

vard Medical School, are being let go, and other, sporadic cuts are being imposed (major layoffs at the Faculty Club, for example, where dining and meeting revenues began declining last fall). The College admissions staff has curtailed travel to individual high schools. Some of the elevators in Holyoke Center have been shut down. And the FAS course catalog and student handbook will now appear only online.

Not yet visible are the changes in the core activities of teaching and learning. The graduate school has trimmed admission of students—saving fellowship funds and perhaps recognizing the

dimmed job prospects for future Ph.D.s. In time, that will reduce the ranks of teaching fellows. As FAS and other schools have imposed limits on the use of visiting or other temporary professors, there will be consequences for course availability when faculty members take scheduled leaves. The *Crimson* reported that the economics department, the largest College concentration as measured by enrollments, will eliminate its junior seminars—a recent innovation, and the only small classes regularly taught by the department faculty. This may be just the first sign that the academic smorgasbord Harvard students have

come to expect will be less well stocked in the future. Adjustments in student and faculty life and amenities may well follow.

In his March message to colleagues, Dean Smith described the work involved in “taking every possible measure to protect our core mission, to support our priorities, and even to pursue some new initiatives in the midst of this crisis.” That hard work may be only just begun.

For continuing coverage of University financial news, see harvardmagazine.com, where there are also more in-depth reports covering many of the developments summarized here, as well as the situations and strategies of peer institutions.

A Walk through History with Justice Ginsburg

CASE BY CASE, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, L’59, has chipped away at laws that have disadvantaged women and reinforced notions of men as breadwinners and women as dependents: both as an attorney for the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) who argued cases before the Supreme Court, and as a justice on that very court. During a conference at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study in March, the associate justice led listeners on a journey through the historic cases that overturned many of those laws; the path corresponded largely with her own life. (To view video coverage, visit www.radcliffe.edu.)

Her fellow panelists at the conference—titled “Gender and the Law: Unintended Consequences, Unsettled Questions”—wondered whether younger women today realize just how much has changed. They “have had the privilege of coming of age professionally in a world that Ruth Bader Ginsburg helped to make,” said moderator Linda Greenhouse ’68, who spent three decades covering the Supreme Court for the *New York Times*.

Ginsburg (who attended Harvard Law School, but finished her degree at Columbia) came of age as an attorney at the same time women’s rights were first coming to



U.S. district judge Nancy Gertner (left) listens as Linda Greenhouse, formerly the Supreme Court reporter for the *New York Times*, questions Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg.

the Supreme Court’s attention. Until 1971, the justice said, the court had no doctrine on gender discrimination. That year, she wrote a brief in *Reed v. Reed*, which challenged an Idaho probate law that said “males must be preferred to females” in appointing estate administrators. (At the time, many states had similar language on their books, she recalled.) It was the first Supreme Court case she worked on in which the court issued a decision, and was an auspicious start: the Court ruled in her client’s favor.

Ginsburg founded the ACLU Women’s

Rights Project in 1972 and, in the eight years before her appointment as a federal judge, argued or wrote briefs in more than a dozen major women’s-rights cases. Especially in the beginning, she said, it was important to choose sympathetic cases: those whose plaintiffs were demographically similar to the Supreme Court, and sometimes similar in *gender* to members of the Court, as well, on the premise that *any* discrimination on the basis of gender was unconstitutional—not just discrimination against women. In one such case, 1975’s *Weinberger v. Wiesenfeld*, the Court struck

down a federal law that had entitled widows, but not widowers, to child-in-care benefits after a spouse's death.

And it was also important to recognize that full equality of citizenship carried responsibilities as well as rights, Ginsburg said, citing *Duren v. Missouri*, a Supreme Court case she won in 1979. In what would be the last case she argued before the Court (she was appointed a federal judge in 1980, and served until her 1993 appointment as a justice), she maintained that a Missouri law making jury duty optional for women should be struck down because it treated women's service on juries as less valuable than men's.

Panelist Sandra Lynch—who last year became the first female chief judge of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the First Circuit—recalled attending Boston University Law School (from which she graduated in 1971) when it was considered radical for admitting enough women to constitute 10 percent of each incoming law class. Lynch described the open hostility that some of her law professors directed toward female students; U.S. district judge Nancy Gertner, who graduated from Yale Law School the same year, recalled interviewing for a prestigious clerkship and being asked whether she ever planned to marry and have children. “I told him, ‘Of course not,’” she recalled. (She now has two.)

