HUMANIST CHAPLAINCY newsletter

Welcome from the Humanist Chaplain

Tufts is a unique and exciting place to explore your experience of something greater than yourself—whether that's the calling of nature, the spirit of justice, or a sense of the divine. We are home to the only university-funded Humanist Chaplaincy in the United States, and because of this, students who consider themselves non-religious, atheists, agnostics, or Humanists have a variety of ways to connect and reflect here. As the Humanist Chaplain, I get to meet you exactly where you are in your journey of making-meaning with your spiritual and philosophical identities.

In this newsletter, you will learn more about what this past year meant for our community and hear from several of our students who make this community so thoughtful, caring, and joyful. I am looking forward to connecting with you and joining you on your philosophical journey—wherever it may take you!

Walker Bristol, A14, Humanist Chaplain

Welcome from the Humanist Community

John Lazur, A22

My name is John Lazur. I am a rising junior this year and a member of the Humanist Community at Tufts (HCAT). I grew up in Minneapolis, MN attending a Unitarian Universalist Humanist congregation regularly, and, though I rarely considered Humanism a core part of my identity, this religious and philosophical upbringing shaped my worldview in lasting ways. I was welcomed into the Tufts community by the University Chaplaincy and Walker Bristol within the first weeks of being on campus, and I quickly found a supportive, dynamic, and expansive home in the Humanist Community at Tufts. The end-of-semester Solstice celebrations have become particularly poignant rituals for me, and they embody the dedication to communal reflection and meaning-making that is so integral to my Humanist worldview.

John Lazur, A22, (far left) with members of the Humanist Community at Tufts on annual retreat
The Tufts Humanist Chaplaincy creates space on campus for everyone to come into connection and collaboration about life's big questions, especially for those who consider themselves nonreligious or outside of traditional religion and might not have that space otherwise.

**History of the Humanist Chaplaincy**

Since the 1990s, Tufts University has been home to vibrant community life for atheists, agnostics, and Humanists. The Tufts Humanist Chaplaincy was established in 2014 to create more institutional support for this community and attend to the many changing needs of students across the nonreligious spectrum. Today, students from a variety of walks of life seek out the Humanist Chaplain for individual support, to gather as small groups, and to host larger programs engaging with contemporary questions around Humanism and modern spirituality.

**Regular Programming**

Please note: We continue to adjust our programming in creative ways to retain the spirit of past events and programs while following Tufts guidelines for the health and safety of the community in the 2020-2021 academic year.

- Weekly Reflection Meetings
- Sunday HCAT Art and Music Group Meetings
- Potluck Meals
- Candlemaking
- Dinners around challenging conversations
- Fall Retreat
- Speakers and Panel Discussions around modern spirituality

"HCAT was such an invaluable part of my transition into college, as it gave me a weekly space to stop, breathe, and reflect amidst the rush of my freshman year. It is an incredibly calming space. Our weekly meetings really taught me to appreciate silence and thoughtful discussion with my peers. HCAT is such a unique space within the Tufts Chaplaincy, as the sense of ritual allows students to experience a sort of spirituality or 'religious' tradition without ever having to identify with a religion themselves."

Lee Romaker, A23
Spotlight Event: Retreat to the Fells

The Tufts Humanist Chaplaincy sponsored a new retreat opportunity last fall to build a vision for the coming year and begin asking bigger questions about life, Humanism, and meaning making outside organized religion. Members of the Humanist Community at Tufts (HCAT) and friends across campus went on a day hike in the Middlesex Fells Reservation to enjoy a local nature preserve, learn about the natural history around Tufts, and connect with one another in new ways.

“HCAT has given me an opportunity to be a part of a larger community. I never considered myself traditionally religious, which I thought also meant missing out on that type of community. Going on a walk in the Fells was one of my favorite experiences freshman year, and I was able to connect with the outdoors in a way I never had. The meetings are the highlight of my week, and the relationships I’ve formed have extended beyond that single space.”

Maggie Basinger, A23

Interfaith Collaboration: Death Café

The Tufts Humanist Chaplaincy sponsors a series of community conversations in the Death Café model, which includes: coming together over dinner and cake and talking openly and intellectually about death and dying. These conversations have grown into popular points of interfaith connection, co-sponsored by the Buddhist Sangha and other religious communities. Students have shared that the Death Café is one of the first times in their lives they are able to talk openly about the topic, and that the space helps them bravely engage with their ideas.

Tufts students joined the HCAT members in conversation for Death Café 2019
“My first experience with the Humanist Community was actually my freshman year attending the annual Death Café. I was struck by how comfortable I felt having vulnerable conversation with strangers about an intimate subject like death. Never had I felt like I had a space to open up and truly explore my own fears and beliefs in that way. After that experience, I started attending meetings, and continued to be in awe of the new pathways of learning and bonding that arose. Whether it is the glow of the candle light or the shared breath of the circle, this community embodies a warmth and devotion to one another that I am eternally grateful for.”

Audrey McGlothlen, A23

Support Humanist Life at Tufts University

A substantial portion of our annual programs are made possible by community donations. Here are some suggestions for how you can help make a difference in students’ lives:

$50 Provides community with books and other resources for deeper study of Humanism

$100 Supports chaplaincy’s programming, including care packages, virtual speakers, and virtual gatherings

$250 Ensures our chaplaincy is ready to support any emergent needs of our community this year

HCAT Members hike in the Middlesex Fells Reservation in Fall 2019

The Humanist Chaplaincy and HCAT raised money for the Somerville Homeless Coalition in Fall 2019

To give to the Tufts Humanist Chaplaincy online, please visit http://go.tufts.edu/giveHumanist. To make a gift by credit card over the phone please contact Tufts Senior Associate Director of Development Rob Ayles:

617-627-2675 | Robert.Ayles@tufts.edu

Thank you for your generosity and support.