



Graduate Program in Science Writing **Student Handbook**

2013

The Fire Hose

Getting an education at MIT has been compared to drinking from a fire hose. Whether you've been to graduate school before or not, the first few weeks in a new academic environment can be confusing and intimidating. To avoid an alluvial introduction, We have compiled some useful information in one booklet to help get you started. In the rest of your orientation packet, you will find other booklets and brochures about offices and services at MIT that you may find helpful. If there's anything you don't see here just ask!

The People

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Other Important Contacts at MIT

Office of the Dean for Graduate Education
3-138 X3-4860
<http://web.mit.edu/odg/>
Christine Ortiz, Dean for Graduate Students

Graduate Student Council
(your student government)
50-220 X3-2195
<http://gsc.mit.edu/>

MIT Medical
E23 X3-4481
<http://web.mit.edu/medical>

Campus Police
301 Vassar Street, Building W89
X3-1212 or dial **100** from campus phones
<http://web.mit.edu/cp/www/>

The Schedule

Advising

You will meet with **David Mindell**, to discuss the elective options in your program. You are required to register for one elective class each semester. In your packet, you will find a list of electives that students have taken in the past, and their responses to them. I hope you find this helpful.

Things you should keep in mind:

- While most of your classes will be at the graduate level, you may take one elective at the undergraduate level.
- You may also consider taking a class at Harvard through the Harvard/MIT exchange. Classes taken at the undergraduate college will transfer as undergraduate classes and classes taken at the graduate schools transfer at the graduate level. More information is available at <http://web.mit.edu/registrar/reg/xreg/MITtoHarvard.html>.

Registration

Once you have chosen an elective, you can fill out your registration form at <https://registration.mit.edu>. Your required classes are the Advanced Science Writing Seminar (21W.825), the Graduate Thesis (21W.THG), and the Lab Experience (21W.823). Once you've entered these classes and Shannon has approved your registration, you can submit it – paperlessly!

Add Date Check-in

Sometime between September 30 and October 3, you should set up an appointment with Shannon for a quick check-in. Together you will meet to ensure that you are properly registered, and are satisfied with your classes for the term. Friday, October 4 is the last day you can add subjects to your fall semester registration.

Choosing Your Internship

There will be a special seminar session devoted to choosing and applying for your internship at the end of September - cover letters, resumes, the internship database, etc. If you wish to peruse the internship database ahead of time, you can find it at <http://sciwrite1.mit.edu/>. Both the login and the password are "intern."

Key Dates

For a complete listing of deadlines, consult the online academic calendar at <http://web.mit.edu/registrar/www/calendar.html>.

September 3, 2013

Registration Day

April 24, 2014

Drop Date, Spring Term

September 4, 2013

First Day of Classes

May 15, 2014

Last Day of Classes

October 4, 2013

Add Date

May 16, 2014

Thesis Day!

November 20, 2013

Drop Date

May 30, 2014

Registration Deadline for Summer Session

December 1, 2013

Pre-registration for Spring Semester

June 10, 2014

Summer Session (Internship) Begins

December 11, 2013

Last Day of Classes

August 20, 2014

Summer Session Ends

February 3, 2014

Registration Day, Spring Term

September 27, 2014

Graduation!

March 7, 2014

Add Date, Spring Term

The Places

The Comparative Media Studies and Science Writing Graduate Education Office

14N-108 X3-6668

FAX: 617-452-5100

The Seminar Room

The Seminar Room is 14N-112. Both the Advanced Science Writing Seminar and the Thesis Seminar are held there.

Your Lounge

Your graduate student lounge is 14N-317. A key has been issued to each of you, which you will return when you leave campus upon finishing the program. Although Shannon will enter the lounge occasionally to put things in your mailboxes, the basic maintenance of the room is your responsibility. Recycle the newspapers. Water the plants. Wash the coffee pot. Don't leave food in the fridge for more than three months. **Inform Shannon if any equipment is not working properly**, unless you prefer it that way. This is your space, to use as you wish.

