

Department cuts undermine liberal arts experience



Molly Skyles

Funds are tight. Sacrifices have to be made, and the dollar has to be stretched far beyond its capacity. This is a mindset shared by many across the nation during the current economic times, and here at Truman, we feel it too.

In recent years, cuts have been made around campus. Professors have cut down on paper usage by putting more work online, and higher tuition has been proposed to help alleviate financial problems.

But now the theater department is facing cuts. Theater department faculty is facing downsizing, and with a smaller faculty comes fewer classes. The classes cut most likely will be those that are not essential to a theatre major. Therefore, without extra classes in the program, any type of specialization within the theater major will be much more difficult for students.

I realize that during these hard times cuts are unavoidable, and we all have to make some sacrifices.

Cuts should be equally distributed throughout the University. No single department should be faced with such an overwhelming burden. The well-being of the students also should be taken into deeper consideration. Cutting the theater department faculty not only puts a few professors out of a job, it also sets back students who are theater majors.

Truman is known for providing its students with a liberal arts education. Not only will a student leave here with a degree in their field, but he or she also will leave Truman with a taste of other areas of knowledge. However, by cutting funds to one section of those core modes of inquiry, the integrity of the liberal studies program that we on this campus are so proud of is being damaged.

Despite this, money continually is given to the athletic department for renovations and improvements. When funds are tight, the available money should be allocated to departments for educational purposes first. What remains then can be given to other nonacademic organizations or departments. The money used by the athletic department is in large part from students who are charged an athletic fee along with tuition, but I don't

understand why that is. Athletics are not included in the liberal studies program. It's not possible to graduate from Truman with a degree in basketball or football.

According to Truman's Web site, in the last six years none of those who graduated with a degree in theater are currently unemployed, and 35 to 45 percent are working in a professional or commercial theater. A theater degree from Truman is no joke. Steps need to be taken to ensure that future theater majors can leave Truman with as much knowledge in that field as possible. Cutting corners to pay the bills should not be an option when it comes to students' futures. Who knows, by reducing the theater faculty and thus ridding the program of certain classes, a future Steven Spielberg or Tom Hanks could go undiscovered.

I do not propose taking funds away from one department to finance another, whether both are academic or not. I simply mean for people's eyes to be opened to the fact that people attend Truman because of its academics. Taking money away from any educational department can be hazardous to the reputation and advancement of this school. If too many classes in the theater program were eliminated, a potential student interested in theater might not be interested in coming here. The fair distribution of funds among all academic departments is necessary to uphold our University's integrity.

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AROUND THE QUAD

What is your favorite Web site to visit when you are bored?



"Kirkville Socialite."

*Dave Lusk
Associate Dean of Student Affairs*



"J. Crew."

*Cassie Dugan
sophomore*



"Stuff white people like."

*Jon Davis
sophomore*



"Bros like this site."

*Jenna Homeyer
sophomore*

Journalism classes don't make students professionals



Alex Boles

What's in a name? Many of you might be following the debacle at Northwestern University, where prosecutors issued subpoenas to professor David Protes and his class syllabus and their private e-mails, according to an article on KMOV-St. Louis' Web site.

Protes and his various journalism students have been working on releasing 11 once-proven-guilty-now-determined-innocent people from jail since 1993, according to the article.

What's interesting is that the prosecutors are arguing that Protes and his students aren't technically journalists and therefore are not protected under reporter's privilege. They think the journalism students altered material in seeking a higher grade in the class. Considering the man whom they currently are attempting to free is incarcerated for the murder of a security guard, I would only hope that their facts have been checked

and weren't altered for a grade.

It's tricky to come out and say, "Yeah! I'm a journalist, so I am on the journalist students' side!" Yes, I agree that it is fishy that the prosecutors have responded only to this case and not the other 11. It puts into perspective that maybe the prosecution's facts need to be checked.

The concern of whether the students are protected as journalists is touched upon in the Illinois Reporters' Privilege statute. This protects reporters from having to give officials information they gathered from reporting, including notes and e-mails, according to the article. Now the question is whether they are considered reporters or students with a class project.

Ultimately the judge will decide this, but I say that unless these students are actively involved with or are contributing to a media outlet, they are not technically considered journalists. Students participating in a class assignment are not to be categorized with people who contribute to a publication or broadcast program of sorts. Turning in a paper where you researched facts by using journalistic techniques does not make you a journalist. These students can say it is absurd to request these materials, and it is a little inconvenient, but with subject matter as serious as murder and no credibility beyond the

status of student, I hesitate to take their word as fact. It would be far too easy for people to land a "Get out of jail free" card if prosecutors stop asking questions. The professor and students might see it as an invasion of privacy and a violation of their rights, but establishing themselves as credible journalists will land them those rights, so they should probably start there.

Defining what it means to be a journalist goes along with deciding if bloggers are journalists, too. Technically they are not, because any Joe Schmo on the street can meander through the interwebs and start up a "news blog" and call it fact. I'm not by any means knocking blogs — I have a few successful ones myself — but I merely classify myself as a blogger or an editor of content submitted. If I post campus news or deep, emotional insights into my mind, I hope people don't take it as concrete fact and run with it. I do consider myself a credible journalist, but only because I have established myself at a publication for the last four years, not because my major at one time was journalism. That is a title, not a right to the privileges of the trade.

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Social satire keeps watch on issues



Toby Hausner

Political correctness and entrenched political beliefs are two features of our society that, in moderation, are healthy. However, a society must have some sort of check to prevent either or both from getting out of hand. In our polarized society, political correctness surprisingly has managed to grip our culture by the throat and demand that a super-sensitive code of conduct be enforced in any and all social settings.

