



[Test] Brandeis GSAS Alum Newsletter for March 2024

Brandeis University GSAS <gsas@brandeis.edu>

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*A newsletter for Brandeis GSAS Alums
March 25, 2024*



1. Stories from GSAS
2. On-Campus Happenings
3. Alum, Student, and Faculty News

Dear GSAS Alums,

Here on campus, we are most of the way through the semester. The chill in the air still feels a little wintry, but the calendar doesn't lie and we're now just a bit over a month away from April break and then a quick turn-about to finals. Personally, this is one of my favorite times of year as our clocks leap forward, the sun is still up at the end of the work day, and as flowers begin to emerge the campus shakes off the grays of winter for the polychrome showiness of spring. It's all very celebratory - and foreshadows the great celebration of commencement to come. In that same spirit, I invite you to read closely our March newsletter, which celebrates all that is going on across campus led with, by, and for our graduate community. As always, we welcome you to participate in our on-campus happenings, and hope you enjoy reading about all that our current students and your fellow alums are doing.

Yours,

Charles Golden

1. Stories from GSAS



[Jinmin Lee, PhD '14, Shares Philosophy Tales with Children](#)

Jinmin Lee earned her PhD in Politics from Brandeis in 2014. Since then, she has written several successful Korean books. Her most recent book, *Philo and Sophie Leave the Cave*, came out in 2023. The book is aimed at teaching children about famous philosophers and their ideas. (Illustration by Sae-byul Kim.)



[English PhD Students Think Outside the Dissertation Box](#)

In the wake of 2020, responding to changes in the world and in academic job markets, Brandeis's English faculty decided to change the structure and requirements of their PhD program. Among these changes? Allowing dissertations beyond the traditional book-length manuscript that the discipline usually demands. With the new curriculum coming into effect in 2021, the fruits of this change are now appearing in dissertations that take a wide range of forms. (Image credit: Nayoung Kim.)



[2023-24 DEIS Scholars Share Their GSAS Experiences](#)

The DEIS Scholarship, funded in part by the A. Philip Randolph Fellowship, supports students from historically underrepresented backgrounds, including first-generation college students, as well as students who have a history of activism in support of underrepresented communities. Here, we profile the four first-year PhDs and two second-year master's students who are participating in the program.



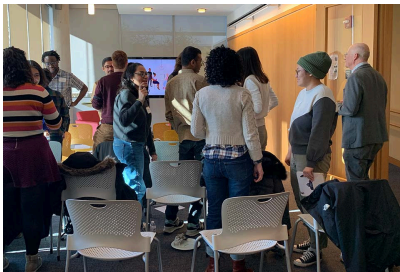
[Brandeis Three Minute Thesis Winner Liz Mahon Journeys to Nationals](#)

This past December, Liz Mahon finished the fall semester with a bang by traveling to the nation's capital to try out her three minute thesis on a new audience. Accompanied by Alyssa Canelli, Assistant Dean of Academic Affairs for GSAS, and by Ollie the Owl, Liz was ready to compete in the finals for the North American 3MT Competition, hosted by the Council of Graduate Schools (CGS). (Photo credit: Alyssa Canelli.)



[Anthropology Department Members Publish Essay on Community-Engaged PhDs](#)

Jonathan Anjaria, Associate Professor of Anthropology and GSAS's Faculty Director of Professional Development, and Moriah King, PhD student in Anthropology, published the essay "Enabling Community-Engaged and Public-Facing PhDs" in the American Council of Learned Societies report Preparing Publicly Engaged Scholars, which came out on February 1, 2024. In their essay, Anjaria (who is King's advisor) and King shared their perspectives on the ongoing conversation about how doctoral students can conduct community-engaged projects while enmeshed in an academic world that is not always set up for them.



[GSAS and Mandel Center for the Humanities Hold Successful PhD Retreat](#)

On January 12, 2024, GSAS and the Mandel Center for the Humanities co-sponsored a daylong PhD student retreat. Aimed at first- and second-year PhD students in the Divisions of Creative Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences, this event followed last year's successful pilot, which was funded by the Connected PhD grant. Organizers Ulka Anjaria, Director of the Mandel Center for the Humanities, and Becky Prigge, Assistant Dean of Student Affairs for GSAS, planned the retreat as one that would address the crucial skills that PhD students need to succeed in graduate school. (Photo credit: Becky Prigge)



[Collaborative Success: Brandeis's New Graduate Writing Group](#)

For Marie Comuzzo and Anna Valcour, the idea to start a writing group for Brandeis PhD students sprang from their recognition of the importance of community in facilitating writing success. After supporting each other through the writing process, the two third-year PhD students in Musicology and Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies were inspired to bring the idea to more students.

