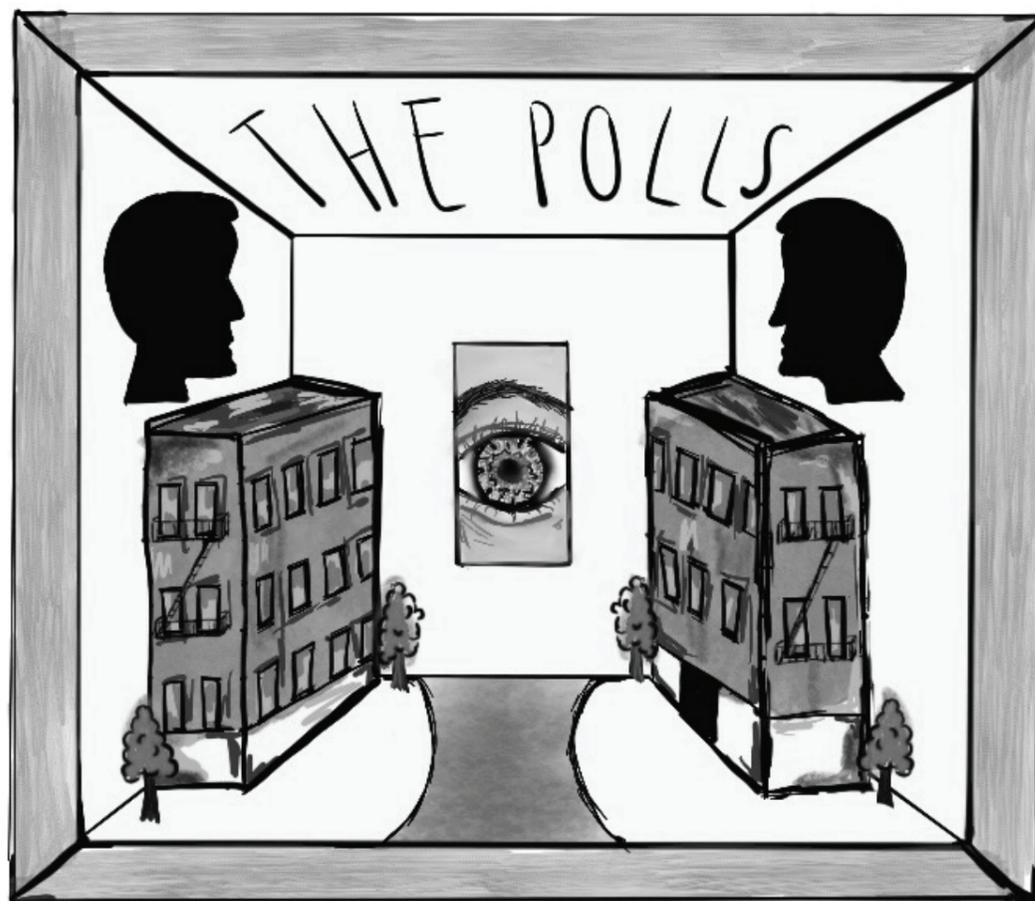
Burnley Jr. also highlighted this aspect of his message.

"Another piece [of the campaign] is just better communication with residents and better transparency. In many of the laws I've passed, I've made sure to include communication aspects so that we're not just saying we're doing better, but that people in our community know where the city is moving," he said. "As mayor, I [will] try to revolutionize the way that we communicate and engage with our constituents."

This emphasis on community engagement helps explain why citizens often view local politics more favorably than national politics. A 2023 Pew Research Study found that 61% of Americans had a favorable view of their local government, while only 22% rated the federal government positively.

"I care about the environment first in politics and the policies that I look for," registered Green Independent Drew Flanders '29 said to the *Independent*. "While [politics] matters greatly on a large scale, on a smaller scale, like for mayoral elections, it really determines a lot of how the town approaches environmental issues...[Somerville] has very strong environmental programs, including a curbside composting program, which I believe is one of the many things that we could do better to aid the environment and better our world as a whole."

Somerville residents who are U.S. citizens and will be at least 18 by Election Day must register to vote by Friday, Oct. 24. Registration can be completed online or by mail.



**PHILIPPOS
ALEBACHEW '29
(PHILIPPOSALEBACHEW@
COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU)
WISHES CAMBRIDGE
CITIZENS COULD
DIRECTLY VOTE FOR
MAYOR.**

**GRAPHIC BY
TRISCHELLE AFIHENE
'27**

Bavaria: Barker-Style

A look into the Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures at Harvard during Oktoberfest season.

BY CLAIRE CHUNG '29 AND AUDREY WU '29

“*zapft* is” echoes out every September as the first beer barrel is tapped at the Schottenhamel Festhalle to open Oktoberfest. Hosted in Munich, Germany, the Oktoberfest dates back to 1810 as a celebration of the nuptials between Crown Prince Ludwig of Bavaria and Princess Therese of Saxe-Hildburghausen. Today, Oktoberfest is a celebration of German and Bavarian culture, attracting tourists from all over the world who want a taste of Germanic food, music, attire, and more.

Around 3,870 miles away from Munich at Harvard, students can immerse themselves in German culture at the Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures through language study and culturally relevant community events.

“Our goal is to provide students with the enriching experience of studying languages, literatures, and cultures of German- and Nordic-speaking Europe across the ages,” the undergraduate page on the department website reads.

The department offers classes in the German language at all levels. To pursue a concentration in German studies, students must take nine courses in the department. This includes both core language requirements and cultural requirements. Offering the Harvard Vienna Berlin Program to earn credits, the department strongly encourages students to study abroad.

With an average class size of five to 15 students, the department offers an intimate learning environment. Germanic Languages and Literatures Department faculty member Professor Daniel Carranza explained the benefits of belonging to such a tight-knit community: “It can be an advantage being a small department, because you have small class sizes that challenge students to speak, but you also have very direct and immediate access to faculty,” he said in an interview with the *Harvard Independent*.

“It makes the kind of intellectual engagement also a bit more intense, because neither students nor faculty can hide in the crowd,” Carranza continued. “It actually creates many spaces where those kinds of more intimate interactions can happen.”

Interested undergraduates have the opportunity to pursue a concentration or a secondary in the department through classes such as German 10 and German 100.

Outside of the classroom, the department provides opportunities for the German language community to connect. One example is Kaffeestunde, a weekly conversation hour open to all German language students. Literally meaning “coffee hour,” Kaffeestunde features community, coffee, and cake in Harvard’s Barker Center.

“It’s a very casual, low-stakes atmosphere for catching up with people practicing German and interacting as human beings, not just as students to teachers,” said Carranza.

Kafeestunde is not the only event that fosters belonging for German-speaking

students and those of German heritage. Weekly Sunday brunches organized by the Harvard Undergraduate Austrian German Association, dinners in Harvard Square planned by German students for other German students, and annual New York trips allow the community to connect over their shared appreciation for German culture and language.

“I’d say our German community is pretty strong. They always organize stuff. We have lots of group chats. I think I know all the German first-years,” Nadjela Wepiwe ’29 from Frankfurt, Germany said in an interview with the *Independent*.

External organizations also aid in the connection between German students across campus. Many of the first-year German students met during the First-Year International Program, a pre-orientation program for freshmen meant to help international students adjust to living in the United States. For these students, FIP helped ease their transition to Harvard and laid the foundation of friendships that carry over into the community’s offerings and activities.

Meanwhile, the Harvard College German Club offers another space for students to cultivate community. The student-run organization hosts dinners in the Square, where students try different restaurants while getting to know their peers. During these dinners, students speak to each other primarily in German, creating an environment to socialize while practicing their German speaking skills.

The cultural exchange provides ample opportunities for connection, from celebrating traditions to clarifying misperceptions.

Fitting for the season, Wepiwe was recently able to address some common misconceptions about the festival. “Oktoberfest is Bavarian culture. It’s a little bit like states. Every region has its own culture. For example, Baden-Württemberg and Bavaria,

they’re really close together. They have a similar culture, while the East has a completely different culture than the West, and Bavaria is in the South.”

She added that the festival’s soundtrack is a type of music called Volksmusik, traditional folk music that can be heard in ski resorts in Austria, Switzerland, or Germany. When she experienced Oktoberfest, she explained that she felt some culture shock. “The music they listen to at Oktoberfest is really Bavarian music. And that is 100% not the music I feel connected to.”

Beyond Oktoberfest, students can look forward to a variety of upcoming events hosted by the department, such as the lecture “The Use and Value of Language Skills in the Workplace” on Oct. 2.

CLAIRE CHUNG '29 (CLAIRECHUNG@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) AND AUDREY WU '29 (AUDREYWU@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) WRITE NEWS FOR THE HARVARD INDEPENDENT.

GRAPHIC BY AMELIE LIMA '27



Inside Trump's Hold on Power: A Conversation with Maggie Haberman

Award-winning journalist Maggie Haberman reflects on power, grievance, and ambition during Donald Trump's 2025 presidential term.

BY NASHLA TURCIOS '28

Harvard's John F. Kennedy Jr. Forum welcomed Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Maggie Haberman in conversation with moderator Setti Warren on Sept. 25. The discussion traced President Donald Trump's path from his early tabloid notoriety to his enduring hold over the Republican Party. Over the course of the evening, Haberman unpacked the blend of ambition, grievance, and appetite for attention that has defined Trump's political trajectory, while also reflecting on what his leadership reveals about the current state of American democracy and the press.

Haberman, a White House correspondent for the New York Times, has covered Trump for decades and authored the #1 bestseller "Confidence Man: The Making of Donald Trump and the Breaking of America." She received the Pulitzer Prize in 2018 for reporting on Russian interference in the 2016 election. Warren, who previously served as mayor of Newton, Massachusetts, now leads Harvard's Institute of Politics and serves as adjunct lecturer in Public Policy at the Harvard Kennedy School.

Three Campaigns, Two Elections

The conversation began with Warren asking Haberman to reflect on what motivated Trump to seek the 2016 presidency, run for reelection in 2020, and mount a third campaign in 2024. Haberman traced Trump's ambitions back decades: "The first time that Trump ever, that I know of, spoke publicly about running for president was in a 1980 interview with Rona Barrett, where he said, 'maybe I'll run for president' as sort of a throwaway," she recalled.

