



# THE HOUGHTON STAR

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## Dr. J. Roger Kurtz Highlights Contemporary African Literature

By Elisabeth Wenger

As part of a joint effort between the English and Intercultural Studies departments, Dr. J. Roger Kurtz gave a lecture on Wednesday, January 23, about an area he has done much work and research in—African literature. Author of several books and numerous essays about African literature, Dr. Kurtz delivered the lecture, "Six Hot Issues for Contemporary African Writers" with an ease that spoke of long practice and familiarity.

Dr. Kurtz comes from a background particularly suited to his subject. Having grown up in Africa—his parents

were missionaries in Tanzania with Mennonite Central Committee—he brings to his area of study a thorough knowledge of the pains and joys of being an African writer.

In his talk, he focused on the challenges that African writers face in trying to write from a Third World culture, as well as in a Western art form. One question many writers in Africa face today is that of form: "What does an African novel look like?" Dr. Kurtz asked. "The novel is an imported form."

The question of language is also important. Should a writer only write in his or her native tongue? The

cultural significance of having people writing in the many African languages is immediately apparent—and the argument is often used that writers should not use the forms imposed by oppressive colonial governments to express themselves. However, "just to get published, to get readers, to get a market, it is often necessary to write in European languages," Dr. Kurtz pointed out. He compared this dilemma to Shakespeare's character Caliban, from *The Tempest*, who shouts to his "colonizers," Prospero and Miranda, "You taught me language; and my profit on't/ Is, I know how to curse." Some African writers now refuse to write in

anything but their own language, but others, most notably Chinua Achebe (author of *Things Fall Apart*, who has said that he "can make English bear the burden of my experiences"), write in the European languages they learned at school.

Many novels written by African writers are seen as counter-narratives. In the past, many stories were written in which Africa and Africans are portrayed as backwards, simple, even stupid and amoral. As a result, when African writers sit down to write they feel a need to write these counter-narratives, in an attempt to correct the

*Literature continued on page 3*

## Despite Weather, Winter Intramural Programs Begin to Heat Up

By Benjamin Tsujimoto

The Houghton College intramural program, currently under the direction of head soccer coach Matthew Webb, allows students, faculty, and community members to compete in a variety of sports throughout the school year.

The program fosters healthy athletic competition for everyone, from the former high-school athlete seeking to rekindle past glory to the casual student working to maintain fitness. With organized women's basketball, two leagues of men's basketball, co-ed handball, and co-ed water polo, the winter intramural season provides an exceptional break from studying and rewards each championship

team member with an "Intramural Champion" t-shirt customized by sport.

In addition to several team sports, Coach Webb mentioned other athletic opportunities for students and community members. "We offer fitness programs such as aerobics and Pilates, as well as provide equipment for cross-country skiing, downhill skiing, and snow-shoeing. I know that not every student participates in intramurals, but we try to offer programs that at some point would appeal to all of our students," Webb stated.

Halfway through the intramural season, several teams have separated themselves from the pack. Here is a look at the current favorites.

Thus far in the men's basketball A-league, arguably the most intense winter sport, three teams vie for the top playoff seed. Team 'Alpha & Omega,' led by perimeter sharpshooters Dr. Matt Pelletier, professor of biology, and Matt Shay, a former varsity guard, has emerged as a powerful force. Wily philosophy professor Chris Stewart adds a veteran presence and rekindles memories of Bill Laimbeer. Close behind is Team 'Zoo Station,' a team comprised primarily of community members. Burly Matt Reitnour patrols the paint with Houghton Academy teacher Ron Duttweiler, while Fillmore teacher and coach Jamie Mullen leads the attack.

Two student-led teams, however,

follow close behind. Team 'Turn and Burn' employs a freakishly-athletic backcourt of Ernie Walton, a high school teammate of current Chicago Bull Aaron Gray, and Dan Brubaker, who overcomes his limited height with quickness and elevation. In the paint, varsity soccer goalie Erik Lefebvre and former JV basketball player Jonathan Mindrebo fight for rebounds and put-backs. "Who's Who" recipient and varsity soccer captain Tyler Haggerty and varsity soccer coach Matt Webb add valuable depth and scoring ability.

Despite a narrow defeat to Alpha & Omega, Team 'Kalena's Wildfire' has shown the ability to compete with top teams. Led by freshmen varsity

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Ashley Hackett

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## WORLD OUT THERE

By Thomas Lerew

**Bridge Collapse Blamed On Design**

Authorities have determined that the collapse of a bridge in Minnesota last summer was due to a flaw in its design. Federal Transportation Department officials said that 16 of 224 "gusset plates" failed to adequately support the links between the bridge's steel support beams. The plates are said to be too thin, which resulted in the deaths of 13 people and the injury of 145 others. There are approximately 465 steel-truss bridges with similar design to the I-35W bridge in Minnesota.

