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# THE CATALYST

THE INDEPENDENT STUDENT NEWSPAPER OF COLORADO COLLEGE

## Budget committee plans to increase student activity fee next year



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**Synch or swim: Menstruation theories try to stay afloat**

Bryce Ingirm  
Guest Writer

James Bond always syncs his watch before going on a mission and he never misses an appointment with his Bond Girl. But the question is never asked whether or not the Bond Girls ever sync up their menstrual cycles with their close female friends and roommates.

"Period syncing" has become a pretty commonplace and generally accepted idea. Four senior class women living together in the Blanca apartments shared their unanimous opinion, "Within the first month of living together we were all synched up." An off-campus house of six female students concurred, "It hasn't happened to me yet this year, but it definitely does." According to a former student from the Emma Willard School (an all-girls high school in New York), a worker in the campus' bookstore often commented about a marked monthly increase in chocolate purchases for a few days. "[The worker] was very sure that period syncing was a fact of life," recalls the former student.

Before the science behind this supposed "fact of life" can be explained, though, it must first be defined. More formally known as menstrual synchrony, it is the notion that the menstrual cycles of women who live together or interact a lot will drift together. According to Martha McClintock's research (1971) there are several theories as to the cause of this phenomenon, the most common of which is the "pheromone theory": pheromones, or molecules released by the body of one of the women in a close group, are dispersed through the air and are received by another woman. This chemical messenger then causes a response in the recipient that will either lengthen or shorten her menstrual period. An alternative theory is that the observance of another woman's period will affect one's own cycle. Simply the awareness of another woman's menstrual cycle may produce changes in cycle length. But, as I said, these are theories.

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Erica Plumlee  
Staff Writer

Every year, a \$350 student activity fee is tacked on to our \$52,000 tuition. According to the CC website, this fee provides "increased funding for student organizations and free tickets to athletic events, including most hockey games." Over the course of block three, a subcommittee of the Colorado College Budget Committee met twice to discuss the very likely possibility of increasing the fee by \$35 to \$100.

This fee was implemented two years ago, and has remained at \$350 since its inception. While the CCSGA maintains an active role in student activity fee increase recommendations, the fee is

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hardly "directed by students" as the CC website claims.

"That's the part that's interesting. The way it works, to my understanding, is that the Budget Committee makes a recommendation to the president, who then looks at the budget that we've recommended to her, and then recommends it to the Board of Trustees Budget Committee, which then votes and makes it final," explained CCSGA Financial Vice President, Logan Dahl. "So anywhere along that chain...it could be President Tiefenthaler, or the budget

committee, or us, who recommends an increase."

The subcommittee proposed increasing the fee to fund Cutler Publications, the drama programs (so that they can make their performances free), and club sports (so that they can attend away games without driving their own cars, which is a liability). In a meeting at the end of block three, students on financial aid were added to the list of recipients of the extra money that would come from the increased fee.

"Financial aid is supposed to get a portion of the fee so that it may pay for students [who] cannot afford to pay themselves," said Dahl. Despite the objective of the student activity fee, which is to pay for students who cannot pay on their own, financial aid has been neglected as a recipient of the fee.

"For some reason this has not previously been carried out with the fee itself, instead [aid has come] from the college budget, which doesn't make a whole lot of sense, so we're fixing it," explained Dahl.

As of Sept. 2, 2011, approximately 31 percent of the \$700,000 student activity fee funds is allocated to campus activities. 21 percent to the CCSGA, 11 percent to student tickets to varsity hockey games, 7 percent to intramural and club sports, 5 percent to Outdoor Education, 4 percent to alumni/parent relations, 4 percent to arts and crafts, 2 percent to the Living Learning Communities, 2 percent to New York Times subscriptions, 1 percent to buses to hockey game student, 1 percent to the Center for Service and Learning... 1 percent to FOOT trips, 1 percent to "athletic spirit," 1 percent to "student life spirit," and 1 percent to alcohol education.

While we may not notice an additional \$100 added on to our already high tuition, that's almost a 30 percent increase in the fee, leading some to question: where does it stop? At what point do they stop allocating funds from an expanding fee?

"I think it is pretty well understood by everyone that having a fee that balloons every year would probably not serve the best interest of the college," explained Dahl. "So while there is no technical limit on paper, I think the attitude

now is close to, 'If we raise it, let's take a year or two to see what the increase did before we talk about raising it again.'"

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Supreme Court of the United States, which ruled that student organization activities may be subsidized by a student activity fee as long as organizations receive money with viewpoint neutrality. Two years ago, CC students paid for the activities they attended out of their own pockets. The student activity fee proved to be a successful subsidization, allowing students to attend hockey games, go on FOOT trips, and grab copies of the New York Times for "free". But how long before the increased fee is costing more than it's worth to the average student? While the proposed figure is subject to change until January, the fee increase is already in motion. The question remains: how much will it increase, and how long until it increases again?

# News

## Football, Politics, and Sex questions CC's response to sexual assault

Jesse Paul  
Staff Writer

This past Wednesday, a panel discussion titled "Football, Politics and Sex" led by six members of the CC community, including students, faculty, and administrators, became heated when a discussion of campus wide sexual assault began. On the panel was Associate Dean of Students Ginger Morgan, Sociology Professor Gale Murphy-Geiss, Psychology Professor Emily Chan, Editor-in-Chief of *The Catalyst* Alex Kronman, and Student Organization for Sexual Safety Chair and President of Delta Gamma Emily Cronin.

The panel discussion was held in light of recent sexual assault cases in the media—namely those at Penn State and surrounding Herman Cain—and on campus.

The discussion, which was sponsored by Sigma Chi and the Office of Sexual Assault Response and Prevention, was an explanation of some of the wider cultural trends and psychological phenomena that contribute to incidents of sexual assault and that shape people's responses to sexual assault—both in American society at large and specifically at CC.

All of the panelists spoke about how power differentials are important to how sexual assault cases happen and are dealt with. At CC, a relationship in which there is a significant power differential might be between a senior and a freshman, or might involve a member of a socially powerful group such as a sports team or a fraternity.

"Social and financial power are inextricably intertwined at CC. The party culture is dominated by men who are often wealthy and/or part of [an aforementioned group]," said Kronman.

While Associate Dean Morgan agreed that certain groups in the community had more social power than others, she cited the fact that people all along the socioeconomic, athletic, and academic lines had been found responsible for violating the school's sexual misconduct policy.

Morgan also discussed how victims of sexual assault at CC often don't come forward because, more often than not, the victim knows the perpetrator of sexual assault. The two people involved may be friends, or at least acquaintances; thus, the victim may fear that reporting the incident will cause unwanted drama within a friend group, or will lead him or her to be ostracized by the institution's small community if the accused is a socially powerful person.

"The more powerful your social group," said Morgan, "the less likely you are to come forward [in cases of sexual assault]."

The panelists also addressed the complicated nature of the confidentiality of the college's judicial process and the recent community Flash message regarding dismissed CC student Mike Lee, who was found responsible for violating



Panelists Gail Murphy-Geiss, Alex Kronman, Emily Cronin, Emily Chan, and Ginger Morgan discuss the culture of sexual assault at CC. Photo by Stanely Sigalov.

the school's sexual misconduct policy.

"When people don't hear all the sides there is a lot of suspicion about what is being hidden," said Morgan.

Chan explained that in most cases of sexual assault between two adults, sympathies are often easier to garner for the accused rather than the victim. She said that people don't want to believe that their friend did something so terrible, because it leads them to question their own self, their judgment, and their ability to determine who is trustworthy.

According to Morgan, all sorts of cases are kept confidential in order to reduce the potential damage to the reputation of the accused student. She said she would rather see that student, if found responsible for the complaint filed against him or her, learn a lesson through the conduct process's sanctions rather than through informal social punishment.

All of the panel speakers had insight into the ways in which the media—and communities, as a result—tend to be biased against victims of sexual assault, whose accusations are often questioned and scrutinized.

The panelists discussed the case of Herman Cain and the Penn State child molestation scandal as examples of situations in which victims are undermined by the negation of their experiences. There was unanimous agreement that people who question the validity and trustworthiness of those who report sexual assault simply do not understand.

"A study done by the FBI said that only 2 percent of rape reports were actually false,"

said Murphy-Geiss. "For a [false] report to be followed through the system and be completed is very unusual. I blame the media for making it [false accusation] into an issue that is bigger than it actually is."

CC's Sexual Assault Response Coordinator Heather Horton, who was in the audience, chimed in to address the issue of false accusations, saying, "We realize that [false reports] do happen and look at that when we look at cases. But most false rape allegations are of stranger rapes, not people victims know."

The panelists seemed to unanimously agree that sexual assault, as a whole, was a serious problem at CC that is not taken seriously enough, for a multitude of reasons. For one, Chan explained, people often fail to recognize acts of sexual violence and other types of violence due to a commonly-held belief that all people are inherently good, making it difficult

to acknowledge that someone—particularly someone they know—may in fact be doing something bad.

"There is a general vibe among freshmen when we [S.O.S.S.] talk to them at orientation that [sexual assault] doesn't occur at CC," said Cronin. "But it does and there should be more done to address it."

Rebecca Spiegel contributed reporting.

*Editor's Note: The panel occurred last night and did not initially meet our standards. In ordinary circumstances we would have cut the piece but instead re-verified information and toned down the article. Everything here is true but is by no means the full story. We feel that sexual assault is an issue of the utmost importance and it was important to inform the community that the panel took place. We will be continuing coverage of the issue.*

## Red ribbons just one symbol of AIDS awareness.

Ellie Cole  
Staff Writer

Red ribbons displayed on your clothes is just one symbol of AIDS awareness.

It's been thirty years since the first reported case of HIV in since 1981 and this year CC has had different events to show the importance of AIDS awareness in our world. This week on Tuesday and Wednesday, there were different speakers, events and activities to help share this with the CC community.

"World AIDS Day is a time for people around the world to unite behind those living with HIV/AIDS, to commemorate those who have died from AIDS, and to work to fight the epidemic," said Madeline O'Connor.

HIV/AIDS has impacted our world and country for thirty years, and it is very important for people to learn more and understand it.

On Tuesday, there was a reception and hors

d'oeuvres in the Cornerstone Arts Center, and then a speech by Eileen Stillwaggon called, "30 Years of AIDS: What do we know about AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa?"

Stillwaggon came from Gettysburg College where she is a professor of economics and the Harold G. Evans-Eisenhower Professor. She wrote *AIDS and the Ecology of Poverty*, and is also an officer and board member for the International AIDS Economic Network.

On Wednesday, there was free HIV testing, thanks to the Southern Colorado AIDS Project in Worner, then "Know Your Status 2" in the Gates Common Room, with candle lighting, food, music, and an address by Rev. Kevin Daniels of St. John's Baptist Church.

The two days of events were sponsored by Colorado College Students for Global Health, Colorado Springs Branch NAACP, Colorado College Black Student Union, and Colorado College Cultural Attractions Fund.

## Old Conoco to become CC parking lot

Jesse Paul  
Staff Writer

Last spring, Colorado College purchased the Conoco at the intersection of Cache La Poudre St. and Nevada Ave., and now has plans to turn that location into a parking lot as part of bigger development plans, according to Vice President of Administration and Finance/Treasurer Robert Moore.

However the Conoco might not be the only business near campus that is at risk of losing its home.

The Leechpit, which buys, sells, and trades a plethora of clothing, records, and collectibles, has been contacted by CC, which wishes to use the space that it leases to the The Leechpit, according to owner Adam Leech and Colorado College V.P of Finance Robert Moore.