While Trump did not act on the idea then, Haberman noted that since his early years in the New York tabloids, he understood that putting himself at the center of attention advanced both his business interests and public persona. "He recognized how much—if he could command focus, if he could command interest in himself—that was beneficial, yes, to his real estate business, but also he wanted to be a star from the time that he was young," she said. "And he's been very interested in attention for a long time."

By the late 2010s, Trump's political ambitions were resurfacing. The Tea Party insurgency cracked open space in the Republican party for outsider figures, conservative media rewarded spectacle, and "The Apprentice" kept Trump in the national spotlight. In that climate, visibility and dominance revealed itself as political currency. "In late 2010, he did start getting more interested. It's always been there at the back of his mind. It's the top job. It's the best job. It's the most attention in politics," Haberman said. "It's power. And Trump is ultimately interested in power. I don't think he has ever pretended otherwise, frankly."

Trump's first serious flirtation with the Republican Party came in 2011. "He very briefly announces that he's pro-life, which he had supported abortion rights prior to that. And a few weeks later, he starts this crusade of

questioning President Obama's birthplace," she said. "But it vaults Trump from pretty far down in the Republican primary polls up to the top," she said.

What followed, she added, was a stinging moment at the White House Correspondents' dinner.

"President Obama really humiliates him at the White House Correspondents Association Dinner with a mockery that really was just targeted at one person," Haberman said. "I was in the room that night. It was very tense, and it clearly left a mark on Trump. I don't think that's the only reason he ran in 2015, but I think it was a big part of it. That dinner really had an impact."

Trump's fraught history with the dinner became part of his political brand: following the viralization of Obama's jokes in 2011, he repeatedly snubbed the event as president, refusing to attend even when it was held in his honor beginning in 2017. Deliberately skipping the Correspondent's Dinner throughout his first term, he opted instead to stage campaign-style rallies, intensifying his attacks on the media by labeling it "fake news" and branding the press as the "enemy of the people."

The discussion soon pivoted to Trump's bid for reelection in 2020 and his choice to mount yet another campaign in 2024, as Warren pressed Haberman to analyze Trump's rationale for both bids.

Haberman emphasized that Trump's instinct to seek reelection was not unusual. "He ran because he wanted a second term because I don't know any president who would leave willingly," she explained.

However, the pandemic dealt a major blow to his 2020 run. The crisis's destructive toll and economic upheaval reshaped the 2020 electoral landscape: by election day, the U.S. had endured over 234,000 confirmed COVID-19 deaths and a steep economic contraction. Turnout surged to about 66% of eligible adults (a 7% jump from 2016): 17 million more Americans cast ballots than in the prior presidential election. Moreover, some county-level studies estimate that areas with heavier COVID incidence saw significant declines in Trump's support. For instance, 100 extra cases per 10,000 people corresponded with a 0.13% drop in his vote share.

"Without the pandemic, I think he probably would have won again. But that was a calamity in terms of how he handled it," Haberman said.

Political Violence

Warren next steered the discussion toward the troubling rise in political violence, pointing to the recent attacks on political figures, including the assassination of Charlie Kirk. Specifically, he asked how Trump views the issue and what he aims to accomplish with his rhetoric.

"July 2024 was when he was shot in Butler, PA. And so much of his reaction has been through the lens of that. And that's not guesswork—that's from talking to lots of people," Haberman said. "He tends to

experience things through what he went through. And there's a pretty clear parallel on this."

She recounted a report in the Atlantic about Utah Governor Spencer Cox, who held a press conference following Kirk's killing to call for lowering the political temperature. "Cox does that press conference. He barely says anything political. He does call for taking the rhetoric down. After that, Cox gave an interview to the Wall Street Journal where he described the alleged shooter as steeped in left-wing ideology," Haberman said. "So I think that tells you sort of where the president's mindset is."

Comey's Indictment

As the evening drew to a close, another contemporary and critical moment was discussed: reports indicating that the Justice Department may soon bring criminal charges against former FBI director James Comey. Warren asked Haberman why this case matters so deeply to Trump and what it could mean to the country.

Haberman's response underscored one of Trump's longstanding fixations. "The president has wanted to see him indicted for a very long time. He was hoping for this in his first term. He was hoping to find some evidence."

"The Inspector General looked into Comey's conduct... Michael Horowitz, the Inspector General, did not suggest charging him. He did suggest he violated department policies. Bill Barr, then the Attorney General, said there's not a case here. And that enraged President Trump," she continued.

For Haberman, the implications are stark. "This is 'I want you to prosecute this person, go get me a crime.' Essentially, we saw the president do a version of this with two presidential orders he signed earlier this year... Comey would be, if he is indicted, a huge escalation on that front," she explained. "We are now in a world where there is now an effort in half a dozen federal prosecutors' offices to try to launch investigations into George Soros and his political activities."



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

PHOTO COURTESY OF BETHANY VERSOY

“Who am I...to Tell You What You Should Put in Your Body?” Harvard’s Flu Vaccine Mandate in Question

A look into Harvard College’s mandatory influenza vaccine policy and associated community opinions.

BY JULIA BOUCHUT ’29 AND ABBY LI ’29

On Sept. 22, Harvard students received an email titled “Immunization holds start Sep. 26” from the Harvard Registrar’s office, notifying University affiliates that students who have not received the seasonal influenza vaccine will face holds on their academic accounts. While the vaccine requirement has been standard practice since 2021, this year, such a policy comes amidst political controversy over changing vaccine safety protocols and recommendations.

Surgeon General Dr. Joseph Ladapo recently vowed to rid Florida of its vaccine mandates completely. While this move received much backlash, including from President Donald Trump, and ultimately failed, it demonstrated how much the discourse has shifted to the question of bodily autonomy.

“People have a right to make their own decisions,” declared Ladapo in a September speech. “Who am I, as a man standing here now, to tell you what you should put in your body?”

“The main reason why debates arise on the ethics of vaccination is because of the ‘paradox of public health,’” Harvard College Professor of Ethics and Population Health Daniel Wikler said in an interview with the *Harvard Independent*. Effective public health often goes unnoticed, since its goal is to prevent disease. “If public health becomes too effective, the threat goes away. And then people are saying, ‘Why are we putting up all this stuff?’”

“To say it’s a question of civil liberties doesn’t mean that vaccine is illegitimate to pressure people to be vaccinated, but it is a question of civil liberties for sure,” Wilker continued. “The problem with vaccines is that you’re injecting a farm substance into somebody who is healthy.” However, if an institution has a strong enough reason, then it justifies this action. “We do require seat belt laws, for example...and it’s by requiring them that we’ve saved untold

numbers of lives.”

“Just look at the number of people who would be dead today or maimed for life if we hadn’t required this of each person. It’s a public health tool you use with overwhelming success, and to fight against that is a little hard to understand,” Wilker explained.

With the winter season approaching, dialogue has shifted from general vaccine mandates to the influenza vaccine. Currently, the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices recommends that persons over the age of six months receive an influenza vaccine every year, which protects against three strains of the virus.

Harvard’s vaccine policy adopts the framework of federal suggestions, which are formalized on several levels. The Department of Health and Human Services oversees both the Food and Drug Administration and the Centers for Disease Prevention and Control—and thus plays a central role in health regulations. The FDA must approve vaccines before they are legally administered. Once a vaccine is approved, the CDC, guided by the ACIP, issues recommendations on how the vaccines should be used. Everything is ultimately overseen by the HHS secretary, who has the power to overrule decisions and recommendations made by the FDA commissioners and the CDC director.

This year, HHS Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. has cast doubts about vaccine safety, voicing opposition to youth vaccine requirements. In June, Kennedy fired the entire 17-member Advisory Panel on Immunization Practices and chose new members, many of whom had a personal history of being critical of vaccines.

It is within this climate that discussions at Harvard turn to a more immediate question of how undergraduates perceive the College’s flu shot mandate and growing tensions on the balance of personal choice and general public health.

Students must meet Harvard’s and Massachusetts’s immunization requirements to register for courses. In December 2022, Harvard sent a University-wide announcement reminding students to comply with vaccination requirements and sign up for appointments offered for the annual flu shot as well as the bivalent Omicron-specific COVID-19 booster shot. Harvard had chosen to mandate flu vaccines and open flu clinics in 2021 due to a potential flu season amidst the already threatened healthcare system under COVID-19.

There are some benefits to this mandate, according to recent studies and College students. Since the effects of the flu are often underestimated, people are less likely to receive the vaccine; only 50.5% of the American population was vaccinated in 2022-2023. Last year, Harvard undergraduate Jupiter MacAvoy ’29 was hospitalized with a strain of Influenza B, unaware of the potential risk and thus unvaccinated. While recovering, MacAvoy saw countless others similarly incapacitated by the flu.

“All of those people hadn’t received

their flu vaccinations, probably out of personal negligence [like me],” MacAvoy said. “So I really support the administration’s policy on getting people vaccinated, just because I think it’s a very low-risk vaccine...and even then, the severity of those health complications is probably much lower risk than that of actually getting the flu.”

While Harvard broadly requires students to receive the vaccine, in certain circumstances, students are still able to petition for religious exemptions. Therefore, even if individuals feel that their liberties are being infringed, they may opt out. “I think this is enough of a public concern,” Wren O’Looney ’29 said. “[But] if you’re willing, if you’re that passionate about not getting vaccinated, you can.”

Institutions must balance creating exemptions for people with strong beliefs and putting enough pressure that a community reaches herd immunity, Wilker explained.

“All these policies insisting that every last person get vaccinated is almost always a bad idea,” he said. “The problem is when you establish a pressure valve, and you say it’s a religious exemption, and then there are people who say the gate is open. ‘Yahoo! Let’s all go.’”

Apart from the annual flu vaccine, Harvard has no further vaccine mandates for students who already fulfill the immunization requirements, with the COVID-19 requirement recently removed, according to the Harvard University Department of Health Services website. However, they continue following data and recommendations on the state and federal levels, and the lack of compliance with any further requirements will result in an immediate registration hold.

In the end, even though the flu vaccine is important for individual safety, it is necessary to create an environment where students and professors alike feel safe. “If you’ve decided that the flu shot is not necessary for you, because you’re probably not going to die from it, you’re probably right,” Wilker said. “But I might, so if you want me to show up and teach you, damn it, get shot.”

