

Separate remedial courses waste time, resources



Tyler Retherford

At a time when the very survival of some departments is in question, it strikes me as somewhat absurd that one of the largest debates over curriculum reform is not centered on whether to keep high school level skills classes, but instead on what format to use to reteach these skills to Truman students. Writing as Critical Thinking and Public Speaking admittedly teach useful skills but, to be frank, incoming college freshmen should have learned these skills long ago. The ability to write a strong essay is part of many universities' admission requirements, and the

majority of high schools require a speech course in their curriculum. If we are going to persist in calling Truman "the Harvard of the Midwest," it is more than reasonable to assume our students are competent writers and speakers.

Given the plight of the theater department, where faculty will be cut to barely cover the needs of teaching courses absolutely essential to the major (not to mention my own department of sociology and anthropology, where there are three relatively distinct fields lumped together with two to three faculty members apiece), the fact that there are 25 sections of COMM 170 and 11 sections of WACT this spring is absolutely ridiculous. Consider also that there are only 17 sections of anthropology and sociology courses total that same semester. This set of requirements alone takes up as much faculty effort as an entire department, but with few actual benefits. The public speaking class I

took my freshman year was interesting, sure, but that was largely due to hearing the other students talk about various topics that interested them, an experience I've had in many of my other classes while simultaneously learning material that contribute toward my major or specific areas of interest. As far as learning actual speaking techniques, I don't recall having covered anything useful that I didn't learn in speech class during my sophomore year of high school. I can't imagine a biology, math, English, history or anthropology class re-teaching high school level material for college credits, so why make an exception for COMM 170?

WACT also is exceptionally redundant. The vast majority of my junior and senior years of high school were spent writing essays and critiques, so learning how to write critically wasn't some new, mysterious endeavor that was sprung upon me in college.

Even supposing my writing skills weren't at a college level when I was accepted to Truman, a great number of the classes I've taken here have endeavored to discuss the proper way to write for that field while simultaneously covering three credit hours worth of material. Dissecting arguments, critically analyzing them and responding with well thought-out responses is part of nearly every assignment in my anthropology classes, and the first such assignment in many of these classes gives a brief but sufficient lesson on how to do so. Spending an entire semester on such basics is putting far too much time and effort into solving what is essentially a non-problem.

Other "essential skills" classes, such as some lower level math, statistics and health classes, assure that students are exposed to the material and skills they cover, in keeping with the liberal arts focus of the university. This

makes sense, given that many majors don't involve trigonometry, statistical analysis, health concerns or physical exercise. However, all students are exposed to critical writing through the writing enhanced requirements, and public speaking is unavoidable, both in class and out.

While removing the WACT and COMM 170 requirements altogether would be the best solution, combining them to make a single class does at least reduce the number of credit hours students waste on relearning skills, and consequently allows them to put their tuition to better use. It also will reduce waste of faculty time and effort, which could then be better used teaching students the advanced material found only in a college education.

Tyler Retherford is a junior anthropology major from Springfield, Mo.

AROUND THE QUAD

What is your favorite Thanksgiving dish?



"The desserts. Cherry pie."

*Miranda Jones
freshman*



"Homemade stuffing."

*Brittany Backowski
junior*



"Grandma's cooking."

*Charlie Keller
freshman*



"Cheesy potatoes."

*Luke Freeland
junior*

Holidays should return to a stress-free relaxing time



Brenna McDermott

The British use the word "holiday" to describe vacations. Like, "Oy, mate, I'm going to the loo, and then I'm leaving for Jamaica on holiday." Holidays are supposed to mean something relaxing, something enjoyable, something spent on a warm beach. But mostly holiday means something different than a relaxing, enjoyable time.

Holidays are hell. Bah humbug. Those Brits have got it right with their use of the term, though. Holidays should be a time for relaxing, for spending with loved ones.

But we're all guilty of warping the "holiday" spirit from a time to enjoy ourselves and our families to a time of stress, debt and drama.

We aren't actually enjoying our holiday season. To actually enjoy and savor the season to be jolly, we need to slow down and take a chill pill.

