

# THE HOUGHTON STAR

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November 6, 2009

## Program Reductions Announced

by Joel VanderWeele

On Monday, November 2, President Shirley Mullen announced to a standing-room-only audience of community members the specific reductions that will be made in the next year to create "greater fiscal flexibility" for the college.

According to Mullen, the reductions, submitted by the Organizational Sustainability (OS) Taskforce and approved by the Board of Trustees in October, are "intended to more effectively align resources to the breadth of our core commitments."

The Adirondack Program at Star Lake will be eliminated, as well as the graduate program in Theological Studies. The Physical Education program will close the Sports Ministry and Fitness tracks and the Therapeutic Recreation track in Recreation and Leisure will be closed because of increased state requirements and a voluntary reduction in faculty in that department. Both French and Accounting will be reduced from major to minor programs, and the Equestrian program will be cut by approximately 30%. The costs of the First-Year Honors Program in London will also be significantly reduced for the 2011-2012 school

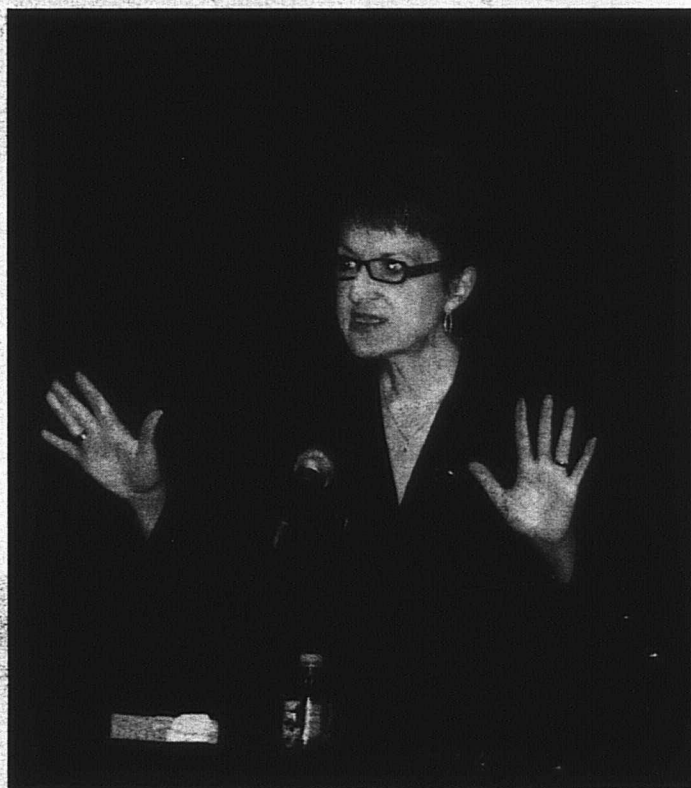


photo by Wesley Dean

**President Mullen announced the elimination of several programs, such as Star Lake, and the reduction of certain areas from majors to minors, and the reduction of positions in several departments.**

year and beyond.

The currently filled academic positions which will be reduced includes one untenured position in

Music, one untenured position in Religion, the voluntary reduction

*Firings cont'd on page 2*

## Dr. Brandon Johnson Receives Teaching Excellence Award

by Mary Doan

In chapel last week, Dr. Brandon Johnson, Associate Professor of Conducting & Vocal Music and Director of Choral Activities, was awarded the annual Teaching Excellence award. Each year, the award is given to a professor who understands the challenges facing many students in college and graduate school.

Johnson began his musical career as a percussionist in his high school in Minnesota. It was not until his senior year that a friend convinced him to join the choir, where he fell in love with choral music.

Johnson said, "I didn't really feel as though I was skilled enough to be a professional musician," but that was his desire. He struggled with inferiority since his musical background "was limited," and it seemed to come easier to those around him. He entered college looking into pre-med and sports medicine as possible careers, but music was always in the back of his mind. While in college, he thought that if he could pass the basic music classes, he would immediately switch to music education.

"I squeaked by," he said, "and switched majors, and switched to a very fine music school, and I kept struggling and working and not giving up."

The struggles lasted through college and grad school, then into his teaching years. Using the education he received at Concordia Lutheran College in Minnesota, Johnson started by teaching students in grades five through twelve, but later went on to teach advanced classes.

The encouragement he gives education majors is indicative of what he went through. "Just don't give up. The first years of teaching are really hard, and it's easy to get discouraged because you don't have the tools to really be successful in a lot of ways."

According to Johnson, the students taught him more than he taught them in those first years, but his heart for excellence and God's

*Johnson cont'd on page 2*

## Bazaaro Art Piece Sparks Controversy

by Marc LeMaire

Over this September's homecoming weekend, the Wesley Chapel Art Gallery presented the annual Alumni Art Show, which was received with mixed feelings due to a piece of artwork entitled Bazaaro. The work, a magazine submitted by Amanda Benton, class of 2007, is a satire toward the industry of fashion and beauty. The message is communicated through pages of images, articles, and advertisements confronting its audience with distortions of some of the messages that subliminate these cultural statutes.

While preparations for this gallery exhibition were under way, a Houghton custodial employee mistook the artwork for an explicit

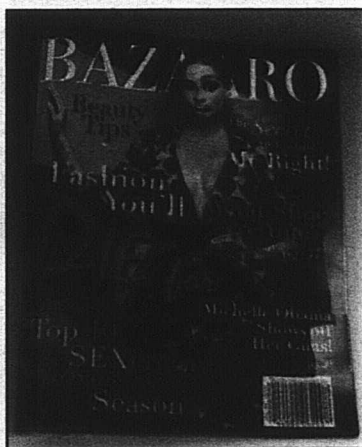


photo by Wesley Dean

**The Bazaaro art piece is on display in the Wesley Chapel Art Gallery.**

magazine that was out of place and brought it to the Student Life Services. After examining the content of the artwork, Sharra

Hynes, Vice President for Student Life, permitted the disposal of this piece. When Megan Little, the gallery assistant, realized the absence of this piece, she sent a campus wide e-mail to inquire about its disappearance. The Office of Student Life responded to Jillian Sokso, gallery Director and chair of the art department, informing her that they mistook the artwork and disposed of it.