JULIA BOUCHUT ’29 (JULIA_BOUCHUT@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) IS AFRAID OF NEEDLES. ABBY LI ’29 (ABBYLI@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) HOLDS HER HAND.

GRAPHIC BY CHRISTY ZEMBROWSKI ’28



What is it Like to Be a Republican Student at Harvard?

A glimpse into the right-leaning side of Harvard's campus after months of political turmoil.

BY KATHERINE CHUNG '29

Harvard's ideological climate faces unprecedented national scrutiny. This summer, the Trump administration claimed that the University was guilty of silencing viewpoints unpopular with the liberal majority while examining on-campus antisemitism. While University President Alan M. Garber '76 called several federal requests "intrusive and unconstitutional," he acknowledged parts of the White House's critique, including concerns that Harvard has marginalized conservative perspectives. In this context, affiliated Republican students navigate the reality of being a member of the campus political minority.

This imbalance shows in the data. According to the *Independent's* Fall 2024 Sex Survey, out of the 672 undergraduate responses, over 73.1% identify as liberal, 12.2% as moderate, and 14.7% as conservative. A 2023 *Harvard Crimson* survey of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences found a political divide amongst faculty of 77.1% liberal versus 2.9% conservative. In other words, few faculty voices diverge from the dominant campus political demographic. The Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression's yearly College Free Speech Rankings placed Harvard last for both 2023 and 2024. FIRE assigned the University an "abysmal" score and reported that many students feel reluctant to share their views.

"Harvard's reputation for ideological conformity precedes it," said Harvard *Salient* Editor-in-Chief and Republican student Richard Rodgers '28 in an interview with the *Harvard Independent*. Rogers spoke to the *Independent* on the condition that it be noted he was speaking in a personal capacity. "My experience has been richer because I've deliberately sought out classes and professors who encourage real intellectual growth—often those who are more moderate than the dominant campus ideology."

"How could [Republican students] not [be marginalized] when they're outnumbered 10 to one among peers and nearly a hundred to one among faculty?" Rodgers asked. "Administrators talk about diversity, but when conservatives raise concerns, they are almost always brushed aside... It's not a climate of genuine representation, but of token tolerance at best."

Criticism from Washington D.C. has amplified Harvard's reputation as a liberal stronghold. As Trump officials framed the University as hostile to conservatives, they demanded that Harvard "audit" student viewpoints and limit the influence of certain groups based on ideology.

"The University will not surrender its independence or relinquish its constitutional rights," Garber responded in his April 2025 University-wide letter, stressing that decisions about teaching, admissions, hiring, and research areas must remain free from government interference. Yet Garber also emphasized a commitment to "broaden the intellectual and viewpoint diversity within our community." For conservative students on campus, the pledge of openness to diverse opinions is something they feel tested by every day.

Harvard's Open Inquiry and Constructive Dialogue Working Group, established in Spring 2024, found that 45% of students were hesitant to discuss "charged topics" in class, citing fears of peer judgment, social media backlash, and reputational damage.

Despite this reputation, from the moment he arrived on Harvard's campus, Rodgers knew he needed a conservative community. "It wasn't about hiding from the campus mainstream, but about

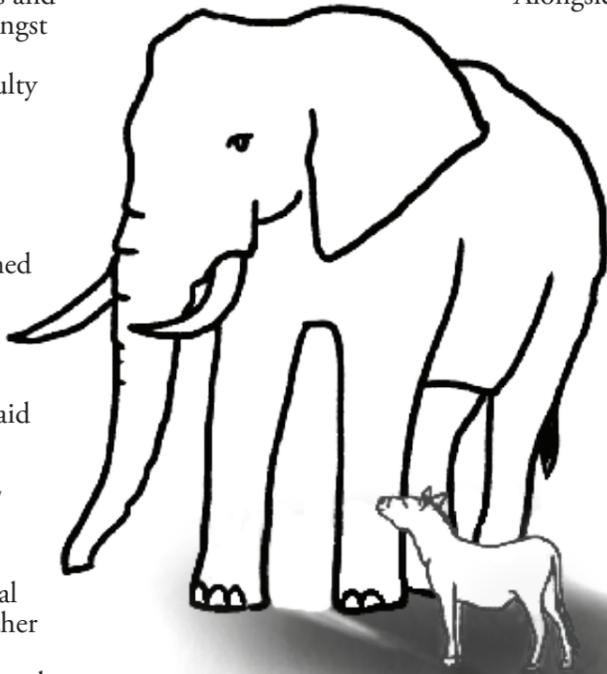
having a base from which to engage it," he said. Rodgers quickly gravitated toward what he calls a "conservative counterculture."

"Without that, Harvard can be alienating... It takes discernment, but there are places where honest inquiry is still possible."

To Republicans on campus, conservative student groups are more than just social clubs. "They provide continuity and stability in an environment that otherwise pushes conservatives off campus means there's a place where students can gather, debate, and build friendships rooted in these shared convictions. That kind of permanence is rare here," Rodgers said.

Yet, in the midst of this minority thought, the right-wing community is witnessing renewed momentum. The *Harvard Magazine* reported that in 2021, students revived the *Salient* after a hiatus since the Obama Administration.

Alongside this revival,



conservative student organizations such as the Harvard Republican Club have experienced elevated attendance and mailing list expansion. Similarly, the Boston Globe noted that Republicans have gained attraction among Gen Z undergraduates: Massachusetts college conservatives are now stepping into the spotlight, networking with right-leaning political power players and landing jobs with influential figures, publicly embracing their views.

"There are more conservatives than meet the eye," Michael Oved '25, former HRC president and *Independent* Special Projects Director, said to Harvard Magazine. "It has never been a better time to be a Republican on campus," he wrote in the *Crimson*.

According to Oved in the *Harvard Magazine*, Republicanism today is far from uniform. It brings together voices that often pull in opposite directions: some embracing technological change while others distrust it, some insisting on decreasing government spending while others call for expanding welfare programs.

Still, Rodgers emphasized that comfort is conditional for many Republican students. "I've heard plenty of stories of conservatives being shut down, ridiculed, mocked, or denigrated by faculty. That shouldn't be normal at a university, but too often it is."

Those dynamics point to warnings published in *Harvard Magazine's* "The Elephant in the Room," which addressed a pattern of conservative students retreating inward to safe spaces and believing that without faculty support, their views would be swallowed by the majority. The article noted that past conservative faculty presence, including the retirement of outspoken

conservative and Harvard Professor Harvey Mansfield '53 led students to question what ideological successors may emerge, if any.

"The biggest misconception is that conservatives are motivated by animosity," Rodgers said. "In truth, most of us are motivated by principle: by religious belief, by a conviction in the value of tradition, by a desire to preserve what makes society flourish."

Others on campus commented on this alleged gap between political misunderstandings and reality.

"I have some friends that identify more towards the conservative side, not too many that I've met, maybe three or four... The preconceived thoughts and assumptions I had about people that were either pretty conservative, moderate, or pretty liberal were very much broken down because I had conversations with people," Harvard College Democrats member Amir Smith '29 said to the *Independent*. "Instead of just saying 'red states aren't smart, they're stupid, and blue states are educated, they're smart,' maybe understanding systemic reasons... would make it a better environment for conservative people to speak out and have their views actually heard."

"I do think that there's a big [liberal] majority, and I think we'd benefit all from hearing more conservative voices," Smith continued.

Rodgers noted that not everyone shares Smith's openness. Rodgers described the challenges that right-wing clubs faced. "The most obvious challenge is open hostility. Copies of the *Harvard Salient* have literally been torn from students' hands," Rodgers said. At the same time, Ellie Koop '29, who identifies as liberal, recalled receiving an issue of the *Harvard Salient*. "My roommates read that together. We thought it was very well written. We obviously did not agree with the message—we're all pretty left-leaning—but as far as quality goes, it was good... The publication gets people talking," she said to the *Independent*.

Koop admitted that she rarely encounters openly conservative peers: "The groups that I'm in just naturally were liberal already. So it's like I can't really speak to the conservative, diverse part. And that very well could be that they don't feel comfortable telling me."

That imbalance is not lost on conservative students themselves. "The political atmosphere at Harvard is contentious, lopsided. Conservatives are always aware that they're in the minority. That imbalance sharpens the experience, though. It forces you to form your beliefs more fully, to articulate your convictions more carefully," Rodgers stated.

To right-leaning students feeling isolated, Rodgers advised, "Don't try to go it alone. Join the conservative organizations, and more importantly, actually take part in them. Those groups will give you the friendships and community you'll need to stay grounded, and you'll make them stronger in return."

KATHERINE CHUNG '29
(KATHERINECHUNG@COLLEGE.
HARVARD.EDU) WRITES NEWS FOR THE
INDEPENDENT.

GRAPHIC BY EMMA CRAGO '28

FORUM

Memories of Oktoberfest

Here's what a REAL Oktoberfest looks like, from the perspective of a part-time German.

BY OKTOBERFEST ALCOHOLIC ANONYMOUS

Once again, the time of the year has snuck up on me: it's October—or, as it's esoterically translated in German, *Oktober*—and that means it's time for Oktoberfest (literally “October Festival,” another toughie to figure out). Now a college sophomore, it's been two years since I've celebrated Oktoberfest in Germany with friends. While I haven't shuffled into my Lederhosen and hit the town until the rides stopped, the memories are still clear enough that I can recall the important parts.

Oktoberfest dates back to the 1800s, a time when, aside from chores like milking cows, the main pastime was drinking with neighbors and making the torchlit walk back home. But it's come a long way since: Fest is now the event of the year (or of early October, I guess). That's true not just for Germany: though the event began in *Deutschland*, Fest's impact on culture has been worldwide, with spinoff Oktoberfests taking place everywhere from Ohio to Brazil! Foot-long pretzels, frosted gingerbread Lebkuchen, and steaming hot Bratwursts have gained worldwide fame—especially here, where people often take pride in calling themselves German, Irish, or Polish.

