The Other Side of Inequality
Professor Shamus Khan goes undercover to investigate the rituals of the 1 percent.

Remembering Vaclav Havel
Recalling the late Czech president, playwright, and dissident’s time on campus as an artist in residence.

Profiles of NSF Winners
Five GSAS students earned grants in fields ranging from anthropology to sequestrial chemistry.

Alumni Profile: Bel Kaufman
The author of Up the Down Staircase looks back, 75 years after earning her master’s degree.
Letters to the Editor

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The spring semester is always an especially busy time of year in the graduate school. In early January departments undertake the review of the sometimes hundreds of applications they receive for admission to the doctoral programs, soon to be followed by the review of master’s applications. Finalists are invited to campus so that they may familiarize themselves with the department, the faculty, the city, and their potential graduate colleagues in a dance of intellectual seduction. Doctoral applicants have until April 15 to accept or decline an offer of admission to a Ph.D. program, whereas master’s admissions are done on a rolling basis until early June. The remainder of the semester and the summer will be spent preparing to receive this new cohort of students into their expectant graduate programs.

Additionally, during the spring semester, the dean and the school’s senior staff meet individually with all graduate departments and programs to assess the health of the unit and to discuss any challenges and concerns about the graduate operation. This intense activity brings home concretely the overarching responsibility that GSAS has to its departments and students. Our interviews engage departments from Anthropology to Italian to Physics, but the questions asked are quite similar. How are your current students doing and when will the most advanced among them finish? What kind of pedagogical training are they receiving? How are you preparing them for an increasingly demanding job market? What resources do you need to run the highest quality master’s program? The questions reflect one of the principal charges of the Graduate School: to look after the well-being of our students across all research disciplines and divisions of the university.

While at Columbia, the intellectual and social lives of our graduate students revolve principally around their department or program. Classes, lectures, workshops, social events, colloquia, etc., create in the aggregate a rich context for both graduate students and faculty, and for the former the opportunity to be exposed to the rituals and conventions of their chosen discipline. These departmental and program settings are so diverse and self-contained that the experiences that arise from them may be felt by the students in them to be distinct and sui generis. For instance, a student in the Department of French and Romance Philology will have a very different existential and intellectual experience of graduate school than a graduate colleague in History, or another in Mathematics. Their paths through graduate education at Columbia will be quite distinct, but in the end the substantial majority will go on to graduate and become alumni of GSAS.

This extensive and welcome variety in student experience is one of the reasons why graduate school is a particularly exhilarating context. One only has to read the extraordinary range of titles of dissertations defended and thesis prospectuses now published in each issue of 109Low to get a sense of this heady mix of research topics and projects—as well as of the parallel existence of myriad graduate research activities going on in all campuses, from Morningside to the Medical Center to the Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory. But if students remain ensconced in their departments and programs they may never be exposed to this enormously diverse activity going on around them, sometimes even unbeknownst to them. This is why GSAS has secured funding for the creation of a graduate student center that will serve as a place where students may find their intellectual interlocutors outside their own departments and programs. Located in Philosophy Hall, the center will join rooms 301 and 302 to create a multipurpose space that will allow graduate students from all over campus to work, meet, relax, and hold student-sponsored lectures and conferences. A café will serve beverages and light fare throughout the day as well. The center is currently scheduled for inauguration in fall 2013.

Initiatives such as this graduate center are important because they lead students to realize that they are part of a larger dimension of this university, one that transcends their specific graduate program or department. This will, in turn, make visible to them the work that GSAS undertakes for its graduate students year-round, and for which we only ask that they thrive and excel in their chosen intellectual path. 🌐
n recent years the expansive field of the digital humanities—which entails everything from computer simulations of historical environments to GIS mapping of archaeological sites to digital analysis of texts, to cite only a few ways in which digital technology is now being employed in the humanities—has gained increasing prominence in academe. But the diversity of the digital humanities is rarely reflected in the discourse surrounding it; instead, the new field is often presented either as the savior of the humanities or the fad du jour. Columbia faculty and students are among those on the vanguard helping to move beyond this reductive binary as they think through—and implement—the use of digital tools methodologically, pedagogically, and professionally.

Graham Sack is one such researcher. A Ph.D. student in English and comparative literature, Sack is using textual analysis to study 19th-century British novels. As an undergraduate student in physics and a master’s student in economics, he always had a passion for literature but couldn’t reconcile his interests in quantitative work and culture until he took a literature course as a non-degree student at Columbia and read Charles Dickens’ *Bleak House*, which he notes “connects huge numbers of characters in strange and unlikely ways.” Sack decided to quantify the social connections in the novel using...
network analysis, a method more often found in the social sciences. “Novels can be thought of as imaginary social forums,” he remarks. “One of the functions they serve is as the representation of the social experience…I decided to use social network metrics to look at the levels of connections in *Bleak House* versus other novels. At first, it was all manual. I went through the text and tried to figure out how everyone was connected to everyone else.” The paper took him two years to complete.

One of the digital humanities’ greatest benefits, states Nicholas Dames, chair of Columbia’s Department of English and Comparative Literature, is the ability to process countless works in a manner that is impossible for the individual scholar on his own: “Quantitative methods allow you to see aspects about literary form that you hadn’t seen and track the development of certain elements of literature over time more effectively than if you were to read every novel written between 1750 and 1950.” Dames is careful to stress, however, that quantitative methods alone are not enough: one must also be “sympathetic to the literary qualities of a project.” The work of digital humanist Dennis Yi Tenen, who was recently appointed to the Columbia English department as assistant professor of digital humanities and new media beginning in fall 2012, is a case in point. After working as a software

**The Ambassadors (Henry James)**

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<th>General Features:</th>
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<td>Small network (12 characters)</td>
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<td>No isolates</td>
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<td>Very high graph density (71%) and clustering coefficient (85%)</td>
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<td>Low average path length (1.3)</td>
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<td>Low degree inequality (-4.9)</td>
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<td>High proportion of strong ties (28%)</td>
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**Conclusions**

- Tightly knit social world focused on deep relationships between small set of characters
- Social interaction broadly and evenly distributed across characters
developer and web designer, Tenen, currently a fellow at Harvard’s Berkman Center for Internet and Society, earned his Ph.D. from Harvard in comparative literature in 2011 and is currently working on a book on the poetics of human-computer interaction.

Sack’s work evinces a similar marriage of method and literary sensibility. When he began the Ph.D. program in English, he knew he wanted to delve deeper into his study of representations of social interaction. “To do that, I have to look at as many interactions as possible, which cannot be done manually or with a large number of texts,” he notes. Instead he employs automated text analysis, name recognition, network analysis, and statistical analysis software. What he found was that Bleak House had an unusually high graph density, a ratio of maximum connections within one group. Social groups in real life have densities around 15 percent. Novels average graph densities near 40 percent. The density of Bleak House is 80 percent.

Sack has since created sixty networks of separate British novels using text analysis data that he converts into visual graphs. The density and types of social connections he has found have shed light on genre, period, and character as well as the unique qualities of individual books. “Each book has a different pattern,” Sack says. “The Ambassadors is a well-connected, small group. The Pickwick Papers is more centralized and larger.” The broad scope that digital tools offer has also been instrumental in suggesting new subjects of inquiry, including questions unlikely to arise through close reading. “When I began this study, I thought it would be about the networks,” Sack remarks. “But along the way, I found other things I could not explain. …In The Pickwick Papers, a majority of the characters are mentioned only a smattering of times, and readers don’t remember them. I find it fascinating that a majority of characters are there to be forgotten. They serve as narrative scaffolding.”
While the digital humanities is primarily conceived as a new field of research, digital tools can also be used to enhance the classroom experience. Steve Baker, an Italian Ph.D. student, brought his background as a filmmaker to his work teaching intermediate-level Italian. His students use digital storytelling for their final projects on various Italian cities. “I grew tired of students always using PowerPoint for a presentation. For language class, they were simply reading off the slides. When you have students for four semesters in a row, you want to push them. Students are savvy with PowerPoint, and I wanted to take it to the next level.”

Baker’s students use software freely available on the Internet to record voiceovers, analyze information, and edit their final projects—an interactive process that lasts all semester and functions as a continuous thread in the subject matter, in contrast to the chapter-driven study often used in language classes. Baker’s approach fully engages a student’s ability to write, listen to, and speak Italian, and he finds that students love it. “It’s amazing what happens when students are allowed to be more creative in class,” he says. “Even the most reserved students thrive. And the viewing of the projects at the end of term allows for a moment of reflection, a deeper understanding of the subject and of what they’ve learned.” Baker’s use of digital tools in his teaching was so successful that it has been shared with other language departments on campus and adopted by all intermediate Italian instructors.