A meeting involving Sokso, Hynes, Associate Dean Linda Mills-Woolsey, Dean of the Chapel John Brittain, Professor of Communications David Huth, and Executive Director of Alumni Relations Dan Noyes, was held to discuss how to compensate and apologize to the artist, as well as

*Bazaaro cont'd on page 2*



# THE WORLD IS THERE

by Derek Schwabe

## Republicans Victorious in New Jersey and Virginia

Members of the Republican Party were celebrating this week after achieving victory in two pivotal gubernatorial elections—in New Jersey and Virginia. Since the seemingly devastating outcomes of the presidential and congressional elections of 2008, the party has been grasping to find a new established identity and solidified leadership. Spokespeople for both the Democrats and Republicans have affirmed that the narrow victories were swayed to the Republican side largely because of wavering national approval levels regarding the performance of president Obama and the largely democratic Congress. Experts repeatedly noted local concerns as key factors in these elections as well.

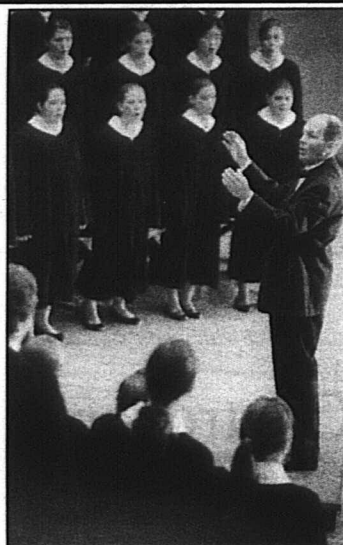
## GM plans to cut 10,000 jobs

Yesterday, American automobile producer, General Motors (GM) made a public announcement to reduce its employee count by 10,000 in its European branch, Opel. GM Labor Unions have already reacted to the announcement by vowing to "reduce the number of jobs lost and to ensure they are voluntary." John Smith, GM's vice-president who made the announcement, chose not to indicate which plants in Europe were to be hit the hardest by the job cuts, but added that a more detailed report would be presented soon. It is estimated that Opel employs 54,000 workers across Europe, nearly half of them in Germany. German officials are already urging GM to reconsider a recently dismissed proposal to sell Opel to a Canadian automobile company, noting the thousands of jobs that are at stake.

Johnson cont'd from page 2

call on his life carried him through. "Something about it being hard is important to remember about God's calling for your life," he said, "God doesn't necessarily only call you to things that are easy." For him, music was always a calling, but accepting that calling and realizing it was possible, has been a journey over many years.

His vision was not to become a college professor, or receive a Teaching Excellence award, but his career has been about connecting with people through music. His students at Houghton expressed their appreciation for his dedication to this call by nominating him for the prize. ★



Dr. Brandon Johnson received the Teaching Excellence Award.

## Rothenbuhler Treasure Hunt × TONIGHT!!!

Volumes are written. If only they could help. Right now. That's all. Understand? Ah, it's clear? Learning? Learning isn't really the goal. Yes, it happens. I can't stress it enough. More? Please. Only the proud. Seasoned. Sufficient. I can't make it clearer. Break its system. Learn its tricks. Earn this. Take your time. Only then can you see. Victims become solutions. I can't continue. Open the door. Let me out. All is good in confusion. Treat me with justice. Even the fools get that. Right? Under the bridge. Lights will guide you. Even if this helps, you still need more. So come and try.



come join the hunt tonight  
schaller hall  
7:00pm  
teams of 4 will seek its prize

Firings cont'd from page 1

to half-time of one position in Recreation and Leisure (effective 2011-2012), the reduction in part-time faculty by one Full-Time Equivalent (FTE), and one retirement in Religion. President Mullen also announced the recent hire of Dr. Keith Horn, who will serve half-time as Associate Dean of Natural Sciences and Mathematics. Some confusion remains regarding the total number of faculty positions being eliminated. The fifteenth recommendation approved by the Board of Trustees at their October meetings states that the school will, "size faculty to a 13 – 14:1 student faculty ratio resulting in a teaching faculty in the range of 88-92 full-time teaching faculty and an overall FTE between 100 and 105." According to the "Faculty Facts" for fall 2009, posted on the Office of the Academic Dean webpage, the current number of full-time teaching faculty members is 89, including professors on sabbatical, one professor on leave, and one scholar in residence. Applying the reductions announced on Monday would bring the number of full-time teaching faculty down to 86.

In non-academic areas, Operations will lose one accounts payable position, Student Life will lose the Director of New Student Programs, and Enrollment will lose the Assistant in Church Relations. In addition to eliminating currently held positions, a number of currently vacant positions will be left permanently unfilled. In academics, this includes one position in Accounting and two positions in Modern Languages. For non-academic staff, this means the permanent reduction of an athletic trainer, a data-entry worker, a carpenter, an IT worker,

and a position for advertising and promotion in Advancement.

Mullen also announced a number of "opportunities that also are before us as we look forward the future, the opportunities that are either under current or that will be under future consideration."

These opportunities included a restructuring of Sociology to accommodate "interdisciplinary strength of our faculty... particularly in specialties related to the environment and how to more fully take advantage of the place in which Houghton is," deepening the Pre-Med and Pre-Law programs, and "continued work with the Institute for the Study of Faith, Justice, and Community Development."

After the presentation, Mullen opened the floor for a question and answer session. Prompted by a question from Professor Ron Oakerson, Mullen explained that the Dean's Office will be examining and clarifying how the institution will treat endowed chair positions and different naming opportunities for donors. "We need a philosophy that we can take to donors and say, 'this is what an endowed position means at Houghton College' and 'this is what a naming opportunity means at Houghton College' because we have some named endowed chairs right now where, we'll just say the college budget isn't benefiting as much as college budgets usually like to benefit by naming opportunities."

