



Fewer, longer books enhance learning goals



Connor Stangler

Please don't put this column down. Please don't read this like you would something that's due in five minutes, or some online article that can afford to be skimmed. Drink it in. Slow your mind down. Give your brain a break from a culture that moves too fast for comprehension. Professors, I'm talking to you.

You've heard similar appeals from your more food-conscious friends, the ones who won't eat a meal unless it takes 30 minutes or more to prepare. They might be a part of the broader "Slow Food" movement: a campaign that encourages people to cook more deliberately and slowly. The idea is that these kinds of meals, compared to fast food, are better for you. More recently, in *The Atlantic*, journalist Maura Kelly asked why there isn't a parallel movement for our mental health. Every day, we're overwhelmed by blogs, status updates, news articles, headlines and videos. We've been trained to do things, and do them quickly. It's the culture, but is it good for us?

From what I've seen in my classes and heard from other students, this culture has spread its influence throughout college curricula. We have a lot to learn and only 15 weeks to do it. In reading-heavy majors, textbook lists can be pages long. Stacks of required reading on the floor conveniently become extensions of our desks. Multiplied by four or five classes, the result usually is the same for most: skimming, SparkNoting or even skipping.

Current workloads encourage the opposite of what we want: rushed, shallow learning. When we don't have time to engage in the texts and ideas, we resort to generalizations that are vague enough to be profound but specific enough to satisfy expectations. If our learning is hurried, then so is our understanding.

We partly can blame the culture. It's cool to learn fast. Late-night papers, multitasking and high-speed browsing — whether it's homework or a hobby — are more than necessities. Some part of us likes to do it. We feel empowered when we skim a reading and come away thinking we "mastered" something quickly. The intellectual adrenaline leaves us invigorated, but the superficial learning makes us hollow.

Professors, rather than packing as much "necessary" reading into a semester as possible, should pick out two or three good, long books that force us to slow down. In English classes, Kelly said, long novels improve our cognition and sensory skills and our ability to empathize with others. But we need something more than fiction. If we have the time and opportunity to engage in long texts, whether fiction or nonfiction, we are more likely to do it and benefit from it.

Reading quickly allows us to get more done, but it doesn't give us the chance to remember or seriously analyze the information. At that point, the words are just ink stains on a page, and the words leave impressions, but only for a few seconds. When we get the chance to absorb something outstanding at a slower pace, we feel more accomplished and are left with something more thought-provoking than a headline.

The current state of academia only worsens the problem. Yes, students have texts and stories they must read and know. And yes, there is no guarantee a decrease in the overall workload will encourage students to take the time to engage. But is an overwhelming amount of work better than a lesser one that has the opportunity for great or reward? We must explore the benefits of a possible "Slow Book" movement to at least oppose a culture high on speed.

We don't need a plan to make school easier, just healthier.

Connor Stangler is a junior English and history major from Columbia, Mo.

Public overreacts to pink slime controversy



Dan Warner

My friends and I are relaxing on the back porch, playing some music, watching the sun slowly sink from the sky. My roommate Dave shouts that the burgers are done and we each grab a bun. I put on my toppings, grab a seat and take a big, juicy bite of pink slime.

The recent media firestorm about the beef product deemed "pink slime" by former USDA scientist Gerald Zirnstein has ignited a sudden flame of indignation in American consumers that would have Upton Sinclair smacking his forehead in disbelief that, more than a century after he wrote "The Jungle," the public remains clueless. However, I feel like I'm one of the few people not too bothered by pink slime.

Pink slime is made from the leftovers of other cuts, warmed to separate fat, spun to separate it further and treated with ammonia hydroxide gas to

kill bacteria, according to Reuters. The inclusion of the ominous-sounding gas conjures images of thousands of cows suffering in European trenches, but it's actually a common chemical treatment for foods, according to *foodinsight.org*.

Pink slime is in 70 percent of ground beef sold at supermarkets, according to ABC News, which means most Americans have eaten it. However, some supermarkets are dropping products that contain pink slime because of consumer pressure.

My main issue is with the public response to this revelation: that mass-produced meat is disgusting. For the last couple of years, I've tried to buy local meat when I could afford it. Lately, I've been slacking by eating fast food and grabbing whatever cheap meat I can find.

The reason I'm not bothered is it's simply not surprising in any way. It amazes me that, even with the constant coverage of Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations and the problems they cause communities and the quality of meat, people act like they don't know mass-produced meat is bad.

It's as if the American public thinks a free, wild cow willingly walks into a wood chipper and comes out in neat little patties to benefit our barbecues.

The production of pink slime actually sounds better than the way I usually imagine mass-produced meat production. Even the title "pink slime"

is how I would describe ground beef, no matter where it's from.