"[CC] did a protest and they gave me a number of different stories and rumors that they were looking to take it back over," said Leech. "We really have no intention of leaving until our lease is up. Our term ends in 2013 and we hope to stick it out and we hope to renew."

Moore says that CC hopes to use the space for students.

"I've heard a painting studio, dance, bar, student screw around room might go in here. There are students looking to take over the place," said Leech. "We don't know if it's true or not and we've heard all that in the last 2 months."

The Conoco station land that was purchased by CC was owned by a man who leased the property out to the gas station to use, said Moore. CC contacted the owner who sold the college the land.

After it was attained by CC, the Conoco was

demolished in a matter of weeks. The station housed four gas pumps and a convenience store.

For the past few weeks, a sign has been posted on the property by El Paso County senior city planner Ryan Tiefertiller outlining CC's plans to, "Improve parking and landscape for the vacant lot and [screen] outdoor storage for arts building."

The parking lot will replace spaces that will be lost when the CC childcare center is moved and expanded into where the Yampa parking lot on Nevada is currently located.

The plans have yet to specify how many parking spaces would be created or what improvements to the landscape would be made. The art studio that is mentioned has a lot in the back where various materials can be seen stacked against a chain-linked fence.

In a press release made on CC's website in September filed under "Letters From The President," President Tiefertiller mentioned plans for more development in the area surrounding campus.

"It is important that we think strategically to secure opportunities to enhance the college's offerings for the future," she said in her statement.

As for the Leechpit, the outlook is grim.

"We hope things change because I think we provide a lot to the campus and the rest of Colorado Springs and the art/music scene," said Leech. "Without us around, things would be sad. We have been here for almost a decade and had a really good relation with students that whole time."

"We opened in 2003 to cater to what students need and want," said Leech. "I have dreamed of taking over this space since I was 15, and I don't want to leave anytime soon."

# Active Lifestyle

## Breckenridge: A love/hate relationship

Jesse Paul  
Staff Writer

If you love long lift lines, complicated, convoluted trails, steep terrain, tight trees, big cliffs, a decent terrain park, and tourists left and right, Breckenridge is the place for you.

If you haven't already, you will eventually develop a love/hate relationship with the nearest ski area to CC. Breckenridge, also known as Breckenfridge for its high winds and bone-chilling weather, is located only two hours away from Colorado Springs in the notorious Summit County.

Owned and operated by Vail Resorts, Breck is one of the largest ski areas in the United States. It opened in 1961 and since then, has been a staple of the Colorado ski culture. In the past two years, Breck has been the second-most-visited ski area in the United States and has been ranked in the top ten best resorts by Ski Magazine.

Breckenridge is a favorite destination of CC's FUCC bus, meaning many of you who are without cars or often too hungover to drive will find yourselves skiing there. Unlike other ski areas, there are right and wrong ways to ski Breckenridge. Ski Breck the right way, and you could have your best day of the season. Ski it wrong, and you could be skiing in circles for hours, cursing, screaming, and wishing you went to A-Basin.

The best way to understand and ski Breckenridge is by its four peaks, which are each a mini resort of their own.

### Peak 7

This is one of my personal favorite peaks at Breckenridge. It offers both a handful of expert terrain and all the while has some of my favorite intermediate groomed cruisers in Colorado. Peak 7 is also the best place to start your day because it is often not as crowded as the main base area, has great warm ups, and is close to the T-Bar and the double black runs that surround it.

When skiing Peak 7, you must be aware of small children and novice skiers and riders. One time last year, I was skiing with a friend who tried to ride switch (backwards on skis) down Peak 7 and ended up taking out a middle aged man who swerved into his path. You have been forewarned - there are old people galore.

On a powder day, lower Peak 7 offers the black run called Ore Bucket, which often has untracked powder late into the day. If you ski

this run aggressively enough, you can get some great turns in the trees and find mini-cliffs hidden amongst the hills.

Another great option for lower Peak 7 is to trail-blaze your own glades. While the trees can sometimes be tight (I have been nussed by them on various occasions, Googling), you can often find untracked powder and some challenging areas in there.

Peak 7 summit, which can be accessed by the



The Lake Chutes on Peak 8 - a short hike from imperial lift

T-Bar or the Imperial Lift, has various double-black runs all within a giant bowl. While this area can sometimes be a poor choice on snowy days due to zero visibility, it offers a variety of steeps, cliffs, and some trees. Some of my favorites include everything in Peak 7 Bowl and Vertigo.

It is important when skiing on Peak 7 to remember that using the T-Bar can sometimes be daunting. The line for the lift can often last anywhere from 15-30 minutes and the short ride can often leave you walking a little funny. Taking the Imperial lift and then traversing across is a good alternative.

### Peak 8

While Peak 8 undoubtedly offers up more terrain than any other part of Breck, it is traditionally the most crowded. The base area in particular can be a real shit show on crowded weekends or holidays. Be prepared for hour-long lift lines on some days at the Peak 8 base.

The Peak 8 summit atop the Imperial lift has some of the most challenging terrain at Breck. The hike to Lake Chutes, when open, are challenging and offer great cliffs, steeps, and

exposed terrain. If you are brave enough to traverse and hike over to Snow White, then you will find yourself some pretty gnarly skiing.

Chair 6 just below the Imperial chair has some fun black runs on it that aren't too challenging, and are still very playful. You can find little jumps, short moguls, and tree runs. Do not go to Chair 6 unless snow conditions are good and the crowds are low. The lift is a slow double and the runs have a tendency to ice

over Photo Courtesy of Creative Commons and have exposed obstacles like rocks and roots.

The Horseshoe Bowl below Imperial and the Lake Chutes is a fun area if you are looking for less-intense, shorter double blacks. However, this area can sometimes be icy and fairly moguled out and skied off.

Lower Peak 8 offers various beginner and intermediate runs that can be daunting and as crowded as a Target on Black Friday. If you can, avoid these areas at all costs.

This lower area also offers the bulk of Breckenridge's Terrain Parks. Since I don't often ride park, I can't really attest to the quality or features that you can find there. Nevertheless, my park rat friends seem to really enjoy what is offered at Breckenridge. The times that I have ridden the park at Breck, I have been pleasantly surprised. The main issue with the parks is that they are insanely crowded, so be aware.

### Peak 9

Peak 9 is intermediate heaven. There are blues everywhere on Peak 9 and unless you are trying to ride them, you should, for no reason,

go to Peak 9 unless you are making your way across the mountain. Peak 9 is also home to the infamous under-over chairlifts where the Peak 8 super chair lift runs over two other lifts and has a midway offloading/loading point.

Peak 9 can be hard to navigate because of the lifts that are there. The main complaint made about Breck is how terrible the lift system is and Peak 9 is the epicenter of this problem. I would suggest, if you can, avoiding it all together.

The one upside of Peak 9 is the access it gives to The Back 9, Breck's inbounds backcountry terrain. You can find a lot of fun, often unvisited runs in this area, but be aware of bare rocks and other ski-damaging natural obstacles.

### Peak 10

Peak 10 is where you will find me on any Breck powder day. Though it takes centuries to get to due to the terrible lift system at the ski area, Peak 10 has, in my opinion, the best runs on the mountain. This peak consists only of black and double black runs, so if you don't know what you're doing, don't go there.

The best parts of Peak 10 are the tree runs. When everything else at Breck is white out because of snow, you can always see where you are going at Peak 10. The tree runs are steep, long and fun. I love Doublejack, Cimaron, Blackhawk, and The Burn. You usually can't go wrong on these runs.

Another upside of Peak 10 is its one, simple, high-speed, detachable quad lift. Unlike Peaks 8 or 9, you won't get lost at 10.

As I said before, the main problem with Peak 10 is it is so far away from the rest of the mountain. When you go there, you are making a pretty big commitment. I recommend hitting this part of the mountain at the start or end of your day in order to save time and energy.

Before you go to Breckenridge it is really important that you know where you are going. The mountain is so big and confusing that you will undoubtedly get lost if you are not familiar with the runs. If it is your first time at Breck, ski with someone who has been there before.

The most crucial part of skiing at Breckenridge is to not get too frustrated. You will have to wait in lift lines and listen to tourists talk about how the hot tub at their hotel was too "chlorine-y," but you might just also get a few face shots, sweet powder runs, and smiles if you stick with it.

## Remembering Gary Speed, 1969-2011

Laurie Laker  
Staff Writer

The world of football is in mourning this week following the tragic loss of one its legends. Former player turned manager, Gary Speed, 42, was found dead at his home this past Sunday. Initial reports from various press outlets, as well as the Football Association of Wales (FAW) claimed that the cause of death was hanging. Police report no suspicious circumstances, and a recently opened inquest has been postponed until further notice. Speed leaves behind a loving wife and two children.

Speed went on to become Wales' most capped outfield player of all time, winning 85 caps for his country over a 14-year international career. Such was his esteem that of those 85 caps, 44 of them were played whilst captaining his country.

Predominantly a midfielder, Speed scored seven goals for his country as well. He narrowly missed, as is the plight of all great players representing smaller nations, on showcasing his prowess at a major tournament as Wales failed,

cruelly, to qualify for Euro 2004.

At club level, Speed began his playing career at Leeds United, whom he joined as a schoolboy in 1988, going on to make his league debut at the tender age of 19 the next year. Easily the high point of a blossoming career was when Leeds won the top league in England, old Football League First Division, in the 1991-1992 season, the last before the introduction of what we now know today as the Barclay's English Premier League. Joining with Gordon Strachan, Garry McAllister, and David Batty in midfield, the four went on to form one of the most revered midfields of the modern English game. Eventually going on to make 312 appearances for Leeds, scoring 57 goals in all competitions, Speed became a club legend with his aerial prowess, work rate, and continual professionalism.

In 1996, Speed moved to Merseyside club Everton for £3.5 million, going on to make only 65 appearances for the club, scoring 17 goals. It has never become clear why Speed left Everton so soon after joining for a marquee price, but his next move cemented him as a modern football legend in my memory forever.

In 1998, Speed was signed for Newcastle United for £5.5 million. Quickly settling amongst the team and the fans, Speed's partnership with Newcastle and England legend Alan Shearer terrified defenses for the better part of 6 years, with Speed going on to make 284 appearances for The Toon, scoring 40 goals.

Towards the latter part of his club career, Speed spent time at both Bolton Wanderers and Sheffield United. During his time at Bolton he became the first player to score in every Premier League season, with a headed goal against Reading on Aug. 25, 2007. A testament to his longevity in the game, Speed continued playing and scoring until his eventual retirement in 2010.

Remembered across the UK and international football world by teammates, friends, and fans - Speed was a massive figure in my earliest memories of watching football. Always running, hair bobbing everywhere, and though he possessed perhaps not the finest technique, he made up for it in spades with his application, drive, and his constant professionalism - always keeping himself in top shape. He played

during two very distinct eras of British football, from the late '80s and early '90s which featured heavy drinking, gambling, and poor nutrition to the late '90s and '00s when the league went truly global, and all manner health regimes were brought into clubs.

Such adaptability was a hallmark of Speed as a player, and it soon became a trademark of his burgeoning managerial career. Appointed manager of the Welsh national side in 2010, suffering from some initial poor results, Speed turned the tide. Until his death, Wales had won 4 out of their last 5 matches, looking to secure qualification for the 2014 World Cup in Brazil. Propelled by young talents such as Aaron Ramsey (Arsenal FC) and Gareth Bale (Tottenham Hotspur), the national side remains on the upswing and will look to continue their emerging first-class form in memory of their late manager's legacy.

I will always remember Speed as a passionate professional, who loved the game and could play it at the very highest of levels. His death is a great loss for the world of football, and a cruel reminder there are much bigger things in this world than the game we all love.

