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Faculty Committee Proposes New Course-Credit Structure

By Ben Tsujimoto

Houghton College faculty will soon be voting on a proposal that intends to alter the current course-credit system of the institution, expanding from three-credit hour courses to four-credit hour courses. Possible ramifications of the switch include revamped Integrative Studies requirements and the elimination of required minors. Formed in the spring of 2006, the Degree Structure Task Force was charged with examining new academic structures that would benefit both faculty and students. Dr. Carlton Fisher, chair of the committee since last spring, reported that the proposal was encouraged by experiences of current faculty and the success of other

Christian colleges under this system. If the proposal is approved by the faculty on October 31, the academic changes will take effect in the fall of 2009.

Though student representatives have served on the task force since its commission in 2005, turnover among members has hindered participation. According to former SGA President Kate Hamilton, the original student representatives graduated in 2006 and were replaced by another senior who graduated last May. Because of these frequent changes and lack of cohesion on the task force, there has been no intermediary between the faculty and students. "Much of the discussion was tentative and complicated, and we lacked a cohesive proposal," Hamilton

admitted. "Uncertain how to best communicate this proposed change to students, we did not want to convey the wrong message about the unfolding debate." Though a short presentation was made to the student senate almost two years ago, but no efforts were made to inform the student body of the proposed changes.

Under the proposed architecture, a student currently taking a regular course load of five classes worth three credits each (for 15 total credits) would instead take four classes worth four credits each (for 16 total credits). With the demands of one fewer class to maintain, students would be expected to spend more time exploring their four courses in greater depth. "This proposal should not be

interpreted as an effort to get more or less work out of either students or faculty," the Degree Structure Task Force wrote in its rationale. "The aim is to divide the attention of students and faculty into fewer but larger pieces." Moreover, the faculty would create fewer syllabi and prepare for fewer classes; as a result, they would be granted an opportunity to pursue professional research, creating room for what Dr. Peter Meilaender called "a more competitive, intellectually-engaged faculty."

What concerns precipitated this push for academic reform? The tendency of students to undertake an unmanageable amount of credits has been problematic;

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Theft of I.D. Scanners Sparks Discussion About Chapel Attendance

By Amy Buckingham

The missing student I.D. scanners used in chapel were returned on Monday, October 1 following an e-mail from Vice President of Student Life Sharra Durham. The scanners had been missing since the previous Friday's chapel and were not recovered during the weekend. The student body was made aware of the incident on the morning of October 1 via an e-mail from Durham, which outlined a nine-hour period during which the scanners could be returned without penalties to

the offending individuals.

Durham's e-mail began by informing the student body of the incident and detailing the value of the scanners, placed somewhere between \$7,500 and \$10,000. Should the equipment not be returned, Durham warned, the New York State Police would be notified and become involved. Although the e-mail recognized the theft as a prank or "friendly protest," it also made clear that the incident was not being taken lightly by the administration. Durham offered herself and Dean of Chapel Dr. Brittain as options for chapel-based

conversation, should students have concerns about the scanning process. The message ended by encouraging students to attend Chapel of their own accord despite the absence of scanning equipment.

An anonymous student group, self-named "La Revolución," claimed responsibility for the theft. A self-proclaimed "unapproved" pamphlet, *The Black Hole* was distributed around campus. The authors titled themselves La Revolución and cited neglect on the part of college administration as the motivation behind the theft of the

scanners. "The administration should... have the maturity to realize that the only people who will ever be able to take responsibility [for ourselves] are ourselves, and by impeding this process they injure our souls," one of the authors, alias Minor Friar, asserted. "It is not a work of love to require someone to formally acknowledge God and then leave anything beyond that to personal initiative." *The Black Hole* included several other articles further detailing the motivation behind La Revolución, insisting that "the key

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THE WORLD OUT THERE

By Thomas Lerew

Putin To Become Prime Minister?

Russian President Vladimir Putin has hinted that he may run for prime minister once his presidential term expires next March. Putin's popularity among party members remains high and has sparked fears among democratic proponents that he may not step down from office. They now fear that Putin may restructure the Russian constitution and strengthen the office of prime minister. Other global leaders of democratic states are instead pleased that Putin has thus far resisted reverting back to Soviet dictatorial policies.