While the work of Sack and Baker illustrates some of the beneficial outcomes of applying digital technology to the humanities, not everyone is convinced. Some critics see a kind of triumphalism in the advocacy of the digital humanities’ most vocal proponents, while others argue that the field is inherently limiting. Nonetheless, the new prominence of digital humanities raises questions about what constitutes the study of literature (or history, philosophy, or any of the other humanities).
and how these disciplines can incorporate differing modes of scholarship. In the case of literature, a variety of interpretive methods have been employed in the course of more than two millennia of literary criticism, from the prescriptions of Aristotle and Horace to New Criticism, reader-response theory, and deconstruction—all, however, grounded in the relationship between the reader/spectator and the text. In the digital humanities, this relationship is no longer primary, but rather mediated by a computer’s Boolean logic. There is also a tendency to view the results of a given query as objective, although Sack is careful to guard against that conclusion. “I think an objection that comes up with this research is the sense that the data speaks for itself and is judgment-free,” he says. “I am hyperaware that there is always subjectivity built into [my] datasets .... I try to be upfront about the kind of assumptions I’m making.”

The digital humanities may also effect changes in pedagogy. After a widely publicized study noted that many members of the so-called “digital native” generation—a today’s undergraduates—were in fact largely ignorant of the logic underpinning search engines, some scholars have argued that digital tools should be integrated more fully into the classroom. While Baker’s use of digital tools complements the aim of his language-instruction courses, Dames notes that teachers of literature courses will soon be at a crossroads. “There used to be a seamless sense that we teach close reading in the classroom, and that’s what we do in our scholarly life—we teach the methods we ourselves use,” he remarks. “That wouldn’t be the case anymore. I believe in the value of close reading ... but how do we explain the disjunction between what we teach and what we practice? That will be a serious question in the future.”

Scholars may also face a rift professionally, since many traditional humanists—including many who make hiring decisions—have not been trained in the methods of quantitative evaluation. “Everyone shouldn’t be doing statistical analysis, it isn’t for everybody,” Bob Scott of the Digital Humanities Center says. “But everyone should understand how it is done and what’s involved or they won’t be able to reasonably deal with it.” The Digital Humanities Center aims to provide students and faculty with training and assistance to use digital tools. The center will move to new facilities in Butler Library next year, and Scott intends to work with other digital offices on campus and academic departments to collectively identify and meet research needs. “I am eager to have conversations with faculty and bring on board more departments to see what they would like us to provide,” he says. Scott also plans to involve more gradu-
For Dames, the importance of digital humanities research lies in its ability to “produce an audience that gives others a sense of community where certain new questions may be asked.”

### Digital Humanities Projects at Columbia

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<td>Susan Boynton, Music <strong>Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts</strong></td>
<td>Center for Jazz Studies <strong>Jazz Studies Online</strong></td>
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<td>Stephen Murray, Art History and Archaeology <strong>Mapping Gothic France</strong></td>
<td>Center for Oral History <strong>Apollo Theater Project</strong></td>
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<td>Carol Schulz, East Asian Languages and Cultures <strong>Korean Through Drama</strong></td>
<td>School of the Arts, Film Division <strong>Film Language Glossary</strong></td>
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<td>Gray Tuttle, East Asian Languages and Cultures <strong>Engaging Digital Tibet</strong></td>
<td>Teachers College <strong>Mapping the African-American Past</strong></td>
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ate students in the center by establishing a humanities libraries fellows program for students from various departments whose research involves the use of technology. The fellows program will include a residency at the center and training in digital methodology.

Yet even as scholars become more comfortable employing digital technology, it remains to be seen whether the digital humanities will truly constitute an irruption that transforms the way humanities scholarship is conducted or become just another element in a scholar’s professional toolkit. For Dames, the importance of digital humanities research lies in its ability to “produce an audience that gives others a sense of community where certain new questions may be asked.” Digital humanities may not replace traditional methods, but simply expand the methodology used. Dames states it simply: “There is no separation. It should be a difference of method, not canon.” 🌐
The Other Side of Inequality

Colonel and Mrs. John Jacob Astor IV aboard the Titanic
The widening gap between rich and poor is the central focus of the Occupy movement, and one of the most pressing issues in the upcoming presidential election. Contrary to how it may feel on the ground, however, the gap is widening not because of spiraling poverty, but because of increasing wealth. From 1979 to 2007, the income of the richest 1 percent of American households increased by 224 percent, with the income of the richest .1 percent increasing by 390 percent; conversely, over the same period of time, the bottom 90 percent of Americans experienced income growth of 5 percent. This period of growing inequality has challenged sociologists, since many of the traditional barriers to wealth and status such as class, gender and race, have become more permeable. Today’s elite look different from those of the 1960s. What, then, is happening?
Columbia sociologist Shamus Khan’s new book, *Exceptional: The Elites of New York and the Story of Inequality* (Princeton University Press, forthcoming), seeks to show that there is far more going on in the higher echelons of society than the accumulation of wealth. Becoming and staying elite means navigating a complex culture of arcane ritual and coded communication.

To understand the development of this unique subculture, Khan turned first to the New York Public Library, where, as a Cullman Center Fellow, he had unfettered access to the Astor Family Papers, a treasure trove of documents that once belonged to one of New York’s most prominent families. Khan’s ongoing research into the august Astor family will provide a narrative backbone for his study of the city’s elites. The archive contains a written record of how the Astor family long ago negotiated its lofty status and was able to remain at the center of the city’s social world despite massive socioeconomic changes in New York City. Among Khan’s finds are letters exchanged during courtships in the Gilded Age, a time when the Astor family ballroom was considered the very core of American high society. The letters reveal an elaborate system of determining marriageability and tense negotiations over what were “almost but not quite” arranged marriages.

Once the historical research is complete, Khan will don coat and tie and attend dozens of formal events frequented by New York’s contemporary elite. Working one’s way into high society might sound fun, but Khan will have to gain the trust of subjects while remaining detached enough to watch for patterns of behavior and take detailed notes. “It is not what they say so much as what they do,” says Khan. To ensure his subjects remain unperturbed, Khan will have to participate in the rituals he observes.

This is not the first time the professor has infiltrated America’s elite to conduct ethnographic research; Khan returned to teach at his boarding school as part of his research for *Privilege: The Making of an Adolescent Elite at St. Paul’s School* (Princeton University Press, 2011). He lived and dined with students for over a year, and found a place very different from what he remembered of his student days. For instance, minority students were no longer confined to their own dorm, and students sneered at peers who acted entitled to the sumptuous social and educational experience they received at St. Paul’s. In other words, pedigree no longer mattered—students and faculty admired hard work and achievement instead of nobility, imagining themselves the products of a perfect meritocracy that allowed them to forget the advantages they had over their counterparts. What constituted hard work was
being redefined at St. Paul’s.

Khan described an institutional shift from a preference for gaining knowledge to one of valuing “a style of learning that quickly becomes a style of living.” At St. Paul’s, students internalized three lessons: “that hierarchies are natural and can be treated like ladders, not ceilings”; that “experiences matter,” meaning that hard work and talent, rather than pedigree, help one climb the ladder; and finally, that “privilege means being at ease, no matter what the context” and that confidence helps ordinary but talented people ascend hierarchies “by naturalizing socially produced distinctions.”

As privileged as the multinational, multiethnic population at St. Paul’s was, Khan found that race, class, and gender still functioned as significant social markers that belied the “ease” assumed by upper-class Caucasian males who imagined themselves the products of a pure meritocracy.

Professor Khan’s classes at Columbia reflect his commitment to ethnographic research. During the spring of 2011 he took students from his “Elites in Democratic America” class to visit the Seventh Regiment Armory on Park Avenue, a massive Beaux Arts structure and a monument to the inequality of the Gilded Age.

“At back then there was no safety net,” explains Khan. The threat of a populist revolt loomed large as the immigrant population south of the Bowery swelled. “As

anxieties about the people grew,” says Khan, “the elite moved north... and took their army with them.” They built a barracks large enough to fit almost all of the city’s wealthy families inside. Louis Comfort Tiffany was even commissioned to design some of the Armory’s interior spaces.

Khan joined the Columbia faculty in 2008, becoming a fellow at the Institute for Social Economic Research and Policy (ISERP) and directing both the Culture in the Social Sciences research group and the Elite Research Network. Despite being on academic leave this semester to do research as a Cullman Fellow, Khan became a sort of master of ceremonies for this generation’s own populist movement, Occupy Wall Street, by accompanying several groups of people to the site as observers, among them his department chair, Professor Yinon Cohen.