If you're like me, your holiday social calendar is packed for a month straight. From Thanksgiving to New Year's, the parties, gatherings and galas never stop. My two grandmas want me at their celebrations, my friends want me around for their gatherings and every relative in between lays on the guilt as thick as figgy pudding to make it to every event. Whether they use the "you don't know how long I'll be around for sweetie" or the "well, you never call, so I don't know what's going on in your life," family seems to be the group least understanding of how un-enjoyable a full, hectic schedule can be — especially when it's the only time most people get free of school or work stress. Time off must include time to put your feet up and actually enjoy some relaxation. Somewhere along the line we forgot how to relax during the "most wonderful time of the year."

But regardless of how many people want you at their party, no matter how heavily Grandma lays on the guilt, decisions like who you want to spend your holidays with have to be your own. Running around from house to house, sometimes even city to city, isn't going to make lasting, happy memories. The fond memories come from card games after dinner,

listening to stories from the olden days or playing with the ol' pigskin in the backyard during a lazy holiday afternoon. Rushing from place to place or event to event won't make happy memories. It's more important to actually enjoy ourselves during the holidays than try to make every single one of our loved ones happy. Holidays are the time where we are supposed to decide which loved ones are the most important to us. Sometimes it's important to sacrifice the "less important" people to truly enjoy a holiday with those we cherish most.

The holidays have become this looming set of dates on the calendar I come to dread months ahead of time. I hate the stress, the expectation and the obligation. But the most ridiculous expectations are the ones we have of ourselves during the holiday months. So I'm giving up trying to make everyone else happy. Maybe that means I'll be on the naughty list this year, but I don't care. This winter, I'll be giving up my job of obligatory visits, and I'll be making a real holiday of my holiday season.

Brenna McDermott is a junior communication major from St. Louis, Mo.

Service can take place anytime, place



Shawn Shinneman

Service is often thought of as a formal act.

We set aside two hours per week to volunteer and think our job begins and ends with those boundaries. However, it is often the small acts of service that garner the most profound results.

Last summer, I was given the opportunity to travel to the heart of Jamaica on a mission trip. Our mission revolved around three days of building houses for the poor. It was a level of poverty I had never come close to experiencing before. The magnitude far outweighed that of the previous mission trips I had attended here in the U.S.

Although our trip to Jamaica focused on our tangible mission — building the houses, donating food and clothes — we quickly learned that our greatest contributions came in the form of simple interactions with the people.

The most notable instance for me occurred at a flea market in Montego Bay a few hours before we departed. If you've never been to a flea market in a foreign country, it is quite the experience. The locals do everything short of lassoing you into their shops and force-feed stereotypes of their country down your throat for less than half the "original price." For instance, if you wanted to, you could have left this particular flea market with at least 30 different Bob Marley T-shirts.

Anyway, as I escaped one shop and decided on my next destination, I noticed something I hadn't seen all day — a lady sitting inside her shop making no effort to attract customers. I walked right in. To my surprise, she didn't jump up and offer me three items for the price of one. In fact, she barely moved. Her face, seemingly worn from years of sun, stayed

buried within her rough hands.

"What's wrong?" I asked.

"I just want to make my first sale," she replied. "I've just got to make my first sale."

I didn't know what to say to that, but I knew the appropriate response wasn't so simple as to buy a Jamaica shot glass from her and be on my way, so I began to ask her about herself. I asked where she was from, what brought her to Montego Bay, if she had kids. Her initial shock at my questions faded to comfort, and finally, a smile.

From time to time here in Kirksville, I see some now-familiar faces walking around, collecting beer cans from the yards of fraternity houses. Their clothes often look dirty and worn. Occasionally, they will find a full bag in a dumpster and load it up in their carts, undoubtedly later exchanging the cans for money at a local recycling center.

I've never had the chance to talk to any of these people, or at least, I have never taken advantage of the opportunity. Nonetheless, I wonder what a simple act could do for them. I wonder what simply engaging in a friendly conversation could do for someone who is blatantly watched and objectified by so many.

As winter approaches, so come the financial stresses of both increased bills and holidays. Our city is lucky enough to have organizations in place like Community Action and the Salvation Army that help ease those burdens. The latter in particular is constantly taking volunteers and donations.

