

THE HOUGHTON STAR

Volume 106, Issue 16

www.houghtonstar.com

February 12, 2010

National Survey Gauges Student Satisfaction with the College

by Joella Eppehimer

This week, seniors and first-year students on campus received a link to the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) in their inboxes. Commonly referred to as "the Nessie," this survey is a tool used by colleges nationwide to evaluate their effectiveness. Associate Dean for Institutional Research and Assessment Daryl Stevenson stressed that this survey is "the big assessment of the year," and that the responses are instrumental in calculating areas in which Houghton College is doing well and determining changes that need to be made.

According to Stevenson, one or two national surveys are conducted each year, in addition to several smaller surveys that are sent to

a random selection of students. While the NSSE was not given last year, another national survey was performed to gauge student contentment.

This year's survey asks a full range of questions pertaining to student experiences, academics, quality of advising relationships and campus environment. The questions are grouped into five categories, including academic challenge, active and collaborative learning, student-faculty interaction, enriching educational experiences, and supportive campus environment. According to the results of the last NSSE administered, both seniors and first-year students at Houghton rated the college higher in the latter two categories, compared to the conglomeration of other NSSE participants. These results are based on the participation of 145 seniors

and 190 first-years, which accounts for more than 50% of each class.

To encourage this year's student body to participate, a challenge has been issued between the classes of 2010 and 2013. Whichever class has a higher percentage of participation will receive \$400, and both classes will receive \$100 if at least 50% of its members contribute. Stevenson emphasizes the importance of participation in this survey, because the results are compiled and used to make changes on campus. As an example of a modification that has been made in the past five years as a result of similar surveys, he cites the emphasis on collaboration between students and professors. Particularly in the science and psychology departments, but in all fields of study, Stevenson said that there are

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Houghton Students Attend Faith and Internat'l Development Conference

by Anna Matejova

On Thursday, February 2, a group of 22 students led by professors Ndunge Kiiti and Marcus Dean traveled to Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan to take part in the annual Faith and International Development Conference (FIDC). Joining several hundred other attendees from colleges and universities across the nation, students were invited to explore issues of international development in the context of faith, by speakers from a variety of backgrounds and areas of expertise including global health, peacemaking and conflict resolution, social activism, and rural community development.

"It was energizing to meet with other people with the same passions about engaging in global issues," said senior and second-time conference attendee, Careth Davis.

Originally launched by Calvin students with the intention of "creating a space for sharing ideas



photo by Wesley Dean

The key theme was participation in development, the idea that to make real change, one must build relationships in communities.

and exploring passions among students and professionals from a wide range of backgrounds," this year's conference hoped to draw attendees' attention to the key issue of participation.

Expounding on the theme of participation from an African

perspective in his plenary session speech, Kenyan-born Davis Omanyo emphasized the importance of walking humbly alongside of and learning from a community of people before

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Abandoned Citgo Turned Community Resource

by Kristen Palmer

When Houghton College was forced to close down its mini-mart at the end of last year due to monetary losses, Phyllis Gaerte, Director of Community Relations, and Dale Wright, Director of Human Resources, were tasked with finding a new use for the empty building. Together, they came up with an idea that they hope will make a great difference at the College and in the Houghton community.

Gaerte and Wright, along with Ginny Routhe, Sustainability Coordinator and acting project director; Efrain Rivera, who is in charge of finance; and Greg Bish, Director of Student Programs, have put together a vision for a Sustainability Center. Essentially, it will function as a gathering place which will focus on topics of sustainability within three different areas: environment, economics, and society.

"The Center is going to be a community resource, where we can help local businesses and boost local entrepreneurship," said Routhe. "We are going to offer community-boosting activities."

The group plans to focus especially on the environmental aspect and will offer workshops about topics such as composting and organic gardening to educate the community on how to be better green consumers. The planning team would also like to provide services for battery recycling and the proper management and disposal of hazardous wastes. A group of community members is currently starting a natural food co-op, separate from the Center, but housed right next to it.

Bish, who was a part of the College's initial Creation Care task force, recalled that, among other objectives, the group tried to make creation care something which was embedded in who Houghton is, as a college and a community.

"Creation care is to be seamlessly woven as a part of our theological fabric; integrated with

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THE WORLD TO THERE

by Derek Schwabe

Shuttle Endeavour Arrives at International Space Station

NASA technicians were pleased to report on Wednesday that the US Shuttle Endeavor safely arrived at the international space station located 200 miles above Earth. The shuttle, which lifted off at Cape Canaveral, Florida on Monday, was sent to deliver new additions to the space station including a room and observation deck. Upon installation of these deliveries, the space station is expected to be 98% complete. The Endeavour's crew of six is planned to join the station's current crew of five for about a week as they assemble the new Italian built compartments. NASA reports that the Endeavor suffered no major damages during liftoff. This report was confirmed by a few hundred photographs that were taken from the space station during the Endeavour's final approach.

Blizzard Slams the East Coast

Snow, wind and slush closed the federal government for three days straight this week—the longest weather-related government close-down since 1996 when federal employees did not have to go to work for a full week. The second blizzard in less than a week buried the most populous stretch of the East Coast under nearly a foot of snow on Wednesday, breaking records and discouraging millions of Americans who were still digging out of the previous storm. Many families in the Washington DC area

took advantage of the opportunity as an unexpected weekend and ventured outdoors to enjoy long awaited winter sports. Some even skied their way around the capital city. The previous records for snowiest winters were 62.5 inches in Baltimore in 1995-96; 54.4 inches in Washington in 1898-99; and 65.5 inches in Philadelphia in 1995-96. All of these were broken this week. Forecasters are calling for yet more snow across the Northeast within the next week.