President Vetoes SCHIP Bill

The President and Congress have once again battled over the reauthorization of the state children's health insurance program. Both chambers of Congress passed the bill, with significant fiscal increases offset by higher taxes on cigarettes. Democrats argue that the bill will extend much-needed health coverage to less fortunate children, while Republicans feel that the bill opens up loopholes for undocumented immigrants to receive coverage. They are also concerned that government coverage will not be as comprehensive as private insurance. As expected, President Bush vetoed the bill.

Escalating Situation in Burma

The state of affairs in Burma grows tenser by the day amidst demonstrations and government reprisals. Initial protests, led by a group of Buddhist monks, were held over rising fuel prices imposed by the government and increasing repression of dissenting voices. Government forces have opened fire on demonstrators on at least one occasion, killing as many as ten civilians. The United Nations has dispatched an envoy to seek a diplomatic solution to adjudicate an end to the violence.

House of Representatives Passes Bill on Iraq Withdrawal

The House of Representatives passed a bill by an overwhelming majority demanding that the Bush administration has two months to propose a plan for the withdrawal of troops from Iraq. Support came from both Republicans and Democrats. The House majority leadership stated that the legislation was an attempt to steer the direction of the war, while minority leadership dismissed the bill as insignificant. Democratic leaders will now be pressing the Secretary of Defense to put together a plan detailing a plan for troop withdrawal.

Campaign 2008 Update

Former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich announced last weekend that he would not seek the White House, ending months of speculation. Gingrich had earlier said that he would enter the field if he felt no other candidate would represent true conservative principles. Elsewhere, all candidates reported third quarter fundraising totals. Democratic candidates raised dramatically more money than their Republican counterparts, led by Hillary Clinton, who raised more than \$27 million.

Radiohead to Finally Release Next Album - And It's Free

Writing on the band's blog, guitarist Jonny Greenwood announced that Radiohead's much-hyped new album *In Rainbows* would be released on October 10. The album is available as a free download only through the band's website. Though other musicians have offered their music for online download at no charge, no band of Radiohead's stature has ever undertaken such a venture. The album will be released on October 10 and is available for pre-order at the band's website. *In Rainbows* is Radiohead's seventh studio album, and is their first release in almost four and a half years.

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characteristic of the revolution is that we are madly in love with you." The publication also listed a website address where responses to the *The Black Hole* could be sent.

Durham responded with a second campus wide e-mail, formally identifying La Revolución as the perpetrators behind the missing scanners. This message first addressed the necessity of scanning into chapel and detailed the benefits to spiritual formation through required chapel attendance. Durham went on to characterize the actions of La Revolución as "unfortunate," expressing dissatisfaction with the rebellious methods used to spotlight the chapel scanning issue.

In an effort to foster discussion on the issue of chapel requirements, the members of La Revolución, as well as all other students, were invited to join President Mullen and Durham for a forum on the evening of Wednesday, October 2. The forum lasted well over an hour, with fifteen to twenty students

present throughout. Durham opened the forum by explaining that the forum was "simply meant to be a time of conversation." She then explained that the confiscation of *The Black Hole* had been mishandled but well-intentioned, insisting that "[the removal of *The Black Hole* was] not censorship; I do not believe in censorship." President Mullen then explained her view of the issue, stating that she sees "this discussion as part of the larger discussion of why require anything in the context of a Christian liberal arts college...how do you signal within a community the things that you want to value?"

After the initial remarks, the majority of the discussion took place between students, with Durham and Mullen acting primarily as moderators. The dialogue was enthusiastic and opinions on both sides of the issue were well represented. Mullen implied that continued conversation on this issue will eventually take place among the newly formed Task Force on Community Responsibility.

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October 5-October 6



The Bistro Review

The first in a series on local restaurants, our adventurous food critic stays close to home and visits the China Star in Houghton, NY.

The Verdict: China Star Shines

By Jimmy Dutton

When I was asked to be the restaurant connoisseur for *The Star*, I was very excited and responded with an enthusiastic "Why not?" After all, anyone who knows me or has even seen me can tell that I am someone who loves to eat. At 6'3" and 150 pounds I am like a skinny vacuum of tasty treats. So, task in hand, it was time to decide what restaurant I wanted to review first. I thought about going high-end and visiting L'Italia in Wellsville but realized that *The Star* didn't provide me with a car (cheap jerks), so I had no way of getting there. But before long, I realized the obvious choice for the subject of my first review: the China Star.

