English Conversation Class: Registration

Pre-Register for classes online! wl.mit.edu
Registration is Tuesday, February 11 • 9:00–11:00am | Stratton Student Center, W20 Room 407

Registration for the spring semester English Conversation Classes, sponsored by the Women’s League, takes place Tuesday, February 11, between 9 and 11 at the Student Center. Students are encouraged to pre-register at wl.mit.edu to hold their place in class and reduce paperwork at registration, then come to registration for a short interview with one of our teachers in order to be placed in the appropriate class level—basic, intermediate, or advanced. Walk-in registrants are also welcome.

The English Conversation Classes began in 1963, and since then more than 3600 men and women from 76 countries and all corners of the MIT community have participated.

The classes are designed for international visitors to MIT whose first language is not English, and are open to all MIT students, graduate students, post-docs, visiting scholars, and employees as well as their spouses, partners, and close family members. Classes meet Tuesday and Thursday mornings, February through early May. Materials are included in the class fee of $120 per semester.

The classes provide a friendly setting in which to practice conversation skills, and the choice of topics is often student-driven. At the intermediate and advanced levels, grammar and vocabulary are introduced in the context of conversation. Speaking and listening competence improves as stories and experiences are shared.

Students gain confidence in their conversational English, become more familiar with US culture and customs, and have the opportunity to share their own culture and customs with a welcoming group of dedicated volunteer teachers and fellow English language learners. Perhaps most importantly, students make life-long friends and feel more ‘at home’ as they adjust to life in the Boston area and embrace their time at MIT.

If you are interested in becoming a teacher or substitute and would like to learn more, please fill out the interest form at wl.mit.edu.

SAVE THE DATE

Celebrate International Women’s Day with the WL on Friday, March 6 from 10am–2pm in Lobby 10. Email wleague@mit.edu to volunteer.

The Spring Chorale Concert is planned for Saturday, May 9 at the Harvard-Epworth United Methodist Church in Cambridge. Stay “tuned” for more details.

Women’s League Annual Meeting will be held on Tuesday, May 19 with guest presenter Stu Schmill, Dean of Admissions and Student Financial Service.

Commencement will be held on Friday, May 29!
Volunteer with the English Partner Program!

Are you looking for a great volunteer opportunity? Join us as an English Conversation partner.

We pair students enrolled in our English Conversation Classes with a member of the MIT Community. This provides opportunities for English Conversation students to build friendly and informal relationships, while working on their English skills. You don't need teaching experience or to speak your partner’s native language. The idea is to help your partner build their English skills and be a warm and friendly presence as they settle into life in Cambridge and at MIT. Pairs typically meet weekly or biweekly for about an hour. You and your partner choose a meeting time and location that works best for both of you.

Please contact Kara Cunningham (kbcunnin@mit.edu) with any questions. Partners will be matched in March!

PKG Center Scholars

Every summer, the MIT Women’s League funds two fellowships with the Priscilla King Gray Public Service Center. Here are our scholars from Summer 2019.

Betty Johnson Fellow
Devora Najjar (PhD, Media Arts and Sciences) above photo

This summer, Devora worked with the Mahia Maori Committee of Mahia, New Zealand to implement the first iteration of a community-led marine sensor system within their mātaitai, a protected area of ocean which grants the Committee control of all non-commercial fishing. Together with Paul Ratapu, President of the Mahia Maori Council, Devora led wānanga, cultural workshops, together with the community that combined hands-on water sensor education together with māori values and monitoring strategies, as well as workshops that focused on how these two knowledge sets work together to give the community a more robust picture of their changing marine environment. After returning from the trip, Devora documented the successes and failures of the wānanga by meetings with community members who participated as well as compile additional materials and documentation needed for the community to implement the sensors autonomously for the upcoming summer season.

Becky Vest Fellow
Ellie Simonson (Master’s, Electrical Engineering and Computer Science)

Ellie worked alongside the nonprofit Invisible Innocence in Bismarck, North Dakota. Data have shown that on average, survivors of sex trafficking return to the life of sex trafficking seven times before they fully leave the lifestyle. Belonging to a community where survivors feel safe may reduce the chances of returning to the life of sex trafficking. However, survivors may experience safety risks when they utilize social media or digital messaging tools. Ellie spent the summer beginning the development of a safer messaging application for survivors.
Since 1981, MIT presidents have presented awards at the Institute Awards Convocations. Among those awards are two the Women’s League created to honor Laya Wiesner, wife of MIT’s 13th president Jerome Wiesner. Last May, these two prestigious awards were presented to Jessica Quaye and Patricia-Maria Weinmann for their contributions to improving the quality of life at MIT and beyond.