The tradition has made its way across the Atlantic to Boston, but your author will unfortunately not be taking part this year due to an onslaught of Stat 110 problem sets—hoping my expected value of survival is greater than zero. Instead, I'll use this time to reminisce on my years in Germany, when it was socially acceptable for high schoolers to go out, get drunk, and then casually tell your teachers about it on Monday—ideally

once the hangover had worn off.

But before we get started, let me clarify something: I'm not German. My family moved there for my high school years, and I attended an American high school, so I definitely still lived in an American bubble. Beyond that, I've lived in a handful of states—including Alabama, where my kindergarten teacher seemed determined to make my life miserable. So, would I call myself international? Perhaps during my years in Germany, though I still returned to the States several times a year, enough to keep my American roots firmly intact.

Being an American, even when I was just starting school in Germany, I began to notice some differences in German and American culture surrounding drinking. A few years after moving to Germany, my friends and I were getting wasted every weekend. As such, the unacquainted may wonder: how could high schoolers just go out and drink in public? Wasn't there someone *carding* you?

Well, the thing about Europe is that drinking laws are...*lax*, one could say. First, you only need to be 16 to buy beer or wine for personal consumption in Germany. Second, most Germans have already started drinking at restaurants with their parents at 14! And if you're worried about open containers on the street—Germans don't care, and why should they? “Open container” doesn't seem to be an idea that crossed their minds. I'm not complaining: it's a great way to save on Red Solo cups. So yeah, drinking in Europe is something else.

Now for the main attraction: beer. Yes, I know you've heard of the famously dark, thick German beers. Yes, the heavy glass steins exist, perfect for pouring your leckerschmecker Bier von Fass. After a simple “Einmal Bier, bitte,” your waiter will get you a special mug called a Stein filled with carbonated bliss, foaming beer that's just asking you to drink it. With the thumping traditional Volksmusik playing, the fest-goers dancing in their Lederhosen and Dreidls, and the near-overwhelming background chatter accented by traditional chants—*Zigga Zigga Zigga! Oy Oy Oy!* The offer of alcoholic delight is impossible to resist.

If you're going to Fest in Stuttgart, the town where I lived, you best believe you'll be drinking one beer—and one beer only: *Wulle*. Anyone who claims to be from Stuttgart and doesn't know *Wulle* is lying. The signature red logo, the satisfying pop of the flip-top, and the deep, hoppy flavor are unforgettable. It feels like every sip represents the Germans I've come to know: serious, bold, and just a little fun.

But you'd be mistaken to think that Fest is just drinking (though—let's be real—it basically is). The other big pull that keeps us coming back for more is the rides.

Imagine that! It's like Six Flags, but drinking is encouraged! And thank God for it: Stuttgart is a pretty big city, but honestly, its industrial vibe makes it pretty dull (great if you want to check out Bosch or Mercedes—the latter is so ubiquitous that there are even literal Mercedes garbage trucks). During Fest, the city redeems itself with the second-largest Oktoberfest in Germany, complete with some of the best rides ever.

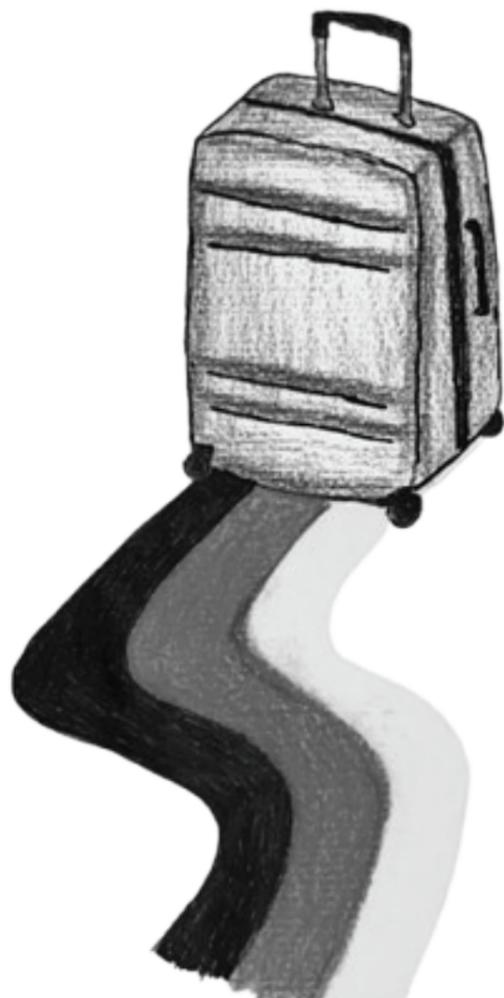
One ride that stuck with me was called the *Airwolf*, a spinning, whirling attraction moving in patterns reminiscent of a Lorenz butterfly. Thinking about riding it? Alright, but before stepping on the coaster, consider this equation: Four Beers + Fast, Jerky Roller Coaster = Bad Time. Not that I'm speaking from personal experience, of course. I'm *very* fastidious. And you don't have to feel bad about having fun: in a way, the roller coaster is scientific. What better way to feel the effects of 4G while twisting left, right, up, down, and sideways than physics in action? Just remember to save the beer tents for after, not before.

Ah, Fest, how I miss you. I still get flashbacks to the flashing lights, the whirling rides, the seemingly endless nights of *Wulle*. It pains me to say it, but for now, Oktoberfest is a thing of the past. This year, I traded Lederhosen for lock-ins and replaced drinking with a slow demise at the hands of Stat 110. I could've gone to the Boston Oktoberfest, sure, but I figured it'd be the equivalent of “visiting Mexico” by eating a Taco Bell Nacho Cheese Baja Blast Heart Attack Diabetes Burrito, so that was a no-go. Still, even continents and years away, my memories of Oktoberfest—well, the parts I was sober enough to remember—remain. I almost hear the sounds ringing in my ears: *Oy Oy Oy!*

The Oktoberfest Alcoholic still goes out in America, but is tired of the vodka parties—what are we, Russians?

THE OKTOBERFEST ALCOHOLIC STILL GOES OUT IN AMERICA, BUT IS TIRED OF THE VODKA PARTIES—WHAT ARE WE, RUSSIANS?

GRAPHIC BY MIA STEWART '29







Thoughts from New Quincy: Getting Experimental

On the embarrassment question.

BY LUKE WAGNER '26 AND SIR GALAHAD

Sir Galahad: Growing up, my dad had one rule for tree-climbing: if you can get yourself up, you can get yourself back down. I would scurry up branches as they bent under my weight until I sat perched too high on limbs too thin; the ground looked impossibly far away. When it came time to climb down, my dad never helped. He'd stand on the grass with his hands in his pockets, calling up only once: figure it out. Sometimes I did—inching down backward, the skin on my palms rubbed raw, my stomach swaying each time I trusted my weight to a bough that creaked in protest.

But sometimes I fell. Not far enough to break anything, but far enough for the air to vanish from my chest in one violent gasp. I'd sit up dazed, a hot scrape burning down my arm, tears held back more by embarrassment than pain. In that moment, the lesson was already etched into my limbs: don't step where you can't stand, don't grasp what you can't hold. My dad would walk me home, dab at my cuts with rubbing alcohol, and slap on a Band-Aid before sending me back to the park to climb again. Only this time, I'd think about the possibility of climbing too high, remembering how it felt to hit the ground.

Luke: Failure doesn't work like that anymore. As kids trade climbing trees for dropping tilted, they lose the experience of making tangible mistakes and learning from them. In Fortnite, a fall is just a reset—the screen flashes, your squad rolls their eyes, and thirty seconds later, you're back on the battle bus, ready to make the same mistake again. No scrape, no rubbing alcohol, no Band-Aid. Just a cartoon thud and a painless do-over.

A fall from a tree leaves something behind—a bruise, a limp, the feeling of bark giving way beneath your hand. It reshapes how you climb next time. A fall in the game vanishes as soon as it happens. You don't climb differently. You don't pause at the weaker branch. You never get the lesson. Today, kids grow up falling without ever learning what it means to fall. What's missing is the experiment: the awkward risk that leaves a bruise, the test of whether a branch will hold. Without those experiments, failure becomes hollow, and so do we.

Sir Galahad: At Harvard, students run from the mere chance of falling or failing. When was the last time you signed up for a seminar that didn't fulfill any of your requirements, just to check it out? Odds are, the refrain rattling in your head is one all Harvard students know by heart: I don't remember. And then, we do the most Harvard thing of all: blame the environment instead of our own footsteps—complaining that clubs are

closed, courses are capped, and the could-be-suitors are, for lack of a better word, chopped.

It's easy to chalk this up to anxiety, but that misses the point. Kids have always been anxious—what's different now is that they're out of practice. They've been trained to avoid the kinds of small stumbles that once built character. A scraped knee, a bad joke in the cafeteria, a swing and a miss answering a question. Those were safe failures—you walked away bruised but wiser.

Now, instead of stumbling through, people sidestep. It's not just that failure feels worse; it's that failure never arrives at all. And without it, you don't get the scar tissue that teaches you how to get up after you fall.

Maybe the fix is to climb again.



Luke: In other words—get experimental.

Getting experimental means stepping into unscripted territory—romantic, social, even sexual—and putting yourself at risk of humiliation. It's clumsy, unrehearsed, and probably ill-advised. But it leaves a mark. Not on the body, but on the memory.

Most experiments fail. They fail spectacularly, embarrassingly, in ways that replay themselves in your head years later. But those failures aren't wasted. They're how you figure out who you are, what you want, and how far you're willing to go. Without them, people become brittle. They don't just avoid risk—they lose the muscle memory of how to survive it.

Sir Galahad: But what does getting experimental look like? Maybe it's smaller than we think. Getting experimental doesn't mean dropping everything to move to San Francisco to launch a startup. It can be as ordinary—and as terrifying—sitting down at the table full of strangers in the dining hall, as sending the text you've drafted three times and deleted twice. These aren't grand

leaps; they're branches you're just not sure will hold your weight. But you won't know until you try.

That's the trick: experiments aren't about certainty, they're about curiosity. They're about pushing just past the point where your grip feels steady, not because you know you'll land it, but because you want to see what happens if you don't. Some of those moments leave you scraped up—an awkward silence, a rejection email, a date gone flat. But they also leave you with something else: evidence. Proof that you can fall, dust off, and climb again.