At the end of his introduction to Privilege: The Making of an Adolescent Elite at St. Paul’s School, Khan writes that despite the fact that many of the 20th-century battles of access have been won, “the results have not been what we imagined. The promise of the open society has proven to be a fiction. Twenty-first century America is increasingly open yet relentlessly unequal. Our next great American project is to find a way out of this paradox.”
Remembering Václav Havel

by Robert Ast

Following Václav Havel’s death in December at Hrádeček, his country home in northern Bohemia, obituaries from all over the world focused on the many signposts of his eventful life: the privileged upbringing that became a liability once Czechoslovakia fell under the sway of Communism; his early successes as a playwright trafficking in an absurdist idiom that portrayed the exigencies and entanglements of Communist society and modern life more broadly; his role as a dissident who challenged the Communist regime as an author of Charter 77, a document protesting the state’s human rights abuses that gave its name to a social movement and ultimately led him to spend years in prison, charged with subversion; and his 12-year tenure as head of state, first of Czechoslovakia and then, following the country’s 1993 dissolution, of the Czech Republic.

With so much ground to cover, it is not surprising that Havel’s obituaries largely omitted his visits to New York over the years, though the city had an outsize influence on his life. In his presidential memoir, To The Castle and Back, Havel recalls his first visit to New York in the spring of 1968, when the Prague Spring made it possible for him to witness Joseph Papp’s staging of his play The Memorandum at the Public Theater:

“The hippie movement was at its height. There were be-ins in Central Park. People were festooned with beads. It was the time of the musical Hair. … It was the time when Martin Luther King Jr. was killed, a period of huge anticwar demonstrations whose inner ethos—powerful...
Christopher Harwood, a lecturer in Czech in the Columbia Department of Slavic Languages, notes that Havel’s visit to New York occurred at a crucial moment, both in Havel’s life and in 20th-century Czech history. “I think New York had a very special place in his imagination because of that experience. Not only was his play produced here and well acclaimed, but it was also his first trip abroad, in the one little window before the Soviet tanks came in. I think later, when he thought of the Prague Spring, he thought of the opportunity to come to New York and see New York at a moment when there were interesting things going on culturally and socially, and when he was young enough for everything to resonate with him.”

Havel’s next visit to the United States was in 1990 (and included a stop at Columbia, where he received an honorary doctorate). He was president of Czechoslovakia and only saw America “from a speeding limousine,” as he recalled. It was only after his tenure as head of state ended in 2003 that he was able to visit the U.S. with something like the freedom of movement he’d initially enjoyed—first as the Kluge Chair for Modern Culture at the Library of Congress in the spring of 2005, and then as Columbia’s first artist in residence in the fall of 2006.

The brainchild of University President Lee Bollinger, Havel’s residency was administered by the fledgling Arts Initiative, which was launched in 2003 under the leadership of theater director Gregory Mosher. “As President Bollinger walked me to the door the day he hired me in fall 2003, he told me he’d asked President Havel to come to Columbia, but that the visit was unconfirmed, and asked if I’d like to take on that venture,” Mosher, now a professor in Columbia’s School of the Arts, recalled.

“Not surprisingly, it took over two years, and many phone calls to arrange a meeting with President Havel, but we finally met in Prague in January 2006, after I’d told his office that I ‘was going to be there anyway.’ He was very interested, not least because it would provide some time to finish a play he’d abandoned when he assumed the Presidency.” Havel’s schedule couldn’t be confirmed until late spring, however, which left Arts Initiative staff only a few months to plan a residency that would begin in October.

“We knew from the first that we didn’t want to squander a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, so we assembled a formidable advisory committee of distinguished New Yorkers and reached out across the University and the city for ideas and partners,” Mosher recalled. “The high regard so many in the artistic, civic, and political communities had for Havel meant we could reach out to a remarkable list of individuals and institutions. We welcomed anyone who wanted to play, and were fortunate that so many so generously did.”

In addition to the major events intended to serve as “tentpoles” of the residency, such as a course-wide lecture for the undergraduate Contemporary Civilization class and a discussion with President Bill Clinton, the Arts Initiative aimed to present a comprehensive slate of events that would not only do justice to Havel’s accomplishments in the artistic and political arenas, but present them as the integrated phenomena they were in his life.

Events ranged from a conversation on literature and citizenship between Orhan Pamuk, a novelist who had just been announced as the 2006 Nobel laureate in literature, and Columbia professor Arthur Danto, Ph.D. ’52, Philosophy, to a concert at The Cutting Room by the Plastic People of the Universe, the Czech band whose arrest prompted Havel and others to draft Charter 77, to readings and performances of many of Havel’s plays. In promoting them, though, the Arts Initiative faced a considerable obstacle.

“Our biggest problem was of course that almost none of the students were old enough to have had any connection to the events of 1989,” Mosher recalls. “We knew, anecdotally if not scientifically, that the students didn’t know who he was. So we had to instill curiosity before we had the big name guests, which we did through a wide variety of means, such as the Havel at Columbia plastic water bottles, which prompted the famous ‘Cool—what’s a Havel?’ comment.”

Perhaps the most significant mode of outreach was the residency website, which functioned as both a pedagogical resource—Havel’s play The Garden Party and his exegesis of life under Communism, “The Power of the Powerless,” had, somewhat controversially, been inserted into the undergraduate Core Curriculum—and a window on the residency to the rest of the world,” said the project’s supervisor, Mark
Havel's Beggar's Opera
Barnard Theatre Department
and The Harriman Institute
Miller Theater
December 2, 2006

**INSERT:**

In strict confidence – let me tell you what I’ve just heard from my friend: Havel is now being interrogated by the secret police three times a week for hours on end (sometimes they stay in his house till 5 A.M.) I’m telling you this, so you’d know that his situation continues to be very dangerous and that we must not relax in our efforts to help him. I’m also telling you so you’d know that everything we can do for him makes sense – and that I’m deeply grateful for all you’ve done!
Phillipson, senior program specialist at the Columbia Center for New Media Teaching and Learning.

Featuring primary sources and video interviews from a remarkable array of individuals—including George H.W. Bush, George Soros, Edward Albee, and Lou Reed—and anticipating some aspects of today’s curatorial Internet, the site offers an introduction to the breadth of Havel’s influence and allows visitors to collect, organize, and repurpose information from disparate sources.

“Havel’s name opened doors,” Phillipson said. “We had all these wonderful interviews, and, for example, CNN gave us archival footage of the Velvet Revolution that hadn’t been broadcast—a standard meeting of Charter 77 leaders that was disrupted halfway through by the news that the entire Communist apparatus had stepped down. You see the raw history, the outtakes left on the cutting-room floor, and then you have the option to republish it through some kind of interpretive framework.”

Today the site exists as a compendium of events held during the residency and a comprehensive source of information about Havel; especially noteworthy are the bibliography of his life and work and the collection of documents pertaining to Charter 77 from the recently established Center for Human Rights Documentation and Research at the Columbia Libraries.

“In building the site we tried to find information about his previous trips to Columbia, and all we could find were a couple of newspaper articles,” Phillipson said. “We’ve captured so much—all the performances, panel
discussions, all these interviews … it’s a scandalously rich website for something we put together in four months.”

Like the residency itself, the website required an unprecedented degree of collaboration among different parts of the University—from the Libraries’ digitization of documents to coordinating filming of performances by the Barnard and School of the Arts theatre departments—and that spirit of cooperation is one of the enduring legacies of the residency.

“President Bollinger’s hunch that Havel would enliven the campus proved to be a good one, because by the end of the residency, the playwright/president was the reigning rock star of Morningside Heights,” Mosher said. “The Arts Initiative staff worked like crazy to support that hunch, and it was realized through the commitment of hundreds of people who had been inspired by Havel and who wanted to pass along, in the best tradition of a university, their experience to another generation that we trusted would be moved by his intelligence, courage, wit, and grace.” Bollinger agrees, noting the importance that the residency had in establishing the Arts Initiative. “[The residency] captured the ambition of our still-young Arts Initiative, which had been launched two years earlier to help the arts take their proper place in Columbia’s interdisciplinary approach to making sense of complex global problems,” he said. “The dozens of symposia and performances on the themes of art, freedom, and democratic citizenship produced by Václav’s residency, including his memorable conversation with President Clinton, deserve credit for helping to make the Arts Initiative what it is today. To be with him enriched our lives.”

