

Differing perspectives on college are tolerable

Every time he heard the question, Arthur wordlessly would stare down his customers until they'd squirm uncomfortably, shove the menus into his hand and stammer, "Ahem, well, all right then – just bring me the crab melt."

The question – "Where do you go to college, son?" – he'd simply answered too many times. And he was tired of the reaction he unfailingly received.

The long and short of the answer was that Arthur didn't go to college. He'd dropped out after two years at some university in New York and never looked back. Instead, he traveled and worked at seasonal jobs in places like southern Texas, Montana and northern Michigan, making just enough money to survive, forming ephemeral friendships and garnering volumes of experiences and colorful stories. He planned (if one could even use that word) to live such a life indefinitely.

His customers hadn't expected this answer and didn't like it. They were incredulous when he responded to, "Well, what do you expect to do after this?" with a shrug and, "More of this." As Arthur walked away from the table, he shook his head, wondering if the people with whom he'd just spoken realized what they were missing in choosing a life so bleak. Undoubtedly, the people at his table were wondering the same thing of him.

In the eyes of Arthur and many others



Katie Gilbert

like him, college represents nothing more than a staged production of life masquerading as the real deal, in which people read from a script only to turn around and recite the lines as their own thoughts.

Sure, go ahead and try to dismiss such a perspective with a patronizing shake of the head. Now consider this possibility: Arthur might be right.

After all, during this point in the semester, which brings us reminders of impending "reality" (which apparently we're all still waiting for) in the form of, say, the Career Expo, it's easy to look at college as simply a preparatory stage, a place where we learn the choreography for the big dance. Arthur's right on the count that such choreography only leaves us stumbling once we're placed in a context that dances to a different beat. But choose to approach college from a different direction, and

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Arthur's argument doesn't jive. Some grab hold of these college years with their own two fists and twist them into what they want them to be. They protest, they publish, they produce. We have the opportunity to make waves here at Truman – be they radio waves or hands waving hello. Why not be among those who choose to ride these waves of their own creation?

Refuse to look at yourself as a marinating filet and the real world as a grill in the process of heating up. This attitude only provides a license to live a secondhand life during these years, in which our primary purpose is to lie limp and soak.

The grill's looking red-hot to me – are you ready to jump on and make it sizzle?

Katie Gilbert is a senior psychology major from Lenexa, Kan.

Despite student complaints, assessments are useful tools

Survey the freshmen. Ask students about their meal plans, when the Sodexho contract is set to expire, and when plans are being drawn up for a new residence hall. Query seniors about their plans after graduation, question their level of satisfaction with all aspects of Truman, and request that they put together examples of their written works from a variety of areas. Test juniors to see if their level of general knowledge is comparable to juniors across the country, and then test them again as seniors to see how they measure up in their field of study.

Sara Miller wrote an article, "JINS fares positively in evaluation," which appeared in last week's Index. In this piece Adam Davis, professor of English and interim director of interdisciplinary studies, said, "I don't think it's much of an overstatement to say that Truman invented assessment in higher education." And as many times as students are mentally poked, prodded and asked to puke up everything they have been taught here and endlessly solicited for their opinions, maybe this statement is not too far from the truth.

Is there any point to all of this assessment? More to the point, is it necessary? Does anyone really listen to students after asking them to speak out? A co-worker of mine is unhappy with the assessment-based culture of Truman. During the summer in my capstone class, others told me how to blow off the senior portfolio and how little effort they exerted. It is easy to see how many students would be frustrated with the system, and on many levels, because of the numerous evaluations, emphasis on measuring up to other schools and the in-



Katie Stuart

convenience of asking a student to offer up information to the University in the midst of tests and projects compounded with extracurricular concerns. To put it simply, what is in it for us?

It is easy to understand and even sympathize with some of these feelings. As students drag themselves to the junior test in the middle of the semester, it is hard to think of the greater good or why any of this should be taken seriously. But it is important to take it just that way, seriously, for a variety of reasons. On a mission to discover where this wealth of data goes, I visited Truman's assessment Web site and found a variety of topics dissected and studied to learn more about students, including pages of information analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of Truman based on the graduating student exit survey.