# Arts & Entertainment

## Opiate: a sociological inquiry into love

Jorge Rivera  
ComDeb Editor

“What is love?” Well, as it turns out, not much at all. For love doesn’t really exist. It is simply a “social construct”. It doesn’t really matter how much it is portrayed as something real by movies, or even by real life interactions. It is just not real. That is indeed the sad truth, at least if you are a sociology major. The Theatre Workshop’s third block production, “Opiate”, explored this concept thoroughly. The two-act play, written and directed by senior Katie Rogers, was an entertaining sociologically-charged drama. Rogers’ play presented the audience with Ella Lyndon’s (Sarah Fischer) ‘love’ story. It was cleverly structured around two different facets of her life: Before she married the aspiring writer Adam Caine (Jake Sullivan) and her life ten years later (present time) as a professor teaching a sociology class.

The scenes that occurred in the past portrayed Ella as someone who saw and understood her life as a series of sociological principles but was willing to give in to the idea of marriage, and possibly of love, when Adam asked her to marry him. However, Adam and Ella had dramatically different understandings of what love is and what being in love actually means. This exploration gave us a glimpse into the failed marriage of her parents, Nora Lyndon (Johanna Holbrook) and Mark Lyndon (Jack Williamson). “Opiate” also vividly portrayed the dilemmas surrounding the commitment of one’s life to someone in the name of such a questionable concept like love.

In the *present time* the focus was rather dif-

ferent. Rogers made an exposé of sociological concepts through the stories and opinions of Greg (Chris Cooke), Juliet (Rosie Nelson), Abe (Matt Potter) and Meg (Michaela Neville). These drastically different characters discuss love, and relate it to their own personalities, in a class taught by Ella, ten years after she married (and presumably eventually divorced) Adam.

“Opiate” had an incredibly great turn out, so much so that people were seated on free spaces on the floor to enjoy the performance of their friends and peers. Though having tickets would have greatly helped the situation, people were more than willing to show up more than half an hour before the show started, at least in the two nights that I saw the play. That only speaks well of the production team’s effort to advertise the play and it also shows that the audience’s impressions must have been very good, since the play drew larger crowds every night.

The drama itself was entertaining. It raised questions that people often asks themselves. It presented characters to the audience that are like the people at CC. Furthermore the topic of love is also something the vast majority of the audience would have an opinion about. That certainly made it easy to engage with the story and enjoy it.

The scenes that occurred in the past gave us an insight on what made Ella her future self. They were my favorite scenes because they were not too heavy on the sociology content (while still making a statement of it) and they provided us with captivating drama. Rogers certainly made a great job of making normality watchable.

The principal characters, Jake Sullivan (Adam) and Sarah Fischer (Ella), were exceptional. They managed to keep the audience engaged through

their natural interactions and clear performing ability. I thoroughly enjoyed Sarah’s various facial expressions and compelling personality changes during the play. Ella was certainly not an easy character to perform but Sarah took on the challenge successfully. Likewise, Jake, a freshman, truly surprised me. He was unquestionably the strongest actor in the play.

Fast forward ten years and we were presented with a sociology classroom. These scenes served as the explanation of the basic philosophical argument of the play. However, they felt too static. There were long periods of time where we just saw people sitting and pondering on the question of love, without doing much else. At points during these scenes, it felt like the audience was actually being taught what one of the sociological concepts of love is. I felt like that did not leave much room for the audience members to actually think for themselves. It is good that some of the more technical concepts were explained, however, the level of detail and explanation felt rather unnecessary.

Yet, the sociological theory was somewhat compensated by the fresh and witty characters that Ella had as students. Most of the laughs came from both their lines and their energetic acting. The casting for that scene was also apt and included the hipster-bro, the feminist foreigner, the romantic-poet, and the geeky-overachiever. Even though they were minor roles it was clear that the best was made out of them.

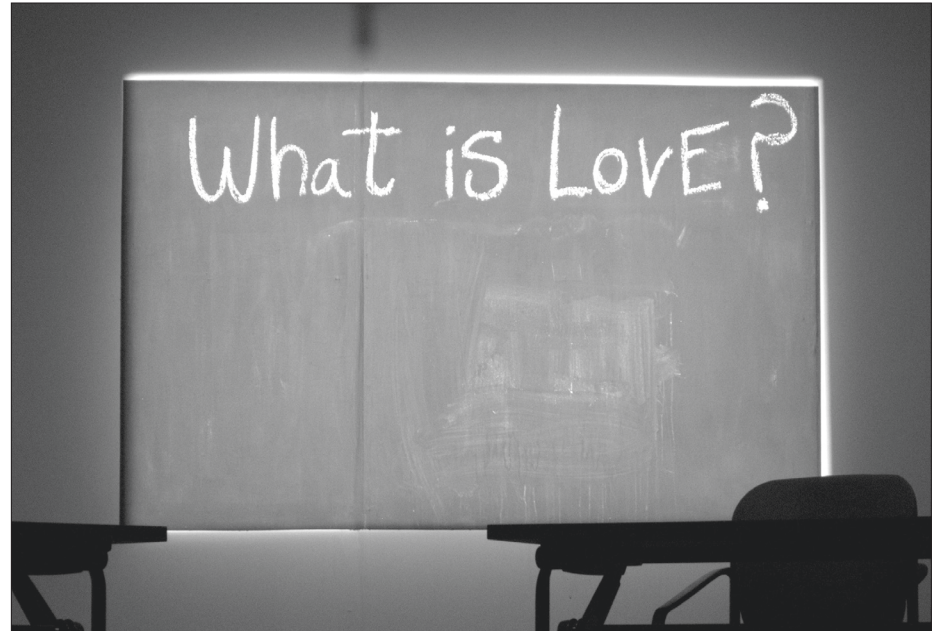
The scenes involving Ella’s parents were indeed very powerful. They gave us a glimpse into a situation that is not often discussed: pretend marriages that continue to be because that is an easier, and more socially acceptable route than divorce. Both Johanna Holbrook (Nora)

and Jack Williamson (Mark) did a fantastic job in their brief appearances. I would like to go further and say that, in my opinion, Johanna Holbrook was the strongest actress of the secondary roles.

Tech-wise the show was nearly flawless. The design of the set was indeed very inventive. Taylor Black certainly managed to create a lot out of very little. There was certainly, as with other aspects of the play, a great attention to detail. I really appreciated that despite all limitations there were very distinct spaces created for the present and the past. Furthermore, even though the set changes in between scenes were fairly complicated, none took more than two minutes. And, even though at first it wasn’t terribly obvious, the sound effects during intermission greatly aided the understanding of the passage of time that accompanied every scene.

Even though the play didn’t have technical wonders or beautiful costumes and lighting, that didn’t affect the overall appeal of the production for the average CC theatergoer. It was a good way of spending the earlier portion of a Friday or Saturday night.

I must admit I was pleased with the quality of the play. The effort and dedication that the cast, crew, and production team put into Opiate was evident in nearly every aspect of the play. Initially expecting an amateur high-school-level performance, I was pleasantly surprised when what I encountered was a serious and well thought out production. I certainly recommend that you check out the performances put by the Theater Workshop group. They are certainly doing a great job of diversifying the drama that we get at CC, while providing our community with good entertainment.



Left: Jake Sullivan and Sarah Fischer in their roles as Adam and Ella. Right: What is love? Baby, don’t hurt me. Photos by Jorge Riviera Hernandez.

## Japanese artistic activism in ANPO: Art X War

Robby Caseria  
Staff Writer

When people from outside of Colorado ask you about the city you go to school in, you might mention the mountains and landscapes to our west, the adjacent neighborhood and downtown communities, the proximity to Denver, or the culture that arises from the campus itself. Although this city is home to Peterson Air Force Base, Fort Carson, and the Air Force Academy, Colorado Springs’ massive military presence often feels removed or decidedly ‘other’ to us residing within the ‘CC bubble’. We don’t think much about the people who work on those bases, and I would bet they do not spend a whole lot of time thinking about us either. We are busy in our day-to-day lives and so are this city’s men and women in uniform. Our missions are markedly different; we are in El Paso County to learn in a liberal arts environment, they are here to defend the homeland. That we don’t run into them or even consider them but from time to time should come as little surprise.

And yet, imagine for a moment that the thousands of military personnel stationed in our community, armed to the teeth and trained

to fight, served under a flag not the same as ours. Imagine that our country and theirs were once bitter enemies in a bloody, prolonged conflict. Their turning their guns onto us is no longer an unthinkable hypothetical, but rather a chillingly possible scenario. Their presence is now fearsome and unnerving, benign for the moment but not without a terrible past and a horrifying potential.

Such is the everyday for citizens in Okinawa, Japan. As a result of the 1960 Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between the United States and Japan, abbreviated to “ANPO” from the original Japanese, the United States currently stations nearly 30,000 troops on the southern Japanese island system. Upon its “automatic ratification” at the behest of what was basically a dictatorship in post-war Japan, this occupation was met with fierce resistance from the nation’s citizenry and its opposition continues to this day. Protests of the treaty have taken the form of mass marches, street-circulated leaflets and books, and many types of art.

“ANPO: Art X War” is a 2010 documentary film that tells the story of some of Japan’s foremost artists using their work to speak out against the United States’ ongoing military presence on their shores. This past Tuesday,

the Asian Studies department sponsored a screening of the film in Armstrong Hall, after which its director, a filmmaker and renowned translator who specializes in subtitled named Linda Hoaglund, spoke about the making of the film and her experiences growing up in both Japan and the United States.

The movie did not maintain much of a political agenda, which helped keep the focus on the work of the artists it profiled. Though it was thorough in pointing out all of the harms that the United States’ military occupation has brought since 1960, issues such as radiation fallout from nuclear weapons testing or a rise in prostitution in the areas surrounding the bases, the film’s mission was always about showcasing the creation that can arise from such turmoil. Aside from gleaning some cultural knowledge by taking in all of the art catalogued in “ANPO: Art X War”, viewers also came away from the screening with a history lesson, seeing how the aftermaths of World War II and the Vietnam War are still very much at play in the Asian Pacific.

Tutt Library has purchased an institutional copy of the film, meaning any student or professor at CC can view the school’s copy whenever they like. Ms. Hoaglund explained that, although she is able to sell individual

DVD copies in Japan and arrange for limited theatrical engagements there, it makes the most business sense for her not to open up “ANPO: Art X War” to consumer video release in the States.

Though I was certainly impressed by the amount of time and effort I am sure it took to arrange all of the interviews and works of art seen in the movie, I came away with the sense that the film was made more for Japanese audiences than for American ones. The effects of ANPO have been felt in Japan for three or four generations now, whereas the treaty is relatively esoteric in the United States. Though the movie presents an opportunity to examine old and difficult questions for Japanese viewers, the people whose lives are the crux of the film’s drama, Americans who watch the movie will likely be unable to emote on as deep a level.

Nonetheless, if the subject matter (i.e. art, art history, Japanese history and culture, military history and culture, etc.) falls within any of your interests, I whole-heartedly endorse the film as a well-made, informative work. Even if you just feel like exploring a corner of history that you do not know much about, the movie will make you not only think, but the way in which it uses real, visceral art will give you an opportunity to really feel.

# Harvey Birdman, the precursor to Archer

Giulio Brandi

A&E Editor

As the youngest of four siblings and a child of the '90s, I grew up on the tail end of "Generation X" (damn, when was the last time anyone said "Generation X"? That should be enough to quell your doubts about the authenticity of my statement.) Anyway, one of the tenets of Generation X was watching cartoons on TV. We didn't have Tivo, Netflix, Hulu, or DVDs. If we wanted to watch a cartoon we had to consult something called "TV Guide" and then wait around until it was time for the desired show to start. The best cartoons were aired once a week on Saturday mornings (e.g. "Conan the Adventurer", "The Pirates of Dark Water", and "Johnny Quest").