Luke: That's why the most formative stories are never the polished ones. They're the messy ones, the ones that make you cringe when you tell them, but also remind you that you were brave enough to try. Embarrassment is resistance in a world that trains kids to avoid risk. It's practice for all the other kinds of failing life is going to demand later.

Sir Galahad: Most of the experiments I can think of weren't really about the substances. They were about the people. The drink, the pill, the smoke—those were just shortcuts, props in a bigger gamble: could I step closer to someone I wanted? Could I look like I belonged in a moment I didn't quite trust myself to handle?

One morning stands out. I was already a seasoned smoker by then, and getting high before flights had become a ritual to make the time pass faster. Riding to the airport with my best friend, we shared a bag of edibles. She popped gummy after gummy, and I—more concerned with keeping pace than keeping balance—matched her bite for bite. By the time we boarded, I'd taken 60 mg. I spent the flight gripped by the slow, unrelenting panic of a body gone sideways. It wasn't inexperience that undid me; it was pride.

That morning, I wasn't experimenting for myself—I was shadowing someone else's threshold, pretending it could be mine. With drugs, that's a dangerous substitution. The line between curiosity and collapse is already thin, and it narrows to nothing when you start chasing someone else's limits instead of learning your own.

This time last year was different. A group of us drove down to Newport with the sole purpose of tripping together. I weighed out five grams for myself, not really knowing or asking what anyone else was taking. That was part of the ease—there was no scoreboard, no performance, just a quiet trust that everyone would find their own way. We talked about other things as we measured our portions, the shrooms almost incidental between beer, die, and bong rips.

When we finally ate them, we didn't hover or compare. We drifted off—some to the beach, some to the couch, and some, I'm still not sure. The silence wasn't awkward; it was spacious. For once, getting experimental didn't mean shadowing someone else's limits. It meant carrying myself and letting the experience unfold on its own terms. And in that space, the lesson was gentler than panic and stronger than pride: that the only experiments worth keeping are the ones that belong to you.

Luke: The most lasting experiments don't just bruise the body—they bruise the ego. That's where embarrassment comes in. Unlike pain, which leaves visible scars, embarrassment resists translation. You can tell a story about pain, and people will nod along, see the scar, and understand it. But embarrassment doesn't work that way—it doesn't shrink into a neat anecdote. It swells in the mind, plays on repeat, warps in memory until it becomes larger than the moment itself. That's why embarrassment is so powerful.

This is the lesson kids aren't getting anymore. They're taught to seek safety in every domain: no bruises on the playground, no slip-ups that go unmediated, no hazing in clubs, no experiments without pre-approval. Every failure is padded or erased. And the irony is that this kind of safety makes people fragile. They don't lose the fear of failure—they lose the ability to metabolize it. Without those scrapes of the ego and the unguarded humiliations, they never build the capacity to keep moving after you fall.

Embarrassment, then, is not just the last safe risk—it's the last democratic one. Everyone encounters it, everyone dreads it, and everyone carries it forward in different ways. If embarrassment is the last honest experiment, then the task isn't to avoid it. It's to treat it the way kids once treated bruises: not as proof you were broken, but as evidence you had the nerve to try.

The strange thing is that embarrassment works in two directions. It shapes you as an individual, teaching you what you can survive—but it also shapes groups. Shared embarrassment is one of the oldest tools of belonging. Everyone remembers the moment they stumbled, not just privately but together, and that memory hardens into community.

Sir Galahad: Of course, nowhere does embarrassment feel riskier—or more inevitable—than in romance. If embarrassment is the last honest experiment, then love is the lab where it gets tested daily. Every text, every glance across Annenberg, every pause before you speak feels like climbing onto a thinner branch than the last.

This summer, an internship with a classmate turned into something more complicated—the slow unfolding of a crush I couldn't ignore. I found myself lingering at my desk, long after my work was done, just to keep her company while she finished hers. Conversations stretched until our computers slept and our monitors went black, following us home when we went our separate ways.

One night after dinner, with more drinks than judgment, we wound up back in my apartment, talking until the clock slipped past two. At some point, she rested

her head on my shoulder, and I—armed with misplaced confidence—leaned in. She pulled back, and I was left sitting in the kind of silence that makes you wish you could sink into the couch and stay there until morning.

The kiss didn't land, but the world didn't end. The silence passed, the conversation resumed, and by morning, it was just another fallen branch. Romance isn't about waiting for certainty; it's about stepping forward without it. You risk the stumble, you risk the flush of embarrassment—and most of the time, you discover you can keep climbing anyway.

Every climb carries the chance of a break, and the fall always leaves its mark. Mine did—spectacularly. But it turned out not to matter. Bruises heal, and now—somehow—we're dating.

Luke: Right—and what you're describing with romance is the same pattern I see in the rest of college life. Embarrassment is the condition of risk, whether it's leaning in for a kiss or standing up to sing a song off-key in front of strangers. What matters isn't whether it lands cleanly but that you tried—and that you risked enough to find out.



The University, though, treats those marks as damage. Risk is recoded as liability, embarrassment as harm. So they sanitize: swap messy rituals for official ones that leave no trace. On paper, it looks like protection. In practice, it hollows things out. A club becomes a résumé line instead of a crucible. Community turns administrative instead of lived.

That's why romance feels so bracing—because it's one of the last places we're still allowed to fail without a form to file. Love ends up doing the work that college pretends to: teaching us how to stumble, how to laugh it off, how to keep climbing even when the branch cracks.

Sir Galahad: This year—a victory lap capping off the last six semesters—I'm trying to take my own advice. To get more experimental. Not in the grand, romanticized sense, but in the small, shaky ways that still scare me. I've signed up for my first English class, a seminar on consciousness; I've resolved to be more mindful about smoking, allowing myself to be present rather than stoned; and I've made a point to spend days alone in

Boston, often without any semblance of a plan.

I've had my fair share of missteps. References to obscure authors have left me lost to my classmates' comments; hours I used to pass with weed have been less entertaining; and just last week, I was caught in a downpour while wandering the South End. But that's the nature of it. To climb is to risk falling, to experiment is to risk looking foolish.

Getting experimental hasn't made senior year cleaner or calmer; if anything, it's made the climb feel less certain. But it's also made the days feel less scripted, and if embarrassment really is the last honest experiment, then maybe maybe the point is to keep stepping forward—even if your footing isn't certain.

Luke: Exactly—and that's the part that matters. What you're calling foolish is what I want to call practice. Each misstep, each soaked walk through Boston, each blank stare in a seminar is a reminder that risk is the condition of being alive. Getting experimental doesn't make the path cleaner; it makes it real.

That's the challenge for us—not to wrap every corner in padding, not to retreat to screens where mistakes vanish with a click, but to keep stepping where the ground feels unsteady. The earlier stumbles—the bike crashes, the tree falls, the awkward silences—left bruises you could carry forward. Ours too often disappear.

If embarrassment is the last honest experiment, then the task isn't to erase it but to lean into it: to treat it like a bruise, proof you tried, proof you're still climbing. Because standing safe at the bottom of the tree might spare you the fall, but it also means you never leave the ground.

So, climb higher. Say the thing you're afraid to say. Risk looking foolish. Get experimental—not because the world makes it easy, but because the world ahead will demand it.

LUKE WAGNER '26 (LUKEWAGNER@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) IS THE MANAGING DIRECTOR OF THE HARVARD INDEPENDENT. SIR GALAHAD WILL FLOAT INTO THE MYSTIC.

GRAPHIC BY CHAU NGUYEN '29 AND LUCIE STEFANONI '27

The Hunt for Oktoberfest

Searching Boston and Cambridge for the best Oktoberfest celebration (in September).

BY WEINER & SCHNITZEL

Boston promised Oktoberfest, so two (technically) German-Americans brought a voice recorder and low expectations to the nearest function. By 2 a.m. last Friday—*why so early, Boston?*—we had yet to keep any steins, but we did get enough audio to stitch together an eight-tier beer flight, with a ranking translated into nicotine profiles. What follows is the cleanest retelling we can do without lying.

We opened at Lamplighter's Cambridge Crossing taproom. Refillable steins, immaculate glassware, absolutely no vibe. We didn't stay long enough for a beer, and we *always* stay long enough for a beer.

Beer 1: Guinness, aka ZYN Coffee 3 mg found in your coat pocket (8/8)

Detour to Phoenix Landing: crowded bar, free Guinness, and a foam printer etching faces onto foam like temporary tattoos. One friend printed the *Harvard Independent* logo because subtlety is for wine bars. Weiner lost her Guinness virginity to a pint that tasted like dirt. For people who don't rip nic, the ZYN comparison is not a compliment. Think chalky coffee breath, instant lip-tingle, maybe a little vomiting. We finished our portrait-pints (and our friends'), because we are scholars of sunk cost. This unfortunately gets last place on our ranking, but the selfie-head was art.

Beer 2: Weihenstephaner (Festbier), aka Marlboro Gold (5/8)

Red Line, light public urination (Schnitzel, the bushes forgive you), Bavarian hats acquired. At the import stand of Samuel Adams Brewery, a classic: crisp, bread, built to be hoisted. The kind of beer that says, "I pay my taxes and wear a cardigan." Everyone on the voice memo kept nodding and saying, "solid." Solid is fifth.

Beer 3: Pumpernickel Dunkel, aka American Spirit Black, the Perique one (7/8)

We hoped for lots of pumper and a whisper of nickel. We ended up with a mouthful of Dunkel. Rich, dark, and determined to make us confront our limits. We offered a sip to a friend who said, "smelling it is enough." We believe her. Seventh.

Beer 4: Jack O' Lantern Ale, aka Elf Bar BC5000 Peach Ice (1/8)

This beer is why we turned pretty at Oktoberfest. Least beer-y, most sippable; the cinnamon-sugar caramel rim arrives

like a seasonal candle and somehow we didn't hate it. The girliest drinks are once again the best drinks, a scientific finding at this point. This one carried the bench through three rounds of Prost and a poorly informed debate about "The Summer I Turned Pretty" (nobody watched the show). No. one.

Beer 5: Passion Fruit Citrus Gose, aka Lost Mary OS5000 Passionfruit Orange Guava (4/8)

Very light, citrusy, with tangerine notes. Nothing negative to say, but nothing phenomenal, either. It had the energy of a situationship you aren't really that into, but you still text. You're not each other's favorite on the roster, but you wouldn't mind seeing them if nobody else is free for the night. Fourth feels right.