The residency also presented an opportunity for Havel. “His time on Morningside Heights came at a moment when he was reflecting on his life and the historical period into which he was thrust as a leader and voice of conscience,” Bollinger recalled. Havel had just published his presidential memoir, To The Castle and Back, and was working on Leaving, his first new play since assuming office. A meditation on power, succession, and personal and public memory, Leaving centers on Vilem Rieger, who has recently resigned as head of state but is in no hurry to move out of his official residence. The play revisits many of Havel’s themes and tropes and playfully juxtaposes notions of authorial subjectivity and his own political persona with references to King Lear and The Cherry Orchard. Havel wrote most of Leaving during his residency, and Harwood notes that the play is “a nice legacy that Columbia has.”

Havel’s own legacy is slightly more secure than his protagonist’s. Though his acclaim abroad has always outpaced his popularity at home, Havel’s role in guiding the country out of Communism occupies a pivotal role in Czech history, and the Arab Spring has revived interest in his generation’s different, but analogous struggle for human rights.

“He left a huge chapter—not singlehandedly, but with the other dissidents of his time—in the discourse of human rights,” Harwood said. “They brought it to a prominence it had never had before, and going forward people who want to have a global outlook on human rights as well as understand how to advocate for and practically enact them will have to keep reading Havel for a long time.”
For the 2011-12 academic year, five GSAS students received research grants from the National Science Foundation (NSF). The variety of research subjects demonstrate the breadth of inquiry that the NSF funds, from archaeological exploration to statistical analysis.

Interviews conducted by Kristin Balicki

Justin Anspach, Cusco

Justin Anspach

Department and Program: Anthropology, Ph.D.

Undergraduate Institution: Grinnell College

How did you become interested in anthropology?

I was first introduced to anthropology at Grinnell in a strange class called “The Anthropology of Bigfoot, Sasquatch, and Yeti.” They were trying to do a class that wasn’t as disciplined and academically oriented, where we could mess around with it and have fun and write papers, as an introduction to get us used to college. The final paper was “Does Bigfoot Exist, Yes or No?”

May I ask what you concluded?

I definitely came down on yes. The best part of the class was looking at different types of evidence. We looked at scientific evidence, interviews, ethnographic mythological histories, and then we had to decide how much weight to put on all of it.

I thought, “Well, what if I want to give weight to the fact that I think oral histories are just as important as whether or not we actually have a documented piece of fur or a bone?” I began to question how much weight we currently put on certain sources of information in Western academia and how much weight we don’t put on other sources. And that did it for me. I said, “All right. Anthropology is where I want to go. I want to start studying people and cultures.”

We all engage with this world in different ways and give it meaning and importance. And each of those ways has become essential and fundamental to a different group of people for different reasons. And I think that’s fascinating. I think they should all be given a voice.

What’s the subject of your research?

I’m basing my research on the phenomenology of the Sacred Valley around Cusco, which is a very narrow area around the old Inca capital that’s extremely developed, with tons and tons of built environment—carved rocks,
shaped streams, fountains. Instead of looking at them as architectural layouts in temples, I’m trying to look at them as sensual experiences.

When people were there at these sites listening to the fountains and seeing how the light was hitting the rocks and stones, what kind of corporeal experience would they have had? How does that carry over into the ethnographic, historic, and chronological records we have? I’m trying to recreate what would’ve actually been an experience in that time instead of just remains in the modern day.

**And how are you doing that?**

There are several streams that come down into Cusco, and each one of them has its own valley. I’m looking at one of those valleys, and we’re GIS mapping it and building some 3D models of what it would’ve looked like without the modern buildings that are in the valley and without a lot of the eucalyptus trees that were brought in by the Spanish.

We’re trying to show what an environment would’ve looked like with fountains running down both sides so that you have a valley that’s filled with the sound of running water, light reflecting off these fountains, these temples which have been knocked down would be set high on the hills and loomed over the travelers as they came down the valley.

The idea that you can have free-flowing fountains—especially in the Andes, which are really dry—shows this ability to both work with and control the environment. The Inca were very much into propaganda, so their ability to make the environment itself propaganda for the empire is important. Our goal is to give people an actual recreation of what that environment would’ve felt like.

**Did you have a tech background to be able to work with the GIS mapping?**

I had to learn all of that here. That’s one of the wonderful things about Columbia. When I was applying to different schools, some of them have departments that are very segregated. It’s hard to take classes across them. But when I came to interview at the archaeology department, they said, “No, you should take history classes, anthropology classes.” So I was able to take a GIS class, a Latin American history class, where we were looking at some of the earliest documents that came out of there and were written by Spanish soldiers that arrived, a Peruvian art history class where we look at some of the murals and drawings and ethnography as well. I’ve also taken Quechua language classes and learned the native language – at NYU actually, through the consortium. I’m trying to catch a lot of different sources of information that wouldn’t normally fall under archaeology.

**What are some of the greatest challenges and obstacles you’ve had to face during your research?**

Trying to do this kind of work ten years ago would’ve been almost impossible. It’s a new field that Terry D’Altroy, who is my direct supervisor and one of the world’s foremost experts on the Inca and the Quechua people, and I and a few others are working in, and we’re calling it ethnoarchaeology, a way of looking at how the past is still carrying into and manipulating the present, and how people are drawing on that past.

So I’m very lucky in that archeologists themselves have begun to recognize that the sources of information are a lot broader than they have been in the past. Every once in awhile, I do run into somebody who doesn’t consider what I do archaeology – especially funding sources, which tend to be a lot more conservative most of the time. Fortunately, the NSF was willing.

When they saw my project, they essentially said, “We want to be on the cutting edge. We know you’re exploring something new and it’s going to be difficult. Because of that, you’re blazing a new trail and the information may be a little bit harder to get. It’s not an easy project at all. It’s a difficult project.” So I was happy that they were willing to take a chance on that and try to explore new areas of knowledge.

I think the NSF recently has realized that they want research that spans several fields and tries to draw on several sources of knowledge and creates more communication. There’s been too much of people getting into their field and they don’t realize these larger issues that they can actually collaborate on and bring knowledge together on. There’s also been some fear in academia, that you don’t want to share information sometimes because you’re worried about somebody else taking it or you’re not getting the right credit.

And it’s losing the focus of what we’re supposed to be doing, which is trying to make the world a better place through knowledge. And that was one of the things I was able to draw out of my projects. I want to spread this knowledge. I want to create an online forum as well, where people from the area that we’re studying can contribute as much as they’re able to. I want their voices in it as well. I think that was one of the things that impressed itself on the NSF, that I wanted a multifocal project where everyone had a voice and everyone had a say in creating this collaborative project that other people can continue to contribute to even after I’ve finished.

**Tell me more about this collaborative project.**

One of the goals with the data, eventually, is to create a website that is based on the map of the Cusco Sacred Valley. And people would be able to go to this map and traverse these landscapes virtually. In the process of doing so, they can discover what different chroniclers and researchers have written about different spots. They can also read about the people who still live there, when they came there, and what they’re doing now – and how they see the sites.

It’s not just the academic voice anymore, but layers of voices: Is there a farmer that lives there now? When did they get the land? What are they doing with it? What difficulties are they facing now? Where do they see it going in the future?

I want it to be open, where people can continue to add information to it if they’ve contacted and verified. It can become something that people can continuously see how this valley has changed over time and how it contains information that wouldn’t normally be available to a strict archaeological study.
James Cornwell

Department and Program: Psychology, Ph.D.

Undergraduate Institution: New York University

How did you first become interested in psychology, and what led you to Columbia?

I became interested in psychology while I was an undergraduate at NYU. I was interested in moral and political differences, and how and why people are motivated to maintain and argue their beliefs.

During my studies as an undergraduate, I was introduced to the theories of Walter Mischel and E. Tory Higgins, both of whom are faculty here at Columbia. I found their approaches extremely useful in explaining different aspects of human behavior, and they provide a great framework to explore the subjects which are of interest to me. I was drawn to Columbia in particular among other graduate programs because of its incredibly collegial atmosphere, and its continuing emphasis on multi-level and interdisciplinary approaches to research.

What was your NSF proposal?

My NSF proposal was a series of studies to examine the motivational underpinnings of political beliefs that have a moral foundation in order to understand the intractable nature of many of the debates in our current political environment. This research is part of a larger program of research attempting to understand the motivations underlying our moral judgments and ethical decisions.

Tell me more about your research.

I’m researching three things in particular. First, I’m interested in the motivational grounding behind particular political positions based on moral values, and how we can influence those who hold these positions to make them more amenable to constructive debate, rather than having them “dig in” in an unproductive way and contribute to the perceived polarization of many issues. Second, I’m interested in how standards of moral excellence (i.e., virtues) differentially influence or motivate behaviors compared to standards of moral expectations (i.e., duties), particularly in the area of generous or charitable behaviors. Third, I’m interested in how what we learn about these two questions can be built into existing theoretical models of motivation and decision-making within psychology.

