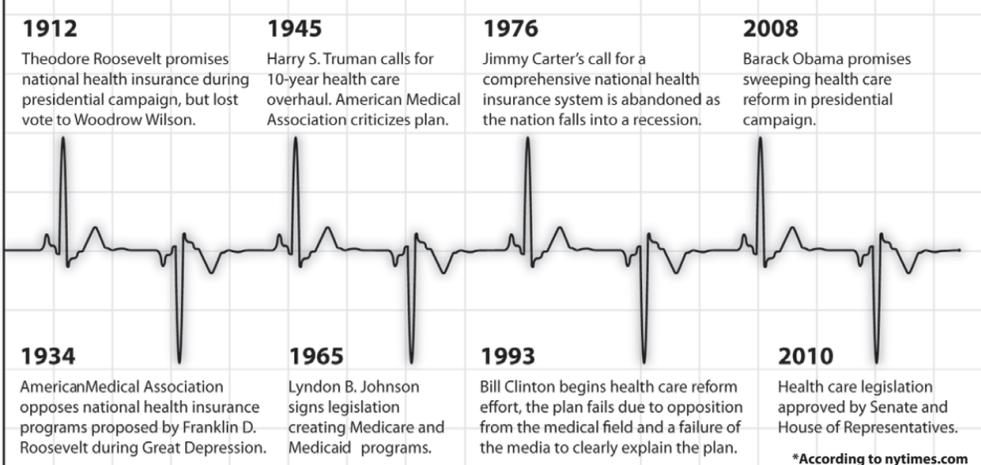


## A brief history of health care reform



## Health care must benefit citizens of all income levels



Connor Riley

Mark Lindquist of Joplin, Mo., is one of the most incredible men of which I've ever heard. During the EF-5 tornado that tore apart the town in May, he attempted to save the lives of three adults with Down Syndrome. Ultimately, he failed in his quest because there was not sufficient time to move the individuals to a safer location.

When rescue workers uncovered Lindquist's body, it was so mangled he was not identified for three days as he lay in a coma in a local hospital, according to an Oct. 23 article from the Associated Press. Upon waking, he was not only surprised to be alive but also by the staggering medical bill he racked up during his recovery. Currently it's about \$2.5 million and going nowhere but up.

Surely, you might think, someone, a government agency or his insurance company, would have paid his outrageous medical bill, but you are wrong. Lindquist does not have health insurance and his employer's provider, Accident Fund

Insurance, initially denied his claim to worker's compensation. After the story broke, AFI reversed their decision and agreed to pay the balance, but they already have shown their true colors.

This story conveys everything that is wrong with our health care system today. Here is a man who gave everything and he was rewarded with nothing but medical bills. Only after the geniuses at AFI decided to save the company's public image did they manage to take responsibility for covering Lindquist's tab.

He might be an exceptional individual, but he still is part of the 52 million Americans without health insurance, according to Bloomberg.com, and quite frankly, it's a disgrace. While many people don't agree with President Barack Obama's plan for mandatory health insurance, myself included, it's pretty obvious there needs to be some option for low-income individuals to find affordable health care.

I don't care if it's government-run or private, but if an honest, hardworking man can't count on immediate help in the wake of a disaster, then on what can we rely? Unlike the Occupy Wall Street protesters, I understand there always has been and always will be a gap between rich and poor, but if we really consider ourselves good people, how can we allow things like this happen on a daily basis?

This issue reaches beyond politi-

cal affiliations and should move anyone with a heart to act in favor of an affordable health care system for everyone, not just senators and stock brokers.

There are not enough curse words in the world to describe the anger I feel every time I reread the story about Lindquist's troubles. I was in Joplin two days after the tornado hit and spent the next three weeks working there, so it's quite possible I'm acting irrationally, but if this is true, then I don't want to be rational.

Mark Lindquist is as much of a hero as any veteran of Iraq or Afghanistan and much more so than any politician who would move to deny him the health care he so clearly deserves. Let's remember there are millions of other people just like him. As such, it is imperative we transcend political debate and move to create a more plausible health care alternative to Obama's well-meaning, but clearly unconstitutional, plan for universal health insurance.

This means a cheap option for low-income families. If this is economically harmful, then business simply will have to suffer, because there must be a point at which we see people as more important than dollar signs. I've reached mine.

*Connor Riley is a senior history major from St. Louis*

## Quantification of human qualities obscures reality



Connor Stangler

I'm more than a number. I'm a human, an individual. No one can define me. No one can simplify me. My parents used to tell me that. Modern economics says they're wrong.

The Americans Thomas Sargent and Christopher Sims shared the 2011 Nobel Prize in Economics for their work this month about rational expectations theory, a branch of economics that describes how rational people will react in situations characterized by changes in economic factors. The theory fundamentally is mathematical: It relies on graphs, equations and a few plausible logic tricks. This commitment to quantifiable human variables distorts the reality of our humanity.

Sargent and Sim's achievement might be the last victory for the economic rationalists, the high-water mark of quantitative analysis.

The quantification of marketplaces and human behavior has served as the cornerstone of most economic scholarship for the past several decades. Supply and demand curves simplify our desires, scatter plots reduce our seemingly incongruent choices to predictable patterns and interesting formulas diminish the awesomeness of our free will. A blackboard covered with the most sophisticated economic principles and equations doesn't compel a student to wonder at its ingenuity. Instead, it leaves him or her with a humbling realization: "That's me."