Now the China Star is a place I have been many times, but since *The Star* said they would reimburse me for my check, I decided to refresh my memory with another visit. A quick glance at the menu shows all of the usual Chinese dishes. My favorite dishes include General Tso's, Sesame Chicken, Orange Chicken, Beef Lo Mein, Broccoli and Beef, and of course Pork Fried Rice. On this particular trip, I ordered the Sesame Chicken house combination, which comes with a serving of fried rice and an egg roll.

The serving size is extremely generous, so you don't have to worry about walking out hungry. I give it a 9 (out of 10). As for the presentation, it wasn't fancy, but I guess one does the best one can when serving food in Styrofoam boxes. Also, as long as

the food doesn't look like it was just scooped out of the garbage, presentation really doesn't matter. After all, what is the point of garnish? I propose that there is no point. In fact, I decided to give the presentation a 10 just to spite restaurants that actually use garnish.

The actual taste of the food was mediocre. P.F. Chang's the China Star is not! But all things considered, what should we expect? The China Star is a small restaurant that resides in a converted barn in the middle of Allegany County. It is what it is, and all things considered, it does a pretty good job at it. I give the food a generous 7 out of 10.

Quick history lesson: have you ever wondered who the General Tso of General Tso's chicken was? Well, after a quick Google search of his name, I learned that he was a Chinese general

in 19th century during the Qing Dynasty who managed to successfully suppress five rebellions during his lifetime. I don't know if this was a good

thing or a bad thing, but good for him! Though no one is sure why the chicken is named after him, we do know that the dish originated in New York City. Wow, what a history!

The China Star isn't the best Chinese restaurant that you'll ever eat at, but it certainly isn't the worst, either. Given the location of the restaurant and the small staff (only two people work there), it's a pretty sweet place! The customer service is outstanding. It might not be the best, but it's certainly worth a visit.

The presentation wasn't fancy, but after all, what is the point of garnish?

It has no point.

Inaugural Weekend Schedule of Events

Friday, October 5th

9:30 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

Academic Colloquium

Wesley Chapel

Four distinguished presenters talking about sincere service to God and Houghton's calm involvement as a place of service. Time for questions from the floor.

11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

Come and Go Lunch Buffet

Campus Center Dining Commons

Open to all; no charge; buffet lines will be open the entire two hours.

1:30 p.m.

Inauguration Ceremony

Wesley Chapel

Open seating begins at 1:15. Open house seating in Recital Hall - video and photo.

3:00 p.m.

Inauguration Reception

Campus Center/Upstairs Dining Hall

Greet President Mullen. Program: Inauguration gifts presented to President Mullen. Class of 2007 Gift: President Mullen's Portrait unveiled.

8:00 p.m.

Inauguration Concert

Wesley Chapel

Houghton musical ensembles and music faculty. Presentation to the President of three commissioned works in music, art, and poetry.

Sunday, October 7th

9:30 a.m.

Family Weekend Breakfast with the President

Dining Hall

11:00 a.m.

Family Renewal Service

Wesley Chapel

Saturday, October 6th

9:00 a.m.

Houghton Alumni Soccer Game

Wilts Field

10:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

Homecoming Parade

12:00 p.m.

Campus Picnic

Quad

1:00 p.m.

Women's Volleyball vs. Malone

2:00 p.m.

Women's Soccer vs. Point Park

4:00 p.m.

Men's Soccer vs. Point Park

6:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.

Alumni/Family Pizza & Wings

Big Al's Snack Shop

7:00 p.m.

Student Homecoming Banquet

10:00 p.m.

SPOT

Wesley Chapel



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in a 18- to 20 credit hour semester, attention to certain classes is sacrificed. "Under such a harried, hectic schedule, students only have time for a cursory glance at each class; with fewer classes, these students will have time to reflect upon the material they have studied," Dr. Meilaender stated. The Political Science professor draws his conclusions from previous experience: as a teaching assistant at Notre Dame, an institution with three-credit classes, Dr. Meilaender can compare the frenetic schedules of the "Fightin' Irish" with an undergraduate experience under the four-credit system.

If the proposal is put into practice, the required number of hours for each major will correspondingly increase. Will students be able to complete four-credit general education classes as well as a newly expanded major in four years? The task force has admitted that Integrative Studies requirements may need to be reduced. Dr. Meilaender suggested that minors may even

become optional. In the absence of the four to five classes necessary to fulfill a minor, students would be able to choose electives to fill the extra space.