Do you have an objective in your research?

I’d say the closest thing I have to an agenda in my research is to try to rehabilitate the idea that morality is integral to a good and fulfilling life. Typically, the emotions one finds associated with morality these days are negative emotions like guilt, and morality is seen primarily as a means to avoiding them. However, historically, morality has been much more closely associated with happiness, and I think there may be a way to get back to that idea empirically via psychology.

How has the NSF grant affected your studies?

In some ways, the NSF grant has made research more flexible. It has freed me to focus my time and resources on projects of my own choosing (although this was largely the case prior to receiving the fellowship as well; our department is very good about this). It also opens up the possibility of an additional year of funding from the university, so I don’t have to feel rushed to complete my dissertation, and I can focus on making it the best quality work possible.

Do you plan to do anything more with your research once your dissertation is complete?

Well, like most graduate students in my position, ideally I’d like to see my work published. I also hope to continue the lines of research I’ve begun here in post-doctoral or faculty positions at other universities in the future.

What are your plans after graduation?

That’s still a long way off, but at the moment I hope to be teaching and doing research at a university in an environment similar to the one I’ve found at Columbia.
Cassandra Nader

Department and Program: Statistics, Quantitative Methods in the Social Sciences M.A.
Undergraduate Institution: Stanford University

What’s the subject of your research?

In the past decade, there has been a lot of focus on test scores as measures of teacher and school performance. In a sense, we have been using test scores to determine whether schools are adequately preparing students to be competitive 21st-century workers after secondary school.

I am interested in looking at the “non-cognitive” side of what students accumulate by the end of K-12 schooling—skills like persistence, attentiveness, and cooperation with others—and relating these to earnings and employment after high school, particularly for low-income students who enter the low-wage labor market directly after high school. I suspect that there are also non-cognitive achievement gaps that have largely been overlooked when creating accountability standards for schools, gaps that correspond to the test score achievement gaps by race and socioeconomic status that we have documented so well.

I will be using data on high school students collected by the National Center for Education Statistics from 2002 to 2006 to predict earnings and unemployment outcomes for students in the labor market using both their cognitive and non-cognitive skills gained by the end of high school. I will also be comparing the magnitude of achievement gaps in non-cognitive skills to the magnitude of the test score gap by socioeconomic status in particular.

How did you find your way to this topic?

Since I first began doing quantitative research, I have always been interested in issues of educational equity. In Germany, I conducted a small study comparing immigrant and native German university students’ perceptions of the value of higher education and a university diploma. I wanted to investigate the persistent issue of inequality between immigrant and native German students in college access and completion in the German education system, a situation that in many ways mirrors our own in the United States.

For my undergraduate honors thesis the following year, I compared language minority students to non-language minority students on reading achievement and motivation, with a special focus on the role that home and school contexts play in these factors during the transition from elementary to middle school. After realizing that socioeconomic status was the primary driver of the gaps in reading achievement that I found between the two groups, I wanted to look more deeply into achievement gaps by family income and education. I also wanted to participate in the ongoing debate about the appropriateness of test scores as measures of teacher and school quality. My current topic has been a natural outgrowth of these long-standing interests.

Your undergraduate major was English, but your current research interest has a broader, interdisciplinary scope. Had you studied economics and psychology before you began your master’s program?

Although I always found my studies of English to be very valuable, I was constantly looking for ways to broaden my knowledge of social processes through statistical analysis. The great thing about learning social science through research is that you get to test the theories out for yourself rather than learning them second-hand from a textbook. Until this year, I had mostly explored the psychological literature around education and hadn’t delved much into the economics literature. The newness of the personality and economics literature for me makes my current research all the more exciting.

How has the NSF research grant helped you conduct your research?

My NSF fellowship has been indispensable to me in conducting my research. The flexibility of the NSF fellowship has allowed me to enter an interdisciplinary, research-based master’s program, in which I have been able to ground my research in quantitative psychology while drawing on the best theories and methodology available from other disciplines to study my topic. Columbia University and Teachers College in particular have given me access to the data I need for my research through the Community College Research Center—an opportunity I would not have had without the benefit of NSF support to carry out my graduate studies here. Particularly since my research aims to impact a population in need of support in the education system—low-income and minority students—I will eventually be able to disseminate my findings to a wider, interdisciplinary audience in the education community with NSF support.

In what spheres, and in what way, do you hope that your research will have an impact?

With No Child Left Behind (NCLB) still up for review, there is legislative room to change the single-minded focus on test scores that characterizes our nation’s current education policy. If test scores are indeed the most important factor in preparing the most disadvantaged students to succeed after high school, then we can continue with the current NCLB agenda. If, however, it turns out that other factors are equally or more important in predicting what makes a successful worker and citizen, then I hope my research will raise awareness about which attributes we should be developing in our students and how we can quantify and measure them as markers of student progress. This will be valuable information for education policymakers, principals, and teachers. Through their combined efforts, I hope my research will positively impact the population of low-income and minority students on which my study focuses.

I plan to publish my research after it is completed and work for a few years conducting quantitative research in the education policy arena. Eventually, I would like to return to graduate school and obtain a doctoral degree.
Laura Paler  
*Department and Program:  
Political Science, Ph.D.*  
*Undergraduate Institution:  
George Washington University*

**What led you into political science, and why did you choose Columbia?**

Growing up in Wisconsin, I read a lot of books about far-off places and distant countries. When I got the chance to go to George Washington, I jumped on it: I wanted to be in D.C., where policy was being made and there was a significant international component to life. After graduating, I worked in international development for about three years for the National Democratic Institute. I was working on the Asia program, so I spent time in China, Cambodia, and Hong Kong, actually implementing democracy programs. My specialty at that time was particularly in China, but what I had seen on the ground was very different from what I had learned in the classroom. When I was applying to go back to graduate school, Columbia had some professors who were very strong in China, and it was in New York and close to the UN and the policy world.

**What is your dissertation about?**

One of the persistent questions in political science is where government gets its revenue from. Whether government gets its revenue from taxes or other types of windfall—natural resources, oil, or gas—has a big impact on how government performs and on the relationship between governments and citizens. The idea is that when government gets its revenue from taxes, there are more incentives to be accountable and responsive to citizens. But when it’s getting its money from oil or from gas and other natural resources—there are higher levels of corruption, weaker accountability, and politicians have fewer incentives to be held accountable by its citizens, which creates some of the pervasive underlying development problems.

What I’m trying to do in my dissertation is use different empirical methods to distinguish which of these stories might actually be explaining things, or under what conditions, or how these different stories related to one another. I use a technique that’s common in political science, and also in developmental economics now, of field experiments, which involves a lot of field work and actually studying different interventions and randomly assigning people to treatment and control groups and using that to assess the empirical story.

**Which governments do you focus on?**

Most of the field work for my dissertation takes place in Indonesia. The questions are very microlevel. The dissertation itself focuses on how these different types of government revenue affect the political behavior of citizens: whether citizens are more likely to monitor their government, whether they’re more likely to turn out and vote or mobilize against government in protest, and whether they’re more likely to be critical of the coming political climates.

In one district in Indonesia I partnered with a bunch of local NGOs and we conducted a public awareness campaign, which had a number of different variations. Because of the way we designed the campaign and how we assigned people to it, I’m able to compare how people react differently depending on what version of the campaign they received, which lets me figure out how different revenue information and different information on government expenditures affected how people behave politically. The idea is to try to show some of the fundamental underlying relationships, even within one district in Indonesia.

**How did you design the public awareness campaign?**

It’s the exact same idea as for a clinical drug trial. If you want to test the effectiveness of a particular medicine, you have your trial group and your placebo group. So this is the same concept applied to the real social-science world. While I couldn’t randomize an actual tax, the behavioral exercises that I used make a very compelling case to say that these really simulate the core elements of an actual tax payment. So, looking at people who paid the tax, those who didn’t have to go through that experience in the campaign, and those who didn’t, we can examine how this idea that taxation creates a stronger sense of government accountability. But I also find, how is that to happen? The information also has to get to people. So if you provided people better information, there are different reasons for that that could suggest that there really is something to this idea that taxation creates a stronger sense of government accountability. So it’s the exact same idea as for a clinical drug trial, having better information is central to a lot of political science theories, and it’s also important to understand how people behave politically. For instance, in the tax group payment made by the district government people who pay the tax in the context of having better information on how government is spending money. So an overlap of that also looked at information. Another big concern is that people don’t have better information on how government is spending money. So an overlap of that with better information on how government is spending money.
overlapping experiment – that also led to higher levels of a willingness to learn about government and a greater participation in government.