Beer 6: New England IPA, aka ZYN Citrus 6 mg (6/8)

"Light, pretty citrusy... a little too acidic," says the tape, which then coughs. Imagine chewing grapefruit pith for the team. We decided to take our hats off for a second to see if it affected morale. It did, so we put them back on. Sixth.

Detour to Parking Lot to Smoke:

As we began to cross over from our sixth to seventh beers, we marked a crucial intermission: the smoke break. Schnitzel looked to Weiner with the infamous "Is it time for a cigarette yet?" glance. We journeyed outside to discover a group of local post-grads who agreed to aid our search for the true meaning of Oktoberfest.

Rule #1: "Nothing brings people together more than a cigarette in a parking lot." Rule #2: "Never leave a good time in search of another." We applied Rule #1 immediately to make up for violating Rule #2 when we left Lamplighter.

Beer 7: Flannel Fest, aka Double Happiness (Chinese cigarette) (3/8)

Darker, coffee-esque notes. We'll fuck with it. It's grown-up in the way corduroy is grown-up—warm, scratchy, performatively academic. It's Chinese in a way we have yet to fathom. We picked up a certain "contraband pack you smuggled in your suitcase from study-abroad" vibe. Faintly bureaucratic.

Beer 8: Jamaicaway IPA, aka American Spirit Yellow (2/8)

Fruiter, lighter, cleaner finish. Not too plain, not too complicated, just right. With Jamaicaway's help, we got to the point in the night when we briefly considered committing to new personalities. Jamaicaway was our last runner in the relay, waiting for the baton to be passed for the last stretch of the night. Silver medal.

After a few unprintable conversations and the kind of parking-lot diplomacy that only nicotine can broker, we pointed our feathered hats toward home (Tasty Burger). By the time we hit Harvard Square, Boston's 2 a.m. bedtime had already tucked the city in. We took our new friends' advice and didn't chase another good time.

Final Leaderboard:

1. Jack O' Lantern Ale
2. Jamaicaway IPA
3. Flannel Fest
4. Passion Fruit Citrus Gose
5. Weihenstephaner (Festbier)
6. New England IPA
7. Pumpernickel Dunkel
8. Guinness

Maybe Boston's Oktoberfest is the beers you meet along the way. And by that, we mean just get drunk enough to forget you're in Boston and not Munich. On that metric, eight beers and 12 toasts say we crushed it. See you again next Friday, this time with Dirndls?

WEINER AND SCHNITZEL DRINK IN THE INDEPENDENT'S HONOR.

PHOTO COURTESY OF SCHNITZEL

Christina Kim: Threads of Time

Honoring craft, time, and collaboration in garment making.

BY MIA WILCOX '28

On Sept. 24, the East Asian Studies Department hosted Christina Kim, designer and founder of *dosa*, to guest lecture for EASTD 154: “Threads: Histories and Theories of Clothing and Fashion.” Kim is known for transforming clothing scraps that are often cast aside as waste into garments and art installations. Through this medium, she draws attention to what she calls “reparative thinking and doing,” a pedagogy central to her design process that highlights the human interaction involved in the process as well.

Kim’s inspiration comes from memories of her childhood in Korea, where she first watched her grandmother mend clothing. This fascination with her grandmother’s process kick-started her interest in design at a young age; soon after in 1971, she came to the United States.

Living in New York City as a young adult, Kim reminisced on her days immersed in the downtown arts scene of the 1980s. Somewhat of a club rat, she described her nights out on the town, for which she would make her own garments to stand out in the crowd. As her work attracted attention from both friends and strangers, she began taking commissions and creating unique designs; her materials were often repurposed—leftover scraps from previous projects, thrifted items, as well as old clothes—sewn together to create a new vision. This, along with recognition from brand names like Henri Bendel and the support of her mother, enabled Kim to begin the *dosa* brand in 1984. Her primary goal for her design process was to “make clothing for other people to feel like they are who they are.”

In an interview with the *Harvard Independent* following the guest lecture, Kim explained her love for the action of clothing-making as a sensorial and meditative process: “The patchwork, or any kind of sewing, it’s like a topography, because you’re moving with the curve of the fabric. And it really feels good because you’re feeling in so many layers—you’re feeling with your hand, you’re controlling with your feet the speed of it, and you hear the sound.”

“Reparative thinking and doing” lies at the core of her design process, extending both to materiality and human interaction:

“In the late 80s, I started really thinking about environment. That was the beginning of my thinking about organic versus non-organic. It started with the food movement, and I heard about Alice Waters, and the way she was talking about local organic.” She also pointed to the emergence of the brand Patagonia in the 70s, and its focus on impact-conscious consumerism as an inspiration. “I really liked these ideas. They seem much more rooted in grassroots and very

much part of the earth.”

This environmental awareness was also deeply rooted in her personal experiences. As a member in one of the first classes of Brownie Girl Scouts in Korea, Kim learned at a young age to care for and connect with nature and the environment. Both outlooks became central to her design process, leading her to travel to Oaxaca in 1992 and study the city’s specialized organic dying traditions.

“I realized the bolt of fabric that you see takes so much time, like the growing of cotton takes so much effort. Harvesting cotton takes time, spinning... All that takes so many hands and skills. So by the time you have a bolt of fabric, you’ve really gone through history of time—human time,” Kim said.

Kim’s fascination with color, texture, and culture began with early interpersonal interactions; before her own travels as an adult, her family would host resident professors in



Korea, exposing her to different cultures. She remembers a professor from Nigeria and another from India who would arrive in their country’s traditional garb.

It was through her travels to Mexico, China, India, Colombia, and many other places that she demonstrated the effort of clothing-making processes. “In order for me to respect the hands of these people, I try to use as much as possible. And that’s when I really thought about how to design with people’s effort in mind.” Kim began saving every scrap left over from her designs, patching them together and giving them a new life of their own.

She would remember not only the visitors from her childhood, but also those she passed on the street or met at the club—and wonder about their clothes. She began seeking out the origins of the designs and techniques that caught her eye on her travels, learning from artisans and craftspeople the traditions embedded in cultural garments. She visited workshops where garments were made and, sitting alongside makers, practiced the techniques that went into each piece.

“I sit and start doing my design, and

[the artisans] get so frustrated because they are so much faster. So then they go, ‘Oh, let me do this.’ And then they take over, or I will sit and do it with them, and we kind of create the design together,” she explained. “Then it becomes sort of like a community project, and they feel certain ownership because they were part of developing an idea.”

A byproduct of Kim’s curiosity and these cultural exchanges was empowerment and authority for the craftspeople. In a society of mass consumerism and fast fashion, the work of individuals becomes overlooked, yet here, they are recognized, appreciated, and accredited for their efforts.

“My aspiration isn’t the aspiration of those who are in the industry,” Kim explained that in the fashion economy, she does not look to directly combat a culture of consumerism and societal impatience, but rather aims to highlight the beauty of process and time in garment production.

“The fact that she [artisan] got such pleasure with me sitting there, watching her, I think that’s a really beautiful human exchange, and that is the reward for me. I’m allowed to go into Muslim quarters and be with men. I don’t have to cover myself. I can be who I am without being uncomfortable. And I think that’s luxury... I think that luxury is much more important than the concerns of the industry.”

Kim is now working toward her next project, an exhibition at LACMA in which she will honor the artists that inspired her—Ed Ruscha, Simon Rodio, and Gloria Stewart—during her first years in the U.S. In the meantime, *dosa* will remain rooted in the ethos of crafting clothing that values story, hands, and time. Her brand and studio will remain living archives of her travels and collaborations. Kim plans to continue her daily practice: using reparative thinking to make choices that have a positive impact on the environment and on humanity, and sewing with her team every day, allowing patchwork to be her meditation.

MIA WILCOX '28 (MWILCOX@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) IS COLUMNS EDITOR OF THE HARVARD INDEPENDENT.

PHOTO COURTESY OF CHRISTINA KIM

Spooky Stories for the Halloween Season

You should read horror this October, but where is the best place to start?

BY EDEN BRIDGE-HAYES '29

The fall season is traditionally hallmarked by pumpkin spice and sweater weather. But to me, fall is characterized rather by curling up next to a crackling fire, beverage of choice steaming in hand, while leisurely reading a good book. With Halloween just around the corner, horror and all things spooky are on everyone's minds—making reading a thrill-chasing story only the more fitting. Many don't know where to begin when tackling the expansive genre of horror: should they start with a well-known novel, such as "Frankenstein," or perhaps something more obscure, like "The Willows"? To remedy this, Professor Deidre Lynch, who teaches Harvard's ENGLISH 148: "Modern Monsters in Literature and Film," helped me compile an official reading list for the upcoming season.

"Dracula" by Bram Stoker

A canonical work of the horror genre, Bram Stoker's "Dracula" tells its story in many different forms from letters to ship logs to newspaper excerpts. The novel follows lawyer Jonathan Harker as he visits Count Dracula's Transylvanian castle to discuss the count's wish to move to England—a place where people don't know that vampires exist. Unbeknownst to Harker, he is merely helping Dracula relocate to a more populated (and unassuming) area to easily stalk victims and further his reign of terror.

Lynch praises Stoker's writing for capturing "that sense of the vulnerability," explaining that "you [the reader] know

more than the characters do, and you're about to have the worst confirmed."

"The Haunting of Hill House" by Shirley Jackson

Another horror classic is Shirley Jackson's "The Haunting of Hill House." More widely known for its adaptation into a 2018 TV mini-series, the novel follows Eleanor Vance, a dreamy yet troubled woman who stays at Hill House to aid in a paranormal activity investigation. As the story unfolds, Eleanor discovers her affinity for the supernatural, and she begins to lose herself to the will of unnatural forces within the mansion.

The original novel leaves the reader feeling disoriented and inner turmoil, which Lynch attributes to Jackson's ability to "[evoke] setting," yet "[make] you feel that you have no idea what's going on in it." The TV series, on the other hand, changes many elements in the original novel, including an added backstory about the haunted mansion.