US and Afghan Troops Prepare for Major Offensive

US forces have made significant advancements this week in their recent initiative of closing in on a Taliban stronghold in southern Afghanistan. They are currently poised and prepared for what is expected to be the greatest US military offensive of 2010. This offensive is expected to accomplish the goal of securing an agricultural sector that has been long known as a center for Taliban drug and supply smuggling. The US has rejected a strategy of secrecy, choosing to make public their plans for attack in the near future. Although an exact date of execution was not disclosed, evidence suggests that the attack will come any day. About 400 U.S. troops from the Army's 5th Stryker Brigade and about 250 Afghan soldiers were reported to have moved into positions before dawn Tuesday. Experts claim that this attack will prove a crucial test of Obama's newly adopted offensive strategy in Afghanistan.

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working to bring development for them.

FIDC's devotional speaker, Dr. Ronald Sider, developed this theme of Christian participation in social justice. President of Evangelicals for Social Action, a national organization, and author of the book, "Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger," Sider called conference attendants to explore with him the Biblical teaching on such topics as God's special concern for the poor, the connection between personal sin and social injustice, and the manner in which Christians are

called to engage in actions bringing about social justice.

Sophomore Katherine Balon recounted being especially struck by the message in which Sider urged his audience of mostly twenty-somethings and college students to *not* be social activists. "Jesus, not social action, must be our center," he stated. In other words, when our striving for social justice is rooted in our relationship with Christ, we are able to act holistically, addressing both the physical and the spiritual needs of the people we are serving as well as regularly being renewed ourselves through faith, worship, and prayer.

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multiple opportunities for group research projects and interaction outside of the classroom.

Senior Business and Spanish major Marc Williams recognized the effect of this change on campus, noting that there are more opportunities for independent studies and hands-on projects.

While Stevenson recognized that surveys are sent out periodically to sample groups of students to measure campus sentiment and may be simply ignored by some, he points out that the NSSE is an attempt to "take the pulse of the campus" and should be taken seriously. Opinions over the length of the survey, which includes over 100 questions, vary. Williams was surprised, expecting it to be longer, but contended that it seemed to cover all of the necessary aspects of student life. First-year student Renee Kennedy, on the other hand, said it was "somewhat long and drawn out," but also asserted that the questions encompassed most areas of student life.

One thing Kennedy would have

liked to see addressed on the survey is how the school's location affects students, while Williams would have liked to see a greater emphasis on evaluating the academic rigor of the institution as a whole, rather than focusing on individual academics.

Claiming that it is part of the civic duty of a student to engage in critiquing processes, such as course evaluations and surveys like the NSSE, Stevenson said that changes will occur on campus within the next year or two as a direct result of these appraisals. That means the first-year students who take part this year will see its effects within their career as Houghton students. Conversely, Williams did not see filling out surveys as a "duty," but rather an opportunity to give feedback if a student chooses to take advantage of the chance. Nevertheless, the survey provides students the ability to voice their opinions about what the college is doing well and what areas need to be improved, and the results will be compiled and presented to faculty and staff next fall. ★

Conference attendants were also privileged to hear from Leymah Gbowee, the woman behind the "Liberian Mass Action for Peace" movement, a coalition of women who came together to bring an end to Liberia's extended civil war. Prior to hearing Gbowee speak, conference attendants were given the opportunity to view a documentary entitled "Pray the Devil Back to Hell," which told the story of how Gbowee and thousands of other courageous Liberian women gathered together to pray for peace and successfully pressured leaders to bring an end to the violence. Davis described this film as being one of the most powerful parts of her conference experience. "It's inspiring to see what a group of women working together can accomplish," she reflected.

For Balon, on the other hand, the most meaningful part of the conference was the "broken-bread meal," during which students got a first hand taste of the simple meal eaten by many people around the world who are suffering from hunger, while reflecting on individual stories of those around the world for whom hunger is a daily reality. "This meal caused me to really want to learn as much as I can about development and what I can do in this world," she said, "even if it's something small."

Another way in which students were invited to participate in this conference was by engaging in critical discussion during small-group breakout sessions, lunch time conversations at "Topic Tables" with presenters,

and personal interactions with representatives from more than twenty development organizations. A distinctive characteristic of this conference was that one of its key goals was to facilitate not only the transfer of knowledge, but also the building of connections and relationships between students and professionals in the development field.

Abby Wolters, sophomore, commented on the value of these "face-to-face" interactions, remarking, "that's not something you can always do."

Wolters said, "The conference caused me to reflect on what I believe about development and why I hold those beliefs, particularly when I encountered ideas that I did not agree with."

Christopher Way, sophomore, also found attending the conference extremely helpful. "This conference was, for me, an invaluable opportunity to expand my perspective of what I am studying," he shared. "I walked away from it with a more practical understanding of how development really looks in our world today." ★



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London FYHP: Mid-Semester Update

by Joel Ernst

The First-Year Honors Program in London is a huge success so far. Our group of 25 students, three professors, and two TAs is having a great time in a city full of heritage and culture. London is an incredible site for Western history, with immense and priceless collections of artifacts in numerous museums.

The city offers a vibrant place to explore. Just hop on the "Tube" (underground subway system), and you're off to wherever you want to go in London! Walking around the city reveals the interesting synthesis of the very old and the very new – compare the 700 year-old Westminster Abbey to the modern London Eye Ferris wheel. For us Houghton students, London provides the perfect place to experience the roots of Western civilization in a tangible way.

