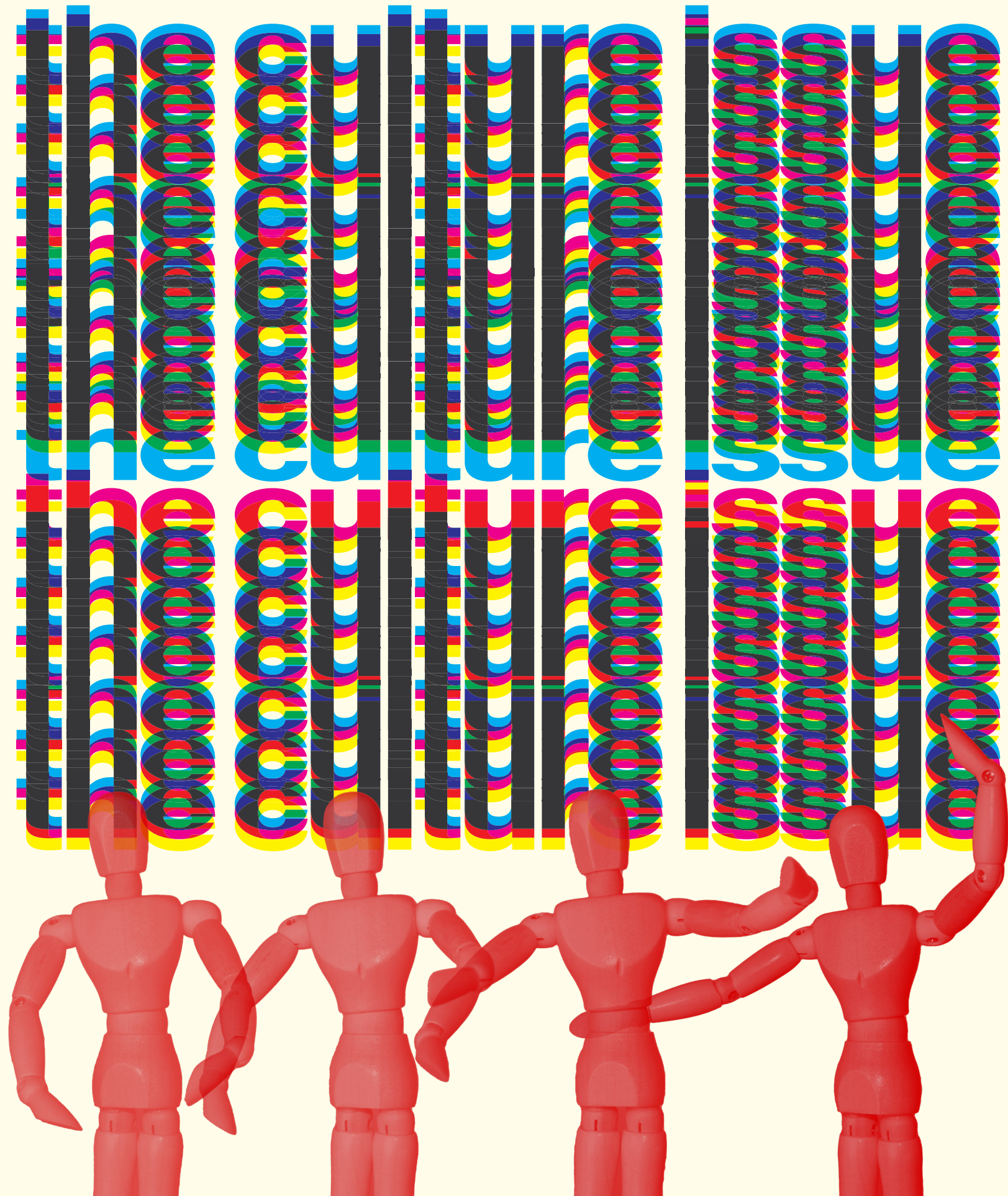


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Editor's letter

The Culture Issue has solidified itself as somewhat of an SPM tradition. In four of the past five years, issue No. 4 has been themed as The Culture Issue, and it seems like it's going to stick around. Though most SPM stories already revolve around culture, this issue gives writers a chance to play sociologist, focusing on the interactions between themselves, their peers and the world around them.

Writers this year looked at what it's like to be "alt" on campus, the phenomenon of overconsumption among students and how students connect with online communities through content creation. One reporter gave her thoughts on how University policies impact ASU's party school reputation, and another reflected on the struggles of growing up without a connection to Spanish, her ancestral language. They poked fun at the attitudes of returned study abroad students and satirized the idea of cuffing season. Finally, one writer recounted the difficult experiences that came with growing up doing ballet in a short narrative.

Looking forward to a great spring semester,

The editors of State Press Magazine

The Immunity Issue crossword answers

- | | |
|------------------|------------------|
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| 2. rewarding | 10. children |
| 3. communication | 11. diversity |
| 4. slap | 12. twelve |
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Report

Where are all the goth girls?

Alternative students reflect on how their unique styles have shaped their college experiences

by Keetra Bippus
Photos by Hajin Lee

“Meow.”

The sound sliced through the dead of night as Erin Taylor stumbled out of a party.

But it wasn't a stray cat — it was a pack of men. Perched atop a balcony, they hurled catcalls down at her.

Even though the sophomore studying business was caught off guard, it was hardly the first time she had experienced harassment or strange behavior from others, much of which she attributes to her unique sense of fashion.

Taylor classifies herself as “alternative,” an umbrella term referring to styles that rebel against the mainstream. The roots of alternative fashion were inspired by the musical movements and other subcultures that swept through the 1950s and 1960s, like the hippie counterculture

and rockabilly genre. Its decadeslong lineage encompasses everything from the stud-encrusted punks of the 1970s to the futuristic cyberpunk subculture of the 2000s.

After leaving the freewheeling San Francisco Bay Area to attend ASU, Taylor quickly realized that not everyone in Arizona was as welcoming of the unique way she expresses herself, which seems to be experimental and ever changing.

Currently, she's rocking jet-black, shoulder-length curls, but just a few months ago, her hair used to trail down to her stomach in a tie-dye sweep of fluorescent green, neon pink and ocean blue. Two snake bite piercings jut out from beneath her lips, and when she smiles, her pair of dimple piercings are on full display. To top it all off, Taylor often draws on pencil-thin eyebrows.

“I think that people see things that

are different and feel scared,” she said.

From strangers snapping pictures of her as she walks around campus to instances of more open harassment, Taylor has experienced many moments that made her realize not everyone at ASU would embrace her personal style. The worst incident occurred at a fraternity party when an unknown man suddenly approached her.

“I had made eye contact with that guy, and that, I guess, gave him an invitation to harass me,” she said.

The man aggressively screamed in her face as Taylor's mind swirled with fear for her physical safety.

“Every time I left in the crowd, he would literally try (to) come find me, and it was just weird and, like, stalkery and creepy,” Taylor said.

She turned to TikTok to recount the stressful experience, and the video went viral, amassing over 120,000

views. The comment section soon filled with stories from students who had also experienced uncomfortable treatment because their more unique styles diverge from ASU's beauty norms.

"It's honestly an az wide issue i feel like, I'm not even that alternative and i be getting looks," one commenter wrote.

"No f(or) r(eal) Im not even that 'emo' anymore and I still get hate for it like bruh I just wear eyeliner and have bangs..." another commented.

ASU reported that nearly 80,000 students attended the University in person last semester, with almost 60,000 of them on Taylor's primary campus: the school's Tempe outpost.

With such a wide range of students on campus, Taylor learned from experience that some people have never seen someone dressed like her before. Not only have some students hurled "nasty" insults about her appearance, but she also said she thinks others, especially men, treat the way she looks as an excuse to verbally harass or objectify her.

Even though alternative fashion has become more popular, especially among young adults, with the rise of style influencers and social media, harassment against those who dress differently than the mainstream still endures. In fact, attacks against people for the way they dress, such as those who belong to alternative subcultures, have even been criminalized in some parts of the world.

Last November, a post written from the perspective of a male freshman was uploaded to the ASU subreddit that satirically bemoaned the "lack of goth girls" on campus.

"I know that my fellow ASU male brethren are also disappointed at the lack of goth mommies here," the post

stated. "Every single day I wake up and do my morning prayer hoping to spot an emo goth girl somewhere around campus, but alas, to no avail."

"ASU is not a goth-centric school," one commenter replied. "We like our hotties in short shorts with toned ass cheeks hanging out—only fans ready."

Cramping the style

Berenice Calixto Castillo was lounging in her dorm room when she heard the toilet flush. But her roommate wasn't using the bathroom. Instead, Castillo's roommate had just received a call that the police knew she had drugs in her possession and were en route to their dorm. So she frantically tried to flush the evidence away.

Her roommate's panic was contagious — Castillo began to freak out too. Even though she didn't have any drugs herself, she was concerned that stereotypes about people of color who dress alternatively, like herself, could put her at risk.

"The severity of weed on a brown person is so bad," Castillo said. "I was like, 'There is no way this is happening to me right now.'"

Ultimately, the call turned out to be a prank, but the scare didn't stop her roommate from smoking in their room — despite their community assistant's warnings to stop and Castillo's constant anxiety that her roommate would be caught.

Most of all, the situation made Castillo sometimes wish she "looked normal."

"If they find drugs in here, they're gonna look at the person who looks the most different," she said. "But at the end of the day, they can just do a drug test and see that I'm sober, so there's no point in me changing."

Castillo has always been drawn to alternative fashion, but she went "full-on emo" in the eighth grade, when she donned dark skinny jeans, ink-black Converse shoes and a backpack decorated with pins.

But her new look caught her parents' concern, as she also said she had depression at the time. But once Castillo found a lasting friend group, her mom became more accepting of her personal style.

"(The friend group) is a bunch of normal Mexican kids accepting this weird emo into their friend group," Castillo said. "I think, like, my mom realized, 'Oh, it's not that bad. The world won't ever punish her for being different.'"

After that, Castillo's mom loosened her grip on her child's expression — Castillo was allowed to cut her hair even shorter, something she knows other children's parents would've forbidden.

Mike Syfritt, known to his friends as "Cyberpunk Mike," was decked out in his full "death rock" outfit — head-to-toe in black, with dark pants, a patch-covered denim jacket and gauges that jutted out from each ear like horns — while he waited to filter onto the ASU shuttle from the Polytechnic campus to Tempe. Even though he had ridden the bus numerous times without a hitch, he was suddenly asked to present his ASU ID to board the shuttle, which he attributed to his eye-catching appearance.

