

## RAPE AND ABUSE STATISTICS



**44%** of victims are younger than age 18  
**80%** are younger than age 20



Every **2** minutes, someone in the U.S. is sexually assaulted  
Each year, there are about **207,754** victims of sexual assault



**54%** of sexual assaults are not reported to police  
**97%** of rapists will never spend a day in jail



Approximately **2/3** of assaults are committed by someone known to the victim  
**38%** of rapists are a friend or acquaintance of the victim

according to <http://www.rainn.org>

## Religions must receive equal recognition



Lacy Murphy

The University of Missouri-Columbia has released a "Guide to Religions: Major Holidays and Suggested Accommodations." The guide has ruffled some feathers since its debut when Fox News criticized it for considering non-traditional holidays when planning the academic year. Specifically, the inclusion of Wiccan and Pagan holidays seems to be causing the friction. As usual, Fox News reports have been wildly sensationalized, and are inaccurate and insensitive.

The news outlet pokes fun at the guide saying in a recent article, "Students at University of Missouri don't need to cram for exams that fall on Wiccan and Pagan holidays, now that the school has put them on par with Christmas, Thanksgiving and Hanuk[k]ah."

However, the guide only is provided to faculty, staff and students as an educational resource and was intended to provide increased awareness of minority holidays. The guide never requires professors to not give exams during those holidays, but exists as a source to educate the University on a variety of religions. The guide includes recommendations concerning food and other accommodations for several holidays and contains Jewish, Hindu, Islamic and Christian holidays in addition to Pagan and Wiccan ones that were added after the request of students and staff.

The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life conducted a random survey that determined 4 percent of American adults classified themselves as Wiccan, Pagan or other "New Age" groups during 2008. In a random phone survey, the U.S. Census conducted 54,461 interviews that revealed 342 individuals identified themselves as Wiccan and 340 identified themselves as Pagan. The same study during 1990 surveyed 113,723 people and found only eight individuals identified themselves as Wiccan and no one identified themselves as Pagan. While the percentage still is small, the statistics show the spread of Wiccan and Pagan religious groups.

While there certainly are students who would be happy to have an extra three-day weekend because of additional holidays, the likelihood of having extra days is slim. The University of Missouri has garnered this unwelcome attention due to blatant religious stereotyping.

"The bad side of Wiccanism [sic] is that obviously, it's a form of Witchcraft," Fox News guest Tucker Carlson said. He continued by saying every Wiccan he's ever known is either a compulsive Dungeons and Dragons player or a middle-aged, twice-divorced older woman living in a rural area and working as a midwife.

Fox News contributor Tammy Bruce said the guide indicated an unbecoming societal shift.

"It almost seems as though we're looking for excuses for people to not have to take their commitments seriously," Bruce told Fox News. "It's beyond political correctness; it's almost like an excuse to do nothing. It's like societal nihilism, where nothing matters."

People just love to use the term nihilism to make something sound scary, don't they?

Brenda Gray, a South Carolina resident, started a petition shortly after the Fox News article was released. She claims the article was poorly researched and prejudiced. The petition pointed out there was 11 Christian, 45 Catholic and 21 Jewish holidays, but only eight for Pagans and Wiccans included in the guide. The petition hopes to achieve enough signatures to encourage the news group to apologize to people who identify with Pagan and Wiccan religious groups and learn from their mistakes. It's probably wise that Fox News do just that.

As usual, Fox News has presented us with another opportunity to roll our eyes. Students should not be bothered that Wiccan and Pagan festivals are listed right next to major Christian holidays like Easter and Christmas. The University of Missouri should be applauded for its dedication to diversity. At public universities, differing values should not be placed on different religions. Every faith should be acknowledged on campus and actions should be taken to supply students and faculty with specific information and recommendations. As always, more information is better information.

Lacy Murphy is a junior French major from Springfield, Mo.

## Vagina Monologues exposes taboos



Mackenzie McDermott

The poster on the bulletin board said "The Vagina Monologues." My friend said "Ew, what? Why is that a thing?" This is a common response you might get when talking about the play, which premiered 17 years ago. Since its initial production during 1996, the script has been modified, twisted and added to as it has gained momentum through word of mouth and YouTube. Still, many people are unaware of what "The Vagina Monologues" is. Many, like my friends, are scared off by the name. Before going into detail, let's get one thing clear — "The Vagina Monologues" is completely about vaginas, and also not at all.

Eve Ensler, the original author, wrote the play after conducting interviews with more than 200 women about sex, relationships and violence toward women. "The Vagina Mono-

logues" is a series of episodic scenes about the female experience, which, as it turns out, is only different from the male experience because of what one woman in the play calls her "down there." There's something a little taboo and uncomfortable about the topic, but that's sort of the idea. Ensler asks the question, "Why are we afraid to talk about vaginas?" It might be because our patriarchal society stifles women's voices about their own sexuality. It might be because, as the opening of the play states, the word sounds "like an infection at best, a medical instrument, maybe." Either way, the play is an attempt to relieve that awkwardness and empower women to talk about their experiences.

