

**TO: All Social Studies Students**  
**FROM: Anya Bassett, Director of Undergraduate Studies**  
**RE: Academic Advising**  
**DATE: September 2016**

Welcome back to Harvard! I hope you had a relaxing and enjoyable summer. The purpose of this memo is to explain how academic advising works in Social Studies.

All Social Studies students are assigned an academic advisor in Social Studies. Students start with the person who is their Social Studies 10 tutor and remain with that advisor unless he or she leaves Social Studies or the student asks to be reassigned. I reassign all students who need new advisors each summer, making every attempt to assign students to advisors with whom they have already worked or who share their intellectual interests.

You should plan to meet with your advisor twice during shopping period. The purpose of the first meeting is to get acquainted (or reacquainted), to discuss your experience at Harvard so far, and to discuss requirements, your focus field and plan of study, and course selection for this term. This meeting should last at least a half-hour. Following your first meeting, your advisor will “release” your electronic study card so that you can register for classes. However, we encourage you to meet again (briefly, if need be) with your advisor before finalizing your courses.

**In preparation for your first meeting of the year with your academic advisor, please write a short essay describing your academic interests and listing goals, questions, concerns, and other information your advisor should know in order to do a good job advising you. If you are new to your relationship with your advisor, offer details about yourself (your background, your interests, your work habits). If you have already worked with your advisor, provide him or her with an update, including information that she or he may not already have (your summer experiences, changes in your family situation). And please answer the following questions: How do you hope to change and grow this year? What would make this year a success for you (however you define success)?**

**Please email your essay as a Word attachment to your advisor by 8 p.m. the night before your first advising meeting or at a mutually agreed upon time. I hope that your essay will help structure your first advising conversation and will facilitate good communication between you and your advisor.**

You will need to meet with your academic advisor again soon after the course registration deadline to complete your focus field and plan of study. Juniors (members of the class of 2018) will submit preliminary plans of study while seniors (members of the class of 2017) will submit a final focus field and plan of study, which must fit with their thesis topic. Your advisor will work with you to prepare these documents, which are due in the Social Studies office with his or her signature by Wednesday, October 5th. The focus field/plan of study form and a checklist for filling it out are in your e-registration packet.

We encourage you to stay in close touch with your academic advisor throughout your time in Social Studies. We pride ourselves on strong advising relationships, and we hope you will as well.