When alerted of this potential change, some students agreed with this reform. "As an upperclassman, history major, I would appreciate the opportunity to devote more time to fewer courses," senior Andrew Gaerte commented. "The [added] depth would better prepare me for graduate school." In addition, the new course-credit system could propel Houghton into the top tier of liberal arts colleges; Wheaton College, ranked eleventh among liberal arts colleges by *Washington Monthly*, has flourished under a four-credit course structure.

Not everyone shares this optimism, however. Some are skeptical of the increased specialization of a committed liberal arts institution, the potential reduction of electives, and the lack of general student awareness. First, the four-hour course-credit system would encourage specialization as more time

is spent exploring an enlarged major. Much of the diverse course selection that defines a liberal arts institution would therefore be sacrificed. Dr. Cameron Airhart, who has taught in a four-credit system before, stated, "I value breadth in student experience. [By changing to a four-credit hour system] we're eliminating eight classes which expose students to things they know nothing about." Generally, those who remain dubious of the proposal stress the value of a comprehensive and broad education as an undergraduate.

Furthermore, students may hesitate in their choice of electives. Because it is a greater commitment to take a four-credit elective, intimidated students may be more inclined to choose an easier math or science class instead of inviting a challenge. If a student were to desire a minor, the number of electives would be further reduced. Dr. Airhart elaborated on the effect of fewer electives. "Classes will be more homogenously made

up of majors, and I don't like that." Without the perspectives of outside majors in an upper-level classroom, he pointed out, the interaction between areas of study will be missed and discussion will be limited.

A further concern lies in amending the existing Integrative Studies courses. "It's easier to move a graveyard than to change the general education requirements," Dr. Airhart claimed. Which courses will no longer be compulsory? Many like Dr. Airhart believe that the Integrative Studies requirements should be adjusted prior to the passing of any proposal. The Intercultural Studies and Political Science departments have already experienced this transition, but it is too early to determine the results. As the decisive date draws nearer, there are no immediate plans to present the proposal to the student body at any point.

Polaris

This week's Polaris poll indicates that the majority of students support a change in the current Houghton policy regarding social dancing. 87% of students support

a change that would allow for events that had a specific theme or dancing style, while 79% would support a change involving events featuring open-ended genres of music, assuming these events were under the purview of Student Life.

Houghton students, as it turns out, do not often leave campus to dance. 68% of students dance off campus at some sort of organized event less than three times a year while only 4% report dancing under the same circumstances on a weekly basis.

Two hundred students responded to this week's survey. Polaris is a student-run opinion poll conducted on Fridays.

During the school year, how often do you dance off campus at some sort of organized event or at a dance club, etc.?

About once a week 4% (8)

2-3 times a month 9% (17)

About once or twice every couple months 9% (37)

About once or twice a year 34% (69)

Never 34% (69)

Would you support a change to the dancing policy that would allow social dancing events to be held on campus that involved open-ended genres of music, assuming the event was under the purview of Office of Student Life? (Example: A Homecoming Dance or Valentine's Day Ball)

Strongly support 51% (103)

Moderately support 28% (56)

Moderately oppose 12% (23)

Strongly oppose 8% (15)

Unsure 1% (3)

Would you support a change to the dancing policy that would allow social dancing events to be held on campus, assuming the events had a specific theme or dancing style and were under the purview of student life?

How would your church at home view a change in policy that allowed for social dancing events to take place at Houghton?

Strongly support 28% (55)

Inclined to support 40% (79)

Inclined to oppose 10% (20)

Strongly oppose 5% (9)

Don't know 19% (37)

Strongly support 60% (119)

Inclined to support 27% (54)

Inclined to oppose 7% (14)

Strongly oppose 5% (10)



Soft Pretzels, M&Ms Highlight *Office* Premiere Party

By Joel VanderWeele

Last Thursday, September 27, Houghton's Campus Activities Board hosted a party to celebrate the premiere of the fourth season of NBC's Emmy-winning comedy *The Office*. As fans began arriving at the Chamberlain Center at 7 p.m., they were surprised by extensive decorations, a makeshift projection screen, and *Office*-themed snacks and refreshments.

Planning for the event began in August, and the preparation paid off. CAB members organized a series of "Office Olympics" to fill time before the premiere began. Events included a coffee mug race, Most M&Ms in Mouth, Flonkerton (the official sport of Icelandic paper companies), and an intense office-chair obstacle course.

