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FEATURE: MARCUS DEAN

ABIGAIL BATES ('26)

Dr. Marcus Dean is a professor of Global Studies, and the Director of Off-Campus Studies at Houghton University.

Before coming to Houghton, Professor Dean and his family were Wesleyan missionaries. At the time, Professor Dean pursued his Ph.D. in Intercultural Studies with the expectation that he would use it in Latin America, however he decided to teach college courses instead.

Growing up in the Wesleyan Church, Professor Dean had always known about Houghton, but it wasn't until his hunt for a teaching position that he became involved in the community. In 2003, Professor Dean joined Houghton's faculty.

"At first I taught Spanish and worked with Off-Campus studies," Professor Dean stated, "but soon moved more into the classes I am teaching now,

in the areas of Intercultural Studies and Missions."

Off-Campus Studies Assistant, Karen Hotchkiss first met Professor Dean just before she interviewed for the assistant position.

"He has worked tirelessly to make sure there are study abroad opportunities for our students," Hotchkiss said. "He's very knowledgeable and works with students to make sure they find a good fit for their passions."

Professor Peter Meilaender—the Dean of Religion, Humanities and Global Studies, and a professor of Political Science—has worked together with Professor Dean for a long time, in a number of contexts: in the Off-Campus Studies office when taking students abroad, reviewing International Development majors' senior capstone projects (along with Dr. Oakerson) and developing the new Global Studies major.

"His background in mis-

sions gives him a perspective that most of us lack in trying to understand different cultures," Professor Meilaender remarked, "and many Houghton students have benefited from his experience over the years."

Professor Meilaender commented that Professor Dean has worked hard to give students opportunities to travel and engage in other cultures, even as enrollment in the program dropped over the past few decades.

"But Dr. Dean," Professor Meilaender said, "despite these challenges, has remained committed to helping students understand, engage, and travel the world."

In both the last academic year (2022-2023) and this current year (2023-2024), Professor Dean has worked tirelessly, helping students complete their requirements in the discontinued Intercultural Studies and International Development majors.

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Dr. Marcus Dean Staff Photo

COURTESY OF MARCOMM

Feature: Rene Stempert

ANNA CATHERMAN ('24)

On July 4, 2024, Rene Stempert will celebrate her 30th year on the job.

"My first day on the job was a paid holiday, so that was kinda cool," Stempert said.

Stempert started off on that day in July 1994 as a custodian in Gillette Hall. Now, she serves as the lead custodian for Sodexo, who promoted her to the role five years ago.

As lead custodian, there is no "typical" day on the job. Stempert does whatever's at the top of her to-do list. She trains new hires and cleans guest bedrooms down at the Flats and in the President's House. She is certified in pool maintenance. In the summer, she main-

tains all the hardwood floors on campus, cleaning and oiling them.

Although Stempert's day-to-day work is primarily keeping campus clean and safe, Stempert views her work not as a chore but as a ministry.

Serving exclusively in Gillette for decades, Stempert made it her mission to learn the names of every girl in Gillette. Some years, she succeeded. She even knows many pets. Stempert recalls a seeing-eye dog named Brownie was the first service animal to live in Gillette with his owner, Elicia.

Now that Stempert's work covers most of campus, she hasn't had as close a connection to Gillette residents. But she gets to meet and train more students-up to 40 each semester, plus 3-6 new staff per year.

When students skip work or their performance goes down, Stem-

pert has a heart-to-heart with them. Three times this year, she's used the parable of talents as a reminder to be faithful in the small tasks. At the end of December last year, she saw a student in Paine who looked like he was depressed and struggling, so she stopped and prayed with him.

Stempert used to struggle a lot with being grumpy and short with people, and explained that she is still working at showing love and kindness.

Working at Houghton has helped Stempert's faith grow. The first time she shared her faith journey in 2001 was a major turning point for her. She had accepted Christ a decade prior, after a childhood riddled with sexual abuse, a stint in the Air Force and marrying a man who became verbally and emotionally abusive. There were no sudden

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Rene Stempert with her son

COURTESY OF RENE STEMPERT

Feature: Rachel Wells

ANNA CATHERMAN ('24)

Senior Rachel Wells took Transitions this Fall 2023 semester.

