

## Financial Validation Improves Student Retention

HALEY TREVINO  
Regular Contributor

For the second year, Houghton's Student Financial Services (SFS) has enforced a stricter policy of adherence to financial validation deadlines.

The change has been exclusively in the enforcement of the policy itself. Students must be properly validated—meaning they have either paid their bill for the semester or have an approved loan or payment plan in place—before arriving on campus. Dean of Students March Smithers explained, "This puts us more in line with what other institutions do. Houghton is instituting what would be considered a best practice." This gives the students peace of mind when they come to campus and a mentality of financial stewardship for both staff and students. Marianne Loper, director of SFS, put it this way: "From the moment a student arrives on campus they can enjoy being a student—attending classes and being part of campus life. They do not have offices trying to make appointments with them to work on paperwork and

forms."

This is a proactive effort on the part of the staff and students. Emails are what Shannan Johnson ('21) recalls to be the greatest tool the SFS team used. She was able to pull up the emails on her phone that motivated her to secure her validation. "Are you Financially Validated?" one of them was titled. "The emails clearly lay out the steps," she remarked. "They let you know if something is unresolved."

SFS reports that the change has been beneficial to Houghton attendance. "Not one student has had to leave this Fall due to finances or unpaid bills," Marianne Loper reported. Furthermore, she stated that there were, "Fewer than 10 students who didn't return due to finances... This number is very low and includes returning and first-year students."

Financial Services and Student Life would like to remind students that they are there to help. "We want students to be here," Smithers said. "[Students] have resources available to them... We want to support

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## Euclid Quartet to Perform Tonight



COURTESY OF EUCLID QUARTET WEBSITE

The Euclid Quartet includes Luis Enrique Vargas, Jacqueline Choi, Jameson Cooper, and Brendan Shea (pictured left to right).

RACHEL HUCHTHAUSEN

Globally renowned Euclid String Quartet will perform at Houghton on October 25, in Wesley Chapel at 7:30. These multinational teachers and performers share their passion for music in their performances; The American Record Guide, a critical review for classical recordings, praised them, saying,

"rarely has a group found such meaning and vision."

The Euclid Quartet was formed in 1998 by graduate students at Kent State University. The current members came together from different continents: violinist Jameson Cooper from Great Britain, violinist Brendan Shea from the United States, violist Luis Enrique Vargas from Venezuela, and cellist

Jacqueline Choi from South Korea. The Euclid Quartet has won awards from the Hugo Kauder International Competition for String Quartets, The Carmel Chamber Music Competition, and the Chamber Music Yellow Spring Competition, and was the first American string quartet to be awarded the top prize at the Osaka Interna-

See **QUARTET** page 2

## Houghton to Hold Second Grandparents Day



COURTESY OF PHYLLIS GAERTE

Attendees of Grandparents Day in 2018 worked on art projects in the Van Dyk Lounge.

VICTORIA HOCK  
Regular Contributor

On October 28th, Houghton College will be holding their 2nd annual Grandparents Day. During this event, grandparents can come to campus and learn about a day in the life of their grandchild at Houghton College. The events planned include breakfast with President Mullen, attending a chapel service with their grandchild, and a performance from

the US Navy Band in Wesley Chapel.

Phyllis Gaerte, the Alumni and Community Engagement Director, explained that this event has been years in the making. She explained that after "years of thinking that it was a good idea," they decided to hold the event. In addition, Bec Cronk, the Alumni and Community Engagement Specialist, said that "Grandparents are such a significant part of a student's life, so we felt it was

a good idea to invite them to campus."

Many students may not be able to invite their grandparents for a variety of reasons, but they still are able to enjoy this event in another way. Cronk explained that if students can't invite their grandparents, then they are encouraged to invite a "significant older adult in their life" to campus.

Both Cronk and Gaerte explained that they were "pleas-

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## College Archives Lose Main Staffer

MATTHEW UTTARO  
Regular Contributor

Laura Habecker, the College Archivist since 2016 recently left her part-time position at Houghton for a full-time position at Alfred State University.

Habecker's departure was unexpected, and some who love the Archives are worried about how it will move forward. Phoebe Mullen ('21) serves in the Archives on a volunteer basis. She says, "I think that we need to find somebody to take Laura's place, because otherwise the place is not going to be maintained. And ideally we could get Laura back, but without that we still need somebody who cares." Mullen appreciated both Habecker's practical knowledge of archival work and also her "enthusiasm for the stories and the people that made Houghton the place that it is."

Since 1980 the Archives have provided a place where students can go back in time and learn about the college's legacy in person. Faculty, students, and visitors can dive into the story of both Houghton College and

the surrounding area. It contains physical artifacts, including the correspondence of central figures of the college like Stephen Paine (2nd President of Houghton College), old maps, issues of the STAR going back for over a century, and copies of the Lanthorn. The small room in the basement of the Willard J. Houghton Library holds an abundance of knowledge much bigger than itself.

Mullen, who mainly helps sort through new items and donations given to the Archives, says, "I enjoy learning about all the random little things that make up the story of Houghton... It's just a fun space. You can just open a box and discover things... there's bricks from old buildings, there's yearbooks, programs from musical festivals in the fifties, architectural plans for the chapel, and Gillette, and other buildings." It is usually staffed by an official Archivist, who serves as the point-person for the Archives.