The Web site also contains a great number of excerpts from student portfolios. The compilation does not spare Truman. There are several comments extremely disparaging to the institution or the portfolio process. However, there are also many posi-

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tive comments about how valuable Truman was to students' growth and learning.

It is beneficial to read how past students felt about things current students are now going through. It is valuable to learn other students feel almost exactly as you do or to ponder how some experiences on the same campus are different than your own. If it is valuable to us, it is not a giant leap to think about how helpful it would be to the faculty who teach us and the staff that helps us develop.

I can't speak as to how many of the faculty here read what the assessment office publishes, but after interacting with faculty for a little more than three years, I am confident that many of them want to do what it takes to make our experience better here. Evaluations, even though they might be annoying in the moment, are something vital that shouldn't be taken lightly. And no, this won't be on the test.

Katie Stuart is a senior business administration major from Maryland Heights, Mo.

Low-budget trek to Iowa provides adventures in name of journalism

During Homecoming weekend, Index sports editor Conor Nicholl and I invented a new form of journalism based on two principles. First, you must have very limited prior knowledge of the place and the event you are covering. Second, you must have extremely limited resources. It is imperative that you only pack what you need to survive. This new style hinges on these two facts to force the journalist to gather the story in the best way possible by moving past the realm of observer and into the zone of participant.

We were assigned a story on famous Kinnick Field in Iowa City, home of the Iowa University Hawkeyes, for Truman's own Detours travel magazine. The Hawkeyes were scheduled to play Michigan, and we decided there would be no better time to travel there and experience Iowa football. We knew about the story a few weeks in advance. Conor called ahead to get press passes so he could sit in the press box to write the story, and I could go on the field to take the accompanying pictures.

At the last moment, however, we lost everything. Literally. Two days before our scheduled departure, the media department of the University of Iowa called and said our press passes were no longer coming because "ABC sports was more important." Subsequently, the morning before we left, I lost my wallet and the driver's license and money that were contained within it, and as if these two facts weren't bad enough, our resident Iowan and tour guide had to leave our party because of a family emergency.

Suddenly we found ourselves in a place we had never been before with nothing but a notebook, a camera, one cell phone, one ID and \$40 cash between the two of us. Standing in an unfamiliar gas station in Iowa City with absolutely no plan, most people would have turned around and gone



Chris Waller

home. I was, however, standing with Conor Nicholl, who looked at me and said, "Well, Chris Waller, this should be interesting."

Interesting was an understatement. The first and only real decision we made was to eat at a Quizno's down the street. What followed was a series of events that led us from the streets of downtown Iowa City to the sidelines of Kinnick Field while 70,000 screaming fans supported their team.

We went from one place to another; talking to people we had never met before, all in the name of journalism. We went to the Pedestrian Mall downtown and met two brothers who lived for the pre-game celebrations that occurred throughout the city on the nights before games. We talked to people grilling in the middle of the street, people chanting and dancing to the Iowa fight music. We even ran into the band, walking from bar to bar playing to the fans.

Having no place to stay, at the end of the night we ended up sleeping in my car, parked in the stadium parking lot. We were awakened by the alarm on my cell phone and promptly walked 20 feet from our accommodations to the bus that would take us to the game. In 20 minutes we joined the thousands of fans making their pilgrimage to the Mecca that was Kinnick Field. Somehow by the grace of God, we managed to

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get in through the media gate, and before I knew what was going on, I was on one knee between a photographer from Sports Illustrated and a cameraman from ABC.

The game was one of the most exciting I had seen. It went into overtime and was decided on a final third-down dive into the end zone. Iowa lost by four points, but as I made my way out of the stadium, I couldn't help but feel like something had been accomplished. Walking through the crowd of people adorned in black and yellow, Conor and I realized he had written the story, I had gotten the pictures, and we had gotten to see one of the best college football games of the year for less than \$40.

It was, to put it quite simply, amazing. The story, once finished, really captured the feeling of being part of what was happening because we were there. We didn't travel three hours to see what was going on – we experienced it. The story and the photos turned out so well, in fact, we've decided to repeat the method next semester by having someone blindfold us, drive us in a van to a random location and kick us out with a camera, a notebook and \$40 cash.