So far, our group has spent over three weeks in lectures, museum visits, and city life. Our days are full of examining unique artifacts, lots of walking, and learning about the "Meaning of the West." As students, our workload is challenging, with copious amounts of reading and a five page paper due every Saturday at midnight. Needless to say, Saturdays are "paper days," a time when ordinarily kind and sociable college students turn into freakish and crazed beings pulling out their hair. (It's really not that bad!)

Despite our full schedule, we do have opportunities to relax and

enjoy our time here. Staying in touch with friends and family back home is a priority for many students. Spending time together as a group

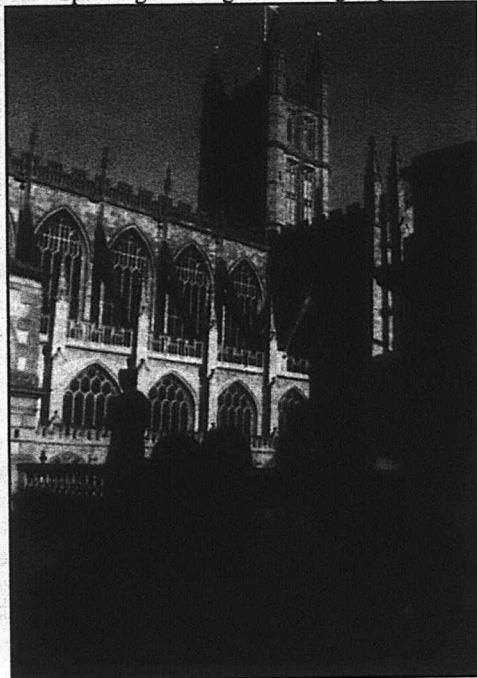


photo courtesy of Liz Chevalier

Students in FYHP London visit Bath Abbey in between writing their weekly papers and exploring the sights of London.

offers relief from what are often stressful study sessions. And our Sundays off give us a chance to see the spiritual life in London through the city's various churches. We can find formal High Anglican or smaller, informal Anglican churches, and many other denominations including Pentecostal and Baptist. Opportunities for social and cultural interaction abound; whether it's a walk along the River Thames to see the historic architecture, visiting

Covent Gardens to watch the live musicians, or enjoying the theatre (that's how it's spelled here) life of London.

Life in London is quite different, and yet not so different, from life in Houghton, New York. For one thing, the weather is milder, yet the sky is usually overcast (not unlike Western NY). British accents and alternate spellings of English words abound. In the big city, international influences are strong, with a large multicultural population and lots of languages floating through the air. Of course, the sheer number of people living in London is the greatest difference from rural Houghton. London truly is a city – you can get lost in the sea of people, or you can soak in all the chances to see new places, try new foods, and learn new things.

Through it all, the Honors Program is an academic venture, and "Londoners" in the program will spend much time doing the same things other Houghton students do – lots of reading and writing, with critical thinking about key issues like what the Western identity really is. When we're reading books or writing papers, our experience in London is no different from regular college life. However, the hands-on experience with the history and heritage in London is invaluable.

So how is it being the only guy

in the London honors program? It's really not as bad as it may sound. The girls have been sympathetic towards my unique social situation. Some say they have heard "girly" songs sung by my voice around our residence, but of course that cannot be true. In reality, the rigorous academics keep me busy enough that "sole-maleness" does not feel awkward. Sometimes I have sought solitude through calm walks in London's parks, but most of the time I do not experience any social discomfort. Interaction with Professor Ben Lipscomb, male workers at our guesthouse, and any guys I see strolling the streets of London keeps me sane enough. I have no complaints about my life in London.

Here we are, seven hours away across five time zones, in the "Motherland." We are enjoying our time here and learning a lot. We all face challenges, academically and emotionally, but our experience is very rewarding. God is expanding our horizons as we learn where we as "Westerners" have come from, and also how Christians have responded to challenges throughout history. We are encouraged and excited that this time will be a memorable and priceless part of our education. ★

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Sustainability cont'd from page 1

our curriculum, co-curricular offerings, and each area of the college operations, and supported by all members of the college community," he said.

Although care for the environment will play a vital role in the new center, it will not be the only focus. The group plans to display Allegany County artists' work, so people can appreciate what is happening in the community. According to Routhe, the group is also vying to get the free tax assistance services on Campus moved down to the Center. The Center will offer a variety of workshops, including workshops on babysitting, hosted by the American Red Cross. Resources, both book- and computer-based, will also likely be available at the Center, according to Routhe.

"We're still brainstorming and dreaming up a lot of things," said



photo by Wesley Dean

The upcoming Sustainability Center will offer an environment where College and community members can learn about greener sustainability.

Routhe, "and we're hoping students, faculty, and staff will get involved in the ideas for what workshops and classes we should include, as well as maybe hosting and teaching down there to help inform the community on topics of sustainability."

The group, which has yet to

officially title the Center, is hoping to be in business by the week of April 22, which happens to be Earth Week.

"I think the Center will really offer an outreach to the community," said Routhe. "This is probably the most unique situation Houghton has,

in terms of service and reaching out to Allegany County, and we are hoping it will help the College better connect with our neighbors, as we provide a free service we can get excited about."

"The new Center is being developed as a cooperative space, creating unique opportunities for Houghton students to engage with the Allegany County community," Bish agreed. "The Center is a new opportunity for us to build bridges across the Southern Tier and to begin to share our vision for caring for creation – both locally and globally."