For the M&M challenge, competitors circled around a garbage can and began placing as many M&Ms into their mouths as they could manage. Some utilized their cheeks, others went for speed, but everyone ended up in the same place: hunched over the garbage can, spitting out the little candies before their gag-reflexes kicked in.

For the final challenge, competitors were required to roll themselves from the third floor of the library to the lobby of the Chamberlain Center. Screams could be heard from the lobby as racers careened down the third floor skywalk and into the halls of the Chamberlain center.

Despite near-vomit conditions in the M&M competition, and blood spilled during the office-chair obstacle course, the games succeeded in building up hype for the premiere.

While dedicated fans put their bodies in danger for a chance at Office Olympic glory, spectators enjoyed the refreshments provided by the hardworking CAB staff. It is unclear when the menu for the party was finalized, but it was obviously very carefully executed. The snacks included fun-packs of M&Ms, office



Photo by CAB

Fact: Greg Dabb and Nic Bragg debate what kind of bear is best at the *Office* party.

supplies encased in Jell-o, and soft pretzels, all items featured in episodes of the show. They also had red fruit punch.

The soft pretzels, featured in the third season episode "Initiation," were a surprise that CAB Representative Emily VanEenwyck was especially excited about. "The pretzels were wonderful, but what else could we expect from [Food Production Manager] Ed [Taylor]?" According to VanEenwyck, it was party host Greg Dabb's idea to serve pretzels at the event. CAB also provided mustard, chocolate sauce, powdered sugar, salt, butterscotch chips, and caramel as toppings for the pretzels, mirroring the options *Office* character Stanley Hudson enjoys on Dunder-Mifflin's pretzel day.

Many attendees expressed delight at seeing the pretzels being served. "I like soft pretzels," smiled sophomore Nathan Forschler, after enjoying the

event. Jordan "JD" Zaner, the winner of the Office Olympic games held before the premiere, revealed that the "pretzels weren't as good as [his] new iPod; still, they were significantly more made of wheat, and that counts for something." Zaner won the Office Olympics by holding nine fun-packs of M&Ms in his mouth at the same time, as well as receiving high marks in both Flonkerton and the office-chair event.

After the conclusion of the high-energy Office Olympics, partygoers settled in to watch the first episode of season four on a large projection screen on the lobby wall. At the conclusion of the show, many students expressed their delight that the show was back, as well as distress that it was going to take away so much time from the already busy Houghton life.

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LETTERS

A reader responds to last week's op-ed, "Can Houghton Come Out and Play?"

Dear Sir,

In last week's "From the Editors' Desk" op-ed, I wish that you had been a little more specific. Your use of the words "activity" and "non-activity" without actually defining either (or, if you did, it was done in such a confusing way that I couldn't grasp it) doesn't make for an argument of any sort.

I get the vague impression that you're trying to criticize Christians who practice "faith without works", which would certainly be a valid and relevant statement. But I have two critiques of your argument. First, it's already been said, and well said. See the book of James, particularly James 2:14. And secondly, you simply fail to develop the argument. I read a few hundred words and left with a sense of disillusionment and confusion. It just seems as though you're performing verbal fencing with yourself, and at the end, I still don't know what was said, except that you feel some people are obsessed with non-activity.

Why not just say "Why have we allowed the Church to divorce itself from active love?" Sure, there are many, indeed an overwhelming majority, who declare their faith but do nothing about it. But this is nothing new. Hypocrisy has been prominent in the church since the Purchase of Constantine and even Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5). Perhaps new is our complacency, and worse our pride and self-righteousness in our inactivity.

I appreciate what I think you are trying to say. But from an editor of this paper, I'd expect a stronger argument.

Sincerely,

James Ratchford



The Specter of Chapel Oppression: Liberating Ourselves From La Revolución

The antics of La Revolución and *The Black Hole* were almost amusing, but failed to make a meaningful contribution to the chapel discussion.

By Abigail Kinem

Plato's observation that "a little learning is a dangerous thing" has been clearly demonstrated this past week among the student body at Houghton College. I am referring to the ideas published in *The Black Hole* and the actions of its anonymous publishers. The proud headline of the sheet was "This paper has NOT been approved by the Vice President of Student Life." Clearly, The administration would probably refrain from backing anything that encouraged students to dance freely and bravely in the sunlight after having liberated themselves from the oppressive regime of chapel scanning.

