



## *Graduate Program in Science Writing* **Student Handbook**

*2019*

### *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. We have compiled some useful information in this booklet to help ensure your introduction to the GPSW is not too overwhelming. In the rest of your orientation packet, you will find more information about offices and services at MIT that you may find helpful. If there's anything you don't see here just ask!

## *The People*

### **Graduate Program in Science Writing**

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[mgravito@mit.edu](mailto:mgravito@mit.edu)

### **Other Important Contacts at MIT**

Office of Graduate Education

Vice Chancellor Ian Waitz

7-133 X3-0218

Blanche Staton, Senior Associate Dean

3-138 X3-4860

<http://oge.mit.edu>

Graduate Student Council

(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/>

## *Curriculum*

### **Curriculum**

You will register for classes at [registration.mit.edu](http://registration.mit.edu). You must submit your registration by 5pm on Friday of the first week of classes.

### **Fall**

21W.825 - Advanced Science Writing Seminar  
21W.THG - Graduate Thesis  
21W.823 - Lab Experience for Science Writers  
One elective of at least 9 units

### **Spring**

21W.826 – Advanced Science Writing Seminar  
21W.THG – Graduate Thesis  
21W.824 – Making Documentary  
One elective of at least 9 units

### **Summer**

21W.892 – Science Writing Internship

Your electives can be anything at MIT or Harvard for which you have the appropriate prerequisites. One elective **MUST** be at the graduate level to satisfy the Institute minimum units for a Master's Degree. A minimum grade point average of 3.5 (A=5, B=4, C=3, D=2, F=0) must be maintained in graduate school.

### **Lab Experience for Science Writers**

To provide a direct view of how science unfolds on a daily basis, the GPSW requires each student to spend a total of 12 hours in two of MIT's hundreds of laboratories, then write profiles of each lab.

### **Thesis**

The thesis forms a second cornerstone of the MIT Graduate Program in Science Writing, and provides students with the opportunity to dive deep into a scientific area of interest. The thesis is a long-form narrative science writing piece of at least 6,000 words written for a general audience. The thesis can be journalistic, data-driven, investigative, historical, even personal so long as it meaningfully bears on science, technology, engineering, or medicine. Students may complete a documentary or multimedia thesis project as long as the written length and original reporting requirements are met.

### **Internship**

GPSW students are required to complete a full-time summer internship following the regular academic year, and may choose to complete an additional part-time internship instead of an elective. Students work with faculty advisors to secure writing-focused internships at print or online science publications, museums, laboratories or research institutions, investigative journalism organizations, digital production studios, educational outreach groups, or television or radio stations.

**Key Dates**

For a complete listing of dates deadlines, consult MIT's academic calendar at <http://web.mit.edu/registrar/www/calendar.html>.

<b>Registration Day, Fall Term</b>	September 3, 2019
<b>First Day of Fall Classes</b>	September 4, 2019
<b>Fall Add Date</b>	October 4, 2019
<b>Fall Drop Date</b>	November 20, 2019
<b>Pre-registration for Spring Semester</b>	December 1, 2019
<b>Last Day of Fall Classes</b>	December 11, 2019
<b>Registration Day, Spring Term</b>	January 31, 2019
<b>First Day of Spring Classes</b>	February 3, 2020
<b>Spring Add Date</b>	March 6, 2020
<b>Spring Drop Date</b>	April 21, 2020
<b>Last Day of Spring Classes</b>	May 12, 2020
<b>Thesis Day!</b>	May 15, 2020
<b>Registration Deadline, Summer Session</b>	June 1, 2020
<b>Summer Session (Internship) Begins</b>	June 8, 2020
<b>Summer Session Ends</b>	August 14, 2020
<b><u>Graduation</u></b>	October 3, 2020

## *The Places*

### **The CMS/W Academic Office**

14N-338      X3-6668

### **The Seminar Room**

The Advanced Science Writing Seminar is held in 14N-112. The entrance code to this room is 4554.

### **GPSW 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. Water the plants. 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:

- Five 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**. The password for these computers is cmswstudent.
- A networked printer – sciwritep. You **can** send printing jobs to this printer wirelessly from your laptops.
- Wireless access to the MIT network.
- Bottled water.
- Refrigerator, toaster, microwave.
- Lockers - you should supply your own lock.

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

## Your Library

14N-112

### 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.

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-338.

## ***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 [https://10.51.1.5:591/fmi/iwp/res/iwp\\_home.html](https://10.51.1.5:591/fmi/iwp/res/iwp_home.html). 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.

### **NASW Membership**

The Program underwrites a student membership in the National Association of Science Writers (NASW) for each of its graduate students. Join up at the student rate, and bring Shannon your receipt for reimbursement. 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 \$500.00 per year toward research expenses, which is matched by the GPSW. Although not officially a GPSW resource, the majority 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>.

### **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 Other Stuff*

### **Books**

The books required for the Advanced Science Writing Seminar are listed in the Syllabus, and available at the MIT Coop bookstore. Due to construction and a move to a smaller space, they are keeping a very limited stock of textbooks in house. You should order and have them shipped.

### **Learning Modules**

MIT uses two course management systems: Stellar and Learning Modules (LMOD). The GPSW uses Learning Modules. The syllabus and many of the readings for the fall Advanced Science Writing Seminar is available at <https://learning-modules.mit.edu/class/index.html?uuid=/course/21W/fa19/21W.825#dashboard>.

### **I9 and Payment**

In order to be paid at MIT, you'll need to fill out an I9 form at the Atlas Service Center. You can start the process online (<http://hrweb.mit.edu/i-9>) and finish it when you get to campus. A passport is probably the easiest form of identification to bring. **YOU MAY NOT WORK IF YOU HAVE NOT SUBMITTED AN I9.**

### **Sexual Misconduct at MIT**

MIT takes the responsibility of providing a safe learning environment seriously. Part of this is complying with state and federal statutes, including Title IX of the Federal Higher Education Amendment of 1972. If you need to report an incident, you can see your options here: <http://sexualmisconduct.mit.edu/>, email [TitleIX@mit.edu](mailto:TitleIX@mit.edu) directly, or come see Shannon. Do not assume that it is your fault, or that someone else will take care of it. Take action.

### **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.
- 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 **Association of Student Activities** website, <http://web.mit.edu/asa/resources/group-list.html>.
- 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://daper.mit.edu>



- The **MIT Lecture Series Committee (LSC)** sponsors extremely low-cost movies. Tickets are \$5.00 per person, and a schedule is available at <http://lsc.mit.edu/>.
- **One Kendall Square** is a series of old manufacturing buildings converted into restaurants and offices. Dining choices range from the Cambridge Brewing Company to Mamaleh's Delicatessen to 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).

## 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 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 about \$1,020.00. 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 **Blue Bikes 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 Blue Bikes station can be returned to any Blue Bikes 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.

- **TechMart** – an at-cost grocery located on the second floor of Walker Memorial (right next to building 14!) and is open 3pm-11pm Monday-Friday.

- 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 Teh 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 First 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. They don't serve food, but you can have food delivered there.

### 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.