The empty building has turned into an opportunity – an opportunity to educate, to further expand the Creation Care initiative, and, most importantly, to reach out to the larger community of Allegany County. ★

Art Professors Recognized at Galleries Near and Far

by Renee Roberts

Houghton is home to many impressive artists who happen to also be professors. The art professors do not passively teach their art; they actively engage in practicing the very art forms and techniques that they teach their students daily. Professors Ted Murphy, Jillian Sokso, and Ryan Thompson are examples of this active practice. Sokso stated she thinks the strength of the Houghton art program is that professors are "practicing artists" and the content they teach is important to "[their] lives, faith, and value systems."

Apart from the courses they teach, each of the professors has independent work hanging in the Ortlip Art Gallery. Murphy's water colored nature scenes hang alongside the elegant, organic prints of Sokso,

while Thompson's black and white newspaper posters are suspended in stark contrast to the others; yet, their art displays a cohesive theme—whether it be the passion they have for their art forms or the overarching nature thread, minimal as it may be.

Murphy, Sokso, and Thompson are known as artists across the country and around the world. Murphy has paintings on display in the Helen Figge Moss Memorial Exhibition at the Carson Gallery at The Stony Brook School, in Stony Brook, NY. A few of Sokso's prints are at Roberts Wesleyan College in an exhibition entitled, "Pressed for Time: Contemporary Printmakers." Her prints are also included at the Fountain Arts center in Belmont, NY, along with other contemporary and early modern printmakers. Thompson's work, which

consists mainly of "photographs, stereographic video animations, and newsprint posters," will be featured at three different galleries: 'PUBLIC THINGS' at Gallery Analix Forever in Geneva, Switzerland; "DIRT: LAND/USE" at Links Hall in Chicago; and "re:form" at Dordt College in Sioux City, Iowa.

Influences and motivations are different for each artist. Murphy said that "there is no such thing as inspiration for [him]." Instead of looking for subject matter, he prefers to "find a place in which [he is] comfortable and make a painting from what is there."

For Sokso, she is influenced by the things around her—colors in her house, landscapes, what she's reading. Her work is also incredibly personal. The etched writings in some of her prints are taken from letters her father has written her. As their primary form of communication, letters take on an important role in her art. Her father's relationship has become a sort of influence to her and the act of making a mark on a page, similar to writing a letter, is echoed in her art form of printmaking.

For Thompson, his focus "is on questioning the representation and objective documentation of truth." He cited the framing of a photograph as an example of how the artist can change and alter the "truth" of the image. His current pieces in the Ortlip Art Gallery center on the study of cryptozoology, or the search for legendary animals, which can be seen through his current work in the Ortlip Art Gallery through

his editing of iconic Bigfoot and Loch Ness Monster photographs. Thompson edited the images, removing the mythical beings. He then printed these images into a newsprint edition. His goal with exhibiting his work is to "[push] ideas and objects out of my studio and into the world in order to participate in both local and global discourses concerning whatever it is the work is about, be it art, food, cryptozoology, or crude oil."

The passion and dedication of the art professors can be seen in the motivation of their students. Sophomore Erin Carr, an art major, says she connects best with Murphy since she intends to concentrate in painting and drawing, in addition to connecting with Murphy through his use of watercolor. Sally Murphy spoke of her admiration of Sokso, calling her a "hard-driving and deeply interested and caring professor." Murphy attended the Roberts Wesleyan opening and said that Sokso's work was received with "intense interest and admiration." Thompson's work also caught her eye. Murphy commented, "the idea of de-creating something is fascinating. Instead of putting something into the universe, he took something out. But in doing so, he actually changed a perception."

If you have a chance, take fifteen minutes to walk around the Ortlip Art Gallery. Spend some time engaging with Sokso's prints or ponder Murphy's watercolors, stare at Thompson's creations for a moment or two. You won't regret it.★



photo courtesy of Houghton College

Prof Ted Murphy at the Faculty Art Show in the Ortlip Art Gallery.

Duquesne U Tamburitzans "Dazzle" Houghton

by Megan Little

The Tamburitzans put on a fantastic display of music and dance in the Wesley Chapel this past Saturday at 8:00pm. The Tamburitzans are, according to their official website, "America's longest-running multicultural song and dance company." They preserve the folk cultures of Eastern Europe and surrounding countries; performing songs, music and dances, and housing a large collection of folk artifacts and library resources. They also have an astounding collection of more than 8,000 costume pieces and 400 musical instruments.

For each dance or song, the group dressed in bright, many-layered costumes, providing a feast for the eyes with each costume change. A highlight was the lovely rainbow of colors that the women wore in one dance, sometimes circling in order of color, other times breaking off into a bright mix of hues. It was

almost blinding when the group arrived on stage to perform the Tańce Łowicki, a Polish dance, wearing fluorescent colors—the men wearing bright orange-on-orange striped trousers and the women multicolored, many layered dresses.

The array of instruments was spectacular in range, including a large number of folk instruments such as mandolins, accordions, the bouzouki from Greece, the bandura from the Ukraine and many more. Among the stringed instruments was the tamburitz, the namesake of the Tamburitzans, an instrument from Balkans.

The dance numbers ranged from fast-paced and complicated folk-style tap dancing, to slow melodic dances, and large, energetic group dances. There were also some excellent vocal performances consisting primarily of romantic love songs, which, although not translated into English, were made understandable via an introduction.