Sometimes to get to the good shows meant trudging through the shitty shows, like Scooby

Doo and Adam Ant. Those '70s cartoons were the cheap time killer of youth. I remember begrudgingly sitting through those crapfest cartoons with my sister waiting for the good ones to start.

After all, we were dumb kids; it's not like we had the idea of going to go do something else until the good shows came on. No, we were so committed to watching TV that bad TV was better than being outside. And while I hated it at the time, I don't regret sitting through those awful shows at all simply because they laid the groundwork for fully appreciating the relatively recent series, "Harvey Birdman, Attorney at Law."

I pretty much forgot about all those awful Hanna-Barbera characters until I started watching Harvey Birdman. It was the 15-year-later-payoff that I wasn't expecting but was damn well worth it. Harvey Birdman is an adult-cartoon (*not* hentai) series that ran from

2000 to 2007 that uses Hanna-Barbera characters from old cartoons in new ways. The main character, Harvey Birdman, originally from a cartoon called "Birdman and the Galaxy Trio", has found a new outlet in life as a criminal defense attorney. The show works so well because it makes fun of the old (e.g. Shaggy and Scooby Doo are arrested for marijuana possession and resisting arrest) and the new (Fred Flintstone is a Tony Soprano-esque mob boss).

Viewers will see 'guest appearances' from characters like George Jetson, Secret Squirrel, Yogi Berra and Atom Ant. Stephen Colbert, of the Colbert Report, is one of the voice actors as well as Gary Cole, who voices Harvey Birdman. Although this show stopped running more than four years ago, it was one of the first in a long line of damn funny, damn successful series starting with "Sealab 2021" which ran alongside Harvey Birdman from 2000 to 2005.

Adult Swim, and some of the makers of Harvey Birdman, went on to create the commercial success "Archer" which was based on their slightly more esoteric "Frisky Dingo". This isn't to say that Adult Swim are flawless publishing house; they agreed to release an awful "Harvey Birdman" video game that currently sits at a score of 60/100 on metacritic.com and was obviously an attempt at pure exploitation of the franchise for profit.

Harvey Birdman aired on Adult Swim, the after-hours version of Cartoon Network, and if you like any of its other programs, you'll like Harvey Birdman. The animations are

often lifted from the same, aging cartoons that are parodied.

Perhaps the greatest aspect of the humor behind "Adult Swim" is that their voice acting and their scripts are so damn quotable. Friends that have seen the same episodes will love quoting and creating in-jokes from the show at the confused expense of all those present that haven't seen it. In general, the jokes are in line with what viewers have come to expect of Adult Swim: self-referencing, on-going, and razor sharp. There are also, of course, the microsecond visual jokes that take place in the background. But there is something strange going on with Adult Swim's, and consequently Harvey Birdman's, style of humor.

Let's just generalize for a second and say American humor is slapstick and British *humour* is witty. Adult Swim, though based in Atlanta, is like the inbred, alien bastard child of the Farrelly Brothers and John Cleese. Harvey Birdman isn't a "HAHA SOMEBODY FELL DOWN ON THEIR BUM BUM!" kind of humor, nor is it so dry that as to leave the viewer spitting cotton for a week. It is a weird, off-center mix of sight-gags, characters, and wittiness that appeals directly to the Adult Swim viewer, namely, the college-age male.

If you like adult cartoons (again, *not* hentai) but have grown tired of Fox's perpetual dumbing down of Family Guy, the Simpsons and others, and are looking for a downright funny (and at times weird) cartoon, check out Harvey Birdman. Mentok the Mind Taker demands it.

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# Comment & Debate

## Women that eat men: the downside of extremist feminism

Sam Smith  
Staff Writer

Feminism, historically and internationally, is beyond wonderful. It has shattered oppressive traditions and achieved human rights for females worldwide. It cannot be denied that the movement has played both a pivotal and significant role in human history. Furthermore, the majority of feminists living today are well-informed, hard-working, and powerful people fighting the good fight and making the world a better place. Feminism, in its best form, is the simple notion that women are people.

That said, I believe it is fair to admit that feminist movements have worked, perhaps without realizing, both against the rights or needs of men, and to perpetuate inequality and gender roles.

Before you assume that these statements mean I have a contrived view of feminism, re-read my first paragraph. Not only do most feminists believe in equality, but most feminists who are perpetuating inequality at least think they are promoting equality.

The fact of the matter is that while being a woman in America used to mean that in nearly every single way, you were at an overarching disadvantage, it now seems to be far from clear-cut. While I don't feel the need to generalize or suggest that being a man is harder than being a woman, I think it's important that we recognize undeniable and institutionalized disadvantages of being an American man.

If you are a male in America, the expectations of your life are often non-existent. According to multiple studies of elementary-level classrooms, including one conducted by Diane Halpern, a psychology professor at Claremont McKenna College, you receive far more blame and punishment from teachers if you are male. According to an Ohio State University study, females get better grades for the same quality work in all levels of education and are still provided with an overwhelming amount of incentives, thus outpacing men in college enrollment and degrees. So, if you are male, your grades are likely to be worse, you are far less likely to graduate high school, graduate college, or to have a job.

In fact, in the United States, men are twice as likely to be unemployed and four times more likely to have been let go during the recession than women. This is all so much more disturbing when race is factored in. Black men are targeted by the police far more than black women and are overwhelmingly more likely to end up uneducated and unemployed. It is just as wrong to attribute all this to an inherent stupidity or laziness in men, as it is to attribute the salary disparity between men and women to the belief that women are underachieving and incompetent. The reality is that being a man in America encompasses massive chal-

lenges often overlooked by feminists.

These challenges include the dare-we-speak-of double standards. Because men are expected to be strong and dominant, males who claim they were sexually harassed or raped by women are taken far less seriously. Moreover, men have no laws such as the Violence Against Women Act that afford them equal protection under the law when they are victimized by violence. This is even more disturbing when one considers that The U.S. Center for Disease Control and the American Psychiatric Association found of heterosexual relationships involving violence, 50.3 percent involve non-reciprocal violence, and of that 50.3 percent, women were the instigators 70.7 percent of the time. Unsurprisingly, a U.S. survey of thousands of adults regarding intimate partner violence, participants were more accepting of women hitting men, and were consistently more likely to tolerate the violence if they were first asked about women hitting men rather than the reverse. The expectation of men to be both emotionally and physically strong figures has led us to create a

world where male victims are intolerable. This goes way too far. There are dozens of rape crisis centers that refuse to help male rape victims and no rape crisis centers that cater specifically to men.

So what role has feminism played? Not always a bad one. Many feminists push to tear down all society-led expectations of both genders. Unfortunately, this does not appear to be the norm. Far too many feminists see America as a place where women can't get what men can. They claim that women make 50 cents for every dollar a man makes. They claim that women are not in positions of power and they claim that women are discriminated against in the workplace. While these claims are true in many regards, they remain generalizations and have led us down a path that makes things unfairly difficult for men.

Yes, women make less money than men today, 80 cents for every dollar to be exact, according to the U.S. census. Part of the reason this is true is because the vast majority of the wealthiest Americans are men. If you look at the typical middle class man and the typical

middle class woman, they almost always earn the same wage. The general-public statistic is thrown off because the average salary of the uber-wealthy men is incredibly high. Still, studies show that female CEOs are paid more than male CEOs and the vast majority of the unemployed, imprisoned, or homeless are men. The statistics, incontestable and undisputed, don't stop there. The vast majority of suicide victims are also men. Maybe because men are expected to be void of feelings like sadness, shame, self-consciousness, and despair, they are far more likely to commit suicide as a result of keeping those emotions bottled up. Men are also more likely to be violent in a society that expects them to work under more stress with later hours than women and in a society that discourages females to serve in combat.

American Feminism has lost its way. There are simply too many examples of the disadvantages of being a man for me to declare myself a feminist. So, I have come to identify as a humanist, one who believes in equality of the genders and is willing to fight against

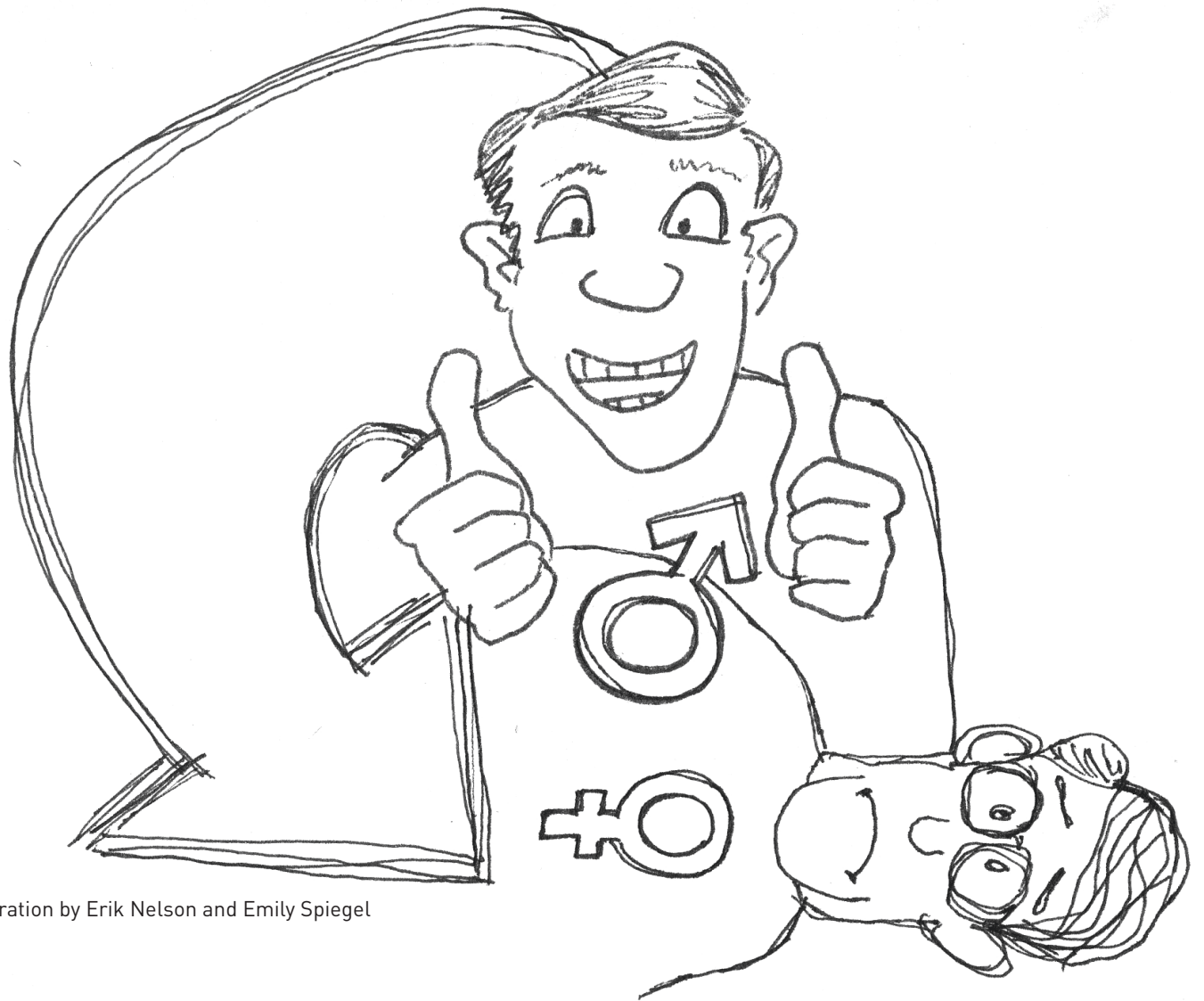


Illustration by Erik Nelson and Emily Spiegel

## THE CATALYST

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# Don't be hypocrites; occupy Fannie & Freddie

Abdoulaye Dabo  
Staff Writer

Do you believe that the federal government is out of control? If so, we have something in common. Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac were created to give working Americans a shot at owning a decent home. Families unable to get a private mortgage could turn to Fannie and Freddie for assistance – it was as simple as that, or at least seemed that way. Fannie and Freddie were supposed to help folks who needed it by giving them a home.