Available to you in the lounge are:

- Four iMac computers.
Do not store personal files on the hard drive of the iMacs – use removable media to store your files – because **these computers are not backed up**. Right now your passwords for the iMacs are your last name. I recommend changing that the first time you log in.
- Two networked printers – sciwritep (smaller one) and sciwritepr (larger one). You **can** send printing jobs to these printers wirelessly from your laptops.
- Wireless access to the MIT network.
- Bottled water.
- Refrigerator, coffee maker, toaster, microwave.
- Lockers - you should supply your own lock.
- Your mailboxes - please check these on a regular basis.
- Newspapers.
The Science Writing program underwrites the delivery of the *Boston Globe* and *New York Times* five days a week, when classes are in session. Please recycle them when you are finished with them.

In addition, from 9am to 5pm, Monday-Friday, you have access to the CMS/W Program kitchen in 14E-304. It has an oven, sink, and microwave.

Your Library

What You Can Find in Our Science Writing Library?

Books – that’s what you can find. But that’s not what we mean. How can you use our library to help get you through the year? Here are a few suggestions:

-- As a source of revered classics of science writing, such as *The Soul of a New Machine*, *Microbe Hunters*, or *The Double Helix*.

-- As potential models for your thesis: What does a chapter in a work of popular science look like? How does it read? What does it demand? How is it related to what comes before and after in the book?

-- As potential models for your thesis, II: Some books in our library, such as *The Best American Science Writing* series, include compilations of pieces that originally appeared as long magazine articles, another possible thesis genre.

-- For content dealing with specific scientific fields. Interested in the origins of molecular biology? Check out *The Eighth Day of Creation*. Early atomic history more your speed? Try *The Making of the Atomic Bomb*.

-- As a way to gain insight into your professors’ secret prejudices and biases. Most of their books are included here.

-- To learn the hidden “rules” of various styles and genres. Work your way through scientific biographies, such as James Gleick’s *Isaac Newton* or Brenda Madox’s *Rosalind Franklin*, or see how science writers explain thorny mathematical problems in books like Singh’s *Fermat’s Enigma* or Hofstadter’s *Gödel Escher Bach*.

-- For inspiration: Rummage around, see what you find, surprise yourself.

The Science Writing Library is located in 14N-112. Because this space is used as a classroom, the stacks are kept locked. If you wish to browse or check out a book please see Shannon in 14N-108. You may also view the library holdings online at <http://sciwrite1.mit.edu/>.

Other GPSW Resources

The Internship Database

The Program maintains a database of past and potential internships for you to browse. You may view this at <http://sciwrite1.mit.edu/>. Both the login and the password are "intern." This database is maintained in a program called Filemaker Pro, which may be unfamiliar to you. If you need assistance using it, please contact Shannon. This database is constantly updated as information on internships changes. If you find an error, please let Shannon know and she'll see that it gets corrected.

Writing Program Copier

If you need to make copies of your assignments for class, you may either print copies on the Lounge printer or you use the program copier, located in 14E-306. Your copier code is **14863**.

NASW Membership

The Program underwrites a student membership in the National Association of Science Writers (NASW) for each of its graduate students. If you wish to take advantage of this, print out the form from the NASW website, fill it out, and bring it to Shannon in the Program office. If you don't wish to take advantage of this, you should immediately take your temperature because you must be ill.

Kelly/Douglas Research Fellowships

The Kelly/Douglas fund (administered by the Literature section) provides funding up to \$400.00 toward research expenses, usually matched by the Program. Although not officially a Program resource, many of our students have taken advantage of this fund for Thesis research. More information is available at <http://web.mit.edu/kdfund/research/index.html#research>. There are limited funds available in the account, so apply early if you can.

Backing up your thesis

Why is this under "GPSW Resources"? Because it's something you won't think about until your hard drive has died and you've lost six months of work. The easiest way to back up your thesis is to email a copy to yourself using your MIT email, making sure you leave that email on the server. (MIT email servers are backed up daily.) It's not a bad idea to keep an additional copy on a cloud-based service such as Dropbox or on some form of removable media – or both.