The performers are all full-time students at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, majoring in a variety of academic subjects and maintaining high averages. The company travels to perform nearly every weekend, and one of the performers conceded "it's a lot of work." However, she concluded emphatically to the strong nods of a fellow performer; "but it's worth it." Performing in the group is clearly enjoyable, as first year student Suzan Peterson commented, "It's not surprising to me why they are smiling all the time; you can tell they are having fun."

It was not only the performers who were having fun. The audience sat spellbound through a gripping soloist and ensemble musical piece from Russia called "Concerto for Domra & Folk Instrument Orchestra." They then perched on the edge of their chairs as a group of women performed a traditional Hungarian dance in which they

balanced bottles of wine on their heads. The tension that was built in the previous two acts was laughed away in the second to last act when the men came out and performed a hilarious Russian dance called "Flotsky Tanyets" where the dancers acted a day in the life of sailors on a ship; complete with machine-like dance moves as they cleaned and readied the imaginary ship and a wayward young sailor who was late for the morning call.

Although a respectable number of people showed up for this night of entertainment, there were quite a few unoccupied seats scattered throughout the Chapel.

Despite a somewhat sparse audience, the event was much appreciated by those who did attend, and when asked at the intermission what she thought of it, Junior Deborah Johnson replied, "I don't have anything profound to say, but I like the word 'dazzling.'"★



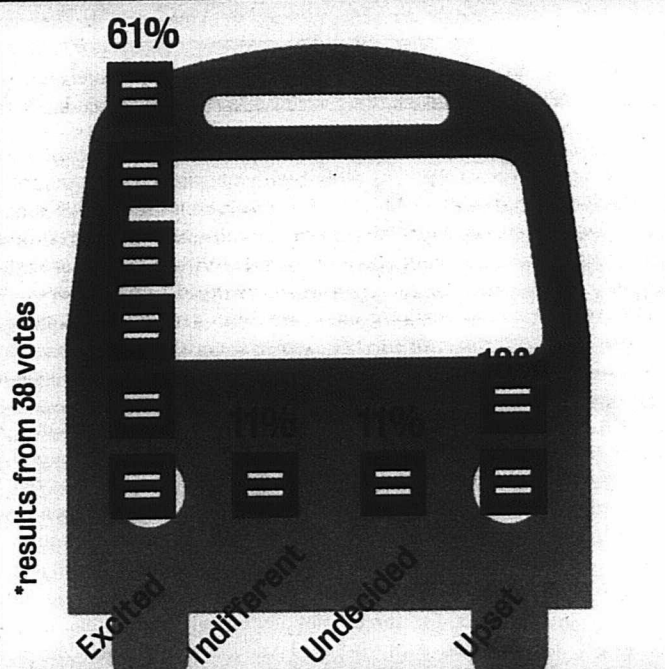
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Review: "Important Things"

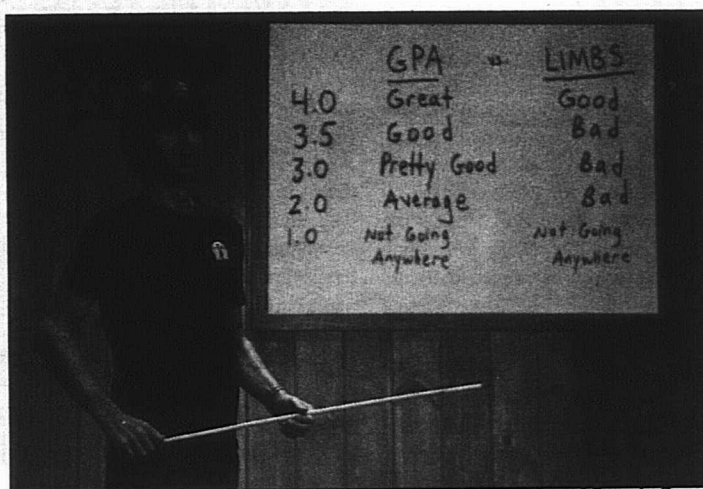


photo courtesy of Comedy Central

"Important Things" is on at 10 pm, Thursdays on Comedy Central.

by Ian Taylor

When you think of Comedy Central what do you usually think of? The Daily Show and The Colbert Report, most definitely. South Park if you are a heathen or have taken a few of Dr. Case's classes. Possibly Jeff Dunham's show, if you know who Achmed "The Dead Terrorist" is. There's another show you should add to that list: Important Things with Demetri Martin. Important Things began its second season last week and is quickly proving that it wasn't just a one-season wonder.

If you haven't seen Important Things, I'll take a moment to explain it. Each episode focuses on one 'Important Thing,' for instance, the 'Important Thing' for the second season premiere was Attention. The half hour is then spent exploring that Important Thing and it's done in an intelligent and witty way. Important Things isn't just a half-hour of stand up. Martin uses many different set-ups: sketches, songs, visual aids, and other things that you don't often associate with comedy (I think Martin is probably the only comedian to use pie graphs in his acts).

What I love about Demetri Martin, and in turn Important Things, is his cerebral approach to comedy. In the first season of Important Things, one of the episodes was on the subject of chairs. Now chairs are not very funny, aside from the usual yanking it out from underneath someone, but Martin's analysis of sitting was hilarious. His comedic genius is in taking mundane subjects and making them funny and thought provoking.

I participated in a conference call with Martin in the build up to the second season premier and he explained what he wants from each thing he puts in the show. "The simplest operating principle that I try to employ with the show is, the best scenario is to have something that is funny and interesting, the second best is maybe just funny, and the third

best is just interesting. If it's none of those then it's not so good...."