In addition to your dissertation project, you’ve also worked on other field projects in Indonesia.

I’ve been involved so far in two big ones, and I have a new one that’s just starting. The first one I was involved with, as I mentioned, was funded by the World Bank and organized through my advisor. That was focused on Aceh, Indonesia, with the goal of looking at the causes of the 30-year conflict that lasted until 2005, shortly after the tsunami hit in 2004. The goal was to do a survey of civilians, former combatants, and village leaders to collect a lot of data. Instead of focusing on the causes of the conflict, we looked at why people joined the separatist insurgency and how post-conflict construction was going—what were people receiving? how was the rebuilding going?—and in particular at the effectiveness of one of the World Bank development interventions.

What did you find?

This was a community-driven development project, a type of development intervention that’s been getting a lot of acclaim for organizations like the World Bank. So in these interventions, villages are given cash grants—windfalls—and the idea is that the villages decide themselves how to spend that money.

Do they vote on it democratically?

Exactly. You introduce democratic institutions to make the process very transparent. You try to make it participatory and inclusive. Villages will come together and decide how to spend the money with the idea that the collective village decision making will lead to better outcomes because villages know what they want. But it’ll also lead to more satisfaction with decision-making because it’s going to be transparent and participatory. The goals of these projects are to promote development and improve social cohesion in the villages that receive them.

When we looked at how that money had actually been spent in villages, what they chose to spend the projects on was quite interesting. The result was some evidence of economic benefit, but not a lot. And there was also evidence that rather than strengthening social cohesion between different groups in the villages—like former combatants and civilians—there’s a chance that it might’ve exacerbated tensions between those groups.

Part of what I’m doing in my dissertation, with one of my papers, is looking a bit more deeply into how these villages use this money and how it might’ve affected dynamics between different competing groups in the villages. When you’re in a post-conflict society and you have a history of tensions between different groups that were involved in the conflict, a lot of the thinking behind these aid interventions is that you’re going to just drop money into these places and that’s going to help bring about welfare improvements and it’s going to make things better.

But it’s possible that that’s not necessarily the case; you have to pay attention to the underlying power dynamics. Research indicates that there are different conditions under which things might not improve, which maybe the development community hadn’t thought through clearly or been as aware of. In my dissertation I’m looking at the different contexts of the various power dynamics and how that affected how well this money was used, which contributes to a larger debate on aid effectiveness and post-conflict reconstruction.

So that was one project, and then the second project was my dissertation project.

And then there’s a third project?

The new one is very early stage. That’s to study a new World Bank intervention back in Aceh. That’s looking at the fact that a lot of the former combatants who were involved in the conflict have now gotten into illegal enterprises—illegal logging, for instance.

The World Bank had an idea for an intervention that would provide training and employment to at-risk youth to work in their communities as forest rangers and see if that created an exit opportunity for them to move out of illegal forest logging and into what they call a “noble profession.” So that again is an experiment where we’re studying the effect of being in that program, on how well at-risk youth respond. Does it improve their integration? Does it make them more likely to get married and have stable jobs and careers in the long run? Also, how do communities address environmental protection issues?

Is this going to be a longitudinal study?

It will take place over two to three years, so yes. There will be data collection at the beginning and end, over a two- or three-year period. Having three different NSF grants has freed me to go and work in the field with the World Bank from a very early stage in my career, where I developed the connections that have led to these follow-on projects, which is something I think will continue to be a part of my career going forward. So it’s nice to have had that in place. Already, I’m seeing the opportunities for new projects arising with these people I met early on.
Amelia Paukert

Department and Program: Earth and Environmental Sciences, Ph.D.

Undergraduate institution: University of Southern California

What sparked your interest in earth and environmental science?

I grew up on a farm in California, and we were always dealing with water issues for irrigation and flooding in the winter, which led to my interest in groundwater and water quality issues. At USC I studied geology and international relations, thinking I would go into international water policy—I wanted to be at the intersection of science and policy and was debating which way to go. After graduating I did a Fulbright in Kazakhstan, looking at implementation of international water rights treaties, and decided the world of policy was a little too personality-dependent.

I realized I wanted to be more on the science side, so that made me want to go to graduate school and get a Ph.D. in earth science. Columbia was one of the top programs for sequestrial chemistry, so when offered admission I decided to come here. In choosing a project, I wanted to do something that was international in scope and that had a direct societal impact. I met with Juerg Matter, who was working on carbon sequestering in Oman, looking at a natural system where groundwater is absorbing atmospheric carbon dioxide and turning into carbonate minerals, thereby combating the greenhouse effect. That sounded like an interesting project, so I joined it, and that’s what I’ve been working on for the last three and a half years.

Tell me a little bit more about your field work in Oman.

Oman basically has a piece of mantle rock and sea floor that has been lifted onto the surface of the earth. So it’s out of equilibrium at the surface. It should be at higher pressure and temperature, so it’s pretty reactive. It has a lot of magnesium in it, so when that rock reacts with water it releases its magnesium and some calcium, and then that combines with carbon dioxide to form these minerals that sequester atmospheric carbon dioxide. But it also makes the water high pH – it’s like pH 12. Not the kind of water you want to put your hands in, but it makes these gorgeous blue pools.

We go out to these springs and we sample water that’s emerging from the deep subsurface. So we go out every January and camp for two or three weeks and take a bunch of water samples and rock samples. I bring these back to the lab at Columbia and analyze them for composition and then use these real data to constrain a model.

We have a basic understanding of how this natural system reduces atmospheric carbon dioxide. But we have big questions like what’s the time scale for the natural system? What are the limiting factors? We’re trying to figure out if we can eventually enhance the natural process, so I’m creating a computer model for the natural system, constrained by real field data.

What would you say is the greatest challenge you’ve faced in your work thus far?

I guess it’s trying to get this model to mimic the natural system. The natural system is so complicated, and to understand it we really need to consider so many different angles. You have to consider the chemistry, the physics, sources of water, and mixing. It’s just a complicated system. So I think it’s hard to consider all the different factors. But it’s also important. Once you have a better understanding of how it works and how the same process works in other areas, then we can look at trying to use a natural process to combat global warming.

What are your plans for after graduation?

I enjoy teaching and research, so academia is an obvious pathway. Grading is always unpleasant, but actually teaching the class and getting to talk to the students is great. I think it’s exciting to see when a concept goes from being confusing to when the light bulb goes on and they get it and get interested.

But I’m also considering research with a national lab. It could be interesting to do something policy-related but still science-oriented. Once we have a better understanding of how this system works, I’d love to get a pilot project in place. I think carbon sequestration is going to be a necessary measure to try to ameliorate the effects of global warming as we try to switch to renewable energy. We’re going to need a number of different mechanisms for sequestering carbon, and I think this is one of the better ones since it would be permanent and safe. If we could get a pilot project going to prove this technology, then it could be more widely implemented.
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• Gorey Preserved, on illustrator Edward Gorey (Columbia Libraries, closes July 27).

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Bel Kaufman
English and Comparative Literature M.A., 1936


Why did you decide to attend Columbia University and study English literature?
After my undergraduate degree from Hunter College, I was eager to continue my education in literature. In a literary family—my grandfather was the celebrated Jewish author Sholem Aleichem—I had been exposed to classics in world literature. I chose Columbia for my graduate work because I was familiar with its reputation and the quality of its faculty.

What was your research focus?
My research was in eighteenth-century literature, particularly Grub Street—all the little scribblers, garreteers, and pamphleteers buzzing around the big authors like Swift and Pope. I lived in my cubicle in the new (now old) library for two happy years. As I read my thesis today, I am still struck with its timeless vividness and humor.

You graduated 75 years ago. How would you describe the graduate experience in the 1930s, and how do you think it has changed over the years?
There were no electronic devices then, no instant answers at the push of a button. I loved the slow, painstaking detective work of research. Into my cubicle would arrive eighteenth-century books, manuscripts, papers, and translations that I would request. I have no knowledge of what has occurred since then, but with computers everywhere, it must seem miraculous.

What inspired you to write Up the Down Staircase?
Necessity and guilt. I had published a very short piece in Saturday Review titled “From a Teacher’s Waste Basket.” An editor at Prentice Hall, Gladys Carr, saw it and invited me to lunch. She asked me to expand it into a novel. I had never written novels, only short stories, but she offered me an advance, which I desperately needed. I had just left my husband and I was penniless. I accepted the money and repaid my debts, so I had to write the book.

