

TO: Social Studies Students
FROM: Anya Bassett, Director of Undergraduate Studies
RE: Academic Advising
DATE: August 2020

Welcome back! 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 that person leaves Social Studies or the student asks to be reassigned. I reassign students who need new advisors each summer, making every effort to assign students to advisors with whom they have already worked or who share their intellectual interests.

You need to meet with your academic advisor at least once during shopping period to get acquainted (or reacquainted), discuss your experience at Harvard so far, and discuss requirements, your focus field and plan of study, and course selection for this term. Following this meeting, your advisor will “release” your advising hold so that you can register for classes.

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

Please send your essay to your advisor via email by 8 p.m. the night before your first advising meeting. I hope that this assignment will help structure your first advising conversation and facilitate good communication between you and your advisor.

You will need to meet with your academic advisor again in September to complete your focus field and plan of study. Juniors (members of the class of 2022) will submit preliminary plans of study while seniors (members of the class of 2021) 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 with your academic advisor’s approval by Tuesday, September 29th. 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 think they will be even more important this year.