**President Asks For Tax Relief To Help Economy**

Last week, President Bush asked Congress to immediately pass a \$150 billion stimulus package aimed at tax relief for small businesses and consumers. The tax break, initially to be included in the president's State of the Union, confirms fears of future economic downfall. Congress is discussing the proposal and party leaders say they believe they can make the deal within a month. Meanwhile, the economy continues to struggle as Wall Street has witnessed rampant fluctuation throughout the week.

**Number of Abortions in America Continue to Decline**

A recent report released by the Guttmacher Institute says that the number of abortions in 2005 was down 8% from 2000. It noted that the number of surgical procedures have dropped significantly while the number of pregnancies terminated via pills have more than doubled. The report cites fewer teen pregnancies and stricter state restrictions as the reason behind the new figures. The number of abortions peaked in 1981 and is down 34% since then. Approximately 1.2 million abortions were performed in 2005.

**Iraqi Parliament Passes Key Bill Aimed at Sectarian Reconciliation**

As American forces continue to bring stability to the various regions of Iraq, the Iraqi Parliament has finally moved on legislation to bring similar stability to government. Recently, a law was passed that would compromise to allow Baathists back in some government positions but place restrictions on their influence. This is seen as a significant step towards ending the political gridlock of the past two years between Shia and Sunni groups.

**Heath Ledger, 28, Discovered Dead In NYC Apartment**

Actor Heath Ledger was found dead in his Manhattan apartment on Tuesday. Widespread speculation has led many to attribute the death to a drug overdose despite the initial autopsy being inconclusive. Various prescription drugs were found at Ledger's residence including some intended to treat insomnia and anxiety; however, no illegal drugs or drug paraphernalia were found at the scene. Ledger was best known for his roles in *10 Things I Hate About You*, *A Knight's Tale*, *Monster's Ball*, and *Brokeback Mountain*. He is survived by his two-year-old daughter Matilda.

**Bloomberg Slams Government's Infrastructure Failures**

New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg delivered a blistering attack on Washington's failure to "keep up with the need for new airports, roads, water systems and bridges across America." While insisting he's not running for president, Bloomberg chose to give his speech in California to announce his creation of a new delegation to push for investments in highways, ports and other infrastructure. Bloomberg's delegation is joined by California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger and Pennsylvania Governor Edward Rendell.

## SUDOKU CHALLENGE

Submit completed puzzles with your name at the Star office. One correct puzzle will be selected at random, and the winner will receive a Sudoku puzzle book!

3	8	4	7	9	2	1	6	5
7	6	5	1	3	4	2	8	9
1	9	2	5	8	6	4	7	3
8	7	1	2	5	9	3	4	6
2	4	6	8	7	3	5	9	1
5	3	9	6	4	1	7	2	8
6	5	3	4	2	8	9	1	7
9	2	8	3	1	7	6	5	4
4	1	7	9	6	5	8	3	2

This week's puzzle is by Eric Liddle, a freshman Math and Computer Science major from Albion, N.Y.

He is currently in London, but remains a diehard Sabres fan.

Answer to last week's Sudoku puzzle is printed to the left.

	3		7				8	
		5				3		2
		1		9			6	
				3			4	
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3		9				8		
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## Campaign 2008: Wins For Multiple Candidates Leave Race Up-For-Grabs

By William Airhart

The race for the presidency of the United States in 2008, featuring no incumbent presidential or vice-presidential candidate for the first time since 1952, is well under-way and wide-open. After contests in just six states, however, candidate casualties abound. Following the Iowa caucuses, Democratic candidates Joe Biden and Chris Dodd dropped out of the race. Bill Richardson followed suite and ended his candidacy following a lackluster performance in New Hampshire. On Tuesday of this week, Fred Thompson also removed himself from contention for the Republican nomination, joining another recent Republican drop-out, Duncan Hunter. Though a handful of minor candidates such as Dennis Kucinich and Mike Gravel remain, the field of competitors has been reduced to a shortlist of three Democrats (Hillary Clinton, John Edwards, and Barack Obama) and five Republicans (Rudy Giuliani, Mike Huckabee, John McCain, Ron Paul, and Mitt Romney).

Held on January 3, the Iowa caucuses were won with comfortable margins by

Obama and Huckabee. Five days later, however, the results were reversed, as Clinton and McCain stormed to victory in their respective parties. (In the meantime, Romney had picked up a handful of delegates by winning Wyoming's Republican caucus.) The Republicans then headed to Michigan, where Romney won his second state. On January 19, the Nevada caucuses were won by Clinton and Romney, as McCain won the Republican contest in South Carolina. It has been an up-and-down contest that still lacks a clear front-runner in either party. While Clinton and McCain currently enjoy the most momentum from recent victories, any campaign gaffe or poor debate performance could hinder a candidate heading into the "Super-Duper Tuesday" presidential contest on February 5, when 22 states will hold their nomination races.