Because discrimination today is subtle rather than explicit, Lynch and Gertner said they worry that young women will fail to see threats to their equality and lose ground inadvertently.

As President Drew Faust—the former Radcliffe Institute dean who has broken a major gender barrier herself—listened in the first row, Ginsburg admitted that her zeal for gender equality explained, at least in part, her quick recovery from surgery for pancreatic cancer earlier this year. She returned to work less than three weeks after the surgery, and the same week attended a major public address by President Barack Obama. When asked by *USA Today* why she insisted on attending, she answered, “I wanted people to see that the Supreme Court isn't all male.” (She is the second female justice; Sandra Day O'Connor was appointed in 1981 and retired in 2006.)

But Ginsburg voiced less concern about backsliding than her fellow panelists. She closed by saying that given

how much has changed in a single generation, “I remain optimistic about the potential of the United States.”

Humanities Rebooted

TWO OF Harvard's most venerable humanities disciplines have slashed decades-old concentration requirements in recent months, marking 2008-09 as a year of considerable curricular change in the foundational literary fields. Both English and the classics have voted to move to far more elective-based programs that department leaders have hailed by turns for their relevance, flexibility, and accessibility.

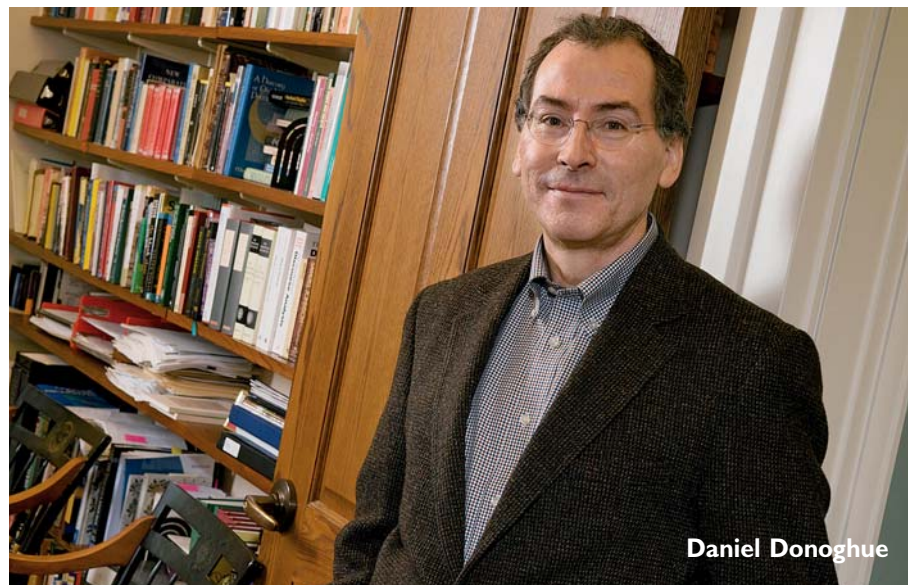
For all their apparent novelty, the revised degree requirements have won general support within the two departments: faculty members insist that the changes represent not modern concessions in a world less receptive to Western heritage, but refinements that will make transmission of that heritage more effective.

“A lot of people, when they first hear about this program, say, ‘Here's the Western literary canon being eviscerated,’ and that's not what we're doing at all,” says Marquand professor of English Daniel Donoghue, the department's director of undergraduate studies. “The people who are saying that haven't read the program. We're selecting works of canonical literature and asking, ‘How are we going to

teach this? How are we going to get this information to the students?’”

The new English configuration replaces a previous requirement for a year-long survey of British literature that drew consistently poor reviews from concentrators, as well as other degree prerequisites, including a sophomore seminar and courses in American and pre-1800 literature. Incoming concentrators will now be expected to fulfill a single requirement in each of four “common ground” areas: Arrivals (focusing on how British literature, from its beginnings in the seventh century, is a product of cultural importation); Diffusions (dealing with the dispersion of “British” literature across the globe, beginning with England's seventeenth-century expansion and imperialism); Poets (emphasizing non-dramatic poetry); and Shakespeares (treating the Bard and his heirs in a cultural context).

The new scheme, professors say, represents a course of study that separates Harvard from its peers by expanding upon the traditional, chronological progression that traced a line from *Beowulf* to Chaucer to Spenser, and straight onward. “Is that linear model sufficient to describe what's happening? Because it's just a tem-



Daniel Donoghue