FROM THE FRONT

"My music is like a baby pink frosted cake with sprinkles, but when you cut into it, there's a gooey, dark chocolate center.."
MELANIE MARTINEZ SINGER

Petition asks Yale to join farmworker rights initiative

FOOD FROM PAGE 1

The Fair Food Program is operated by the Coalition of Immoka lee Workers, a farmworkers' rights organization. Buyers that participate in the Fair Food Program buy produce from farms in the program that guarantee certain worker protections and abide by a code of conduct. Buyers also agree to pay a premium of one cent per pound picked, which goes to farmworker wages.

Warrior — who is a member of the Student/Farmworker Alliance steering committee, its main organizing body — said that the group has been seeking to meet with Yale Hospitality throughout the semester and invited them to the September film screening.

"We contacted Yale Hospitality to discuss the Fair Food Program in July, but Hospitality only agreed to a meeting in mid-November, more than four months after our request," Warrior wrote. "When Hospitality raised questions about the technical details of the FFP, we offered to include expert representatives from the FFP in our meeting – which Hospitality refused."

According to Warrior, the alliance will be tabling in Yale dining halls across campus to bring more visibility to their cause, but did not specify when.

A Yale Hospitality spokesperson confirmed an upcoming "November meeting scheduled with members of the Student/Farmworker Alliance" in an email to the News, adding that Yale Hospitality aims to increase tomato purchases from Fair Food Program-affiliated growers.

According to the spokesperson, because Yale Hospitality purchases food from third-party distributors, those organizations may be better entities for the Student/Farmworker Alliance to approach about the Fair Food Program. The spokesperson said Hospitality "can help facilitate those connections."

Bena Feng '29 said in an interview that she feels most Yale students are not informed about where Yale's food comes from.

"I don't know a lot about it, but I hope that we can continue to support fair labor," Feng said.

The Student/Farmworker Alliance was first organized in 2000 following a march led by the Coalition of Immokalee Workers, per the alliance's website.

Contact **JERRY GAO** *at jerry.gao@yale.edu and* **HANNAH LIU** *at hannah.liu@yale.edu.*

Tamar Gendler returning to classroom this spring

GENDLER FROM PAGE 1

"One of the challenges about the job I had for a decade is that, pretty much, administration took up a large proportion of my time, so I couldn't do a lot of writing, and I couldn't do much teaching," Gendler said in a Zoom interview with the News. "I'm super duper happy about the prospect of being able to do two of the other things that I really, really love about universities."

Gendler said her seminar on human, animal and artificial intelligence, which she said is intended for seniors, brings together topics on behavioral science and artificial intelligence that she explored during a sabbatical she is currently spending at Stanford University. She also said she was excited to return to teaching the first-year Directed Studies program, which she described as "the greatest course in the world to be able to teach."

"In the spring, I'm teaching both ends of the Yale spectrum in terms of career cohort," she said. "I love meeting students on their way in, and I love meeting students on their way out."

While Gendler taught "Public Plato: Ancient Wisdom in the Digital Age" during a medical leave in spring 2023, she said the standard expectation for full-time faculty in the Humanities division is to teach two courses a semester. She added that she sees no reason why she wouldn't continue to teach full-time in the fall and the upcoming years.

Gendler, who graduated from Yale College summa cum laude in 1987 with distinctions in the humanities and the mathematics and philosophy majors, served as the University's Deputy Provost for the Humanities and Initiatives from 2013 to 2014 and the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences from 2014 to 2024.

In an interview with the News that was published in December 2024, Gendler said she was one of the top contenders to succeed former University President Peter Salovey, whose tenure as president ended in June 2024. She also said she was interested in leading one of the four Ivy League universities that at the time did not have permanent presidents and thought she was passed over for the Yale position because she is uninhibited in her public speaking.

Gendler said that her administrative experience will make her "more imaginative and more effective" in the classroom. Serving as dean — working with the Poorvu Center and reading about tenure cases — familiarized her with other professors' innovations in teaching, she said.

Since the end of her term last December, Gendler said, she has been spending her sabbatical at the Stanford Institute for Human-Centered Artificial Intelligence and the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences at Stanford. She also said she wrote a book that is "basically an introduction to philosophy in the voice of a stand-up comic," which she hopes to publish in the "reasonably near future."

"Imagine Socrates were to give a TED Talk on Comedy Central. That's the book," Gendler said. "In some ways, this year that I spent writing a non-academic, popular book was an effort to teach a really, really large audience. Now I'm thrilled to go to the interpersonal part of just teaching students again."

Gendler said her course on human, animal and artificial intelligence struck her as "the perfect way" to bring together everything she's learned during her sabbatical. The fundamental question of the course, she said, is "What is it, intelligently, to make sense of the world?"

The first two-thirds of the course will focus on well-developed topics in human and animal intelligence, she said, while the last third will explore "literature that's literally being written while we are teaching and taking the course." The course is cross-listed in the cognitive science, humanities, philosophy and psychology departments.

Gendler is also returning to teaching Directed Studies, the first-year Great Books program that includes two semester-long courses on historical and political thought, literature and philosophy. She said she taught DS for the first time in 1996 and several more times between 2006 and 2013.