David Stevick, the Director of Libraries and Information Resources, said that the Library

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# Sports: Athletic Department Looking to Increase Fan Support At Games

CALEB PHILIPS  
Sports Writer

In an effort to increase fan support at home games throughout the rest of the athletic seasons, the athletic department has begun to develop a new marketing strategy, that will be put into action throughout the rest of the academic year. Attendance has been visibly down at a majority of home games over the last couple years and also during this semester, but with the help of a student marketing team, the athletic department at Houghton has been brainstorming new strategies to urge more fans to come to home games. These new strategies will include stronger advertisement of upcoming sporting events throughout campus and also creating giveaways and contests at the games themselves. Through this, this group hopes to have a great atmosphere at home games to support players and create an enjoyable outing for fans as well.

Jason Mucher, Houghton’s Assistant Director of Athletics for Compliance and Communication has helped lead the charge in this effort to grow student support at home games. “A lot of people [on this campus are missing out on] supporting student athletes, who are investing a lot of time to put their skills on display,” he said, “It’s disappointing when the seats are filled with only 20 or 30 people [at home games].” While Mucher knows that there are a lot of things competing

for people’s time at Houghton, athletics can be more than just a game. “Athletics can be a great venue for community spirit and activities that support the community, too. And it’s fun, it’s vibrant, even when the teams aren’t winning,” Mucher says. According to Mucher, the main goal of this effort is for fans to feel that vibrancy and excitement so that more people have a great experience at games, no matter the result.

With this goal in mind, the

Sports Information Department formed a group of students to help come up with ideas to market games and possible events to the rest of the campus. One of these students, Joey Gross (‘20), talked about the some of the ideas that this group has come up with to market Houghton’s sporting events. This would include things like social media posts, graphics on TVs in Java or in Big Al’s, and giveaways/contests at games. “Our strategies include a variety of

marketing tools that are targeted mostly to our student body, but are not limited to faculty, staff, and community members,” Gross said. “Perhaps our most tenacious attempt is the creation of an official Student Section at the Nielsen Center for Women’s Volleyball, and Men’s and Women’s Basketball games.” With a roaring student section, games would come with a much stronger atmosphere, one to give the athletes the support that is being sought after.

Athletes feed off of fan support, especially in indoor sports like volleyball and basketball, where the crowd can energize the building. Scottie Berghaus (‘21), a guard on Houghton’s Men’s Basketball team, would love to see the fan support at games grow. “Nothing fires us up more than seeing a packed and rowdy crowd in the Nielsen Center,” he said. Berghaus also talked about how a big crowd can help in the outcome of the game and help to give the team extra energy in long and grueling games. “[A great atmosphere] helps us in so many ways. Being the ‘6th man’ off of the court and showing us support helps our team play harder and get after it every single play,” he stated. “Packing the Nielsen Center for conference games would help to light a fire under our squad and keep us going for the 40 minutes of game time.”

Athletics are a significant part of Houghton life, and athletes make up a large percentage of the student body. It is important to support fellow classmates in any extracurricular activity, and athletics is no different, as many students fully dedicate themselves to a sport or multiple sports. In this effort to increase fan support at home games, the athletic department wants to urge not just fellow athletes, not just sports fans, but all of the students at Houghton to come out and support their fellow classmates as they put their skills on display. ★



COURTESY OF CALEB FESMIRE

The collapsed bleachers on the basketball court in Nielsen Physical Education Center.

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them.” Working through forms such as FAFSA and emails from Houghton over the summer can be frustrating. Smithers emphasizes that these policies are in place for a good reason. “I always want students to know that any sort of process or policy we put in place is done with an eye towards hopefully enabling them to have a better experience here,” he said. Johnson was quick to admit that she wished that the emails would explain the reasoning behind the forms she was asked to fill out. Financial stewardship and responsibility can be especially straining on students without financial help from their parents, and she wishes the college would offer more resources on how to manage this. However, she knows that SFS is there to help. “[Financial Services] has been helpful time-wise especially... they’ve also tried to help me get as much aid as I can,” she said of her own experience. ★

## QUARTET from page 1

tional Chamber Music Competition. They were honored by the

String Quartet Fellowship of the Aspen Music Festival, invited to study at the Carnegie Hall Professional Training Workshop, and chosen for the prestigious string quartet residency at Indiana University South Bend. Euclid’s members are active both in teaching and recording. While Cooper is the only founding member remaining, Vargas explained to me that he underwent the rigorous selection process and audition to become a member “simply [because of] the love for this genre.” He noted that the Debussy Quartet which they will perform at Houghton is a staple in Euclid’s repertoire. Dr. Suzano stated he requested this repertoire because it “seemed to be the most eclectic, which fits the range of tastes and preferences of the audience that comes to our concerts.” He described the Euclid Quartet as a “leading contemporary ensemble.” He added, “anytime we have the chance of bringing a top-notch ensemble such as this one to perform at Houghton, we have no option but to jump in and make the most out of the unique opportunity.” Vargas stated that it is hard for the quartet to separate performance and education. “We

think of performances as being another way of teaching, our students learn from us by being one-on-one in their lessons but also by watching us perform,” he said in an email. “We believe that our performances are filled with lots of energy and passion and this, we hope, can provide our enthusiastic audience (particularly college students) an inspiration for creativity.” They strive for top performance both in the classroom and on stage. Vargas encourages Houghton to “watch how we communicate with each other with our body language.” The Euclid Quartet teaches this skill through example. He reassures student musicians that though “it might take a few years for performances to feel more enjoyable and less stressful to the performer... hard work will pay off.” He emphasizes the importance of continuing to learn “technical tricks” through trial and error in order to “trust ourselves a little bit more... to bring out the beauty in music and to enjoy what we do, so that our listeners can also enjoy it.” “The Euclid Quartet was formed by regular musicians who had a dream,” Suzano said. “Coming out of college they decided to follow their dream and

use their God-given talent to share the beauties of music with audiences all over the world... This ability of believing in yourself and committing to a dream or to a vision is a *sine qua non* for anyone who will succeed.” ★