It's that type of logical analysis that makes Important Things hilarious. Not every joke is high-brow, intellectual humor but it smacks of some sort of intelligence.

His cerebral comedy is an extension of how his mind works. If Important Things intrigues you, I recommend that you find Martin's 'If I' special on YouTube. It is a fantastic example of what Martin is all about. He examines the five different meanings of the word 'if' and he uses this examination to explain his evolution as a person. It is an amazing look into a man whose plan was to be a corporate lawyer but ended up being a successful comedian.

Fans should not expect Important Things to be around for too long. Martin said that he thought he would only do another season or two after this one, so enjoy it while it lasts. He will never have the fan base of Jon Stewart or Steven Colbert, or be as big as Jerry Seinfeld or Robin Williams, but he really does not want to be. He's not ever going to sell out because he wants to hit it big (think Jeff Foxworthy).

When I asked him about the success he's had, he said, "I'm really grateful that I'm getting to work, especially when you look at the economy and the world today. I also know that it's very fleeting...I don't think I'm tortured or anything but I do think I'm still searching for some sort of balance here, where I can just enjoy what I have right now because I know it doesn't last for anybody."

Comedy can be a lot of things. Watch Comedy Central for any amount of time and you'll see just how many different types of comedy there are. Martin successfully blends humor with intellect and the end result is a fantastic show. I highly recommend tuning into Important Things with Demetri Martin, Thursdays at 10pm on Comedy Central.★

Haiti: Recognizing the Complexity of the Issue

by Candace Wilkinson

It is an ill-conceived critique that first begins with a sarcastic comment and proceeds to state a universally acknowledged allegation. This is in effect how the editorial piece last week, "Rebuilding Haiti, Reforming International Aid," attempted to discuss the reformation of U.S. international aid policies toward Haiti. Now, I will be the first to admit that America is not my ideal, but are you honestly going to open a critique of this country's well intentioned donations with a sarcastic cliché? Beginning any article with harsh sarcasm eliminates the potential for constructive criticism as it sets the tone for the rest of the piece. After the author sufficiently delineated her disapproval of American policies the main point as I understood it came out: "If our commitment to Haiti is to be real and sustained, we must address systems of governance and the cultural ethos that keeps Haitians in a cycle of poverty."

It has been my observation that this is what the United States has been attempting to do in many countries throughout its recent history. Whether the means have justified the ends or not, the U.S. has been promoting democracy, more equality in government, and so on, and have received a lot of flak for it. It has been described as jamming a square peg into a round hole and the presumption of the powerful to impose its own interests on the weak. For a long time now, the U.S. has been struggling with the balance between looking out for the interests of its own citizens and being a voice of positive reform in the world, and the debate has only increased since the September 11th attacks. From a realist perspective, any country (not just the U.S.) is in it to win it. The motivation for action is in the interest of the greater good of the nation – not the world or Christian social activist values. The world does not claim to be running on Christian moral values, so it seems

foolish to judge it through that lens.

I believe that, as the country with the world's most powerful economy (though that may change soon), America does have a responsibility to the rest of the world to use its resources well. But, that is a responsibility for our culture and society as a whole, not just the government, which, after all, is just a reflection of the people.

What I am trying to ask you, Ms. Derksen, is what do you want? Your

article introduced very little insight into actual policy steps that the U.S. could and should take in order to benefit the people of Haiti. Obviously you would not suggest that a group of democratically elected government officials armed with the strongest military force in the world should approach the Haitian government and demand that it democratize, that it give the people freedom and a voice in government, and then threaten to make it do so by force. But the imperative need for radical and drastic change that you are asking for takes years, decades or centuries, not months. To expect a government to work for the people is a misunderstanding of the role government should have in society. Part of what makes a society function properly is citizen self-ownership of government. That isn't something that can simply be parachuted in. In order to feel a sense of self-worth, the one creating the self-esteem has to be taking action. This will take time. It will take an altered understanding in the minds of the Haitian people and any other developing country unsatisfied with its government. America cannot save any country and expect that it will be fully sustainable without the majority of the movement being created by and through

the people of that country, because once the aid leaves it is up to the people. No one would say that the better option is American occupation. I am left questioning what the alternatives are.

Haiti is experiencing a crisis right now, an emergency that cannot wait for years of reform. Stating that putting money towards Haiti isn't doing enough is perhaps true. It will not solve the fundamental issues of Haitian society and government, after all, but

Yes, America's moral compass is off course. There is no doubt that its foreign aid policy could be better. But with the current situation in Haiti, what should the response be?

fixing those problems will take a long time. It will involve the people of Haiti taking control of their lives, not some foreigners dropping in to tell them what to do and how to do it. Right now in Haiti the United States is making the only reasonable response that is helpful in meeting the most urgent needs of this suffering country. It is not only money that is being sent but groups of nurses, doctors, and relief workers whose efforts should not be downplayed. If we were not responding with oodles of donations and federal aid the naysayers would continue to critique America for its lack of values.

As a campus full of potential mountain movers we need to recognize the complexity of the issue: the ideological, social, and political implications of the problem and America's response to it. Unfortunately, the world is a devastatingly messed up place, and it has never been any other way. I want to contend that Ms. Derksen is seeing this through the wrong lens, and thus wrongly judging it. Her article establishes the popular trend, acknowledging something that doesn't need to be defended, without offering any new ideas. Yes, America's moral compass is off course. There is no doubt that its foreign aid policy could

be better. Throwing money at every situation is not the best solution. But with the current devastating situation in Haiti what should the response be? It seems to me that the immediate needs of the people are more important right now than the promotion of a new political order. This is probably a question that an intercultural studies major could answer to some extent.