The proliferation of online political commentary has offered an overabundance of analyses of the 2008 presidential campaign. Obama and Huckabee both enjoyed five days of articles heralding their Iowa coronations as front-runners, only to

immediately lose the popular vote in all other contests that have been held thus far. (Obama, owing to the intricacies of electoral politics, still managed to split the delegate counts with Clinton in New Hampshire and Nevada.) As pundits hold their collective breath before February 5, opinion is split over which candidates are now the favorites for their respective nominations.

Some of the highlights: Examining the choices of the Democratic party following a recent debate held in South Carolina, Bill Schneider labeled Clinton as the "anti-Bush" and Obama as the "un-Bush." Looking forward, Andrew Sullivan has recently suggested that disillusioned Obama supporters might not swell the ranks of Clinton's camp once she had secured the nomination, but could instead flock towards the candidacy of McCain. Representative John Linder of Georgia has suggested that Mike Huckabee best embodies the legacy of Ronald Reagan, a legacy that

has been alternatively embraced by Fred Thompson, Rudy Giuliani, and Mitt Romney (among others). As a teetering American economy weighs more and more heavily on voters' minds, numerous commentators have heralded the new Mitt Romney as the

Republicans' best economic guru. And media darling John McCain has enjoyed an incredible resurgence in national polls, after being left for dead by most journalists just six months ago.

The Democrats are currently campaigning in South Carolina,

where the next primary will be held tomorrow, January 26. Republicans are focusing on Florida, once considered an easy victory for Rudy Giuliani, but now a wide-open four-way contest to be held on January 29. Moving forward, all eyes are on the numerous contests to be held on February 5. Both parties will host a final debate among candidates prior to the Super-Duper festivities on January 30 and 31.

Even a minor campaign gaffe or poor debate performance could greatly hinder a candidate heading into "Super-Duper Tuesday."

*Literature continued from page 1*  
prejudices of colonial writers. "[I think that] narratives that are pejorative... are evil" said Dr. Kurtz, expressing a belief that these counter-narratives are an important part of a healing process in which

Africans can take control of their own stories and present a clear view of the truths

of their culture to a Western world that has too often trivialized any sign of intelligence from Africans.

Closely tied to this is the tension many writers experience between tradition and modernity. The storytelling model of oral tradition is deeply ingrained in

African culture, leading to questions about the viability of new writing forms. Dr. Kurtz shared a clip from the African movie *Keita*, which juxtaposes an ancient African oral epic, *Sundiata* ("the Beowulf of Africa") and the modern life of a schoolboy learning different things from the epic and his lessons in school. One of the most important

concerns of African art is its functionality—masks, gourds, carvings, all have their purpose, and writers must ask themselves how their art contributes to that.

One major distinction between a Western philosophy of writing

and an African philosophy is the emphasis on community. Africans have a considerably stronger sense of community than Westerners, and as a result they see writing as a communal act. Western mythology glorifies the image of the "starving artist," freezing in his or her garret, with a cat for company while trying to express deep, internal, personal emotions; African writers see that view as selfish. "Being a writer means that you have to be politically engaged," Dr. Kurtz said, reading us a list of writers who have been imprisoned, exiled, or even killed for their works. The other component of this social philosophy of writing is the idea that "what you write has to contribute positively to your society." In Africa, this means that writers are often writing against the government,

and they are "the ones out on the street, talking to their people." In relation to this, more than a few writers have gone on to become Presidents or politicians, working for social justice and change.

Dr. Kurtz closed the talk with a question-and-answer session, and talked about religion in African writing, which depends, as it does in Western countries, on the writer. He also discussed the possibility of film adaptations of works, which is rather difficult in Africa because the cost is so prohibitive, although recent years have seen the development of low-budget film industries in Burkina Faso and Nigeria. To finish the talk, Dr. Kurtz handed out a top-ten list of African novels, and dismissed the attendees with "all this to say: read some African literature sometime."

Kurtz focused on the challenges African writers face when trying to write from a Third World culture in a Western art form.



*Intramurals continued from page 1*  
soccer players Aaron Martin and Alex Merrill alongside former University of Connecticut manager Collin Wright, the team's athleticism and intensity poses problems for opponents. As the post-season nears, these four teams will battle for the championship t-shirt.

In the women's basketball league, Team 'Volleyballers' and Team 'Soccer' have surfaced as the favorites. In a contest between the top teams, Team 'Volleyballers' reigned triumphant, winning 40-34 without Holly Motheral, a focal point of the team.