## ARCHIVES from page 1

has received approval to have a current work-study student in the Archives fill the position on an interim basis for this semester, and hope to have that continue through next semester as well. How can you help? The best way to serve the Archives, Stevick says, is to enjoy them and make use of them. “Do a research project on Stephen Paine’s work on the NIV translation committee. Compare early drafts to the published versions of John Leax’s poetry, essays, and fiction. Browse the cases of Seneca arrowheads. Check out Houghton town history in the online Genesee Valley Town & Country photo collection. And have fun with it!” ★

## GRANDPARENTS from page 1

antly surprised” last year with both the event turnout and the

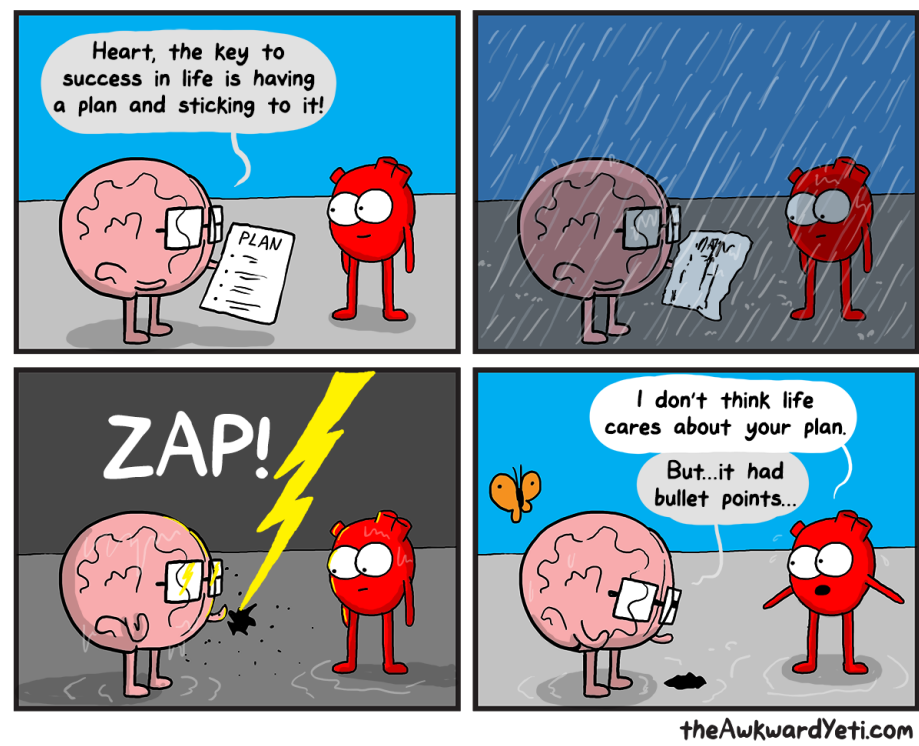
feedback they received from students and grandparents alike. They hope that this year will be just as successful. Emmy Erisman (‘21) is a testament to how well received this event was. Both she and her grandparents had a great time at the event. She said her grandparents enjoyed “getting to see my art, and getting to see the gorgeous mural in the chapel.” For Erisman, attending this event with her grandparents was a no-brainer. “My grandparents had been wanting to come to campus anyway, so I knew this would be perfect for them to attend,” she said. She’s also glad the event is held in the fall, as the campus and fall foliage surrounding it are particularly beautiful during that time. Emmy would encourage anyone who wants to invite their grandparents to a future Grandparents Day to definitely do it. Overall, she had “a ton of fun”, and she is glad she participated in it. This event is one that Cronk and Gaerte hope will continue for “years to come”. It’s a great day for students to invite their grandparents to campus, especially if they (like Erisman’s) have been wanting to come and pay a visit to campus. ★



# Comics

## Heart and Brain

NICK SELUK



## Strange Planet

NATHAN PYLE



# Humans of Houghton

## Sarah Glick

ALLY STEVICK

Sarah Glick is a senior music education major, with a concentration in voice. This semester she is student teaching at an elementary school, which she says provides some challenges as far as how young the kids are, and how rambunctious they can be. I ask Sarah to tell me a little bit about what it's like teaching music to elementary school aged children. "It's different depending on the school district you're in," she says. "Where I am right now she uses music learning theory, which is a lot of having the kids listen and hear the music in their heads, and then sing it when you tell them to... It's a lot of listening and getting them to the point where they understand it, and then telling them and showing them the symbols of what they're doing." But other school districts, she tells me, use methods that more directly explain to kids what the notation means and how to use it.

