

Facebook fiasco curbs the important issues

A few weeks ago I was exposed to a particular phrase that could spark annoyance, paranoia and anger in a heartbeat at every friendly gathering across most college campuses.

This phrase, weeks after its initial appearance, can now probably trigger vomiting, rolling eyes and a worthy cause for leaving the room. This phrase is "News Feed." This phrase makes me want to gag.

I don't know about you, but I am really sick of hearing about Facebook. Period. Call me hypocritical for writing this, but I just need to let the world know one thing:

Relax. It is just a Web site. I believe "News Feed" has only one feature that is really killing us: It simply exposes the amount of time you waste on Facebook instead of studying, which is the only the real reason people like you and I don't enjoy it. It's like your mother telling you to stop watching television. It is a constant reminder of your frequent use.

Let me back up a bit: If you have been in hiding the past few weeks, "News Feed" basically is a gossip column about people you actually know. It tells you who broke up with whom, what so-and-so's status is, who has added pictures, all on your Facebook homepage. It makes staying in tune with your friends' lives on Facebook a whole lot easier because you can see all the updates without having to do a thing. Although some see this as useful, most consider it a Facebook



Jackie Gonzalez

stalker's dream.

But let's face it. If you don't want people to know your business, don't put it on a public site. I will admit I was one of the panicked citizens of "Facebookland" when I first was exposed to the "News Feed," but then that panic quickly turned into a wave of shame.

I can't believe I let myself get absorbed into the small, trifling issue of a new Facebook feature when there are so many other things to be worried about. Even minor things such as what to wear or what to have for lunch are more important than a silly addition to an already ridiculous site. And to think, groups grew by the thousands to petition against this feature. A lousy, completely un-life-changing feature.

If only we could take those numbers and apply them to things like the number of young adults voting in the November elections or the number of young adults who have done service in the name of global

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health care — then we might be able to start a trend of youth activism. Wouldn't that be neat?

It could be the start of a new generation of freedom fighters and peacemakers. Instead of coming together to combat Facebook, maybe we should embrace Facebook and use it as a tool to organize non-violent protests and to create meaningful petitions to send to our legislative representatives.

Of course, Facebook shouldn't be just for political agendas. I'm on Facebook all the time (go ahead, friend me) and I perform the occasional Facebook stalking. Who doesn't? I just think that people shouldn't take it so seriously. Put the rage to use somewhere else. I'm sure we can all think of something more important than a self-serving Web site.

Jackie Gonzalez is a sophomore political science and history major from Bonita, Calif.

English graduate offers advice to improve personal statements

Throughout the course of my undergraduate career, I took a lot of flack from friends for majoring in English. However, in the end, it was I who had the last laugh when it came time to apply to grad schools because my English degree gave me a nice background in composition. While my very intelligent, yet lexically malnourished friends struggled to incorporate a multi-syllabic vocabulary in their personal statements, I wrote mine in iambic pentameter. You know, for kicks.

So what's an English degree really good for? To be honest, not a whole lot. However, I've found my English degree useful for at least two things. It's good for getting into graduate programs, and it's good for helping your friends edit their personal statements so they too can get into grad school. I've edited a lot of papers and read some fairly awful personal statements, which is why I thought I'd pen a little advice for how to improve them.

First things first, have the stationery you submit your personal statement on reflect the grad program you wish to enter. For example, if you're a biology major trying to enter medical school, show your dedication to all things organic by writing your personal statement on human skin. The morgue charges an arm and a leg though.

If you're a history major trying to get into law school, show how succinct and subtle you can be by writing your entire personal statement on a cashier's check. Go ahead and write the words "cough" and "ahem" in the memo line to drive home the point. Though not usually kosher, this would be an acceptable time to have your parents help you with your personal statement.

If you're a computer science major



Joel Andersen

trying to get into a computer science graduate program, I'm not really sure why you're applying to graduate school because you picked a major with a job market. Go cry into a bag of money if you feel left out of the grad school game.

