

Liberal arts education needs better explanation



Nicola Fish

Part of the reason I applied to Truman was because it is a liberal arts school. The benefits of a liberal arts degree are obvious, and we've all heard them a million times. It makes you well-rounded, your degree will apply to more jobs, you show your versatility — and the list goes on. What isn't so obvious is this — what exactly is a liberal arts degree? How versatile do we actually need to be? And why do we need to ask for these explanations?

This semester I'm taking chemistry, which many of my friends find

hilarious. Apparently, because I'm not pursuing a chemistry degree, this doesn't make any sense. What I find even more hilarious are the looks on their faces when I inform them they're probably going to have it take it too. Yes, as part of the liberal arts degree, this year's incoming freshman need to take at least three quantitative and at least three qualitative modes of inquiry. To fulfill the quantitative modes, you must choose between social science, physical science, life science or mathematics. Likewise, the qualitative modes can be fulfilled via literature, historical, fine arts or philosophy and religion.

Trying to find this information on Truman's website, though, is very difficult. Unless you know what you're looking for, it can be like looking for a needle in a haystack, and when you're applying for admission, you don't know how to even begin the search. I hoped that it would all become clearer during orientation, but I still wasn't exactly sure what I was supposed

to be taking. I got my packet with the multiple colored sheets, boxes to check and reassurance from the advisers on-hand that it was simpler than it looked. It wasn't until I had to develop my own plan for the next four years that I became fully aware of what exactly I had signed up for by coming to Truman. In panic, as I looked at the amount of mathematics I was going to have to take, along with the multitude of science courses, all I could think was why I wasn't told this earlier. I know I have a level of responsibility in researching the school, and maybe I was a little naive about how liberal this degree would be. But, as a school, Truman also has a responsibility to lay the requirements out more simply for incoming students.

Telling prospective students they're going to have to be so versatile may put off and even could scare some students with the knowledge that they'll have to maintain a good GPA while taking a class they might

struggle with. On the other hand, forewarned students make forearmed students. They will come to the University knowing what they're going to face.

Even now I'm not 100 percent sure if I know exactly what my degree has to contain. I'm not the only one. There seems to be an air of mystery around how you know if you've completed the requirements and exactly what you need to do. There doesn't seem to be a time limit on when you should take the courses by, but a lot of students seem to want to get them out of the way. Some freshmen I know seem to want to ignore the liberal arts part, secretly hoping that it will magically change overnight and they won't need to take that art class, or that one semester of a language suddenly will be enough.

I think it's up to Truman to provide us with a simplified version of exactly what we need to do. Instead of being secretive, there needs to be an open dialogue of all the requirements

for a liberal arts degree from the moment of admission until the end at graduation. Through the school's website, students interested in the school should have some way of seeing what their schedule will actually look like. I'm aware that each major has a list of requirements, but these need to be more specific. They should give examples of current students' courses and a schedule showing what is necessary to achieve the major and the ways to go about it. Another idea is an application that would allow students to enter their strengths and weaknesses, which would give an idea of possible classes they would be best suited to. A more open and clear policy of what a liberal arts degree entails would make for a smoother transition into classes and fewer shocks.

Nicola Fish is a freshman undeclared major from Consett, England

AROUND THE 'VILLE

What source do you use to get the news?



"My TV won't pick up the news stations, so I listen to the radio mostly."

*Pat Stribling
Kirkville resident*



"The Internet, whatever pops up when I go online to check the weather."

*Sherry Stacey
Kirkville resident*



"The local TV news station in my hometown in South Dakota."

*Herb Mullenix
Kirkville visitor*



"I listen to NPR and check the news on Yahoo when I check my e-mail."

*Keith Jackson
Kirkville resident*

Comedians offer credible news options



Toby Hausner

Has funny become the new serious? Have we replaced actual hard-hitting news with a comedic attempt to mock the journalism of today? Have "The Daily Show" and "The Colbert Report" damaged our generation's ability to discern the difference between reality and a satirical distortion of it?

If you had asked me these questions a few months ago, I would have answered "maybe." But as I research into the matter, I am beginning to think we are viewing a phenomenon that is sparking a generational shift.