The growing prevalence of political correctness has left our generation in a puzzling quandary — to accept all points of view without ever critically analyzing their validity or to function as a bystander aghast at the idiocy of our surroundings. What social mechanism is there for us to balance a need for social etiquette and politeness, yet confront issues and boldly point out the pervading thoughts of society? Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls, freshmen, sophomores, juniors and seniors, for your consideration I present to you the social cure-all — South Park.

Now, when I say "South Park," I speak not of the literal TV show, but what it represents in our society. It is the driving social satire of our generation. Without a twitch of conscience, South Park boldly confronts the irony and hypocrisy present in our culture. Strong, inquisitive satire has been in hibernation in many respects while political correctness has championed the social standard of acceptability. Perhaps this is for the best, but it does not negate the need for a satirical filter to be available. We as a generation are drawn to such outlets of perspective. We have seen the popularity of shows such as "The Daily Show" and "The Colbert Report," predominately because they provide information in a format that doesn't inherently present one point of view but instead points to the idiocy of all.

The cacophony that saturates our social environment is deafening. There are so many contrary viewpoints and an abundance of what I call social dissonance that it becomes confusing, and a politically correct stance is more a matter of giving up on finding the truth than a desire not to offend.

Clearly it is all but impossible to agree with or enjoy all satire, especially when it is directed at a belief you might hold. But to me, this is an important part of refining one's belief. It is beneficial for society as a whole when people are confronted and forced to develop a defense for why they feel the way they do.

"South Park" often is dubbed as a perverse show about children swearing, farting and committing all kinds of despicable acts. Yes, there is a talking piece of fecal matter, and yes, sometimes I, a self-proclaimed fan, choose to turn it off because I find it vile and disgusting. Yet this is not why it is a socially relevant piece of work. The breadth and depth of issues that "South Park" has gone into is utterly astounding. It presents the information in a rather crude fashion, but in the end the message is soundly pragmatic and centered around a deep, contemplative perspective that educates those that watch. I can honestly say that I am more intellectually stimulated by some episodes of "South Park" than my random C-SPAN or CNN watching sessions.

In no way believe that shows such as "South Park" are for everyone. I can see and believe that it often takes crude humor too far. Yet until another social satire of equal quality emerges, I will continue to watch and be entertained and think. Issues like gay marriage, stem cell research, global warming and others won't be solved by political correctness. They can no more be solved by a jarring, garish social satire, but perhaps the critical reasoning developed by those forced to see an issue in a different light because of such satire can lead to improvement.

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Discrimination changes victims, doesn't go away



Jean Kaul

These days, the American melting pot seems close to boiling.

After the horrendous and unjustifiable attack on the servicemen and women of Fort Hood by one of their own last week, both the American public and the Army are trying to make sense of this violent act. In the ensuing confusion, one fact about Major Nidal Hasan, who opened fire at Fort Hood, has risen to the surface. The man is a devout Muslim.

In this post-9/11 world, Muslims in America have a difficult life. Since the 9/11 attacks, some of their fellow citizens jeer at their dress, make judgments about their religion, accuse them of being fundamentalist terrorists

and cast slurs like "towel head" at them.

For many observers, Hasan's faith became the defining theme of the attack — and at the same time, the impetus for it. As of now, there is no clear-cut evidence linking Hasan to membership in al-Qaeda terrorist organizations, and the Army is operating on the theory that Hasan's documented disillusionment with American involvement in the Middle East is just another piece of his fragmented mental puzzle.

Unfortunately, his actions have become another tool for the anti-Muslim rhetoric that permeates much of the discussion about the Fort Hood tragedy and the Muslim-American community in general. As I read about Hasan's life, I became less interested in his faith and more interested in what it means to be different when you live in America.

Hasan is a first-generation American, the son of uprooted Palestinians who came to America in search of a place to call home. He is the son of

immigrants, just as many of us are, or our parents or grandparents were. Like many other immigrant families, they

faced the difficulties of settling in a foreign land — one rife with both opportunity and obstacles. America is a nation of immigrants, making us the most diverse nation on the face of the earth. Unfortunately, this diversity has not made us any more tolerant. Perhaps it is human nature, but as each new group of huddled masses arrives on our shores yearning to breathe freely, they are more likely to be greeted with an ethnic slur than with a welcoming embrace. Whether you are Irish, Japanese, German, Chinese or any one of a whole host of other nationalities and religious identities,

there is a corresponding slur marking you as different or undesirable.

And be it 1850 or 2009, the fear of the "Other" remains. Now, instead of "gooks" or "micks," terms like "wetback" and the aforementioned "towel head" are the word weapons of choice. These words are ugly pieces of hate — hate that should have no place in the American consciousness.

As I read accounts of Hasan's troubled life, I was not surprised by the venom directed at Muslims — his faith is an easy scapegoat of an answer to many observers. But through all the hate, one thing became clear: Muslim could just as easily be Mexican or Jewish or black. Why? Because it is much easier to

categorize those around us as different or bad than to honestly examine race and religion in America.

Just as those who wonder why Mexican-Americans don't instantaneously know how to speak English upon their entrance to the country, yet expect English to be spoken in every foreign country they visit, so too are headscarves called weird and yarmulkes silly. Sometimes even worse than silly or weird, these differences are called scary, and that is the same mindset that eventually reduces Hasan's sick and sad act to nothing more than an angry Muslim exercising jihad against the United States military.

We may never understand why Hasan killed his peers and betrayed his country's trust, but we should try to understand and accept our cultural differences.

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