



The CHFA Advising Center Presents:

# The Scribe

Volume 1, Issue 2

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- Since finals are coming up, the Scribe decided to include some helpful study tips in this edition! Look for them scattered throughout the issue.
- Stay in touch with us over break to learn about next semester's events

[www.facebook.com/UMassHFA](http://www.facebook.com/UMassHFA)

## Cooking up a Storm!

Thanks to everyone who entered a recipe in our first ever HFA comfort food cooking contest!

The Photo Entry Winner is:  
**Red Velvet Whoopie Pies by Noah Aris**

The Video Entry Winner is:  
**Spinach Artichoke Dip by Beth Paret**  
The winning photo entry is pictured on the right. To watch the winning video and see all of the fantastic entries, see the event's Facebook page!



## Leadership Board Hosts Wintery Relaxation Event



Are you looking for a fun, low-key way to relax before finals week? The HFA Student Leadership Board,

which recently became an official Registered Student Organization, is hosting an event designed to help you do just that. You're invited to come and ice skate for free on Saturday night, December 10<sup>th</sup> from 8:30 PM-10:00 PM, in the Mullins Center Practice Rink. There will be a limited number of skates available for students to rent free of charge, but anyone who owns a pair is encouraged to bring them. Free hot chocolate will also be provided.

In the spirit of the holiday season, the Leadership Board will also be collecting donations for the Amherst Survival Center. Students are encour-

aged to make a donation of at least \$1, or to contribute new and unwrapped toys, clothing, sports equipment, books, games or gift certificates. These items should be appropriate for recipients aged 0-18 years old. Any money that the Leadership Board collects will be used to purchase more items to donate to the Amherst Survival Center.

Please come and enjoy this fun-filled night. It is an excellent way to relax before finals and provides an opportunity to make a donation to community members in need.

*Study Tip: Study somewhere new! If you usually stay cooped up in your dorm room, take your laptop to a local hotspot like Amherst Coffee and set up shop for a bit. You'll find the change refreshing.*

## Megan Strathearn

Undergraduate

School:

UMass Amherst

Undergraduate Work:

English major, History and Education minors, Certificate in Professional Writing and Technical Communication

## Grad Student Spotlight

## David Bendikson

Undergraduate School: Carleton

College in Minnesota

Undergraduate Major: English and Romance Languages

Current Graduate Program at UMass Amherst: Comparative Literature

Many HFA students worry about what their next step should be after they have completed their undergraduate years at UMass Amherst. Several consider attending graduate school. To get a sense of what life as a grad student in an HFA program is like, the Scribe spoke to two current grad students, David Bendikson and Megan Strathearn.

Looking at their profiles above, you might notice that both David and Megan changed their focus slightly from their undergraduate major. This is an important option for HFA students to consider. It is easy to feel pressured to continue on the same track that you have been pursuing to for four years, but it is not required. Don't limit yourself by feeling bound to your major. Since you will be following this interest for a long time, it is important that you feel excited and passionate about it.

This ties in with the advice that Megan and David had to offer prospective graduate students. Both emphasized the importance of doing what you love. Megan and David are obviously very passionate about their chosen fields, and they urge students to choose a focus that really excites them. They both note that one of the best things about graduate school is that all of the courses are interesting, because they all pertain to a student's chosen area of study. There are no requirements other than classes that relate directly to a student's program. Megan points out that this allows students to really sculpt and personalize their grad school experience, which she finds very exciting. David even comments that it is sometimes easy to overload on classes because all of them seem so intriguing. He cautions students against this, noting that as enjoyable as grad school is, it does entail a lot of work.

Megan also comments on the significant workload in grad school, raising the point that it is also a time when commitments to extracurricular work and other "real life issues" become more central to a student's life. She cites the task of balancing school and these other commitments as one of the most difficult aspects of graduate school.