Jessica Quaye has dedicated her time at MIT to enriching the life of her peers. She serves on multiple committees, including the Committee for Race and Diversity and the Undergraduate Student Advisory Group. She is the first student representative for the International Students of Color working group, developing strategies to ease the transition for international students who identify as underrepresented minorities. Over IAP, she forged the beginnings of a relationship with a high school in Ghana, so that in 2020, MIT will for the first time have a Global Teaching Labs partner outside of South Africa. An extremely self-driven student, Jessica cares deeply about the MIT’s campus life, and promoting inclusion for all who study here.

Associate Coordinator of MIT Radius, Patricia-Maria Weinmann is one of those remarkable people one finds behind the scenes at MIT every once in a long while. Her skill, influence, and positive effect on the MIT community are matched only by her humility, generosity, and warmth. Her work offers critical opportunities for students to explore, develop and apply an ethical lens to their world — and to the science and technology pursuits they engage in. Trish makes space for the MIT community to develop their ethical backbone with thoughtful mentorship. She lifts up every team she joins with enthusiasm, encouragement, and the generous offering of her time.

We are proud of our award recipients and congratulate them for their dedication and accomplishments.

In anticipation of the May 8, 2020 Awards Convocation Ceremony, we invite League members to nominate candidates for these awards. Both carry financial prizes.

The 2020 awards website will be open for submissions from February 7 through March 20. We encourage you to nominate candidates for both the Laya W. Wiesner Award and the Wiesner Community Award. Visit awards.mit.edu for more information.
Upcoming Events

Breakfast Series

Breakfast Series with Deborah Blum on Wednesday, March 11 at 8:00–9:30am

Twice–yearly women in the MIT community are invited to informal “breakfast talks.” Known as the Breakfast Series, they are occasions when women faculty and administrators explore the role of women in the academy, sharing the pathways their professional lives have taken — the people and events that have influenced their direction.

Deborah Blum is a Pulitzer-prize winning American science journalist, columnist and the director of the Knight Science Journalism program at MIT.

Please email wleague@mit.edu to register for this event as space is limited. Breakfast is served promptly at 8:00am and the cost is $12 per person. Please let us know if you have dietary restrictions.

Cityside Dining

Our Cityside Dining interest group provides an opportunity to meet new friends and try new restaurants in the area. The next event is a group dinner at Henrietta’s Table on Monday, February 24 at 6:00pm.

Please contact Jennifer Fleming (jfsousa@mit.edu) to sign-up or get more information about future dining events.

Donate to the MIT Furniture Exchange

Here’s to a new year and a new decade!

Now is the time to declutter and spark joy in your life by donating your gently used household items and furniture to The MIT Furniture Exchange (FX). Proceeds from those donations benefit the Women’s League Scholarship Fund, a growing endowment that provides annual financial support to undergraduate women at MIT.

Did you know that the FX is open on the first Saturday of the month from 10am –1pm? Load those bulging boxes into the car and set your GPS for 350 Brookline Street, Cambridge (Building WW15-182). Weekday hours are Tuesdays and Thursdays from 10am–4pm.

Need more info? Contact Julie Parker at jgparker@mit.edu or visit fx.mit.edu
The MIT Women’s League Manager, Kirsty Bennett, is on maternity leave through early April. Renie Pavilon, Senior Events Planning Associate at Gray House, is covering two days a week until Kirsty returns.

Visit Renie in the office (10-342) on Tuesdays and Thursdays or email her at wleague@mit.edu.

Thank you for your patience during this transition!

The MIT Women’s League Newsletter is published four times during the academic year. The deadline for submission for the April 2020 newsletter is March 1. All items should be emailed to the Women’s League Office, wleague@mit.edu.

Please call the office for a hard copy of the newsletter or for any questions you may have.

Manager Kirsty Bennett
Chair Cheryl Vossmer
Honorary Chair Christine Reif
Visual Identity Ink Design

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Contact Renie Pavilon
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Visit our website for more information
wl.mit.edu

League Interest Groups

Would you like to get involved in the Women’s League and meet people with similar interests? Interest Groups are open to all. Visit our website (wl.mit.edu/interest-groups) to find upcoming meeting times and locations. Meet new people or catch up with old friends.

BOOK DISCUSSION
Nancy Hollomon
nancyredsox@gmail.com
Upcoming meetings:
Wednesday, February 26 and March 25 from 11:30am–1pm

FIBER ARTS
Claudia LaBollita-James
nonnajames@gmail.com
Upcoming meetings:
Wednesday February 12, March 11, April 8 from 12–2pm

CITYSIDE DINING
Jennifer Fleming
jfsousa@mit.edu

MIT JAPANESE WIVES GROUP
Kimie Shirasaki
mitjwg@mit.edu

CHORALE
Sally de Fazio
de_fazio@alum.mit.edu

News from the WL Office