GSAS Course Shows Business World Not Just for MBAs Anymore

By James Devitt

Recognizing that knowledge about the business world is important not just for MBAs anymore, Columbia's Graduate School of Arts and Sciences (GSAS) this summer completed its second year of offering a free course for GSAS students designed to teach master's and doctoral students the basics of the business environment.

"Today, there is much more of an effort to place master's and doctoral students in nontraditional jobs," said GSAS Dean Henry C. Pinkham, designing the courses "recognizes the need for programs that prepares students for the changing job market and the world of global economy.

"It used to be that the primary career path for a Ph.D. was to become a university professor; now there are many other things you can do. There are employers who are looking specifically for M.A.'s and Ph.D.'s. We help provide them with the tools to handle a variety of careers." GSAS plans to continue offering the course in 2003.

Rogier Mesznik, who has taught the course for the past two years, agrees. But he adds that career benefits extend beyond the job market.

"I think that much of what we teach has relevance way beyond a career in business," said Mesznik, a Columbia Business School professor of finance who has taught at the University for the past 20 years. "Valuing investments, assessing risk in any security, the role of financial market oversight and regulation, which is especially relevant this year, and how to develop budgets and accounting statements in any organization has value outside any career endeavor."

The New Yorker reported on the course in June 2001 in an article entitled "How to be a better protector in Your M.A. or Ph.D." The course, "Business Basics: Opportunities, Requirements and Complexities," offers participants the tools and analytic methods to identify business opportunity correctly, to deal with venture capitalists, to reject undervaluing or unsound propositions and to know what to look for in assessing a venture. It also teaches students what to expect of an advisor or consultant, how to gain familiarity with the institutional and legal surroundings and how to develop the basic tools necessary for running an organization.

The class has drawn praise from GSAS students.

"The notion of a business basics course for Ph.D. students is an excellent idea, particularly considering the market for intellectual property. The world of 'skeptics'—individuals who can combine specialized knowledge and expertise with a broad vision," said David Abramson, a doctoral student in the biological sciences, who is currently writing his dissertation.

"It was a very useful class, both to my future career and personal-
ly," said Victoria McKinney, a graduate student in the biological sciences. "As a biologist I may want to work at a biotech [company] one day, which can be a risky proposition. I now feel like I could assess the risk involved and make an edu-

The New Yorker reports on the course in June

Bookshelf

Mill on Democracy: From Representative Government, by Nadia Urbinati, associate professor of political theory, (University of Chicago Press, $37.50). Urbinati's book clarifies and illustrates how Mill's political ideas help enrich our contemporar-
y understanding of democracy.

Grover Cleveland, by Henry F. Graff, professor emeritus of history (Times Books, $20). Graff traces the life of an historically significant chief executive who never curried people's favor, yet won it just the same.

Emporer of Japan: Meiji and His World, 1852-1912, by Donald Keene, University Professor Emeritus (Columbia University Press $39.50). Keene pre-

Land's End: A Walk in Provence, by Michael Cunningham, associate professor of writing (Crown, $23). Cunningham, whose The Water Dance sold $1.6 million in hardcover, paper-

Voyage: How It Can Save Your Life, Marianne J. Legato, professor of medi-
cine (Harmony Books, $23). Legato provides here a step by step journey through the differences between male and female form and function, and presents a groundbreaking proposal for how gender-specific treatments will radically improve the qual-

Memoir of a Visionary: The Story of America's First Female Doctor, by Antonia Pantoja (Arts Publica, $26.95). As part of the Hispanic Civil Rights Series, Pantoja—who died in May at 80 years old—recalls in her own words the major benchmarks of her journey and her story of public service, social justice, and intellec-
tual innovation.