The HOUGHTON STAR is dedicated to the free exchange of ideas, and encourages community members to participate in the discussion. Ideas expressed in these pages reflect solely the opinion of the writer. The editorial staff reserves the right to edit any contributions for reasons of length or decorum. Letters to the editor (signed) should be 500 words or fewer and be submitted to STAR@houghton.edu.

Names may be withheld upon request.

It smacks of Moulin Rouge's musical number "Children of the Revolution," the hippie movements of the 1970's, and *The Flying Nun*. (I rather hope *The Black Hole* and *The Flying Nun* begin to duke it out secretly as warring guerrilla factions in the Matrix-like fantasy world they have created for themselves.)

My criticisms of *The Black Hole* concern its faulty reasoning. First, the main author, "minor friar" (who I hope is an overeager freshman [fresh-person?] who has watched *V for Vendetta* too many times), referred to the movement whose first action was to confiscate the chapel scanning equipment as "La Revolución." The logical question for minor friar is "What are you revolting against?" and I am afraid the answer was a bit vague. The column claimed that the Houghton College administration does not believe that Houghton students have the maturity to make their own choices. (I disagree with this statement, but if it were true, I could hardly blame the administration after the foolish theft on Friday.) Minor friar argued that the scanning procedure removes the responsibility for spiritual choices from the student, and then, in a very poor rhetorical move, claimed that if all Houghton is doing to create

spiritual growth is requiring chapel scans, they are not doing their job.

I doubt, though, that all available options have been exhausted. There are Logos Bible studies, weeknight studies through area churches, a book study with Dr. Brittain, dorm small groups, Global Prayer Team, MercySeat Ministries, prayer during chapel, Thursday afternoon evensongs and communion services, mentoring partnerships with community members, personal prayer and Bible reading, a library and bookstore full of spiritual resources, and a campus full of opportunities for outreach.

And I must ask, is required attendance at something really that oppressive? Education majors must attend several non-credit seminars. Music majors attend recitals. Similar requirements are found at all institutions of higher learning. You came to Houghton College knowing that chapel attendance was required. If you disagree with this policy, join a discussion to intelligently present your arguments against it. Borrowing revolutionary rhetoric from Marxism or Hollywood may sound impressive, but the analogies you make are weak. Please, Tobias, minor friar, and the other name which slips my mind, do not be deluded into thinking

you are the next Che Guavara, Emiliano Zapata, or Inti Martinez.

Finally, I was surprised to hear that you love me deeply and passionately with the love of a freshman couple on a Campus Center couch, and that you long to embrace me. The mental images that description conjures are rather disturbing and make me wonder if I should carry mace. Now, if you would try to love me with the love of Jesus, I would consider returning that embrace and possibly granting a holy kiss as well.

A friend of mine, Jill Stewart, said, "I love to go to chapel and I hate missing it. I would go all the time if I could, and scanning in no way lessens my appreciation for chapel." So you see, this frustration over chapel scanning really is a matter of the heart, but not in the way *The Black Hole* suggested. This is not about an oligarchy, but about community, which involves accountability. The authors of *La Revolución* aside, let us examine our own lives to see if we are exemplifying the maturity that the Houghton administration believes us capable of showing.

Abigail is a junior English and Education major.

The Black Hole of Materialism: Effects and Responses

It's time to reevaluate Jesus' call to poverty amidst the rampant materialism of our contemporary lives.

By Tristan McCray

Materialism and consumerism are rapidly eating away at the Christian's ability to truly live as God would have. We say we live by the mantra "Honor God with all your heart, soul and mind and love your neighbor as yourself," but reflected in our lives is "Honor Hollywood with all your heart, soul and mind (and money) and love yourself as much as you can." When was the last time you bought a new outfit because it

was how you thought God would want you to love your neighbor, by buying the goods they produced by slave labor? Think back on the last major purchases you have made (including your college degree). How many were motivated by wanting to honor God? How many were motivated by personal gain? Is the difference not apparent in every area of our lives? It is clear that our Christian worldview is being tainted by pop culture instead of fully directed by Biblical values. How then

do we convert (or revert) to loving God and neighbor? The place to begin is, I think, by reexamining our views on property and ownership.

