THE GOD SOLUTION
When It Comes to Religion and the Public Sphere, Columbia’s Father Knows Best By Andrew Flynn

TRIAL AND ERROR
Frontiers of Science Was Supposed to Revolutionize the Core. What Went Wrong? By Christopher Morris-Lent

LOVE (AND DEATH) IN THE TIME OF FACEBOOK

ALSO: KNITTING, TEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF DRUNKENNESS
When it comes to religion and the public sphere, Columbia's Father knows best.

How a silly little networking site deals with life's serious milestones.

Frontiers of Science was supposed to revolutionize the Core. What went wrong?

A textual analysis of your drunken bullshit.

Sophomore slump could not find a better dump.

How a new generation of knitters is blurring the line between craft and fine art.

Bastions of minutiae you won't find in Time Out.

Cover: “St. Paul’s” by Rachel Lindsay
After global warming wreaked paradoxical havoc in the form of endless winter, she’s finally arrived: Summer, that golden goddess, in all her malodorous glory. Pale, theory-addled Columbians can soon take a break from g-chat and free-food scrambling and spend our long days basking in the glow of the sun or our parents’ HDTV. Pheromones rage beneath our neurotic facades, fueling ill-conceived flings with future EC floormates. We might soon be scattered to the winds, but your issue of the B&W is delightfully portable— and, unlike your friends, can crash at your sublet without wearing out its welcome.

This month’s cover story provides the ultimate beach reading. While soaking up rays in Far Rockaway, we suggest you alternate US Weekly and Andrew Flynn’s exclusive sit-down with Father Richard Neuhaus: learn how the Naked Public Square gets this man of the cloth hot under the priestly collar.

If selling your soul to the Brothers Lehman allows for idle moments (and Facebook-judging the interns in the Deutsche Bank network has lost its luster), sneak a peek at our story on the weightier implications of everyone’s favorite Internet timesink.

For seniors unimpressed by the musings of ABC’s sexiest castaway, hide the issue under your graduation robe and whip it out during the keynote speech. One look at the Frontiers piece and you’ll see what a bullet you dodged.

We dedicate this issue to the Class of 2007, for whom this summer is not just a respite but the portal to the great beyond. You made Columbia better—we have our work cut out for us.

—Taylor Walsh  
Editor-in-Chief

**DIGIT TALES: HIGH ROLLERS**

Amounts of money that Columbia affiliates have given to recent political campaigns:

**$6,600**: Political Science Professor Judith Russell, to Hillary Clinton  
**$2,300**: Urban Studies Professor Hillary Ballon, to Barack Obama  
- Business School Professor Bruce Greenwald, to Mitt Romney  
- Economist Joe Stiglitz, to Barack Obama  
- Business School Dean Robert Hubbard, to Mitt Romney

**$1,000**: Lame Duck Barnard President Judith Shapiro, to Hillary Clinton  
**$500**: Presidential Spouse Jean Magnano Bollinger, to Hillary Clinton

Total number of donations from employees of Columbia University:

11 to Hillary Clinton  
10 to Barack Obama  
7 to Rudy Giuliani  
4 to John Edwards  
3 to Mitt Romney  
1 to Bill Richardson  
1 John McCain

*Source: New York Times Campaign*

Bluebook compiled by Lydia DePillis and James Williams, illustrations by Carly Hoogendyk
**REVELATION OF THE MONTH**

One might imagine the lexicographers who write the OED to be stodgy people, but consistent updates to the dictionary’s body of entries suggest that they might be more up with the times than you’d expect. Recently defined words, according to the [Oxford English Dictionary Online](https://www.oed.com), include *asswipe, bad boy, Bikram, buzzkill, claymation, drag king, ixnay, Jello shot, light stick, motherf#ck (v), pig pile, shit-eater, Tae-Bo, and everybody’s favorite, sandwich cookie.*

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**COME AGAIN...?**

“We cannot go to the moon, Mars, or beyond without first learning to farm indoors on earth.”

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—From [verticalfarm.com](http://verticalfarm.com), the website of Columbia Environmental Science Professor Dickson Despommier’s Vertical Farm Project, which aims both to solve current environmental crises and feed the world’s masses by building a series of multi-story indoor farms in major cities.

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**TRANSACTIONS**

**DEPARTURES**

- Presidential ass-slaps during 40s on 40
- David Charlow
- The invented rivalry between Jester and CUSJ
- Judith Shapiro
- The winter gloom

**ARRIVALS**

- Celebrity shindigs at St. John the Divine
- *Eclectica Esoterica*
- Injustice, in the form of the Student Loan Xpress Scandal
- Those crazy new bus stops
- Carding policies at the Heights, the Abbey, and Ding Dong Lounge
- Steps culture

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**CALENDAR**

**April 30 - May 6, New York City, (mostly) free**

**Spider-Man Week**

Timed to coincide with the release of *Spider-Man 3* on May 4, this week of comic arachnid glorification will conclude, on May 6, with a ceremony at the Apollo theater featuring poets reciting original raps about Spidey.

**May 15, 10:00 AM, South Lawns, free: Columbia College Class Day**

Get thee gone, class of 2007! But first, get your diplomas, and hear the wisdom of Matthew C. Fox.

**May 31 - June 3, Campus and Beyond, priced by individual event: Columbia College Alumni Reunion Weekend**

For nostalgia-driven graduates whose class years end in 2 or 7, the Office of Alumni Affairs and Development provides a weekend full of cocktail parties, dinners, and memories. Gentlemen, start your checkbooks!
Andrew Tillett-Saks, C’09, hadn’t initially planned on rushing the stage of Roone Arledge Auditorium on October 4, 2006. He also never planned on giving the biggest campus controversy of the year one of its most indelible images, that of him pumping his defiantly clenched fist in the air, his long hair flowing down in an iconic silhouette, during the now-infamous Minutemen mêlée. And, chances are, he never planned on being the butt of Jon Stewart’s jokes on The Daily Show, either, where he was singled out and sarcastically referred to as “particularly peace-loving.”

“It was basically an impulsive action,” says Tillett-Saks, speaking in his characteristically laid-back manner, one that seems at odds with the few notorious moments of confrontation that landed him on national TV. “I was incredibly offended. I felt that we could make our message heard by going onstage, so I took part in it. People decided collectively that they had to do something to protest this movement.”

Five months after the fact, Tillett-Saks is more philosophical than polemical. “If anything, it’s just been a learning experience in understanding bureaucracy,” he says, “as well as understanding, intellectually, some of the limitations of liberalism.”

In reference to the first point, Tillett-Saks is careful in separating his educational experience at Columbia, which has enjoyed, from his all-too-close encounter with the school’s massive and arcane bureaucracy, which he has not. And while he likens the disciplinary process to being “thrown to the wolves,” faulting the university for “allowing this to hover over [his] head for so long,” he is not surprised by the school’s reaction to the stage-rushing. “I was mildly disappointed,” he says in reference to President Bollinger’s handling of the situation. “But at the same time I really wasn’t surprised. It’s a private institution. It dedicates so much of its efforts to increasing its endowment, I expected them to make the decision that they thought would be most conducive to continued donations. It didn’t surprise me that they didn’t even mention the immigration debate.”

If his ordeal at the hands of Columbia administrators has resulted in a sort of good-natured cynicism, his run-in with the Minutemen has led him to more optimistic conclusions. What he considers to be the stage-rushers’ success in exposing the Minutemen as a “highly offensive, intolerable group” reaffirms his confidence in more disruptive methods of protest, even though they might be out of step with liberal concepts of free speech. “We were highly effective in doing something,” Tillett-Saks says. “The choice of direct action proved to be a success.”

In early April, the University found Tillett-Saks to have engaged “in conduct that places another in danger of bodily harm,” but punished...
him minimally. The decision brought with it a certain level of relief, but he doubts that even a harsher punishment would have had much of an effect on him long-term. “It’s not really the way I want to spend my life, just looking out for my own self-interest and ignoring causes which I think are just.” In other words: he’d do it again in a second.

Besides, there are always other paths of recourse. “If I find that the Minutemen are following me around,” he says, “I’ll just cut my hair.”

—Armin Rosen

When it comes to education, Ice-T doesn’t mess around. “When I was growing up, y’all were stupid,” he said to an auditorium full of aspiring high school teachers, Teachers College masters’ students, and professors. The occasion was a TC conference in late March. “You ain’t got no car. You’re dressing fucked up.”

The audience giggled nervously, a tentative cry for help with the translation.

Clad in a crisp, white baseball cap and tinted sunglasses, Ice-T broke it down for them. Essentially, if teachers could afford to drive around in pimped-out Escalades, then kids would stop looking for joyrides with the neighborhood drug dealer.

The crowd erupted in applause.

The star of self-described “terrible-ass movies” like *Leprechaun 5: Leprechaun in the Hood*, and *Frankenpenis*, Ice-T may not have spent his career in service of schools. But he is old school, which was apparently enough to garner the ’80s rapper and *Law and Order: SVU* cop an invite earlier this semester to keynote “Teach. Think. Play.,” a Teachers College conference about popular culture in the classroom.

As it turned out, Ice had plenty of common-sense educational theory to impart upon the eager group. Much of his wisdom stems from time spent playing sensei to a bunch of elite prep-school kids in *Rap School*, one of VH1’s latest variations on the fish-out-of-water reality TV premise. The idea was simple: “leave the thug alone with the children.” It was Ice’s chance to educate sheltered, clean-cut kids—and through them, America—about “authentic” hip-hop music and culture, his area of expertise.

Hip-hop, he maintains, broadened his mind as a youth in the streets of Los Angeles—“I couldn’t rap about freedom of speech until I was censored.” It took him to places he’d never been, namely small Midwestern towns filled with rap-loving white kids, an experience he irreverently described as “kind of like Malcolm X going to Mecca.” He remembers taking his fellow gangsters with him. “Look at all this land,” he said to them, gesturing out the windows of the tour bus. “You ain’t got to kill over your block.”

Hip-hop could even help alleviate racism, he said. “The fear is if they listen to us long enough, they’ll like us.”

But as Ice told the grad students, he has no interest in glorifying the lifestyle he led as a West Coast gangsta. He has always infused his music with real life, rapping about AIDS, homelessness, guns, and violence.

And, besides, he hasn’t hustled for awhile. “I pay parking tickets, motherfucker.”

—Sara Vogel
FRANCES HOWORTH

“YOK-na-pa-TAW-pha.” Frances Howorth B’07 politely corrects my pronunciation of Yoknapatawpha County, the fictional setting of many William Faulkner novels, which encompasses Howorth’s hometown of Oxford, Mississippi. This leads to a story. “I ran into a guy the other night at a bar,” she recounts, “and he’s like, ‘Where you from?’ And I told him, and he spent the rest of the night trying to spell Yoknapatawpha for me.” I look at her—strawberry blonde, can’t be less than 5’9”—and decide that the guy in the bar was after more than an A on that night’s spelling test. (Not that she’d fall for it: she’s been happily boyfriended for over two years).

Howorth has just started baking peanut cupcakes, with a recipe from Joy of Cooking, to sell that Saturday night at the Relay For Life. Wearing an apron, she shuffles around the kitchen of her airy suite in 620 W. 116th. Barack Obama stares at me from the New Republic on her cluttered table.

“It’s really an incredible town,” Howorth continues in her light Southern accent. “It actually has a town square, with a courthouse in the middle.” She lived in Jackson, the capital city 150 miles almost due south of Oxford, until she was 10, moving upstate after her uncle’s failed 1996 gubernatorial run. Why did he lose, after serving as secretary of state for 12 years before that? “Democrat.” Spending her formative years in Oxford probably lessened the political, if not the cultural, shock upon her arrival in New York in the fall of 2003. “It’s a pretty liberal place, a college town—a lot of my friends growing up were actually Democrats,” she explained. Another of Howorth’s uncles, also a Dem, is the town’s mayor.

Howorth’s enthusiasm doesn’t slag even when the topic of movies with “Mississippi” in their titles is broached. Her mother’s hometown of Philadelphia, Mississippi was the site of the infamous 1964 murder of the three civil rights workers, Schwerner, Cheney, and Goodman. She hasn’t seen Mississippi Burning, the Gene Hackman film about that event, but recommended Ghosts of Mississippi, which depicts the crusade to reopen the investigation into Medgar Evers’ 1963 murder—a crusade led in part by journalist Jerry Mitchell, whose daughter was Howorth’s schoolmate.

Meanwhile, she offers me sweet tea, homemade with brown-sugar Splenda. “Only I think I put too much in, ‘cause it tastes more like brown sugar than it did last time.”