The OS Taskforce, when drawing up these reductions, used the analysis delivered by the Austen group this summer and sought to develop an "appropriate level of excellence in all programs," and maintain strength in the mission-consistent programs that currently draw a lot of students, like the biology, music, intercultural studies, and education programs. ★

MONDAY, NOV 9 AT 7 P.M.  
HOUGHTON COLLEGE ID TICKETS: \$8!  
AT WELCOME CENTER OR MEALS!

# Austen Consulting Group Develops Curriculum Cost Analysis for Houghton College Academic Programs

by Elisa Shearer

In June and July of 2009, the Austen Group, a financial consulting organization represented by Dr. Michael Williams, worked with the Organizational Sustainability Taskforce, Efrain Rivera, Vice President of Finance and Administration, and Ronald Mahurin, Academic Dean, to develop a "curriculum cost analysis" for the college. The Austen Group's analysis focused on the cost effectiveness of and demand for each of Houghton's programs.

For a comprehensive analysis, the Austen Group gathered data from admissions, enrollment, the registrar's office, and the finance office. They worked mostly off site, and Williams hosted a web seminar and then presented the findings this summer to the OS Taskforce.

To determine each major's yield rate, the Austen Group compared the percentage of prospective students interested in each major and the percentage of students who end up studying each major at Houghton.

According to Mahurin,

Houghton's biology, education, and music programs all showed high yield rates. History, political studies, and art have lower than average yield rates.

The group also compared the cost effectiveness of each major – what each major costs the college in relation to both how many students study the subject and how many credit hours each major sells.

According to President Shirley Mullen, the analysis acted as a "mirror" for the college to compare what it says its academic priorities are, with how it distributes its resources.

"What they're really asking all around," said Mullen, are "questions of distribution of resources" and "the alignment of institutional resources to external and internal demand of various majors."

"They're inviting you to test your priorities," Mullen said.

According to her, the Austen analysis was "one of the main factors in the decisions that were made" by the OS Taskforce, "but in no case was it the only factor that we looked at."

According to Mahurin, the conclusions reached by the OS

taskforce "were based in part from information that we gleaned from the Austen analysis."

One of the decisions made by the OS taskforce was to find ways to "reduce the costs of running the equestrian program," according to Mahurin. "Put together with recreation and leisure, the equestrian program is the second most expensive program in the college to run."

According to Mahurin, the Austen Group analysis also indicated that the science program was cost inefficient. Mahurin said the college needs to "continue to strengthen the sciences," even though "some of the more expensive programs to run are those in the sciences. There are some programs that are very costly to run, but as it relates to the core mission of the college, you still make the decision to operate those programs."

As a liberal arts college, "to maintain our strengths in the sciences, we'll continue to need to make investments in programs that are more costly," added Mahurin.

"We've got to get additional resources into that program. We need to make additional commitments

there," he said. The plans to expand the science building, Mahurin said, were in place before the Austen Group consulted the college.

Mahurin said that other programs are sacrificing in order to maintain cost inefficient programs: "The short answer is yes, there are sacrifices that are being asked of places across the campus, and on the one hand it's going to be felt perhaps more acutely by those programs, departments, and individuals who lost positions, or whose programs have been reduced or eliminated. But the other side of that is that it puts that much more of a burden and responsibility on the rest of the community," said Mahurin.

The decisions to "release some faculty members" in the religion and music departments were also related to the findings of the Austen analysis, according to Mahurin, in that there was a "need to reduce the costs in those areas, even though these are areas that are critical to the mission of college."

"Given the overall size of the programs in both areas," said Mahurin, "it was necessary to reduce faculty positions." ★

## Bazaaro cont'd from page 2

how to better distinguish the chapel gallery space. Benton was willing to send another copy of the printed magazine and was compensated for her losses. The group also chose to purchase signage to distinguish the chapel gallery to clarify any misunderstandings of its use, which was installed by Sokso.

The controversy surrounding Bazaaro came to a head three weeks later, during New Vision Week (NVW), sponsored by the Class of 2012 and the Global Christian Fellowship (GCF). Some members of this group were taken aback by Bazaaro when students, missionaries, and speakers, as well as some children accompanying these guests, involved in NVW were meeting in the new Prayer Chapel adjacent to the gallery space. Meredith Toombs, a sophomore on the NVW council, took the magazine to safety and security. Toombs had not encountered the artwork before and did not know what its intended message was. Safety and Security referred Toombs to the Office of Student Life who told her to contact Sokso about any concerns.

Sokso invited Toombs to come speak with her after hearing from the Student Life Office about the concerns raised. Toombs brought Erika Harlow, NVW council member, Nathanael Smith, sophomore, NVW Sponsor Rene

Stempert, and GCF sponsor Cindy Austin to support her request in the relocation of this piece. Sokso explained that the Alumni Show is "open call" and seeks to foster an inclusive attitude towards the acceptance of art. After this meeting, the artwork remained in the Wesley Chapel Gallery.

The artwork is currently displayed in the chapel basement but students continue to express concerns about the placement.

Both Toombs and Harlow expressed concern about the multi-functionality of the chapel as a community space open to a wide variety of people, including children. The students were also concerned about how Houghton would be perceived by guests visiting for NVW.

Toombs emphasized that there are "so many visitors in the chapel who don't have the learning experience to approach this piece." Because of this, she suggests that the piece be relocated where people are more prone to spend time in an intentional contemplative attitude, such as the Ortlip Gallery.

"The problem with the artwork is that it's in a location where people don't take the time to look at it," Harlow added.

Regarding the method of communication, Harlow expressed skepticism regarding the piece's consistency, because it uses images from magazines, of which

its models are already being used by the industries. She questioned whether or not a criticism should involve the same people who are already being harmed.

On the other hand, Sokso, along with Professor of Art and Communications Ryan Thompson, find Bazaaro's placement in the Wesley Chapel Gallery as a fitting venue. Sokso views Houghton, as opposed to Western society at large, as an audience that will take this critique seriously.