Lynda.mit.edu

MIT has partnered with Lynda.com to promote its software training products and services, and as a result, MIT students and employees enjoy free access to its online library of tutorials and trainings in everything from database management to HTML to animation. Once you have your MIT ID and have a certificate installed on your computer, browse the site (making sure to access it through MIT). If you need to log on to the site from a computer without certificates, you can do so using your Kerberos ID.

The Little Stuff

Books

The books required for the Advanced Science Writing Seminar are listed in the Syllabus, and available at the MIT Coop bookstore, at 3 Cambridge Center, next to the Kendall Square T stop on Main Street.

Stellar

Stellar.mit.edu is the course management system that most courses at MIT use to manage readings, homework, etc. The syllabus and many of your readings is available at <http://stellar.mit.edu/S/course/21W/fa13/21W.825/>.

The MIT Card

Your college identification - where would you be without it? Bereft of proof that you are a student and missing out on many benefits and discounts, that's where. Go to the MIT Card Office in W20-021 (the Student Center) to get your MIT ID card. You can also set the card up to act as a debit card ("Tech Cash"), to give you access to food. Get more information at <http://web.mit.edu/mitcard/>.

Entertainment and Diversions

This is a topic entirely too large to cover completely, but there are a few things worth pointing out that may keep you sane and save you money while you're at MIT.

- The **MIT Activities Committee** (MITAC), located on the ground floor of the Stata Center, offers discount tickets on concerts, plays, movies, museums, and other events to MIT affiliates. <http://web.mit.edu/mitac/>. There are significant savings available here - don't miss it. Credit cards only – no cash.
- There are myriad student groups – artistic, ethnic, athletic and otherwise – at MIT. Although you won't have copious spare time on your hands, you may want to make the most of what you have. The best place to start looking for a group of interest to you would be the **Graduate Student Council** website on student life: <http://gsc.mit.edu/Play/>.
- Many graduate students at MIT also participate in its athletic programs through the **Department of Athletics, Physical Education and Recreation** (DAPER). More information on these activities may be found at their site: <http://web.mit.edu/athletics/www/>.
- The **MIT Lecture Series Committee** (LSC) sponsors extremely low-cost movies. Tickets are \$3.00 per person, and a schedule is available at <http://lsc.mit.edu/>. If you join the Committee, admission is free!
- **One Kendall Square** is a series of old manufacturing buildings converted into restaurants and offices. Dining choices range from the upscale Blue Room to the Cambridge Brewing Company and the Friendly Toast to Flat Top Johnny's pool hall.

Across the street is the Kendall Cinema, a very nice art-movie house (see **MITAC** for discount tickets).

- Interested in publishing right away? The **Graduate** has happily published pieces by our students in the past, and will happily accept submissions in the future. Write to *gsn-editor@mit.edu* for more details. The **Tech** (<http://www-tech.mit.edu/>) is the main MIT newspaper, and is usually happy to entertain submissions as well. In addition, you can talk to us about writing for the MIT News Office.

Travel and Commuting

- The **MBTA** or "the T" is the Boston area public transportation system. It can occasionally be annoying, but it can also get you where you need to go without a car. The MBTA consists of buses, subways, trolleys, and commuter trains. MIT subsidizes monthly T passes at a rate of nearly 50% off what the general public pays. Go to <http://commuting.mit.edu/> for more information.
- **Parking** - If you live in campus housing, parking is arranged through your dorm's parking coordinator. If you are staying off-campus, you may purchase a student commuter-parking permit for about \$700.00. Parking on campus is very limited. As above, go to <http://commuting.mit.edu/> for more information.
- MIT also hosts many **Zipcars** on campus. Zipcar is a car-sharing organization for which MIT sponsors membership - you pay a small annual fee, plus the hourly cost of the car when you use it. If you wish to live without a car, but find yourself needing one every so often, Zipcar may be for you.
- MIT also subsidizes memberships to **Hubway Bicycle Rental**. More information is available at <http://web.mit.edu/facilities/transportation/>. The short story is that you can pay an annual fee of \$25 for a membership and then pay by the hour after that. A bicycle rented from a Hubway station can be returned to any Hubway station.
- Although it is rare, MIT has been known to cancel classes due to **snow** or inclement weather. If there are blizzard conditions outside your window, and you're wondering if you ought to get out of bed, you can call **(617) 253-SNOW** and be told by a friendly, recorded voice whether or not the Institute is "open and operating as usual." Do remember though, that during the Blizzard of '78, it took an order from the Governor of Massachusetts to cancel classes and close the school.