Motheral explained the team's success, stating, "From Katie McCulloch joking up three-pointers, Brianne Brubaker's great defense, and Lenore Bassett's fast-breaks and relentless hustle, a total team effort contributed to the victory." Team 'Soccer,' however, is characterized by aggressive defense, superior fitness, and a deep bench. Although the term 'trap' receives a different definition and 'three-pointers' may sound foreign to the soccer team, the squad will likely have an opportunity to exact revenge in the

championship game. After appearing in the NAIA National Tournament's Second Round, Team 'Soccer' should have no trouble handling the pressure of an intramural final.

In the men's B-basketball league, the competition is considerably weaker, but the intensity remains. Team 'Helen Keller and the 5 Senses' persists as the lone undefeated team, and its offense has been bolstered by the return of 'big-


man' Andrew Keller from a wrist injury. In his absence, Tom Luckey and Jeremiah Schmutz raised their level

of play and the cohesive, yet slightly ragged Shen team is the favorite to earn the title. Arguably their closest competition is Team 'Los Luchadores.' Composed of many of the women's varsity practice squad players, this team may possess more individual talent than the favorite. While Brian Rowlinson orchestrates the attack, Ed Santoro, Pat Mest, Andrew Nedimeyer, and Dan Dutton are experienced and capable scorers. At present, the victor may include a "team of masked crime-fighters who constantly battle the evil

which threatens their home" in Los Luchadores, or a charitable, rugged squad championing the cause of the first deaf-blind college graduate.

In handball, the first of two co-ed sports, the competition is fierce; four teams are in the hunt for the top spot. Currently undefeated is Team 'Large Trouble,' aptly named after an intimidating stuffed gorilla. Although the fearsome offensive duo of Joel Lord and Brian Johnson grabs the headlines, the team is anchored by the strong defense and passing of Kerri Paul, Jess Mullen, and Marleah Irwin. A potential playoff rival is Team 'Hand One,' a team that only narrowly lost to Large Trouble, 18-17, with potent scorer Dan Tomlinson absent due to varsity basketball. Stalwart goalie Dan Brubaker possesses the reflexes to stop any shot and adds some offense of his own. The team's chemistry provides a distinct advantage; Holly Motheral, a participant in all three intramural sports, credits playing with 'Hand One' as her favorite part. "I like how a group of my closest friends and I can go out and have fun while still being competitive at the same time," Motheral notes. Although Team 'Blue Magic,' made up of many members of Houghton's Frisbee Club called the 'Roaring Sheep,' is the dark

horse, Team 'Miniature Buddhas' has the firepower to win the much-coveted t-shirt as well. Led by varsity soccer goalie Erik Lefebvre, the varsity soccer goalie, Justin Farnsworth, and Bryce Ireland, a varsity basketball forward, the team can score at will, yet is lacking the abundance of hair that its team name would suggest.

In co-ed water polo, the final intramural winter sport, Team 'My Water Fun Packs Heat' has dominated its opponents early in the season. The team is a conglomerate of two of last year's dominant teams that lost players due to graduation. Captain Lindsay Yandon states, "Two water polo dynasties have come together to achieve guaranteed domination." Despite her confidence, two teams figure to challenge. Team 'Crazy Alpacas,' captained by Jim Luckey, and 'Bald Spot,' directed by Kendal Stoltzfus, both hold winning records as well. Because the competition is so wet and intense, Team 'Killer Males and Females' chose to forfeit the remainder of their games. While Dan White's 'Pistol-Packin' Platypi' win recognition for the most creative team name, keep an eye on the outcome of the winter intramural playoffs. 

## Men's and Women's Basketball: Houghton Highlanders Fall to Roberts Wesleyan Raiders

By Doug Roorbach

(Rochester, N.Y.)—The Houghton College Highlanders came up short against rival Roberts Wesleyan Tuesday night, 77-60.

Roberts led by just six at the half, but went on an 11-2 run to start the second half and stretch the lead to 15.


Houghton came back, getting nine straight defensive stops at one point to close the gap to five (51-46). The Raiders came back to life, though, and closed with a 26-14 stretch over the final nine and a half minutes to end the game.

Mada Abdelhamid led the Highlanders

with 17 points. Yannick Anzuluni added a double-double with 14 points and 11 rebounds.

Mark Saladzius had a game-high 23 points for the Raiders, who out-rebounded Houghton 39-34.

\* \* \* \* \*

(Rochester, N.Y.)—The Houghton College women's basketball team fell to rival Roberts Wesleyan College 85-64 Tuesday night. 