“I never showed much interest,” she remarks of her father’s architecture. “My dad still tries. He never tried until this year, when he started to realize none of his kids were interested—he was like, ‘Well, okay, it’s Frances.’” Howorth’s mother heads the Mississippi Arts Commission. She’s got a fifteen-year old sister and a nineteen-year old brother, as well as a huge extended family. “I’ve never gone to a bar in Oxford without running into a family member,” she complains.

Here lay part of the impetus for the move to New York: the freedom, the un-Oxfordness. (She certainly could’ve stayed put; in fact, yet another uncle used to be Ole Miss’s director of undergraduate admissions.) But, like Douglas MacArthur,
she shall return. Next year, she intends to apply for a Teach For America-type program in Mississippi, with a master’s degree as part of the deal. The classes take place in Oxford. “But I wouldn’t be living with [my family],” she demurs. “Hopefully, I’ll be teaching in Jackson, so that I won’t make such a weird transition to the Mississippi Delta from New York.” Puzzled, I ask if Jackson is more... but I can’t come up with the right word. She responds, with a laugh: “It’s ‘more...’ than most places in Mississippi.” She pauses. “But compared to New York City...” For once, she can’t find the right word either.

— Marc Tracy

Jonathan Walton, C’08, started writing after a motorcycle accident. “It changed my life,” he says. But if this was a particularly dark time in Walton’s life, he doesn’t let on, mentioning it almost in passing. His characteristic grin never leaves his face as he describes taking out a loan to self-publish his first book, My Release.

Since then, Walton, a creative writing major whose artistic dedication extends far beyond Structure and Style, has published another book and a third, Legal: The First Twenty-One Years, is due out this summer. He’s no stranger to quoting sales figures—his first book sold out of all 2,500 copies—and he “researched publishing in New York” before signing a deal for his second.

Still, Walton has a knack for playing down his accomplishments. Sure, he might have a legitimate public speaking career, and he might have published a few books of poetry, but just ask about the origins of his endeavors. “I never advertised,” he says. “It all started when I was fifteen. I got asked to give a speech.”

The next six years—the “it all” to which Walton refers—have been filled with such speaking opportunities. “I speak one or two times a week wherever in the country I’m called to,” he says. “Last weekend, I was at UVA. Recently, I’ve been at MIT and BU, and before that, a high school graduation.” And that’s just this past month.

Often, his speeches take the form of poetry readings. His poems are driven by complex rhythms and informed by his Christian upbringing. One poem available to listen to on his website is an apology to Anna Nicole Smith for society’s objectification of women; a poem in his second collection, The Second Verse, reads: “Lord lighten the path and turn them to Christ / [...] God, this is my prayer for the Lost of mankind.”

Walton exudes good Southern (he’s from rural Virginia) church-going vibes with his easy smile and gentle courtesy. There’s a passion behind his words, even in casual conversation, that seems fu-ellied by his belief: “Faith is the reason I do what I do—every single thing I do is inspiring.” He points to a bearded and bespectacled old man flipping through the pages of the Times at a neighboring table in the Butler lounge. “That old man over there is inspiring,” he says. “Poetry is a gift from God—every person is a gift from God.” He takes a long pause, evaluating. Eventually, he speaks. “Poetry is what I was put here to do.”

Though he’s obviously worked hard to get where he is, Walton has a self-effacing modesty regarding his achievements. He was “put here” to write poetry and “asked to give a speech.” He is guided by the Fates, by a higher power. And his public engagements are not for the sake of self-advancement: “All the speeches I give now are for World Vision events, working on rehabilitating child soldiers in Uganda.”

Walton’s success is not due to chance, but it couldn’t have happened to a nicer guy. Any suspicion of ulterior motives stems from the combination of his success and his genuine decency, an unlikely combination in the sharp-elbowed New York publishing world.
As for where God will lead him after Columbia: “I have three options: perform and write full time, which would be amazing; work for World Vision; or an MFA or Ph.D. program in poetry.” When pressed as to which way the pendulum will swing, Walton laughs. “I’m leaning towards all three right now.”

—Daniel D’Addario

IZUMI DEVALIER

“I pray that North Korea will choose not to test its WMDs this week,” wrote Izumi Devalier, C ’07, in her first e-mail regarding our interview. We did too, in a general humanitarian sense, but Devalier’s prayers were much more immediate: as an associate producer for one of Japan’s four main commercial television stations, action at the Security Council means a day spent interviewing diplomats at the UN, classes be damned. Or she could be sent to Kentucky to cover a plane crash, or to a small town in Missouri where no one voted for mayor. All in a day’s work.

She was about as bemused by it as we were.

At the end of her junior year, Devalier, raised in Tokyo and Kyoto by a Japanese mother and a French-American father, decided she didn’t want to go home to Japan for the summer. After trolling the Japanese help-wanted ads, she found an opening at Nippon Television’s New York news bureau (most people in Japan have no cable and only five channels, including NTV), and landed an internship within days of faxing them her résumé. Two weeks later, she was promoted to associate producer because she needed a UN press pass, and, as she puts it, “they couldn’t just write down ‘intern.’”

Life at a small-staffed bureau offers a lot of variety. Her stories usually have some sort of Japanese angle, loosely defined: the comeback of the roller derby, a hot dog eating championship, pole dancing classes, the Union Square pillow fight. NTV also covers major hard news in North and South America, and because Devalier’s got a penchant for diplomacy (her political science thesis is on Japan’s entry into World War II), her boss often sends her to the UN. It’s a good conversation starter, but after a few hotel stakeouts in the freezing cold, waiting for this ambassador or that minister, the job sounds a little less glamorous. She’s come to dread watching CNN—when a big story breaks, “I know I’m gonna get a call in 50 minutes.”

Devalier, who favors sweater vests for the office and hoodies in her EC highrise, likes talking about her job. It takes a while to tease out the rest of her story, from her stint as the only girl in All-Star Little League (She went to Nationals in Tokyo, an experience she describes as “the highlight of [her] youth.”) to her gigs around the city drumming in a band called The Midnight Hours (Devalier calls it 60’s Southern rock; a bandmate dubs it “red dirt from New York City”).

She’s also a certified noodle chef and trained beer server, having worked as a waitress in Tokyo’s Roppongi nightlife district (“The perfect ratio of body to head is 8 to 2.”) Devalier’s suitemates reap the benefits of her experiments in the kitchen, including Top Chef-inspired entrees and a series of flavored chiffon cakes.

Most Columbians, however, know Devalier as a diplomat in her own right. Having served as student-body president in her senior year at St. Paul’s School in New Hampshire, she’s led the financial aid campaign on campus for two years as CCSC VP Policy, liaising between the councils, student groups, and administrators to squeeze more money out of the process. She’s an insider, not one to picket on Low Steps or posit demands. Her understanding of group dynamics, aside from her athletic, musical, and gustatory talents, is what makes her a good journalist. Devalier isn’t sure what she wants to do with the rest of her life. Maybe that’s why she’s been able to do so much.

—Lydia DePillis and Hannah Goldfield
Told Between Puffs

In which our hero strides in the sun.

Why is it that homecomings always seem to possess a note of the elegiac? The actual—the chicken come to roost, the return to what had been, the prodigal son—would seem to connote happiness and joy, certainly, and perhaps even relief. Like a chilled Chardonnay or a particularly skilled vixen (the perpetual quest for the apocalyptic orgasm being one hobby-horse Verily will never cease to mount), the homecoming should make one, if briefly, forget the altogether limited nature of one’s time, whether on earth or even, say, at college. Yet the homecoming always produces a sense of finiteness. Perhaps nostalgia, a feeling that accompanies the homecoming as surely as the sun sets over those clapboard houses across the Hudson, is to blame. For all nostalgia is false nostalgia, a fact we must constantly relearn; and every time we relearn it, we despair as though learning it for the very first time.

Such thoughts are not merely the consequence of Verily’s need to refill his Wellbutrin. The main provocation of Verily’s grimness— “depression” is so Sopranos season one; “boredom” is so season four; and “ennui” is so Yale—was a missive that he received from his editor regarding his pathetic, putrid, and altogether pesky collection of words that The Blue and White displays each issue for the edification of its eight regular writers and their parents.

“I don’t need another tantrum, Verily,” the electronic-mail message began, in a prose unmistakably feminine and Christian, which indicated to Verily, if nothing else, that a change of command had taken place. “Remember when we told you you’d have to start writing on a computer?” (Verily hadn’t yet realized that he could still pen his dispatches literally, with a calamus crafted from rhinoceros ivory, and have an intern transcribe; he took the iMac that had been offered up like a heifer and hurled it halfway across Avery library.) “So, just so you know, ‘Told Between Puffs’ will appear in the May issue on page 11, and not in the back of the magazine, as it has been this past year.” The message was signed— if pressing one’s fingers on identical square buttons may be called signing—and contained the addendum, “P.S.: Please do not print any of this in your column. Find a different way to fill 600 words.” Consider the preceding an object lesson: this, boys and girls, is what you get for neglecting to initial your post-script.

Verily does not know what quite to make of this homecoming to his once and perhaps future prominent spot in the pecking order. Verily used to be a star, a draw—what else were people looking to read in what Verily overheard one insufferable first-year call The B Dubs? But as the formidable journal you hold in your hands grew, Verily was escorted to the back of the book. (Excepting a few issues a year ago, when Verily was escorted to a CIA black site in—so he guesses from the way the natives’ cabbage was pickled—Moldova, and consequently did not appear in the magazine at all.) Glancing occasionally at the 39 other pages, sometimes as enigmatic and impenetrable as Hitchcock’s same-numbered steps, Verily noticed differences—perhaps even good differences.

There are probably people worth crediting for this. But, frankly, the scaffolding outside Butler has been up for too long, artificially shading Verily’s stone perch, and he intends to remove himself forthwith from its coolness and walk in the sun, smoking the cloves that have played his Sancho Panza to these many years, before it sets. Such are the consolations of the Columbian steeling himself for a summer—and more?—without Columbia.

—Verily Veritas, who is M.T., and has been I.C., C.S., M.M., C.V., A.V., and B.D.L., but who is forever
Richard John Neuhaus is Columbia’s intellectual superstar you’ve never heard of. You’ve never written a paper for him, you’ve never checked his CULPA reviews, and you’ve certainly never shown up late to one of his classes. This is because Neuhaus’s lectures are delivered not from a Hamilton Hall lectern, but from the pulpit in St. Paul’s Chapel. Every Sunday for the past four spring semesters, Father Neuhaus has made his way uptown from his parish on Fourteenth Street to say the 5 p.m. Mass at Columbia.

“Lecture” is a loose way of describing what Neuhaus does—but not that loose. The Catholic priest is an orator of Roman proportions—with a stentorian voice, perfect sense of timing, and a knack for rhetorical flourish. The sermons themselves are peppered through with references to great works of theology, philosophy, and literature—classic and contemporary. All are variations on a theme: “the attractiveness of the high adventure of Catholic faithfulness,” as he puts it. They are recorded and archived on the Columbia Catholic Ministry’s web site for the greater listening public.

Neuhaus’s relationship with Columbia is also a variation on a theme: his status as a maverick intellectual. When New York magazine named the top five intellectual movers and shakers in Manhattan, they grouped Father Neuhaus with Jeffrey Sachs, Columbia physics professor Brian Greene, NYU law professor Noah Feldman, and CUNY philosopher Saul Kripke; Neuhaus is the only one who does not teach at a university. Neuhaus is famous not only as speaker, but as the Editor-in-Chief of First Things, which is—as the New York Times put it, and First Things re-put it on their subscription cards—“the spiritual nerve center of the new conservatism.” The monthly magazine of religion, politics, and culture is indeed the place to find top-notch conservative thought presented for a general reading audience. This is the work of impresario-Neuhaus. Once a far left-wing Lutheran minister, he re-emerged in the 1990s as a conservative Catholic priest and founder of First Things.

Both inside and outside its pages, he has mounted a paradigm attack against secularism in politics. Each issue of First Things contains a near 10,000 word “Public Square” column (which reads more like a blog), in which Neuhaus unleashes his biting wit on all issues theologico-politico-cultural. His words are read in the White House, where Neuhaus has been called on occasion to consult with President Bush. Academics marvel at the breadth and depth of his reading across the humanities and social sciences. “Someday when the rest of us are forgotten, Father Neuhaus will be remembered,” Princeton political philosopher Robert George told me. “He’ll be remembered because he really did revolutionize thought about religion in public life.” He’s chatted about Nietzsche and Schopenhauer over dinner with Pope John Paul II. Yet, for all his influence in the world of ideas, Neuhaus has never been a member of the predominantly secular academy.