Food

There are as many different types of food available in the MIT area as there are types of people, and for a variety of costs. Whether you are shopping for a quick lunch or weekly groceries, it's good to have an idea what's out there. Other graduate students will happily share their own favorite places to eat and hang out.

- **Two Dollar Tuesdays** (<http://gsc.mit.edu/Play/TwoDollarTuesday>) run by the Graduate Student Council. Buy tickets for \$2 and get a fantastic, often cool and ethnic meal.

- **MIT Produce Market.** Tuesdays, from 12-6 Russo's Produce in Watertown comes to campus to sell high-quality fresh produce. Outside of Walker in the summer, in the Stata Lobby in winter. Cash only.
- **The Food Trucks on Carleton Street lot (by MIT Medical).** Arriving each day just prior to lunchtime, these trucks provide inexpensive lunch selections from funky organic (Clover Truck) to Mexican to Middle Eastern to Asian. The quality is generally good, and the price is right. Students and staff alike have relied on the trucks for years for their nutritional needs.
- **The Forbes Family Cafe** in the Stata Center. This dining area is more expensive than the trucks, but also presents more choices. Sandwiches, sushi, and pizza are part of the menu here. Seating is available in the scenic first floor of the Stata Center.
- **Lobdell Food Court** in the Stratton Student Center is similar to the Forbes Family Cafe, but on the other side of campus.
- **LaVerde's Market** in the Stratton Student Center is a small market plus a sandwich counter. Their sandwiches and soups are quite good, and reasonably priced. Selection for groceries is limited somewhat because of the store's small size.
- **University Park Star Market** is a full-size, full-service supermarket located at the University Park Hotel@MIT at the intersection of Green and Sidney Streets in Cambridge.
- If you're adventurous and frugal, **Market Basket** is the Cheapest supermarket around. Located at 400 Somerville Avenue is nearby Somerville, it is not convenient to get to, is often crowded, and is not for the faint of heart (I've been elbowed out of the way by little old ladies after their Yoplait). But bargains abound, and the quality is good. Best to shop in the early morning, preferably on a Sunday. An excellent destination for a Zipcar trip.
- **Trader Joe's** and **Whole Foods** are not far away, in Cambridgeport.
- **Central Square** boasts an assortment of Indian, Middle Eastern, Chinese and other restaurants well worth visiting. Just walk up Massachusetts Avenue away from the river, and see what you find. Don't skip the **Miracle of Science** café!
- **Ice Cream:** Toscanini's, on Main Street, is both the closest ice cream parlor and the best ice cream in the United States. Christina's on Cambridge Street in Inman Square is also excellent. Or you could just drum up some liquid nitrogen and make **MIT Ice Cream**.
- **The Muddy Charles Pub:** Beer = liquid food. Sometimes. But the prices are low, and the location can't be beat – it's on the first floor of Walker Memorial, right next to building 14.

One last thing...

There's a rumor that you can get to anywhere from anywhere at MIT underground. While that's not strictly true, there is an extensive underground system of basement hallways connecting most of the eastern part of the campus. If you would like a "tunnel tour" sometime during the early fall, just ask Shannon. You can get from Building 14 to the MIT Medical building (close to the Kendall Square T) entirely underground, which can be a nice treat on a cold rainy day.