

## TRUMAN PROFESSORS WITH THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF RATINGS ON RATEMYPROFESSORS.COM

NAME	DEPARTMENT	TOTAL RATINGS
RANDY HAGERTY	POLITICAL SCIENCE	65
KENNETH CARTER	CHEMISTRY	58
SUREN FERNANDO	MATHEMATICS	54
LLOYD PFLUEGER	PHILOSOPHY	54
SAL COSTA	PSYCHOLOGY	52
PAUL PARKER	POLITICAL SCIENCE	49
TONY WEISSTEIN	BIOLOGY	49
DAVID PARTENHEIMER	ENGLISH	46
NATALIE ALEXANDER	PHILOSOPHY	45

•ACCORDING TO RATEMYPROFESSORS.COM

## Pope's open attitude is a step forward



John Riti

Pope Francis has been the new leader of the Catholic Church since March, and his short tenure thus far has shown his humility and less formal approaches to the papacy. The casualness he brings to his role might have some members of the Vatican and the Church sitting uneasy, but in my eyes, Pope Francis is exactly what the Church and the world needs right now.

A Sept. 24 Huffington Post article reported a poll that showed 81 percent of U.S. Catholics see Francis as having a positive impact on the Church. As pope in today's increasingly secular world, Francis is faced with the difficult task of making a religious institution, plagued with recent controversy, relevant to all, including those who might not conform to Catholicism or any specific religion.

Francis made international headlines when he proclaimed the Church was "too obsessed" with certain issues, and when prompted about his thoughts on gays, replied, "Who am I to judge them?" garnering a positive response from the Human Rights Campaign.

He also reached out to the Muslim community, urging Catholics to live in "mutual respect" with their "Muslim brothers."

According to an Oct. 9 Yahoo News article, Imam Mohamad Bashir Arafat, the president of the Islamic Affairs Council, said Francis resonates with the Muslim World "in terms of contributing to stopping wars and conflicts, [and] praying for better understanding."

Francis might be the religious leader of 1.2 billion people, but just as importantly, he isn't forgetting about the billions of world citizens associated with other religions, either.

From the beginning, Francis proved himself a pope who wasn't afraid to break tradition. He didn't wear traditional vestments at his ordination because he deemed them too extravagant.

He openly talks in interviews about hot-button issues such as relating to gays and atheists, and has several times delivered what some deemed blunt or controversial homilies. He emphasizes the importance of listening to younger generations.

Francis revealed in several interviews that he almost turned down the papacy, even once saying he didn't want to be pope at first, according to an October 9 Huffington Post article. Anyone of any religious ideology — or not — can sympathize with the pressure that comes with being the leader of a Church consisting of 1.2 billion members. His explicit admission that he almost turned down the job makes him more human in my eyes — popes often appear saintly or superhuman, but he feels emotions just as we do, and this allows us to relate to him on a basic level.

There always will be a number of Catholics displeased with the leadership of the Church, but Francis' comments pave the way for more outreach and are helping the Church regain lost footing. Francis is a world leader who isn't losing sight of the entire world population. Thus far in his papacy, he's proven himself to be a compassionate leader who can bridge gaps between different people.

Francis demonstrates a distinctly Catholic ideology rooted in beliefs of coexistence and goals for world peace. The world always will consist of humans of different backgrounds and faiths, and Francis is a leader that, regardless of how you identify, we can all learn from.

John Riti is a senior English major from St. Louis, Mo.

## Courses need fair ratings



Andrea Trierweiler

Five minutes of your time could help Truman State students build their best schedule.

With registration for the spring semester beginning Monday, it's time to consider classes and professors to take. Student-provided comments and statistics on the website ratemyprofessors.com and Truman's faculty evaluations can provide insight into the difficulty of a class, how a professor grades and how much work is assigned. But surprisingly few people respond to these evaluations, and more should.

As college students, we pay thousands of dollars for our classes. We deserve to get what we pay for, or at least have an idea of what to expect from a class if there's only one professor teaching it.

RateMyProfessors is the most popular professor rating website, with 4 million students using it per month, according to the website. While many students use the site to view ratings, it appears few students actually take time to rate their professors.

The Truman professor with the highest number of ratings at 65 is political science

professor Randy Hagerty, who teaches POL 101 Constitutional Government. During spring 2013, 177 students were enrolled in this half-block course, according to TruView's open course list for spring 2013. This means since 2004, the date of Hagerty's earliest RateMyProfessors rating, fewer than half of a semester's worth of students for a single class provided a rating on the site.

Many professors listed on the site have fewer ratings. Some professors have less than five, which cannot provide a fair assessment of someone's abilities or teaching styles. Sometimes a professor might only have one rating from recent years, and it's possible they have changed how they conduct their class since 2004, which appears to be the first year any Truman professors were rated.

Furthermore, not every course a professor teaches has ratings. I've searched for professors only to find a few ratings for some classes they teach, but none for the one I'm considering.