Many Lit Hum and CC students have an uncomfortable memory regarding religion—realizing that others in the class took the Bible a lot more or less seriously than they did; not quite getting the point of St. Augustine’s pear obsession; tip-toeing lightly around Darwin. For Father Neuhaus, religion should not be treated differently than other academic disciplinary approaches to discovering truth. He insisted
on the importance of investing yourself in whatever text you are studying, no matter the type: “That’s as true if you’re Jewish and you’re reading the Gospel of Matthew,” he explained. “But that’s where, of course, it becomes problematic. It doesn’t become problematic if you said what I just said about Dostoyevsky, or about Newton, okay? But, it becomes problematic if you talk about religion, because immediately people are afraid that you are trying to convert them, or that there’s even a sense of disloyalty to your commitments—say if you were not a Christian.” “This ought not to be the case,” he concluded. “We have to remove this sense of flashing yellow lights, if not red lights, around anything called religion.” Easier said than done.

First Things’ First: Why First Things?

If you define a university as a place where scholarly conversation takes place at the appropriate depth,” theologian, former New York University professor, and frequent First Things contributor Father Edward Oakes told me, “then First Things is like a university ‘outside the walls.’” The waiting room at the journal’s Fifth Avenue office felt like a newsroom—except replace “news” with “dense treatises on political theory.” People bustled in and out of their offices, and I could hear muffled editorial chatter. The walls were covered with photographs of academic elites attending the scores of conferences First Things has sponsored. There were certainly a good more Roman collars than might grace the walls of, say, Columbia’s Earth Institute—but the atmosphere was unmistakably academic. I thumbed through some of Neuhaus and friends’ books, which were propped up in magazine racks near the entrance.

Father Neuhaus poked his head out of a doorway, approached me, and shook my hand. He was wearing a bright red cardigan sweater over his clerical shirt, which gave him an odd, grandfatherly aura. He ushered me into his massive office, where a good deal more books jammed the shelves behind his desk. This was the place, I presumed, where Neuhaus thought, argued, and wrote about...well, first things.

And what, exactly, is a first thing? The inaugural issue of First Things, March 1990 published a statement of purpose entitled, “First Things First.” “First Things means,” wrote Neuhaus and the editors, “first, that the first thing to be said about public life is that public life is not the first thing.” This was a tortuously witty statement, but not a new one. That tongue-twisting manifesto reiterates the central notion of Neuhaus’s seminal book, The Naked Public Square, in which he argued against the prevailing exclusion of religious arguments in public life. This attacks not only contemporary intuitions about the separation of church and state, but also basic presumptions introduced by the overwhelmingly influential political philosopher John Rawls. In 1973’s A Theory of Justice (now a Contemporary Civilization staple) Rawls argued that ultimate questions about the universe—such as those addressed by religion—could and should be separated totally from politics, and could be replaced by arguments that appealed to a “public reason” that was rationally
acceptable to everyone regardless of their religious commitments.

Neuhaus’s response to this line of thought is deceptively simple (although it takes more of a socio-historical than philosophical approach). Given that moral matters are inevitably discussed in politics, moral questions must be asked in public debate. But moral questions, Neuhaus argued, cannot be separated from more fundamental questions about the meaning of life—and, in America, the answers are usually found in religious traditions.

If religion is banished behind that unbreachable wall dividing church and state, according to Neuhaus, a state ideology of secular humanism replaces religion in providing answers to the Big Questions. “Secular humanism,” Neuhaus concluded with a flourish, “in this case, is simply the term unhappily chosen for ersatz religion.”

While this at first may sound like typical Christian Right rhetoric, draped in elegant lines of thinking, Neuhaus does want not to bring the evangelical language of private revelation to the public square, nor does he think it wise to assume a common religious heritage that can immediately be employed as an acceptable public morality. Rather, Neuhaus insists that we must return to a robust public debate on fundamental moral issues that does not exclude the discussion of the basic religious tenets that shape people’s worldviews.

Neuhaus’s critique of Rawlsian secular liberalism is, in fact, shared by many other secular liberals. “I think this idea of a neutral form of public reasoning that Rawlsian liberals adopt is wrong,” said Philip Kitcher, John Dewey Professor of Philosophy and the Chair of Contemporary Civilization, who told me he had not read Neuhaus’s works. “I think that people who find themselves wanting to insert religious texts and religious authority into public life are in fact recognizing something correct: namely, the non-neutrality of secular reason.” Under optimal conditions, Kitcher believes, the first things of secularism would beat out the first things of other competing worldviews. “I mean my own view is that the secular standards are the right ones. And, what that means is a return to thinking about what Neuhaus obviously calls ‘first things,’ what I would call problems about human meaning and community.”

When Neuhaus and his editors wrote of “first things,” they meant to imply their belief “that there are first things, in the sense of first principles, for the right ordering of public life”—that there are correct answers to these questions of morality. This strain of thought culminated in a rousing, forceful statement of what it might mean to discuss “first things”—and thereby what this magazine took as its mission: the defense of a true pluralism in which the deepest differences are given genuine scrutiny. “Against the monism that denies the variety of truth, against the relativism that denies the importance of truth, and against the nihilism that denies the existence of truth, we intend to nurture a pluralism that revives and sustains the conversation about what really matters, which is the truth.”

Truth is something of a lofty goal. “Why does anybody set out to do something that seems to have entailed in it a certain amount of chutzpah?” Neuhaus laughed avuncularly when I asked him about First Things’ purpose. “Why does the world need to know what I or my friends think about anything?”

Neuhaus and his friends at First Things (they tend to be Catholic, Jewish, or of various Protestant hues) have spent 17 years discussing the meaning of life—from a perspective friendly to traditional religion—and how it affects contemporary politics. This engagement with religion and politics at their most primal levels has led to its fair share of controversy. In 1996, the magazine published a symposium entitled “The End of Democracy?” which included essays
by Princeton political philosopher Robert George, Nixon henchman-turned-evangelist Charles Colson, and Judge Robert Bork, challenging what the writers saw as the usurpation of democratic moral deliberation by the Supreme Court. “The Federal District Court’s decision favoring doctor-assisted suicide, we said, could be fatal not only to many people who are old, sick, or disabled, but also to popular support for our present system of government,” read the unsigned introduction to the symposium. “The question here explored, in full awareness of its far-reaching consequences, is whether we have reached or are reaching the point where conscientious citizens can no longer give moral assent to the existing regime.”

It sounded dangerously close to a call for revolution, and resulted in New York Times coverage, widespread criticism of First Things as extremist, and the resignation of two prominent neoconservatives—historian Gertrude Himmelfarb and political theorist Walter Berns—from the magazine’s editorial board. At Columbia’s “Religion and Liberalism” conference last year, hosted by the American Studies department, Mark Lilla, now a visiting professor of religion, criticized the 1996 symposium as an example of political theology, simply unacceptable to those interested in the survival of liberal democracy.

On the flip side, First Things has also received ecstatic praise for its coverage of issues rarely found elsewhere. “It’s a journal that takes seriously issues of religion and public life that go beyond the constitutional questions,” George explained. Father Oakes pointed to the journal’s supporters and frequent readers who come from the opposing camp. “I know a professor at Harvard,” he said, “who says ‘I always read First Things right away each month, when it comes in the mail, because it’s my bath of sanity.’”

God, Country, Core

First Things is not the only, or even the primary place where first things are discussed. This is—I’m sure no Columbia student needs reminding—the domain of the traditional liberal arts education, where fundamental issues about human life are discussed in relation to literature, history, philosophy, and religion.

But if First Things is a “university ‘outside-the-walls,’” then, its relationship to universities inside-the-walls tends to toward the skeptical. As Editor-in-Chief of the foremost first-things-discussing magazine, Neuhaus plays a prominent role as critic of the nation’s foremost first-things-discussing institutions.

His criticism of the secularized academy has been most systematically directed at Christian universities (e.g. Georgetown, or Southern Methodist). In 1996, Neuhaus published a series of reflections on what it might mean to call a university’s identity “Christian.” In the April 2007 issue of First Things, he repeated these themes in an article entitled “A University of a Particular Kind.”

Reflecting on Harvard’s removal of “Pro Christo et Ecclesia” (“For Christ and the Church”) from its seal a century ago, Neuhaus wrote, “When Harvard changed its seal and the constituting conviction reflected in that seal, it did not become more of a university.” It became, rather, “a secular university.” And, as you could expect, he reminded his readers: “Secular is not a synonym for neutral.” To Neuhaus, a Christian university aims for something quite different than the secular university, and to lose sight of that fact is to lose sight of the Christian intellectual tradition.

The Christian university’s imitation of secular higher education entails casting off theological commitments that connect every discipline to the central purpose of life. When universities like Harvard shed their religious ideals and later their religious trappings, they not only become differently orient-ed universities; because of modern specialization, where everyone must focus on their own tiny niche, they can also become disoriented universities, without interest in truth. “Secular is not a word referring to something substantive,” Neuhaus explained. “In our culture it’s a word that suggests almost anything except being specifically religious or Christian.”
Neuhaus’s critique here is the corollary of a broader dissatisfaction with the direction higher education has taken over the last few centuries. Mark Lilla offered a brief rundown of this historical shift and its discontents. “Western universities developed out of the Christian churches,” he explained. “I think it is an achievement in the West that scientific and humanistic investigations were eventually spun off and liberated from one particular doctrinal line on them.” But this liberation can have its downsides.

“Central to a reflective life has to be an awareness of how the things we reflect about connect to each other and to our objects of highest concern.” Lilla noted. “The only way to address those connections is to have a full awareness of the alternatives, which requires exploring those alternatives without taking a dogmatic position on them. And that seems to me the task—not always fulfilled—of a secular university.”

To a certain extent, Neuhaus’s position is not that different than Lilla’s; Neuhaus is not opposed to thoughtful intellectual discussion in a non-theological setting. (Indeed, he awards many fellowships to work at First Things to Ivy League graduates and is close friends with professors at numerous prestigious universities; “I really like Princeton,” he told me. “I’ve sometimes thought—in a purely whimsical, frivolous way—had my life trajectory been different I would have liked to have gone to Princeton”). He views the university like the public square: it is the lack of serious discussions about matters of first things that he finds so destructive in the secular university. This serious discussion—especially regarding religion—can perhaps be found in the Columbia Core Curriculum, regardless of the professor’s theological persuasion. Recounting his students’ excitement in realizing how Augustinian they actually were, Lilla—who is not religious—argued that religious texts only become a problem if they’re treated as somehow alien, requiring serious consideration only because they are “other.” “You don’t want to go into class and say, well today we’re going to bring in religious thought, as though it centered on things totally different from non-religious thought,” he said. “We’re talking about the same problems in all of these books, but we come up with different answers to them. And Robert Miller, an Assistant Professor of Law at Villanova, frequent contributor to First Things, and former Lit Hum instructor took a similar approach in his classes. “I approached the works by asking, and having my students ask, what the work tells us about living a good human life,” Miller said. “Achilles, for example, sits on the shores of the Troad and asks whether it’s better for him to have a short life of outstanding success on the battlefield that will make him long remembered, or a long life of quiet enjoyment at home in Phthia with wife and family. I wanted my students to ask themselves what Homer thought about this choice, why he thought some human lives were better than others, what things he thought we ought to pursue and what he thought we ought to avoid. Religious answers to these kinds of questions are legitimate and reasonable ones, and I think students should think about them along with other possible answers.”

Neuhaus’s recommendations for an undergraduate education—be it religious or secular—are that it be geared towards wisdom. He puts forward the standard argument for a core curriculum, encompassing—as Matthew Arnold said and Father Neuhaus likes to quote—“the best of what has been thought and said,” in order to introduce them into the great tradition of the intellectual life in all of its facets.

Unlike many of the most strident defenders of the canon and critics of the current academic climate, Neuhaus does not assume that intellectual develop-
ments such as postmodernism and post-structuralism are necessarily tragic mistakes that warrant no serious discussion; as with first things in general, there must always be discussion. In fact, in Neuhaus’s respect for tradition, he shares a good deal in common with many postmodernists. “If the word had not been so terribly abused,” Neuhaus said, “I would call myself a postmodernist. I would say at its heart it is an understanding of the ways in which human life is narrative and is narratable and our understandings of reality are inevitably entangled with the various narratives that are, quote, privileged, whether by intention or by life’s circumstance. That kind of approach to human knowledge is very valuable.”

It’s hard not to warm up to a clergyman who says, “if this is disciplined and kept within a conversation—if you read, say, Derrida on the one hand and Thomas Aquinas on the other—you can have a really interesting intellectual adventure.”

In this approach to wisdom and tradition—contra both the anti-intellectualism of many evangelical Christians and the dogmatic rationalism of many secularists—Neuhaus does not assume there is a dividing line between faith and reason. This is what he sees as the message good Catholic universities have to impart to the academic community. He cited Fides et Ratio—“Faith and Reason, it’s called”—an encyclical of John Paul II, as an articulation of the idea “that both faith and reason, that the two wings, are necessary to ascend to what is the goal of an education and indeed the goal of a life, and that is wisdom.”

