

Core course, Historical Study A-34, "Medicine and Society in America," and writes on the social and ethical aspects of health, disease, and medical practice, focusing on twentieth-century America. *No Magic Bullet* explores venereal disease. *The Cigarette Century: The Rise, Fall, and Deadly Persistence of the*

Product That Defined America, examines the tobacco industry (see "The Fall of the House of Ashes?" July-August 1996, page 19, on the research then in progress). It won the Albert J. Beveridge Prize of the American Historical Association and the Arthur Viselstear Prize of the American

Public Health Association. On his website for the book, Brandt wrote, "We now confront a worldwide pandemic of tobacco-related diseases as cigarette use has spread....It is my hope that *The Cigarette Century* provides a strong foundation for a critical discussion of new strategies to

Focusing on the Ph.D.

During her tenure as dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences (GSAS), from mid 2005 through last December, Theda Skocpol says, "I got a Ph.D. in what it means to be a university administrator in two and a half years." Recognizing that the graduate-student experience can be far more diverse, isolated, and protracted than the undergraduate experience, Skocpol, who is Thomas professor of government and sociology, focused attention on graduate education as a whole in an effort to better ensure those students' successful preparation for their future role as scholars.

• Time to degree. Early in her deanship, Skocpol recalled during a December conversation, she sought data on each of the

separate Ph.D. programs—in particular, on how long it took students to complete classwork, their general examinations, and the dissertation. Such data had rarely been gathered, and even less frequently shared—despite national statistics indicating that fewer than half of humanities students complete the doctorate within 10 years. (The time to degree is typically longest in the humanities, where students may have to master multiple languages, and shortest in the sciences; social sciences fall in between.)

As of 2003-2004, according to the data, 8.5 percent of Harvard humanities and social-sciences Ph.D. candi-

dates were beyond their eighth year of graduate study—suggesting problems in completing their programs that put at risk their own careers and faculty members' investment in these advisees (plus hundreds of thousands of dollars of Harvard support). Skocpol talks about students getting "lost." Departmental performance—when members of an entering cohort took their generals, for example—varied widely.

In response, GSAS took corrective action. Funding was secured for dissertation fellowships: a year of writing uninterrupted by teaching, provided students have completed chapters in hand by their sixth year (or sooner) and use the funds in their seventh (so the money isn't an incentive to further delay). Near-

ly all applications for such fellowships were funded by the 2006-2007 academic year; only one-third had been funded two years earlier. (For other financial-aid news, see "Gains for Graduate Students," page 58.)

Skocpol added a stick to that carrot: for each five students enrolled in a doctoral program beyond the eighth year, departments would lose an admission slot the next year. The policy was put in place in late 2005, to take effect 18 months later. Sixteen of 24 humanities and social-sciences departments were then at risk of losing 33 slots in total. A year later, 14 departments still faced losing 23 slots.

But in the end, only two departments lost a slot apiece, as faculty members and students found ways to work together to accelerate graduation. Harvard conferred 71 humanities doctorates in 2005, 82 in 2006, and 99 in 2007. In social sciences, the numbers were 95, 98, and 110 in the same years. By her final report to the Faculty of Arts and Sciences (FAS), Skocpol noted that the share of students still working on their degrees past the eighth year had declined to about 4.7 percent.

• Teacher training. Skocpol led an FAS task force that recommended multiple incentives to improve pedagogy—from more rigorous evaluation of teaching during tenure reviews to equal assessments of classroom work and research in professors' salary reviews (see "Toward Top-Tier Teaching," March-April 2007, page 63). Many of the measures await action, but GSAS has implemented those pertaining to teaching fellows. A program now promotes full English competency, during the first graduate year, for students whose native language is not English. Graduate assistants should now have better training, more regular relationships with faculty course heads, and "dossiers" documenting their teaching when they go on the academic job market.

• Setting policy. Skocpol created the Graduate Policy Committee (GPC) to advise the GSAS dean on policies and financial resources, and to review each doctoral program (as is routinely done for undergraduate concentrations). The committee stimulates faculty involvement from all the schools participating in Ph.D. programs; informally, its members have become peer advisers on best practices from across the University. Under the GPC's aegis, the joint Ph.D. in science, technology, and management has been overhauled; FAS is about to approve a program in film and visual studies; and doctoral students, like undergraduates, now can pursue "secondary fields"—increasingly important as disciplines evolve.

In all, said Skocpol, despite fears that faculty colleagues could not cooperate or commit to innovations in graduate education, "That's not what I found."



Theda Skocpol