Though the federal government doesn't directly run these agencies, it does provide them with funding. In the wake of the 2008 recession, the federal government gave Fannie and Freddie as much as \$156 billion to keep running. Despite claims that most bailed-out banks repaid their dues (because the bailout worked so well), Fannie and Freddie still owe the American taxpayer up to \$141 billion in U.S. dollars. Moreover, top executives at Fannie and Freddie are expected to receive \$100 million in compensation for work done between 2009 and 2011, as reported by CNN.

With that being said, why isn't there an Occupy Fannie and Freddie? Why isn't there an Occupy the White House? Why isn't there an Occupy Congress? The executives at Fannie and Freddie are probably pretty well off as a result of the generous donations by the federal government. They accept lavish salaries. Do not expect them to pay the \$141 billion lent to them by the federal government back; this type of lending practice by the federal government has hosed all of us. It should not be hard to realize that the funding of these agencies is contributing, in a significant way, to the unprecedented growth of the national deficit.

Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac should be abolished. It is not in the best interest of the United States to continue funding these agencies. Americans cannot afford to pay their executives. It's evident that some families will find it harder to get a mortgage, but then again, America is broke. It is decision time and I believe we should give priority to the survival of the country in these hard economic times.

The hypocrisy of the Occupy movement is staggering. While the "Occupiers" concentrate on the private industry, they overlook chaotic liberal programs. Does this mean that Occupy Wall Street is bogus? Maybe. Do the protestors care about lavish salaries the government doles out? Probably not.

Even though the private sector has always been a job creator in the economy, there were times when investment bankers screwed up by taking unrealistic risks. There were also times when corporate greed led to a financial meltdown. It's true that, at times, individuals in the corporate world base their decisions on financial judgments that don't always work. Human judgment is far from being perfect. Also,

volatility in the stock market over the past several months (or even years) has not improved things from a business standpoint. As a result, some individuals were convicted and Wall Street is now heavily regulated.

Wall Street has a sizable amount of negative connotations attached to its name. However, the greed of a minority should not lead to generalization and a demonization of a whole institution. It's been three years since the bailout, and it was not the banks that passed the Emergency Economic Stabilization Act of 2008. Congress did. This leads me to say that the protesters are rather confused about whom to blame. Bankers are not gods, and therefore are not faultless.

It's always amuses me to see people blame Wall Street in bad economic times and hardly refer to it as the catalyst of economic growth in great times. A protest of this kind will just divide America into different factions. We have Congress and the Senate for a reason. Lawmakers are responsible for bringing about change; let them do their jobs. They were the ones elected through popular vote to represent the public by large. A good number of the Occupy protesters probably voted for a change of direction in the 2008 presidential elections; if so, then they should blame the people they elected. It's like a football team. When the team wins the Super Bowl, the head coach is often forgotten and all the credit goes to the quarterback, wide-receiver, linebacker, etc. However, when the team loses and doesn't make the playoffs, it's the head coach who is the first one blamed.

Some pundits have been obsessing over the similarities between "Occupy Wall Street" and the Arab Spring (a wave revolutionary wave of demonstrations and protests in the Arab world in the spring of 2011, mostly in Tunisia and Egypt). Secular dictators have ruled Tunisia and Egypt for decades and ruthlessly suppressed all political activity. Egyptians, just like Tunisians, were protesting against the same things: lack of democracy, limited freedom of speech, an authoritarian regime, and high unemployment. Work needs to be done to address social injustice. However, "Occupy Wall Street" should not be compared to what took place on Tahrir Square, the focal point of the Egyptian Revolution of 2011, considering that America is a democratic country.

Next year, Americans will have to make a decision: whether to vote for the Democratic Party which largely wants to continue this social justice madness (which reminds me of communism) or vote for a rather chaotic and vacillating GOP which says it wants smaller government. But who knows? President Bush did spend an unbelievable amount of money, which is contradictory to the Republican philosophy. Next year's election is not going to be about President Obama or his opponent. It will be about saving the United States from economic collapse.

## QUEERIOSITIES

### "Marriage or freedom?"

"Ribbons"

Comment & Debate Columnist

Does one have to be in a relationship to achieve everything one wants to?

This is the question that struck me the other day, when a friend happened to mention "the perfection of unity". That phrase stuck out, causing me to completely stop listening to the rest of the important monologue he launched into. No doubt I missed something crucial, but I was busy thinking of magazine-worthy couples, frolicking through sunflower fields.

From a young age, marriage is understood as being a crucial milestone in one's life. When you're married, you can own a house. When you're married, you can have children. When you're married, you can have a successful career. The concept of the "perfection of unity" is drummed into us. Girls play with Barbie – she has Ken; her life is complete. Women assume a gender role, which sanctifies coupling and promotes a dependency on the other, be they a woman or a man. Men have less exposure to these expectations, although they're still present.

Why do we assume that being with someone else will vastly improve our life? Why do we feel the need to exclusively bind ourselves to someone? Why aren't we promoting polygamy? Do these needs date from an ancient desire to protect our property through "strength in numbers" and loyalty? Since the dawn of Christianity, Western culture has never really promoted polygamy. The growing sanctions surrounding Christianity eventually meant that in order to engage in any form of desire, one had to be married. Society expected us to be married. One could argue that it was a form of control. By being married, people were split into small (theoretically) monogamous units for economic and population control. Since that time, marriage has become an ingrained facet of our culture. It is both expected and desired due to the need to conform to cultural boundaries.

Personally, I think that being with someone in a long-term relationship spanning decades is quite unnatural. I don't understand it myself – not to say I won't try it once (maybe twice, hopefully not thrice). How can you maintain an interest in someone for that long? Knowing all of their faults, a waning attraction and external complications, how can you commit to living with someone for the rest of your life? There are too many difficulties involved with entering into a marriage.

According to the Americans for Divorce Reform Group, at present the U.S. has an approximate 40 percent divorce rate. Although divorce is not as taboo as it once was, it is still perceived as a failure. Is this due to an

increasingly hedonistic society, or a greater degree of personal freedom? I believe that as society has become increasingly socially liberal, one is able to chase after their desires more easily. Why stay in a loveless marriage if you can pursue other means of happiness? It follows that medieval marriages were also not as committed and perfect as we would like to believe. Society was far more patriarchal in previous centuries, allowing less freedom for women and greater acceptance of male use of prostitution. Males were therefore more able to engage in covert polygamy. Contemporary views consider prostitution degrading and female agency is increasing as time passes. As such, it is not a change in the individual, but in the society, which has impacted divorce rates.

In my opinion, marriage is not good for either individual. Marriage is formed from the desperation to ensure someone remains committed to you for the duration of their life. This desperation to unite with someone creates a clinging sense of need and affirms self-sacrificing behavior. Ultimately, through selflessness, individuals stop engaging in areas of their life that previously made them content, so as to make room for their partner. The individual is lost as the couple takes over. One begins to be defined by his or her partnership.

Thirty-nine and single? She must be awfully annoying to have failed to marry by now. Or maybe she's a perfectionist and refuses to accept anything less than the best. A couple that has been married for 28 years? They are successful. Their life must be full of happiness and success, and probably golf. The relationship status of the individual overshadows most other aspects of their lives. If an individual is an overwhelmingly successful businessman without a wife, his life is void of meaning, right?

Don't get me wrong, I understand the need for self-affirmation from other people. As much as people attempt to deny it, others' validation justifies our place in the world. I understand the fiery consuming love we feel for an other. I just do not understand why this has to result in a monogamous unit. Is polygamy not the best relationship system? Or an open relationship? You can engage in all of your carnal desires, without engaging in a contractual obligation to remain monogamous and committed to one person for the rest of your life. It is freer and less constraining. Of course, jealousy is a huge barrier to these arrangements; however are these possessive emotions innate human characteristics? Or are they formed through societal expectations and cultural exaltations of private property?

I know why it happens. I just wish it wouldn't. The "perfection of unity" simply seems to cause more problems than it solves; at least, in my experience.

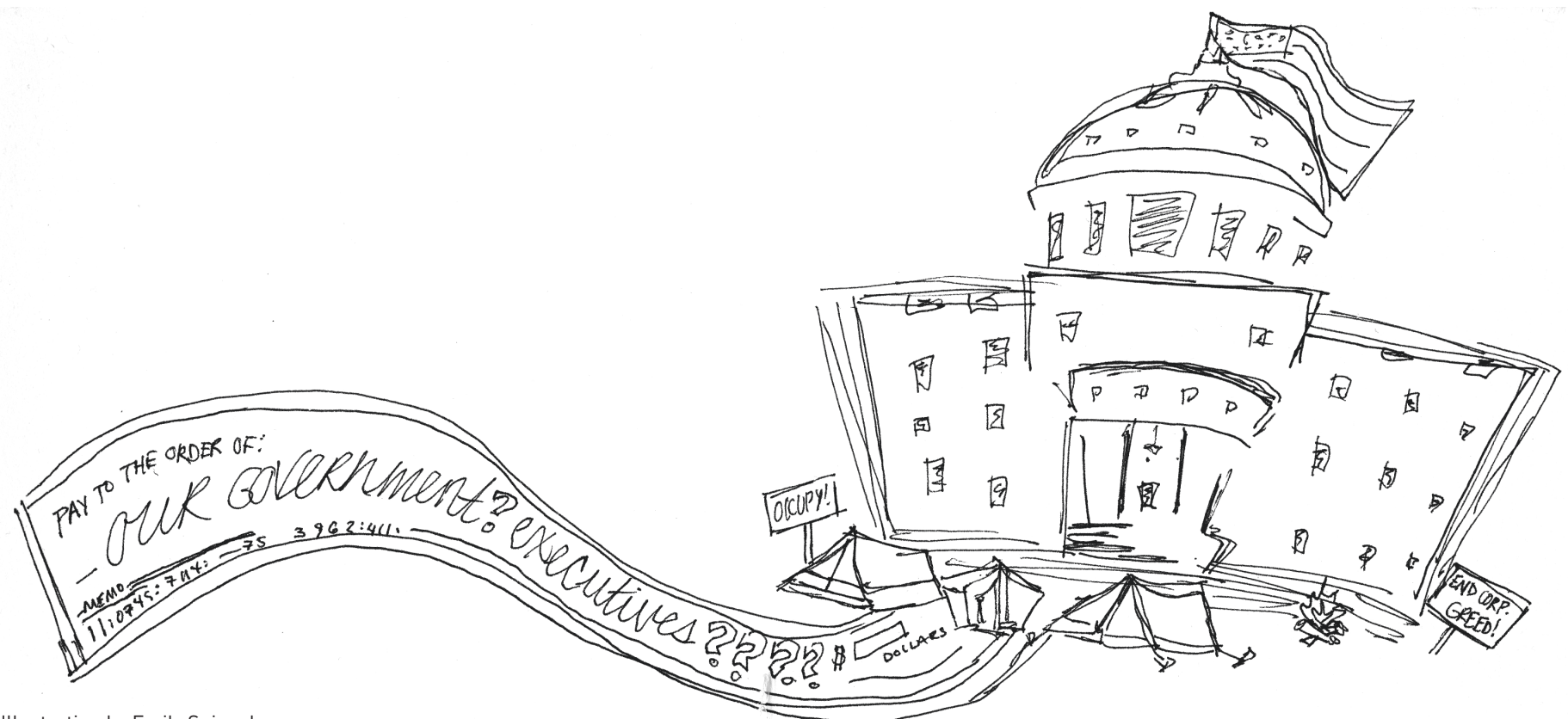


Illustration by Emily Spiegel

# How postmodernity ruined idealism

José Gallegos  
Staff Writer

In the late Eighteenth Century, the German philosopher Immanuel Kant defined the archetype of modernity by asking the question, “What is enlightenment?” Perhaps it is time for us to ask, “What is postmodernity?” in order to illuminate the challenges of our time. After all, in order to know where to go, it is fundamental to know where and who we are, just as the Delphic Oracle advises: “Know thyself”. I believe such philosophical questions should abandon academia and the scholarly papers and get into the agora (i.e. the public sphere). What better a place to start the discussion than our college newspaper?