"The Willows" by Algernon Blackwood

This novella, set on an island in the Danube River, observes two friends camping when they suddenly notice that their surroundings keep eerily changing form. Although both friends feel tense since setting foot on the island, this realization largely comes in the night when they realize that the surrounding willow trees have crowded around their tent. At this point, they have to figure out how to leave the island when their environment is actively working against them.

Lynch commends Blackwood's ability to elicit "a sense of unease, so you feel slightly off-kilter, you don't know what's going on...and you're fearing the worst."

Similarly to "The Haunting of Hill House," Lynch also praises Blackwood's use of setting, attributing much of the "unease" to each novel's unsteady surroundings. By empowering the environment, rather than any of the characters, Blackwood instills a feeling of hopelessness and defenselessness within the reader.

"The Sandman" by E. T. A. Hoffmann

"The Sandman" is a short story by German (perfect for Oktoberfest) author E. T. A. Hoffmann that traverses the memories of the main character, Nathanael, as he confuses reality with his visions of the titular figure, a terror-inducing character who is said to steal the eyes of children who do not go to bed. By constantly evoking absurd and nightmarish imagery (such as the Sandman stealing people's

eyes and feeding them to his owl-like children who live on the moon), Hoffmann weaves a tale that leaves the reader wondering what is real and what is a result of Nathanael's delusions.

Lynch expounded that this short story was "sort of a source for...Sigmund Freud theorizing 'the uncanny' as a special category of the frightening." Hoffmann's ability to blur the lines between the real and the unreal, examining reality through a distorted, grotesque lens, is what provides this sensation of the uncanny, making this short story a pioneer in its genre.

...

While you can choose to merely watch scary movies, reading novels in the likes of those mentioned above preserves many key features of internal narration that do not always translate well onto film. This "narrative within a narrative structure" is a key aspect that Lynch feels can only be found in literature, referring to classic novels with many film adaptations, such as "Frankenstein" with its distinctive frame narration. It's this aspect that contributes to the feelings of suspicion and unreliability that make horror distinctive as a genre. Because of this, Lynch also advises readers not to "let the films mislead you" when going into horror novels with popular film adaptations, as some of the story portrayed in the film may not be what it seems.

At the end of the day, there are endless scary stories to choose from. The sensations of suspense and tension heightened while reading a well-narrated horror novel perfectly accompany Halloween, making it truly no better way of spending your evening. If you want any more suggestions, you know where to find me: within the pages of a terrifying book.

**EDEN BRIDGE-HAYES '29
(EDENBRIDGEHAYES@COLLEGE.
HARVARD.EDU) IS A HORROR
FANATIC WHO IS TRYING TO MAKE
SURE NO ONE CAN SLEEP AT
NIGHT.**

GRAPHIC BY CALEB BOYCE '29



Does Youth Fade When the Sun Goes Down?

BY NOAH BASDEN '29

Alloween's coming up!
My younger self is shrieking at the prospect of trick or treating, Now it's just "dance! dance! dance!" repeating and I'm conceding,

Despite my better judgement. And now I'm misleading random people I never thought I'd be meeting

"Yes I'm on the football team" (words I should never be speaking),
And their

How many have I had?
smiling
and-
I've forgotten.

The leaves have a tan now,
My foggy brain is an introspective one,
My head is rocking,

Where did the sun go?
I've forgotten my keys,
There are bunnies in the yard,
I have to run to Lamon-
where did the sun go?

You don't notice when the sun sets when you're always busy,

Or perhaps that's just me,
The seasons have changed and I haven't,

Noticed (nor has it crossed my mind)
There are pumpkins in the Square,

Matter of fact there are pumpkins everywhere,
And I hadn't noticed.

Will my childlike wonder die on the steps of Widener,
Or will it be Cabot that'll do the trick?

The answer I do not know but as the first

drops
of fall
fall

Upon my brow,
I stop. And look around,
The leaves really have a tan now.

The yard is a collage of colours,
At every step there are hints of ruby red and chestnut brown,



Only this weather can evaporate my permanent post p-set frown,
And it's beautiful.

So look around,
And you might just see the sun before it goes down.

**NOAH BASDEN '29
(NHBASDEN@COLLEGE.
HARVARD.EDU) IS
COMPING THE HARVARD
INDEPENDENT.**

**GRAPHICS BY ANNABELLA
BURTON BOONE '29 AND
JUSTIN MA '29**



SPORTS

From Spain to the Stadium: My First American Football Game

Experiencing American football for the first time at the Harvard-Brown game.

BY LAURA CREMER '29

I don't watch sports. Back home in Spain, "football" means something entirely different. So with my European roots and little knowledge of American sports, I anticipated crossing the river this past weekend to watch my very first game. I left the stadium on Saturday in awe, having watched Harvard dominate Brown 41-7 at their home stadium for the Ivy League opener.

At 4:30 p.m. on a warm Saturday afternoon, I set out for the stadium. Making my way over the bridge, I paused to take in the view—the sky stretched with clouds, the sun breaking through to cast everything in gold. The walk itself felt cinematic, but the real show began once I stepped into the athletic complex.

The moment I stepped inside, I was engulfed by a sea of crimson. Everywhere I looked were Harvard T-shirts, hats, and faces painted with bold H's. I had never witnessed so much "school pride" gathered in one place. Music blared, people danced, and drinks splashed carelessly onto the ground. I threw myself into the crowd, dancing with my friends until my hair stuck to my face from the humidity. It was messy, loud, and sweaty—but I could not stop smiling.

By the time the crowd started to dwindle, the clock had already slipped past 6 p.m. The game had started, but no one seemed to care. We left the field and walked through the concourse, weaving past Coop booths selling even more gear. Concession stands loaded with popcorn, hot dogs, and nachos were all around us, filling the air with the scent of fried dough. After my friends decided on a section, we started slowly making our way up the stadium stairs. Decker solely in a Harvard cap, I could not have been more excited.

The stadium alone left me speechless. With an ocean of bodies rippling in the stands on both sides, voices were echoing like thunder. Announcements blasted over

the speakers, but we could barely hear a thing. I had not done my research before the game, so the rules were a mystery to me. From my seat, all I could see were armored players slamming into each other. In a matter of seconds, bodies were colliding until six men were suddenly piled on the ground. At other times, when nothing seemed to be happening, the crowd exploded in cheers.



This sudden change was how I realized Harvard had scored.

While the game progressed, my understanding did not. My friend attempted to shout over the noise and explain the rules to no avail. I tried to follow between downs, yards, and possessions; however, every time I thought I finally understood, a whistle blew, stopping the game. The players marched around like chess pieces that I desperately tried to follow. Eventually, all I could do was smile and nod in defeat.

But then. Touchdown. The crowd sprang to their feet, clapping in rhythm, stomping against the bleachers. I didn't know what a touchdown was, but the eruption of the crowd told me it was monumental. People jumped, hugged, and

screamed. We scored six points, then a seventh.

Suddenly, the stadium flooded with blinding white beams as drones began rising into the night sky. They swarmed together, shifting to form a multitude of shapes. First, the Harvard Athletics logo, followed by Tim Murphy Field and "Welcome Class of 2029." As the crowd roared, the drones assembled into a single symbol as their finale: the Veritas logo.

At that moment, I felt something I had not expected to feel at a football game: pride. Not the kind that comes from winning, but the kind that comes from belonging. Between the drones, the cheers, and the music from the band, I was reminded that I deserve to be here. I belong to this school as much as every person sitting next to me.

When the final whistle blew, Harvard had dominated Brown 41-7. The scoreboard lit up as the crowd erupted one last time, their cheers just as loud as at kickoff. I still couldn't make sense of the strategy or the stats, but it didn't matter—I had felt the moment, and that was enough.

Walking back across the bridge after the game, the Charles was dark with sprinkles of city lights. I felt exhausted while simultaneously exhilarated. What made the night unforgettable wasn't the football itself, but the way the community came alive. I felt folded into a tradition I had never known, discovering that even here, on unfamiliar ground, I belonged. As I ended the night with a slice from Pinocchio's, one thought lingered in my mind: Roll Crim.

**LAURA CREMER '29
(LAURAPEREZCREMER@COLLEGE.
HARVARD.EDU) STILL DOESN'T
UNDERSTAND AMERICAN FOOTBALL.**

**PHOTOS COURTESY OF JORDAN
WASSERBERGER '27**

Fantasy Roundup: Week 4

A recap of the notable games from the NFL this past week.

BY TYLER DANG '28

Only about a month into NFL play, and for some, the season already feels like a loss. The Titans, Saints, and Jets all fall to 0-4.

Meanwhile, the Ravens are falling short of their playoff hopes with a 1-3 record, and that's not to mention all the teams that have suffered season-ending injuries to their star players. For full team rosters, see Week 0's issue.

First and Lowell (2-1) vs The Ball Courier (0-3): 125.86-136.2

Top performers: Dak Prescott (30.96) | Lions D/ST (20.0)
Underperformers: Ravens D/ST (-3.0) | Chris Olave (9.0)

Kirkland Cousins (1-2) vs Bring it Dome (2-1): 145.08-153.06

Top performers: Omarion Hampton (27.5) | Puka Nacua (36)
Underperformers: Jameson Williams (5.7) | T.J. Hockenson (7.6)

Pfirst Down (2-1) vs The Inn-Zone (2-1): 135.0-102.28

Top performers: Christian McCaffrey (26.1) | Bijan Robinson (28.1)
Underperformers: Trey McBride (12.2) | Derrick Henry (7.8)

Standout Games:

Chargers @ Giants: 18-21

The Chargers started the week as the favorites, entering with a 3-0 record against untested rookie Jaxson Dart; however, Justin Herbert failed to show up at MetLife Stadium as the Giants led the entire game. Despite Herbert throwing a terrible ratio of two interceptions to one touchdown, Omarion Hampton tried his best to help the Chargers in an unsuccessful comeback. On the first drive of his professional career,

Dart, the rookie quarterback from Ole Miss, rushed for a touchdown. Two quarters later, Dart threw his first touchdown pass, a shovel to Theo Johnson. The downside of Sunday's game for the Giants was an awful season-ending injury to receiver Malik Nabers as he tore his ACL; Nabers' injury came on the same field as Odell Beckham Jr. (former Giant WR1), reigniting the debate about grass or turf fields.