Wells came to Houghton from New York City, where she'd attended The King's College for two years. When King's shuttered due to financial woes, Houghton offered a generous teach out program, making it a clear choice. But it still wasn't easy for Wells to start over in a new place for the second time in three years.

Wells grew up in suburban Florida—vastly different from both New York City and Houghton.

She didn't tour King's, and had only spent half a day in New York City before moving there.

Wells said that her new life "did not feel real for a very long time."

Thrust into not only starting classes, Wells also had to learn how to grocery shop, cook, and make friends in a place where she knew no one. She contracted COVID-19 in her first month and had to spend time in isolation, which worsened her homesickness. But she

pushed through, and in time, grew to enjoy living within walking distance of Battery Park and its views of the Statue of Liberty.

By her second year, Wells said she found she "actually love[d] living in the city."

Highlights included her college professors, classmates, prayer group, babysitting, and studying at the city's many coffee shops. She enjoyed King's unique culture of debate and friendly competition, tutoring her housemates to win a writing contest. It was the only contest the House of Queen Elizabeth won in her time there.

However, the year was fraught with tension as King's financial woes slowly became public.

Zoom calls with executives became routine. The interim president, Steven French, said that more money was needed to finish the semester. Students began getting rent notices for their college housing. Yet through May 2023, the school claimed no intention to close.

Then King's announced no classes would be taught in the 2023-2024 school year.

Forced to transfer somewhere else, Wells "eventually came around to the idea of Houghton." Many of Wells' family

members have attended Houghton University.

Wells misses the iced oat milk lattes at Olive's, her favorite coffee shop; her babysitting job; and her former professors and classmates. But she's found new people—and drink orders—at Houghton.

Wells really enjoys chapels. "Hot take, I guess?" she chuckled, acknowledging that many students don't feel the same way.

And Wells has had a blast at Houghton's events, including intramural water polo.

Wells hopes to return to New York City from time to time to visit friends, although she plans to move home to Florida after graduation. There, she wants to teach alongside her high school English teacher.

Ultimately? She'd like to be Dr. Wells.

She asks herself, "should you be saying that right now because you're an undergraduate?" But she still dreams. ★

MARCUS DEAN from page #1

"Dr. Dean puts in long hours on behalf of his students," Professor Meilaender added. "He is in his office more than most faculty and is always available to students."

Professor Dean has always enjoyed teaching, especially in the work he does to inform students about different cultures. He hopes that by sharing his experiences of living in other parts of the world, his students will be able to meaningfully interact with our increasingly diverse world and touch the lives of people facing cultural differences. To make choices, thinking, "How can we be like Christ?"

"It is interesting that we really don't know how what we do will [eventually] end up," Professor Dean contemplated. "My first year here, I had a student in class [Dr. Klejment-Lavin, who] has been on the mission field, now has his doctorate, is a college professor, and will be the speaker Monday April 22nd for the Chamberlain Missions Lecture ... teaching really is about the long term, but today matters so that students engage for the long term."

In his years of teaching, Professor Dean has learned alongside students in order to continue connecting with them. He enjoys exploring new topics and areas students are interested in, and applying that knowledge in future conversations.

Julia Collins ('26) describes Professor Dean as a good professor who has a lot of knowledge in addition to personal experience.

"The most important thing I've learned from him," Collins said, "is that Christians need to be tolerant towards other cultures. It is important to treat everyone with love and respect."

Professor Dean's classes have been described by students as informative, interesting, organized, and students know what to expect from him.

"His teaching style is organized and foreseeable," Chesnie Waddingham ('26) said. "He follows a set schedule when assignments are due ... I like it because it's nice to know what to expect, and I can trust nothing is go-

ing to sneak up on me to do [later]. I think he does it this way for the benefit of the students. It prevents a lot of stress for us."