Syfritt, who is a returning student studying media arts and sciences, has long been a veteran of the alternative scene. Since being introduced to alternative culture as a teen in the '80s, Syfritt's lived through decades of different styles and subcultures. While he's learned that people nowadays seem



to be more accepting of alternative styles, his experience on the shuttle made him reconsider.

Syfritt doesn't always dress to stand out — at networking events, he tries to fit in even though his many tattoos and piercings still distinguish him from the crowd.

"I almost have to put on a costume no matter where I go," Syfritt said. "If I'm going into the goth scene, I'm going to dress like a goth. If I'm going into the corporate scene, I've got to put on a button-down shirt and jeans."

When he has gone out dressed head to toe in his alternative style, his polarizing fashion garners one of two reactions from passersby: extreme intrigue or extreme repulsion.

Dressing up and standing up

Alternative styles have a long history with various underground subcultures. While these subcultures all diverged from the mainstream, many did so out of necessity. Many marginalized groups, like LGBTQ+ people, have long had a tie to alternative culture.

"I feel like in today's society, like, they're almost like the epitome of our culture," Syfritt said. "That whole community is just accepting of everybody for whatever they are, whoever they are."

In many ways, it's not surprising that alternative fashion has become a sanctuary for LGBTQ+ people, who were long pushed underground and shut out from mainstream society. Rebellion against the status quo and political discontent have been hallmarks of alternative culture for decades.

Being political is the "precedence behind being alternative," Syfritt said.

Because of the close tie between the two groups, recent political backlash against LGBTQ+ people has directly impacted the goth community, said Giselle Torres, an ASU alum who participates in the Arizona goth scene.

As of early February, the ACLU has classified 11 Arizona bills as "anti-LGBTQ." In 2023, the Arizona Legislature attempted to pass four bills governing drag shows that restricted them to certain times of day, required them to obtain permits and criminalized the performance of drag on public property or wherever it "could be viewed by a minor." The bills were able to pass the Arizona Senate, but they were ultimately vetoed by Gov. Katie Hobbs.

On campus, ASU PD said it was investigating an incident last semester in which a queer ASU professor was allegedly attacked by members of right-wing group Turning Point USA as a hate crime.

During times of political hostility,

goth spaces have stood as sanctuaries for those in the LGBTQ+ community, Torres said. She believes the connection between the two communities was forged around both groups' tendency to subvert traditional gender roles and diverge from societal norms.

"You know, the whole topic of being alternative is you're doing something outside the norm," Syfritt said. "You're making a statement in whatever element that you want, and every statement that's made can be political."

Alternative culture

Even though those who dress alternatively suffer harassment and negative stereotypes, many still find a home in a vibrant and diverse community. As a broad label, alternative style can be hard to nail down definitively, but in Syfritt's opinion, it's "just anything that's not corporate."

"You know, goths are all just nerds that just don't fit in anywhere else," he said. "They're nerdy outcasts that veer on the darker side of life."

When she came to ASU, Torres found that college was a welcome space to express herself in ways she wasn't able to when she was living with her parents. For the first time, she would often receive compliments on her outfits.

Her favorite memory was during Halloween, when she teased her hair up into a giant deathhawk, a mohawk-like hairstyle that's characterized by long, backcombed hair on top with the sides shaved.

"There would be kids walking around campus in their little Disney princess costumes, and they'd be like, 'I like your hair,'" she said. "And I'd be like, 'Heck yeah.'"

The moment Taylor stepped outside the Starbucks at the Memorial Union, a girl complimented her outfit. Adorned in a lacy black top and skirt with a furry cheetah-print jacket and a statement red pendant, she was dressed to the nines.

Music, which has long had a presence in alternative culture, has heavily influenced her style. In fact, it was only when Taylor began getting into metal music that she started experimenting with darker styles.

"I want other people to ... look at me and be like, 'Oh, that bitch probably listens to metal,' and then come up to me," she said. "Then we can share interests."

Even though Taylor hasn't found a large alternative community on campus, she said her personal style hasn't kept her from making friends with students who don't dress like her.

"Basic bitches love me," she said.

Dance Bag

by Gib Manrique

Illustration by Andrea Ramirez

Every day, I carry a dance bag. It's a navy blue duffel bag, to be exact, and it has everything I need: flat ballet shoes, hairpins, a snack of vegetables and hummus, extra pairs of tights and soft boots that keep my feet warm. I place my dance bag in the same spot every class — top left on the highest shelf — and when I'm done, I run back to grab it as fast as I can to get a good seat next to my friends before rehearsal.

My dance bag changes one day. It carries pointe shoes — instead of flats — string and needles for sewing, loose cotton and toe pads for feet protection, a snack of an apple or two, and a wrap skirt painted with pretty colors because when you're older, you can wear different-colored skirts. I stay after rehearsal for pointe class with the other older girls, and I carry pain medications and bath salts to soak my feet.

I land my first solo on pointe at just 14, and now my dance bag carries bandages and a lighter so I can burn the ribbons cleanly on my new pointe shoes. I take classes six days a week and still place my dance bag in the same spot every time. Top left on the highest shelf. Some things don't change. But other things do. I get older, and I lose weight in my legs. I turn 15, and I am 110 pounds.

A performance is coming up soon. My dance bag carries more hairpins, my only tights with no holes, broken-in pointe shoes, a special leotard that cinches my waist more than the others and an extra pair of clothes for when I hang out with friends after. I rush out of the house and barely make it to rehearsal on time. I forgot a snack. I don't need it. I dance on an empty stomach for eight hours, and my dance teacher comments on how much better the corset for my costume fits.

I carry the bruises the stage leaves on my legs. I get home and stare at my exposed ribs in the mirror. I reach out to touch them. I carry the feeling of bones on my fingertips for the whole day after.

That night, I get yelled at with the rest of the dancers. Our arms are sloppy, and our feet aren't pointed, my director barks. There's no room for error. I carry my director's voice in my ears that night, ringing through my head as I try to sleep. Finally, I do. I dream of screaming and sweating and broken toenails and blood and cuts all over my skin. I dream of maggots crawling over my dance bag, eating something trapped inside. At least it's wearing a pretty-colored skirt.

It's performance day. My dance bag carries two pairs of pointe shoes, hairpins, some toe pads, a pretty smile for my proud family members, a black skirt and a granola bar. It's chocolate.





Dry, dry devils

ASU's current drug and alcohol policy fails to prioritize the safety of students

by Abigail Beck

Illustrations by Andrea Ramirez

ASU may officially be known as No. 1 in innovation, but the school has cultivated a different, less coveted national ranking over the decades: a widespread reputation as one of the top party schools in the country. Provocative publications like *Playboy* lauded ASU in the 2000s and early 2010s for its intense party culture.

But back in the '80s, ASU students found their right to drink the partier's beverage of choice — alcohol — was under siege. In 1981, Arizona Gov. Bruce Babbitt proposed to raise the state's legal drinking age from 19 to 21. This sparked an impassioned student uprising across the state at all three of Arizona's public universities, according to *The Arizona Republic*. But in the end, the students lost. To ring in New Year's Day 1985, a state law signed the year before took effect, raising Arizona's minimum drinking age to 21.

Just a year later, ASU partiers

suffered yet another loss: The University, which had previously permitted alcohol on its grounds, became a dry campus, meaning that students of any age would be prohibited from drinking alcohol on its grounds. Fast forward to now, and the policy still stands — ASU has been a dry campus for nearly 40 years.

While some view ASU's dry campus policy as an unenforced joke at a university still widely considered a party school, others see it as a necessary safeguard for students' well-being. Regardless, the school's dry campus policy doesn't seem to have prevented alcohol use and abuse on and around campus, so what does it really do for students?

Ultimately, it serves as a transparent curtain that's clumsily attempted to conceal the University's decadeslong reputation of revelry. But with liquor stores across the street from dorms, bars just steps from campus and The Pub in the Thunderbird School of

Global Management at ASU Downtown Phoenix, the dry campus policy only perpetuates a secretive culture around alcohol that threatens students' safety and well-being.

Policy to policy, a new age

ASU's current approach to managing alcohol use on campus is to ban it altogether, a mirror of the school's desert home: dry and barren.

"ASU strives to create a healthy environment in which the illegal or improper use of alcohol and other drugs and controlled substances does not interfere with learning, performance, employment, residential living, or development," states the University's current drug and alcohol policy, implemented on Nov. 1, 1985, as the philosophy behind the dry campus rule.

It's essentially impossible for any student who's lived in an ASU dormitory

to be unaware that any consumption of alcoholic drinks or ownership of kegs, bongos (beer and otherwise), shot glasses, alcohol funnels and any other type of alcohol or drug paraphernalia is prohibited in residential halls.

It's an unbending rule that's plastered on hallway posters inside the dorms and repeated throughout the year by University Housing staff. It's a part of the culture — it's a dry campus.

It wasn't always this way, though. ASU's current alcohol policy is overly restrictive, but it used to be more open. The previous policy allowed students of legal drinking age to make the "personal choice" of whether they wanted to drink on campus. Under it, ASU was a wet campus, meaning that students of legal drinking age were allowed to consume alcohol on the University's grounds.

"The university is committed to maintaining an environment conducive to intellectual and personal development of students and to the safety and welfare of all members of the university community," the former policy stated. "This includes encouraging responsible

drinking habits by those individuals who consume alcoholic beverages and respecting the rights of those individuals who otherwise choose not to use alcohol."

Take away the dry versus wet campus element, and the language of the University's previous alcohol policy is extremely similar to the current rule's. Both were born from the philosophy that every student should have the most educational, enjoyable and healthy experience possible on campus. The key difference is that now, even responsible, legal alcohol usage seems to have no place in this environment.

Alongside the school's flat-out ban on alcohol, specific restrictions have also been added for different drugs over the years.

As state and federal policies, as well as national attitudes, surrounding these substances have changed, ASU's policy feels stale and outdated. It seems the University figured students couldn't possibly pursue a worthwhile education and drink responsibly at the same time.

But what if you can?



A reputation, drenched

Almost all ASU students know that Halloween is one of the school's premier holidays — students may be cloaked in costumes, but the University's party school reputation is on full display. So it wasn't atypical when Tatianna Gladu-Lesniewski, a sophomore studying forensic science, stumbled upon a pair of visibly drunk girls outside her dorm around Halloween 2022. Rather than abandoning them to their own devices, she and her friends checked up on the girls, provided them with water and electrolytes, and offered them rides home.