I ask Sarah if there was a moment when her love of music began. "I really think I've always loved music... I remember my mom was always singing to me and my sister when we were younger. And then, we switched churches when I was in first grade, and that summer I joined their children's program which does children's musicals over the summer, and I just fell in love. And I did one every summer after that." Sarah also expresses a lifelong love for acting, "which is weird," she says, laughing, "because I'm shy. But I don't know, maybe I just become the character and don't even think about it."

Sarah works hard to find the words to characterize what she loves about music and acting. "I like the thrill that [acting] gives me inside," she says. "I'm always nervous before a show, but as soon as I step out on stage it's like the audience gives you this extra boost of energy, and I love that. I feed off of the audience and it gives me more energy to make it through, and I have more fun doing it." As far as music, one of the things Sarah mentions is the calming ef-

fect that music has on her. "If I get all nervous and anxious then usually a song will pop into my head and then I calm down, or at least I try to," she explains. "Other times, especially worship music, I just love the connection I feel when I'm singing certain songs. Other songs, especially ones that we do for juries or recitals here, they are ones so that you can act things out and give certain expressions. I love that—I love being able to portray certain characters through the song, through the words and the music."

Before we conclude our conversation together Sarah tells me a story. She had always had headaches, but the year that Sarah was in seventh grade her headaches started getting much worse and making her nauseous. After several trips to the emergency room where she was assumed to be dehydrated, one doctor finally ordered a CT scan and found that she had a rare brain tumor on her pituitary gland. This tumor was the cause of the headaches, as well as some other issues. The tumor was benign, and a surgery and six weeks of radiation got rid of it. After that Sarah just had to go in for regular checkups, which are now down to once a year. Sarah tells me that she had a very nice surgeon. "He had daughters of his own," she says, "and so he didn't cut off my hair. He said, 'My daughters would scream if I cut off their hair if I had to give them surgery.' ... So he didn't shave me bald." This was apparently for the best, since, Sarah tells me, her younger sister said she wouldn't come visit her in the hospital if she didn't have any hair. We laugh about this, but then Sarah tells me something more serious. "I hear of people having faith struggles and issues, or having a hard time with certain things," she tells me. "And I feel like that's one of the reasons why I haven't had that... God was like, 'nah, I'm here for you, you don't have to worry at all.' It was just kind of, smack-in-the-face, 'I've got this.' And I haven't had any faith issues or struggles, and I think it's because of that." ★

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# Center for Sustainability Hosts Second Harvestival

SHANNAN JOHNSON

The Harvestival, going on today (October 25) from noon to 5 p.m., is a student-led festival organized by interns from the Center of Sustainability. The aim of the event is to bring students and community members together to celebrate the fall season “before it gets cold,” according to the event’s founder, Jesse Rucquoi (‘21).

There will be lawn games, local vendors, live music, and a pumpkin carving table. An aspect of the Center for Sustainability that many students may already be familiar with is the Eco-Reps program, open to any student interested in promoting sustainability and becoming more aware of how their lifestyles impact the environment. The program’s current coordinator, Mary Chichester (‘22), will be leading an activity for both students and community members alike to participate in. There will also be donuts. Lots of them. “I ordered four times more donuts [than] last year,” Rucquoi noted, saying that all musicians, vendors, and volunteers will receive a donut for their participation. The rest will be for students and community members who pledge to make a lifestyle change for the sake of the environment. They will be located at the pledge table, with a banner Rucquoi created herself. According to Chichester, the goal for this banner is that “every year people will pledge to use less water, use less electricity, eat sustainably, waste less food. You write it down on



COURTESY OF CALEB FESMIRE

Autumn leaves on the side of Genesee Street, across from the Campus Center.

the banner and that’s your way of solidifying your pledge for the year.”

Rucquoi learned about many of the vendors participating through various connections at Houghton. “I would talk to different faculty, and either they would be friends with a business and talk to them or I would email the businesses or Facebook message a business, but it was pretty much different for every business.” Some of the local vendors that she mentioned are participating include: Wagner Bees, Hinz-Sight Goat Dairy Farm, and The Perfect Blend. The Perfect Blend, a popular coffee shop located

in Cuba, will be selling gourmet coffee, lattes, chai, and hot chocolate, as well as pastries such as cookies and brownies, in a coffee camper. The owner, Annie McCumiskey, actually came to Houghton for church camp as a child, and hopes her business will continue to be a part of this event. Alongside the local vendors, Houghton students will be selling their artwork and pottery. The Center for Sustainability will also have produce grown here at the college garden at either a low cost or for free with suggested donations.

The idea for the Harvestival actually came from a joke. According to Rucquoi, during the

Center for Sustainability’s staff training last year, the center’s director, Brian Webb, “had us do this planning game sort of thing where we had five minutes to write on a Post-It note a random event that if we had all the money in the world we could create.” Rucquoi’s response was a spin on the phrase “harvest festival.” “I joked about the pun and then thought about all the things that I would assume would be at a Harvestival, and that’s what we made it.”

Last year’s Harvestival was a great success. Both Chichester and Emily Hornibrook (‘21), the Event Coordinator for the Center for Sustainability, have

positive recollections. “[The participation from the community] was really good. We had a lot of professors bringing their kids,” Chichester said. They hope to have a bigger outcome this year, especially because of their choice of alternative location. Using the Van Dyk Lounge instead of KPAC will be more accessible to both students and community members.

