

Pop culture should be more respected



Trevor Hamblin

Popular culture sometimes can seem to be a world away from that of academics. The things we see as high culture — the works of Shakespeare or Picasso — are so different from what we see as pop culture — Spongebob SquarePants or One Direction — that it would be hard not to make a distinction. Yet some scholars have decided popular culture is worth the time and effort of academic study and I, for one, am inclined to agree.

“Jersey Shore” might be considered, at least by some, one of the most vapid TV shows in history, but during 2011 the University of Chicago hosted an academic conference dedicated to the reality show. It lasted all day, with panels and discussion dedicated to analyzing and understanding the underlying themes behind the show’s narratives. The event, created by then-student David Showalter, is only one example of the many ways popular culture and academia can intersect.

Many other colleges have programs and events dedicated to the study of popular culture, or at least partially focused on it. For example, the introductory class for Princeton University’s American Studies program is AMS 101 — “America Then and Now.” The class strives to compare America’s past to its present, and its studies cover a wide range of topics, according to the course description on the Princeton University website. “Analyzing a rock song, for instance, can aid in illuminating aspects of economic history, while examining a work of art can yield information about immigration policy or controversies within the scientific realm,” according to the Princeton University website.

But it’s not the only school with lofty ideas about popular culture. There are many schools

where students can major in popular culture studies. This trend began with Bowling Green State University, which was the first — and only — university to have a popular culture department. The department’s founder is considered by most to be professor Ray B. Browne, who dedicated his entire career to the study of popular culture until his death during 2009. His efforts also led to the creation of “The Journal of Popular Culture” and the Popular Culture Association.

While Truman State might not have a major or department for popular culture studies, the importance of popular culture still is recognized by most teachers. For example, I took a film class my first semester here and we watched a wide variety of films — including ones that easily could be considered popular culture rather than high culture, like “WALL-E.” Similarly, popular culture was addressed several times during my mass communication class, where we even briefly studied the intricacies of 90s popular culture, and how mass media created and destroyed this culture.

If you really want to understand the culture of a place or time, you shouldn’t just look at its highest and most renowned art. Rather, you need to look at what regular people saw and made on a daily basis. Even today, with an endless stream of commercialized television and music, there still is so much to analyze and understand about how our culture operates. This is especially important when you consider the Internet, which I think has caused our culture to rapidly tire of previously beloved works of art, while maintaining nostalgia for others.

Popular culture is a very real and important part of our lives, whether we realize it or not. The culture of our time and place is reflected in these movies and songs, just as other times or places have been captured on canvas or paper. If we ignore this, we might never truly understand the world around us.

Trevor Hamblin is a sophomore English and communication major from Moberly, Mo.

WHAT'S WHAT

POP CULTURE

Sports

Television

Movies

HIGH CULTURE

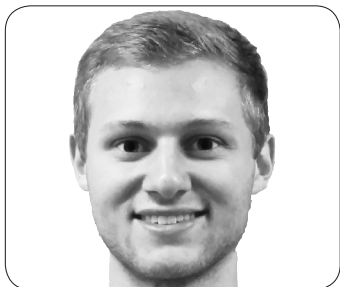
Opera

Fine Arts

Theatre

https://philosophynow.org/issues/64/Pop_Culture_An_Overview

Missouri needs election reform



Jeremy Busch

As the nation shifts its eyes toward the presidential possibilities of Vice President Joe Biden, Missourians might notice a similar position is up for grabs during 2016. The lieutenant governor’s race in Missouri is beginning to heat up, yet its magnitude has fallen flat compared to other races. Given the significance of the office of lieutenant governor, should the lieutenant governor be on the same ticket as the governor?

Of 43 states with a lieutenant governor, Missouri is one of only 18 others where the position of lieutenant governor has its own place on the ballot. The remaining 25 mimic the national ticket, where the president chooses a running mate and the two are voted into office simultaneously, from the same party. However, Missouri can have a governor and lieutenant governor of competing parties.

The partisan divide, as experienced by half of Missouri’s governors since 1973, arguably dimin-

ishes the power of the lieutenant governor and the governor. Working in tandem rather than in opposition would strengthen the offices that lead the state in several respects, such as legislative relations and community engagement.

Similar to the role Biden fills for President Barack Obama, lieutenant governors frequently have tighter relations with the legislative branch, and can improve communication and propel progress. Immediately prior to becoming the current lieutenant governor, Republican Peter Kinder served in the State Senate as president pro tempore. This is not an unusual instance, as the last five lieutenant governors all served in the Missouri Legislature prior to becoming lieutenant governors.

In contrast, Missouri’s last 12 governors held statewide positions prior to gubernatorial election. This time gap since their service in the Missouri General Assembly means legislative relations could have eroded — with the current term limits, the second term of a statewide officer will conclude with the election of an almost entirely new General Assembly. After eight years, the only remaining senators are those who were elected during special elections.

When a lieutenant governor is working in cooperation with the governor, the communication from the executive office can be improved dramatically. It is no secret that Democratic Gov. Jay Nixon’s relationship with the legislative branch has been predominantly hands-off. If a lieutenant governor of the same party were there to mend ties, such a disconnect might not be present.

Furthermore, the position of the lieutenant governor could be more complementary if elected on the same ticket. Missouri features conflicting environments — the urban powerhouses of Kansas City and St. Louis versus the rolling corn and soybean fields of rural areas. A governor with an urban upbringing could be complemented by a lieutenant governor with a rural upbringing, or a governor with conservation experience could be complemented by a right hand with a law degree.

This could not only improve understanding of the executive office but also better its ability to serve the people of Missouri. Instead, Nixon and Kinder’s relationship is nearly severed, as evidenced by the night of the failed indictment of Officer Darren Wilson. While Nixon could not be reached for comment, Kinder opted to express his outrage about the verdict on Fox News. As the eyes of the nation focused on Missouri, the government’s inability to communicate effectively was apparent immediately.

A governor and lieutenant governor elected on the same ticket would improve the unity, effectiveness and abilities of the executive branch. After all, Missourians voted for the governor to lead the state, and a lieutenant governor of the opposite party only acts as an obstacle.

Jeremy Busch is a senior communication major from Ballwin, Mo.

AROUND THE QUAD

How invested are you in current political events?

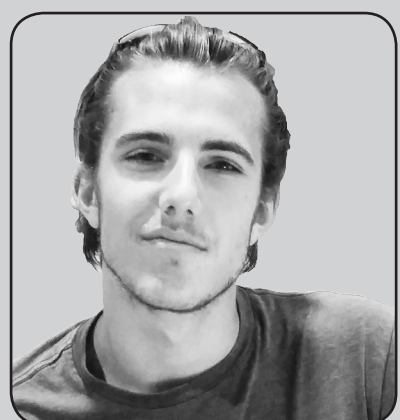
Pretty invested. Both my parents work in politics so I was raised that way.

Kyra Jones
Sophomore



Not very. I don’t really follow the presidential candidacy but I am very involved in environmental issues.

Alex Hromockyj
Senior



I feel like international news should also focus on Africa. We’re so focused on America that we don’t focus on poverty and the important issues.

Mufaro Hungwe
Freshman



I read a lot and follow it, so I am invested.

Dillon Laaker
Senior

