Today’s Scholars,
Tomorrow’s Leaders
The Graduate School stands at the very heart of Yale’s mission as a university—committed to intellectual creativity, the promotion of research and scholarship, vivid teaching, and fostering a vibrant community of learning—the life of the mind in all its facets.

Thomas D. Pollard
Dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
Sterling Professor of Molecular, Cellular, and Developmental Biology
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Students in Yale’s Graduate School of Arts and Sciences stand among the very brightest young scholars in the nation, indeed, the world. They bring a lively curiosity to their pursuits, along with a facility for making sense of complex problems. Whether in laboratories, libraries, archives, museums, or in studies abroad, Ph.D. students raise probing questions, chart new approaches to solving old mysteries, and add insight to understanding. For them, learning is a passion.

Through their own inquiries, collaborations with faculty, and teaching, graduate students contribute much to the ongoing conversations that shape Yale’s intellectual environment. Their dedication makes groundbreaking research possible; they advance knowledge while preparing themselves to assume leadership roles in academia, government, business, and society.

So that Ph.D. students can dedicate themselves to these vital tasks, the Graduate School supports them with generous fellowships covering tuition, health benefits, and living stipends. The impact of this support, which totaled $70 million in fiscal 2010–2011, is both tangible and practical. Mankind’s greatest accomplishments—from how we govern ourselves to the highest forms of self-expression, from history to mathematics, from agriculture to industry—all are expanded and improved by their scholarship.
In an era of budget challenges, additional funding for graduate fellowships is an increasingly urgent University priority. New endowment, which not only supports students but also frees operating funds for their research, is a vital investment in the future of society and the future of Yale.

I invite you to explore the pages that follow, which profile some of the ways Yale’s graduate students in the social sciences and humanities are making important and enduring contributions that will have implications far beyond Yale’s campus. They are but a small sampling of the “life of the mind” that flourishes in our Graduate School.

Funding for graduate fellowships is truly an extraordinary opportunity to participate in the mission of training tomorrow’s scholars. I hope you will join in this vital undertaking.

Sincerely,

Thomas D. Pollard
Subjects of study do not always come ready-made. Arthur Mitchell, a graduate student in East Asian Languages and Literatures, is forging his own path with the study of the modernist movement in Japan in the 1920s. “It had been misunderstood,” he explained. “The prevailing assumption was that the literary style we call modernist—a style sometimes characterized as experimental, using stream of consciousness, disrupting conventional narrative, and overturning expectations—was in Japan derivative of the movement in the West.”

On the contrary, Mitchell proposes that the movement was very much indigenous. While modernist writers like Jun’ichiro Tanizaki and Riichi Yokomitsu read Oscar Wilde and drew inspiration from Immanuel Kant, the Japanese artists...
wrote in response to their own immediate social context in the early twentieth century. “That context was dynamic,” he said. “Literacy rates had soared in the decades preceding; by the 1920s the reading appetite of the nation was voracious, encouraged and sated in part by booming magazine and newspaper industries where the artists’ stories were serialized.”

The swirl of ideas emerging from Japan’s deepening engagement with the West was certainly a spark for these writers. For example, Mitchell explained, “theories of efficiency were becoming all the rage. Proponents encouraged men to abandon the traditional hakama in favor of Western style suits and women to adopt supposedly more rational methods of cooking rice.” This was not mere imitation of Western practices; rather, it was part of a strategy to help Japan surpass the countries of Europe and the U.S. But Mitchell notes that some modernist fiction writers wrote critically against that trend, holding up a lens to expose the contradictions of the project.

Mitchell’s investigation reveals modernism in Japan not just as an aesthetic style, but also as a movement with profound social relevance—insights that are only possible because he dared to look beyond what was already known.

Kaizo (Reconstruction), a widely read magazine, captured the zeitgeist of the early 1920s in Japan, before and after the Great Kanto Earthquake.
New approaches to longstanding questions

Alex Torgovitsky uses econometrics to understand which economic models offer the best answers to real-world problems.

Mathematics offers a powerful way to describe forces at work in the world—the load on a truss or the trajectory of a rocket—and to accurately predict their outcomes. But when human behavior enters the picture, as in economics, precise models are much harder to come by.

Graduate student Alex Torgovitsky aims to understand what constitutes a sound model for economic questions through his study of econometrics, the intersection of statistics and economics. “Yale has one of the world’s premier programs in this field,” he said. His inquiries have been guided by theorists Don Andrews, Edward Vytlacil, and Xiaohong Chen, all members of his thesis committee.
Properly conceived, statistical models can yield nuanced answers to important questions. There is a positive correlation, for example, between education and income. But before they can address economic disparities, policymakers need to know whether schooling in fact causes higher income or if there is another factor involved, such as a personality trait that drives achievement in school and the workplace. Similar ambiguities can arise when considering the relationships between class size and test scores, unionization and wages, or wages and the labor supply.

“Econometrics gives us a way to make plausible arguments that distinguish between cause and correlation in the data we see in the real world,” Torgovitsky said. And convincing statistical models are essential if such arguments are to guide decision-makers and the policies they put into practice.

Harry Truman famously asked for a one-armed economist, frustrated by “on the one hand... other hand” answers to pressing questions. As Torgovitsky and his colleagues continue to refine their methods to weigh competing economic models, such answers may be clearer.
A passion for solving problems

At Yale, Ana Arjona ’10 Ph.D. investigated the dynamics of civil conflict under Stathis Kalyvas, the Arnold Wolfers Professor of Political Science. What causes a nation to wage war upon itself? And what happens to people when civil war persists for generations?

For Ana Arjona these questions are more than academic. A native of Colombia, Arjona focused her Ph.D. studies on the war that has devastated her country over the last half century. “I wanted to understand micro-level dynamics of civil war: how a conflict that has gone on this long is experienced, especially in the day-to-day routines that have evolved between armed groups and civilian populations,” she explained.

To gather her data, Arjona returned to Colombia for field-based research of right wing paramilitary groups and the Revolu-
tionary Armed Forces of Colombia, known as the FARC. She interviewed some 800 ex-combatants, studying the interactions between civilians and armed groups and constructing detailed histories of three communities.

Arjona was surprised by the order that exists within the conflict. “If an armed group has a stronghold over a region, its leaders are more likely to establish and oversee parallel institutions there, including conflict resolution schemes, and to regulate commerce and access to natural resources,” she observed, noting also that civilians may have a voice in the process. “They may stage peaceful protests and succeed in having their grievances addressed either through show of numbers or by disobeying norms.”

Arjona is beginning a three-year postdoctoral fellowship at Columbia University. As she deepens her research—including a comparative study of the civil conflicts in Kosovo and Lebanon—Arjona hopes to find insights that will inform policy decisions and help bring peace to communities around the world.
Preparing New Leaders for Tomorrow

Original thinking, great teaching, innovation, and a passion to serve—these are the hallmarks of the Yale graduate student. In every area of endeavor, these scholars are true pioneers, addressing challenging intellectual problems and expanding the bounds of knowledge while preparing for careers in their chosen fields.

The support of donors makes graduate education possible. In the course of a typical program, a doctoral student will require more than $270,000 in tuition and stipends from the University. A gift directed to graduate fellowships can sustain the excellence of graduate education at Yale today and well into the future.

To learn more about supporting graduate fellowships at Yale, please visit www.givingcatalog.yale.edu or contact Wesley H. Poling, Director of Graduate School Capital Giving, at wesley.poling@yale.edu or 203.432.7919.