*Houghton  
Superstar*

Finals

January 25th

7pm Wesley Chapel

Sponsored by C&B





# Finding Nemo: Murrow, Kierkegaard and La Revolucion

By Chris Stewart

We haven't heard from our friends at La Revolucion in a while, which is too bad. Organizations and subcultures like "the Houghton College bubble" (to quote one of their missives from last fall), like democracies, can flourish only when a loyal opposition is able to thrive within their borders (or membranes if you care to stick with the "bubble" metaphor). The phrase "loyal opposition" is one of them oxymorons – figures of speech in which opposite or contradictory ideas or terms are combined, as in "thunderous silence" or "sweet sorrow." How someone could be opposed to something and yet remain loyal to it is a hard thing to grasp, even in the best of times.

In the worst of times, the line between opposition and sedition becomes razor thin, and sometimes vanishes altogether, as William Wilberforce discovered when his pal William Pitt (who at the time happened to be the Prime Minister) urged him to dial back on his opposition to Britain's policy on the slave trade in the midst of its war with France in the wake of the French Revolution. (Check it out in the film, *Amazing Grace*.) In such times as these, opponents of the established order, along with pretty much anyone bold (or imprudent) enough to criticize either the status quo or the glorious traditions of the past, however mildly, tend to be marginalized, or worse.

Consider Winston Churchill's career in the early 1930s. Sometimes these prophetic voices make a roaring comeback and everyone eventually comes around to their point of view, at least for a while (as happened in the case of both Wilberforce and Churchill), but sometimes they fade quietly from the scene, never to be heard from or talked about again. Opposition, after all, is hard work. It wears you down.

But what Ralph the Dog tells Kermit the Frog about women in *The Muppet Movie* is equally true of loyal opponents:

"you can't live with 'em, you can't live without 'em." (I'm not endorsing this view of women, mind you, just crediting the source of the phrase.) The same point is driven home by the journalist Edward R. Murrow, whose opposition to Senator Joseph McCarthy's for a time popular efforts to ferret out clandestine communists during the "Red Scare" in early 1950s "Cold War" America is the subject of another film, *Good Night and Good Luck*. Murrow's criticisms of McCarthy's witch hunt, which aired on his CBS program *See It Now* in 1954, contributed to McCarthy's fall from power and eventual censure by the Senate. Murrow, whose career did more than anyone before or since to shape the role of journalism in American life, urged that "We must not confuse dissent with disloyalty. When the loyal opposition dies, I think the soul of America dies with it." There is, however, always a price to be paid, and the ensuing controversy eventually compelled the network to remove *See It Now* from the airwaves.

Some of the heat directed against the leaders of La Revolucion has stemmed from their decision to employ pseudonyms, like "minor friar," "Tobiah" and "Nemo." Authors conceal themselves behind pseudonyms for all kinds of reasons. The great novelist Mary Evans adopted the pseudonym George Eliot in an apparent effort to ensure that her novels were taken seriously by readers, most of whom were somewhat less than inclined to consider a woman capable of fathoming, let alone revealing anything important about, the complex inequities and hypocrisies of late 19th century English society so vividly portrayed in her works.

At a time when authorship in general was widely regarded as an unsuitable occupation for a woman, Jane Austen's first published novel, *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), which like George Eliot's later novels is replete with stinging social commentary, was attributed to "a Lady." The main purpose

in each of these cases seems simply to have been to conceal the identity of the author, thereby shielding her from any public scrutiny that might otherwise have resulted from her publications.


Hiding their identity seems, on the face of it, to have been the principal motive of the authors who gave us "The Black Hole" – the handbills sprinkled around campus by La Revolucion for the benefit (they explain) of the victims of the established Houghton order (and, presumably, for their oppressors as well), whom they confess to be "madly in love with," albeit "from a distance." But mere concealment of identity is not the only reason to deploy pseudonyms, especially when it's a case of loyal opposition. (After all, anonymity would do the trick just as well.)

The best example of the potential value of pseudonyms to the task of reforming something comes from another 19th century author, the "melancholy Dane" Søren Kierkegaard. In his literary crusade to reform the church in his native Denmark, in which everyone seemed (to him) to be a Christian "as a matter of course," and the radical implications of Christianity had been almost entirely forgotten in waves of accommodation to the prevailing winds of 19th century Danish culture (which, as Nemo points out, bears an uncanny resemblance to a lot of North American evangelicalism), Kierkegaard deployed a squadron of pseudonyms with colorful names like Vigilius Haufniensis, Nicolaus Notabene, Hilarius Bookbinder, and a pair of Johns – Johannes Climacus and the notorious Johannes "the Seducer."

Kierkegaard's pseudonyms were not mere masks to conceal the identity of the true author, but rather personae whose creator invested them with values, concerns, points of view and even histories unlike (though related to) his own. Kierkegaard cautioned readers not to confuse the ideas or opinions expressed in the books with his own, and insisted that they consider his relation to the content of the pseudonymous

works to be little more than that of "a reader" not unlike themselves. He wanted his works to serve as a mirror for his contemporaries, and believed that his readers were more likely to recognize themselves and see the error of their ways if they were prevented from examining the works as clues to the thinking of an actual person. Sadly, Kierkegaard's pseudonymous efforts had very little discernable impact, at least at the time.