She said Directed Studies is the "one course at Yale where you don't have to write the play and direct the play" and compared teaching the program to writing within the constraints of the sonnet form.

Gendler praised Yale College Dean Pericles Lewis' plan to expand the program starting next year. To make for a "nice knitting together" of the first-year class, she said, every first year should be one degree of separation from a DS student — just as every student should be one degree of separation from a varsity athlete, an international student and a first-generation student.

Lewis said that Gendler's return to the classroom — like former Yale College Dean Marvin Chun now teaching and Salovey's plans to teach next year — is "a sign that they stay connected to the academic enterprise."

"She's just a very widely read, knowledgeable person," Lewis said of Gendler in a Tuesday interview. "Obviously, she's a philosopher, but she's very knowledgeable about literature and history and politics as well. So I think she'll be a terrific teacher of Directed Studies."

Cognitive science professor Laurie Santos, who has hosted a podcast episode with Gendler in 2020, wrote in an email to the News that "Tamar is an amazing teacher and I think it'll be wonderful for students to have her back in the classroom."

Ariella Kristal '14, who took "Philosophy and the Science of Human Nature" with Gendler in 2011, wrote in an email to the News that Yalies are "incredibly lucky" to have the opportunity to learn from Gendler again. Kristal recounted Gendler's passion for teaching, recalling a discussion section when she brought in cake to illustrate John Rawls' "I cut, you choose" principle.

Robert Nozick, the American philosopher, was one of Gendler's three doctoral advisors at Harvard.

Olivia Woo contributed reporting.

Contact **JAEHA JANG** *at jaeha.jang@yale.edu*

Haidt warns against social media at president's talk

BY JAEHA JANG
STAFF REPORTER

Jonathan Haidt '85, a social psychologist who recently published the bestselling "The Anxious Generation," warned of technology's harmful effects on Generation Z and urged students to reclaim their attention at a Wednesday afternoon lecture sponsored by University President Maurie McInnis.

Speaking to a packed audience in Battell Chapel, Haidt argued that social media platforms and technological developments have caused a mental health crisis among young people, disrupted American democracy and eroded trust in universities.

"The story I'm going to tell is incredibly dark and pessimistic," Haidt said to the audience, which included McInnis, Yale College Dean Pericles Lewis and former University President Peter Salovey in the front row.

The lecture, titled "How to be a Student in an Era of Anxiety and Political Polarization," was the second event in McInnis' Presidential Lecture Series. Raj Chetty, a Harvard economics professor, spoke at the first lecture in February.

Haidt spoke about Yale's prominent role in shaping national discussions about free speech on college campuses, specifically mentioning speaker disinvitations at Yale Law School and widespread outcry about racial inclusivity at Yale after Halloween in 2015.

Haidt, the professor of ethical leadership at NYU's Stern School of Business, is the author of three New York Times bestsellers: "The Coddling of the American Mind," "The Anxious Generation" and "The Righteous Mind."

In her introduction, McInnis invoked the spirit of William Blake, the 18th-century artist whose work is currently on display at the Yale Center for British Art.

To McInnis, Blake's spirit mirrors the spirit of the university, which she described as "the freedom to oppose without ostracism, the freedom to be opposed without being ostracized, that is the creative friction that sparks originality."

McInnis — highlighting Haidt's ability to tackle topics such as morality and identity politics — said that his work demonstrates that "we should be able to disagree fundamentally without flinging cranberry sauce or mashed potatoes at each other." She said Haidt's work effectively spotlights the perils of not being able to agree civilly.

Haidt began his talk by referencing a 2022 article he wrote in the Atlantic called "Why the Last Ten Years of American Life Have Been Uniquely Stupid." Using the Tower of Babel as an analogy, Haidt explained that he had observed a large technology-based shift in culture, politics and mental health in the early 2010s.

Haidt connected developments such as the iPhone gaining a front-facing camera, Instagram launching the "like" button and Twitter adding the "retweet" function to rising anxiety, depression and self-harm in Gen Z.

Haidt linked the mental health crisis to changes on university campuses, where students began requesting trigger warnings, safe spaces and speaker disinvitations at unprecedented rates. Videos of campus protests and speaker disruptions went "super viral on the right," contributing to the collapse in public confidence in higher education, he said.

"The president is attacking us, extorting us, threatening to destroy — you know — grabbing scientific research, saying 'I'm gonna take away, not your future funding but your payroll next week.' So incredible things are happening to us and we don't have the support of the country," Haidt said. Haidt partially attributed those actions to viral events which "alienated a lot of the country."

While Haidt acknowledged that Yale has long experienced tension over free speech, he also praised Yale's recent initiatives, including a partnership with the Constructive Dialogue Institute — which Haidt co-founded with Caroline Mehl — that required first-year students to complete a training about how to consider opposing views.

Shifting from diagnosing the problem to potential solutions, Haidt called on universities to return to their "telos" — their essential purpose — which he identified as the discovery of truth.

Haidt went further and told members of Gen Z that to regain their diminishing attention spans, they should remove addictive apps like TikTok and Instagram from their phones, read entire books and avoid consuming short-form video content.