RateMyProfessors is not without other pitfalls. Two years ago, ratings on the website landed Truman a spot on the list of 25 colleges with the worst professors in the nation, according to an October 2011 CBS News article. These ratings were based solely on student input from two of the four categories used to rate professors on the site, "helpfulness" and "clarity," but not "easiness" or the frivolous "hotness" rating. How can rating only a professor's helpfulness and clarity level result in fair ratings? Why not also rate them on amount learned or fairness of grading?

The flaws with RateMyProfessors are why Truman's end-of-course evaluations are important. These anonymous evaluation forms, emailed to students at the end of each semester, rate a professor's effectiveness of communication, approachability, fairness of grading, feeling of having learned a lot, methods through which course concepts were presented, number of hours spent per week on class work, main grade components, and what source test material came from. The data is then posted on TruView's open course list for students to view.

Not many students complete these forms either. Based on patterns I noticed on the open course list, only 40 students might respond out of 100 to 200 students enrolled. Sometimes a course and professor might have fewer than 10 ratings, which isn't enough. A higher quantity of fair, detailed ratings is necessary to provide the most accurate insight possible.

"Choosing the best courses and professors is a rite of passage for every student," according to RateMyProfessors.

If you've ever used ratings to help you create your class schedule, return the favor and provide feedback of your own. Don't let those course evaluations get lost in your inbox. If RateMyProfessors and Truman's evaluation system are ever going to be fair sources of ratings, everyone must contribute. It only takes a few minutes.

Andrea Trierweiler is a junior Romance language major from Columbia, Mo.

## How do you think the shutdown of the federal government will affect you?

"I don't think it will have a huge effect on me personally."

John Phegley  
Sophomore

"My job is at [Northeast Mo. Community Action Agency]. With the government shut down, they can't get food and their budget has been cut."

Haley Fitzgibbons  
Sophomore

"My uncle is in the Marines. He's not out of work, but there are people he knows who are."

Nate Kardesch  
Freshman

"It could affect my ability to do government-funded training and education programs for my field."

Courtney Crocker  
Junior



## AROUND THE QUAD

## Government shutdown will affect students



Laknath Gunathilake

What's the big deal with the U.S. government shutdown everyone seems to be talking about? A shutdown occurs when the federal government closes its non-essential offices due to lack of approval for government program budgets for the upcoming fiscal year.

Although some assert the shutdown will have no impact on many Americans' daily lives, others say failure to reach a deal will have far-reaching implications for the U.S. economy.

At first glance, the political standoff in Washington, D.C.

seems to have no effect on Truman State. University president Troy Paino hasn't declared holidays until the fiscal deadlock ends, and none of the campus offices have been closed as a result of the shutdown. Classes are being held according to schedule. The library and the Student Recreation Center remain open, and students are going about their work just as before.

However, the government shutdown does affect average students, including resources some students depend on.

The shutdown could impact student financial aid. Although most Pell Grants and student loan payments already have been awarded for this semester, a continuation of the shutdown into November, December or even the next calendar year could pose a problem when students apply for new financial aid.

According to the Truman Financial Aid website, the University has a number of federal aid programs, including Pell Grant,

College Work-Study, Nursing Loan, Perkins Loan, Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant, TEACH Grant, Subsidized and Unsubsidized Direct Stafford Loans and PLUS Loans.

All types of scientific research deemed "non-essential" conducted at public universities have been halted as a result of the shutdown, according to an Oct. 3 USA Today report. Many universities, such as University of Michigan, which relies on \$53 million of federal research money each month, might see cuts to their research programs if the shutdown continues beyond a certain time period.

Although Truman does not rely heavily on federal funding for research, individual students applying for federal grants might be affected as a result of the shutdown. For example, a student applying for a National Science Foundation grant might discover the NSF website and all other business applications, including NSF.gov, FastLane and Research.gov, are unavailable.

The shutdown also could have a detrimental impact on Truman's international recruitment. Truman attracts a large number international students each semester, and the shutdown could hamper visa processing for incoming international students.

According to a Sept. 30 Washington Post report, the U.S. State Department said it will keep most passport agencies and consular operations open as long as it has the funding to do so.

But according to the report, during the 1995 to 1996 shutdown, between 20,000 and 30,000 applications for visas went unprocessed each day. International students applying for the spring intake could face problems if the shutdown is prolonged.

The shutdown might inconvenience every student on campus. You might not have noticed yet, but most scholarly resources haven't been up to date since the shutdown. Many federal sources of information used by Truman students for research papers and

academic work are not being updated at the moment.

Among others, the U.S. Census, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Data.gov, Fedstats.gov and the Education Resources Information Center currently are either not available or not up-to-date.

So if you were trying to find information about a particular federal agency or if you needed the latest information about the USDA for a class on agricultural science, you have to wait until the shutdown ends.

A prolonged shutdown could have a detrimental impact on the average college student. It is important to note the overall ripple effect from a prolonged shutdown could seep into all aspects of the economy. The government shutdown might then be another thing to add to your reasons to be worried this semester.

Laknath Gunathilake is a senior political science major from Colombo, Sri Lanka