Her experience that night pointed out the glaring need for students to be educated on safety precautions when consuming alcohol and partaking in the party culture that permeates and surrounds campus. Realizing the University had failed to sufficiently fulfill this need, she took this responsibility into her own hands and founded Sun Devil Sips, a club dedicated to creating “a community of

educated individuals that look out for each other to avoid potentially harmful situations involving alcohol,” according to its Sun Devil Sync page.

“If people want to partake in alcohol and engage in those activities, they will find a way to do it, regardless if ASU is a dry campus or not,” Gladu-Lesniewski said.

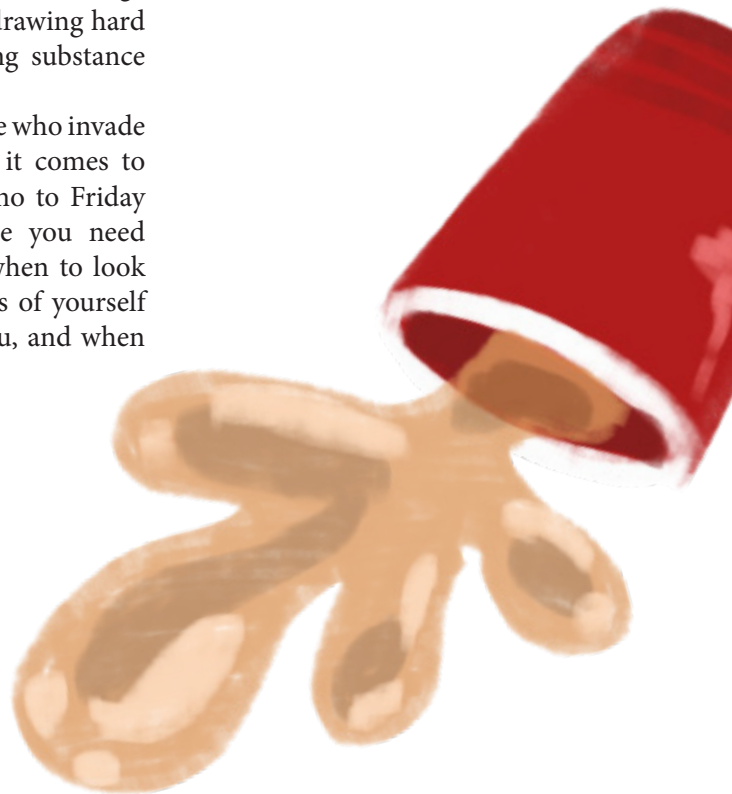
That's because rules don't create boundaries — people do. They do it for themselves, for one another and for entire universities.

For many, college is an experimental version of adulthood. It's a time when many students awkwardly attempt to familiarize themselves with maturity for the first time, taking it on and off at will like a costume. A large aspect of that maturity is drawing hard lines for yourself regarding substance use.

It's letting go of people who invade your comfort zone when it comes to substance use. It's saying no to Friday night party plans because you need time alone. It's knowing when to look at the substance use habits of yourself and the people around you, and when

“If people want to partake in alcohol and engage in those activities, they will find a way to do it, regardless if ASU is a dry campus or not.”

— Tatianna Gladu-Lesniewski





to decide something has to change.

These are completely personal decisions. No policy or guideline will stand in the way of someone who wants to use a substance, so it's not safe to act like it does. All it does is push those who want to use substances to do so in secret.

Smoke-free

Alcohol may be the name of the dry campus game, but it isn't students' only substance of choice. As with alcohol, an all-out ban is also ASU's approach to the use of many drugs, even for some federally legal substances, like tobacco.

In 2013, ASU became a tobacco-free campus after banning the use of the substance on all school grounds "to promote health and wellness in the ASU community," according to ASU News.

Just six years later, in 2019, the University also prohibited vaping on campus for the sake of students' health and safety, but some in the ASU community criticized the ban for

"demoniz(ing)" the habit, which is a popular alternative for those trying to quit smoking cigarettes, according to The State Press.

Vaping proliferates among college students — out of all adults, those aged 18–24 were most likely to use e-cigarettes, a study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found in 2021. Just take a look at the rows of neon-colored, candy-sweet e-cigarettes that stock the shelves of convenience stores around campus, and it's not hard to see evidence that supports the statistic in real life.

Like any drug, nicotine alters users' brain chemistry, compelling them to chase the same dopamine rush with every hit or drag. The more nicotine a person intakes, the more dopamine receptors the brain creates to handle the sheer amount of the chemical, a process known as upregulation.

"The brain is used to that nicotine being there to stimulate all those added receptors to increase the dopamine levels," said Scott Leischow, a research professor in the College of Health Solutions who studies nicotine

addiction and the process of quitting smoking. “So if you take away the nicotine, then the dopamine levels that a person is used to drop a lot. The absence of the added dopamine is why withdrawal symptoms occur.”

Along with the pain of withdrawal symptoms, Leischow said quitting the drug could only become more difficult if the user were in an environment where nicotine use is common, as the case may be for ASU students looking to kick the habit. In a 2019 survey by ASU Wellness, over 1 in 8 students reported that they had vaped in the past 30 days, and over 1 in 20 reported smoking cigarettes within the same timeframe.

On a campus where substance use is so common, Leischow recommended that students trying to quit a substance place distance between themselves and the people around them who practice the habit they’re trying to break.

“If a person is dependent on a product and they want to discontinue it, there’s value in trying to stay away

from the product and the use of those products, and that may mean staying away from the people that use them for some period of time,” he said.


Whether it be drinking, smoking or vaping, the bottom line is this: People create these boundaries only if they want to. No policies or bans can make the decision for them, so why keep pretending that these rules will?

The policy down south

The dry campus way may be the only way at ASU, but not all universities take the same approach. In fact, travel a little over 100 miles south of ASU, and you’ll find that the language of the University of Arizona’s current alcohol policy is very similar to ASU’s more permissive former policy.

“The University of Arizona recognizes that the use of alcoholic beverages by those of legal age is a matter of personal choice,” UA’s rule states. “The University requires that those who choose to drink on





University property abide by state law and University regulations, and expects that such individuals will conduct themselves responsibly, mindful of the rights of others.”

Unlike ASU, UA is a wet campus, so students of legal drinking age can consume alcohol on campus — within reason. But UA’s decision to allow of-age students to drink on campus has come with some repercussions, according to Trinity Gary, a senior at UA studying ecology and evolutionary biology, along with communication.

Even though UA’s wet campus rule allows students to drink on campus, the privilege applies to students of legal drinking age only. But enforcement of the school’s ban on providing alcohol to minors and alcohol consumption by underage students is fairly relaxed, which can lead to unsafe situations, according to Gary.

“I have friends on the EMS teams here, and they’ll get calls every weekend about someone on campus, some

freshman in a dorm needing to go to the hospital because they’re so blackout drunk,” she said.

“All drugs have been so normalized here.”

Wet campus or dry campus, ASU and UA are plagued by some of the same problems involving substance use and alcohol consumption. So is there really one “correct” policy?

As of right now, there isn’t. Instead, conversations about substance use need to go beyond policy — they need to be about people, about what best benefits the student body.

I don’t have all the answers or a steadfast solution. But I know through my personal experiences as a student that the dry campus policy has failed to keep every student safe, happy and healthy, which should be some of the school’s top priorities. ASU’s dry campus policy feels like a finger-wag while UA’s seems to be no more than a shrug.

Neither is what students deserve.



Report

the cost of fitting in the cost of fitting in the cost of fitting in the cost of fitting in the cost of fitting in the cost of fitting in

**With fashion this cheap, the end of the world
doesn't seem so bad**

**by Gib Manrique
Designs by Monica Navarro**

Sometimes, shopping for secondhand clothes at ASU can feel like a competitive sport — especially for the uninitiated. Just imagine: The double doors of the Buffalo Exchange on University Drive slam behind you for the first time, and with it, pulsing dread sets in like a second heartbeat. When you walk out those doors, you need to leave with an outfit that impresses the nearly 80,000 other students on campus and that will somehow summon the people who will become your forever friends.

Then you remember that the hordes of fellow shoppers in the store are just as desperate to fit in as you are. It's a race to see who can find their clique faster, and no one wants to get left behind. Better start hitting the racks.

Thanks to social media, fashion trends spread across the internet like wildfire. But because these trends fade away just as quickly as they come into fashion, many cash-strapped students try to opt for the cheapest clothes possible. Many times, that means scouring secondhand stores.

THE STATE PRESS MAGAZINE STORE

But secondhand shopping isn't what it used to be: Many fashion resellers like Buffalo Exchange, which promises to peddle "vintage pieces and unique finds" on its website, are stocked with poorly made clothes that cheaply recreate online fashion trends.

Even though style mavens on a budget may find these clothes convenient, their consumption fuels the fast fashion industry, which is one of the world's most significant contributors to the climate crisis.

Despite the U.N.'s warning that climate change is the "single biggest health threat facing humanity" fueling many students' anxiety about looming climate doom, it may seem contradictory that overconsumption, or the practice of buying an unnecessary amount of products, has campus culture in a chokehold, as evidenced by the Stanley cup takeover of TikTok and shopping hauls full of Shein.

The fast lane

While the roots of fast fashion date back to the dawn of manufacturing during the Industrial Revolution, fashion today has only become faster and faster. Now, the modern fast fashion industry churns out billions of

articles of clothing a year at breakneck speeds through a business model that often uses cheap, low-quality materials and replicates existing trends, rather than featuring unique designs.

"There are so many fast fashion brands out there, like Shein, Forever 21, H&M," said Olivia Madrid, a fashion design student currently on a gap year. "If there is something new every week or day, it's easy to catch fast fashion."

In this industry, companies are still able to spin a profit from selling cheaper clothes by producing mass quantities of low-quality items, rather than fewer long-lasting pieces.

"With new trends ... happening every day, retail stores will produce mass amounts of clothing, which ends up as overconsumption," Madrid said. "This is very bad for the environment because it all ends up in landfills. All this trash is taking up space, and it's taking up a massive amount of resources to produce this much."