I hope that the leaders of La Revolucion don't abandon their experiments in pseudonymity but rather develop them, following Kierkegaard's example, some of whose cast of characters (like "the Seducer") model attitudes or behavior of which their creator did not approve, but to which he believed many of his fellow Danes were either subject or prone, for the most part unwittingly.

Given my inclination to think that our friends at La Revolucion are not quite so sophisticated in their journey down the well-worn and time-honored path of pseudonymity (at least not yet), allow me to end with a bit of sleuthing to see if I can't guess the identity of at least one of the revolutionaries who have declared their "shadowy presence" among us. Take Nemo, for instance. Nemo's prose reveals a more than a passing acquaintance with the history of Western Christianity. The fact that it's seasoned with words like "worldview" and phrases like "freedom/responsibility," not to mention comments about Kierkegaard, reveals Nemo to possess a philosophical nature. A penchant for "contrasting metaphors" and references to Geoffrey Chaucer suggests that Nemo is the product of a well-rounded, liberal arts education. Put it all together and couple it with a passion for inspiring actions "furthering God's kingdom," and there can be just one conclusion about the true identity of Nemo – Shirley Mullen. 

Chris is Professor of Philosophy at Houghton College.



## Amending Houghton's Chapel Policy (Again)

A student affirms the chapel proposal offered last week, with one suggestion: why not require faculty and staff, too?

By Katherine Hamilton

"How do we bring the horse to the water?" This astute metaphorical question was asked at a faculty breakfast last week focused on evaluating the chapel curriculum by Mr. Hess, one of our 'Missionaries in Residence.' In essence, his question to those present was, since we cannot ensure that people will drink (i.e. listen and be engaged), how do we at least get them there to offer the possibility of a drink? Now, my initial response to him was, "Give them something worth drinking. People are always thirsty, and if you offer water that quenches their thirst, they will come."

Aside from images of Kevin Costner standing in a cornfield which that comment may elicit, I do, in many ways, stand by this initial opinion, for it seems to be to be a fundamental basis of Christianity. By this I mean simply trusting in the power of the message we have to share and offering it openly and freely. By message, we speak of more than the Gospel of salvation; we speak of the full depth of truths and wisdom, the bread that feeds us at all points along the road of faith.

Yet in light of recent messages sent by our community, I have begun to question if content alone is the main problem when we speak of attitudes toward chapel. It is easy to criticize the content of chapel programs on an individual level because we offer so many in a given semester—it is inevitable we will all find one, or more likely several, which we do not like. But it is inconsistent for us to both condemn chapel for lacking in content

yet abandon our opportunities when we are offered something deeper, more challenging, and something which requires genuine mental discipline to follow and take in. We are now in a situation where, instead of being able to debate or comment on the content of what has been presented, we are left outside at a toddler stage asking why we weren't even willing to listen in the first place. The problem seems to me to be not with the content, but with our attitude toward the mere attendance.

I am a political science major. As a result, perhaps, I truly believe that the way our institutional structures are set up will actively affect the way we perceive and think about the world around us. I genuinely believe that the current structure of the two-thirds


**We desperately need to re-examine our chapel policy... and we might start by requiring not just students, but faculty, staff and administrators to show up, too.**

chapel requirement actively hinders, not improves, our attitude and actually keeps us from the ultimate goal of not just showing up, but genuinely listening.

It is for this reason that I want to second the proposal for a three-week cessation of chapel scanning made in last week's *Star*. Perhaps ultimately no requirement would not be the best way to resolve my, or even Mr. Airhart's, concerns. But I think we desperately need to re-examine this area of college policy. And what better way to do so than to give Mr. Airhart's proposal a chance? Not just to see who will show up (or to be the pessimist, who won't), but to use those three weeks as a time of dialogue and focused debate to open the doors to new ideas for how we can better conceptualize our chapel program.

And by all of us I mean *all* those here. For I would add that in my mind one of

the best ways to answer Mr. Hess' query is to require not students, but rather the faculty, staff and administrators to attend. I suppose you can consider it my amendment to Mr. Airhart's proposal. I ask—why should I consider something meaningful or worth my time when the people I look up to and respect can't even find the time to go themselves?

Now that I have successfully made enemies with every faculty member who liked me up until that sentence, let me close with this thought. My ultimate response to Mr. Hess went something like this: I don't want chapel to be equally important to me as everything else on campus including my academics (yes, Dr. Pearce, snarky comments are anticipated). I want it to be more important, for as much as I respect the academic purpose of the institution, I fail to see how we can call ourselves a Christian institution when we relegate our Christian worship as just another required thing to do. Instead, chapel ought to be our highest offering, and the place where we are equipped to do everything else that much better. And I believe it ought to be so, not because I have to be there, but because I *want* to be there. 