Religion in the Curriculum

Neuhaus’s misgivings about the way religion is discussed goes right to the heart of a much larger debate about how “religion” ought to be treated as academic subject matter. While it is inevitable that considerations of the power of religious ideas will be savored as long as the “Great Books” are savored, that debates about the existence of God will continue as long as philosophy continues, and that core tenets of Christian theology will need to be understood as long as Milton and Blake continue to be read, one facet of modern intellectual discussion of religion is a radical innovation: the religion department.

Once again, Lilla proffered a CliffsNotes version. “It starts in the nineteenth century in Germany,” he narrated, as though we were sitting around the lampest (or coolest!) campfire ever, “with the assumption that religion needs to be studied from a humanistic point of view. Our subject is not God, our subject is people who believe in God. Now, in studying people who believe in God, we can then end up talking about God. But the religious studies approach is through human experience.” This essentially social-scientific approach to the study of religion is the working thesis of most religion departments at major universities (including Columbia’s), and it rankles Neuhaus. “It assumes, among its other problems, that there

Why Columbia?

Father Neuhaus’s role at Columbia began with the Polish Dominicans. “I had these longstanding connections with the Polish Dominicans, going back to this seminar that we’ve been running for 15 years in Krakow,” Neuhaus told me. “I talked to Cardinal O’Connor about their interest in establishing a house of studies here in New York, in connection with a parish.” That parish was 114th Street’s Notre Dame, and the Dominicans were appointed to the chaplaincy at Columbia. Since then, Neuhaus has been a spring-time visitor to the Columbia Catholic Ministry.

Father Jacek Buda, Columbia’s Catholic Chaplain, goes back a long way with Neuhaus. He first met him in 1993, at the inaugural Tertio Millennio Seminar on the Free Society. The seminar—focused on the workings of a democratic society and geared to bring together American students and students from former Soviet Bloc countries—has been taught by Neuhaus, along with philosopher Michael Novak, papal biographer George Weigel, and others. “Ever since, we’ve been friends,” said Buda. “I find him a very remarkable man.”
is a genus called ‘religion’, of which there are then species—Christianity, Buddhism—which is a very dubious proposition. Very dubious proposition."

This view—that religion, by its nature, is unwelcome to empirical study—has been bandied about the pages of *First Things*, among other places, for some time, and it receives its strongest (and most recent) treatment in David Bentley Hart’s “Daniel Dennett Hunts the Snark” (*First Things*, January 2007). The piece, written in the Eastern Orthodox theologian’s unmistakably erudite prose, is a 7,000-word conceit that likens philosopher and super-atheist Dennett’s attempts to diagnose the anthropological and psychological origins of religion to Lewis Carroll’s story about the hunting of the non-existent “snark.” For the snark was a boojum, you see. There is no such object called “religion” which we can study the way we study atoms and elephants, argues Hart. Rather, there are many varying practices that get roughly grouped under a category, “religion.”

“There can be no science of the hard empirical variety,” Hart explains, “if one’s object of study is already an act of interpretation, contingent on a collection of purely arbitrary reductions, dubious categorizations, and biased observations.” The academic study of religion is not empirical science; instead, it is a form of hermeneutical interpretation. “If a faith claims that there is a ‘method’ of experiencing God or knowing God,” wrote Hart in a later defense of his article, “then the only way to test that truth is to employ that method, to see what it yields, and so on.”

But as for religion departments, the historical study of religion often purports to be no more “scientific” than any sort of history, or indeed any sort of liberal-arts scholarship. Paul Griffiths, Chair of Catholic Studies at Iowa State, pointed out in *First Things* that literary theorist Stanley Fish can know what it was like for Milton to hold Protestant theological tenets as actual known truths about God without himself agreeing with these tenets. It’s the difference between sympathy and empathy: understanding how someone feels versus feeling it yourself. If Fish can utilize this method of seeing through Milton without agreeing with Milton to produce groundbreaking literary criticism—Fish’s *Surprised by Sin* was a landmark in Milton studies—then why can’t religion departments?

Neuhaus, though, thinks that in practical terms, religion is more likely to get a fair hearing if it’s taught by partisans at variance than by detached observers in agreement: “you have to have people who are immersed in and committed to the tradition—not to religion in general—but to the specific tradition of faith and practice and belief.” Both Neuhaus and Oakes were quick to point to the Religious Studies Department at the University of Virginia of ten years ago. “It was a remarkable department of religious studies,” Neuhaus said, “with serious Thomists, serious Buddhists, serious Reformation scholars, serious Jewish scholars, each of whom were immersed in and unapologetically advancing not simply the proposition that their subject matter was interesting, but that it was engaged in the pursuit of truth.” But UVA (along with Notre Dame and Duke, according to Neuhaus) is the exception, not the rule: “I’m afraid that in most universities today, that’s not the case.”

But Barnard professor of religion Randall Balmer, who is also a recently-ordained Episcopal priest, balked at the idea that the confessionally-committed teach religion best. “Well,” he laughed, “by that logic, only a Marxist could teach Marxism, which I think is just silly on the face of it.” And for Philip Kitcher, “fair and balanced” means dealing with the historical and social facts, or thinking philosophically from a detached perspective. “I think it’s very difficult to do both—to be involved spiritually and treat the subject matter academically,” he said.

Father Edward Oakes has by far the most author-
ity to speak on this subject; he’s taught religious studies at NYU and at Regis University, a Catholic university. He now teaches theology proper at Mundelein Seminary in Chicago. At NYU, he saw the potential of historical analysis to inspire deeper theological questions: “What I discovered was,” said Oakes, “that I was getting them interested in theology simply by teaching it historically and not confessionally.”

As far the ideal discussion of religion in a secular setting, Father Oakes pointed to Jaroslav Pelican, the great historian of Christian dogma who taught at Yale. “He said roughly this,” Oakes told me. “I’m going give you a course on the house I live in. I am a Christian, and a Christian Church has certain features of its house that are not found in other houses. I’m inviting you in, and all you have to do in the course is to describe the house I live in. You are not expected to move in. Furthermore, you are not to trash the place as you walk through it. You simply have to describe it.” I think that was a very fair way of dealing with a secular university like Yale, where the stress is placed on knowing religions on a phenomenological level. But in proceeding that way, I wouldn’t be surprised that Pelican made people see—whether they were Christian or not to begin with—the depth of the intellectual achievement that’s found in the history of Christian thought.”

Theology Outside The Academy

Regardless of the position one takes on the possibility of studying religion objectively, there is little likelihood that “theology” will find itself back in the secular university course catalogues anytime soon. The question for many then becomes where to find the debates that take religion—and especially theology—most seriously.

The answer here was near unanimous: think tanks and magazines. Stating that “Something has gone dreadfully wrong in the life of the university,” Neuhaus told me, “I’d say in the last 25 years, in terms of public intellectual discourse, this has really been the era of the rise of the think tanks.”

This rise of the think tank and the journal, of privately sponsored lectures and institutes, lies at the confluence of everything that Neuhaus has thought and written about. They represent a vibrant response to an academic life that is divorced from popular debate, and so surely something Neuhaus could get behind. But think tanks and journals can also be seen as the intellectually insulated result of the disappearance of serious religious discussion from mainstream secular discourse. While it may be “demonstrably false” that religious thinking is absent from public life (as Randall Balmer put it), it is true that the intellectual underpinnings of Americans’ religious commitments receive very little widespread engagement.

At least, this is how Wayne Proudfoot—a prominent philosopher of religion and member of Columbia’s Religion Department—views the shift. Proudfoot remembers a time in America when theologians like Reinhold Niebuhr, Karl Barth, and Paul Tillich were featured on the cover of Time, wrote widely read books published by popular presses, and gave public lectures attended not just by Christians and not just by the theologically inclined but by the generally intellectually curious. “Why aren’t there theologians who are household names like that?” Proudfoot asked. “You could say, ‘Well those were great thinkers and we don’t have any of these thinkers anymore.’ But, that’s not really it.” Rather—and in only the past half-century or so—theology has largely disappeared from the public intellectual debate.

The insular nature of the think tank/journal scene is problematic in Philip Kitcher’s eyes. “I resist this think tank, journal stuff,” he said, “because I think there’s a certain sense in which some of the issues that are being debated there are over. They’re closed.” For Kitcher, the insular nature of journals allows them to go on taking seriously discussions which he sees as having been conclusively decided in the academy. “We’re not going to have a debate about religion; the point is to debate about what we do after religion. That seems to me to be the real issue. That’s because I think there’s this very thorough chain of reason-
ing that should turn us all into secularists of some stripe. And then the question is how to work out secularism.”

While universities may be missing the big questions, journals and think tanks are pondering endlessly about non-questions. So, Kitcher thinks, the answers remains in the realm of the academy, not outside of it; the trick is to make the word “secular” substantial in a way that Neuhaus claimed it wasn’t. “We need to find ways of giving people meaning and giving them a sense of mattering,” Kitcher said, “even though this isn’t grounded in some transcended being, or some mythic covenant, or some promise of salvation. The thing to do is for people like me to work out the details of this. This is continuous with things that James and Dewey wanted to figure out a century ago. Philosophy’s sort of got derailed from that, but I think that it’s the issue for our times—working out secularism.”

But for those who are not convinced that robust theological discussion has been put out to pasture, there is probably no better place to be than First Things. “There’s no question that First Things provides a unique forum for me and many other people who publish there,” said Robert Miller. “The audience of First Things is very intellectual, mostly college and university professors, who are interested in sophisticated presentations of questions on religion, culture and public policy from a point of view favorable to traditional religious beliefs though not sectarian to any particular religion.” Edward Oakes concurred. “Of course,” he told me, “no journal of opinion can determine the answers its readers will arrive at in a free conversation, but the best ones can certainly determine the topics of the conversation and the terms of the debate.”

Drawing on his experience with students across the globe—including at Columbia University—Neuhaus himself writes of “a large cohort of exceedingly bright and persuasively assertive young Christians and religiously serious Jews who are determined to make their mark in transforming our intellectual and political culture,” and remarks, “There is no little gratification in discovering that, in case after case, they are avid readers of First Things.”

After we finished our discussion, Father Neuhaus led me into a nearby office to meet the rest of the First Things staff. “We’ve just solved the problems of higher education,” he announced with a note of grandeur, “and now this man is going to write it all up for The Blue and White.” The editors looked skeptical. ✩
Love (and Death) in the Time of Facebook

How a silly little networking site deals with life’s serious milestones.

BY JULI WEINER

Thanks to the continued efforts of Mark Zuckerberg et al, and Facebook’s newest addition, the Network Page, there are now statistical breakdowns of the relationship statuses of Columbians with Facebook profiles. According to the site, seven percent of people are listed as “Married” and two percent are listed as “Engaged.” Though both titles are often used to signify what are in fact “BFF” relationships, they are also used by actually married and engaged couples.

Take, for instance, actual married person Sharon Eastlund. “I joined Facebook begrudgingly,” she says. “I’m not a huge Facebook person.” Eastlund’s mini-feed corroborates the claim: activity is recorded roughly every two weeks. She tries off-hand to recall the information listed on her profile. “I just realized we have our phone number. But I’m not worried, it’s not like we have our address.”

What is striking about Eastlund’s Facebook profile is not her contact information (or lack thereof). Rather, it is the evidence that she is part of the first generation of Facebookians to unironically commemorate life milestones on their profiles. Eastlund is listed as a member of the group “Young, Married, & Loving Every Minute!” whose description makes a point to distinguish their marriages from “Facebook-marriages” (which, it should be noted, they are not “hating on”). “This is the place for those of us that are actually married and enjoying every moment of married life!” There are five members, all female. “Most of our friends aren’t married, they’re still seniors in college,” Eastlund says. She graduated from Cornell, where her husband Paul (Networks: Cornell and Google) was in graduate school.

There are dozens of married couples in the Columbia network, cheapening our “It’s Complicated”s with their marital bliss, trivializing our photoessays of pilgrimages to 1020 with professional wedding and baby photos. Columbia senior Devo- rah’s profile picture captures the Hora dance at her wedding reception. Debbie, a Columbia alum, has a similar photo: bride and tuxedo-ed groom in a giant white heart-shaped chair. In front of them sits a basket of challah and a wonderful life together. Columbia grad student Noah has three albums dedicated to his friends’ weddings and one commemorating his own bachelor party in Atlantic City. Matt, another married senior, recently
received a Facebook gift from his better half: a sock draped over a doorknob “From Rachel” sits proudly atop his wall. But be warned: Matt’s groups include “I kinda hate my life” and “Legalize!”