As the third-largest polluting industry in the world, fashion releases 1.2 billion tons of carbon a year, representing 10% of annual greenhouse gas emissions worldwide. Textile production also dumps 92 million tons of waste in landfills annually, with only 12% of textiles being recycled and reused.

'It is so easy to overconsume'

For those who want to fit in but are on a budget, fast fashion can seem like a blessing.

"Fast fashion trends are cheap, which allows college kids to keep up with trends while on a budget," said Elyse Rivera, a junior studying fashion design. "They're also relatively casual and easy to wear, which tends to be ideal for college kids with busy schedules and active lifestyles."

These cheap clothes have found their way into many areas of student life at ASU. From joining a group that often requires members to dress in a certain style, like Greek life organizations, to piecing together a last-minute costume for themed events, fast fashion promises students that they will never be left scouring their closets, lost on what to wear.

Cassandra Kellar, a junior studying healthy lifestyles and fitness sciences, is no stranger to overconsumption through fast fashion — both from herself and her peers. As an avid music festival attendee, Kellar has depended on Shein and other fast fashion brands or online retailers, like Amazon, to cobble together affordable, yet trendy, outfits for shows.



“You really only wear outfits once, so it is so easy to overconsume,” she wrote in an email statement.

Aside from the festival scene, overconsumption also found a place in her life as a member of the Alpha Epsilon Phi sorority. Themed Greek life celebrations, like parties and bid day — the last day of the recruitment period for a sorority when invitations to join the organization are distributed — tend to overuse resources, according to Kellar.

Bid day shirts, which are distributed to every member of a sorority during the event each semester, cannot be reused for future bid days because they often align with a certain theme and include a specific year, Kellar said. In addition, these articles of clothing are frequently made with cheap materials and are often purchased in bulk.

“It’s not even just with bid day shirts or sorority or fraternity parties, it’s very common for ASU parties — a very prominent part of our ASU lives — to have themes,” Madrid said. “You see the post (advertising) a party on Snapchat, and you need to come up with a Western-themed outfit in four days.”

Madrid was no stranger to caving

to fast fashion in order to fit in with the crowd as she navigated the University’s party scene.

“I am guilty too,” Madrid said. “I was trying so hard to fit in my freshman year. ... I would go to parties and try to be on theme or trendy, and I would shop Amazon all the time.”

What happens next?

The typical life cycle of a trendy fast fashion piece begins with a click. But after all is said and done and it lives out its shelf life on the racks of some student’s dorm closet, all those puffy jackets and cow-print flared jeans have to end up somewhere. For many fast fashion pieces, that final resting place is the bargain bin at a secondhand clothes store.

“You go to Buffalo Exchange, and all those mesh shirts with angels on them from 2020 are everywhere when there used to be some high-quality finds,” Madrid said. “It makes me want to throw up.”

The country’s culture of overconsumption has caused fast fashion pieces to flood thrift stores nationwide, which can strain smaller stores that lack the employees, time and space to sort through the influx

of clothes, according to The New York Times.

This phenomenon has also impacted the shopping habits of many longtime thrifters, like Abbey Raye Richmond, a sophomore studying psychology. As someone with an alternative fashion style, Richmond has long depended on secondhand shopping as a surefire way to come across lasting pieces that align with her unique tastes. However, she said it’s now nearly impossible to go secondhand clothes shopping without encountering fast fashion pieces that mimic past style fads.

“I still have friends who buy huge Shein hauls to try and look alternative, and it only ever lasts a few months,” Richmond said. “I just wonder how long it will take until I find it in a Goodwill somewhere.”

Fashion forward

While overconsumption culture and fast fashion may have found a home at ASU, many students and faculty are also working to promote sustainable shopping on a budget and reduce waste when shopping for clothes.

Elena Marshall may be the director of sustainability at The Fashion

Collective at Arizona State University — a club dedicated to the business of fashion — but even she has fallen victim to shopping at fast fashion stores. The sophomore studying fashion wasn't aware of sustainable fashion practices until researching the topic, so she used to unknowingly purchase clothes from fast fashion brands.

"As I gained information on the topic, I slowly stopped shopping at those stores and (began) shopping at thrift stores and saving my money to purchase longer lasting pieces from sustainable brands," Marshall said. "Choosing to shop sustainably impacted my style significantly. Instead of purchasing trendy clothing that would only be relevant for the next week, I chose clothes that were more timeless and complemented my style better."

At The Fashion Collective, Marshall hosts workshops that discuss sustainability issues in the fashion industry and why impulsively buying

clothes before researching brands can be environmentally harmful. Even though the urge to hit "add to cart" can feel irresistible, Marshall aims to teach students that it's not always the most sustainable option.

In the end, she hopes to emphasize that sustainable shopping can also be a celebration of individuality. Rather than resorting to trends that are shoved down their throats by large corporations, shoppers can hone their own personal styles by avoiding fast fashion brands, all while being more sustainable, Marshall said.

"Admitting to faults and stepping away from fast fashion is a huge step in the right direction of figuring out who you are," Madrid said. "People not just following trends and having some staple pieces is what shows the world who you are."



*Buy one,
get one
50% off!*



*Please, we're
desperate!*

Meanwhile...

I try my best to be environmentally friendly.



I drink from a reusable water bottle...



I don't shop fast fashion — anymore.



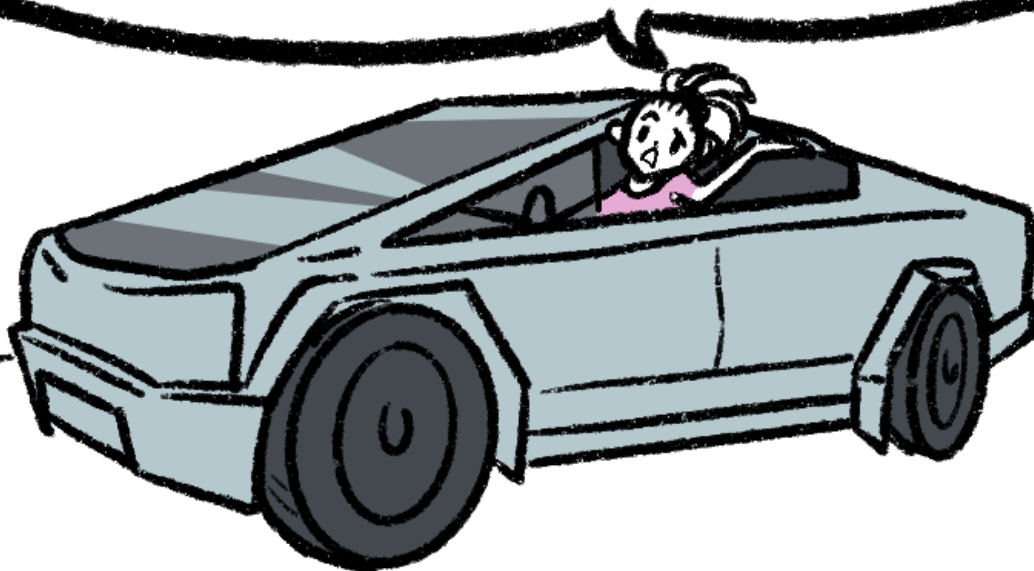
Even my vibrator's good for the Earth!



People judge me for "participating" in overconsumption...



But I really only buy the things I need.



by Claire Geare

Illustrations by Andrea Ramirez

Language barriers

Your Spanish proficiency does not diminish your heritage

by Audrey Eagerton
Designs by Monica Navarro

In the beginning, learning a new language can seem impossible. Not only are you expected to memorize a sea of new vocabulary and a maze of complex syntax rules, but you also have to be willing to make mistakes, accept that embarrassment is inevitable and have the courage to throw yourself into another culture while hoping the native speakers will be patient with you.

It's even harder when the language you're learning was once connected to your heritage but ultimately removed from your family, making it feel like there are generations of ancestors pressuring you to achieve fluency.

I'm half Mexican, but my family doesn't speak Spanish. After struggling to learn English as a kid, my grandfather refused to pass Spanish down to my mom and aunts, trapping us all in a cultural limbo. What's more, because I'm only partially Mexican, it feels like my claim on the culture is even weaker. And it is — I could easily hide behind my dad's English surname, and no one would know that this other part of me exists.

But I don't want to hide. For years, I've tried to connect with my Mexican heritage through learning Spanish.

I struggled through four years of

honors high school Spanish instead of opting for the regular section because I embarrassingly assumed the language would come naturally to me. Spoiler: It didn't, and it still hasn't.

I vividly remember the humiliation I felt burning my cheeks during a high school Spanish final as I watched all my classmates finish early while I was stumped trying to string together coherent sentences. Nonetheless, I kept trying. I added a Spanish minor in college to help me work toward my goal of fluency and one day achieve my dream of traveling through Latin America with ease. While I have made some progress, I still can't help but struggle with guilt and shame whenever I try speaking Spanish.

I'm not alone in this. While 75% of Latinos nationwide reported in a 2022 Pew Research Center survey that they can speak and understand Spanish at a conversational level, that statistic decreases with every generation that an individual's family has lived in the U.S. Less than 70% of second-generation U.S.-born Latinos in the survey said they can speak Spanish, and only 34% of Latinos who were third generation or higher said they can.



“The U.S. is the perfect place for families to lose their non-English language,” said Gabrielle Yocupicio, an instructor in the Spanish Heritage program at ASU. “Most families after the immigrant generation will have that language at home, and then their children might be bilingual. But then their grandchildren and beyond typically shift to English dominance depending on where they live and who they interact with.”

The University’s Spanish Heritage program aims to expand the Spanish skills of students who have had contact with the language in their families or within some other Spanish-speaking community they’re a part of. The program’s courses differ from traditional classes for students who are learning Spanish as a second language in that they focus on cultivating students’ cultural knowledge and pride in their heritage.

As a first-generation Mexican American who grew up near the U.S.-Mexico border in Nogales, Arizona, Yocupicio personally understands the backgrounds of the Spanish Heritage students she teaches, having lived many of the same experiences they have.

It’s not your fault you don’t know Spanish

In the beginner Spanish Heritage courses Yocupicio teaches, in which students “may just have the cultural connection and zero language knowledge,” she said some of the projects push students to acquaint themselves with their family lines — and the generational pain that may be intertwined along them. In one project, students are tasked with having in-depth conversations with their grandparents about their experiences with speaking Spanish.

“Sometimes grandparents don’t want to talk, but that really helps the students understand that it’s not your fault,” she said.