In addition to taking courses, Megan works as a project assistant and David as a teaching assistant. Both of these positions involve significant extra work, though David cites teaching as one of his favorite aspects of graduate life. Assistantships are useful because they entail a stipend and, sometimes, other compensation that can be put toward tuition. A full list and description of the types of grad student assistantships offered by UMass Amherst is available at [umass.edu/gradschool/assistantship/Policies.htm](http://umass.edu/gradschool/assistantship/Policies.htm). If you are considering grad school, it is useful to make yourself aware of these types of opportunities.

Despite the pressures of the workload, Megan and David both seem to be enjoying grad student life immensely. They have clearly followed their own advice, to "do what you love," and there is no question that it will pay off for these bright, enthusiastic students.

*Study Tip: Know yourself. If all your friends like to work in study groups, but you feel you learn better by studying alone, trust your instincts and stay solo.*

If you're considering graduate school, you may be feeling overwhelmed, maybe similar to how you felt in high school when you were applying to undergrad programs! The good news is, just as the stress might be similar, the process is similar, too. See our back page for some tips to consider when applying.

But the most important thing to remember is that you shouldn't allow yourself to be daunted by the idea of grad school. While it's true that it is a more intense commitment to your field, while you will be working with less structure than you're used to, all of this will pay off in the end. Completing graduate work will ultimately allow you to contribute to the field that you are passionate about.



## Faculty Spotlight: Professor Kyle Frackman

Though he is officially associated with German Department, Dr. Kyle Frackman is well versed in Film Studies, Queer Theory, Gender Studies, Scandinavian and Nordic Studies, and Swedish and Finnish Studies, in addition to the study of 18<sup>th</sup>-early 20<sup>th</sup> century German and Austrian literature and culture. Despite the demands of this impressive slew of research interests, Dr. Frackman happily made time to discuss his experiences as a professor at UMass Amherst.

Though he has been teaching here for three years, his interest in a wide variety of topics began while he was an undergraduate student. A positive mentoring experience with a professor, with whom he worked collaboratively, showed him that ideas from a variety of disciplines could come together to develop new and refreshing perspectives. The possibilities provided by this meshing of ideas from different disciplines appealed to Dr. Frackman, and he continues to explore them in his professional research life.

HFA students often voice uncertainty regarding how exactly research is conducted in non-scientific fields, as the process is more frequently associated with disciplines like biology and chemistry. However, Dr. Frackman's work exemplifies the way in which research can be executed within the humanities and fine arts. Reemphasizing that such research brings together academics with varied interests, he asserts that when researchers with different specialties work together, they can learn to view a subject in new ways. For example, a professor of music may come to a piece of visual art with a completely different perspective than a professor who has studied visual art exclusively throughout his career. By working together, they might discover nuances in a piece of art neither had been aware of before.

An example of the products of this type of research is Dr. Frackman's recent project, an examination of the literature, film, and memoirs that came out of East Germany in primarily the late 1980's, around the time the Berlin wall fell. Dr. Frackman examined the experiences of outsiders, with a special focus on the film *Coming Out*, which was the first East German film to look at the experience of gay citizens. He studied the content of the film, but also focused on how music was used to advance the plot. This project called on his knowledge of literature, history, political science, legal studies, classics, musics, queer theory, and German studies. By combining his knowledge on all of these subjects, Dr. Frackman was able to produce a more comprehensive view of a complex subject than if he had looked at it with a single lens.

If you are a student who, like Dr. Frackman, has many widespread and varied interests, you might feel overwhelmed or unsure of how to bring your ideas together. Dr. Frackman has valuable advice for students who find themselves in this position. He recommends taking several different courses with a wide variety of topics. College is the ideal time to explore the subjects that interest you. If possible, Dr. Frackman suggests taking small classes and working with professors who will have the opportunity to really get to know you as a student. This can sometimes be difficult at a large university like UMass Amherst, so if it's not possible to take small classes, attend office hours regularly to discuss your ideas with your professor. Aside from the fact that it is a professor's job to help you work through the process of managing your academic interests, Dr. Frackman asserts that most will be eager and excited to discuss this with students. He advises students to work with different professors from a

range of disciplines in order to get a good sampling of what work in different fields entails.