The benefits of the Harvestival are many. Chichester pointed out that community members likely see Houghton as merely “the college” and may not otherwise get to interact with students. Through this event, however, Chichester hopes that the festival shows community members that “we care about the community and we care about the people we live next door to and our neighbors.” As for students, they may not have a clear or positive perspective on sustainability. Learning through a festival instead of a traditional lecture can help change that, Chichester explained. And both students and community members will have the chance to, as Hornibrook puts it, “make connections, work together, and fellowship with one another.”

“This what the Center for Sustainability lives for,” Chichester said. “We live for bringing the community together sustainably.” And for Rucquoi, “This event is my heart and soul.” She hopes that it will become an annual event, that in the future alumni will return to the event, and that it will continue long after she’s gone. ★

## Investigating the History of Shenoween

BURTON BREWSTER  
Regular Contributor

The most defining event at Shen during the October month is Shenoween. The costume party extravaganza is hosted in the basement of the Shen dorm annually in celebration of Halloween, always taking place on the last Saturday of October. Over the years, a collection of stories and traditions have formed that have shaped the event since its foundation, nearly fifteen years ago.

“Shenoween was not really a thing when I was a student, although we did once duct tape this guy to the wall on Halloween just to make the dorm extra creepy,” explains Dean Michael Jordan (‘99), “It was with his consent, to be clear. People [just] used to do semi-creepy or socially awkward things in the dorm on Halloween.” This proved two things. A) Shenoween was not conceived until after 1999, and B) Shen has always been a patron of spooky Halloween activities.

These spooky activities eventually accumulated into Shenoween sometime before 2004. In an interview with Marc Smithers (‘08), he recalls, “There was a costume contest, drivers of IBC [Independent Breweries Company root beer],

and music, though of course dancing wasn’t allowed when I was a student. [Over the years] the basic structure has remained the same but we’ve had different activities, including one year where we had Punkin’ Chunkin’ off the third floor of [the] Shen fire escape. Closely supervised, of course.”

Costumes are one of the biggest components of the event, and have been since its beginning. AC Taylor, the Director

of Student Engagement, explains, “There’s individual and group contests that happen. I think someone showed up in a full chainmail and actually won last year. And there’s The Spice Girls who showed up where there was a whole town house that dressed up like the spices you would buy from the store. It was pretty clever.” Another story by alumni Jesse Carter (‘16) goes as follows: “My first year attending Shenoween I

dressed as a rugby player. Some students started a kind of mosh pit where everyone was dancing and I ended up tackling my buddy Sam into a couch... except I missed the couch and smashed my head on the table. Sam and I didn’t get hurt, but probably not the best idea to act out your costume in a dimly lit room.” Of course, costumes are not mandatory, but as Elizabeth Rutledge-Aikens (‘07) put it, “All I remember was that it was my first time in Shen, there were a lot of people there, and that I should have worn a costume!”

Sweets and candy are a hallmark of Shenoween. Along with IBC root beer, which has been a staple of the Shen experience for almost as long as Shenoween, there are the traditional candy hordes that are presented during the party. According to Kami Birdsall (‘22), “I know last year they had mini candy bars, candy corn, and I think in years past they’ve also had candy apples.”

An interesting shift happened over the years concerning the leadership of the event. According to AC Taylor, Shenoween began as an event primarily managed by the dorm’s Resident Assistants, but over the years, transitioned to be directed by the Campus Activities Board (CAB). “CAB became more involved in it when I came

on staff as an RD [for Roth] and when the Shen RD became an assistant director of Student Programs back in 2015,” Smithers explained, “There was much more direct collaboration, eventually becoming a traditional CAB event.”

The “Haunted Hallway” of Shenoween is an on and off tradition of the event. Smithers recalls his experience with it, saying, “[It] usually involved a “haunted house” which went the length of the basement floor of Shen. I remember going through the haunted house as a first-year student and getting to the end of the hall where the back door was open and it was pitch black and as soon as a student got to the door, someone honked their car horn as they were parked right outside the door, making us all jump. It was a lot of fun!” The Haunted Hallway is expected to make a return this year and will be the only thing under the jurisdiction of the RA’s of Shen this year.

Shenoween will be taking place on the 26th of October (this Saturday) from 8:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.

In the words of Birdsall, “It’s just a fun time to have candy and go wild with your friends.” ★



COURTESY OF HOUGHTON COLLEGE TWITTER

Pumpkin smashing at Shenoween in 2013.



# History and Political Science Programs Revamped

LUKE HUIZENGA  
Regular Contributor

New proposals for potential changes to the department of history and political science are up for approval. Currently, only two faculty members make up the entire department: Dr. Christian Esh, Professor of History, and Dr. Peter Meilaender, Professor of Political Science and Chair of the Department of History and Political Science. The two have been working on the proposals for the past fourteen months and are, in the words of Dr. Meilaender, “really excited about this.”

The main motivation for making these changes is from the impact of severe turnover in this department. Five faculty members within the past three years have retired from the department. “We can’t do all the things we’ve done in the past,” says Dr. Meilaender, “some courses we can’t teach anymore.” On the other hand, this creates some good opportunities: “It’s a new moment for us, to start thinking anew. We wanted to ask ourselves, what is this department going to look like in the future?”