But I urge you to realize that service opportunities are not limited to formal organizations. Service can take place anywhere and at any time. Our society has a tendency to view the poor differently from all other people.

You just never know what kind of impact reaching out and breaking those boundaries can have.

Shawn Shinneman is a junior communication major from St. Joseph, Mo.

Sex takes on new meaning from Christian view



Zach Vicars

I know what you're thinking: "A Zach Vicars column about sex? Does he even know what sex is? Anything he'd have to say about it would be prude, detached and boring."

I beg to differ. I think the Christian viewpoint of sex is anything but boring. I hope, after you read this sex column, you'll agree.

First off, I need to dispel the myth that Christians are afraid of sex. This notion is nothing but a secular reaction to the abstinence movement. The Christian community does not shun or look down on sex. Rather, sex is celebrated as a gift from God. In the Bible, Solomon proclaimed: "Your breasts [are] like clusters of fruit ... I will climb the palm tree; I will take hold of its fruit." Clearly, intimacy isn't a topic the Bible avoids.

In the Church today, sex is not some taboo activity that should be separated from religion, as many believe. I once heard a respected pastor in my denomination say, "Sex is healthy. Have it early. Have it often. Have it inside marriage." But if biblical references and personal anecdotes aren't enough, consider the sociological data: My grandmother is one of 10 children, and I know of several families that boast a dozen children or more. You can't get numbers like that if you're afraid of sex.

Further, I'd like to make it clear that Christians are not only unafraid when it comes to sex, I'd say that Christians place more meaning and value in sex than the rest of the culture. We might even enjoy sex more, because we believe it is more than a casual connection, more than a tool for power and more than an empty pleasure. Christians understand sex as the highest expression of love, as the union of two bodies and two souls and as a holy act.

I'll use my own experience as an example. Before my wife and I even met, we both made commitments to ourselves, to God and to each other

that we would "save sex" for marriage. We dated for almost five years, which tested our commitments. There were several moments when I wondered why we had made such promises in the first place. Then, during the summer, we exchanged rings, made vows to each other and spent our first night together. It was the most powerful, emotional and physical experience of my life. I am so thankful for the promises we made and for God's faithfulness to see us through. Waiting for sex might have been the most difficult thing the two of us have ever done, but it's also been the most rewarding. Our story is but one of thousands attesting to the incomparable bliss of committed, passionate, marital sex.

So you can see that Christians do not fear sex, we value it immensely. However, it would be a misrepresentation of the truth if I said the Christian community feels the same way about sex as everyone else. Christians do make distinctions. We do have boundaries on sexuality.

The first boundary is marriage. The old adage "sex should be kept in the confines of marriage" is useful

here. Sex must be "confined" to one couple. Christian ethics forbid people from copulating with anyone who is not their spouse. In fact, Jesus says you shouldn't even think about it. There's no getting around it. This puts a boundary on sex. Just as fish should stay in water where it can grow, develop and play, so should sex stay in marriage.

Christian ethics also maintain that sex is meant to be shared between a man and a woman. There is no avoiding the fact that the Bible says homosexuality is not what God had in mind when he gave humans the gift of sex. In a post-modern world, many people find this viewpoint offensive and unacceptable. Others insist Christians only hold this belief because "the Bible tells me so." Although this religious formula is enough for many believers, I would suggest that God has given this commandment with good reason. The biblical witness exclusively supports sexual relations between a man and a woman because that is the only means of natural reproduction. Two men or two women simply cannot, on their own, create life. It

is a biological impossibility. Further, God made men and women interdependent on one another, in both psyche and anatomy. In a way, each gender is incomplete — but sex is the completion.

I've done my best, in the last few hundred words, to lay out a Christian understanding of sex. There's a good chance in the process I've upset a few members of the Truman community, both Christian and non-Christian.

But, I hope you all will take this for what it is. It's not me sitting in an ivory tower claiming to have all the answers. In fact, I know I don't. You can reject what I'm saying. I just want you to know what you're rejecting. You're rejecting a sexual life without shame, guilt and heartache. You're rejecting a pleasurable and endless journey with one person. You're rejecting the unbelievable sex you were designed to have.

Zach Vicars is a sophomore philosophy/religion and linguistics major from St. Charles, Mo.