Waddingham described Professor Dean's lectures as being calm and incorporating group discussion and interactions about one to two times a class.

"I love Marcus Dean," Waddingham declared. "He is very approachable, and cares deeply for his students and what he is teaching us. I appreciate [his] comforting classroom atmosphere, and I know that his office door is always open if I need anything."

Waddingham explained that one of the biggest things she's learned from Professor Dean is the practice of considering her assumptions and beliefs about the world, while aligning her reflections with scripture.

"He encourages all of us to see the world through the lens of the Bible, and it's a beautiful and powerful thing," Waddingham reflected.

Looking towards the future, Professor Dean said, "We always look forward to understanding what God has next. Before we came here, we had no idea what would be next. Yet I am now finishing my 21st year at Houghton! I need to remind myself that I can look forward to what God will do." ★

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revelations for Stembert.

"I really wish my faith story had started off more intensely because I continued to make a lot of stupid choices in my life," Stembert confessed.

But God used moments throughout the years to slowly transform Stembert. Sharing her story was a big one. One that helped her understand what testimony and ministry are.

Stembert strives to put what she's learned into action. This year, she felt a strong call to invite people to come to her church. Thanks to her initiative, five First Year students are now attending Belfast Free Methodist. ★

EVENT CALENDAR

APRIL 19 / Men's and Women's Choir Concert

APRIL 19 / Silent Disco Night

April 20 / Spring Hunter Jumper Schooling Show

APRIL 20 / Wind Ensemble Concert

APRIL 21 / Year-book Distribution

APRIL 22 / Graduate Recital: Ryan Nickelsen

APRIL 23 / Senior Recital: Kaitlin Kleinau

SILENT DISCO NIGHT

BHC | CAB

19 AT 8
APRIL PM

CC BASEMENT

LET'S GET JIGGY



And that's a wrap! Thank you to everyone who read and contributed to the Houghton STAR this semester. Please consider filling out the survey below to tell us how we did this year!

We Have No Mouth, But We Must Speak



CHRISTIAN WELKER ('24)

As I looked back over my college experience, there was this nagging sensation following me that I struggled to put my finger on. However, through conversations with friends and memories of the Houghton I first applied to, one phrase came to mind:

We have been silenced.

Let me be clear. This is not about Houghton's academics. The classroom can be a spot for discussion and questions, which I believe is one of Houghton's most amazing features. But we, students, have been taught a different lesson when we step out of the classroom.

Through the Houghton Rock, we've been taught that expressions of our sexuality, if they don't match with Wesleyan virtues, will be met with anger and American flags.

Through the relocation of the Rock, we've been taught that the methods of creative expression will be regulated to the Field of Dreams if they make for uncomfortable press.

Through the Rainbow Alliance Cooperative, we've been taught that clubs and people who don't adhere to the status quo will lose their ability to speak and gather freely on campus.

Through the Mosaic Center and the Center for Sustainability, we've watched programs designed to begin these conversations fall to ruin and vanish, becoming mere shadows of what they were meant to be.

My first serious opinion for *The Houghton STAR* was about debate in the modern world, which has become more about winning than discussing opposing views. In my four years at Houghton, I've seen that belief taken to the extreme. We are afraid to speak because others will do anything to win. It seems that if someone's views do not perfectly align with the status quo presented to them, there is no support for them to present their ideas safely.

Conversation appears to have withered and died, with its only remains being the shallow

"It seems that if someone's views do not perfectly align with the status quo presented to them, there is no support for them to present their ideas safely."

this pattern.

There is nothing inherently wrong with these messages. They can be timely and important in the right context, but the problem that has arisen is that these are the only conversations happening. This has cheapened those messages when deeper, more meaningful discussions could be paired with "Jesus loves us, we should love others" to take the message to the next level.

I've spoken to freshmen

(2020), when conversations about difficult topics happened frequently. Issues like race, sexuality, politics, and religious beliefs were commonplace, and there was little fear of expressing one's own beliefs. Houghton was the place that broke the assumptions and stereotypes that I had started my college experience with.