“You’re not responsible for not knowing Spanish even though you feel like you are or people might tell you that you are responsible. We see how the experience of our relatives informs whether the language is passed down or not.”

For many of the students’ grandparents, eliminating Spanish from their day-to-day lives was often a painful and difficult experience,

brought on by the need to assimilate and survive. But today, the lack of opportunities for bilingual education in Arizona public schools and the rigidity of English as a Second Language classes still make being bilingual painful for their grandchildren.

“When you’re bilingual, they put you in reinforcement classes with a special teacher to help with reading, writing and language arts,” said Tenoch Meza, a sophomore studying sports journalism who is one of Yocupicio’s former students. “That’s what limited myself and my ability to speak my language, and that’s when I really lost the Spanish ability.”

In 2000, Arizona passed Proposition 203, which required that all public school students be taught in English. Students who were considered “English language learners” would be taught in English immersion classes until they had a “good working knowledge” of English. Then, they’d be transferred to a classroom where English was the mainstream. Even though these English immersion classes were meant to be specially designed for students who were still learning English, they failed to help many students.

At the time, Yocupicio was in fourth grade, and she had been taught in a bilingual classroom up until the proposition was imposed. The change almost caused her to fail the grade.

Now, she researches sociolinguistics, the study of language

in relation to social factors. Based on her research, Yocupicio has come to understand that students’ English language skills aren’t threatened if they’re from a bilingual household — even though the public school system may treat them as such.

“The first thing they do when you register a child in public school is ask what language a child is exposed to,” she said. “And you say, ‘Oh, his grandma speaks Spanish to him,’ but the child only knows English. But the moment they hear they’re exposed to another language, it makes it suspicious. So, then they’re given an exam in English, and (because) a 5-year-old hasn’t taken an exam (before), they don’t pass.”

Once able to speak in Spanish, Jazlene Nevarez Carrillo, a freshman studying transborder Chicano and Latino studies, eventually lost most of her Spanish abilities in mandated ESL classes.

“I knew a few words, and I could understand, but I just couldn’t speak Spanish anymore,” Carrillo said. “It was weird too because I lived with my grandparents, who spoke Spanish, but even they didn’t speak it to me — it was just English. ... Being in a Hispanic household that’s supposed to encourage Spanish and keep the culture alive, I didn’t really feel connected to my culture.”

When Carrillo was younger, her mom swore Carrillo only spoke Spanish. But once she got older,

something changed along the way — she no longer knew Spanish as well. As a result, Carrillo began asking her family why.

“The first person I went to was my mom because ultimately, she made all those decisions for me,” Carrillo said. “And when she found out that I was getting placed in ESL, she kind of took that offense from the school, saying, ‘Oh, so you think my daughter can’t speak English.’ And because of that, she kind of used it as her own fuel to have me be more dominant in English.”

Carrillo’s mom began to speak to her in English and asked her grandparents to switch to English around her as well. Around that time, her parents divorced, and her father — who only spoke Spanish — moved out of the house, effectively erasing her connection to the language.

“When my mom told me about that, I felt not betrayed but just, ‘Why didn’t you want to let me learn both languages at the same time? Why did you take that part away from me?’” Carrillo said.

It’s ‘no sé,’ not ‘no sabo’

“No sabo kid” is a relatively new term to describe young Hispanic people who can’t speak or aren’t fluent in Spanish. At best, it’s used to lightly tease. At worst, the label can shame and exclude those who already feel shut out from their heritage.

The “no sabo” portion of the term mockingly refers to a purportedly incorrect way of saying “no sé,” which is Spanish for “I don’t know.”

When Carrillo visits her family in Mexico, she knows they’re going to mock the quality of her Spanish skills. Since she asked her family to start speaking to her in Spanish again, she’s built up her fluency and started to reconnect with the language. But the pronunciation of Spanish words differs depending on the region, and families are often all too willing to let you know when you don’t measure up, Carrillo said.

“Mexican Spanish and U.S. Spanish are completely different,” she said. “Whenever I go there (Mexico), they would always give me names like ‘the white girl’ or ‘the northern girl,’ always giving me names based on where I live.

“When I was smaller, it would make me feel like they didn’t really love me — why would your family who cares about you try to categorize you in groups, make fun of me and mimic my words?”

Even though the term “no sabo kid” may be relatively new, the concept it mockingly refers to is not. Growing up, Yocupicio was often called “Pocha,” another term for Hispanic Americans who aren’t fluent in Spanish.

“It was hard, and I felt like I wasn’t Mexican enough and I’m not American enough,” she said. “I felt that throughout



my entire schooling, basically.”

Now, as a Spanish Heritage instructor at ASU, she explores what it means to be fluent and the preconceived notions heritage students have of what proper Spanish is.

“It wasn’t until college when I took a freshman course for heritage learners (that I learned) what that (term) meant,” Yocupicio said. “(I) realized it was having a language as part of your background that you were exposed to as a child, so you understand some of it, but maybe you lack some of the literacy skills. And I found there was a huge community of students that had the exact same experience.”

In order to learn how to best guide her students, Yocupicio begins most of her bilingual heritage Spanish classes by asking her students about their language goals.

“A lot of them say their goal is to speak properly,” Yocupicio said.

“What does ‘proper’ mean? What is informal? What is formal? How are these things real? Are they subjective?

How do they define a standard or the formality? And then we start to realize, ‘Oh my gosh, there’s a whole bunch of opinions about what is proper, what isn’t proper.’”

After setting these goals, Yocupicio then begins to introduce her students to sociolinguistics topics to demonstrate that there is no one “proper” way to formally learn a language.

“Eventually, we get to a point where I will try to explicitly say, ‘We’re not here to correct anything. You’re here to keep what you have, and we’re going to add more,’” Yocupicio said. “So we want you to keep your Spanglish words. Whatever you define as formal, informal, slang, let’s keep it, absolutely everything. The idea is you can use the language however you’re comfortable with because people are not going to be pleased no matter what.”

To unlearn her own preconceived notions of what proper language looks like, Yocupicio also had to be explicitly instructed in the same way. Once she did, however, she knew she wanted to

“When I was smaller, it would make me feel like they didn’t really love me — why would your family who cares about you try to categorize you in groups, make fun of me and mimic my words?”

— Jazlene Nevarez Carrillo

enter the linguistics field and share her realizations with students and other teachers.

One of those key realizations was that “no sabo” actually makes grammatical sense.

“I’ve had students identify as no sabo kids, and something I like to do is look at the verb and break it down,” Yocupicio said. “We’re studying present tense, and what are the rules for present tense? Verbs in present tense take the ‘-o.’ It follows the form.”

“So technically, if you say, ‘no sabo,’ that means your brain has internalized the present tense rules for regular verbs, and you have a lot of knowledge. And my students are like, ‘Oh my gosh!’ It just so happens that (the verb) ‘saber’ is irregular.”

Connecting beyond language

Like myself, Meza and Carrillo are both dedicated to strengthening their Spanish and reaching a level of fluency that they’re proud of — whatever that

may look like. While language is a major step toward reclaiming and connecting with Latino culture, it’s not the be-all and end-all.

Beyond learning Spanish, Carrillo found that food is one of the most direct ways to connect with her heritage after begging her grandma to teach her how to make tortillas.

“Food is a big part of our life,” Carrillo said. “So I feel like that’s a really good starting point on, you know, how to connect with your ancestry.”

It wasn’t until Meza added a Spanish minor and started to connect with classmates who shared many of the same experiences as him that he found a community.

“It was my second year ... (when) I took advanced bilingual Spanish, where I felt welcome, like I belong(ed) for once — finally,” Meza said. “I made friends because I could bond with them in the culture aspect, because (they have) similar beliefs as me.”



Satire

The timeline of relationships

**The vicious cycle of falling in
and out of love**

by Claire Geare

Designs by Anna Olp & Monica Navarro

I'm in my bitter era. Maybe it's because I'm single before Valentine's Day, or maybe it's because you people are testing me.

It's definitely the latter. I can't even take a walk around campus to escape my eternal loneliness because you're all ruining it. I'm talking face-sucking at the Memorial Union, hands in back pockets, matching pajamas in public. It's the apocalypse. It's like a deadly plague of romance is slowly sweeping through the village, and we survivors are helpless to watch as the disease claims its next victim.

Except it's even worse than that.

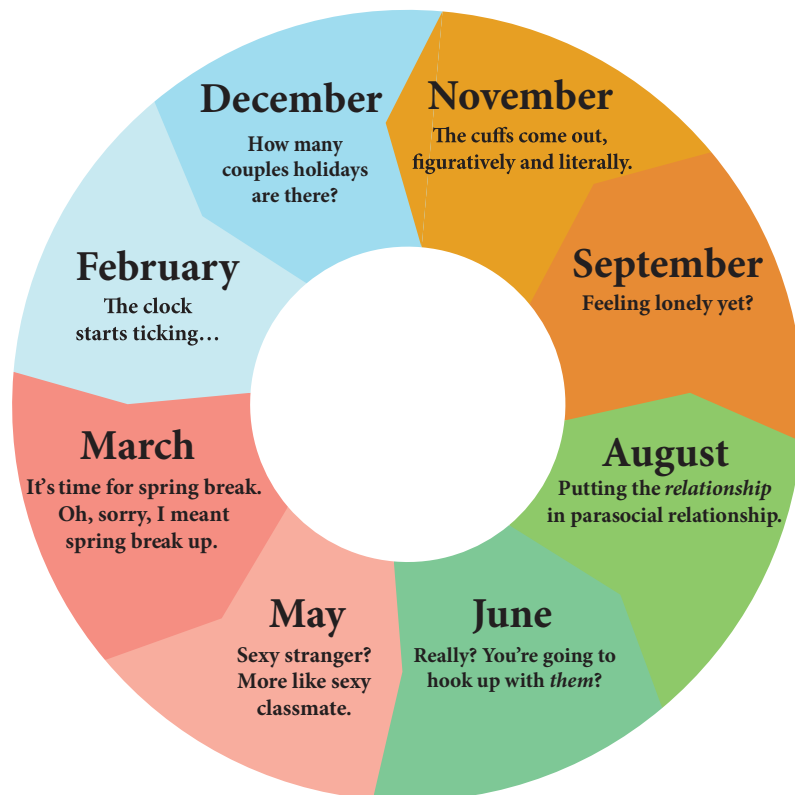
You know, there's a species of cicadas that comes out every 17 years with the sole purpose of screeching and screwing, but at least they don't post about it on Instagram.