After you've chosen proper parchment, it's time to actually write the thing. Talk about yourself and what life experiences have led you to this academic avenue. However, although it might be called a personal statement, nobody really wants to hear personal details about your private life. This includes, but is not limited to, why you really volunteer at the animal shelter.

Your personal statement also can be used to explain discrepancies in your transcript, for instance, why your LSAT score never saw triple digits. You might be thinking I'm telling you to lie in your personal statement, but I'm not. Instead, I'm suggesting your rationalize your shortcomings. When rationalizing, be creative, have some fun, and dig your little, Machiavellian heart right into a hole you couldn't possibly crawl out of.

After you've written your personal statement, review your masterpiece to

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check your diction. Show prospective grad schools how intelligent you are by using big words that you don't really know the meaning of. Most likely you're a smart person who's just about to graduate from faux-Harvard, and if you haven't come across a certain word before, chances are that neither has anyone else. Incorporating big words that you don't understand is such a "tenebrific" idea that it borders on genius. Just disregard what those gloomy prescriptive grammarians at the writing center might tell you, and go for gusto.

Finally, and this is the most important part of writing a good personal statement, wait until the last minute to even start, much like I do with half of my columns. This will give it a lively, honest feel. Nothing says sincere like typos, grammatical errors and faulty rhetoric in a rushed composition.

At the very least, it gives us English majors something to do with our degree.

Joel Andersen is an MAE graduate student from Blue Springs, Mo.

Energy issues inspire students, community to form groups

If you've heard the drone of reconstruction, it's because contractors are giving many of Truman's buildings a makeover. The sounds aren't pleasant, but the effects will be welcome as students from the Sierra Student Coalition as well as the Environmental Campus Organization are campaigning this semester to introduce renewable energy to the building plans.

The effort to fight energy consumption is known as the "Cool Cities" campaign and this semester, students are hopeful of an adoption of several campus and citywide policies including those known as LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design).

Contractors might see these plans as expensive, but for the green reader, the expense of remodeling according to LEED certification is minor and will be repaid in full in the coming years as we reduce our dependence on foreign oil, cut down on the high cost of constantly running air conditioners and learn how to redirect light lost to the atmosphere.

Campuses across the United States already have begun to take action against wasted non-renewable energy. The Apollo Alliance and Energy Action organizations have created plans for campuses that make it easy to take steps toward efficient policies. In their "New Energy for Campuses" booklet, they note "If every one of the 4,000 campuses in the U.S. used 100 percent clean energy, it would nearly quadruple the current renewable electricity demand in the U.S."

Suzanne Russell, Student Senate environment chair, is compiling students



Hannah Hemmelgarn

passionate about setting an example as a university with energy efficiency policies. She will be proposing a plan for the new buildings using LEED certification guidelines as the time comes to approve such changes.

Other changes you can make include introducing light-emitting diodes (less energy consumptive) in the newly remodeled buildings and encouraging students to unplug their microwaves and TVs when not in use. Learning that these seemingly insignificant mistakes make a big impact can save our campus as much money as we pay in increased tuition each year.

In conjunction with Cool Campus plans, a Cool City movement is underway for Kirksville. Sierra Club, ECO and Kirksville's own Adair Night Sky group hope to convince Kirksville's City Council to include more bike paths on some major roads, begin using non-globe lights in the streets, which emit unnecessary light into the sky and promote the use of clean, alternative energy by

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advocating conservation as key to the sustainability of this town.

Shocked by the omission of the Kyoto Protocol by the U.S. government when "the United States of America, with less than five percent of the world's population, is responsible for producing approximately 25 percent of the world's global warming pollutants" (Nickels, 2005), mayors from cities nationwide began implementing similar requests under "The U.S. Mayors' Climate Protection Agreement," the longer name for "Cool Cities."

The project has spread and with eager young minds, is taking root at universities. Campuses that already have made significant changes include Yale, Rutgers, Carleton and Harvard. To include Truman among these names could be the beginning of a financially and environmentally beneficial program.