I had grown up in a conservative Christian environment and was simply never exposed to the LGBTQIA+ community, or the struggles that minorities go through on a daily basis. These conversations helped me round out my understanding and grow more accepting of ideas contrary to my own, shifting my perspective on social issues in ways that drastically changed who I was. These conversations made me the complete person I am today.

I'm afraid that the Houghton where those conversations happened is gone.

In its place, a silent campus has arisen. When conversations do happen, they have become loud, angry, and fear-inducing. The old Houghton would have embraced Chapel talks on uncomfortable subjects. It would have stoked the flames of discussion instead of suffocating voices out of fear that the fire would escape the bubble that we are in.

I miss that Houghton.

The new Houghton that has risen in its place threatens to collapse the community we've spent so long building. This new Houghton of simple chapel messages and simple opinions. This new Houghton of silence and silencing. This new Houghton where the only discussions that happen must take place in the classroom or administration-approved events. While the old

Houghton boasted student-led forums on difficult topics and personal experiences, this new Houghton has forums led by singular faculty members where questions can be submitted via an online form and fed to the speakers via middlemen.

What is there, then, to be done? This silenced Houghton has become the new normal. How can we return conversation and debate to a silent campus without an explosive result?

Beginning the conversation is key to returning to the old Houghton. We must embrace the difficult and scary conversations, stand out from the crowd, and show why we are unique. We must listen to the voices that we disagree with instead of shutting them down or shutting them out. We cannot expect that the opportunity for these conversations will be handed to us; we must make these opportunities for ourselves.

I wouldn't have become the man I am today in this new silent Houghton. Those who were willing to speak, the LGBTQIA+ students, the liberals, the conservatives, and speakers who challenged our view of the Bible and the God that we worship, shook my beliefs to their core. Despite the potential backlash they faced, they began the conversations and fundamentally changed who I am, making me love God and others in ways that this new Houghton's "Jesus loves you, this is all" message would never have managed. I will forever be grateful to those people and the Houghton who allowed them to do what they did.

My only hope is that those following me will have that experience. I pray that Houghton will allow them to burst their bubbles and make connections instead of silencing them to maintain a status quo.

We have to begin the conversation.

Even when it feels like we have been silenced, we can still use our voices to improve the world.★

Christian Welker is a Senior History and Writing Major. In his free time, he likes to read, write, debate, and learn about perspectives that differ from his own.

"This silenced Houghton has become the new normal. How can we return conversation and debate to a silent campus without an explosive result?"

roots of widely accepted facts, recycled endlessly from chapel pulpits and STAR articles: Jesus loves us. We should love others. Get off your phones during Chapel. Even Around the Table, which was supposed to be a place where deeper conversations occurred, has fallen into

and sophomores who have told me that Houghton doesn't seem like a place where open conversations can happen. Students find their bubbles and stay within them and rarely, if ever, bridge the gaps that form between them. I'm drawn to compare this to my freshman year

Have an opinion
you want to share?

CONTACT
Victoria.Arndt25@houghton.edu

SPEAK OUT!

Letters to the editor
should be less than 600 words

SUBMIT TO
star@houghton.edu



The mission of the Houghton STAR is to preserve and promote the values of dialogue, transparency and integrity that have been the ideals of Houghton University since its inception. This is done by serving as a medium for the expression of student thought and as a quality publication of significant campus news, Houghton area news, and events.

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STAR

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Review

Dune Part 2 (2024)

Written By: Caleb Tiedemann ('25)

Dune Part 2 was my most anticipated movie of this year. At the moment of writing this, I have seen it three times in theaters. When it was first released I got the privilege of seeing the movie in IMAX, and I was so enthralled, that I went and saw it again the very next day.

I can confidently say that the stereotype of "sequels being worse than the originals" does not even remotely apply here. Despite my love of Dune Part 1, I can admit that it is slow and long. However, I find beauty in that. Part 2, takes what the first movie did and improves on it in every way. Is it slow? Not at all. Does it manage to find that sweet spot between world-building and action? Yes.