If one of the professors you'd like to work with in this way is Dr. Frackman himself, consider taking a class with him in an upcoming semester. One that he regularly teaches is Viennese Modernism. This class explores 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century Vienna, examining Viennese music, literature, visual art, design and fashion of the time. This course, listed as German 372, is a gen-ed, and usually attracts students from many different majors. This adds to the value of the experience, because each student brings a different perspective to the class.

If you are unable to take this class with Dr. Frackman, try to engage with his work in some way, if not by taking one of his courses, then by attending a talk with him or reading one of his many publications, which include "Coming out of the Iron Closet," an article that addresses his study of East Germany. Dr. Frackman is the type of engaged and enthusiastic professor who can elevate a student's collegiate experience from academic humdrum to intellectual fulfillment. The deep passion he exhibits for his work, both in his role as a researcher and as a professor, makes him a true credit to the university.



*Study Tip: Chew peppermint gum*

*during your exam. It stimulates the brain and improves recall!*

**Attention seniors!** It's time to start thinking about ways to preserve all those golden memories you've accumulated here at UMass Amherst. In addition to the photographs that will be taken of each graduate at the school or college senior recognition ceremonies this May, GradImages will be taking individual cap and gown portrait photos right here at UMass Amherst. You can have individual photos taken or get a group of friends together for a portrait. Free proofs of all images will be mailed to students, which allows you to see an example of the photo before making any decisions about purchasing.

We know it's hard to believe your undergraduate career is coming to a close. Take advantage of this opportunity to capture the memories you've made at UMass Amherst so you can enjoy them in years to come. Portrait sessions will take place in Memorial Hall. Below is a list of available time slots.

Tuesday, December 6, 2011, from 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM  
 Wednesday, December 7, 2011, from 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM  
 Thursday, December 8, 2011, from 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM

Tuesday, April 24, 2012, 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM  
 Wednesday, April 25, 2012, from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM  
 Thursday, April 26, 2012, from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM.

You may schedule appointments online at the following website:

<http://www.gradimages.com/index.cfm?action=main.portraits&OID=59430>

**Keep an eye out for an email announcement about our upcoming winter-themed multimedia contest!**



**Tips for Prospective Grad Students**

- Look carefully at the other schools you are considering.
- Ask professors in your field of interest about programs which have good reputations.
- If possible, visit campuses you are interested in, meet with students, and attend graduate level classes.
- If it's not possible to visit a school, you can often find off-site admissions info sessions, especially if the schools you are looking at recruit in your area.
- Start the application process as soon as possible!
- Take time to study comprehensively for the GREs and really work on your essays!

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**Trivia Triplets**

*Time to put your HFA trivia knowledge to the test! Answer all three of the following questions correctly and be entered in a drawing to win a UMass Amherst sweatshirt blanket!*

**Trivia Triplets**

- What is the name for the monster that, according to Jewish folklore, was made of soil and clay, came alive when a scroll with God's name on it was put in its mouth, and unquestioningly followed the orders of its creator?
- What holiday ballet takes place on Christmas Eve, features a mischievous, toy-making godfather, and was written by Tchaikovsky?
- What painting by Rembrandt holds the record for "most stolen painting," has been referred to as "the takeaway Rembrandt," and has been stolen 4 times in the last 35 years alone?

*To qualify to win a UMass Amherst sweatshirt blanket you must answer all of the above correctly. You can enter the drawing by stopping by the CHFA Advising office in Machmer E-20 and putting your answers (with your name on them!) in the ballot box, or by emailing [kgray@hfa.umass.edu](mailto:kgray@hfa.umass.edu). If you enter by email, please put "Trivia Triplets" in the subject line.*

The Scribe is  
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Graduation Date,  
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