And then there are the ironically married. Columbia senior Paul, something of an archetype of the fake-married Facebooker, lists his activities as “alcohol-induced vapid narcissism” and “Sigma Phi Epsilon.” Carly, a Columbia sophomore, is looking for “dating” and “A Relationship” — presumably quite a blow to her Facebook wife. Group after group decries the Facebook nuptial. “Facebook Marriage: Making My Respect for Your Sense of Humor Drop Since 2005” and its three members rally against the fake-marrieds. Their tirade reads: “Hey, we’re not married in real life, so it would be, like, deep irony or something if we said we were married on Facebook! LOL!!!!!” The stakes in the battle of irony vs. earnestness have never been graver.

For the Eastlunds, Facebook functions as a declarative statement of their marital status and a perpetual birth announcement for their two-month-old daughter, Ruthie. “Facebook was a way for me to show off the baby pictures,” she explains, maintaining that this is merely a consequence of having both a newborn and a Facebook account. “We wouldn’t have sent a birth announcement out anyway — too lazy. Because of Facebook, everyone just knew automatically.”

Like any book, Facebook suspends its characters in the time. Unless her mother updates her photos, Ruthie will stay a baby forever, the Maggie Simpson of online social networking. Eastlund’s three photo albums, “Baby Pictures,” “Week 6,” and “Two Months,” chart her daughter’s short life, beginning in the delivery room. There’s Baby Ruthie and Grandma, Ruthie and Aunt Ellen, even one labeled, “Mom and Ruthie Post Labor.” The photographs are disarming and exquisitely personal, out of place in the sea of most other Facebook albums, which tend to chronicle the adventures of smiling college coeds holding red Solo cups. Commenters from Cornell and Columbia leave well wishes and compliments. “You look way too good to have just given labor,” Sarah Hazlegrove wrote at 7:54 p.m. on March 8, 2007.

“People I haven’t thought about in ten years friended me; now they have a way into my life,” Eastlund says of the effects of Facebook. “Although, one thing I think about is that people who I may not want to know…” she trails off.

“Ex-boyfriends or something... now that’s a little weird.”

At 12:19 a.m. on Thursday, March 22, Mary McGuire wrote a Facebook note entitled “I can’t hide it, now hear my confession...” In the note, she chose 30 friends and wrote each of them a small paragraph thanking them for their friendship, mostly in coded references to inside jokes. In the midst of the robust blurbs and emoticons was a single sentence, dedicated to Friend 20. “What else is there to say? I love you.” Friend 20 is Neha Shende, the Columbia College freshman who was killed in a car accident in over winter break. The present tense of the verbs in her “About Me” section is eerie, the vivaciousness of the content haunting: “I laugh like a goofball... i dance as if i have no other care in the world.” In the same way that Facebookers like Sharon Eastlund can freeze themselves in time, Facebookers like Neha Shende can almost, if only in one insignificant dimension, elude death.

What’s more, Shende’s Facebook profile is a continuous, public elegy. Comments on her wall swell with love and echoing incredulity. “neha, i will always remember u as the bubbly person u were, u will always be in my thoughts and prayers”; “i’ve been with you for 6 years and now you’re gone....”

The Facebook wall is a bizarrely perfect medium for paying respects. Friends can use wall postings not only to share their memories of Shende, but also to write to her, unlike most memorials, eulogies, and funeral services, which rarely address the deceased directly. “Dearest Neha, I may not have known you too well but I assure you, the world will
feel the loss of a vibrant, intelligent young woman. You will be dearly missed. You and your family are in my prayers.”

Nearly identical messages are posted on the profile of Camille Bouquet, a Barnard student who died in late 2005 in a car accident in Tanzania, Africa. A flood of birthday wishes poured in on August 31, 2006, promising the consumption of many drinks in honor of her twenty-first. Her profile picture is conspicuously absent, a large blue question mark in its place. John Butler, a senior at Brown University, was a Facebook friend of Camille. “[Facebook] hasn’t been a huge part of my mourning experience.” Butler told me. “But if anything it has been helpful. I didn’t know Camille in her capacity at Barnard, so it has been nice to see the things her friends wrote about her and in a way to get to know them.” In March, nearly a year and a half after her death in December 2005, Butler posted pictures of Bouquet in an album titled “Tanzania! Tanzania!” He explains, “I like posting pictures of her because I have a lot and I know [her Barnard friends] enjoy it. For them I think it’s probably more valuable, since they weren’t near her when she died, they hadn’t seen her in six months or more, so, seeing pictures to help fill in that six month gap has been helpful for them I think.”

To someone who didn’t know Camille—for example, this reporter—her profile is hypnotic and otherworldly. Viewing it is like seeing something you think you shouldn’t, like disturbing a tomb. “It was [unsettling to see her profile] at first,” Butler says. “But as my grief healed so has my resistance to seeing her profile, in the same way that seeing any other possession of hers might be upsetting. I think the wall-posting thing is interesting. There’s something poetic about it, but I can’t quite put my finger on it.”

On April 16 of this year, Cho Seung-Hui, a student at Virginia Tech, went on a bloody massacre that left 32 students (including himself) and teachers dead. Within hours of the tragedy, over one hundred Facebook groups, most in networks other than VA Tech, had been created in remembrance of the victims. This astonishing speed to Facebook-action lent the phenomenon an almost competitive air. Multiple groups with the same name and graphic were created within minutes of each other. On April 17, the New York Times published an article called “Campus Goes Online for Information and Comfort,” exploring the role of internet in the wake of the tragedy. Courtney Treon, a high school student in Virginia, started a Facebook group called “Prayers for VT.” A VT student blogged about searching for his girlfriend on the day of the shooting and the relief he felt when he finally found her. The Washington Post reported on the multiple Facebook groups that express outrage and hatred toward the gunman, citing “I Hope Cho Seung-Hui Burns in Hell” and “Crazy Bastard Cho Seung-Hui” as examples. The Post also pointed out that the University of Virginia network is home to one of the largest groups, “Hoos supporting the Hokies,” despite the rivalry between the two schools. The description reads, “I know we Hoos have had some issues with our southwestern neighbors, but today we all grieve together.”

Brooklyn Estes, of East Kentucky University, is the creator of another of the largest VA Tech memorial groups, “We are Praying for VA Tech.” “I immediately began a prayer chain via bulletin on MySpace, then created a group on Facebook with the same purpose,” Estes wrote in a Facebook message. “I don’t have any friends at VA Tech, however, being a college student I feel there is a kind of connection between campuses across the nation. Having this Facebook group has helped me tremendously, because it helped me realize that my feelings of shock and despair weren’t abnormal and I wasn’t the only one who felt scared.”
Trial and Error

Frontiers of Science was supposed to revolutionize the Core. What went wrong?
BY CHRISTOPHER MORRIS-LENT

I found Professor of Astronomy David Helfand reclining expansively in his office chair, his generous figure clad in a pink shirt. Wintry midday sunlight streamed in through the window on the top floor of Pupin, his grandfatherly demeanor put me at ease, and we got to talking.

Helfand is best known as the architect and hegemon of Frontiers of Science, the newest and perhaps most radical addition to the Core Curriculum. Though just one of his many accomplishments—his website lists such research interests as “Large-Scale Structure and AGN in Radio Surveys”—Frontiers is, by virtue of its public nature, his largest and most personal project. Since its debut three years ago, the class has become a delight for few, a nuisance for most, and, inarguably, a landmark in the history of Columbian undergraduate education.

I had come to find out why such a grand concept seems to have fallen so flat. The story took two sessions to tell.


Serious work on the course’s current incarnation began nearly two decades later in 2001, when Helfand and his associates began to sketch out preliminary plans for the unique structure and function of the class that would become Frontiers. A year later, they offered six lectures to the general public in Miller Theater to try and prove that such a format could be both engaging and educational. The success of the lectures spurred Helfand to launch a pilot version of Frontiers in 2003, open to all Columbia College undergraduates. In fall 2004, 22 years after a Core science class was but a glimmer in the eye of the original committee, 85 years after the creation of Contemporary Civilization, and 250 years after Columbia’s founding, Frontiers of Science was finally and officially launched. Until at earliest spring 2008, when its initial five-year “lease” expires, the class will be required of all CC freshmen and, for better or worse, a defining part of their academic college experience.

I first encountered Helfand on a humid September morning, when I and a deluge of my first-year peers surged into Miller Theater. I sat in the upper tier of the auditorium, took out my notebook, and watched as a cheerful geezer alighted upon the stage, microphone in hand.

Radiating enthusiasm, he expounded briefly on his class and his philosophy, which kind of got my academic blood flowing. What could be better than learning about four different subjects—astronomy, climatology, evolution, and biodiversity—from four different distinguished lecturers, each illustrating basic and important scientific concepts, all in a single class?

Exposition complete, Helfand segued into the first lecture. Over the next hour, he took us through a myriad of topics, ranging from the scale of the solar system to Beethoven’s ninth symphony. It should have been exhilarating. Instead, I felt faint misgivings. Something seemed fundamentally wrong.

Six days earlier, I had attended my first FoS seminar. Ready to begin my serious academic career, I descended three flights of Pupin stairs, opened a door, and found myself in a small room lacking any source of natural light. An Indian woman ambled to the front of the class, introduced herself and the course, and handed out a syllabus.
“Have you read Habits?” she asked. Silence.

Like all incoming CC freshmen whose last names begin with the letters M through Z, I had received a link to Scientific Habits of Mind, Helfand’s e-book, before school started. Confident in my reasonably solid math background, I gave Habits a skim, realized it was basically a primer in some of the basic concepts covered in AP Statistics, shut the Firefox window, and went for a walk.

So it’s basically a primer on practical statistics, with a little ‘back-of-the-envelope’ section thrown in for variety?” I asked Helfand.

“And graphs. Don’t forget graphs,” he responded quickly.

Helfand’s fingerprints are all over Habits, just as he pervades Frontiers as a whole. Helfand is big on the idea of liberal arts: his educational ideal is the impartation of heuristic knowledge and skills that can be utilized in any life situation. The sequence of classes that he’s taught—The Universal Timekeeper, Beyond the Solar System, and others—reflects this ideal, and Habits’ seven vivacious chapters form the corpus of knowledge that Helfand expects students to understand by the time they graduate Frontiers.

Helfand likens Frontiers to Lit Hum and the rest of the Core in that “the objectives are to emphasize the analytical thinking skills relevant to this kind of human endeavors,” by which he means the sciences. Psychology professor Donald Hood, a Frontiers lecturer who will take over the program next year while Helfand is on sabbatical, added an extra dimension to the course’s raison d’ètre:

“I don’t think you can claim to be an educated person in this day and age without having a fundamental understanding of some of the basics of science and how scientists think. I’ve been in groups of educated people where someone would mention nanotechnology, and only one person would know what that was. These same people—if you asked them who Othello was—they’d see you as dumb and uneducated.”

Columbia isn’t the only school with a core curriculum—the University of Chicago and Harvard have their own versions, and nearly every other undergraduate institution in the nation has some form of distribution requirements. Our Core is not unique in including a science component; UChicago requires all students to take a course in biology and another in chemistry, while Harvard’s seven-pronged core stipulates that students complete one physical science and one life science course. Frontiers distinguishes itself by being the only example of a science course designed to embody the principles of the Core; part seminar, the class meets two hours once a week to discuss the concepts, extrapolations, and implications of the week’s lecture.

The way Helfand and the rest of the Frontiers faculty see it, most students at Columbia and elsewhere enter college with an educational approach retrograde to the liberal arts ideal, in effect restricting the utility of their studies. They largely lack basic scientific skills and mindsets, because they’ve been distracted by the ultra-competitive engendered by SAT prep classes, rabid parents, and increasingly selective college admissions. Frontiers, then, can be seen as an attempt to correct this syndrome,
by encouraging thorough examination of scientific problem-solving instead of rushing through assignments without understanding the underlying concepts.

Helfand was quick to emphasize the importance of the seminar, particularly because of the peer learning they encourage. “The way we select people to come to Columbia is on the basis of their level of competitiveness, and I think this is kind of unfortunate,” he said, without a hint of accusation. “Students should know that working with each other, and teaching each other, is not a bad thing to do. Teaching is by far the best way to see if you actually understand material.” Having bullshit my way through calculus in high school, I can attest to that: it was only a tutoring job last summer that forced me to understand what was going on conceptually.

Stuart Gill is a Columbia Science Fellow, a faculty member hired by the university to conduct research and lead a Frontiers seminar. Several fellows float around Pupin at any given time—my seminar leader is one of them—and, according to Helfand, they’re hired on the basis of their enthusiasm for both doctorate-level research and undergraduate-level pedagogy. Yet another way in which the class unites those on the cutting edge with those who usually sit lowest on the totem pole of a research institution: undergraduates. 