To me there’s no better way to describe the spirit of our time than by evoking the American classic, the composition “Rhapsody in Blue” by George Gershwin. A clarinet glissando in the opening reveals the rising of a novel promise. It is neither metaphysics nor the surpassed utopias of modernity, but something beyond that, perhaps the promise of evanescent flourishing. Then tuttis come into action, prominent enough to convince anyone of the triumph of liberal capitalism. Orotund cadences are always inconclusive, as an endless expectancy for the unexpected. Intrepidness, agitation, wildness, unpredictability, such is the impulse of Gershwin’s composition: a fluctuation of pompous sonorities that recreate the roundness of a self-referential time. And even though such redundancy is nothing but a sarcastic grandiosity, postmodernity rises proudly on the feet of its nihilistic completeness.

Postmodernity is the encounter with a fluctuant liquid world. A world that is always changing, that is always at expectancy, eager to receive the “new”, whether for better or for worse. Novelty is a prerequisite for the postmodern individual: the new mobile phone,

the new laptop, the new trip, the new girlfriend. One recognizes and embraces instability as a never-ending reformulation of life, which also reflects on the inaccuracy of terms to describe the fugacity and vagueness of one’s relationships: flings, friends with benefits, inconsistent sexual partners etc. The postmodern condition is a repetitive *carpe diem* that becomes meaningless in its nth repetition.

The postmodern life is an approach and a reproach to the world, characterized by a cynical-skeptical-hedonist attitude. Yet, its cynicism is not like Diogenes’ or Crates’, for postmodernity has replaced self-sufficiency by self-interest and humbleness by the kitsch of a hippy-asceticism. In addition it has transposed the concept of shamelessness from a political claim to a scornful detachment of the world. Postmodern skepticism is no longer a confrontation to the common-accepted values of society, but rather a solipsistic epigraph of pessimism and conformity. Hedonism in postmodern terms is certainly not a Dionysian ecstasy of enjoyment and pleasure, but rather the alienation of the soul by material acquisition and the alienation of the body by the arbitrariness of unconscious-physical encounters. Get drunk tonight, get in your neighbor’s bed tomorrow!

Agnosticism is the postmodern religion par excellence. Atheism is a fashion in vogue and Christianity is a conservative social-club. Marxism is a relic in the showcase of history, and democratic liberalism is a surrealist painting of a bourgeois gallery. Ideologies are bad faith. “God is dead”, the author is dead, the subject is dead. Postmodernity seeks individuality in homologation—she wears Converse and smells like Chanel No. 5. To be is to have, and there is no Shakespearean question. In postmodernity, there are neither metanarratives nor boundaries to contain the world from its contingency. Utopias become dystopias, emancipation is interchangeable with populism, reality shows make normal people heroes, and heroes are turned into pop-stars, villains are victims of

their own vanity, freedom is a language game, and love is a romanticized version of sexual intercourse. The sublime gets fused and confused with the mundane. The emptiness of our society is reflected into the minimalist allure of arts; simplicity takes the form of complexity and complexity takes the form of antiquity.

But is this really what postmodernity is all about? Or is it just what the typical-college-American student is capable of articulating from his world perspective and philosophy readings? I personally think this is not an accurate description of our time, for the ontology of our present cannot be described merely by the quintessence of the Western cosmopolitan subject. Our present is also characterized by inconformity, injustice, inequality, and struggle. There are metanarratives to justify the status quo, just as there are to take action for change.

**“Utopias become dystopias, emancipation is interchangeable with populism, reality shows make normal people heroes, and heroes are turned into pop-stars, villains are victims of their own vanity, freedom is a language game, and love is a romanticized version of sexual intercourse.”**

Perhaps in the future, when people look in retrospect at our time, they will compare the grassroots movements that are taking place today with the 1968 global revolutions. They will give a fair account of the thousands of

Mexicans protesting and marching against the violence derived from the Mexican drug-war. The Chilean students involved in massive demonstrations that strive to make college education accessible for everyone will be recognized. So will the Spanish Indignants who occupied Madrid protesting against the lack of representation and democracy in their political system. The revolutionary wave in the Middle East (also known as the Arab Spring) will be viewed as an admirable attempt of the people from Tunisia, Egypt, Bahrain, Syria, Yemen, Algeria, Iraq, Jordan, Morocco, and Oman to fight undemocratic regimes and their inherent inequality and oppressive nature. And last, but not least, for the public demonstrations and occupied places around the United States against the one percent (namely a plutocracy integrated by transnational companies and banks) that dominate the country’s financial system and the future of the American people.

The original subject of postmodernity, who described himself in terms of conformity, skepticism, and denial, has provoked the origin of his alter-ego, and yet they are both part of the same entity. Postmodernity is like the comedy/tragedy mask of Greek theater, transposed to a twofold reality of farce and struggle, nihilism and emancipation, solipsism and action. These are two very different and almost opposing narratives, which beyond subjectivity constitute one same reality. Acknowledging this dualism, as opposed to neglecting with indifference the other side of the coin, is the first process to construct a dialectical process, where there’s still space for idealism and for change. What would be the new ideal to inspire everyone to change? What would be the new ideology to mobilize people towards a new political system? And what is the model of society that we should aspire to? Philosophy has addressed these questions for more than two thousand years, and they are still as valid as ever.

## Conformist college students are the problem

Luigi Mendez  
Guest Writer

Last block, I decided to join American Politics and Government with Andrew Dunham. I had always tried to avoid taking it because, as an international student interested in political science, the subject seemed a little unnecessary, and incredibly tedious. But what could I do? It is, after all, a requirement for my political science major. However predisposed and unwilling as I was, I walked into the classroom and to my surprise there were only six other students there! Six students, and I bet that some of us (if not most of us) were there because we were “required” to take the class in order to get a political science degree.

On the very first day, Andy Dunham presented the class with the statement that Americans are politically “inactive, uninterested and un-aroused”, and the very size of our class supported his claim. This made me wonder about the student political activism in the United States (or at least, what I’ve seen at CC) as it compares to what I’ve seen in Latin America; the realities are extremely different. Students in Colorado College are remarkably less participative, aware, and vocal when it comes to taking a political stand than students in Latin America.

In Venezuela, like in most of Latin America, university campuses have no dormitories. For this reason, there is an absence of campus-centered extracurricular activities in comparison to North American universities. The great number and variety of “extracurriculars” in most universities in the U.S. makes students devote their energies to athletics, debating, religious and secular associations of all sorts, singing and theatre groups, student newspapers and magazines, etc.; students in Latin America lack these ways to divert their passions from politics.

Thus, they seek association with political groups (Marxist, Social-democrats, communist, etc.) and see them as an essential part of their university experience, just as most Americans regard extracurriculars as crucial for their time

in college. Why then, if we have the facilities, the time, and resources to do this at CC, don’t we create un-affiliated political organizations that give a room for students to debate on political issues nationally and internationally?

Also, university students back home appear psychologically more prone to political involvement because they are more confident than non-students about their political efficacy. In a sociological study, E. Bakke argues, “Students

**“Let me say it again: Latin American students are more involved in politics than Americans, overall. Back home, in Venezuela, students are among the most important political forces, and we usually feel responsible for the social and political stability of the country.”**

[in Latin America] are aware that they are a force to be reckoned with both in the determination of the character of the university and in the shaping of the social political life in the community and nation.” There is a notion among students that we have the capability and responsibility to orient and lead other sectors of society. And this is a notion that has been created through the students’ constant political participation and involvement through social work, media, political allegiance, etc.

It would be nice, if not essential for the country’s integral development, if this same feeling was fostered among students in American colleges as well. Imagine if college and university students were reckoned with as a relevant (and united) political force in the country. It doesn’t seem bad or irrational to me to leave

some politics in the hands of students who do have the energy and some of the extra time to get involved in them. We need to participate in society and politics more actively and vocally to become a relevant political actor in the country. Imagine a student taking part in a Republican debate. Imagine a group of students from different perspectives and backgrounds on national television, analyzing the policy platforms offered by different candidates and providing the country with their opinions of these candidates. Imagine that students, as an organized, united force, had a voice in politics...

There is a notion that university students in Latin America are socially responsible, and that their university, as a whole, acts as the social conscience of the nation. This is true, to the degree that in many Latin American countries, universities act as social welfare institutions. For instance, Mexico’s National University (UNAM) has a separate Social Service Department which manages internships in villages and neglected areas. And, among other activities, it arranges weekend work camps where students interact with and learn about the problems of underprivileged people, and then help them solve these problems. Also, “Accion Comunal” in Colombia is a student-led organization that provides opportunities for participation in community development. “Javaeriana”, in Bogota, has an impressive list of options for student participation in charitable activities, including participation in workers’ education, legal consultation for the poor, visits to and study of jails, Catholic missions and social work assistance, dental clinics, and community medical services.

This injection of students into the life and needs of the Latin American people has shaped our role as political activists. With it, we carry the opportunity not only for the expression of idealism, but to actually be an active agent of change in our society. That is why we feel the need to raise our voices when we see things going wrong. We reckon ourselves as political agents, as “social policemen” whose responsibility lies in social justice work, politi-

cal awareness, and participation.

Let me say it again: Latin American students are more involved in politics than Americans, overall. Back home, in Venezuela, students are among the most important political forces, and we usually feel responsible for social and political stability of the country. If things go wrong, we protest, send letters, go on strikes, make pamphlets to raise awareness, participate in municipal and state meetings, and organize support and create policy platforms together with political party leaders. The student themselves are political party leaders. University students have been crucial in the revolution movements of Argentina (1918), Cuba (1933, 1959), Guatemala (1944), Venezuela (1958, 2008), and Bolivia (1964), and have led significant anti-government demonstrations (almost consistently) in nearly every Latin American country at some point in the last century.

But why would this matter? Why would we, as mere college students seeking intellectual betterment be involved in the political situation of the nation? Student involvement is crucial for every country, especially in the United States. The bipartisan political system tends to offer only two alternatives to address an issue: Democrats seek to expand the social welfare system and improve the quality of lower-income people by increasing taxes; Republicans seek to reduce taxes and government intervention as much as possible, letting the individual care for his or her own destiny. Students need not conform to these two alternatives, but need to re-define them, criticize them, break them into smaller parts and see what actually benefits the nation and what doesn’t. CC gives us the means and theoretical foundations to understand the different policy platforms offered by both parties. It should be our responsibility to analyze and understand these platforms, criticize them and create a new, third one, if necessary. Like in Latin America, we, as university students, need to be the intellectual voice of the people, not because we are smarter than the rest, but because we have the tools to do so.