She added that the location in the chapel is well-suited, because "the audience is for people who don't address these social issues."

Because of this, she considers the chapel's diverse audience as a benefit in the communication of the artwork. Sokso understood the concern that the images may not be appropriate for most children, but she explained that the chest-high podium where the magazine rests was selected for this very reason.

Associate Dean Woolsey said that Bazaaro is subtle in respect to its size and placement in the gallery. She supports the multi-functional use of the chapel, including a variety of uses such as worship, SPOT, or confrontational art.

Thompson said that the chapel should be a place where confrontational artwork such as this can be approached in a contemplative manner. He added that the crucifix is also a strongly

graphic image of confrontational value.

According to Thompson, removing all the confrontational and objectionable content from works in the chapel gallery "would only leave room for puppies, unicorns, and rainbows."

Because of the nature of confrontational artwork, people's reactions to the piece can apply meaning to the artwork itself. Harlow said that she wondered how a reaction is necessary in this piece, because "if this controversy doesn't change anything, this controversy is worthless and it is feeding the problem itself."

Thompson said that he wants to caution to avoid oversimplification in issues such as this, because we all take part in complex relationships with corporate America through advertisements conveying complex messages of both good and bad.

In reaction to this piece, Woolsey said that she values confrontational artwork in its ability to invoke community growth.

"In a live Christian liberal arts community we will have these conversations and the challenge is to have them with respect for one another," said Woolsey.

Vice President of Student Life Sharra Hynes and Dean of the Chapel John Brittain declined to comment, Brittain citing ongoing meetings regarding this topic. ★



# Woolsey Lecture Series: Jeremy Begbie

by Micah Warf

"I would hope first of all that [the Houghton community] would glimpse more of the Gospel...and secondly, I would hope that they begin to see that music is much more wonderful than they have imagined, that it's a gift from God, and that the possibilities are rich and immense." These are the things that this year's Woolsey Lecturer, Dr. Jeremy Begbie, hopes to accomplish during his time at Houghton, as stated in a *Star* interview this week regarding his upcoming visit.

Begbie, who is best known for his work in integrating theology and the arts, sees himself first and foremost as an ordained minister in the Church of England. "Nothing is more exciting for me than seeing people come alive in the faith," he said, and this passion has been the driving force behind his innovative and very impressive career as a writer, lecturer, professor, and musician.

As a child and young adult, Begbie was certain that his life was going to be focused on music, but this took an interesting turn when he was introduced to Christianity at the age of 19. Having previously viewed Christianity as a system of morals designed to "please a belligerent and rather grumpy God," his personal realization of the faith as "good news" forced him to rethink his musical aspirations. "Having found a living faith, I began to ask, 'how does music relate to this, and what roles do the other arts play?'"

This question has fueled a great deal of research and exploration for Begbie, and he has identified three distinct areas of inquiry that "he believes need to be addressed when dealing with theology and the arts."

First, and most obviously, there is the area of the arts in worship. This is something about which there is no shortage of discussion among Christians today, and while recognizing that this area is of the utmost importance, Begbie has

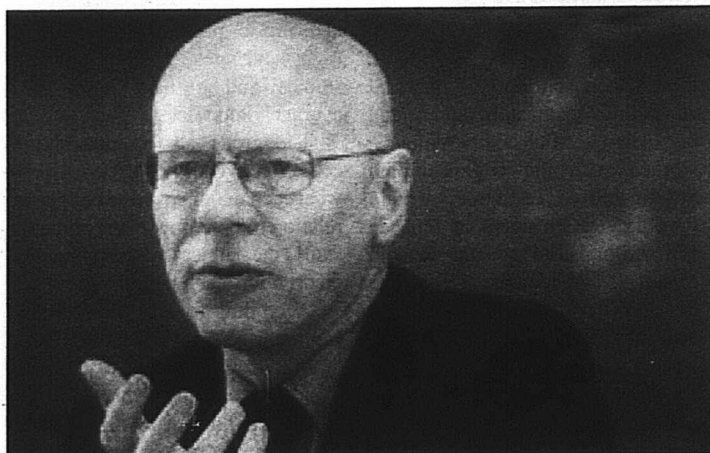
focused on the remaining two areas of inquiry in his own work, primarily because of the lack of attention to them within the modern Christian context. When asked about mentors that he has valued throughout his life, Begbie replied that, while he had strong mentors in other areas of his life, "theology and music is a new interface, and there weren't really others who were writing within this field."

These areas are theology through the arts, and the arts through theology. Respectively, these deal with how our experiences of the arts should be guided and shaped through our knowledge of who God is, and how the arts can influence our experience of theology, and our understanding of God's relationship to his creation. Begbie, beginning his career as a teacher of theology, realized that "if there was a piano [in the room], I'd start using music to aid my theological teaching." An example of this, for Begbie, is "the way that the sounds overlap in a three-note chord," and how this illustrates the interpenetrative nature of the Trinity.

"Music," for Begbie, "has possibilities that no other area of the arts has." This does not mean, however, that the same is true for each one of the artistic pursuits. The long term research and teaching program that he has developed, entitled *Theology Through the Arts*, aims to "help the church find ways in which the arts can help them think about God more faithfully."

Some have criticized Begbie's work for forming unhelpful or unnecessary relationships between the secular and the sacred. When asked about this, Begbie replied that "in the Christian faith, there is no secular and sacred - there is the world under the lordship of Christ." Instead of dealing with 'Christian' arts, he would have us realize that "the holy spirit is active at all times in all ways trying to implement that lordship," and to not limit our focus to music or art with "an Evangelical tag."

While admitting that "not all art is God-glorifying," Begbie thinks that the modern church tends toward presuming this about any art that isn't specifically evangelical in nature. When asked about his favorite composers, Begbie mentioned Bach "first and foremost," but also "Brahms, which may surprise some people." Brahms was far from being an orthodox Christian, but his compositions "integrated head and heart, combining intellectual rigor with profound emotion," which demonstrate



Jeremy Begbie will deliver the Woolsey Lecture on November 17, 2009.