Chris Waller is a junior communication and English major from St. Joseph, Mo.

Around the Quad

This week's question:
"What are your thoughts about teaching intelligent design as opposed to evolution in public schools?"



Scott Unnerstall junior

"I guess [intelligent design and evolution] both should be taught in public schools. It doesn't seem like they should exclude one based on religion or something like that."



Shahr Rezaiekhali sophomore

"I don't think it should be taught in public schools. I don't think it has scientific backing, therefore it's not eligible subject matter in public schools."



Andrew Morgan sophomore

"Since there's no scientific basis for its origins, it shouldn't be taught in a class based on scientific process. It's not a matter of opposing viewpoints – it's a matter of one being based on faith and one being based on scientific evidence."



Wes Glenn freshman

"It shouldn't be there. It's a private school thing. You pay for viewpoints, so that's why you go to a private school."

Parks' movement must be revitalized

Does anyone even care anymore? The funeral of Rosa Parks was yesterday in Detroit following a remarkable and moving ceremony at the U.S. Capitol on Sunday and memorial services in Montgomery, Ala., on Sunday and Monday. At the Capitol Rotunda, thousands mourned her Oct. 24 death and celebrated her fateful stance against discrimination when she, in a simple and symbolic manner, rode home from work in the front of a public bus in 1955.

Parks became the first woman ever to have her coffin viewed at the Capitol Rotunda, and according to an Oct. 31 Washington Post article, a U.S. Park Police spokesman said the crowd was as large as the one honoring President Ronald Reagan last year.

Flags were flown at half-staff in Washington, D.C., yesterday, a clear sign of the respect this country has for the civil rights movement that Parks, among others, helped to launch in the 1950s. However, honoring Parks presents a fork in the political minds of Americans.

I fear the ceremonies marking the end of Parks' life will also mark the end of the movement for many Americans who look back at those terrible times in our country's history, thankful that they're over. This would be a travesty.

The other path we can take is to recognize that the battles for civil rights in this country are far from over. We need to take the memories of "Miss Rosa" and continue her struggle for equality. Her dignity, awareness and hope are needed now almost as much as they were needed 50 years ago. The fight must continue.

Face the truth: We do not have equality in America. Aside from a few issues, mostly regarding homosexuals, we ostensibly have achieved equality under the law. However, what is written in statutes, precedent and the Constitution is not reflective of how people are treated every day in our society. Socially, discrimination is an overwhelmingly persistent threat in America, where a large portion of the population sees nothing wrong with harassing or killing someone because of ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion or political beliefs.

Take Kirksville, for example. Hatemonger Alex Linder proudly prints "The Aryan Alternative" with the slogan "No Jews. Just right" from the Vanguard News Network in our area. As of 2004 there are 23 active hate groups in Missouri and 762 total in the United States, according to the Southern Poverty Law Center. The center does not list any active hate groups in the Kirksville area, but we know they're here. If the Vanguard News Network isn't listed as a hate group, it is likely there are many others not accounted for.



Chris Matthews

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We must continue to battle abhorrent beliefs like those of Linder and his followers. The best way to battle speech is with more speech. The civil rights movement must be revitalized on a national scale. It is no longer acceptable for just a few political groups to denounce discrimination and inequality in America. The time has come for another huge movement.

There are parallels between the political atmosphere today and that which sparked the civil rights movement in the mid-20th century. Unpopular military action, vast political corruption and apparent oppression are defining characteristics of both time periods. We have made great strides since the repressive "good ol' days" of the 1950s, so a revitalized movement might not seem necessary to the general public.

Information and education are the keys. People must be informed of the need for a continued battle for civil rights and social equality. Become informed, and share your knowledge with everyone who will listen. There is a great opportunity to start your enlightenment at Truman as we celebrate Native American Heritage Month throughout November. Learn about the people of our country and the world, respect their individuality, and fight for their equality.

The 1960s and '70s were two of the best decades in the history of the United States. Unfortunately, the political atmosphere has taken a drastic shift to the far right, and civil rights are simply no longer a priority. That shift is nearing its end. On the spectrum of political opinion, it is time the left has a strong voice again. You have the responsibility to make it happen.

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