Dr. Gill was nothing if not enthusiastic when discussing his seminar. I asked him if his students learned from or established friendships with one another. He replied: “Yeah, they do. I try to foster that as much as possible. You want to take yourself away from being the holder of the knowledge and get your students to teach each other. That develops over the semester.”

Gill’s vision is appealing, but is it realistic?

As summer gave way to fall, and the effects of time and familiarity eased me and my fellow freshmen into soothing routine, there emerged a most peculiar social hierarchy within my seminar. Arriving bright and early and sitting in the front were the sycophants, diverse in ability, ethnicity, and gender but not in their attitude towards the class. In the middle were the apathetic, studious types who quietly attended to their work, seen but not heard. And behind them, at the back of the bunker-cum-crackerbox that was our seminar classroom, were those who blatantly begrudged the fact that we spent 110 minutes of our lives there every week.

At the head of us all stood our leader, short, stout, and increasingly sullen as the semester dragged on. Seminars consisted of brief recaps of the lectures, esoteric articles that were supposed to complement the lectures, and worksheets that were tangentially related to material covered in the lectures. In Lit Hum I felt attentive and stimulated; during Frontiers I slipped in and out of engagement. I wrote a poem here, gave a bizarre, impromptu presentation on the physics of centrifuging there, and rediscovered calculator games. Peer discussion, bonding, and learning were pretty much nonexistent, the brief lectures my leader gave were eminently uninspiring, and the whole ordeal was infuriatingly simplistic. Nobody expected anything out of anyone.

After the midterm, I stopped attending the lectures at Miller. It wasn’t that they lacked compelling material or articulate delivery, but I felt I was getting just a shadow of the full picture—the lecturers were withholding the lion’s share of their knowledge. It was more or less equivalent to reading a popular science magazine, and I felt that just doing the readings and scrolling through the PowerPoints would be more efficient. 75 minutes a week spent in lecture is a long time.

Pleasant autumn turned to balmy winter, and the end of the semester was upon us. I took the harmless final and flew back to the Motherland to convalesce, confident in my mastery of the dainty material. A few days after Christmas, I got my final grades for my first term of college. Frontiers of Science: B+. I shut my iBook in disgust and went back to bed.
In spite of my awful experience and Helfand’s admission that there is “very little empirical data” to support his view that Frontiers is, by and large, accomplishing the very goals that he wants it to, I found more than enough to make a compelling case for it. Enrollment in science classes is up—for example, the EEB department, which enrolled 112 undergraduates in 2004-5, has averaged 220 students over the past two years. And come June, a study conducted by the psychology department will test students who have and haven’t taken Frontiers. Results are expected to reveal superior quantitative and scientific thinking skills in those who’ve run the gauntlet. As I learned in AP Statistics, correlation doesn’t necessarily imply causation, but it’s not unreasonable to conclude that Frontiers is making a difference.

So how could a class with such noble intentions and widespread success go so drastically wrong for one person? I was stuck in a bad seminar with a bad leader, exposed to almost no material that could be used heuristically (i.e. Habits), and left to languish, though compelled to contribution by the compulsory attendance and class participation policy. My experience felt vapid and forced. For me, Frontiers was dangerously similar to the ultimately useless years of secondary school education that Helfand rightfully criticizes.

I knew from friends and classmates that I wasn’t alone in my disdain for Frontiers, but I was pleasantly surprised to learn of the serious efforts some students had made to reform it. David Gerson, C’08, is an English major who took the class during its inaugural year. Disgruntled by his experience, he wrote an epic two-page e-mail to Helfand with the subject line “The Ugly Duckling,” in which he coherently argued for the implementation of a history-of-science-style course and against the concept of Frontiers. His best line was, “If your aim is to teach us to think like a scientist, why do you not show us how history’s greatest minds thought rather than show us how Columbia’s professors’ minds work?” Helfand responded with a three-page apologia—or, in Gerson’s words, “glorification”—of Frontiers. Gerson visited Helfand’s office and the two embarked on a dialogue that Gerson believes bore little fruit. However, Helfand—a theater major in his undergraduate days—is serving as an advisor for a play that Gerson is directing this semester and Gerson enrolled himself in Helfand’s astronomy class.

Within more official channels, pressure to amend Frontiers has come from CCSC’s Academic Affairs Committee, headed by Alidad Damooei C’09. We sat down to chat a couple weeks ago. Midway through our conversation, he handed me a pamphlet entitled “New Frontiers for Frontiers of Science.” Authored by him and six current freshmen, the six-page pamphlet’s introduction declares, “Student after student had similar thoughts regarding what their experience with the course was lacking.”

It goes on to detail solutions to what the Committee sees as five seminal problems with the course: an overwhelming breadth of information presented, directionless content of discussion sections, inaccessibility of the help room, discrepancy between the difficulty the course readings and that
of the lectures, and Miller Theater—which Damooei
describes as “a good napping space, but not neces-
sarily a good place to learn.”

Damooei was quick to emphasize his intent to
change, rather than eliminate, the class. “Philos-
ophically,” he said, “Frontiers is on the mark; [the
problem is] in the execution.” He also character-
ized the pamphlet, which has an air of authority to
it, as not a “dictum” but an “invitation towards con-
versation.” The Committee has plenty of reason-
able suggestions to make for improving the class,
and the Frontiers faculty is more than willing to
engage in a dialogue. But are they willing to make
fundamental changes to their initial vision?

When I asked Helfand and Hood what they
would do to improve Frontiers, they offered
a litany of flaws that seem trivial, and prescription
for changes that are sensible but also trivial: replac-
ing one unit per semester, breaking down the lec-
tures into two or three different sections, improv-
ing the readings, and so on.

I don’t think we should axe the class. The argu-
ments that Helfand and his underlings presented
to me in support of Frontiers are utterly compel-
ling, the rhetorical cocktail of success stories, crit-
icism of the modern state of education, and hard
empirical data difficult to argue with. With such a
strong case, it’s easy to see why every one of them
I spoke to expects Frontiers’ five-year lease to be
renewed.

Maybe it’s a good thing for the University:
some students master back-of-the-envelope
calculations, humanities savants are enticed
into expanding their horizons, and everyone is
exposed to the fun and exciting discoveries at
the forefront of modern research. But given the
intense boredom and resentment I experienced
during my seminars, the self-imposed intellec-
tual fluffiness that emanated from the lectures,
and the similar reports of many of my peers,
something needs to give.

Helfand balks at the ideas of stratifying seminars
by ability level or allowing students to test out of
the class entirely. It is, as he said, “antithetical to
the spirit of the Core, and fraught with great dif-
ficulties.” But challenging us, rather than patron-
izing us, seems like a good place to start. What we
catch will be greater than what we ignore after a
semester of alienation. ❍
What Will You Do

For Fun Now?

If you’re dreading the future without Columbia, membership in the Columbia University Club of New York can bring the spark right back.


Columbia’s SocialIntellectualCultural RecreationalProfessional Resource in Midtown.

For more information or to apply, visit www.columbiaclub.org or call (212) 719-0380.

All for one low price, made even lower with our 2007 Graduation Special! Just $100 for first-year dues for 2007 BA/BS degrees with NO initiation fee. Plus special extras!

Offer expires June 30, 2007. Different rates apply for BA/BS in other years.
Write about transsexuals. How does estrogen affect men who are transsexuals and women who inject testosterone? Write about their lives, how these drugs affect/change them, write about some history. It’s very open-ended, so just discuss these freaks of nature in a creative way.

In high school, my beat up mini-van sat in a parking lot of BMWs, Audis, and sporty SUVs. I once found a flier on my car from the local town newspaper, wanting to interview me for having the “courage” to drive a “normal” car. In Westport Connecticut, this human interest story was not tongue in cheek.

For example, a person who was interested in making the most delicious hotdog in Korea started his first trial about 10 years ago. He had met famous chefs as well as had cooked hundreds of hotdogs in order to invent the most scrumptious one, even though he did not have any talent to cook... After 5 years of this he finally found what kind of hotdog flavor Koreans liked and opened his business in front of the university. He has donated some of his earning to the university in order to show his appreciation to the students who have bought his hotdog. In this respect, staying with a subject longer contributes to coming up a new idea to solve it.

In conclusion, continually attempting to solve a problem enables people not only to adapt a variety of ideas but also to learn about them, even in lack of smartness; if people dig one pond long enough, they will finally and definitely attain their goals.

“Oh, sorry, I dialed the wrong number. I can’t be with someone who doesn’t like Caddy Shack.”

While no one would argue that Central Park is less than beautiful, even the most radical of New York residents would cry foul at the notion of flooding a section of it in order to make power and provide fresh water.

Once in college, she shed any lingering values that her parents had instilled in her, starting up a coke addiction and sleeping with anyone interested all the while thinking, “Now I’m finally more like those Hugo Boss models.”

Anthony and Joseph hit the streets.

MONTAGE:
We see Joseph pointing out famous monuments to Anthony;
We see Joseph and Anthony at the top of the Empire State Building;
We see Joseph showing Anthony old bookstores and other interesting sites;
All this time, Anthony is beginning to open up to Joseph.

There was the dent in the bumper, from that time I accidentally backed into a car full of Mormon missionaries in the Target parking lot. Why there were a bunch of Mormon missionaries at Target, I’ll never know.

M: Injections usually make children cry and parents feel horrible in these cases. Would you still take your child for vaccines?
I: Yes
I pretended that we were in our tent, I pretended that he was inside of me, I pretended that he was beside me, whispering, my rumpled Canyon Queen, my wild desert rose, my fair-haired beetles nest, my sweet, sweet - click - my sweet - click - tender thighed maiden - click - my nymphette in distress, my - click - my, and my eyes followed that snake of a stream as it wound its way between dusty red lumps of clay.

They know that I dance in my underwear and admire myself in the mirror, that I love to sing at the top of my lungs to Kelly Clarkson, that I eat crackers in bed, that my room can oftentimes be declared a national state of emergency, that I like flirting with boys that I meet online until 4 in the morning, and that there are moments when I can be a little slutty. They know my deepest, darkest secrets. They know, but will they tell?

My uncle does his business in my country. He rides domestic car for his work. Someday he met client. Sometimes clients ignore him. Because he doesn’t look like owner of his company. He changed his car to imported car. And then he met clients. After that attitude is changed.

Trudy Then you won’t be able to hear the ocean. I love hearing the ocean. I’m so glad to be away from the sound of the city. Car alarms. I mean, has a car alarm ever stopped a car from being stolen? They just go on and on. Ooooooo-ooooo. Ooooo-ooooo. Waaahhh-ahhhhh, waaaaaaaahhhhh. Wuuuuuuuuuuuulpp! Wuuuuuuuuuuuuulpp.

Betty Now, actually, I think I’d like you to become a nun, and live in an isolated area, where no one is allowed to speak ever or make crazy alarm noises.

Trudy ........

Winnie wants to have sex with Sam so she can cover her indiscrete pregnancy, but Sam is too forlorn to have sex. Winnie suggests that they try to get Gabby to meet a real guy. Sam and Fred do all they can to put Gabby on dates, and she sees these guys but still misses Lars. Finally, Winnie “goes to get him,” and Fred celebrates the return of his step-daughter’s baby-daddy by saying it like that, and then Gabby’s all “I’m not pregnant” and it comes out that Winnie is pregnant, and not by Sam, and then in the end, the only resolution is that Lars sings “Don’t Worry, Baby” to Gabby.

When I was seven, I became engaged through an accident of kindness to Sergio Z. Sergio was a boy from Spain with a woefully unaccomplished kickball record, short bangs, and a Basque accent that we all mistook for a lisp. (That pretty much described me at the time, too, except that my bangs flopped into my eyes and my lisp was domestic.) His letter to me read:

You will marry me? Circle one: Yes/No.

Even if Leedskalnin got what he ostensibly wanted, Agnes Scuffs, a beautiful teenage queen for his Castle, it’s easy to imagine how things would have gone rapidly south. Agnes growing fat and cantankerous by nineteen, dimpled of thigh and chin; Agnes hogging the covers on their queen-sized coral bed. Agnes demanding cable, a baby, potato chips, basic plumbing.

They know that I dance in my underwear and admire myself in the mirror, that I love to sing at the top of my lungs to Kelly Clarkson, that I eat crackers in bed, that my room can oftentimes be declared a national state of emergency, that I like flirting with boys that I meet online until 4 in the morning, and that there are moments when I can be a little slutty. They know my deepest, darkest secrets. They know, but will they tell?