President Shirley Mullen takes an optimistic look at the state of the department right now: “They’re working in the way we’ve encouraged all departments to work when there’s retirements, but to also think about particular ways that history and political science might be reshaped to reflect the changing global requirements for... graduates.”

One significant proposed addition to the department is a politics, philosophy, and economics major. This is another interdisciplinary track that would be relevant



COURTESY OF HOUGHTON.EDU

Professors Meilaender and Esh are spearheading the changes to the programs.

to someone going into political science, history, or law. President Mullen expresses enthusiasm about this major: “It’s a way to communicate Houghton’s commitment to quality,” she says, “[and] the importance of interdisciplinary preparation for the future.” The one catch is the requirement that the major be approved by the State Department of Education. Due to the Department’s erratic approval process, it’s hard to predict when students will be able to enroll. “The hope is next fall, but we don’t have any control over that,” says Mullen.

Another change to the department would be the introduction of a law and constitutional studies minor. “It’s interdisciplinary,” Dr. Esh explains. Many prospectives come to Houghton interested in getting a degree in history or law in order to one day attend law school. However, Esh says, “you don’t need a history degree to go to law school. What matters is to have a set of habits [like] analytical writing and philosophical reasoning. Those aren’t necessarily

taught everywhere.” Because Houghton doesn’t have a law major, this minor is designed to appeal to students whose studies are focused elsewhere but are still somewhat interested in law.

Changes to the history and political science majors themselves are also being proposed. With less faculty and less classes, it is necessary that some adjustments be made. Dr. Meilaender lays out the future of the two majors: “[They] will be reduced in size [from 40 hours] to 30 hours.” Both will also share a single capstone. “We are also going to add some required courses,” Meilaender continues. “We are adding a co-requisite requirement: students in these majors will have to take two semesters of foreign language, or one foreign language class and one semester abroad in a non-anglophone country.” In particular, he says, “We regret the cutbacks in foreign language at the college. We think language is important to students studying political science and history.” The two minors will also be reduced from 14 to 12 hours.

Current students have mixed feelings about these changes. Skylar Hillman (‘20) is a business and political science double major who feels that these changes will not ultimately pay off. “I do not think it is in the best interest of Houghton to cut these programs,” he says. “Having more credits in these programs provides a high level of rigor most students want.” Hillman also dislikes the language co-requisite. “A student not planning on engaging in an intercultural experience should not [have to]... with already having a lot of general requirements to fulfill.” Blythe Gilbert (‘21), is slightly more optimistic. Gilbert, a history and political science double major, approves of the language co-requisite: “Most [history] graduate programs I’ve looked at require you to demonstrate some level of proficiency in at least two languages,” he says, “so that’s a good thing.” However, he too is uncomfortable with the loss of credits. “I think you need at least forty hours to make it a competent major, but I understand the lack

of staff.” He also believes that the Houghton administration is partly responsible for the dwindling faculty. “I think they haven’t paid much attention to [history and] political science majors recently,” he says.

With so many changes in the works, the hope is that the history and political science majors will appeal to more incoming students and lead to an increase in the size and relevance of the department. President Mullen says that having a strong program in history and political science is important for Houghton. “It’s [especially] true right now where the world is changing faster and faster. I think the flourishing of the department is absolutely critical.” The proposals are set to be approved at the next faculty meeting and should be implemented in the Fall 2020 semester. ★

## PHOTO OF THE WEEK

Taken during the women’s basketball retreat last weekend.

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# Four Views on Empathy,

## Connecting Literature with the Real World



COURTESY OF CALEB FESMIRE  
JACIE COOK

“Impoverished Empathy: Teaching Literature in the #MeToo era” was the title of a recent lecture by Professor Susan Lipscomb. I attended this lecture with the thought that literature would be tied to the modern world. To my surprise, little was said about the real world; in fact, the whole lecture was focused on literature, purely fictional works. While I thoroughly enjoyed

the discussion of empathy within novels, I found myself anticipating the connection to modernity, to which there was none.

Professor Lipscomb did a tremendous job going through the story of *Adam Bede*, in which she elaborated on the ideas that Mary Anne Evans, the author of *Adam Bede* (published with the nom de plume George Eliot,) put in her novels. The overwhelming idea that Lipscomb focused on was the idea of avoiding “taking sides” when reading a novel—that people are more complicated than simply being wholly good or wholly bad. I think that is not only true, but a wonderful truth at that. Going beyond the scope of a book, God created human beings to be diverse, complicated, and intense. In that sense, the characters in Eliot’s novels correlate with real humans. Since that connection can be made, and Lipscomb’s title referred to that connection, I was intrigued at the lack of mention of the real world.

To further my confusion, during the question segment of the lecture, someone asked Lipscomb what she thought about a recent case, and how Eliot’s ideology would relate to it. In her response, she clarified that she was addressing literature and literature

alone. I wondered why, then, the #MeToo movement was featured in her title and in the advertisements for her lecture. The #MeToo movement is all-too real, and unfortunately so. When it comes to taking sides, I agree that regarding novels, it can be easy to avoid. However, when it comes to reality, espe-

cially in the area of #MeToo, it can be rather difficult to avoid choosing sides. For example, in a court case, in order to decide whether or not a person is guilty, the jury must make a choice. They have to, in a sense, choose to “side” with the victim or the victimizer. This

does not mean the side chosen is wholly good and the side not chosen is wholly bad. Along with characters in a novel, humans are far too complex to be simply good or simply bad.