Even though I'm a Certified Hater, I'm no liar. And I have to say, you guys are pretty entertaining. For God knows what reason, you all participate in this train wreck of a mating season, and I just get to sit back and watch. Every. Single. Year. I'm the Jane Goodall of

college relationships at this point. I've got my doctorate in hate-ology and my minor in keeping tabs on your life. So, I've put my talents to good use.

Thanks to my expert social media stalking — I mean *research* — skills, combined with your willingness to share every moment of your relationship online, I have devised a scientifically tested calendar for tracking your love life. As seasons come and go, so do relationships — and unfortunately, yours is about to end.

Welcome to The Annual Cycle of Relationships™ (Patent pending. But not really.)



Okay, that's a little too general. Let's break this down further, class, shall we? So even *you* can keep up.



Winter

It's the most wonderful time of the year — if you're taken. But if you're single, it's a bitter reminder that your time is running out.

Look, I get it. Our little monkey brains don't want to be alone in the winter. The freezing chill that lingers around the holidays sends everyone into a panic about our imminent deaths, so instinctively, we pair up to try to survive these cold months together.

Except, what cold? We live in the middle of the desert. And what are you trying to survive exactly? FOMO?

Colloquially, this time of year is fittingly referred to as “cuffing season.” Yes, as in literal handcuffs. And it's not wrong! You people must be chained together the way you're perpetually on top of one another. I know the cuffs are figurative, but your hand seems awfully stuck to her thigh, buddy. Enjoy it while it lasts.

Before the bomb strapped to your relationship goes off, you get to spend one last holiday with your soon-to-be ex: Valentine's Day.

Here's a fact of life: People hate missing out, especially when it comes

to Valentine's Day. We've all seen the movies where some sad-sack idiot loser spends Feb. 14 without a valentine, and who wants to be a sad-sack idiot loser?

So, as January races by, we cling to whoever's readily available in fear of losing cheap chocolates and even cheaper promises. “*We'll be together forever.*” “*You're the love of my life.*” “*I couldn't live without you.*”

Just spare me, honestly. I've heard these lies before. I've ended a relationship once or twice in my life, and I can't confirm or deny this, but I think they're still living.

Spring

Fuck a May-December romance. Make room for an October-February fling. After five couples holidays, 40 anniversary posts and 2,000 hours of banging my head against the wall, the cuffs are finally unlocked. That's right — you've officially made it to breakup season.

Do you know what's more entertaining than watching entire relationships burst into flames online? Nothing. As someone who's very publicly retracted a hard launch

multiple times, I'm allowed to say this: It's objectively hilarious.

Random mutuals who were codependent on some stranger are suddenly posting provocative pictures to angsty songs. It's like a Bat-Signal for the newly single.

Thirst trap all you want — nothing will help you overcome the shame of deleting your ex's tag from your bio.

PSA: Stop doing that. For one, it makes your partner's account look like a social media campaign that you've started for your cat. But most importantly, it's simply embarrassing. Do you know who else has your tag in their bio? Your mother, right under the words: “It's wine o'clock somewhere!” The least you could do is put her tag in your bio instead after all the free press she's given you.

Oh, and if you thought no one noticed you've “quietly” deleted all traces of your ex from your feed? We did. I did. And I speak for the people. Instagram giveth, and Instagram taketh away.

But don't despair: Every single's favorite week — spring break — is upon us, which means it's time for you to ditch the old ball and chain and make



out with a sexy stranger in Cabo.

The unfortunate news is, when you're an ASU student, there's no such thing as a sexy stranger in Cabo. For better or worse, you have the entire student body to choose from, so be prepared to see that random hookup around campus for the next couple of years! In line at the MU, strolling down Palm Walk and sitting in front of you in your lecture class. No place is safe.

Summer

As the temperatures spike, the cycle continues. Hot They Summer heats up as everyone returns to their hometowns for a regrettable rendezvous with that one kid who sat behind you in high school math. The very people you never wanted to see again after graduation suddenly become viable options, and I'm convinced a monthslong heatstroke is to blame.

Pro tip: Don't even think about logging onto dating apps in your hometown. Yes, I'm speaking from experience here. I accidentally matched with a random kid from high school on Hinge the other day, and the first thing he messaged me about was whether I

was still dating my ex. Why, of course I am. That's why I'm on Hinge, obviously, because I'm in a happy relationship.

The only other way to kill time over the summer is to daydream about unattainable crushes. Whether it's a parasocial crush on a YouTuber or the only other person at the airport who's your age, you swear there's some tension. There isn't. I'll tell you the truth here: The grocery store clerk doesn't want you, the barista doesn't want you, and Kurtis Conner definitely doesn't want you. You're just bored.

So, that's a wrap on summer! Time to head back to campus with your laundry list of regrettable hookups, missed connections and potential sexually transmitted diseases. Get tested, folks.

Fall

Wait, you're still here?

Pour one out for our fallen soldiers because this season is for the relationships that made it through the year alive. Hats off to you, honestly. If you're still in a relationship at this point, you're either a victim of Stockholm syndrome or the wedding is next month

— and I haven't gotten my invitation in the mail yet...

Seriously, though, congratulations. If you're not single in September, it's truly a miracle. Like that fish that grew legs, you're a scientific anomaly, and you've stumped even the most skilled scientist in the field (me). You've survived spring's carnage and summer's breeding frenzy, and you've lived to tell the tale.

Fall is the time when these OTPs reign. For the rest of us cretins, however, the prowl begins once again. As school starts up, a new dating pool floods onto campus just in time to be snatched up for winter. I swear, it feels like I'm dodging Cupid's arrows just trying to walk through campus.

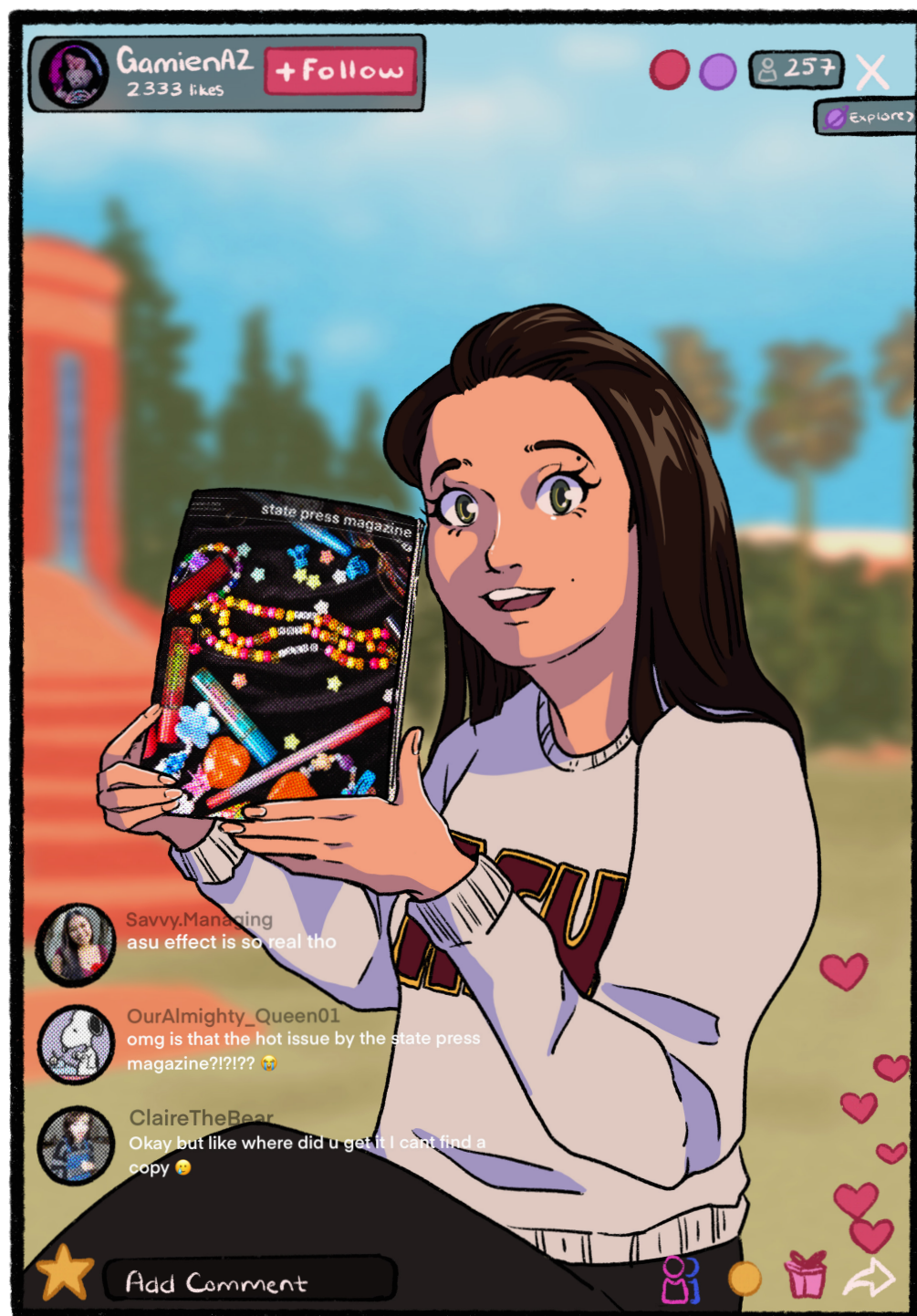
After that, the cycle restarts yet again, continuing in perpetuity. What have we learned here? From the looks of it, probably nothing. I know I didn't learn anything. Life is a flat circle, love is meaningless, and you'll do it again next year.



Under the influence

Content creation is more than light-hearted fun — for some, it's hard work

by Leah Mesquita
Illustrations by Andrea Ramirez



Whether you're chronically online or actually outside touching grass, we all know influencers are taking over our world. They fill our feeds with ring light-illuminated brand deals and 15-second clips of their latest self-tanner routines. Gone are the days of viral sensations like Jenna Marbles and Connor Franta, who once ruled the internet without the help of weekly brand deals. Chapstick challenges, music video parodies and flash mobs have now faded into trends of the past.

These days, a catchy username, a functioning smartphone and a dream are all you need to kick-start your career as an influencer. The simple act of recording your life may be enough to put you on the map, just as it did for TikTok star Emily Mariko, who rose to internet stardom after sharing her beloved salmon rice bowl recipe with the world.