Geeking Out With...

Geeking Out With... is a series in which we talk to GSAS students about their passions! Read on to learn about English/WGS master's student [Ayla Cordell's](#) job with the GSAS Professional Development team, Anthropology PhD student [Medha Asthana's](#) love of music, History PhD student [Joseph Weisberg's](#) dissertation research on Jewish American relationships to slavery, and Psychology PhD student [Jillian Franks's](#) research into empathy, informed by her love of theater.

Geeking Out
with **AYLA CORDELL**
"I sometimes feel like I'm not getting the hard skills that I need for the workforce. And that is where professional development comes down on a whole fully about with sunbeams behind them. I love being required to go to their events because I hear from such a range of people about their jobs, and you're hearing directly from the source about their own process, their experiences, their failures, and their successes. Everyone likes to have the idea that they will find a job in what they love most, and do best, but I don't know what that is for me, and it turns out a lot of other people don't either! So it's great to hear about their journeys."
Second-year master's student
English and Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies

Geeking Out
with **MEDHA ASTHANA**
"Music is a feeling, an intuition everyone can connect to. It can be used in teaching critical thinking, reading, and writing and in fieldwork as a humanistic approach of connecting everyone. I've used my passion to move towards experiential learning."
Fourth-year PhD candidate
Anthropology

Geeking Out
with **JOSEPH WEISBERG**
"I recommend wandering around—intellectually or physically. I learned so much as a researcher when I was in Charleston by just wandering around the city, especially the parts I knew dated from the time that I was researching. You can wander through a place to learn about it, and you can wander in your research—going away from what you initially thought you would focus on. Just walk around."
Third-year PhD student
History

Geeking Out
with **JILLIAN FRANKS**
"Try to mix your passions together if you can. There might be new ways that you didn't even know that things are in communication with each other that could open a new research path. I'm about to launch a new study that uses actors and how they understand the characters they're playing, the actors will portray characters in a video that I will use in other parts of my dissertation project as well. I had no idea it would be possible to explore my theater interest in this academic way. If you have another passion, don't close the door but see if it's possible to bring them together."
Third-year PhD student
Psychology

Connected PhD Profiles

The Connected PhD grant, now in its final year, provides students with support in pursuing professional development opportunities outside of the traditional academic route. We recently profiled students [Manning Zhang](#) and [Eric R. Miller](#) on the skill-building courses they took through the grant.



Alum Profiles

GSAS has recently profiled alums [Marcie Brewer](#) (AGS '19 and EdM '20 in Teacher Leadership), [Genevra Valvo](#) (AGS '17 in Teacher Leadership) and [Rachmiel \(Rocky\) Klein](#) (MA '22 and MS in Passing '23 in Mathematics, current Mathematics PhD student). Read about their experiences at Brandeis!



2. On-Campus Happenings

University Commencement

[Brandeis's 2024 Commencement ceremony](#) will take place on May 19, 2024. **Roy DeBerry '70, MA '78 and PhD '79 in Politics and 2017 Alumni Achievement Award winner** will receive an honorary doctorate of humane letters.

Three Minute Thesis (3MT) Competition

Friday, April 5th, 4:00-5:30 PM, Spingold Theater

Brandeis GSAS is excited to be hosting our third annual three minute thesis competition (3MT). The Brandeis 3MT Competition is a university-sponsored speaking competition designed to showcase GSAS student research in three-minute talks to a general audience. This is an opportunity for graduate students engaged in original research to develop communication and presentation skills while sharing their work with faculty, staff, and students across Brandeis University. Visit the [3MT webpage](#) for more information.

Mark your calendars for Friday, April 5 from 4-5:30 p.m. to see the Final Round of the 3MT Competition in Spingold Theater. Finalists will present, judges will deliberate, and prizes will be awarded.

Film Screening: *Hollow Tree: Growing Up at the End of the Earth*

COMPACT is hosting a screening of [Hollow Tree: Growing Up at the End of the Earth](#) on April 1 from 6 to 8 PM. This impactful film follows three teenagers coming of age in their sinking homeland of Louisiana. Following the film, director Kira Akerman will talk with faculty and students about her approach to filmmaking in the context of the climate crisis.