The New Testament is filled with calls to voluntary poverty and putting trust to supply God for daily needs. The Church, though, has become clever at disguising most of these as metaphors open to interpretation, disregarding their authority as commands of the Savior. "Our daily bread" becomes

• *Materialism continued on page 7*



• *Materialism continued from page 7*

whatever help we may need to get through the day (except actual bread – that is just something that everyone has, right?). “All these things added unto us” is a proof text to submit every time someone suggests that perhaps we Christians have too many possessions. Jesus’ exhortations to his disciples to carry minimal supplies with them for their journey are dismissed as specific to that situation, if mentioned at all. When you examine these passages, you begin

to see 1) the Church’s present avoidance of voluntary

It’s much easier to tell ourselves that we’re just “blessed” than to deal with the reality of Jesus’ call to poverty.

poverty as a command (or even a suggestion) and 2) the importance of these topics to Christ. Shouldn’t we worry that we are perhaps the rich, whom Jesus so blatantly speaks against in the Beatitudes? It makes me sick whenever I hear someone talking about the current oppression of Christians in the U.S. – sick. Open your eyes and look around, we are the oppressors – yes, no different from the ancient Egyptians or the not-so-ancient sweatshop owners.

I’ve always heard that we can’t change our position in life, that we should humbly thank God that we don’t have to worry about our next meal and then donate to charities that feed the hungry. Of course, it is much easier to tell ourselves that we are just “blessed” than to deal with the reality of Jesus’ call to poverty. Further, I think it is possible to change our place in life and begin to live life with a real, urgent need of God’s help thereby drawing us infinitely closer to Him.

“Tristan, it’s the 21st century – it’s not that simple.” I hear you, but I do believe it is that simple. I understand that living in poverty is a 180-degree turn from our current accepted Christian lifestyle, but I’ve heard repentance described that way; as not only a plea for forgiveness, but also a complete change in behavior. Think of how Jesus called the first disciples – by telling them to leave their nets and follow Him. They didn’t

take a week to think about it, or take a month to save up some money, or even take some fish with them for the road; no, they simply left their nets and followed. It is this type of drastic action that will transform the face of the Church, resulting in Christians who are closer to God.

A final argument I can already sense rising is that some Christians don’t feel they have been called to poverty. While I sympathize, I believe that everyone is called to poverty. Everyone, at some

point in their lives (perhaps the most crucial point), should

“take up their cross” through the denial of earthly treasures. It is only then that we can even begin to honor God and love others. Society has become such that no one is capable of understanding what true Christianity is while in the possession of goods, no matter how many conferences we attend or how many books we buy. Even in our genuine attempt to honor God we are only honoring “the man” by buying his books and funding his extravagant lifestyle. The text-twisting (aka exegesis) that is necessary to arrive at the conclusion that Jesus means we can keep our things, just not put so much emphasis on them, is just short of hypocrisy. True, there may have been some points in time that not everyone needed to give everything up, but now, in this “MTV” world we live in, there is no choice but to start from scratch. Only then can we learn how to honor God and love our neighbor, and only then can we consider making the treacherous journey to possession.

We cannot afford to pull any more punches – we must call things what they are: greed, immorality and idolatry; this is the only cure strong enough for our current moral disease. That crucial time has come, it is now that we need to act, we have thought long enough.

Tristan is a senior Trumpet Performance major.

From the Editors’ Desk...

Viva La Black Hole Revolución?

The borrowed chapel scanners were returned unscathed. But might it have been better for the community if they had remained missing?

By the Editorial Staff

Upon awaking this past Monday morning, many students were delighted to receive an e-mail informing them that the student I.D. scanners in the chapel had been missing since the previous Friday. A new anonymous student publication, *The Black Hole*, immediately claimed responsibility. “If you attend chapel today you will notice that nobody is requiring you to scan in,” the author of the first article announced. “For this you can thank me.”

The publication was well written and tongue-in-cheek. “It is not a work of love,” the authors remarked, “to require someone to formally acknowledge God and then leave anything beyond that to personal initiative.” In chapel on Monday morning, the scanners were conspicuously absent. The authors of *The Black Hole*, it seemed, were intent on signaling their protest with the Houghton administration in the face of potential penalties.

But then they returned the scanners just a few hours later. It’s a shame, really: we wish that they hadn’t.

The removal of the scanners can hardly be classified as a felony. Grand larceny usually refers to things such as luxury cars stolen by hardened criminals, and not scanning devices borrowed by mischievous students. Despite repeated threats to involve the state police—the administration was somehow “obligated,” we were told—it is the suspicion of the *Star* editorial staff that the state police have a number of more important things to worry about.