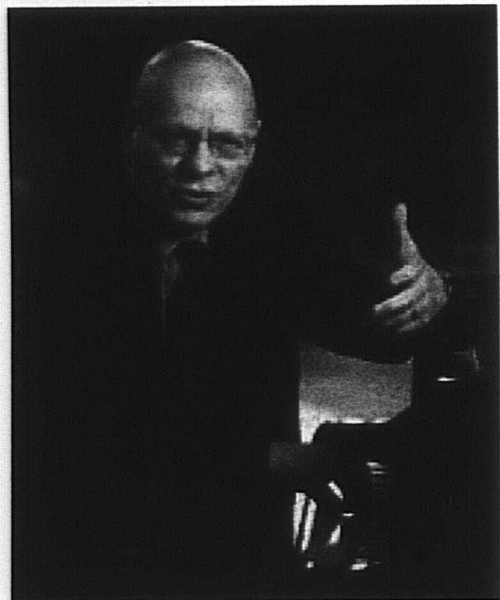
"the kind of people God wants us to be." Begbie sees this as evidence of how even arts in the secular world "can bring us [aspects of] God's grace, by the action of His spirit. Great instrumental music that is rich, varied, and well played can bring glory to God by the fact that it is ordered and beautiful."

Dr. Begbie will be speaking in Wesley Chapel on Tuesday, November 17<sup>th</sup>, at 7:30, and during the chapel service on the following Wednesday morning. ★

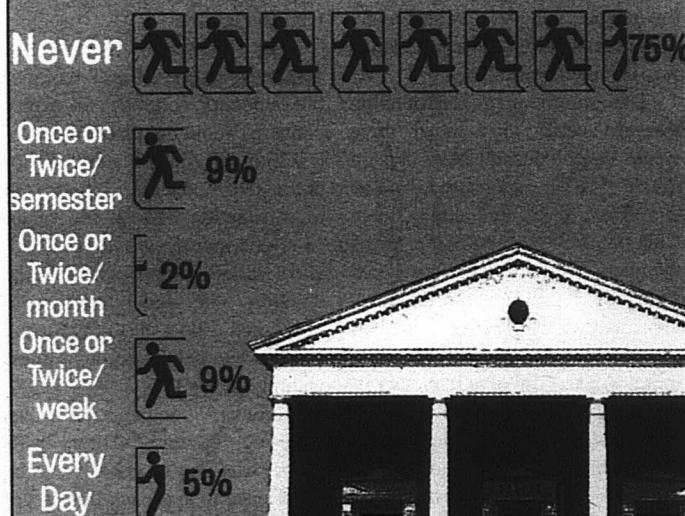
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Apple \* Apple Streusel \* Caramel Apple Crunch  
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Strawberry Rhubarb \* Cherry \* Coconut Custard  
Maple Cinnamon Pumpkin \* Ricotta \* Maple Ricotta  
Almond Joy \* Peach \* Chocolate-Peanut Butter  
Coconut Maple Crunch \* Blueberry \* Maple Velvet  
Cherry Rhubarb \* Blackberry \* Red Raspberry  
Bumble Berry \* Peach Berry \* Chocolate Pecan  
Cranberry Apple Walnut \* Blackberries 'n Cream  
Caramel Pecan Cheesecake \* Chocolate Raspberry



## How often do you "scan and scam"?



Visit us at [www.houghtonstar.com](http://www.houghtonstar.com) for...

- New Poll: Do you think Bazaar should remain on display in the chapel basement?
- Additional work from our Artist of the Week
- Full Jeremy Begbie article

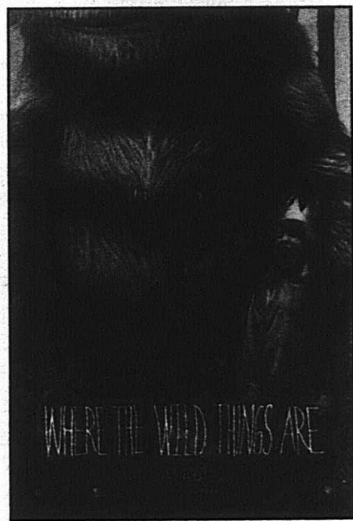


# Film Review: *Where the Wild Things Are*

by Katherine Thompson

Based on the book by Maurice Sendak, director Spike Jonze (*Being John Malkovich*, *Adaptation*) brought the classic children's story, *Where the Wild Things Are* to the screen on October 16<sup>th</sup>. Shot like a Sigur Ros music video, intensely dream-like and stylized, the film has been highly praised.

The script, which was co-written by Jonze and Dave Eggers (author of *What Is the What* and *A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius*) presents the audience with dialogue that is believably from the mouth of a child. But every line is loaded, carrying with it a higher level of meaning.



Alexander, one of the Wild Things, tells Max after he realizes that Max actually isn't a king, that he "doesn't even know if there's a king that can do all of the things [Max] said." This is a simple relation of Alexander's childlike disappointment,

but on a different level there is the question of God, and how we tend to place our own personal expectations on that which is greater. Max, feeling the pressure the Wild Things have put on him, is given the opportunity to ask Bob and Terry, the owls that act somewhat like oracles, anything he wants. He asks, "How do I make everyone okay?" Bob and Terry answer in incomprehensible squawks.