The article left me wanting, as I did not feel that it contained insight that could have been helpful for those of us not closely connected to the developing world and its deep-seated troubles. I am curious to know what the author would suggest is the best route to take in making sustainable institutional change happen in Haiti and other countries plagued with corrupt government.

This may seem like an article of mixed emotional and mental tension – I am proud to be an American and I wish I didn't have to be. But what I want to say is that singling out America as the nation that has caused all the problems is not helpful no matter how many times it is repeated. America will never be good enough, and this goes for any nation in a superior position. As long as it is the wealthiest nation with the most overreaching influence on international affairs it is a prime target for ridicule. America can always do more; it can always do better. In the end, you cannot judge someone or something by a standard to which you yourself cannot claim adherence. This is a serious dilemma facing the Christian community. There need to be more Christian examples of living out the message from the pulpit, the television, the newspaper. This is our calling as the next generation. And change will not manifest through the censure of any one person, any one nation, or any one system of values for that matter. The issue has been introduced and the floor is open for discussion, so let us engage.

Candace Wilkinson is a senior Political Science major

Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor,

In the issue from January 29th, there was an article about making "smart choices" when eating in the cafeteria; I found this article to be extremely offensive. The person who wrote the article on "smart choices" said that "we often do not have the

financial freedom to control how much gas our cars burn or what kind of fuel heats our home . . ." This is incorrect. I can ride my bike over 20 miles, and I have done that numerous times. Granted it takes longer, but if she thinks that controlling cars is difficult, she should try tractors. I am the proud relative and friend of many different small farmers (under 150 head) and friend of a couple large farmers (200+). I have ridden in many tractors, driven a few, and found that many seemingly small tasks would be impossible without a tractor: try hauling a manure spreader load by hand . . . I hauled more than

one when I was 10, as we did not have a skid steer to haul it out to the manure spreader. We had to shovel the manure into a wheelbarrow until it was full, haul it out approximately an eighth of a mile (seemingly small distance is really quite large when you repeat this process for three hours to get it done), and dump it into the spreader and repeat. Then we would use the tractor to spread this manure two miles away, which is far more difficult than riding a bike 20 miles. Another thing I would like people to try is hauling hay from three miles away, unloading it, and somehow hauling it up into the

haymow without the assistance of a tractor. That would be a comical sight, but the reality of it is that it is exactly what would happen if we took tractors out of the picture.

Another comment is that just because a food says "organic" does not necessarily mean that it truly is. I know a few people who have "organic" farms that aren't organic. The land was used for traditional farming, meaning fertilizer and pesticides were spread on it prior to being classified organic. The

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From the Editor's Desk...

Students as Customers: A Paradigm of Shared Governance

by Joel Vanderweele

In a recent forum on the New York Times website, experts of higher education debated whether or not business schools should treat their enrollees as "customers" rather than as traditional students. Some, like Richard Vedder, director of the Center of College Affordability and Productivity, argued that treating students as "customers" would lead, and indeed has led, to an "inmates running the prison" scenario; a pampered population of students with inflated GPAs, country club-like facilities, and no Friday classes. On the other side of the fence, David Benjou, dean of the School of Business and Economics at the Elizabeth City State University and author of "Treating Students like Customers," contests that "treatment of students as customers is not about grades or unrealistic expectations; it is about a new paradigm of shared governance."

While it was an interesting and insightful forum, I was disappointed, although not altogether surprised, that none of the forum contributors were students or recent graduates of colleges or universities. I was not surprised because students rarely manage to insert themselves into serious conversations about how their schools ought to be run.

The word "serious" is an

important qualifier here because everyone on a college campus, students included, has at one point or another expressed their opinions about how the school ought to be governed in casual conversations with their friends or confidants. In my own experience, these water-cooler chats often take the form of an extensive list of personal grievances with no practical solutions offered.

Regrettable conversations like this are often cited as evidence that students should be excluded from the serious decisions about an institution. But there are a number of reasons why this type of conversation is so common. First of all, students are never expected to have a serious impact on college governance and policy. Because no one expects them to contribute to the civic life of the institution, there's no reason for the average student to develop a proper understanding of how institutional decisions are made, nor to craft well-reasoned solutions to real problems. Without the burden of proof, the majority student opinion will always remain in an undeveloped state.

And even if they did try to develop a better understanding of the institution, the only experience students can draw upon is their own, which is limited to their four-

year enrollment; there is no such thing as a Chronicle of Higher Education for Students.

Another reason why students don't bother to enter into serious conversation about how their schools ought to be run is vicious modesty; when given the opportunity to express themselves, they fail to take even their own opinions seriously.

This modesty is especially pervasive on Houghton's campus. How many times have you been in a class and someone begins their answer to a question with, "This is probably completely off, but I think, maybe, that it might be..."? Similarly, when I ask students to write letters to the editor, the most common response I receive is, "I don't really want to write anything, I just like reading what other people have to say."

The modesty of students, when combined with the fact that no one expects them to contribute to the civic life of the institution, results in a quiet (if not silent) student body. And when interested students do muster up the courage, ambition, and enthusiasm to join the conversation, they are not equipped with the same institutional knowledge that everyone already involved in the conversation takes for granted.

Back to the forum mentioned

at the beginning of this article: To what extent should students be allowed contribute to the institutional decisions that shape their school? If I was on the panel, I would echo the sentiments of Benjou and encourage schools to move towards a paradigm of shared governance.