Traditionally, the idea of comedy shows, such as "The Daily Show," being the major outlet of someone's news has been viewed as a horrifying possibility. I struggle with this notion as well. In the interest of full disclosure, I must confess that I am a nerd who enjoys watching C-Span. The notion that someone could have an accurate grasp of current events from Comedy Central shows is innately appalling to me. I also must admit to my bias as a big fan of these comedic news shows, but not in that I view them as effective sources of news.

In my previous attempts to defend the show as a source of entertainment, I have used Jon Stewart's argument that they are not a primary source of news because their viewers could not get the nuances in the jokes had they not sat down with a previous knowledge base of the material being discussed. However, I think Stewart fails to grasp the show's full impact on its audience. He continually stresses that the mandate of "The Daily Show" is to be funny and that it makes no attempt to have journalistic integrity. However, despite Stewart's efforts to the contrary, his show is every bit as relevant as major news shows, both in the eyes of the viewers and by quantifiable evidence.

Indiana University did a study revealing that "The Daily Show" is equally substantial to its network news counterparts. However, because of its humorous, non-intellectually threatening nature, these comedic-based news sources are far more potent in their ability to access the mainstream audience.

As Stewart pointed out, the audience would not be able to get all the jokes if they did not have some background knowledge. I believe this stimulates people to find out more about these news topics — they have an interest in current events because of his show.

Stephen Colbert recently appeared before a House subcommittee hearing to discuss the issue of immigration. His satirical approach was met with mixed reviews from legislators. House Majority Floor Leader Steny

Hoyer thought it to be an embarrassment and Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi thought it to be great and helpful to the process. But one thing cannot be ignored — his presence has an effect. You do not see Wolf Blitzer shaking things up on Capitol Hill. This is part of what makes Stewart and Colbert dynamically different from other news sources, but not inherently, dynamically bad.

The duo now is beginning to hold rallies in Washington, D.C. Jon Stewart's Rally to Restore Sanity, set for Oct. 30, already has garnered thousands of RSVPs and a thumbs up from Oprah. Stewart and Colbert are starting to emerge as visionary leaders who can approach the issues our country is facing without the baggage of political correctness or an inherent party bias. This is why we have begun to embrace their call for reform.

A Truman professor asks in class, "Did any of you see this segment on 'The Colbert Report' last night?" My initial response is an eye roll if I have not and a chuckle if I have. However, upon learning that the substance is equivalent to mainstream network news, my focus on the merit of these shows turns to their approach. They are not bound by any form of journalistic integrity or political correctness, and we cherish the sincerity that has been removed from so much of our society.

Toby Hausner is a senior political science major from Kansas City, Mo.

Political campaigns should focus on issues



Molly Skyles

Rarely do I say this, but recently I have been empathizing with the Republican Party.

In recent political campaigns, my beloved Democrats have been using harsh, negative advertisements to bash Republican politicians. The concept of trash talking another party's approach to improve the image of your own party is not a new trend in politics. However, the Democrats have taken playing dirty to a whole new level by criticizing the personal lives of the opposing party members. They have sunk as low as bringing up past lawsuits and even divorce proceedings.

What happened to the good ole days of simply saying what you, as a politician, can do to improve society? Are times so bad that politicians cannot do anything to help us, so they have to resort to ruining their opponents' reputations to get the vote?

Representative Betty Sutton (D.-Ohio) calls her Republican opponent a "dishonest used-car salesman" because he allegedly has been sued more than 400 times for everything from lying to customers and fraud to endangering the safety of car buyers. And in New York, Representative Michael Arcuri (D.) calls his Republican rival a millionaire who only got so rich because his construction company overcharged taxpayers by thousands. He also supposedly was cited 12 times for health and safety violations, according to an article in the Sept. 25 edition of The New York Times.

Whether any of these accusations are true does not matter. We are not casting our votes for car salesmen or construction company owners. We are voting for the leaders of our country. What they have or have not done in the past should not play a role in which box we check on the ballot.

Yes, I want an honest person in office. But more than that, I want someone who can make things happen. I want someone who is aware of the problems and can work to improve them. I also want to be in-

formed of the decisions made. I don't want my representative to waste all their time telling me how awful someone else has been. I don't care about their past. I just want to know their future involves making things better — here and now.