*Katherine is a senior Political Science major, and serves as SGA Chaplain.*

## Letters

### To The Editor

Dear Editor,

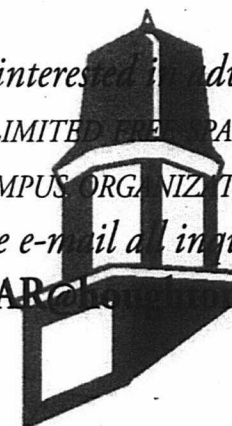
I was struck by a statement editor-in-chief William Airhart made in his recent editorial suggesting a chapel-scanning experiment: "...skeptics of my proposal must assume that students are devious and hell-bent on wiggling their way out of chapel attendance at any cost. I prefer to think much more of Houghton students." Mr. Airhart's article didn't elaborate on what, in fact, Houghton students may be instead of this pure evil, but I'd like to take a guess.

I think that many students such as myself don't go too far beyond attending our required number of chapels because they have other things to do, as unspiritual as it may sound to say. A policy or experiment focusing on human behaviors like chapel attendance should consider the motives for such behavior. It's not that Houghton College is full of mischievous sprites posing as students just so they can scan and scam (which I hope Mr. Airhart realizes is a fairly blatant straw-man argument). It's that life--and indeed, even Houghton College--takes precious time.

Sincerely,

Andrew Davis, Class of 2009

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From the Editors' Desk...

## The Pursuit Of...

Embracing an unusual medium for this periodical, an editor reflects on the dangers that Christians face when pursuing happiness above all else.

By Timothy Bastedo

You want to be happy, but where should you look?  
Can the secret to life be found in a book?  
Which author might parse the structure of pleasure,  
And direct us toward the proper object of leisure?

Perhaps academics, a plausible thought  
After all, let's hope we don't study for naught,  
But academics as *pleasure*? A sketchy contention,  
Which I'm you would meet with an adamant  
declension.

What about sports, can we find happiness there?  
It's possible, but what of the longevity snare?  
Sports only last as long as we're able,  
What's left after, just recourse to cable?

And speaking of bodies, what of desire?  
As internal drives and cravings conspire  
To bring happiness, shirts and pants taken off,  
Postmodernism's flag, flying aloft!

What of the families such sinful acts form?  
A house, kids, and picket fence is the norm.  
But what of those without, or with relationships  
strained?  
Will their happiness remain forever estranged?

Doubtless you've all now become impatient,  
"The Bible!" you scream, "and the church congregation!"  
Isn't it clear that Christianity brings,  
All of the praises which happiness sings?

Here we must tread with the utmost discretion,  
For now we attempt theological dissection,  
And if our cuts become careless, and our lines  
don't run true,  
Our worldview will crumble from surgery undue.

But isn't there *something* in thinking this thought?  
Isn't it happiness which Christianity brought?  
Is this what we mean by joy so fundamental,  
Caused by a shepherd of men kind and gentle?

Perhaps, but I think it's become dangerously misleading,  
Consider the culture whose interpretation we're reading,  
"Life is self-fulfillment," cry their  
street-corner preachers,  
Pathetic, the church tries to pander to "seekers."


People want a religion that will make them feel best,  
So they shop for the church who'll respond  
with the zest  
Of a salesman, always so eager to please  
The customers, whose wishes they strive to appease.

Those who agree here are sorely mistaken,  
It seems that their lives have never been shaken,  
Consider the death of a child and then,  
Question happiness's role in Christianity again.

Because God doesn't promise or guarantee such,  
And frankly, it shouldn't really matter that much,  
Because if your focus is on what *you* can get,  
Then it seems you've been caught in our culture's  
tight net.

If we're not to be happy, what are we to be?  
And how do we make this important discovery?  
I don't really know, since I'm not in charge,  
But I think *that's* the key point we've been leaving at  
large.

As Christians, remember, we don't own ourselves,  
We're on rent for a spell, 'til we're returned to the  
shelves,  
With our stories completed, in full not in part,  
Through grace, by faith, how great *Thou* art.

So don't expect your story to turn as *you'd* like,  
Because you're not the author, and it's not open mic.,  
We recall that it's *God's* story, he's written it well,  
And if we disagree, we can go straight to hell. 

\*Tim is a senior Philosophy and Political Science double major, and serves as commentary editor. This is his first poem that has received publication.