Max comes to the realization that there is no answer, and that he cannot make everyone "okay". Even in his own fantasy, Max is unable to take out the reality he was trying to escape. His imaginary family turns out to be as dysfunctional and as painful for him as his real family situation. Max's make-believe universe is the one place where he supposedly has control – it is intended to be the



Max the King runs after Carol through the land of the Jonze's *Where the Wild Things Are*.

opposite of his reality, but in the World of the Wild Things, even where he is in a position of authority, life is just as hard. When crowned king, one of the Wild Things asks him, "Can you keep out the sadness?" Although Max initially feels that he is capable of doing this, he learns differently. When Max decides to leave, a Wild Thing asks Max, "Will you say good things about us?" Max answers yes. He has discovered, in his own imagination, that – despite the pain – it has all been worth it. He will have good things to say about his experience with the Wild Things even though it's been painful. The Wild Things, though monstrous, want to be perceived as good – as worth it. The film is a lovely visual parable, relating that life may be full of pain and dysfunction, but the goodness of it outweighs all that is negative.

Praised for its aesthetic characteristics and more mature philosophical themes, it has also received a good amount of criticism for the latter, mostly for being less suitable for children than expected. While based off a popular children's book, Jonze did not actually intend the film to be for children. Jonze revised the film to make it more kid-friendly than he originally intended at the plea of Warner Bros., who in turn compromised to not advertise it as a children's film and spent 70% of the promotional media geared toward adults.

Affecting and emotional, the film *Where the Wild Things Are*, uses the familiar children's story to portray philosophical themes through simple but striking settings and shots. ★

## Black-Eyed Susan Acoustic Café to open in Angelica

by Renee Roberts

Angelica, New York, has something new to boast about: Black-Eyed Susan Acoustic Café. The newest addition to the town offers live music and a variety of food for customers to enjoy. Every Saturday night, beginning at 7:30 p.m., the café features different musicians. There is no cover charge for these events, but guests are asked to contribute to the tip jar.

The café is not only a venue for musicians but offers a wide array of food choices for hungry customers. Karen Ash, co-owner, encourages students to try the "great food!" Fresh appetizers, homemade soups, and dinner entrees are on the menu, as well as freshly-roasted coffee and espresso drinks. Desserts, including flavored pastries, crème brûlée, pumpkin mousse, and chocolate raspberry crème pie, are also available. Those looking for a quick lunch option might consider visiting the café between 11:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The café also offers Saturday dinners

beginning at 4:30 p.m. and ending when the kitchen closes at 10:00 p.m.

Don Ash, co-owner of Black-Eyed Susan Acoustic Café, is excited about "creating an environment where food, conversation, and great music come together every Saturday night." Don and Karen Ash, who also own the Angelica Sweet Shop, love music and wanted a place for musicians and customers to come together and have a pleasant evening. Inspired by frequent trips to the Canaseraga Coffee House where they enjoyed meals and live music, the two decided to open their own version, hence, the birth of Black-Eyed Susan Acoustic Café. Numerous attempts at options for the name of the café came to a head with the "Black Eyed Susan Acoustic Café," which the Ash's feel invoke a "warm, welcoming, and friendly" atmosphere.

Open-mic nights coming in the future and recurring gigs on Saturday nights offer students the chance to showcase their musical talents and create a new, engaging place for music-lovers to hear the offerings of

local bands.

The Ash's see the success of the café directly related to the relationship between owners and customers. Their purpose as owners is to "[provide] a pleasant place for friends to socialize and enjoy good music." The job of the customers is to "show their appreciation by buying dinner or coffee and dessert, and by tipping the band," while the band "[puts] on a terrific show so everyone has a good time." The Ash's said, "When everyone does their part, all elements are in place to make the enterprise an ongoing success."

For those interested in attending a Saturday night performance, November 7 will feature

musicians Bob and Gena Decker. Their musical style is eclectic, drawing influence from blues, rock, folk, and roots music. The doors will open at 4:30 p.m., and the community is encouraged to attend.

Musicians and customers interested in learning more about Black-Eyed Susan Acoustic Café should visit [www.black-eyed-susan.com](http://www.black-eyed-susan.com). ★



The Deckers will perform on Saturday, November 7.



# Put Down that C.S. Lewis and Develop A Critical Eye

by Ryan Clark

Why is Houghton College a "liberal arts" college, and what does that title mean? Is there really such a thing as a Christian institution? By taking on these questions as a Junior Music Performance major, I must say that I have many times, in conversation or just outright venting, risked pretentiousness, arrogance and downright malice. But the subject of the definition (whether attributed by someone or chosen) of our college as "liberal arts" has always, from day one, seemed to me mediocre; a definition that students do not live up to, or care to live up to. I am speaking specifically of students' views on music and film.

It has never been lost to me that people of my generation have an inadequate grasp of art and its place. While that is not necessarily entirely their own fault, if one is going to attend a liberal arts school, one would suppose that a certain amount of artistic education and discussion would be in order. And one would also suppose that at a school that attaches the Christian God's name to every shred of paper it shoves in students' faces, the arts would be

taken on even more bravely and with a more spiritually-oriented position. Unfortunately, quite the opposite is the case. Students at Houghton College saunter sleepily from one theology class to another, seemingly tackling large ideas in their readings and then are unashamed in singing praise songs with abhorrent theology...and they enjoy it. Students will gladly pay money to watch "Transformers" in the chapel and then mock and deride a documentary like "For The Bible Tells Me

So," a film which shamelessly poses difficult questions to "Christians;" questions that Houghton Christians seem afraid to ponder, or perhaps are simply not willing to ponder.

Recently in my 3-M class led by Dr. Stewart (yes, as a music student, I still have to fulfill a philosophy credit), we discussed Socrates' definition of a "misologue:" a person who despises philosophical discourse and knowledge. Socrates speaks of these "misologues" as miserable and

pathetic creatures. To him, there is no greater evil. They hate discourse because they do not want to consider their beliefs objectively or they fear that their philosophical problems are

**If one is going to attend a liberal arts school, one would suppose that a certain amount of artistic education and discussion would be in order**

unsolvable and bitterly resign to laziness. I'm afraid to say that such is the case with many Houghton students that I have run into. The environment of artistic discussion I've encountered at Houghton is vapid at best. Many students choose to view Art the same way they've been taught to read the Bible: word-for-word and literal law. If there is any suggestion of deeper meaning, it is dismissively swept away because it may use vulgar language or portray a homosexual character sympathetically.