It would be one thing if these people were serious criminals or murderers, but no. They were business people who may or may not have slipped up a bit. We don't know. We only know what the Democrats are telling us, and who is to say the Democratic candidates' records are spotless?

Sutton, Arcuri and all the other Democratic trash-talkers out there need to focus more time on the issues our country faces. I'm sure it took a lot of time digging through someone else's personal history to uncover every bad grade and slap on the wrist they ever received. I sure hope they spent that much, and hopefully more, time working on the issues, which should be the essence of their entire political campaigns.

Let's say these Democrats do get elected to office, what then? They spent such a large part of their campaigns destroying their rivals. Are they going to be prepared to start establishing their positions? Or, are we going to have to wait around forever while they decide what it is they actually want to tackle in society and how to do so?

I get that in these times, things aren't great. Unemployment rates are up and the economy is down. We want to elect the people who have the potential to turn things around — to make our world better. Not voting for someone based on what someone else said, though, is just juvenile. If anything, I wouldn't vote for the trash-talkers — obviously they don't have anything positive to say about themselves and their own campaigns, so they have to resort to making their opponents look bad. Haven't you ever heard that bullies are the most insecure of all? That is who all these Democratic candidates are — big, unprepared bullies.

At the end of the day, we, as voters, must vote intelligently and look beyond our party lines to vote for the candidates who can actually do their job in representing us.

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Citizenship should be granted to those born in the U.S.



Anna Meier

"All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States."

So reads a clause of the 14th Amendment of the United States Constitution. But support from, largely, members of the GOP for a bill going through Congress may change that. This change would make the citizenship of a child depend on the citizenship of his or her parents, regardless of where the child is born.

One of the main arguments for taking away birthright citizenship

is the fact that America and Canada are basically the only two developed countries in the world that have laws protecting the offspring of illegal immigrants to the country. The last time the law really was looked at in the Supreme Court was in 1898, when the United States did not have laws restricting immigration, and thus had no illegal immigrants to the country.

Another argument against this clause in the 14th Amendment is that there are approximately 10.8 million illegal immigrants in the United States right now, according to cbsnews.com, and more than one-third of those undocumented parents have an American child due to birthright citizenship, according to The New York Times. Something else to take into consideration is that the number of illegal immigrants dropped between 2008 and 2009 by approximately one million people, presumably because of the decreased number of jobs avail-

able in America, also according to cbsnews.com.

This debate seems asinine, as America prides itself on being the "melting pot" of the world. Yet, there seem to be a large number of people who want only certain things coloring that pot — namely, white things. I have trouble listening to speakers like Sarah Palin telling us to "take back America," without wondering what she means by that. What kind of America are we supposed to be taking back? The white America that booted the people who were here before us from their land and imposed our laws on them? Or the America that I like to think we are, one that lives up to the claim of being the melting pot?

The story American politicians tell of welcoming all races and religions, anyone willing to live the American dream or anyone who comes from less and wants to make more for themselves, is a myth.

To have this debate in Congress,

to try to deny citizenship to someone born on American soil, is to make a generation of country-less, undocumented children and to further mythologize the image of America with its arms wide open asking for "your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free," as Emma Lazarus so eloquently put it.

I guess people are looking for the America that says, "I know you were born here. I know your parents risked their lives to come here to make a better life for you. I know they work 16 hours per day peeling potatoes or washing dishes or picking produce so that they can clothe you in overpriced merchandise made in sweatshops where they came from. You have no right to this country's citizenship, so go back to where your parents felt the need to run to a 'better' country."

America is the greatest country in the world, so we're told. So if that's true, I have a feeling we have at least a few people capable of

figuring out a better way to prevent the illegal immigration our country can't handle. I understand some of the reasons behind limiting immigration and making sure the people within our borders follow our laws. But if the border is a lawless place where we only half-heartedly make attempts to secure it, illegal immigrants are to be expected.

What I don't and probably never will understand is deeming someone "illegal" because of a decision his or her parents made — a decision that was probably for the betterment of their child. If good fortune and natural circumstance place you in America on the day you're born, then lucky you, because you just inherited a small part in this country, greatest on Earth or otherwise.

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