I don't think this process is totally acceptable, I just think it generally is the same type of thing the meat industry has been practicing for years. If people think as I do, that it's disgusting, then they should start paying attention to where all their food is from. Becoming an informed eater is as simple as a Google search and a glance at the farm where the food was produced.

The closer and smaller the farm, the more likely the food was produced in a decent way. It also means that buying food probably is better for the economy, the environment and your health. That is a general guideline, but if you're not up to doing more in-depth research, it usually rings true.

If you don't want to be an informed eater — and there is no reason not to be — quit complaining about pink slime. It is gross, it is harmful and most of us have eaten it almost daily for years without worry. The occasional pink slime meal will not kill us, but we should set the bar higher most of the time.

Pink slime: It's what's for dinner.

Dan Warner is a senior English and communication major from St. Louis

For an upper level course, how many pages a week do you expect your students to read?

"I think a reading load of about 125-150 pages per week would be reasonable. The assignment of reading levels must always be considered in light of the responsibility to the material expected of the students."

Mark Hanley
history professor



"I imagine roughly 60-100 per week, give or take. That seems to be what students can handle. Less and it's too easy."

James Przybylski
political science professor



"It varies, but usually somewhere between 40 and 100 pages. Again, it depends. I tend to think about how much reading can you get done in six hours [for the week]."

Natalie Alexander
philosophy/religion professor



"I think an average of 275 pages per week. Over the course of several years, I've found that this generally provides the best opportunity for students to properly comprehend the material."

Linda Moore
English professor



AROUND THE OFFICE

Upright men have disappeared from American society



Zach Vicars

Where are the gentlemen?

We live in a day when the fabrics of masculinity are fading — or have even vanished, and it's a huge problem. Culturally, we are in crisis.

We have taken our post-gender movement too far, to the point that both sexes have accepted the mantra that chivalry is dead. These days, it practically is insulting to hold the door for a woman, old-fashioned to think a man should take initiative and ask a lady on a date and sexist to say a man should strive to provide for his family. The result of this cultural shift is we have so many guys who would rather sit around and scratch themselves than

stand up and be a man.

As men have retreated in America, another demographic has emerged. It's what Kay Hymowitz of *City Journal* calls "the child-man." Mark Driscoll, an author and pastor, has dubbed them "boys who can shave."

Whatever term you like to use, these guys are everywhere. They're downloading porn, playing video games and shirking responsibility as quickly as they can. The number of men who commit to marriage is dropping every year and men are proving to be more reluctant to raise children, according to the *city-journal.com* in 2008. That's because some guys these days would rather have a lifelong date with the computer in their mom's house than care for a family in their own.

This slide in masculinity begins during college. It begins with guys who want to spend as much time as they can drinking beer, objectifying women and watching Will Ferrell movies. For many guys, college is the beginning of an era of irresponsibility — where they can do whatever they want, whenever they want and don't have to answer to anyone.

Some might say, "What difference does it make? So what if some boys never become men? Does it really matter?"

It matters dearly — to all of us. Even in

our own little world, multiple stories have appeared in the *Index* throughout the last few months detailing the accounts of brutal abuse against women.

Again, I ask where are the gentlemen? What kind of man hits a woman? Where were the fathers and the friends who were examples of upright manhood in the life of the alleged perpetrators?

The problem is, the men are nowhere to be found. The men of our generation are cowards who wouldn't condone the abuse of women, but wouldn't fight to stop it, either.

Think about the jokes boys who want to be men tell. I can't count the number of times I've heard a guy at Truman say, "That's what she said." This joke is so offensive it literally makes me want to throw up. Chauvinists of years past only made one woman, usually "my wife" or "your mom," the butt of their crude jokes. Today, the vulgarity has increased, as guys degrade and scandalize all women with their failed attempts at humor.

The news isn't better on a national level. Research is telling us that one in three girls is sexually abused by age 18, according to *theadvocacycenter.com*. That figure breaks my heart and lights a fire of rage within me. A third of our innocent young women, without

anyone to help or defend them, are being preyed upon. And by whom? Cowards who claim to be men. This is an absolute outrage and societal crisis.

If you are a man — I mean a real man — you, too, should be furious about what has happened to our gender. Instead of being upstanding men who care for and defend women, we have become irresponsible cowards who want to please ourselves, no matter what the cost.

So I'll ask for a final time: Where are the gentlemen?

You boys-who-can-shave have a choice to make. Put your beer down for a second and decide for yourself: Do you want to be a boy who takes, or a man who gives? Do you want to be a boy who consumes, or a man who produces? Do you want to be a cowardly predator, or a courageous protector?

Please, choose wisely. Our culture needs you. We need to find the men.

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