# The bright side of internationalism at CC

Krithika Vachali

Guest Writer

I am an international student at CC. I flew for 27 hours before I got to campus, and that is extremely fast considering the distance I travelled. In terms of culture, it seemed like I alighted from my plane and set foot on an alien planet. It was not American culture per se that seemed so different to me, but the culture at CC, specifically one aspect, a dearth of “internationalism” that I found hard to deal with. But I reassured myself that I was new here and that I just wasn’t meeting enough people. Sure enough, my class assuaged my fears by teaching me about Asian cultures, yet I still felt there was something missing. I could not quite pinpoint what it was. Therefore, when CC hosted an International Week a month ago, starting with Taste of the World and ending with the Music Across Borders Video Dance Party, I thought it might be a good time to talk to as many people as I could to try and put a finger on what internationalism meant to CC.

When I first started asking around, the definition of international that I found was very limited. I thought that the only “internationalism” at CC came from its small group of international students. Besides, I was world weary and cynical about the role of internationalism at CC as I went into this week. I am afraid I had a very well developed notion of what I would find. From my experience alone, in classes and other interactions I have had with the CC student body, I felt the majority of students did not really care about the opportunities that CC presented in terms of expanding to the international community. Yes, people study abroad often, and yes, people live in language houses, but I do not feel as though that affects anything. Simple things like bringing up international politics at a lunch table would reward me with blank faces. Sometimes, the only way I could be sure that someone would know something about another country was if it was related to the U.S., or happened to be front page news in the New York Times. It was frustrating and demoralizing, for I expected people to simply know more and care more than I thought they did. Going into international week, my thoughts were predictably dark and, as I said, I thought I could predict the answers I would get. It was not just the status quo in terms of internationalism that I was looking for; I was also looking for what people do about it. People do not broach the topic of internationalism often. At the end of the week, luckily, I was proved wrong on one of these fronts.

It took around 13 informal interviews to realize that CC has more international elements than I, or many others that I spoke with initially, give it credit for. There are the international students, of course, and then there is international faculty and staff. Beyond

that, there is the satisfyingly large percentage of people who study abroad, and finally, there is the academic curriculum itself. People’s opinions about these elements of internationalism in CC are as varied as the costumes people wear during Halloween.

International students are everywhere you look. If you do not have one in your class, you will have one in or your extracurricular activities, and if nothing else, you have at least one on the editorial board of this publication. As of last year, there were 117 international undergraduate students on this campus, and this year, there are approximately 120 international students according to OMIS (The Office for Minority and International Students) and the Admissions Office. These numbers only count the “non-resident aliens” on campus. When applying CC’s definition of an international student, there could possibly be more. CC’s formal definition of international students, from the CC website, includes, “non-U.S. citizens who attended high school in the U.S., U.S. citizens who attended secondary schools abroad, non-U.S. citizens who have never been to the U.S., dual citizens, and U.S. permanent residents.” CC seems to be saying that it considers anyone with a significant background outside the United States an international student. I would even go so far as to expand this to students who have done gap years abroad either in service or studying, as they also have had an exposure to perspectives held in other countries.

Now that we know we have this group, which according to my unofficial estimate is around 12-15 percent of the student body, my question to my interviewees was, why do they matter? I got bland looks before someone either explained to me earnestly why “diverse perspectives” was a good thing, or shot me a glare dripping with scorn because I seemed to not know this basic truth. The general consensus I gleaned was that an international student body provided diverse perspectives and views that were essential to liberal arts education. However, when I asked about seeing examples of this on campus, the responses were very mixed. Some people felt that diverse perspective really didn’t play a part in the CC community, while others swore by the existence of vibrantly different perspectives and said that it changed their lives and the way in which they looked at things. I believe both, but am more dubious about the latter than the former. Yet, it is interesting to me that both can exist in tandem in such a small community. “Culture is easily accepted,” Joah Chun, a CC freshman, noted. “It is the other stuff, political views particularly, that are treated with caution. I do not think that there is a doubt about the existence of perspectives anymore. There is, however, the question of their acceptance.” It also seemed that people did not oppose new views; they just took a while to get used to something formerly glaringly unfamiliar. On

the international student front, I have listened to frustrated students who feel that their views are not given any importance by students who swear to the open-mindedness of their class or circle of friends. While it is obvious that all students, regardless of where they come from, receive a good education at CC, it is questionable whether the learning environment, created by the community of students and faculty, is as diverse as it should be.

I also found that people who had studied abroad felt much more comfortable with new perspectives, and they were usually the ones who claimed that the international aspect to CC, because the study abroad programs changed their way of thinking and looking at things. As of last year, 53 percent of students studied abroad before graduation, according to the CC website. As this number does not include the students who do a summer block abroad, this figure may be more than 70 percent, in my estimate. Nearly one in two people would have studied abroad before graduating. It boggles the mind when we look at these numbers, but they are true. CC is offering us the chance to go abroad for a semester, a year, or a summer, and we all seem to be taking them up whole-heartedly on this offer.

When I spoke to some students who had studied abroad, they said that going abroad fundamentally changed the way they viewed the world. In a class with guest lecturer Amitava Kumar, one of the participants confessed that she hadn’t really felt “American” before she studied abroad. She then went on to say that putting herself in the context of a different culture and learning environment helped her understand her own identity in the way that she wanted to. Many students who study abroad do so to learn an aspect of the culture they are studying academically, and that brought me to the third presence of internationalism in this community: academics.

The first class that I took here was Japanese Culture and Interpreting Asian Cultures. I learned eventually that they fulfilled two out of three Diverse Perspectives credits that I needed to get. They are a requirement for every student who wishes to graduate from CC. Added to that are the international elements present in the courses offered, which include foreign languages, the study of other cultures, arts from around the world, and even different political, religious, and scientific traditions of thought. It would be impossible, as a CC student, not to encounter internationalism at some point before graduation. When asked whether people thought this was good, I received the same mixed opinions again, ranging from resounding agreement to apathy, to strong disagreement.

At the end of the week, with all its cultural activities and international general knowledge quizzes, I came to absolutely no conclusion. I felt that there should be one, and I knew that there were questions worth asking, but right at that moment, it felt as though most people

were just confused about what it all meant, or did not really care. I did not speak to the whole community however, and therein lays my uncertainty with framing an opinion on what “internationalism” means. My view concerning internationalism had certainly changed from my initial perspective and hypothesis. However, it does not mean that the majority of the community values our international aspects. While students are clear about the status of internationalism in their personal lives, no one felt the need to re-evaluate or change that status. There was some regret expressed at the fact that in some areas, international or global knowledge and perspective was woefully absent. However, it stopped with that regret. The status quo, as tenuous and inconclusive as it seems, has been established. The sad part? No one seems to want to change it.

We need to start to engage in a dialogue about what internationalism means to this community. Why have international students at all? Why have study-abroad programs? Why fund faculty from across the globe to come give us talks and teach classes? And when we answer those whys, we need to figure out whether those answers really apply to this community. This confusion about internationalism in itself, and its potential value is something that I really feel this community needs to come to terms with, and live out instead of just spouting “correct” views at opportune moments. Think about it, when CC, administratively, does so much to introduce this community to a more global outlook through the language houses and study abroad programs, why don’t people talk about it more? At the same time, why do some people say that people don’t care about “internationalism” when, looking at the amount of people who study abroad, they do in their own ways?

These are questions that I could not find answers to because this dialogue has yet to take place in the greater community. However, the necessity for this dialogue is apparent. It is rare to have so many opportunities at hand and so many outlets through which we can broaden perspectives and enrich the academics here. It would be a shame then to not have this dialogue and let things stay the way they are. The fragile and often confusing thing that is internationalism at CC is currently standing in limbo. It is comfortable for us to just let it be, without questioning the need for it, or even discussing the possibility of having or not having it. Perhaps, it should remain the way it is, in suspended animation peppered with small discussions in and around campus. Or maybe we could evaluate it and see whether or not it’s a valuable part of the CC community, and if so, maybe even figure out ways to utilize this more efficiently. Either way, we need to do something, because if we don’t, we might just let one of the most valuable aspects of a liberal arts education, and a CC education in specific, pass us by.

## Stolen dignity: Redefining loss and virginity

Radhika Singh

Guest Writer

My best friend told me last year that her father had sexually molested her all through middle school. At first, she didn’t even know that her father was doing something wrong. When she found out that he was, she also felt that something was taken from her; to put it in her own words, “I felt that I was dirty, kind of...corrupt; I still kind of feel that way.” Along with the realization that her father was doing something wrong came the idea that something was stolen from her.

There is a lot wrong with the way sexual harassment is handled in certain societies. In many Eastern cultures, women who are sexually harassed do not know that it is wrong, and when they do find out that it is, they have no one to turn to because of the shame and stigmatization that the loss of virginity carries with it. More than this, however, whether or not they knew it was wrong, a skewed sense of what has happened to them emerges, because of how their society views women.

Both Western and Eastern cultures tell

women that rape or sexual harassment is the worst thing that could ever happen to them, especially if the woman is a virgin; that it results in the loss of purity and innocence, and, understandably, would leave them feeling dirty and impure. When looking at the word “rape” in a thesaurus, the synonyms that appear are “to plunder, despoil, ransack, rob”. I would like to question this view, because not only does it encourage the belief that a woman’s worth lies in the possession of her virginity, but it also leads to the objectification of a woman and to her “value” spoken of in terms of ownership and loss.

Forced sexual intercourse is obviously a violation of a woman’s body, but it must not be seen as an end of a woman in any way - whether it be the end of her life, her childhood, or her sanctity. A woman must not be defined by her sexuality, or more specifically, her virginity. We, as a society, must move past the notion that a raped woman has had something precious stolen from her. One’s virginity should not be considered “precious”; if so, it would mean that the loss of it would make a woman “worthless”. Just the fact that we use the term losing your virginity makes it appear to be a loss of something.

In most of India today, marriage is still viewed as a business, an advancement of both families. A woman is indeed “worthless” if she has lost her virginity before marriage. When a child is born, its future is determined by its sex. If it is a boy, then raising him will bring money to the family directly, through his own money-earning ventures. If it is a girl, she will be an investment. Her parents need to raise her, which costs money, and then pay her dowry, which costs even more money. She can only bring money to the family indirectly through her husband and his family. If she loses her virginity, she not only loses her “purity” and “innocence”, she also loses her potential to make money because she will probably never be able to get married.

If she loses her virginity through rape, she will be shunned by society because she has lost her monetary value for the family. Even in Western society, just a few decades ago, a raped woman was often held in contempt because she was seen as “asking for it”. If she were a virgin, she would have lost her “sanctity”. Either way, this focus on the loss associated with virginity misdirects the real atrociousness of rape- the stealing of a woman’s personal freedom of choice through

the infliction of violence. Instead, it encourages the raped woman to feel guilt rather than anger at what was inflicted on her.

It was the sense of guilt, because of what she thought she lost, that stopped my friend from telling me about her molestation sooner. We had been best friends for ten years, and I thought we shared everything. She hid this from me and the world, and struggled through her mental and physical torture alone. She was not only victimized by her father, but by society’s distorted understanding of rape.

It will be hard for people to overcome the almost subconscious connections they make between rape, virginity, and loss. It has been driven into our minds since we were children. Media, to a large extent, confirms and emphasizes this idea. Changing it would mean changing our very ingrained perception of sex as a whole—a near impossible task. We need to try, though. We need to understand rape for what it is and help victims understand that nothing was taken from them; rather, something was forced onto them. In this distinction lies the healing of a woman, even a virgin, who has been raped.

