ARTS

"I think this is the beginning of a beautiful friendship."
RICK BLAINE, **CASABLANCA**

Summer course in Sweden aims to inspire through environment

BY ANGEL HU
STAFF REPORTER

Yale will offer a new study-abroad program in Sweden this summer for students to read and write young adult literature inspired by the landscape, architecture, culture and history of Stockholm.

According to the program description, students will take trips to landmarks such as the Birka Viking Village, the Vaxholm Fortress and the Gamla Stan — Old Town. The program will run from June 13 to July 11, and upon completion, students will receive two Yale credits.

The program will be taught by Jake Halpern '97, a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and New York Times bestselling author. At Yale, Halpern teaches the course "Young Adult Writing," in which he incorporates "experiential activities" into the writing process.

"I want the students to reconnect with the 12-year-old inside of them. I want them to feel wonder and joy and excitement and curiosity because that's what I want them to channel into the writing," Halpern said.

When teaching in New Haven, Halpern's class activities have included trips to Yale's Peabody Museum and Horse Island, blindfolded walks through the Buddhist Shrine in Branford College and games of Jenga, in which each student tells a sentence of a story as they add a block onto the tower. Through these writing exercises, Halpern encourages his students to think of his class as "a space in which you can be creative."

"That was my thinking of getting us overseas, which is out of Yale, out of the classroom, in some sort of setting, that allowed us to basically have an extended, month long field trip, and to really see this, not as a class, but as an experience, because I think that will help them take more risks and be more creative," Halpern said.

In the past, Yale has offered many study-abroad opportunities across Europe, especially in France, Spain and Italy, but they had "always thought about starting a program in Sweden," according to Halpern. Halpern noted that its "Nordic legends, Viking history and beautiful landscapes" could be potential inspirations for writing.

"Jake Halpern has put together a terrific program, and I'm confident that students who study with him in Stockholm will have an amazing – if not a transformational – experience," wrote Director of Study Abroad Kelly McLaughlin in an email to the News.

Over the past summer, Halpern traveled to Stockholm with Angela Kuhne, the senior associate director and director of special initiatives for Yale's study abroad office, to scout out the city and find potential places he could take his students.

In an email to the News, Kuhne described Halpern as a "great faculty partner" whose "enthusiasm for working with students is infectious."

"He will provide students with an academically challenging experience, create a supportive community, and help students build upon existing writing skills or develop new ones," Kuhne wrote.

Halpern noted that a particular highlight of their trip was Birka, a former Viking island west of Stockholm.

"There were Viking mounds as far as the eye could see, and there was not a soul in sight. I'm not someone who believes in ghosts exactly, but it's as close as I ever felt. Goosebumps rippled up my arm, and I was like, 'Okay, I'm taking my students here,'" Halpern described.



COURTESY OF JAKE HALPERN
This summer, students will have the opportunity to study young adult writing in Stockholm, Sweden.

Additional activities will include a bonfire in the woods, a ghost tour of the old town and potentially a visit to a defunct nuclear reactor, according to Halpern. He also hopes to do something with Sweden's refugee population so that his students can witness "a different way that people are experiencing Sweden."

Ultimately, Halpern said he hopes that the study abroad experience will create long-lasting bonds that extend beyond the course.

"I want them to indulge the fantasy that maybe they have a life, a creative future of creating whatever it is the stories that they want to tell. But I also want to forge a strong sense of community among the students, that they feel supported by one another and that they feel encouraged by one another," Halpern said.

Total billed expenses for the program will amount to $13,170, and students receiving Yale financial aid will be able to request the International Study Award to cover costs proportional to their financial need.

The application deadline is Tuesday at 11:59 p.m.

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J. Press, founded at Yale, plans brick-and-mortar expansion

BY RISHI GURUDEVAN AND LAURENTIA WOO
STAFF REPORTERS

J. Press, the clothing retailer founded at Yale over a century ago, has announced plans to expand its customer base to a national scale.

Per an October strategy document authored by Onward Holdings, the Japan-based parent company of J. Press, the brand aims to increase its revenue to $100 million by the 2030 fiscal year, a "tenfold" increase from the $10 million brought in during the 2024 fiscal year.

To accomplish this growth, J. Press will pursue the "aggressive opening of brick-and-mortar stores," from just three in 2024 — including one on New Haven's Elm Street — to 20 in the US by 2030, per the document.

The vision is centered around Jack Carlson, a former member of the U.S. National Rowing Team who took over as J. Press' creative director and president in the fall.

"This role feels like coming home in many ways," Carlson wrote in an email to the News, adding that many of his first suits, shirts, ties and belts came from J. Press.

When asked about the brand impact of the business's scaling, Carlson wrote in a statement to the News that maintaining the tradition of J. Press is his primary goal. The "best way to make the brand resonate with new audiences and with younger generations is, in my opinion, by staying as authentic and true to the brand's history as possible," he wrote. "That's what makes it cool."

Carlson wrote that, in addition to planning to grow the business, he "has brought the brand more in-line with its DNA." He wrote that J. Press is producing more clothing in the U.S. and that its campaigns have a renewed focus on traditional "Ivy style."

Carlson said he prefers "Ivy style" over the term "preppy," which he said came into use in the 1970s and was popularized by the 1980 publication of "The Official Preppy Handbook," a satirical book.

"To some people, the word is synonymous with J. Press, but to others it evokes brands like Vineyard Vines or Southern Tide. Some people think that any jacket and tie combination is 'preppy,'" Carlson wrote. "There's a bizarre movement on TikTok to redefine the word to mean neon pink, sparkles, Lululemon, and Stanley water bottles."

Matthew Longcore GRD '18, editor of the fashion blog Ivy Style, wrote in an email to the News that, as the "preppy aesthetic" has grown to include more than "old money WASPs," J. Press has adapted to represent a more diverse cohort.

"J. Press is democratizing preppy style by featuring models who are ethnically diverse and by hosting popular events at its New York City store that attract young people," Longcore wrote. "It is very much an 'if you build it, they will come' strategy, and from what I can see it is working."

Carlson also contrasted J. Press, with its Yale roots, to the menswear brand Brooks Brothers.

"Brooks Brothers was founded in New York, and it has always been more mainstream and more business-oriented," he wrote. "Most people probably think that the historic American presidents always wore Brooks Brothers. And a lot of them did."

"But many — especially the ones who went to Yale and Harvard — wore J. Press," Carlson wrote. "J. Press traditionally is more genteel, tweedier, more academic and more intellectual, and sportier than any of its rivals. A bit more British in style and inspiration — and a bit more of a sense of humor. In all of these ways, J. Press derives much of its character from Yale, its home."

As much as J. Press derives its character from Yale, it is also inspired by global textile traditions, said Kathleen Quaintance GRD '28, a doctoral candidate researching craft and material culture in Yale's art history department. She pointed to fabrics like Madras plaid, which J. Press and other similar clothing brands helped popularize in the U.S.

The fabric, named for the city of Madras — now Chennai — in India, has been woven for centuries using natural dyes that early European manufacturers often attempted to replicate.

Vignesh Harikrishnan ARC '22, who has researched Madras plaid, the "bleeding Madras" — as it was often called due to its tendency to create a unique, faded look upon being washed — was imported into the United States in the mid-20th century and became a staple of Ivy style.

The New Haven location of J. Press is at 262 Elm St.

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ALEX HONG / CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHER
The brand has targeted $100 million in revenue by 2030 under the leadership of Creative Director and President Jack Carlson, who started in the fall.