So, what I'm asking is that Houghton students put down their third-generation paperbacks of *The Chronicles of Narnia* and *Lord of the Rings* and start to take their lives (and education) more seriously. Now, I have met many students of

like mind, and we seem to share this disappointment in common. And I do have great confidence in many faculty members I have spoken to about this issue. I have taken film and music classes, some of which I greatly enjoyed, some of which I thought were grossly inadequate in terms of student response and professorial approach. I really don't have any answer to apathetic and stuck-up attitudes but this: grow up. Perhaps many Houghton students are afraid to ask questions. Perhaps they are afraid of thinking critically. But as Jules Winfield says, "If my answers scare you, Vincent, then you should cease asking scary questions." In other words, if a liberal arts school is going to attach a religion's name (much less a denomination's) to its own name and is not willing to take all the arts as seriously as they take *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe*, then not only is it backwards education, but I would recommend leaving God out of the mix completely.

- Ryan Clark is a Junior Music Performance major

## Letters to the Editor

Dear Editors,

I was left deeply confused and disturbed by some of the comments made in chapel this past Monday. I find it odd that despite our never-ending discussions about how to maintain Houghton's "community," extremely offensive and inappropriate remarks still manage to find their way on to the stage and off the podium of Wesley Chapel. The fact that these comments were made by our very own SGA Chaplain gives more cause for concern. I am of course referring to Suzanne Derksen's comments about her time living with a gay couple in Nice during her semester abroad and her speculation that they were the cause for some "spiritual oppression."

After explaining how she became incredibly lonely, miserably sleep deprived and depressed just a few weeks into her semester in France, Ms Derksen made the comment "the enemy was just closing in on me... and maybe I risk something when I say this... I also wonder if there was spiritual oppression just because I lived under the roof of a homosexual couple."

Now, I have no problem with conservative beliefs over homosexuality.

But holding those beliefs and being sensitive and respectful are two very different things. I am puzzled that our student chaplain can so flippantly scapegoat other people as the cause for her feeling "spiritually oppressed." Have we learnt nothing of the all-embracing loving nature of Christ that we still play the finger-pointing game? On top of this, Ms Derksen's preface to her comment should have been a clear indication that this was not a wise thing to share during her chapel message on hospitality. If she understood it to be "risky," and by that of course she means offensive and insensitive to some in the audience, then why say it at all?

Could it be that Ms Derksen simply jumped into a world she was not prepared for, with nothing to fall back on? No, of course not. It was the enemy and those ghastly homosexuals again! Ms Derksen's comments displayed a lack of respect for her audience and great insensitivity to those on our campus who struggle with this issue. How unfortunate that Ms Derksen wasn't present last semester to attend a performance of *Swallow*. Perhaps then she would have been aware of how delicate and critical this issue is to a number of students here at Houghton; maybe then she wouldn't have been so reckless with her words.

- Henry Langston, Class of 2010

Dear Editors,

In last week's issue Monica Sandreczki wrote an article noting the twentieth anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall. In the article, she stated that "The toppling of the Wall... marked the dissolution of the divisions between Western democracy and Eastern communism..."

As a Communist, I was deeply offended by this statement, not because of any lack of historical accuracy, but because of the serious misrepresentation of Communism presented here. Firstly, while asserting that the fall of the Berlin Wall marked the end of the Eastern bloc is true- to assert that bloc was Communist is not. While confusing Communism with the pseudo-Marxist empire known as the USSR is a common mistake, it is still a serious one. The best equivalent I can imagine would be to take the atrocities of the Crusades and Spanish Inquisition and label them as Christianity. As history teaches, there always have been- and always will be- those who misuse ideologies as justification for their actions- it's easy to confuse the culprit and the façade he uses. Today you will find that about as many Communists consider the (former) USSR, Cuba, and North

Letter cont'd on pg 7

**Disgusted?**  
**Delighted?**  
**Just confused?**

**We want you to be part of the conversation.**

Letters to the editor (signed) should be 350 words or fewer and be submitted by Tuesday at 7 p.m. to [star@houghton.edu](mailto:star@houghton.edu)

**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.



From the Editor's Desk...

# Can a Christian College Education Succeed Without Agnostics?

by Micah Warf

With all of the airtime that "diversity" and "community" get on this campus, it's a surprisingly lonely place for an agnostic. I suppose I should clarify that a bit, for those of you who are doing a double-take and just now realizing that a Houghton student referred to himself as something other than Christian.

I am an agnostic in the sense that I believe in a God who may or may not want anything to do with us, and of whose goodness and mercy I am strongly suspicious. I am certainly not alone in this view, but within the Houghton community, it's very hard to find others who are looking for truth in my little corner of the religious outfield.

I question just how much diversity and community can be achieved given the very nature of Houghton as an institution.

Diversity, as I understand it, is the quality of variance within a specific group, usually in the areas of race, color, and creed. I think Houghton's doing a great job of encouraging diversity of race and color. NCMSLC was very well received by the campus at large, and as a community, we were able to aid in the furthering of intercultural unity in the educational arena.

The problem is, we seem to be so focused on race and color that we've forgotten about creed. Can we truly call ourselves a campus that embraces diversity if we only tolerate diversity in a few specific areas? It seems as though we are

saying that skin color is somehow more important than faith and belief. We actively bring multi-cultural students to our campus, and welcome a student body that represents many different countries worldwide. But how many Buddhists, Unitarians, Mormons, Atheists, or Jehovah's Witnesses do we see on a regular basis?

Let me make myself understood: if I were arguing that Houghton should be entirely indifferent to the religious education and spiritual growth of their students, there would be some very obvious flaws in my understanding of this college. If we were not an outstandingly Christian school, we would lose a very important part of what makes Houghton such a good institution, namely, a common ground that focuses the goals, directions, decisions, and educational integrity of the college.