What are you working on now?
I am now working on my memoirs—if not now, when?—that will be in the form of letters to my grandfather, answering his letter to me from 1915 when I was four in which he asks me to learn to write. Now, at 100, I do.

How did your graduate education relate to your work?
My education directly related to my work. It made me an educated teacher, writer, and public speaker. Of the three careers, I think I prefer public speaking. It’s easier and gives me instant applause and often standing ovations. Typewriters and computer keys never jump up to applaud.
What was the greatest challenge you had to face in your career?

My greatest challenge was the Board of Education of New York City. I had come to New York from Russia at the age of 12 and still had a trace of a Russian accent when I took the exams to teach English in high school. It was my first failure. I enrolled in speech courses and totally erased my accent. The Board, however, failed me the following year. I had been given “Euclid Alone” by Edna St. Vincent Millay to interpret. It was a sonnet I loved and knew by heart, but the Board accused me of “lack of background in English and poor interpretation of poem.” This time, I got angry. I sent the Board letters from my professors attesting to my literacy, honors and plaques in English, awards in poetry, etc. I also wrote to Ms. Millay telling her exactly how I had interpreted her poem. She mailed me a three-page letter in return, stating that she herself could not have explained her poem better. I submitted her letter to the Board as well, and they met to vote on my little case, which had become a minor cause célèbre in educational circles. I received a notice from the Board: “Failure stands. Should you take the exam next year, we are confident…” It was a face-saving device. The following year, having served as a substitute the years before, I took the exam, passed with flying colors, and become a regular teacher—one of the best in the city.

If you could offer any advice to current students, what would it be?

When you know you are right never give up, no matter how difficult it may be.
EyeMinded: Living and Writing Contemporary Art
Kellie Jones, Art History and Archeology
Duke University Press Books

Featuring selections of her writings from the past twenty years, this collection highlights Prof. Jones’ efforts to bring attention to the work of African American, African, Latin American, and women artists who have challenged established art practices. Interviews with and works on a variety of artists such as Lorna Simpson, Kcho, and Jean-Michel Basquiat illustrate Jones’s curatorial sensibility and offer a survey of some of the most important figures in contemporary art.

Bergson Postcolonial: L’élan vital dans la pensée de Léopold Sédar Senghor et de Mohamed Iqbal
Souleymane Bachir Diagne, French and Romance Philology
CNRS Editions

Diagne studies the importance of the philosopher Henri Bergson in the work of Léopold Sédar Senghor and Mohamed Iqbal, both of whom played fundamental roles in the independence of their own nations and took inspiration from Bergson’s theories. Diagne received the Dagnan-Bouveret Prize from the French Académie des Sciences Morales et Politiques for this work.
A Behavioral Theory of Elections
Michael Ting, Political Science; Jonathan Bendor, Daniel Diermeier, and David Siegel
Princeton University Press

Ting and his co-authors provide a behavioral theory of elections based on the notion that all actors—politicians and voters—are only boundedly rational. The theory accordingly posits a model of learning via trial and error: actions that surpass an actor’s aspiration level are more likely to be used in the future, while those that fall short are less likely to be tried later. Based on this idea of iteration, the authors construct formal models of party competition, turnout, and voters’ choices of candidates. These models predict substantial turnout levels, voters ultimately dividing into parties, and winning parties adopting centrist platforms.

Carbon Democracy: Political Power in the Age of Oil
Timothy Mitchell, Middle Eastern, South Asian, and African Studies
Verso

Beginning with the history of coal power, Mitchell discusses the rise of democracy, the development and dependence upon oil, and the reorganization of political life around the management of the economy. This book shows a complex picture of the world’s dependence on oil, addressing how it shapes the politics of oil-producing regions as well as of countries that rely on it.
On the Shelf

Sugar in My Bowl: Real Women Write About Real Sex
Edited by Erica Jong, M.A. ’65, English and Comparative Literature
Ecco

This collection explores what women want with and from sex. Works by writers such as Susan Cheever, Jennifer Weiner, and Molly Jong-Fast discuss everything from casual sex to Catholic upbringing to octogenarian libido. These works together reflect how sex can be as fleeting, mundane, and intense as the rest of life.

Osa and Martin: For the Love of Adventure
Kelly Enright, M.A. ’02, Museum Anthropology

This biography follows the lives and adventurers of Osa and Martin Johnson, a public and daring couple who brought the jungles of Africa and the South Pacific to millions of Americans in the early 20th century. They established their reputation as an independent and fearless duo with their first expedition to the South Seas, and their decades of work influenced everything from science and wildlife conservation to children’s literature.

What They Saved: Pieces of a Jewish Past
Nancy K. Miller, Ph.D. ’74, French and Romance Philology
University of Nebraska Press

After her father’s death, Miller discovered a minuscule family archive: a handful of photographs, an unexplained land deed, a postcard from Argentina, unidentified locks of hair. Miller follows their traces from one distant relative to another, across the country, and across an ocean. As a third-generation descendant of Eastern European Jews, Miller learns that the hidden lives of her ancestors reveal as much about the present as they do about the past.
[sic]: A Memoir
Joshua Cody, M.A. ’06, D.M.A. ’12, Music Norton

A bracing account of a talented young composer’s diagnosis with, and recovery from, an aggressive cancer, [sic] provocatively outstrips the generic conventions of the cancer memoir.

Helvetica and the New York City Subway System
Paul Shaw, M.A. ’78, M.Phil. ’80, History MIT Press

Shaw’s investigation of the transit authority’s choice of typeface—in fact, it was Standard, not Helvetica that established the subway’s familiar look and feel—gives way to a larger survey of the mid-century transit system.

Harlem: The Four Hundred Year History from Dutch Village to Capital of Black America

Gill, currently a professor at the University of Amsterdam, traces the vicissitudes of New York’s most protean neighborhood.
Anthropology
Mireille Sylvie Abelin, Fiscal sovereignty: Reconfigurations of value and citizenship in post-financial crisis Argentina
Gajendran Ayyathurai, Foundations of anti-caste consciousness: Pandit Iyothee Thass, Tamil Buddhism, and the marginalized in south India
Anderson Hall Blanton, Until the stones cry out: Materialities of faith and technologies of the Holy Ghost in southern Appalachia (Distinction)
Ronald C. Jennings, Cosmopolitan subjects: An anthropological critique of cosmopolitan criminal law and political modernity
Vishnupad Mishra, Parables of the market: Advertising, middle class, and consumption in post-reform India
Antônio Andrade Tomás, Refracted governmentality: Space, politics, and social structure in contemporary Luanda

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Benjamin William Diehl, Working up hills: Dynamics over sloping topography with bottom-enhanced diffusion
Anil Raj, Large-scale machine learning in biology
Michael Vidne, State-space models and latent processes in the statistical analysis of neural data
Yutian Wu, Midlatitude storm track response to increased greenhouse warming

Applied Physics
Owen Clark Clancy, Dosimetric optimization method for CyberKnife robotic radiosurgery system using a memetic algorithm
Michael Frei, Force and conductance spectroscopy of single-molecule junctions
Ophir Gaathon, Incorporation of nonconventional crystalline materials onto the integrated photonics platform
Jie Gao, Chip-scale photonic devices for light-matter interactions and quantum information processing
Maria Kamenetska, Single molecule junction conductance and binding geometry (Distinction)

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Shantel Blakely, The responsibilities of the architect: Mass production and modernism in the work of Marco Zanuso, 1936-1972
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Patrick Robert Crowley, Forms of spectrality in ancient Rome (Distinction)
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Albert Narath IV, The baroque effect: Architecture and art history in Berlin, 1886-1900
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Kathryn Joyce Kreckel, Gas in void galaxies
Takamitsu Tanaka, Mergers of supermassive black hole binaries in gas-rich environments: Models of event rates and electromagnetic signatures
Neil Thomas Zimmerman, High-contrast observations with an integral field spectrograph

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Andrew Stephen Kuziemko, Using structure to explore the sequence alignment space of remote homologs
Qiangfeng Zhang, Towards the integration of structural and systems biology: Structure-based studies of protein-protein interactions on a genome-wide scale (Distinction)

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Anthony Michael Barsotti, Negative regulation of gene expression by the tumor suppressor p53
William Michael Behnke-Parks, Gates and latches: The mechanism of ATP affinity in Kinesin 1 and Eg5 (Distinction)
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Charles Clifford Keller, Microtubules, acetylation, and MEC-3-regulated genes in C. elegans mechanosensation
Adam Max Packer, I: Understanding the nervous system as an information-processing machine: Dense, nongeneric, canonical microcircuit architecture of inhibition in neocortex. II: A neural circuit for angular velocity computation
Gulsen Surmeli, Positional coordinates for spinal sensory-motor connectivity (Distinction)