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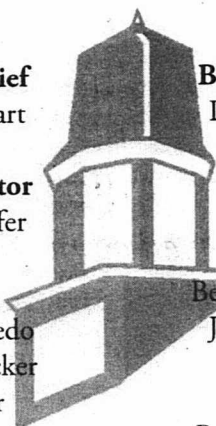
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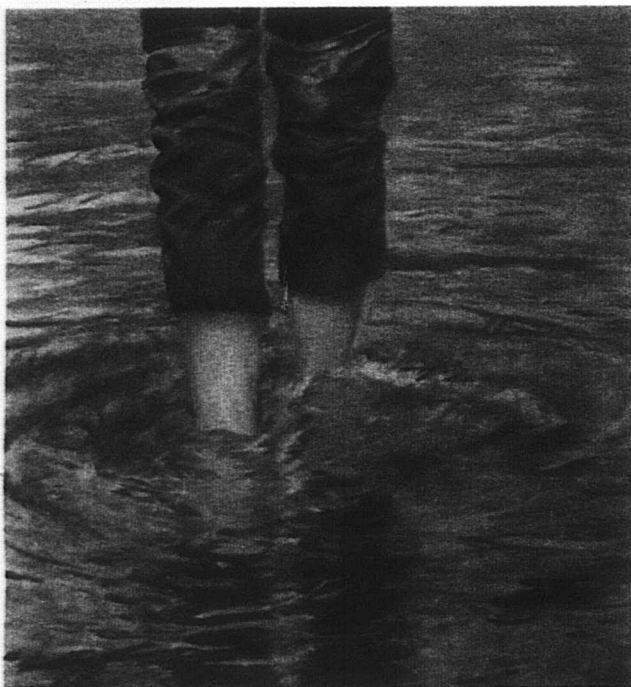
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The HOUGHTON STAR is dedicated to the free exchange of ideas, and encourages community members to participate in the discussion. Ideas expressed in these pages reflect solely the opinion of the writer. The editorial staff reserves the right to edit any contributions for reasons of length or decorum. Letters to the editor (signed) should be 350 words or fewer and be submitted by Tuesday at 12 p.m. to  
**STAR@houghton.edu.**

Names may be withheld upon request.

featured  
artworkASHLEY  
HACKETT*The Broken Stream, oil painting*

## Note from the artist:

*The oil painting originated from a photograph I had taken. I loved the colors reflected in the water so much that I took on the challenge of trying to recreate it through oil paints. One of my most favorite things to photograph are people and the body. I love to experiment with lighting and see how light can capture certain parts of people that might not be seen normally.*

*V, photograph*

Ashley is a junior Art major with concentrations in Painting and Photography.

## Tropical Day: Pack Your Bags! We're Leaving the Day After Tomorrow

By Jesse Woolsey and Peter Carpenter

This past Monday, the campus center played host to Tropical Day, sponsored by the Campus Activities Board. What was this so-called tropical day? It was a special afternoon in the dead of winter on which a subtle illusion was created—that we were all at an overpriced timeshare in a tropical resort, or maybe even at a Florida retirement home.

Featuring wicker golfing hats in abundance and portable shuffleboard courts on the floor, the campus center was turned into a Del Boca Vista of sorts. Stepping in from the blustery Houghton snowfall, awed students entered a tropical beach resort of drinks, miniature novel drink umbrellas, and giant inflatable objects.

In one corner, a giant inflatable monkey took on a life of its own, becoming the life of the party and spouting joy upon all who felt his embrace. Students crowded around the monkey, who was clearly enjoying his newfound status as party central. Tropical Day, it seemed, was not only a brief escape from the chilling winter of Houghton, but an event that brought people closer together.

Free tropical-themed merchandise and fruit smoothies costing just one dollar reigned supreme throughout the day. Some students even took the tropical mood back home by snatching one of the beach balls, serving as a constant reminder in their rooms that somewhere in the world, the weather is comfortable, warm, sunny, and livable.

Java 101 also joined in this winter illusion of tropics by providing cheap, frozen drinks to the general public. Sophomore Bryan Gerlach reminisced, "My drink was cold." While some speculated that the frozen drinks were an ironic choice given the chilling cold outside, most agreed that the drinks somehow managed to trump the ferocious weather. How could any student remain angry about the blustery snow and intense cold while sipping on a piña colada, listening to the Beach Boys, and have a flaming pink lei hanging around your neck? And, failing that, what student couldn't appreciate said beverage while relaxing in a comfortable, authentic tropical hammock? On top of it all, anyone who bought a smoothie is now the proud owner of a new tropical cup.

It was fortunate that one of this year's prospective student days coincidentally happened to fall on Tropical Day. Could there be any better message to send to potential students than the proof that Houghton students, despite being surrounded by cold and snow, can still live a tropical lifestyle? Tropical Day provided Houghton's student body with a much-needed tropical spark, for we no longer need to despair; the sun will indeed come up tomorrow, even if it fails to warm the air above 15 degrees. Can the bleak gray January life in Houghton get any better than Tropical Day?

*Look for another challenging crossword in next week's issue of the STAR!*