But I'm very concerned about what we think makes Houghton a Christian institution. As an agnostic from a strongly Christian background, I'm not comfortable or content with my current stance on religion. In fact, I'm very interested in answering the deep questions I have about God and the church. But there is so much about our school that does nothing to further the "Christianity" of the institution, but that does quite enough to make people like myself feel uncomfortable, unwelcome, and uncared for.

Chapel, of course, is the most obvious facet of this, and one that has had plenty of public airings-out, even just this semester. I am

not, however, concerned with the attendance requirement. I'm all for accountability and the attendance to spiritual growth, especially in these times when I feel as though I need it more than ever. But when chapel consists of yet another speaker who wants to cheer us on, as though we are all running Paul's famous "race for the heavenly crown," and this is bookended by everyone around me singing songs about how holy they want to be, I am marginalized.

When I was applying to Houghton, I remember distinctly staring at the rather capacious box in which I was supposed to describe my relationship with Jesus Christ, and wondering exactly how this mattered. Does Houghton want to accept only those students with good academic records AND a top-notch faith, whatever this means? If this were something that had no bearing on the admission of a particular student, would it figure so prominently on the application sheet?

So what does a Christian institution look like? Is it a place that we should protect from those who are not Christians, just in case we are tainted somehow, or "bad blood" is introduced into the veins of Christ's body? Is it a place where everyone should assume that everyone else holds relatively the same beliefs regarding God and the purpose of the universe?

If we are a place that transforms "the world" along with lives, what better place to start doing this task than Houghton's campus (safety in numbers and all of that, you know)? To have a college where the only

spiritually directed events center around the presupposition that everyone is a Christian, where it is assumed that it is in our best interest, and for the good of our own education that we have a campus comprised primarily, if not solely, by Christians, and where evangelism is something we talk about and learn about and think about, but never actually engage in, then what exactly is so "Christian" about this college, other than the kind of church everyone goes to on Sunday morning?

I'm not looking for privileges, recognition, or even sympathy or a special diet of "agnostic-only" learning and living. Rather, I'm quite interested in Christianity, and in what the Bible says about God so loving the world, and in Christ eating with his disciples and with every tax collector and prostitute he could find. It was my understanding that at a Christian college, I could find out more about Christianity, and possibly be encouraged in my questioning and pursuing of this particular faith, in a community of people who were strongly rooted in the faith, and who were just as eager to fellowship with their like-minded friends as they were to embrace the agnostic, the homosexual, the pagan, the faint-of-heart, the hurting, and the hopeless with this cosmic love that apparently grounds their religion.

So...was I wrong?

*Micah is a senior Philosophy Major and is the Associate Editor.*

Letter cont'd from pg 6

Korea true Communist countries as you'll find Christians who consider the Salem Witch-hunts as Biblically sanctioned. Secondly, the article holds that the fall of the Wall marked the end of divisions between "Western democracy and Eastern communism", suggesting that democracy and Communism are diametrically opposed. This simply isn't true. The "dictatorship of the proletariat" (i.e. the "rule of the public") is one of the central tenets of Marxism- suggesting then that Communism and democracy are opposed is the equivalent of stating that justice and the teachings of Jesus are opposed. It is excusable to confuse Communism and the USSR- to state an outright falsehood about Communism is not.

Of course I do not believe that

Monica Sandreczki intended to defame Communism, but frankly this is the way it comes across. I believe that Monica is a talented journalist- may aim is only to correct, not condemn.

- Gordon Brown, Class of 2012

## Correction:

Last week's "From the Archives" article entitled, "Crane Report: Houghton Losing Its Edge," was incorrectly prefaced in the print edition.

The printed introduction read: "The current *Star* staff finds this article particularly relevant given Houghton's renewed emphasis on the country of Sierra Leone."

It should have read: "The current *Star* staff finds this article particularly relevant given the recent visit of the Austen Group and the renewed focus on Public Relations and Marketing at Houghton College"

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Abstract 3, Oil on Canvas



March, 35mm Film Print

THIS SUDOKU IS  
**EASY**

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**sudoku**  
**CHALLENGE**

The Star will only accept ONE puzzle per semester from each student.

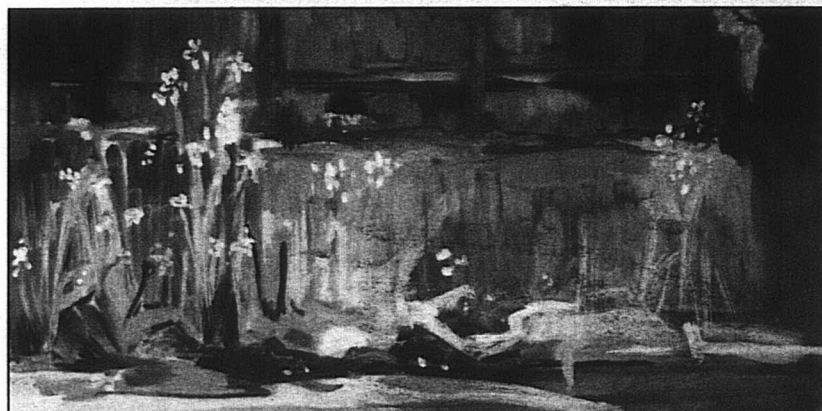
# RACHEL PREVILLE

*Note from the artist:* In my twenty years I have painted, drawn, sculpted, and photographed; manipulated "stuff" to become another kind of stuff. But why? I make things, permanent or otherwise, because over and over again I listen to the world, see God's people and am truly overwhelmed by the fantastic and deep movements that it causes my soul. Every experience hits like waves, big and small, and I love it- I love taking those changing feelings and making images with them. My main medium is oil paint, but any and everything my fingertips reach is fair game.

More of Rachel's work can be found at [www.houghtonstar.com/culture](http://www.houghtonstar.com/culture).



October, Oil on Canvas



Attention, Oil on Canvas

## artist OF THE WEEK

THIS SUDOKU IS  
**HARD**



The Point, Oil on Panel

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Prize: Leroy Townes and the Lone Stars' album!