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My uncle does his business in my country. He rides domestic car for his work. Someday he met client. Sometimes clients ignore him. Because he doesn’t look like owner of his company. He changed his car to imported car. And then he met clients. After that attitude is changed.
Great Minds Drink Alike

Abstract:

My target of analysis is the *ex post facto* retelling of a drunken adventure. What first comes to mind is just how many different narratives are possible for the population of an urban, pedestrian campus. No drunk driving means less dying, and Manhattan’s bounty offers thousands of ways to have an awesome night. Now, a look at semantics.

Common Phrases:

1. “Soooo,” “waaaasted,” “druuunk,” etc., as in “I was soooo druuunk last night. I stole some cop’s gun and waaaasted him.”

Such words are very common in drunk stories. The speaker expresses the extent of something in the story, usually his/her/his own blood alcohol content or how ho(ooo)t someone looked, using vowel lengthening to express this quantity in sound. I call this “quansonance,” and I find it not only in stories about drunkenness, but also in the real-time speech of actual drunks. Thus:

Inquirer: I see you’re drinking rum. How much have you had?
Drunk: Ruuuum.
Inquirer: Ah, four.

2. “So then...” as in, “So then I pawned the cop’s gun for more schnapps, and since ‘cop’s’ rhymes with ‘schnapps,’ we all started LAUGHING.”

Drunk stories are often picaresque, and “so then” is crucial to maintaining the illusion of a logical sequence of events while also allowing for the intrusion of wild escapades. Many stories are simply a chain of “so thens” ad nauseam (i.e. to the point at which the speaker vomited in the cab). The listener wonders whether the speaker is using the terms of a result clause (“so”) and the apodosis of a logical conditional (“then”) to create an illusion of inevitable necessity, perhaps in order to remove responsibility for his/her/his own actions. For instance: “The cop told me to stop drinking, so then I stole his gun, so then he started yelling, so then I shot his foot.” This obfuscates moral choice.

3. “This homeless guy...”

In another consequence of our urbanity, drunk stories tend to include the presence of the indigent by means of the phrase “this homeless guy,” as in, “So then this homeless guy overheard us talking about the cop, so then we gave him some pizza and told him to keep quiet. So then we pushed him over a guardrail, so then we ran ‘cause we were LAUGHING.” The “this” in “this homeless guy” is demonstrative yet indefinite, making the homeless guy momentarily specific and yet a walking blank, as if “this” homeless guy exists only for the purpose of “this”
story. If the phrase were “that homeless guy,” it would be as if there were only one homeless guy who shows up in everyone’s drunk stories—some sort of eternal, omnipresent Bob Homeless. “This homeless guy” is fleeting, while “that homeless guy” is more substantial, existing outside the narrative. Usage of such a phrase would run counter to the larger effort of assuring one another that homeless people aren’t real.

4. “I was like…”

Usage of this phrase alerts the listener to indeterminacy in the speaker’s memory of what he or she said. We may attribute this amnesia to intoxication, but this glosses over a mimetic tension; the speaker is creating a representation, or simulacrum, or “like”-ness, of a vanished reality, and is ultimately saying, “Who I was no longer exists. I merely am, and my recreation of a past ‘I’ comes from my present state of mind and pressures me to present myself in certain ways, specifically as someone who is really cool and adventurous when drunk. Therefore, I was like, ‘We need more schnapps, and don’t tell anybody about this cop or this homeless guy we just killed.’”

5. “[B-list celebrity] showed up and we were like “Whaaat?””

New York is full of celebrities, and students want to make it clear that they go where celebrities go but it’s no big deal. Here the speaker tries to appear jaded and above being starstruck. The “whaaat” expresses this detachment through its quansonance [see above] and its songlike intonation. What should be noted is that the speaker’s intoxication caused him/her to react to trees and/or shiny objects with the exact same “whaaat?” It should also be noted that the celebrity is in fact William H. Macy, every time, no matter what the speaker says to the contrary.

6. “I went home and cried myself to sleep.”

Despite nights rife with sexual tension, drinkers often go home alone. The juxtaposition of “aloneness” and “rife-ness with sexual tension-ness” creates an ironic energy that must be harnessed through the self-deprecating image of crying oneself to sleep. For example, a young fellow might say: “So then her friends were all like ‘We gotta go, Bethany! You’ve got hella blood on your hands!’ So then she left and I went home and cried myself to sleep HAHA- HA.” The usage of this phrase has become cliche [see VH1, blogs], but possibilities for original expressions of the topos of drunken somnolence still exist. For instance, after a wild night out, I often cry myself awake.

Argument Summated

The aforementioned analyses are all I could come up with, but that’s because I have my own individual perspective. Your experience, inherently unique, is sure to yield even more incisive critiques. ♦
Whether early or late onset, Sophomore Slump could not find a better dump.

Oh McBizzle? Thine Hallowed Halls make the toil of the Undergrad manifest.

No deeper challenge than guessing the missing number in the vending machine when you are wasted at 3am.

And no larger battle ground for the saga of Man is Tower.
But it's the memories that will last a lifetime.

...and making new friends that soon became best.

Your ceiling falling in...

And if you're not getting any!!... you can count on the shaft. [No pun intended.]

Says looks like Floor 5's at it again! Okay... God this is hotter than Grecs.

So welcome to our God Elevator!!

May the radiator live and die!!

Clang his whistle does burn.

And I die!! Sizled shenck.

O = 0
As a lifelong fan of arts and crafts, I’ve sewn clothes and made books; I’ve soldered stained glass windows and silver jewelry—but I’ve never been able to get into knitting. I’ve tried, but after the first few rows of stitches I’ve tangled my yarn into a solid knot and thrown my needles across the room. Some say I haven’t had enough practice or a good teacher, but I’m pretty sure knitting just isn’t for me.

It’s certainly not for fear of being uncool. Everyone’s knitting these days. Crafting—a broad term that encompasses crocheting, vintage clothing reconstruction, papermaking, bath salt concocting, and much more—has undergone a recent popularity boom, and knitting is leading the way. In 2003, Debbie Stoller’s instructional book *Stitch and Bitch* catalyzed the trend by bringing updated patterns—like the knit bikini—to the hip, young masses. It spawned four sequels as well as knitting groups across the country, and was sold at Urban Outfitters.

The Internet has brought the movement to the grassroots level—crafters share their techniques, projects and patterns on thousands of crafting blogs. More than one thousand of them are devoted to knitting: Craftster.com is arguably the most popular crafting site; over ninety thousand registered members use its message board to discuss new ways to convert pillowcases into skirts or wire found objects into lamps under a banner proclaiming, “No Tea Cozies Without Irony.”

In all its manifestations, the crafting movement is about doing-it-yourself and believing that a handmade object is superior to one purchased at a big box store. An independent, rebellious streak runs strong in the movement, and is referenced by “Radical Lace and Subversive Knitting” (January 25–June 17), the new exhibit at the Museum of Art and Design, which presents works that defy conventions of fine art and craft alike.

The exhibit features thirty artists, whose work offers alternative interpretations of conventional techniques of knitting, crocheting and tatting. Dave Cole’s “Lead Teddy Bear” is a cute, compact creature knit from lead ribbon—it would poison any child who tried to play with it, if a child could even lift it in the first place. Cal Lane crafted one of the exhibit’s most impressive works, “Filigree Car Bombing,” from found car parts, from which she meticulously carved a lace-like filigree with an oxyacetylene torch. The exhibit is filled with such pieces—craftsmanship so painstaking that the process of creation is as much an art as the product.

Althea Merback’s miniature sweaters required the artist to sharpen surgical wire into needles.
Some works, however, push the definition of knitting and lace-making too far, even for an exhibit devoted to expanding such boundaries. Edward Mayer’s interlocking structure of chairs, ladders, metal shelving units and tubing, “Drawing Over,” spills over several floors and feels out of place. “History,” Bennett Battaile’s glass filament sculpture inspired by Brownian motion, is beautiful but makes no reference to knitting’s past, present or future.

It turns out that the Museum of Art and Design (MAD) has gone by that name for a mere five years; in 2002, the original name, the American Craft Museum, was deemed outdated and too small in scope. Holly Hotchner, the museum’s director, explained in a press release that the new name asserts that they are a “contemporary museum about materials and creative processes, which are at the core of all the arts.” David Revere McFadden, head curator, elaborated in the same press release: he saw the term “craft” as a relic of an outdated “system of categorization” applied to art in the early nineteenth century that distanced artisan crafts like woodworking and metal-smithing from so-called fine arts like painting. MAD’s website now describes its collections as art created in “craft media...at the crossroads of craft, art, and design.” Still, the name of one of those roads is conspicuously absent in the museum’s new title.

Regardless, the pieces that consciously dealt with craft were inspiring, and yarn may be the most accessible medium ever displayed on a museum wall. I decided to give knitting another shot. I soon discovered Booze and Yarn, a free knitting group that meets every Wednesday at the Luna Lounge on the Lower East Side. Corinna Mantlo, who started the group in 2003, is a professional who teaches knitting to anyone, free of charge with cool vintage sweater patterns to boot. I borrowed some needles from a friend and headed downtown.

While I didn’t find a crowd of hip twentysomethings knitting their own skinny jeans, I’d be surprised if anyone there had grandkids. The group—which even included a few guys—hovered around 25 people. Corinna preened a crop of eight beginners; I was happy to be blundering along in the company of friendly fellow knitters, and Luna Lounge’s delectable bruschetta kept everyone in high spirits. By my fifth row, I began to have dreams well beyond my own irregular mint-green square I was producing. I cast envious glances at the luscious turtlenecks and hats that my more experienced colleagues were working on.

Mantlo seems a fitting spokesperson for “subversive knitting,” and not just because of her tattoos and jet-black hair. She started the group—through a Craigslist post—in response to the soaring price of knitting classes and the cynical attitudes of the instructors at New York’s yarn shops, both of which she felt contradicted the spirit of the craft. As for rebellion, Corinna is wary of the term’s application to what she sees as a humble craft. She admitted that since crafts are no longer widely taught, “choosing to learn a home craft is in itself a rebellion,” but insisted that “the only rebellious part of B&Y is that it’s free.” Still, she sees the group as more than just a knitting lesson: “B&Y started as a way to bring people together as a community,” she says, a way to get back to the “small town feel” the Lower East Side—and New York in general—had before gentrification really took off.

Corinna explained that knitting, although perceived today as a solitary activity for plane flights and at-home movie marathons, originated as a man’s trade, when large groups of shepherds made garments for sale. Even when women in Victorian England picked up the needle, they knit together socially in their homes. Knitting has only become a private hobby in the last few decades. “The pursuit of career and equal rights,” Mantlo said, “made women think twice before knitting in public.” The embarrassment is only now beginning to fade.

Lace-making and knitting have a rich tradition and a contemporary body of work of their own that does not need to be dressed up with fine art to be museum-worthy. While the Museum of Art and Design have celebrated modern knitting and lace-making, they instead used this opportunity to further shun that hated word, “craft.”

Corinna agreed. Though she thought the exhibit “is a step in the right direction,” she was “concerned that the history of a simple craft will be brushed under the rug in order to make modern knitters feel better about wanting to knit.” Cashmere yarn and $100 coffee table books [are] not what it was or should ever be about.”

Now, I’m happy to say, I can truly count myself among the crafty revolutionaries. And Corinna did the impossible—she successfully taught me how to knit. My mother would be so proud.

—Sasha De Vogel
HAIR

It’s summer and

Arlene is in primary colors
sitting in the kitchen ignoring a soap opera
roaring in broken English on the phone with Trinidad
combing her oily hair,
making white rice meatballs canned beans
because the family has already eaten.

My mother is in her pink nightgown
lying in bed watching the news
weeping in private, upstairs, door locked
coughing to hear herself cough,
shoving black cohosh Chinese mushroom essence susun weed
down her throat without water.

Can Arlene open her fat lips and scream
bleed all over the dining room table
soil our clothing and unlock the back door?

Can my mother take off the hair someone else
cut off to show off
stagger down the stairs and escape into the street?

I am dripping on the living room couch
watching my curls as they’re pulled towards the floor
writing and rewriting my plans
to unknot it all.

—Jessica Cohen
UNIVERSE(a tease) OR, UNIVERSE CITY

I.
Some kind of a seismic happiness happened
'lectroshocking the cistern with its systematic violence.
After all my long proto-emoto-diasporic projects
A mimetic pseudo-arch-anyymphobjectivalist archivist gets carpal tunnel syndrome.