"Your phone should be a digital Swiss Army knife," Haidt said. "If you make it a slot machine with companies that give you variable ratio reinforcement, you're gonna get addicted to your phone."

During the question-and-answer session moderated by McInnis, Haidt expressed cautious optimism about Gen Z's future, noting that "Gen Z is not in denial" about technology's effects.

In an interview after the lecture, Oriana Dunker '29 said she appreciated both his critical analysis and his hopeful perspective.

"What I took away from the actual lecture itself is that A, I should go home and delete TikTok, and B, that there is a lot of hope for our generation," Dunker said.

Teddy McGuire '29 said he enjoyed reading Haidt's work in high school and was excited to meet him and take a photo after the event.

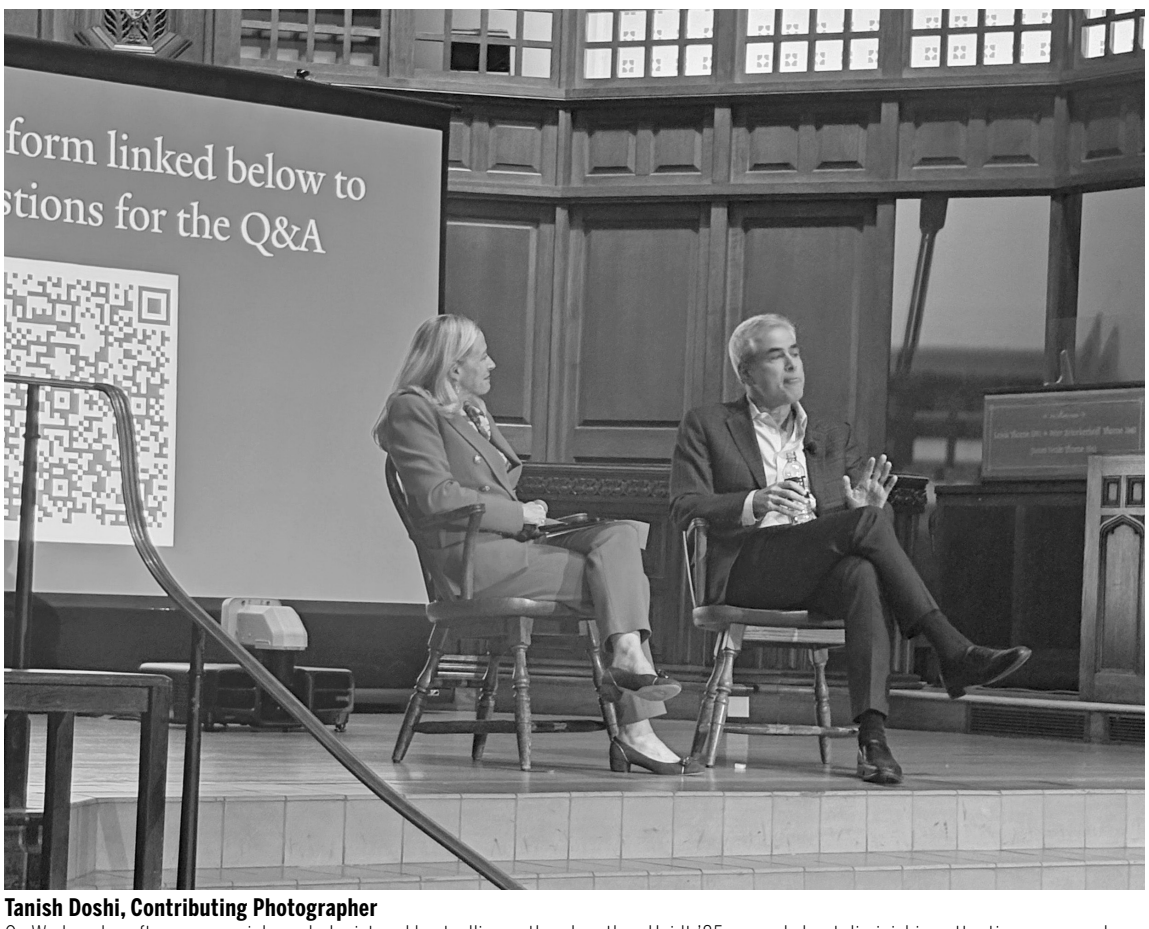
Another attendee told Haidt after the lecture that Haidt's work helped her and her boyfriend communicate with one another, adding, "I'm getting married because of you."

In an interview with the News, Haidt emphasized that individual actions would be insufficient in response to the many challenges he laid out. He said that forming communities and friendships is also necessary and encouraged students to do activities together without their phones, rather than just talking.

He concluded his lecture by encouraging the audience to repeat together: "I will give less offense. I will take less offense. I will pass on less offense."

The Presidential Lecture Series will continue in the spring, though the next speaker has yet to be announced.

Contact **JAEHA JANG** *at jaeha.jang@yale.edu*



Tanish Doshi, Contributing Photographer
On Wednesday afternoon, social psychologist and bestselling author Jonathan Haidt '85 warned about diminishing attention spans and political polarization at a lecture organized by University President Maurie McInnis.