3. Alum, Student, and Faculty News

Dr. Larry Abbott, PhD '77 in Physics, and his colleagues Terrence Sejnowski and Haim Sompolinsky, won the [2024 Brain Prize](#), the largest award in Neuroscience, for their work on the principles of neural structure and function. Dr. Abbott is a professor of Theoretical Neuroscience at Columbia University.

Dr. Richard Beaudoin, PhD '08 in Music Composition and Theory, published the book [Sounds as They Are: The Unwritten Music in Classical Recordings](#) with Oxford University Press in December. Dr. Beaudoin is an assistant professor of music at Dartmouth College.

Dr. Prajita Bhattarai, PhD '23 in Physics, received a 2023 [ATLAS Thesis Award](#).

Dr. Bridget Chalk, PhD '09 in English, was appointed as [Associate Dean of the Kakos School of Arts and Sciences](#) at Manhattan College.

Roger L. Danchik, MFA '74 in Theater Arts, was recently [interviewed about his newest novel](#), *Viila and the Doomsday Affair*.

The English Department has started a [classnotes page](#) for their graduate alums. Read on for stories and to submit your own notes!

Dr. Ieva Jusionyte, MA '07 and PhD '12 in Anthropology, is the author of the new book [Exit Wounds: How America's Guns Fuel Violence Across the Border](#), which will be published on April 16.

Melissa A. Kelly, MS '08 in Genetic Counseling, has received the [2024 Carolyn Mills Lovell Genetic Counselor Award](#).

Dr. Timothy Kendall, PhD '75 in Mediterranean Studies, was the featured speaker at the Custom House Maritime Museum's [First Friday lecture](#) on Friday, March 1st.

Dr. Peizhao Li, PhD '24 in Computer Science, received a \$55,500 [Graduate Research Fellowship](#) from the National Institute of Justice this fall for his work on bias in artificial intelligence.

Rabbi Shaul Magid, MA '92 and PhD '94 in NEJS, recently released a [new book of essays](#), *The Necessity of Exile: Essays From a Distance*.

Dr. Eve Marder, the Victor and Gwendolyn Beinfeld Professor of Neuroscience and University Professor, and **Dr. Greg Petsko**, Professor Emeritus of Biochemistry, received the [National Medal of Science](#), the nation's highest honor for scientists, from President Biden on October 24, 2023.

Ian S. McElhinney, MFA '74 in Theater Arts, was [interviewed by the Belfast Telegraph](#) about his long career as an actor and recent success with *Derry Girls*.

Dr. Olajide Olagunju, MA '08 in Anthropology, was featured in the *EdTechBrief* articles [“What Strategies Help Maintain Learner Attention in Virtual Classrooms?”](#) and [“What Innovative Approaches Do Education Leaders Take to Assess Online Learners?”](#)

Daniel Joseph Osborn, MA '12 in NEJS, joined the Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Boston as their [Director of Educational Partnerships](#).

Dr. John Rieffel, PhD '06 in Computer Science, was [awarded the Mercator Fellowship](#) to study advanced artificial intelligence techniques in Regensburg, Germany. Dr. Rieffel is the chair of the Computer Science Department at Union College.

Abraham C. Storer, Postbaccalaureate '06 in Studio Art, is [showing his paintings](#) at Wellfleet Adult Community Center.

Dr. Julian Ungar-Sargon, MA' 94 and PhD' 00 in NEJS, has been appointed as the [Division Command Surgeon](#) in the United States Volunteer Reserve Corps (US VRC) by the Commanding General.

Division of Science students and alums [Mercedes Villalonga \(PhD in Psychology\)](#); [Julia Apitz \(PhD in Biochemistry and Biophysics\)](#); [Chansik Kim \(PhD '22 in Biochemistry and Biophysics\)](#); [Hunter Seyforth \(PhD in Physics\)](#); and [Teodora Markova, Claire Ciampa, and Jourdan Parent \(PhD in Neuroscience, Neuroscience, and Psychology, respectively\)](#) have recent publications.

Dr. Meredith L. Woocher, PhD '03 in NEJS, has joined the [Advisory Board for Collaborative for Applied Studies in Jewish Education](#) (CASJE).



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