Borrowing the scanners was admittedly a drastic step. (We choose to use the term “borrow,” for the students involved made it clear that they did not intend to hold onto the scanners indefinitely.) But it was a

remarkably efficient way of hastening the debate. The new presidential task force charged with the review of the policy will work incrementally for up to two years, and includes just three student representatives. Instead of waiting for such a somber body to address the issue in a private setting at some point in the future, the authors of *The Black Hole* have managed to place their concerns at the center of campus discussion.

To this end, an impromptu forum open to students was held on Wednesday evening of this week. This would never have happened so quickly unless the chapel scanners were temporarily removed. But imagine for a moment that the scanners had been borrowed for an entire week. Assuming that the forum had still been held—and that the state police were unsuccessful with their investigation—a remarkable experiment would have taken place. Would Houghton students have continued to attend chapel voluntarily, or would they have chosen to skip chapel altogether?

Because the students succumbed to administrative pressure to return the scanners, we’ll never know for sure. We’d like to think, though, that most Houghton students would continue to attend chapel as often as possible regardless of its requirement status. And we’re thankful that the students involved with *The Black Hole* made their intentions very clear. “Go now and attend chapel with the realization that you don’t have to be there,” they told us. “It is the free gift of your soul to God.” The removal of the monitoring equipment allowed Houghton students to do just that. We only wish that they hadn’t given the scanners back so quickly.

The Editorial staff is made up of editors and members of the rewrite staff.



Early Morning Invitation

Note from the artist:

These photos were taken while I was traveling in the Balkans during Mayterm. I got up early one morning in Croatia to take pictures by the water's edge. I took the picture of the two boats along the Mediterranean coast while traveling to Kotor, Montenegro.

featured artwork of the week

WESLEY DEAN



Relax

A Look Ahead At The Inaugural Weekend Events

By Rebekah Miller

Shirley Mullen will be officially inaugurated today as the President of Houghton College, the institution's first new president in 30 years. Along with the inaugural events, the college has the opportunity to increase awareness of Houghton's ideals and goals to the students and surrounding areas of Houghton.

After the appointment of Dr. Shirley Mullen to office of the President last fall, an inaugural committee of students and staff was formed under the Dean of Academic Administration Dr. Daryl Stevenson. The committee was, as he put it, "charged with the responsibility of putting on a season of inauguration." According to Dr. Stevenson, people both on and off the committee dedicated thousands of hours to meetings, organization, and the actual work of "presenting Houghton to the world." "I cannot think in my 26 years of being here of any event that has taken more man-hours of time," he remarked.

Dr. Robert Danner, the "trail boss" of the committee, was responsible for

keeping the committee on track and ensuring that all details were taken care of. The goal of Inauguration weekend, he stated, is "to communicate the kind of institution that Houghton College really is" and to look towards the future, following President Mullen's vision for the college.

While this event may seem to be solely a celebration for President Mullen, Dr. Danner specifically pointed out that "this is not [just] about [President Mullen], this is about Houghton." The inaugural ceremony demonstrates the college's faith tradition by inviting worship, scripture reading, and a prayer of blessing over President Mullen. The Colloquium to be held on Friday morning represents Houghton's academic commitment by inviting four world-renowned theologians, philosophers and church historians to the campus. To display Houghton's artistic excellence, three works of art have been commissioned for the president: a sculpture by Art faculty member Gary Baxter, a musical composition by professor of Composition and Conducting Mark Hijleh, and a written narrative by

writer-in-residence Jack Leax.

The committee believes that this weekend is an opportunity to both celebrate Houghton College and to "put our best foot forward" in presenting ourselves to the outside community. Representatives from over 70 different colleges will be in attendance at Friday's ceremony. The student body, though, has an integral role to play in this inauguration as well. Elyse Drum, one of two student members on the inaugural committee, had this message for students: "We don't want you to go home this weekend; we want you to be a part of this. This is history in the making. This is important for you." The Thursday evening gala and the combination of inaugural events with Homecoming events are efforts to include students. Dr. Stevenson encourages students to "think historically rather than thinking rather short-sightedly." In other words, students should broaden their vision in order to see the forest and not just the trees. For more information, a schedule can be found online or in this week's edition of the *Star*.

if you would like your work featured in the Star, send photos with titles and a brief description to STAR@houghton.edu

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