Hannah Hemmelgarn is an undeclared sophomore from Columbia, Mo.

Around the Quad

This week's question: "How do you buy your textbooks?"



Lava Kadel senior

"I buy it online usually. When you buy it online, it's really, really cheap compared to the bookstore."



Meghan Sherman sophomore

"This year, I bought my textbooks online. If I were to buy them from the University, it would have been over \$600. I bought them online for \$325."



Mark Enselman freshman

"I get my textbooks at Patty's, basically because my parents have an account set up so I can go and pick up my books and I don't have to deal with money. It's a lot easier."



Emily Tobias sophomore

"I send in my schedule of class to Patty's, and then I look online on Amazon to try to find them cheap, and then I compare which is cheaper and buy from whichever one."

Web grants forum for free expression

"The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants," Thomas Jefferson once said.

From that inspirational quote, I write on my Web page, "Killing Chris Matthews or any of the elitist liberal tyrants who are enslaving us under their laws would be a genuine act of patriotism. That is Thomas Jefferson's view, and it is my view too."

Can I legally write or speak these words? Can you? Does it matter if the speaker directs these words to a group of people who explicitly and professedly hate elitist liberals? Does the speaker's intention in expressing his view make a difference? The answer to each of these questions is "yes."

Summarizing the law, expression on the Internet might be restricted if it is obscene, threatening or likely to incite imminent lawless action. Nearly inarguably, the latter yardstick should measure our example speech.

Therefore, the legality of the writing rests on this question: In context, does saying that killing someone is patriotic likely to lead to an immediate illegal act? The government must show explicit, convincing evidence that there is a clear and present danger of incitement resulting from the expression.

Many of us have said or written similar political thoughts. Killing Osama bin Laden, Saddam Hussein or Hitler would be an act of patriotism. Many citizens believe killing murderers and traitors is patriotic. Killing abortion doctors, communists and African-Americans all have been justified by an American at one time or another. Each of these statements condones an illegal action, but as long as the speaker does not actively attempt to fulfill the action, he has the right to say it.

This discussion stems from an incident that occurred here in Kirksville about two months ago. According to several articles from The Associated Press and several articles in newspapers based in Ontario, Canada, the FBI temporarily shut down the Web site of white supremacist Alex Linder, a Kirksville resident, for posting a comment similar to the one I used at the beginning of this column, except about someone else's actions.

Luckily for the First Amendment, Linder was not punished and his Web site remains operational. However, we cannot ignore the fact that the U.S. government shut down the Web site. Even if it was for only a day, this act of stifling expression is repugnant, more so even than Linder's racist sentiments. The government effectively placed a strip of tape over a citizen's mouth.



Chris Matthews

"Each of us has a duty to advocate freedom of expression, whether or not we agree with the argument."

Although it was removed quickly, the ideal of freedom of expression felt a swift, sharp sting.

Each of us has a duty to advocate freedom of expression, whether or not we agree with the argument. Examining a situation that falls somewhat in the gray area of the spectrum between clearly protected and clearly illegal speech allows us to question our commitment to the right of free expression that has the power to make us disgusted and upset. If we want the opportunity to criticize someone, we must develop the mature position of accepting criticism. This reasoning especially is important during our generation of seemingly infinite access to information.

Our political and social expression increasingly occurs on the Internet in the forms of blogs, discussion forums, chat rooms, instant messaging and personal Web pages on Facebook and MySpace. Opinions and expressions inundate our online experience. So, how should we regulate speech on the Internet? This question clearly is the future of freedom of expression jurisprudence. As of now, the answer is "limitedly," and I agree. Let caution be the virtue. When we speed along the information superhighway on our regulation-mobiles, we wisely must yield to our valued rights — they always have the right of way.

For information regarding the legal precedent used in this column, see *Brandenburg v. Ohio*, 395 US 444 (1969) and *RAV v. City of St. Paul*, 505 US 377 (1992).

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