Eagles @ Buccaneers: 31-25

In a battle of the undefeated, only one team could walk away with the victory. From the jump, the Eagles dominated, returning a blocked punt for a touchdown. At halftime, they kept the lead 24-6 as Tampa Bay could only score field goals. Despite poor outings from Saquon Barkley and A.J. Brown, the Eagles continued to score throughout the third as the ball was shared throughout the receiving core. In the second half, Baker Mayfield began to wake up. The Buccaneer quarterback threw two touchdowns, closing the gap to one score at the end of the fourth, but an interception and a turnover on downs sealed the Eagles' victory. Nick Sirianni's coaching has held up even under pressure, with a suffocating defense constantly forcing Mayfield to play out of the pocket. Notably, Bucky Irving and Emeka Egbuka had great performances for Tampa Bay.

Jaguars @ 49ers: 26-21

After a successful showing with backup quarterback Mac Jones, Brock Purdy returned to the field with the 3-0 49ers. Still, the Jaguars' defense competed, forcing a fumble at the San Francisco 48-yard line and before a touchdown run. This was quickly followed by an interception four plays later, leading to an 89-yard drive capped by a touchdown.

Just like that, the 49ers were down by two scores. While Christian McCaffrey did his best to keep San Francisco in the game, the 49ers continued to turn the ball over with Purdy throwing another interception and fumbling the ball in their last drive. Though the quarterback threw for two touchdowns, claims that Purdy is just a "system quarterback" may be warranted. As for Jacksonville, Travis Etienne Jr. had a monster game, rushing for 124 yards on 19 carries. Trevor

Lawrence continues to look average, but a win is a win.

Looking Ahead:

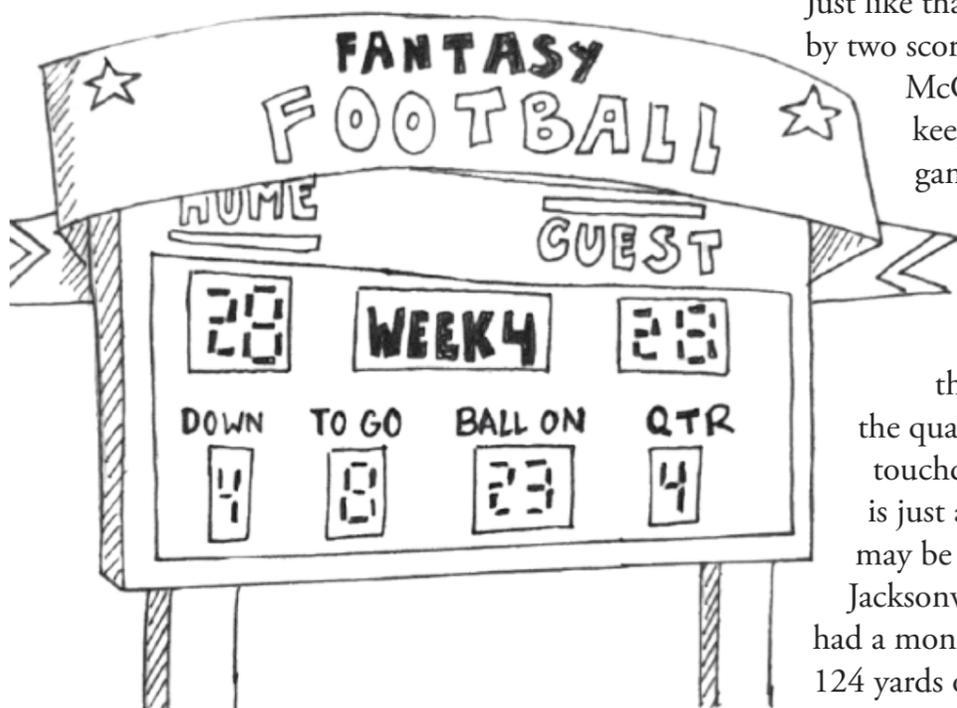
Next week will be the first week of goodbyes as Atlanta, Chicago, Green Bay, and Pittsburgh all get a break from the action. We'll start with a battle in California as the 49ers travel to face the Rams, with Rams favored (LAR -6.5) to walk away victorious. Minnesota @ Cleveland (MIN -3.5) will host a battle of defenses as both are some of the best in the league. Conversely, New England @ Buffalo (BUF -7.5) will be a clash between two elite offenses against two subpar defenses. This divisional matchup will get to see Drake Maye and the Patriots attempt to silence Josh Allen's Bills.

Watch out for Puka Nacua and Jonathan Taylor. Nacua had 170 yards on only 13 receptions and put up a touchdown. He faces off against the 49ers, who allowed three Jaguars players to have 40+ receiving yards this past week. Jonathan Taylor, who leads the league in yards and is tied for second in carries, faces off against the Raiders, who allow an average of 4.0 yards per carry.

For some games that won't be the most exciting, you'd be excused for missing the Titans play the Cardinals. As a Tennessee native, it pains me to say this: the Titans are awful as is. There is no defending the team after they were shut out this week against the Texans. The Cardinals, despite being 2-2, are not much better; their two wins have been one-score games against the Saints and Panthers. The Lions-Bengals game is also looking like a beatdown as the defense of the Lions will likely destroy backup quarterback Jake Browning.

TYLER DANG '28 (TYLERDANG@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) IS MOURNING THE TITANS' SEASON.

GRAPHIC BY NUALA MERNIN '29

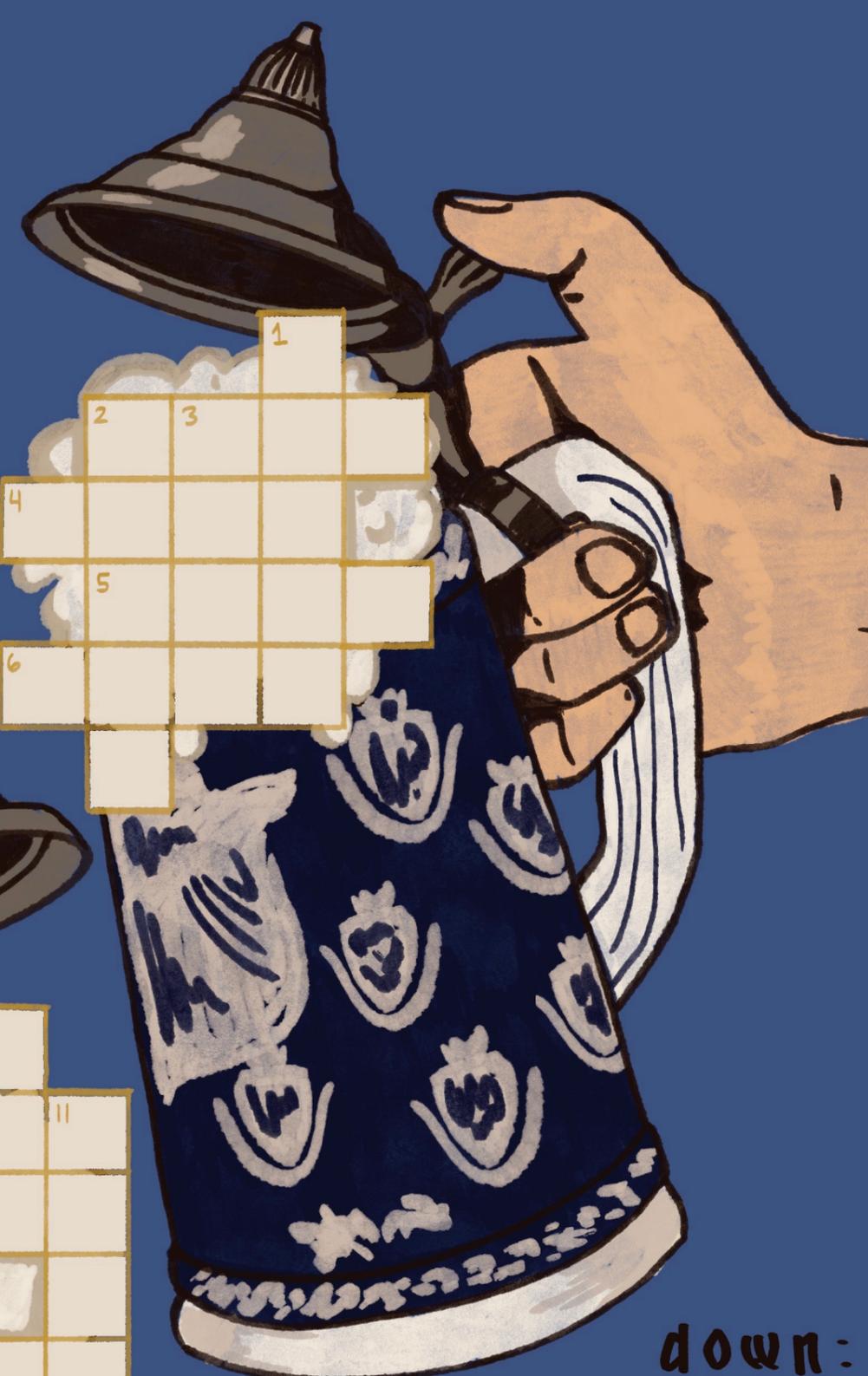


OPINIONS OF FORUM PIECES AND ARTISTIC
INTERPRETATIONS OF DESIGNERS BELONG
ONLY TO THE CREATOR AND DO NOT
REFLECT THE VIEWS OF THE *INDEPENDENT*

Oktoberfest

crossword by *Bred '28*
design by *LAMURN Bernier '29*

- across:**
- 2 Beverage You Shotgun
 - 4 Vice presidential Hamilton Hater
 - 5 Events For Special Puncnees
 - 6 National Acapella Competition
 - 9 Sign of Bad Things To Come
 - 12 River In Germany
 - 13 Oktoberfest Season
 - 14 Low-Quality AI Productions



down:

- 1 Slang For "For The Boys"
- 2 Miller And Natty Lite Sibling
- 3 Adams Who Dropped NY Mayor
- 7 Clothing Retailer known for
Namesake "cash"
- 8 As opposed to Women
- 10 Beer with "A Fine Pilsner" on label
- 11 Market-leading Espresso Maker
- 12 State College Equivalent of A
Proctor/PAF