Back when YouTube and the now-deceased six-second-video app Vine captivated the internet's attention, users needed to amass millions of followers to be considered a celebrity. Unless you reached viral territory, your name was largely unheard of on these platforms.

In 2015, Vine began curating users' feeds with a personalized "For You" channel, which was similar to TikTok's "For You" page. With the rise of these personalized algorithms, a user with 100 followers can now achieve virality just as a user with 1 million followers can. And some students at ASU are no stranger to this.

Microniche

From TikTok to Instagram to YouTube, influencers seem to have infiltrated every corner of the internet. In fact, over 50 million people worldwide consider themselves to be influencers, Forbes reported in 2022.

As influencer culture continues to seep into users' everyday lives, criticism of these online personalities has only grown louder. Many online viewers have mocked influencers for being out of touch in their digital bubbles, especially when they complain that content creation is exhausting.

Even though working as a full-time content creator may not be a true 9-to-5, stereotypes that influencer work is effortless could not be further from the truth, according to ASU alum Caitlin O'Reilly.

"People only see the end product," she said. "They're used to seeing a 10-second video, and that's it. They don't see what goes on behind the scenes."

O'Reilly, who graduated from ASU in 2018 after studying marketing and entrepreneurship, has been creating online content since her junior year of college.

"I have a passion for fashion, and I love to combine that with my Navajo culture," O'Reilly said. "My mission with my brand is to encourage other people to reconnect with their culture and embrace it through style and everyday living."

O'Reilly currently boasts over 10,000 Instagram followers under her handle, @nizhonifulme, and she's also amassed thousands of followers on Facebook and YouTube. Her brand name, Nizhóniful Me, takes inspiration from the Navajo-English slang term "nizhóniful," which means "beautiful." On her Instagram, you can peek into her moccasin collection, try her recipe for Native peach tea and journey along with her through traveling vlogs.

"It definitely took years to grow my Instagram following," O'Reilly said. "What helped me nail down my brand was focusing on the areas I wanted to create content in and finding my target audience."

Since finding her brand's niche, O'Reilly said she plans to stick to the more "traditional" online platforms she is already established on, instead of breaking into the complex, algorithmic world of TikTok.

"TikTok is really foreign to me," she said. "I haven't dedicated much time there."

O'Reilly's YouTube channel, which has over 1,000 subscribers, is where you'll find some of her most recent projects, including thrift hauls, lookbooks and discussions about her Navajo identity. Even though she said the process of filming and editing YouTube videos can be "intense," the end result is always rewarding.

"YouTube is great for building a deeper connection with your audience," O'Reilly said. "I feel like it's more of an

investment because you're watching longer videos from a creator."

Student creators

"I really wouldn't consider myself an influencer," said Maggie Barry, a senior studying music theater performance. "But in 2022, I posted a silly, little video poking fun at theater kids that got 1.5 million views."

Like many during the pandemic, Barry began creating videos as a way to distract herself from the monotony of her everyday life while COVID-19 put a pause on all outside activity.

"I started posting content that romanticizes my life to break up how mundane it can be," Barry said. "I like to offer opportunities for people to find joy online."

On her TikTok page, @magnificent7, Barry has cultivated a close-knit community of over 2,500 followers, who loyally watch her videos and leave comments of encouragement

as she shares her talents as a singer and dancer.

"I wanted to make content for people who do theater," Barry said. "I'm a midsize dancer, so I want to show that other midsize dancers can work professionally, even if our bodies aren't what the industry typically wants."

Instead of being wracked with nerves, Barry feels excited by the prospect that her fan base may grow.

"I feel like I should be freaked out," Barry said. "But I grew up in the age of YouTubers, and I learned so much from them."

Although she does not have any long-term plans for her TikTok account, she does not completely discount a future as a full-time influencer.

"Right now, it's a way for me to have fun," Barry said. "But if I somehow got a bunch of followers, having a (bigger) platform is something I'd be interested in."

For another ASU student, maintaining an online platform is more

than a hobby — it's a source of income.

"My brother and I saw something on Nike and thought, 'What if we made that?'" said Enasia Colon, a sophomore studying communication. "Then the idea started growing, and everything picked up pretty quickly."

Colon's brand, the EC Collection, provides clothing for all athletes who "represent the everyday grind and hustle," according to its website. The brand's clothes are defined by athleisure pieces featuring minimalist designs, such as solid-colored hoodies and caps embroidered with the brand's "EC" logo.

"This is year three for our brand, and it's doing really well," Colon said. "But as far as social media goes, it's a lot of work, and it's not easy, especially since I'm the face of it."

Because the turnover of trends on social media is so fast-paced, Colon's brand is constantly innovating to keep up with new style fads. To gauge what colors should be included in her brand's

merchandise, Colon and her team rely heavily on their audience to tell them what's trending.

"You have to figure out what colors are 'in' and look out for what people like," she said. "Your brand depends on everything that's trending in the world.

"I use apps like Instagram, TikTok and Snapchat (to see what people are wearing). I also see what famous people are wearing because if they're wearing it, other people will wear it too."

On her Instagram, where Colon showcases the EC Collection's pieces, she's amassed over 1,300 followers. Currently, the EC Collection offers hats, hoodies and shirts for \$40-\$65. While the average shopper may consider these prices to be more expensive than athletic gear at major stores like Target and Walmart, Colon said purchasing clothes from her brand is more meaningful than buying from a big-name corporation.

"If Nike sold a sweatshirt for \$60 and an independent person was

trying to sell a sweatshirt for \$70, to Nike, it's just another \$60 in the bank," Colon said. "But to the independent person, that's success. And I think that's something people don't really understand."

Eventually, Colon envisions the EC Collection blossoming from a small business to the shelves of larger stores, like Dick's Sporting Goods.

"I just know (my brand) is going to be at that point," Colon said.

Being authentic

After sharing her life on social media for the last few years, O'Reilly has mastered handling negative comments on her accounts. She said she maintains a positive attitude by learning to look past detractors' negative words and see into their humanity.

"It's hard at times, and right now I'm trying to shift my mindset into thinking, 'It's not so much about me as it is about them,'" O'Reilly said. "I don't

know what they're going through at this moment. Maybe something I posted triggered something? I try to stay focused on, 'I don't know what their circumstances are right now.'"

For O'Reilly, one of the most rewarding aspects of her job is when fans leave positive notes on her page.

"I always love it when I get comments saying my content has helped someone in some way," O'Reilly said. "Those are always the best, and it motivates me to keep going."

More than money or a massive fan base, O'Reilly's ultimate goal as an influencer is to foster a connection between herself and her viewers while maintaining a standard of authenticity.

"I want to build a personal connection with my audience and not focus so much on the materialistic side of things," O'Reilly said. "I just want to connect with my audience by showing them a more realistic look at what life is like (for an influencer)."

Respectfully,

I don't want to hear about your study abroad

Finally, a way to overcome the annoyance of recent study abroad returners

by Audrey Eagerton
Illustrations by Anna Olp

“The last thing I did in Italy was stroll through a *piazza* with a *cappuccino* in hand — did I mention that?”

Every year, thousands of ASU students embark on a study abroad experience, with many of them making a long-awaited pilgrimage to Europe. Sure, some return with a new perspective on the world, but honestly, most come back absolutely intolerable. You'll know them when you see them — just look for the people who start every conversation with “back when I was in Europe...”

These one-time world travelers are constantly bragging that during their experience abroad, they were challenged academically, learned to speak the local language “fluently” and came to appreciate the “simple, little lives” of their host families. Except, we already knew that because they felt a compulsive need to let the rest of us know what a fulfilling time they had visiting Europe's overcrowded tourist traps — I mean *hidden gems* — on social media.

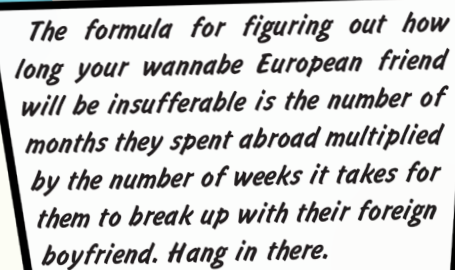
These professional globe-trotters considered it their job to diligently document their four months in Italy and report back to those stuck in the

States, who aren't as well-traveled and cultured as them.

Their Instagram feeds look like Pinterest boards filled with every piece of artisan bread they consumed, quaint bridges and cobblestone streets you hope they tripped over while their eyes were glued to their phones watching the likes pour in on their latest post.

While I am guilty of hate-liking these photo dumps and commenting “GORGEOUS!” I've finally had enough.

You would think the constant, not-so-humble bragging — through meaningless “aesthetic” photos that just clog your feed and 20-slide-long Instagram stories of random scenery in Greece — would end when their plane touches down in Arizona and they're sentenced to a car-centric lifestyle in the States like the rest of us peasants. But no, it's just the beginning.



The formula for figuring out how long your wannabe European friend will be insufferable is the number of months they spent abroad multiplied by the number of weeks it takes for them to break up with their foreign boyfriend. Hang in there.



When they inevitably return from their riveting journeys, they act like gallant adventurers from the Age of Exploration who just discovered cheese that isn't wrapped in plastic. Naturally, they have to share their revelation with anyone they can trap for 30 minutes. But don't let it make you miserable. In fact, let me introduce you to a life-changing discovery: Former study abroad students are *very* easy to mess with.

These are examples of real conversations I've had with friends who came back from Europe annoyingly ready to overshare, and how I got my revenge.

'When I was in (insert European destination of choice)...

"When I was in Florence, I would volunteer at this local orphanage and practice my Italian with the nuns and

kids," my friend, Emma, said as we caught up over coffee, or — as she would call it — *caffè*. "I just felt so present, and it made me appreciate the little things in life, you know?"

"I can imagine," I bit back. I couldn't.

Emma spent most of her study abroad trip boarding planes to Berlin and Madrid for 48-hour-long clubbing adventures, and prowling around Paris on the hunt for a French boyfriend. I know this because she called me from all three places to fill me in on her latest escapade, regardless if it was 3 a.m. in Arizona. As far as I can tell, she spent very little time exploring Florence, where she was supposed to be taking a full semester of classes.

"The Italians weren't very welcoming to study abroad students," Emma prattled on. "I got so many dirty looks just from walking down the street." Probably because she wears athleisure and puts ice in her wine.