That being said, one can still empathize with those that are deemed as “the side not chosen”—not to the extent

that they don’t deserve consequences, but to understand that those consequences are hard to experience, even if their own actions have caused the need for said consequences. I agree with Lipscomb and Eliot, that empathy is important and choosing sides can be dangerous. In addition to this, I think it is equally important to connect literature to reality. Of course, not all novels are meant to be didactic, I understand that. But for those that are, and even some that aren’t but have humankind within them, concepts can be learned and understood before mistakes are made in real life. That is the beauty of books like Eliot’s *Adam Bede*: seeing characters make mistakes and what happens when they make their mistakes can truly be beneficial to readers, and help them to avoid the same mistakes in their own lives. ★

*Jacie is a sophomore majoring in psychology and writing.*

## Empathy vs. Sympathy: Seeing More than Heroes and Villains



COURTESY OF CALEB FESMIRE  
JAKOB KNUDSEN

“Let me tell you a story,” began Professor Susan Bruxvoort Lipscomb. The topic: “Impoverished empathy: teaching literature in the #metoo era.”

I’m not sure what I expected to follow, but I smiled in delighted surprise when Prof. Lipscomb began to summarize the plot of *Adam Bede*, a book she had taught in her Victorian Literature class. Though written about one hundred and fifty years before the #MeToo movement began, the connection between *Adam Bede* and the movement was obvious: name-

ly, the catastrophic relationship between Arthur Donnithorne and Hetty Sorrel.

The story can easily be read as an example of a young, rich man using his power to seduce a woman he employs, and in the process destroys her life—akin to many of the infamous lawsuits that have resulted from the #MeToo movement. However, Prof. Lipscomb pushed back against that interpretation of *Adam Bede*’s narrative. Both she and I agree that the #MeToo movement has done an excellent job of bringing to light injustices in modern America and empowering women who have been harassed or assaulted. However, *Adam Bede* significantly predates the #MeToo movement and was written with a vastly different agenda. The first clue lies in the fact that the text is far too complex to let us draw such a simple conclusion of affairs. Hetty was a vain and selfish individual, she was just as enamored with Arthur as Arthur was with Hetty, she ran away from home after she discovered she was pregnant, and she abandoned her child in the wilderness—leading to his/her death. Arthur, on the other hand, was in all other places characterized by being an extremely

well-meaning and kindhearted young man, whose greatest flaw was the inability to see how terrible the consequences of his actions could be. *Adam Bede*’s author Mary Anne Evans (better known by her pen name George Eliot) refused to present her readers with a simple dichotomy of good and bad characters who neatly line up with the victim and victimizer characters. Though Arthur is condemned by both the characters and the author for his actions toward Hetty, George Eliot nevertheless insists that we take our time to understand him—or, in the author’s words, feel sympathy for him. This Victorian idea of sympathy was a lot more profound than the modern word, with less of an emphasis on pity and a greater emphasis on understanding.

Prof. Lipscomb evidently appreciated George Eliot’s portrayal of complex characters. Prof. Lipscomb also believed this stance was becoming rare in modern literature—the culprit, empathy. Empathy as both a word and a concept did not exist in the Victorian age (appearing in the wake of World War II) and unlike sympathy, empathy implies something more along the lines of feeling what someone

else is feeling. Though I, Prof. Lipscomb, and a good handful of sources she referenced agree that empathy is a powerful tool for understanding others, modern studies are beginning to discover it has its own flaws—the chief of which is its tendency to polarize people into different camps. In the case of victim and victimizer, having empathy with

the victim places the victimizer squarely as the villain, the enemy—and generally precludes seeing the victimizer in any but the most unforgiving light.

Though research pointing in this direction has vast implications in both sociological and political trains of thought, both Prof. Lipscomb and I are literary people, and Prof. Lipscomb’s focus in her lecture was the production of modern literature. Though I am hardly qualified to dissect the political backdrop Prof. Lipscomb explored, I have consumed my fair share of modern media, all I have seen corroborates her conclusions. There

are some acts almost no modern story will feature a character performing unless that character is an irredeemable villain. The problem is, real life is a lot more complicated than that. Villains and heroes are rare; most real people are a complex medley of good and bad traits, and produce both good and bad actions. If empathy produces side-taking,

then we must grapple with the fact that empathy will produce no perfect side and no irredeemable side. Sympathy (in George Eliot’s sense), on the other hand, encourages understanding—even if that understanding is only necessary to judge with fairness instead of vengeance. ★

*Jakob is a junior majoring in writing.*



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# Literature, and #MeToo

## The Christian Calling to Love Complicated People



COURTESY OF CALEB FESMIRE

ERIN MAGGIO

Professor Bruxvoort Lipscomb’s recent lecture discussed the implications of morals and empathy in fiction. She used George Eliot and her novels *Middlemarch* and *Adam Bede* to display how Eliot created characters that all caused readers to feel empathy for them. She did not simply create flimsy characters that were either to be blamed, causing us to feel no sympathy for them, and characters who got wronged, causing us to feel empathy for them. Instead, Eliot wrote more complex characters that inspired empathy despite the

wrong they did. Lipscomb thinks that such writing has become less and less prevalent as we live in an age that portrays evil vs. good, rather than characters who all represent the brokenness and depravity which is present in all humans.