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Sean Adam Burgess, Development and applications of laminar optical tomography for in vivo imaging
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Naureen Quibria, Characterization of Gf, a Drosophila trimeric G protein alpha subunit
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Michael Thomas Englebard, The ribosome discriminates the structure of the amino acid at its peptidyltransferase center (Distinction)

Ian Jay Orozco, Functional characterization of hippocampal synapses in a mouse model containing a mutation in the dysbindin-binding protein 1 (DTNBP1) gene

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Jianing Li, Towards high-resolution computational approaches for structure-based drug discovery

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Thibaut Pugin, An algebraic circle method

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Amy Rachel Betz, Multiphase microfluidics for convective heat transfer and manufacturing

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Andrew Michael O’Grady, Development of a MEMS sensor for sub-kPa shear stress measurements

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Kanako Lorene Togashi Lewis, Targeting of specific developmental pathways to understand dendritic cell heterogeneity and function

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Cecilia Albertha Rougier, Cultural values, religiosity, and spirituality as predictors of professional psychological help-seeking behavior of black adults in the United States

Teachers College: Developmental Psychology

Rita Gabriela Barajas, The family process model: Predicting youth behavior problems in Mexican American, African American, and European American families

Katherine Anne Beckmann, Association of maternal cumulative risk during pregnancy and IQ in preschoolers: Role of glucocorticoids and their receptors (Distinction)

Nina Mareike Philipsen Hetzner, First-year parental employment and child developmental outcomes at two and four years of age

Aliza Waksal Pressman, Maternal responsiveness of infants at one, two, and three years of age in low-income families: Associations with maternal characteristics, child characteristics, and developmental outcomes at five years

Teachers College: Mathematics Education

Margaret Karrass, Diagrammatic reasoning skills of pre-service mathematics teachers

Alexander An Munson, Knowledge as theory and elements

Teachers College: Philosophy and Education

Jessica Lee Hochman, The antigone discourse: Zines and blogs as articulations of young women’s subjectivities

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Teachers College: Applied Behavioral Analysis

Jinhyeok Choi, Effects of mastery of auditory match-to-sample instruction on echos, emergence of advanced listener literacy, and listener as own listener casus by elementary school students with ASD and ADHD

Lin Du, The effects of mirror instruction on the emergence of generalized imitation of physical movements in 3-to-4-year-olds with autism

Jalene Donica Moreno, The effects of imitation instruction using a mirror on the emergence of duplicative responses by preschool students diagnosed with developmental delays (Distinction)
DAVID STARK, Arthur Lehman Professor of Sociology and International Affairs, and BALAZS VEDRES, Ph.D. ’04, Sociology, co-authored the paper “Structural Folds: Generative Disruption in Overlapping Groups” for the 2010 issue of the American Journal of Sociology. This paper received the 2011 Viviana Zelizer Prize from the Economic Sociology Section for best paper in economic sociology and the Roger V. Gould Prize for the best paper published in the journal over the past two years.

TIMOTHY FRYE, Marshall D. Shulman Professor of Post-Soviet Foreign Policy and Director of the Harriman Institute, recently opened a new research center, along with colleague Andrei Yakovlev, in Moscow at the Higher School of Economics. The Center for the Study of Institutions and Development aims to bring together Russian and foreign experts in economics and political science to conduct international research on development.

ELIZABETH M.C. HILLMAN, assistant professor of biomedical engineering, has been awarded a National Institutes of Health Research Project Grant of $1.7 million over five years to study the resting brain.

PASHA MOHAMAD KHAN, Middle Eastern, South Asian, and African Studies Ph.D. student, has won a 2011 Andrew W. Mellon Foundation/American Council of Learned Societies Dissertation Completion Fellowship for his work “The Broken Spell: The Romance Genre in Late Mughal India” which examines the social context of the Urdu romance genre and reactions to it from about 1500-1900.

Computer Science Ph.D. student AARON BERNSTEIN was awarded the Best Student Paper Award at the Association for Computing Machinery-Society for Industrial and Applied Mathematics Symposium on Discrete Algorithms for his work titled “Near Linear Time $\epsilon$-Approximation for Restricted Shortest Paths in Undirected Graphs.”

Earth and Environmental Sciences Professor ARLENE FIORE received the 2011 James B. Macelwane Medal, one of the highest honors given by the American Geophysical Union, in recognition of her contributions to the geophysical sciences as a young scientist.

The Graduate School of Arts and Sciences has launched a new M.A. IN HISTORY AND LITERATURE AT REID HALL, Columbia’s campus in Paris. The program will train students in historical approaches to the study of literature and in the interpretation of texts for the study of history.

LARA NETTELFIELD, Ph.D. ’06, Political Science, received the 2011 Marshall Shulman Prize for Courting Democracy in Bosnia and Herzegovina: The Hague Tribunal’s Impact in a Postwar State. This annual prize sponsored by the Harriman Institute of Columbia University is awarded by the Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies for the best monograph dealing with the international relations and foreign policy of former Soviet Union or Eastern European states.

ALY RAAFAT, Ph.D. ’57, Architecture, a professor of architecture at Cairo University, was awarded the Nile Award in Arts in June in recognition of his five decades of work in architectural practice and scholarship. The Nile Awards are the most prestigious state cultural awards in Egypt and are determined by the Supreme Council of Culture in Cairo.
Timothy Frye (photograph by Eileen Barroso)

Elizabeth M.C. Hillman (photograph by Eileen Barroso)

Dirk Englund (photograph by Eileen Barroso)

Reid Hall, Paris
Computer science Ph.D. student Jeremy Andrus has been named one of 12 winners of the 2012-13 Facebook Fellowship. Andrus is working on technology that will allow mobile phones to have multiple user profiles.

Physics Ph.D. student Imre Bartos (profiled in the Spring 2011 issue of Superscript) was named one of Forbes’ Rising Stars of Science 30 Under 30.

Biango Manieri, M.A. ‘88, M.Phil. ‘92, Ph.D. ‘95, Political Science, has been appointed director of research at PFM Advisors, after serving as an investment officer with the Federal Reserve.

Hyung-Min Chung, M.A. ’92, M.Phil. ’93, Art History and Archaeology, has been named director of the National Museum of Contemporary Art in Seoul. She previously served as a professor of art history at Seoul National University and as director of the Seoul National University Museum of Art.

Poet John Ashbery, M.A. ’50, English and Comparative Literature, and Andrew Delbanco, Julian Clarence Levi Professor in the Humanities at Columbia, were awarded National Humanities Medals by President Barack Obama.

Shu Chien, Ph.D. ’57, Physiology and Cellular Biophysics, was awarded the National Medal of Science by President Barack Obama.

Paul Maya, M.A. ’03, Quantitative Methods in the Social Sciences, was named global head of Bloomberg.com and Businessweek.com. He previously worked at Turner Broadcasting and led CNN’s digital technology strategy and product implementation.

Peggy Barlett, Ph.D. ’75, Anthropology, has been awarded Emory University’s inaugural Faculty Sustainability Leadership Award, which acknowledges a faculty member who works to increase the breadth and depth of sustainability education. The Goodrich C. White Professor of Anthropology, Barlett co-authored Sustainability on Campus and has helped to develop influential workshops on sustainability.

Poet Tan Lin, M.A. ‘81, MPhil ‘88, PhD ‘95, was one of two poets—and 14 artists, in total—to receive a grant through the Foundation for Contemporary Arts’ Grants to Artists program.

Tyranny of Opinion: Honor in the Construction of the Mexican Public Sphere by history professor Pablo Piccato received an honorable mention for the 2010 Best Book in Mexican History Award granted by the Council of Latin American History.
Imre Bartos

John Ashbery (photograph by David Shankbone)

Pablo Piccato (photograph by Eileen Barroso)
Helpful Links

Columbia YouTube: http://www.youtube.com/columbiauniversity
Columbia iTunes U: http://itunes.columbia.edu/
Columbia Calendar of Events: http://www.columbia.edu/events/today.html
Columbia Athletics: http://www.gocolumbialions.com/
Graduate School of Arts and Sciences: http://gsas.columbia.edu
Graduate Student Advisory Council: http://www.columbia.edu/cu/gsac
Graduate School of Arts and Sciences Alumni Association: http://gsas.columbia.edu/alumni
Give to provide financial aid to graduate students: https://giving.columbia.edu/giveonline/

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