What would need to happen for this shift to take place at Houghton?

First and foremost, faculty, staff, and students must all take student opinion more seriously; students should be *expected* to contribute to the civic life of the college. Now more than ever, the operation of the college depends on the tuition money paid by students. Doesn't it seem natural that students should have some say in how that money is spent?

If the expectation is present, not only will student voices be taken more seriously by others, but students themselves will learn that it's not out of the ordinary for them to voice their concerns and criticisms about the college. Of course, this will sometimes make running the college more complicated and cumbersome, but it's a necessary shift if we want give students the very best experience they can get at Houghton.

Joel Vanderweele is a senior Philosophy and Mathematics major and is the Editor-in-Chief.

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problem with this is that if an organically classified farmer wants to lease or rent land from this traditional farmer, he can do so without the standard three year resting period for the land, and yet the milk is still sold as organic. Also, the feed may not even be so-called "organic," but because the farmer has gained organic class, he is still able to ship accordingly. So, this is truly a marketing scheme for which those uninformed in the cities, who have never shoveled manure in their lives, nor have really seen a live cow, are willing to pay the extra dollar for something that may or may not hold to the standard for which they strive. Yet as green politics are being

touted, science is enabling our food supply to increase, but that doesn't make the kind of profit for the political machine quite like "green" does.

Dairy farmers work hard to make what little they do—although the milk prices are high. As the relative of many small dairy farmers, I know that the actual amount the farmer gets is low. They hardly make enough to live on. Most of the milk check, what little they get, goes back into the farm, supplying feed for the animals, repairs, and buying diesel fuel and gas. Dairy farmers are already attacked from all sides—don't attack them here, especially with all of the dairy counties around us.

—Lauren Moss, Class of 2013

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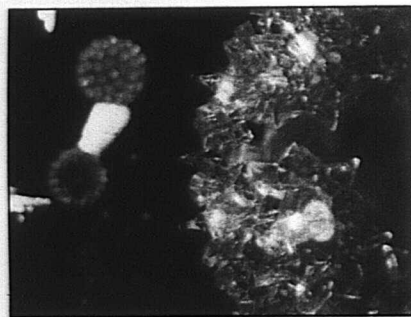
Antique Washer, Digital Photograph

Note from the artist:

I like to take pictures of things that can't move. But if they must move, they'd better be awesome little kids.

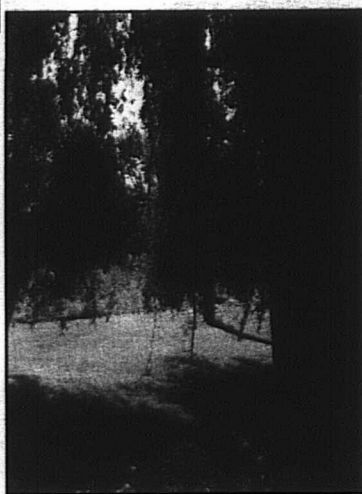
For more of Laura's work, visit us at www.houghtonstar.com

OF THE artist WEEK

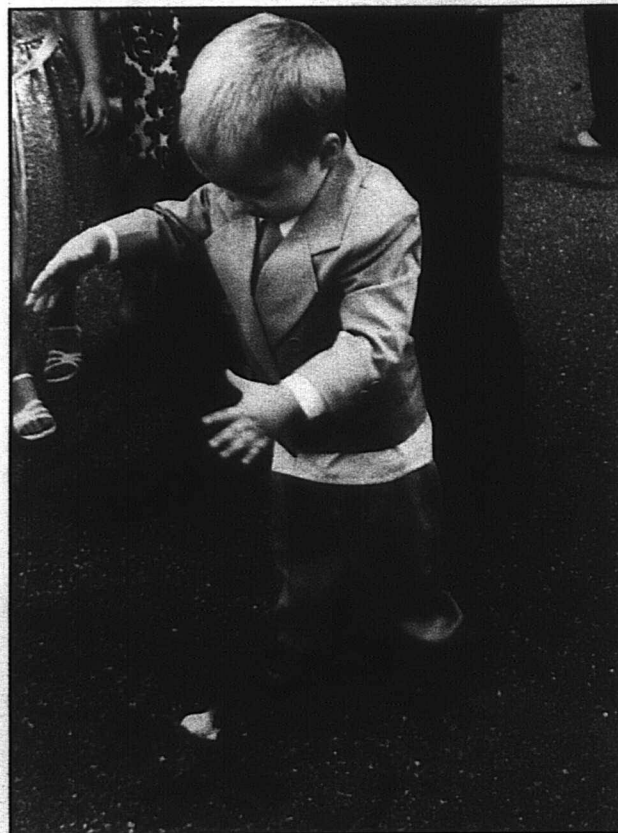


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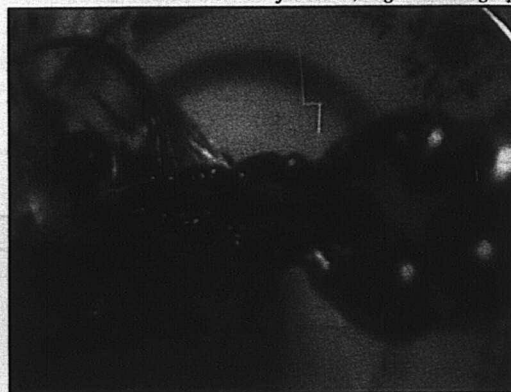
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