# Science!

## Synch or swim: menstruation theories try to stay afloat

Bryce Ingram  
Guest Writer

*Continued from page 1*

Even more numerous are the evolutionary theories that might undermine menstrual synchrony. Richard A. Kiltie summarizes a number of these theories in “On the Significance of Menstrual Synchrony in Closely Associated Women” (1982). One theory proposes that period synching is a result of competition for social or sexual dominance. Because the menstrual cycle is closely linked to sexual desire and arousal (see “horniness”), being synched with sexual competitors may increase a female’s chance of finding a mate over her competitor. Another theory states that if women menstruated together there would be an increased likelihood of pregnancy and birthing children at the same time. This would have then allowed the mothers to collectively care for the children, increasing survival. Both of these theories (and many others) are plausible, especially considering they are not human-centric and may be applied to other mammalian species that more likely exhibit period synching. However, these have not been widely studied and are really just speculative.

So what’s the truth about menstrual synchrony? Unfortunately, the scientific evidence behind menstrual synchrony isn’t very

straightforward. It was first formally studied in 1971 by a University of Chicago professor of psychology, Martha McClintock. She observed 135 women living in a college dormitory over the course of an academic year. The results indicated what you might expect: the temporal onsets of their estrous cycles

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were directly related to the amount of time the women spent together. Problem solved, right? Not quite.

Since its publication, McClintock’s research

has been both corroborated and contradicted. Repeatedly. For every supporting study there is another that does not replicate her findings. Probably most significant of these counterpoints was evidenced in a study produced by Yang and Schank in 2006. They reviewed McClintock’s work and concluded her findings were at the level of chance; that is, we can’t rule out her findings as merely coincidental.

So, if the science is inconclusive, what can explain period synching? It may actually just be human perception that accounts for the phenomenon. Whether or not menstrual synchrony does occur to a significant amount in the population, we may think it does because the idea has already been planted. Mathematically, using actual data about cycle length, Yang and Schank logically state that at any given time, two women’s periods may be either diverging or converging. They conclude, then, that synchrony is only noticed when cycles are converging, artificially inducing the feeling of synchrony. Conversely, when periods are diverging it may generally go unnoticed. According to social psychology, confirmation bias can help explain this perceived misconception. We tend to favor and notice information that aligns with our preconceived notions whether or not the information, or in this case phenomenon of period synching, is actually real.

But can a false perception really account for the ubiquity of anecdotal evidence? Is

menstrual synchrony a fact that’s lacking supporting evidence or is it just corroborated fiction? Alas, current scientific studies seem to

“So, if the science is inconclusive, what can explain period synching? It may actually just be human perception that accounts for the phenomenon. Whether or not menstrual synchrony does occur to a significant amount in the population, we may think it does...”

suggest either could be true. What can be concluded, however, is that menstrual synchrony does not happen to everyone all the time. It is a very modest claim, but it is all that can truly be said given the evidence. The dreaded, yet inevitable conclusion to most scientific reviews must be applied: more research must be done on the topic. Do the Bond Girls sync their menstrual cycles together? The world may never know.

## Home is where the brain is: a reflection on The Society for Neuroscience Conference 2011

Zachary Zeidler  
Staff Writer

A drunk neuroscientist stumbles into a crowded bar. The bartender asks, “What’ll it be?” The neuroscientist replies, “Two double shots o’ yer strongest whisky.” The bartender hesitates and says, “I’m not sure that’s a good idea.” “Good idea?” the neuroscientist slurs, “I didn’t get this drunk just to listen to *your* prefrontal cortex!”

Under normal circumstances, that joke is not funny...at all. It’s more likely to provoke cricket chirps than a chorus of laughter. However, in one specific city at one specific time of the year, it produces guffaws instead of groans. Washington D.C. was that city, and this past month was that time.

From Nov. 12 to 16, Washington D.C. hosted the world’s largest gathering of neuroscientists from across the world for the annual Society for Neuroscience conference. Over 31,000 brainiacs were in attendance, and among the throngs of graduate students, leading researchers, and esteemed professors were a handful of undergraduate students, including myself and two other CC students.

Ostensibly, my purpose was to present the research I conducted over the summer in Lori Driscoll’s behavioral neurotoxicology laboratory. The research concerned a particular chemical, called PBDE, ubiquitous in modern life (it can be found in flame retardants, for example), and a chemical that has been associated with various developmental abnormalities. It’s recently been banned, not to worry, though what is already present will persist for many, many years to come.

While presenting at an international conference for neuroscientists may sound prestigious, my contribution took place in what is most accurately described as a glorified science fair, not unlike the ones back in elementary school, though with less baking soda volcanoes and

more Alzheimer’s disease.

That isn’t to denigrate presenting at the conference, however. Rather, it’s to praise science fairs. Because the idea behind both of these events—collaborative, communal exchange of information—is a critical part of science that is rarely discussed with those outside of the scientific community.

The stereotype of the scientist as being a reclusive workaholic laboring in his laboratory is no longer accurate. As different areas of inquiry grow, more and more cross-disciplinary collaborations occur, and options for more diverse experimentation flourishes.

Glancing over the myriad of different presentations at the conference is both intimidating and intriguing. Such a diversity of topics and methods of research serves to stimulate ideas for new scientific inquiries and also to spark conversations with complete strangers.

During my short time at the conference, I met one medical doctor, three undergradu-

ates, several fulltime researchers, a handful of professors, and a couple whom I believe snuck in—each with a robust interest in all things brain, mind, and central nervous system. Names were exchanged, hands were shaken, and beers were bought. I left with a smile on my face and contacts in my phone. Networking had never been so much fun.

To be honest, I was wary of what a gathering of neuroscientists on this magnitude would be like. Would everyone be in white lab coats, with disheveled hair, cackling maniacally? Would there be an abundance of orthopedic shoes and nasally voices? Should I wear a pocket protector?

As it turns out, neuroscientists, both young and old, are more-or-less normal people (though the pocket protector was notably in vogue). Aside from mild eccentricities and an academic vernacular, the conference attendees were simply people who were excited about what they were studying and wanted to share that enthusiasm with like-minded

people. It’s not often you get to talk neurological shop with the guy sitting across the bar from you at lunch.

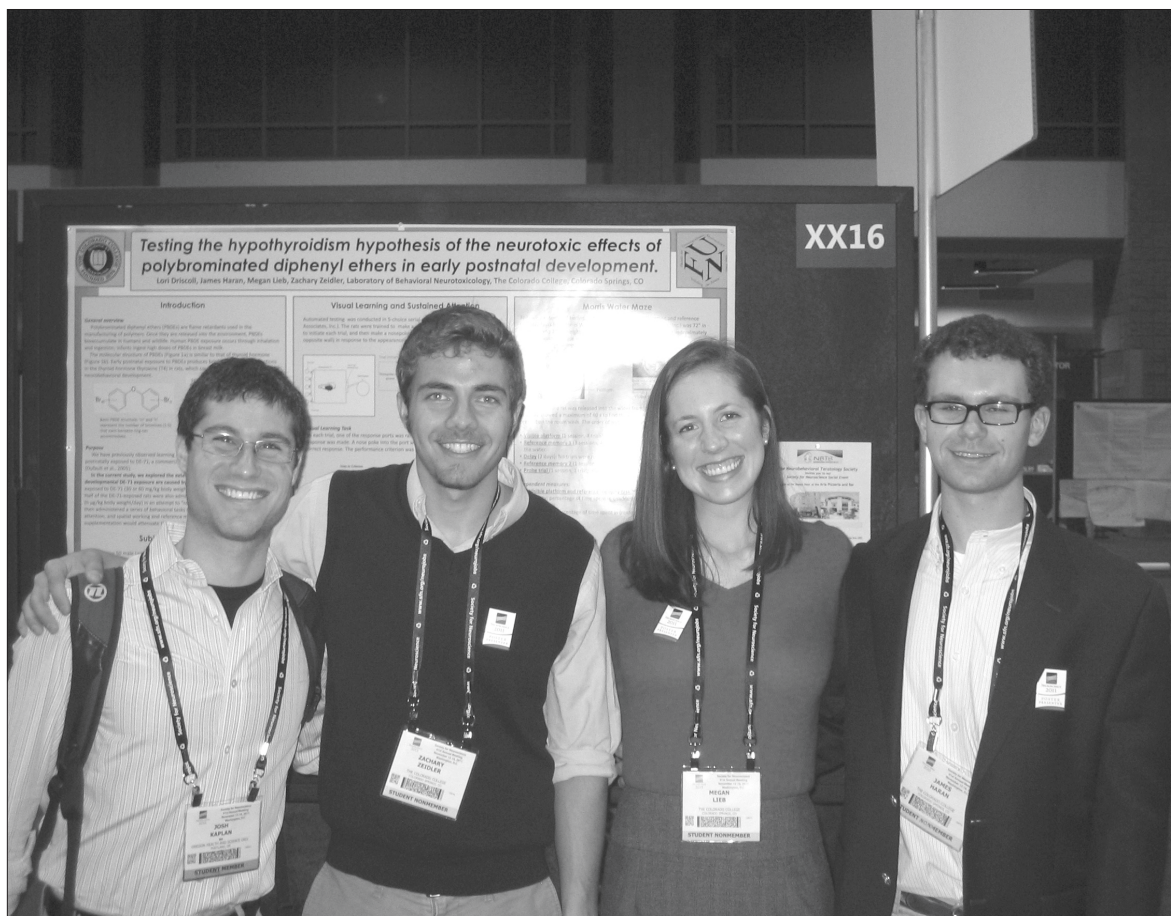
Not only are people and ideas introduced, but the latest gadgets for neuroscientific research are discussed as well. One of the main attractions of the Neuroscience Conference is the product expo. Dozens of different companies, even tangentially related to the field, market their wares, hand out freebies, and demonstrate their products. Everything from popular paperback books to designer rodents can be found.

One of the largest crowd pleasers was undoubtedly the virtual reality EEG device. EEG stands for electroencephalography, which is the recording of the pattern of electrical activity produced from the brain and measured through the scalp. It is used for everything from diagnosing strokes and tumors to researching sleep and meditation.

This device provides full auditory and visual immersion in a virtual environment while recording this brain activity. In this way, a person’s neurological response can be examined in situations normally inaccessible to researchers. You can confront a fear of spiders while a therapist guides you through the trauma, or experience a plane crash without any mortal danger for researchers to examine the brain under fear, or you can fight dragons just to see the effects of fighting dragons on your brain.

Really, the options are limitless. And that was the overall message I left the conference with; that there are so many people devoted to uncovering the workings of ourselves and our construction, yet there are always more questions to be answered and more pieces to put together. Even the most seemingly abstruse new discovery plays into the larger picture of how the brain works.

Everyday one new discovery is made and everyday two new questions are posed, and there is an army of dedicated individuals working to answer those questions. That prospect of a relentless quest for a deeper understanding of my existence excites me. And I know now that I am not the only one.



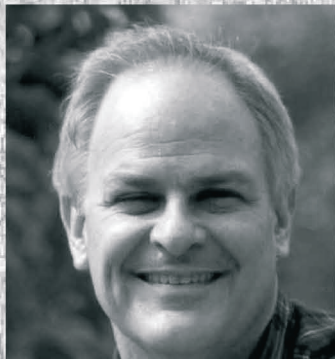
Josh Kaplan, Zach Zeidler, Megan Lieb, and Jamie Haran Photo by Bob Jacobs.

# The Colorado River Basin and Climate: Perfect Storm for the 21st Century?

Monday December 5, 2011

7:00 PM

Gates Common Room,  
Palmer Hall



**Stephen Saunders,**  
President- Rocky Mountain Climate Organization

**Jeff Lukas,**  
Western Water Assessment



**Beth Conover,**  
Editor- *How the West was Warmed*

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