I think that Professor Lipscomb is on to something— all too often in fiction today, in literature but also in television and film, we see black and white depictions of humanity which are not too accurate to reality. We do not often feel much sympathy for certain people in fiction, as they are written in a way that we as readers or viewers can not find characteristics we can relate to: we get evil characters, not simply humans like us who make mistakes.

Rather than this flat model of good vs evil, a more realistic model would be to have characters who are all more authentic, with positive attributes but also with flaws and brokenness. This correlates well with the Christian theological doctrine of total depravity. This is the idea that all humans are born broken, morally corrupt, and enslaved to sin because of the Fall in the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve ate of the

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fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Jeremiah 17:9 says, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?”

However, we know that God creates each human being in unique ways and out of love, and also calls us to love each of those humans He created. Thus, this means that each human has both lovable and innately good qualities while also, somewhat paradoxically, being depraved and having downfalls and temptation to sin. Fiction, if done well, can have us connect to all characters if writers, like Eliot, can create characters which show their likeness to all of us as humans—with both good and depraved qualities running through them. In fiction like this, we start to feel empathy even towards characters who do the darkest things.

I think that this is important, but also quite scary. These ideas are reminiscent of a novel I read in high school English class—*In Cold Blood* by Truman Capote. It describes the murder of four members of the Clutter family and focuses closely on the two men who were convicted of the murder and later executed for the crime: Richard “Dick” Hickock and Perry Smith. Capote’s descriptions of Dick and Perry throughout the novel bring the reader very close to the two of them. While I was reading, I often forgot that the two of them were the murderers and would often have to remind myself that these two seemingly ordinary and normal men were the ones who committed the crime against the innocent family. Capote, through his writing of Dick and Perry, does what Lipscomb calls lit-

erature to do: to create characters who readers can relate to, so that we as humans can share in the common condition of struggle and shame.

I think that this is important because it brings us closer to humans we often marginalize and judge. As humans we are called to love our neighbors, and even visit those in prison. I think that reading fiction like Eliot’s and Capote’s can help us to see that even criminalized humans in society are similar to us. Although I don’t think this should cause us to excuse humans who commit heinous crimes and severely hurt others, I think it’s important for us to realize that all humans are capable of both good and evil. This realization, I think, can cause us to love each other better, as Jesus calls us to do as His followers. Being able to feel empathy for all people, whether fictional or not, whether they’ve done something wrong or not, is important, I think, in helping us to best and most truly love our neighbor as ourselves, as we have been commanded. ★

*Erin is a junior majoring in writing and communication.*

## Accepting the Humanity of Abusive People



COURTESY OF CALEB FESMIRE

ABBEY HARDMAN

Professor Susan Lipscomb’s faculty lecture tackled a fascinating and complicated subject. In her lecture, Professor Lipscomb discussed George Eliot’s novel, *Adam Bede*, and the deeply flawed characters within.

One character, a rich and powerful man, makes questionable decisions, accidentally impregnates a young woman, and pays dearly for his mistakes. But Eliot doesn’t allow you to remain in the comfortable place where you can wholeheartedly condemn him. She allows the reader to see that he is a fully human charac-

be him.

While this is all fine and dandy in literature, I cannot help but wonder how this would actually look if it were practiced in real life. During her lecture, Professor Lipscomb alluded to the Brock Turner case. What would it look like to see myself in him? To see myself in the people that I despise

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ter. Not only that, but she asks the reader to see their own humanity in him. Not to simply understand him, but to realize that you could

and condemn? At first, I bristled at the thought of potentially justifying his actions. How can we ever grow as a society if we leave

room for pity towards people like Brock Turner?

Still, I would like to think of myself as a compassionate person—at least I aspire to be—and Brock Turner is a human being. As much as I would like to view him as a human manifestation of the devil, I must recognize that the humanity within me is also within him. Does that mean we should allow people to get away with sexual assault and rape? I certainly hope not. However, I do think that most humans, regardless of past actions, deserve a chance to learn and grow.

Professor Lipscomb pointed out the alarmingly high rate of suicide among those who have been accused of sexual assault. I believe that this problem might be rooted in our tendency to dehumanize the people who have hurt us. If we instead choose to condemn their actions without

writing off the person, it leaves room for people to change those actions. Don’t get me wrong, I know that we didn’t always treat perpetrators of sexual assault in this way. Historically, and even today, people tend to ignore the heinous actions of powerful people. I am nothing less than ecstatic that the #MeToo movement has brought some of these crimes out of the shadows, empowering women to take back the microphone. Still, if the Brock Turners of the world were able to own up to and accept the consequences of their actions, we would all be better for it. ★

*Abbey is a sophomore majoring in inclusive childhood education.*

Letters to the editor should be 250 words or less.

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# Artist of the Week

## Seth Pearson

// Senior Art Major



I have created art my whole life. When I was younger and was inspired to draw something, I would sit for hours making one drawing, not stopping until I was finished. I continue to make art because it's all I know. Art calms me down and gives me something to focus on, but I also want my art to help people reflect on themselves and the world around them. Much of my art focuses on humanity and organic qualities of life, because I am fascinated with human experiences and emotions.