The movie focuses primarily on the spiritual aspects of the Dune universe. The author of the Dune series based the spiritual elements loosely on Islam, and even though I am no Islamic scholar, from what I do know, it has a fascinating sci-fi representation. The juxtaposition of believers and non-believers in the "Lisan Al-Giabb" (Messiah), creates a tense religious atmosphere among the inhabitants of Arrakin – The Fremen. As Paul becomes accustomed to the Fremen ways he is worshiped by some and scoffed at by others.

In the first movie, I scoffed at the idea of Timothee Chalamet playing Paul, who is supposed to grow into a powerful messianic leader, but I can say that Chalamet pulls the role off beautifully, being equally emotionally resonant and powerfully dominant. Zendaya plays Chani well; a skilled and capable fighter who falls in love with Paul as he ascends. Rebecca Ferguson plays Lady Jessica wonderfully, hiding so much calculating intelligence behind her eyes as she manipulates others for her and Paul's benefit. Javier Bardem plays Stilgar, a believer of the Fremen tribe in the Lisan Al-Giabb, who comes off as an intelligent warrior, intensely spiritual man, and loyal follower, almost to the point of being funny. However, the main standout is Austin Butler's portrayal of Feyd-Rautha Harkonnen: a devilishly psychotic Harkonnen warrior, equally thirsty for both power and blood. Butler plays the role magnificently. Every time he comes on the screen he commands it with menacing gravitas.

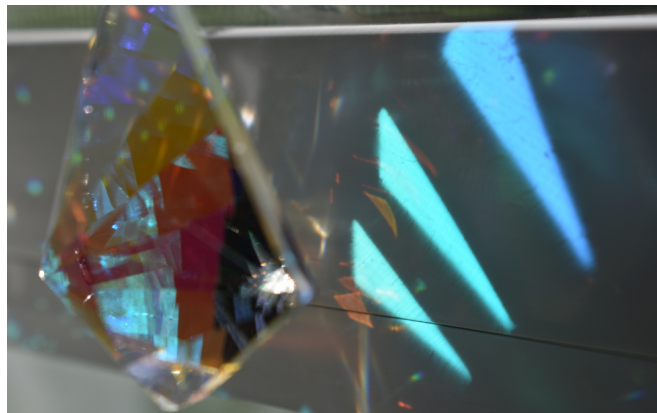
Dune Part 2 is one of the most beautifully shot movies that I have seen in a long time. Cinematographer Greig Fraser captures the beauty and simplicity of the dunes. One would think it hard to capture beauty in a sandy environment but through twilight, eclipse, and natural lighting the color palette of Dune is surprisingly varied. At one point in the film, certain scenes are filmed using an infrared camera. I have never (to my knowledge) witnessed the use of one of these cameras in a film before and it crafted the scenes it was used in beautifully. The pale soft white is utilized to film a particularly brutal scene so the contrast of color and content was an odd but tasteful choice. Hans Zimmer's score is immaculate. It captures an almost tribal feeling in its use of drums, unorthodox instruments, and sounds. Yet, at the same time, it is a beautiful composition, brimming with emotional resonance and profound

meaning.

The last half hour of the movie is one of the most impressively shot, incredibly well-acted, and beautifully lit, endings. As I said, I have seen it three times and every time the ending's technical aspects just floor me. You don't have to love the first movie to enjoy the second. I strongly recommend the movie. One of the easiest 10/10 movies I have ever seen. ★



Artist of the Week

Tenshi Chispa
(Tamara Edwards '25)

Hello! I am a senior majoring in Studio (Fine) arts. The mediums I like to work in the most are pastels (oil & soft) & watercolor. Recently, I have been experimenting with incorporating non-traditional objects into my work. The joy of art is exploration. For me, this is in abstractions based on real life & character design. These are probes into processes, questions, emotions, & stories. Aside from art, I enjoy reading, going outside, writing, being with family, & time with friends.