II.
« Montrez-vous le Hippodrome »
Shoe through the leaves of the “tomes upon tomes”¹
(Supple moral constructs tag the morning’s tea)

III.
I have been astudyin
Geomorphic postpostantimodern topology.
My grant’s been underwritten
By several neoliberal families.
Meus parentes es tempestas, non silicis.²

IV.
Each Thursday³ descends to slice our daily bread
Into weekly burlap bag bits.
These form the ersatz templates of
Our houred tongue depressor sticks.
Open wide:
Batteredegg and deep-flowery-fried.
Faux profound.
It’s for this that our foredollars died.

V.
There’s an entheogenic difference between “slang” and “slag.”
Its exponential power cuts down all this paper,
Generating the x-value of a single degree
Charted [gilt-framed] on some proverbial wall.
So with sneakers for teachers
The cartographer
Runs his lines down the beaches.
(A rusty John D. tractor, perpendiculous, combs back ceaselessly forth)

All these sweet years of seeking clandestine full moons
Cristallize and dissolve upon one silver spoon.

—Joanna Siegel
At 319 West 107th Street, about halfway between Broadway and Riverside Drive, there sits a pristine brownstone without any residents. A polished plaque to the left of the heavy wooden door reads, “Nicolas Roerich Museum.” The first time I saw the place, I made it all the way around the corner before stopping in my tracks. “Nicolas who? Why does he have his own museum?” I turned around and marched back up the block to find out.

Indignant curiosity may be the main draw of the Nicolas Roerich Museum. The space is equipped for visitors (there are hours listed, brochures with “events,” postcards for sale) but seems altogether indifferent to them. A heavy older man with a thinning, white ponytail sitting at the front desk seemed determined to ignore my presence, as though I was more likely a figment of his imagination than someone coming to see the art. Right...the art. As I made my way upstairs, it became apparent that “Nicolas Roerich Museum” is meant in the same sense as “Picasso Museum.” His paintings are the main and only attraction. Unfortunately, what you might describe as Roerich’s “psychedelic blue period” seems never to have ended. At some point Roerich took a trip to India, after which the Himalayas became a permanent subject. The Himalayas in a storm. The Himalayas with Buddha. The Himalayas with Mary and Jesus. They all look vaguely like cover art for a series of obscure sci-fi fantasy novels. The titles—“Star of the Hero,” “Warrior of Light”—add to this impression.

While browsing the wall of notecard reproductions, I marveled at the existence of an institution dedicated to Roerich’s curious brand of bad art. It occurred to me that the obscure museum is altogether a different animal than the mammoths lining Museum Mile. With fewer daily visitors than would fill the Temple of Dendur and collections that MoMA wouldn’t deign to keep in its storage facility, how do places like the Roerich stay afloat? Without any masses to cater to, the obscure museum must exist to showcase the highly-focused, questionable interests of a few people. What other bizarre institutional personalities were out there? I left the Roerich, “Pearl of Searching” postcard in hand, primed for museuming off the beaten track.

The first thing I learn when hunting for obscure museums is that they’re inclined to revel in their obscurity. They achieve this in several ways: (1) They keep strange hours, (2) they are often physically inaccessible, and (3) they tend to avoid such conventions as the internet.

The Living Museum, which showcases artwork by the mentally ill, accomplishes all three. I find out about the place, which is attached to the Creedmoor Psychiatric Center in Queens, only by stumbling across the outdated website of a gallery in which some of the work was displayed. The only piece featured on the site—a chair with a plaster body strapped to it, the whole thing swathed in papier mache—is enough to warrant the trip. I call a number listed by the gallery, hoping at least for hours. “Hello, you’ve reached the Living Museum. Please leave a message after the beep.” Hmm. I call Creedmoor itself. “Is the Living Museum open?” They transfer me back. Thinking I’ll just hop boroughs and hope for the best, I look up the address. Creedmoor is accessible “by car only.” I cross the Living Museum off my list.

The African American Wax Museum has its own website—well, its own generic internet listing—and it’s within walking distance of Columbia, which means it has prospects. I’m skeptical, however, when under “Hours” I read, “By appointment only.” Is this a luxury, or a warning sign? I call up, only to find that the number has been disconnected. If the Wax Museum wants to keep out the casual visitor, this certainly seems to be a fool-proof plan. But after being shut out of the Living Museum, I’m not about to get hung
up on a few logistical obstacles. Though I’m sus-
picious of the address, 115th Street and Central
Park West (doesn’t the park end at 110th?), I
convince my roommate to walk there with me.
But when we reach the intersection, there’s no
evidence of the museum. Looking around, I no-
tice an empty lot on the northwest corner. Strike
two.
Revelation: A museum that doesn’t want to be
found will stay hidden until you find it accidentally.
If you want to plan your visit, it may be necessary to
go slightly more mainstream.
The Skyscraper Museum website has slick
graphics and listings of new exhibitions. At the
same time, its narrow focus and the number of
people I know who’ve actually been—one—mean it
still meets my criteria for obscurity. Tucked
discreetly into the footprint of the nondescript
Ritz-Carlton Hotel in Battery Park—at Manhat-
tan’s southern tip, where its subject thrives
most—the 5,000 square-foot gallery seems rela-
tively undiscovered. But in the landscape of the
edge of the financial district (a ghost-town on a
late Sunday afternoon) the museum is downright
vibrant. When I arrive, there are at least ten
visitors shuffling along an expertly crafted ramp
that coils around the exhibition space and draws
out a viewing experience that would otherwise
last all of five minutes. The room itself is a spec-
tacle: the walls are constructed so as to give the
impression that you’re either looking out from
or looking into a massive skyscraper, many sto-
ries up. Mirrored glass tempers the effect of low
ceilings and encourages you to stare upward, as
you would at the foot of a building.
There’s no doubt that the museum is aesthetically
successful, but the whole affair—from the archi-
tects (Skidmore, Owings and Merrill) to the current
exhibit (a World Trade Center tribute)—smacks of
mass appeal. The Skyscraper Museum feels more
like one big trailer for the Freedom Tower than an
undiscovered treasure.
There’s nothing like corporate backing to coun-
ter a museum’s quirkiness. State sponsorship, how-
ever, is a whole different story. On my way from
the subway stop to the main concourse in Grand
Central, I pass a storefront that looks more like a
Starbucks than a museum. This is the Annex of the
well-known NYC Transit Museum, and though a
good 30% of the floor-space is occupied by a gift-
shop, it is worth a detour. The objects on display
range from antique turnstiles to yellowed architec-
tural plans to outmoded ceramic moldings. Even
those delicate grilles inlaid in the walls of the 116th
Street station are on display—called “weep holes,”
they’re installed to allow water to escape, and are
surprisingly intricate. A full tour of the place takes
me less than ten minutes, but it’s hard not to feel
awed by the subtle artistry that’s gone into the sub-
way system, and maybe slightly less annoyed at the
MTA for the consistently inconsistent operation of
the 1/2/3.
M.E.W. Sherwood, an American socialite and
traveler, once wrote, “to look at and properly ap-
preciate the British Museum is the work of a lifetime.”
He was probably right, but there’s something oppressive
about the cultural authority of rambling, national museums.
An accidental encounter with a museum that makes no claim
to the canon is likely to draw you in and force you to look
more closely at objects that would be lost in the mix at the
Metc. At the same time, the experience is a singular one—
half the fun is knowing there’s no obligation to return.
—Merrell Hambleton

Illustrated by Christine DeLong
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This issue is sponsored by the Columbia University Arts Initiative.
The CUAI Support Fund is made possible through a generous gift from David and Susie Sainsbury.
In early April, just as unattached students were facing new heights of desperation in the search for summer work, a research internship became available with the film *For Love and Honor*, “a feature-length documentary about the history and importance of Ivy League football.” The listing for the position, which was posted on Craigslist, was also sent out to the appropriate email aliases at NYU— but not at Columbia, despite the fact that they listed esteemed alumnus Brian Dennehy, C’60, as one of the subjects of the film.

As the debate on the use of laptop computers in the classroom rages on, and rumors abound about a school-wide ban at Barnard next year, thirtysomething computer science professor Adam Cannon gives his two cents to his Java Programming class:

“When I was in school we didn’t have laptops! We didn’t have legs, we had stumps!”

**Overheard in Wien:**

Girl: “I can’t get used to these showers, they’re just... just so gross.”

Boy: “I know, they look like gas chambers. This whole place feels like Auschwitz.”

Girl: “Auschwitz? Hm, I’ve never been.”

Traffic cop to woman in Subaru station wagon, pulled over near campus: “You’re telling me you don’t understand how to drive in the city? Yeah? Well I’m telling you you’re BREAKING THE FUCKING LAW!”

Barnard Latin American Literature professor Alfred MacAdam is a renowned Spanish scholar and translator. He is also a certifiably eccentric man in his 60’s who wears a hearing aid and cowboy boots to class, asks his students to deliver final papers to the doorman of his apartment building, has a very small dog that he always seems to be walking in Riverside Park, and says things like this:

On the pros and cons of Morningside: “Havana Central? I’m hoping that place fails miserably so this neighborhood gets what it really needs—a place that sells underwear and socks! A hamburger I can get anytime—what I can’t always get, when the wash fails, is a pair of underpants! But seriously, I’m sincerely hoping that place implodes. What we really need is a Gap. You want a burger? We already have Tom’s! Oh, you’ve been to Tom’s? You live to tell the tale! [snorts] Tom’s...”

On Wikipedia: “For God’s sake, please don’t embarrass yourself and quote Wikipedia... just make sure you’re using an actual source and not some stoned graduate student in Illinois. You don’t know what you’re getting off there.”

On why Symposium is worse than Le Monde: “It’s off the beaten track. You can’t always be sure if your clients will like Greek food, whereas at Le Monde, you have a panoply of choices. You can have a salad. You can have a ladies’ lunch, which consists of...a Diet Coke and a salad. Sometimes followed by too many candy bars, but uh—anyway, that was unnecessary.”

**A sign outside Butler for a psych study:**

“Do you suffer from obsessive compulsive disorder and live in or around New York City?”
KILL 'EM WITH KINDNESS

Overheard at Days on Campus:

Pre-frosh: Do you have a lot of friends here?

Freshman: No. I don’t talk to anyone.
(Pause) But I’ll talk to you if you

Professor Dan O’Flaherty in Urban Economics:

“The best people to rob are the people who aren’t going to report the crime, carry around a lot of cash, and a lot of very small very valuable things. Who is it that you want to rob? Drug dealers, of course!”

APPLIED ETHICS

Barnard Philosophy Professor Frederick Neuhouser, in a move that would make the students of honor-code obsessed Haverford proud, sent the following email to students in his Kant class:

Dear Students,
Andreja and I forgot to penalize the Kant papers that were handed in late. In total, five papers were handed in late, but I can only remember whose papers these were in three of the five cases. If you turned your paper in to me after 5 pm on Feb. 22, can you let me know? Sorry for the slip-up.

WE SHUDDER TO THINK WHAT THEY PUT IN THE BURRITOS

One fateful April day, a couple of vegetarian students were seen in John Jay discovering, halfway through their meal, that the “vegan pasta soup” they had been served contained chunks of beef.

Traffic cop to woman in Subaru station wagon, pulled over near campus: “You’re telling me you don’t understand how to drive in the city? Yeah? Well I’m telling you you’re BREAKING THE FUCKING LAW!”

Earlier this month, a select group of 2007 English majors handed in their 30-40 page Senior Essays, the culmination of a semester’s worth of close, intellectual research. According to an allegedly confusing set of directions about handing in the essays, however, many of the sponsoring professors did not receive copies to grade. As a result, Department Administrator Michael Mallick sent a puzzlingly aggressive email to essayists, chastising them for misunderstanding the directions:

“This result reflects poorly on your ability to read closely and comprehend rather simply directives... It is possible that your failure to follow directions will result in your failure to receive honors, perhaps a failure to receive a writing prize, perhaps even a failure in the course.

“I urge you to act immediately. I further urge you not to email me... I do not have the time to respond to individual protestations, rationalizations, fantastic explanations, and the like. If you feel you must vent some misguided feeling of having been somehow led astray, then please direct your arguments to Prof. Rosenthal. I am too busy at the moment preparing materials for the fall semester to deal with this mess, which is not, in any case, my responsibility. I am acting solely now as a messenger, not a judge, nor am I an arbitrator. If you’ve taken offense at my straightforward tone, apologies—I’m as befuddled as your sponsors at your failure to comply with uncomplicated directives; unlike your sponsors, I have no interest in any explanations—it is to your sponsors and, if you wish, Prof. Rosenthal that you should speak. But I’d save the breath and act fast instead.”

TOO SOON

Barnard History Prof. Lisa Tiersten, in her class European History Since 1789, showing a video of an obviously bombed-out Hiroshima:

“I can’t really tell if this is before or after.”

Class Day credibility...it’s Lost!

THE BLUE AND WHITE