You're not a book-loving English major who hopes to one day make it big as a creative writer, you're a consumer with preferences who will enter the labor force as soon as you graduate. You're not a social activist who wants to fight for the rights of workers and unions, you're an obstructionist whose inefficiency actually can be numerically valued in terms of production loss. You can be captured in a graph, bordered by two axes whose arrows stretching into infinity are not indicative of your limitless freedom but of your arithmetic simplicity.

The problem with the quantitative emphasis within the social sciences (economics, political science and even history) is its obvious inaccuracy. We are not completely rational, and such an assumption misleads our understanding of human behavior. My inadvisable devotion to romantic poetry leads me to overdramatize even the most everyday scenarios. I watch reruns of "The Office" and "Seinfeld" when I know it hurts my productivity. Economic equations cannot capture the irrational spontaneity, unpredictability or quirks of the human condition. That irrationality makes up the human essence.

I understand the allure of economics and the other quantitative social sciences. Humans want to make sense of their world, to unify it in the simplest terms. When I unfairly judge another human, I succumb to this pressure. The easiest explanation for someone's behavior or annoying tendencies is, I think, the right explanation. Fortunately, I almost always turn out to be completely wrong: The situation is more complex and the person is more than just a one-dimensional actor.

When economists put the right amount of emphasis on quantification, the results can be illuminating. Those wonderfully self-evident equations and graphs help make sense of the incredibly complex interactions between buyers and sellers. We can apply empirical approaches to those things that demand statistical analysis, but when we try to convert the abstract to numbers, we demean the complexity of humans.

For most of the history of economics, scholars and thinkers realized the limitations of statistical analysis. They knew it could only go so far to capture human behavior. They relied on it to describe certain tendencies, not determine conclusively what people would or should do. As economists increasingly valued quantitative efficiency over everything else, they began to quantify the unquantifiable. The simplicity of numbers eased our understanding.

But humans are not simple, and the sooner economists again realize the limitations of numbers, the sooner we can again describe our essence.

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

## AROUND THE QUAD

### What are you dressing up as for Halloween?



"I don't plan on dressing up this year. It's too much work."

Marissa Meehan  
freshman



"I'm not sure yet, but my roommate is being Waldo from 'Where's Waldo.'"

Katherine Kennison  
junior



"Thor. I need to find armor and a hammer to go with the idea."

Zach McPherson  
junior



"I'll be going to Monday night football instead. So I guess I'll be dressing up as a Chief's fan."

Martha Tillmon  
junior

## Doomsday predictions create unnecessary frenzies, panic



Molly Skyles

If you're reading this, congratulations, you survived last Friday's rapture. It is now safe to come out from your basement, return to your jobs and remember to refrain from yelling at the guy with stinky feet who sits next to you in class because you will live to smell him another day.

Doomsday predictions aren't new, yet the hype surrounding them never ceases to amaze me. This particular prediction was made by Harold Camping, a 90-year-old preacher who heads Family Radio International, according to an Oct. 21 MSNBC article.

This isn't Camping's first attempt at predicting the end. Previously this year,

he claimed May 21, 2011 would be the rapture date. May came and went and now in October, we've prevailed through his Oct. 21 doomsday prediction. Sorry Camper, but I think your math is a little off.

While most of us hear these stories and have a good laugh, some take matters into their own hands. Prior to May 21, Family Radio International spent millions of dollars on the more than 5,000 billboards and 20 RVs advertising the coming of Judgment Day, and many people quit their jobs and donated their retirement or college funds to the cause.

It's a tad bit impulsive to make such important life decisions because of one man's premonition, I'd say. Camper claimed to have used an idiosyncratic calculation that combined the number of years since the Noah's Ark flood and other biblical numbers to conclude the doomsday date. However,

nowhere in the Bible is the information explained. Sure, I could add up a bunch of unrelated numbers and make up a date, but that doesn't mean the world is going to explode.

Maybe during his old age, Camper lost a bit of his rationale, but then how can

**More than 55,000 people referenced the Oct. 21 Judgment Day on Twitter last week, according to MSNBC, and while most of them were making jokes, some seriously questioned the potential truth.**

all the other end of the world predictions be explained? The most well-known rapture date is Dec. 21, 2012, which is "explained" through the Mayan long-count calendar. The Mayans might be to thank for our modern-day understanding of mathematics, but they were not supernatural beings. They had no way of predicting the end. There isn't even any scientific or anthropological evidence to support the apocalypse, according to MSNBC. So why panic?

To put it simply, we are crazy. Predicted rapture dates have come and gone, and hysteria occurs every time. More

than 55,000 people referenced the Oct. 21 Judgment Day on Twitter last week, according to MSNBC, and while most of them were making jokes, some seriously questioned the potential truth.

Call me a masochist, but I almost hope someday one of the predictions comes true. No, I don't want the world to end, but the idea of planning for such a thing is just as crazy as those who believe it's true. If the world is going to end, it's going to end — there's nothing you can do to prepare for that. Go ahead and quit your job and donate all your money to a Judgment Day billboard, you still are going to die.

All the crazies can relax now. The world is safe until at least December 2012. As for Camper, maybe the third time will be the charm. I must say though, having a little crazy in the world isn't such a bad thing — it makes the rest of us look saner.

*Molly Skyles is a senior communication major from St. Louis*