Although I never had been to a showing of the play before, I had seen videos and had a gist of what it is. Along with a few of my friends, I walked across campus through the cold to see what the hype was about. During the show, we saw monologues that made our sides hurt from laughing, ones that made us think and ones that were terribly sad. The topics ranged from typical relationships to the outrageous account of a strange employee, but they were all about women's experiences and were recited by women. Today, the play is often put on in conjunction with V-Day, a nationally-organized response to violence against women. The Women's Resource Center

organized Truman State's showing of the play and a majority of the proceeds went toward the effort to end violence against women.

Aside from the good cause and the message attached to "The Vagina Monologues," they also are extremely entertaining. There were monologues that had men and women alike roaring with laughter. They created an environment that fed upon the uncomfortable nature of the subject to help eliminate that awkwardness.

By the end of the production, I had a new understanding of why the play is important and felt happy to have spent only two dollars on something I genuinely enjoyed. The walk across campus after the production was quiet at first. As my friends and I left the safety of the auditorium full of people, we were unsure if the topics still were on the table for discussion. Sure, we could laugh about it, but could we talk about it? Was that suddenly allowed? We walked with our hands in our pockets and our eyes on our feet until one of us broke the silence. It was my very skeptical and uncomfortable friend who finally spoke. "You know, that was really funny," she said. We all spoke at once in agreement and couldn't shut up the rest of the way home.

Mackenzie McDermott is a freshman English major from Springfield, Ill.

## What do you think of celebrity instructors at educational institutions?

"It depends. If it is in a field like acting and someone who has real-world experience in the field, I see that as valuable to students."

Bill Townsend sophomore

"Obviously if you don't know the content, you shouldn't be teaching. But it's silly to discredit someone based on name recognition alone."

Sara Redel junior

"I think it would be a disservice to students. Hiring celebrities just to bring in students seems like a money-grab."

Kayla Bastian freshman

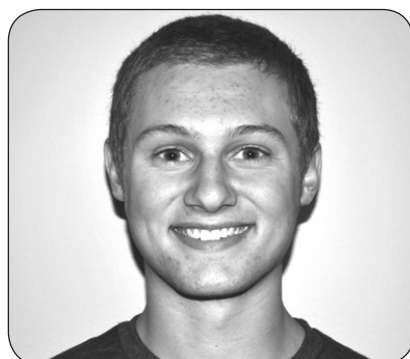
"Inviting Stephen King to teach a writing class makes perfect sense. But, you have to be careful who you ask. They must have been successful in the field."

Tom Barrow sophomore



## AROUND THE QUAD

## Celebrity professors can hurt educational institutions



Jeremy Busch

It's not a rare sight to see a public figure taking on multiple roles in today's world. Former Alaskan governor Sarah Palin, known for her less than impeccable foreign policy, certainly has branched into a wide variety of activities including her own TV show and appearing on Saturday Night Live. Now, what if she were to work for Harvard University?

It was quite the surprise when I read that Harvard's prestigious Kennedy School of Government decided to hire Palin to teach four classes throughout three years, and she joined Harvard's Consortium for Energy Policy Research, according to a Feb. 18 Daily Current article.

It was a relief when I realized the Daily Current publishes satirical, fake columns, but it sparked thoughts. Political figures often assert themselves as experts in areas where their formal educational credentials are lacking. Their prominent positions often allow them to get away with their self-assessments, but they still should be examined.

After pondering how comical it would be to take one of Palin's classes, I decided to evaluate whether or not she truly is qualified to teach them. She has governmental experience, but does that qualify her to educate today's young people?

Palin graduated with a journalism degree from the University of Idaho, according to a Sept. 2008 Huffington Post

article, and it is doubtful her position in Alaska taught her much about the history of psychology in society. However, she theoretically might be hired to teach the class simply due to her fame.

During a similar case, a 2009 Huffington Post article criticized political commentator Bill Maher for acting as an expert while discussing ADHD. He incorrectly stated facts and made false statements with no scientific backing, yet was able to do so because of his prominent position. Many viewers were misinformed because of his sloppy background research.

When these celebrities assert themselves as experts in a field that they are not, they not only discredit themselves, but also the institution they are representing. A well respected university, Washington University in St. Louis, almost hosted Bristol Palin, Sarah's daughter, speak on sexual responsibility, when the 20 year old was reported pregnant the previous year. The students spoke out against it, and the University decided to cancel the event to

maintain its credibility and image.

Institutions must avoid these gimmicks. Even though they might draw publicity and increase profits, they do not benefit students. It decreases credibility of the sponsoring institution when non-experts assert themselves to be experts in a field. Professors and speakers must be hired on the basis of their experience and knowledge about a given field, and this must be proven through formal credentials. Instead of Bristol expressing her hypocritical wishes for abstinence, an expert in unplanned pregnancy would be more educational.

Institutions must judge candidates for presentations based on their qualifications rather than their capability to draw crowds. By doing this, they maintain their credibility and educate the audience.

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