“Even from the nuns?” I asked naively. And that is how they trap you. You ask one innocent question about their trip, and you can say goodbye to any hope for a pleasant evening.

After she name-dropped the 15th European country she visited — I kept count — I desperately made eye contact with the other poor soul trapped in this conversation with me. At that moment, we elevated to a higher plane of existence and communicated telepathically to devise a plan.

When your college life consists of mandatory reading and test anxiety, you must make shit up to wrench the reins of the conversation away from the Emmas in your life. Spread gossip. Talk about people who don't actually exist but who you apparently had wild nights with — at least, that's all Emma needs to know. Sacrifice your dignity, your friend's dignity. Anything is better than another story about Italian nuns.

My ally and I spun an otherwise ordinary semester at ASU into tales that could become Tempe Barstool legends. Ragers every night. Tinder dates gone wrong. Tinder dates gone right. Coveted internships and jobs were secured. Friend groups exploded. All complete exaggerations, like stories from any study abroad.

Emma never reached out again. Audrey: 1, Emma: 0

‘You wouldn’t get it’

Another archetype produced by studying abroad is The Intellectual. These faux philosophers are usually history majors who spent their time roaming museums and staring at a singular painting for two hours. You get the impression that they read “The Secret History” once and decided to make it their entire personality.

This was the case for my dear friend, Joe, who spent last spring in Spain, specifically Madrid and

Barcelona — or as he says it now, *Barthelona*.

One evening in early August, we took a walk together and caught up on each other’s lives. I could tell he was just waiting for me to ask, “So, how was Spain?” Like the amazing friend I am, I indulged him. Little did he know, I was no rookie. Emma had made me a veteran of study abroad conversations, and I was prepared to go to war again.

I let him muse about his internship at the U.S. embassy in Madrid and what an honor it was to see democracy in action abroad. Like the gentleman he is, he then apologized for getting overly excited and using terms I apparently didn’t know, like “visa” and “expat.” And then his monologue pivoted into the weekends he spent absorbing Spain’s culture, usually on solo walking tours of the city.

“I liked walking around by myself,” Joe said. “It just makes you feel more grounded in a place, and you can really connect with the locals.”



“How exciting,” I replied. I’d rather wash dishes.

Internally, I laughed at the thought of him imagining himself as Ethan Hawke’s character in “Before Sunrise” — romantic, lonely and wandering in search of the meaning of life.

Naturally, Joe name-dropped all the museums he went to and the paintings that moved him. Ever the sensitive thinker.

“Seeing Diego Velázquez’s works in person — I can’t describe it,” he said. “You wouldn’t get it. You have to see it in person.” I roll my eyes. “I think he’s one of the greatest Romantic painters to ever exist.”

And that right there is what we’ve all been waiting for.

“What are you talking about?” I interject, heading in for the kill. “Velázquez was a Baroque painter.”

I'm not saying that if you have a Joe in your life who's planning to go abroad, you have to take Spanish history and art history classes to have a prize moment like this. But if you can spare the credits, the payoff is high.

After that, Joe asked his first question about my life since he got back. Audrey: 2.

‘I can never live in the U.S. again’

For some, the European lifestyle may be a pleasant distraction from life in the States, but the U.S. will always be home. For others, one sip of *caffè espresso* from its motherland and functional public transportation are enough to make them never want to return to America.

What’s complicated about these wannabe expatriates is you can’t blame them. Fleeing the country has crossed every American’s mind at least once — if their critical thinking skills are still intact. But that doesn’t mean you can’t find a way to poke fun at them for thinking that Europe calls them in a “deeper” way.

I do this often with my friend, Harper, who is notably one of the least annoying study abroad students I know. After she graduates in May, she’s immediately returning to Ireland, where she already has an apartment secured.

And I can’t blame her. I too would move to the most unproblematic country in Europe — and the home of Paul Mescal — in a heartbeat. But

sometimes, she’ll get this look in her eye, and I can tell she’s about to dive into a long rant about how much she hates the U.S. freeway system and how she can’t wait to walk everywhere in a couple of months.

When this happens, I like to bring up U.S. politics and ask, “So, who are you planning to vote for in the presidential election again? Have you looked up each candidate’s stance on public transportation? Will you come home to vote?” This prompts her to let out a long, drawn-out sigh.

“You can’t just leave all your friends to deal with this mess without at least doing your civic duty,” I admonish her. Then, I gleefully blast Celtic folk music as we merge onto Interstate 10 during rush hour. Audrey: 3, TKO.

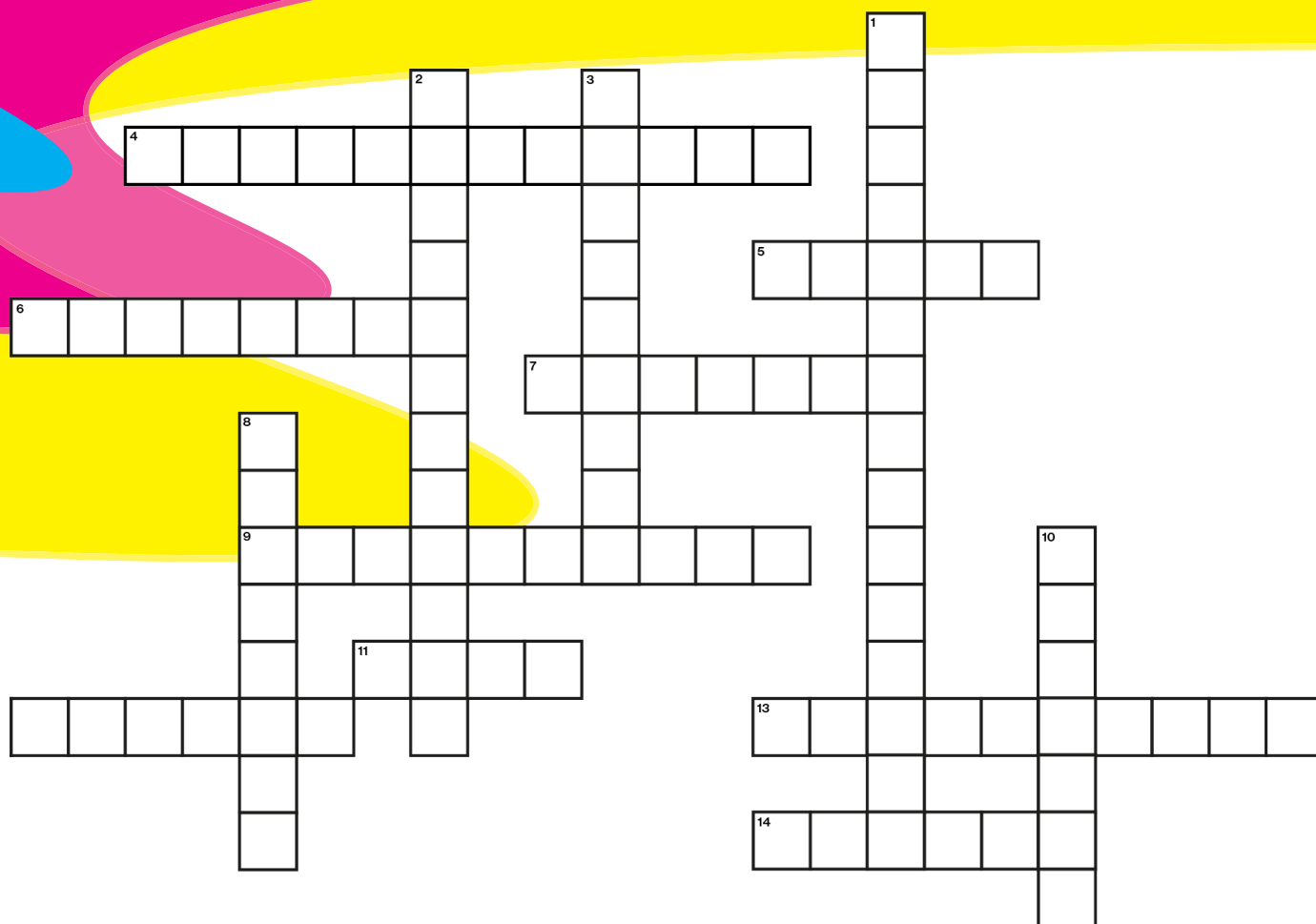
Keep it to yourself

If there’s a study abroad student in your life, first, identify what archetype they fall into, and then plot in preparation for their homecoming. Tailor your tactics to wherever they spent the past however many months gallivanting about. Do some anthropological research. Trust me, it’ll all be worth it in the end.

If you are a former study abroad student and have enough self-awareness to recognize yourself in these pages, respectfully, shut up.



the SPM crossword.



1. Despite the U.N.'s warning that climate change is the "single biggest health threat facing humanity" fueling many students' anxiety about impending climate doom, it may seem contradictory that ____ has campus culture in a chokehold.
2. The more nicotine a person intakes, the more dopamine receptors the brain creates to handle the sheer amount of the chemical, a process known as ____.
3. Caitlin O'Reilly's brand name, Nizhóníful Me, takes inspiration from the word "nizhóníful," a Navajo-English slang term meaning "____."
4. One activity Gabrielle Yocupicio tasks her students with in the Spanish Heritage program is to have in-depth conversations with ____ about their experiences.
5. Another term for Hispanic Americans who aren't fluent in Spanish.
6. In 1981, Arizona Gov. Bruce Babbitt proposed to raise the state's legal ____ age from 19 to 21.
7. As the third-largest polluting industry in the world, fashion production releases 1.2 ____ tons of carbon a year, representing 10% of annual greenhouse gas emissions worldwide.

8. Pro tip: Don't even think about logging onto dating apps in your ____.
9. The formula for figuring out how long your wannabe European friend will be insufferable is the number of months they spent abroad ____ by the number of weeks it takes for them to break up with their foreign boyfriend.
10. Another archetype produced by studying abroad is The Intellectual, usually ____ majors who spend their time roaming around museums and staring at a singular painting for two hours.
11. In 2023, the Arizona Legislature attempted to pass ____ bills governing drag shows by restricting them to certain times of day, requiring them to obtain permits and criminalizing the performance of drag on public property or where it "could be viewed by a minor."
12. Over 50 ____ people worldwide consider themselves to be influencers, Forbes reported in 2022.
13. The term "alternative" refers to styles that rebel against the ____.
14. It's the most wonderful season of the year — if you're taken.

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