

New Athletic Facility: Replacing “Foley” with Folly?

By Paul Armstrong

Sparking controversy, UST has decided to proceed with the construction of the Andersen complex, consisting of a new campus center and athletic facilities. As mentioned elsewhere, the funding for this project comes from a restricted fund, and thus could not be used for other purposes; granted there may be a relationship between the recent drastic increase in university fees and tuition for the 2009-2010 school year, but correlation in this case likely does not mean causation. Moreover, as an on campus resident I have been witness to the mediocre campus life of our university, especially on weekends, and perhaps the new student center could help improve the current situation. True too, is the claim that UST sports facilities are not first rate, and do indeed leave much to wish for. Yet is there really a need for such a drastic change in the buildings at UST?

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QDQ Writing Contest First Place: “Fall of Redemption”

By Thomas Megargle

A bleeding hobbit lies wounded on the rocky floor of a mountain chasm. Above the hobbit’s head dances a demented figure, misshapen, twisted, and emaciated – it clutches a still-bleeding finger. Magma paints a red glare onto the surrounding walls and in its ruddy light a small circlet of gold glistens brilliantly on the severed finger. Thrusting the trophy above its head, with a triumphal cry the broken creature slips, plunging with a shriek into the molten rock below.

“Gollum. Gollum.” A sound familiar to many of Tolkien’s readership breaks the silence of the dark underbelly of the mountain. “Gollum.” His is a figure shrouded by a web of mystery, spun thicker than any Shelob could manage, living in a darkness pierced by few and fully illuminated by none. What, among all of Tolkien’s characters in the *Lord of the Rings*, draws the reader to Gollum? He is one of the most complex characters in Tolkien’s tale, true, but perhaps, even more than that, it is the tragedy that he suffers at the climax of the tale; his fall, both down into the fires of Sannath Naur and away from the lonely pinnacle of the good, achieved by so few. Herein lies the attraction of Gollum, stronger than any pull of the Ring. Not in his fall, although that is a part of it, but in what that fall entails. In the *Lord of the Rings*, Gollum falls, but in that descent, does he actually reach the good – is Gollum redeemed?

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QDQ Writing Contest Second Place: “Swan Song”

By Ryne Smith

The Boston Garden: 16 Months Ago

A wicked power chord rang out over the rhythmic shouting and stomping of forty thousand Bostonians, each of whom had eagerly anticipated the band’s return to the stage. Unclaimed Freight had finished their main set minutes before, but when the roar of the crowd grew louder in their absence, the band had no choice but to come back for an encore. The people yearned for more face-melting

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QDQ Writing Contest

Honorable Mention: FFI

By Ryan Persons

I resign once more to the path of Lunesta and warm milk, confident that this familiar partnership should ease my passage. Descendents of twenty eight bloodlines hold no such hope.

Parents pass the disease to children, who pass it on to children of their own. Such a small scope of afflicted, yet such a high rate of inheritance. Half of all the children receive this wicked disease; the fate of a human life left up to the toss of Mendel's coin. To land on tails is a death sentence, to land on heads is the freedom to live,

to live and watch as kin dwindle away behind bars, unable to even say the word "sheep." A small mercy that they could raise children of their own before they knew where the coin landed, change from the pocket of "Patient Zero." Perhaps a curse, for their young may see a coin flip of their own.

There is no cure for their fatal familial insomnia, no way to stop the progression of this affliction of the thalamus from months of misery, to insanity, to freedom. "I'm just resting my eyes" begins to hold new meaning as the ocular muscles are the only part of the body to gain any reprieve as everything else wastes away.

Three years at most, half a year with the best of luck. As the warm liquid passes down my throat to settle down in my stomach, bedfellow to the cold, hard tablet, I surrender.



WHERE IS THE MOUSE?

From: <http://www.amazingillusions.blogspot.com>

As a Division III school, the necessity and demand for improved sports facilities is not as great as at a Division I or Division II school, not to mention that the Coughlin field house is less than thirty years old, and is not in express need of being replaced. And while it may seem that more entertainment facilities on campus may foster a more active campus life, the fact that the vast majority of Tommies do not live on campus makes me skeptical of the popularity of the new on-campus facilities. Additionally, running these facilities will be an increased cost to the university, since they will likely more demand more energy, personnel and supplies than the buildings which they will replace.

What I find most worrisome in St. Thomas' new construction project, is the annihilation of the theater program at our university. Recently, the theater department was closed, and soon, its main venue, the Foley Theater, will be demolished, with no replacement. True, financially, this department may have not been viable, yet other considerations should have outweighed the closing of this integral part of a collegiate setting. While sports are quite an important part of any university, yet an institution claiming to offer an education involving the liberal arts must allow for students to pursue the fine arts as well. Thankfully, UST still maintains its music program, though as the only possible fine art which is possible to pursue as a field of study. Of course, one can always pursue theater, and even art, through ACTC. Yet, this does not replace the presence of a fine arts program, its positive impact and inherent value, at the largest private university in Minnesota.

Thus, although there is some objective merit to the new structures which will soon be present on our campus, it comes at a considerable, and perhaps unnecessary cost. There is no reason why a new theater cannot be included in the Andersen student center or the refurbished Murray-Herrick building. And it is the omission of this program in the new vision of St. Thomas which proves that indeed, the university may be changing its course, replacing its emphasis on the liberal arts with a more functionalist one on sports and entertainment. Perhaps this trend is good, perhaps it is bad; regardless, at St. Thomas, fewer and fewer muses are being represented by diploma programs.

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In understanding the possibility of Gollum's redemption, one must first be able to comprehend the forces driving him in the *Lord of the Rings*. In the depths of Sammath Naur, the foundations of Gollum's character are laid bare, the raw elemental forces which motivate his being. Gollum's internal mentality is a jumbled chaos of emotions, passions, and instincts, but out of the turmoil rise three above the rest. The first, and most powerful, of these is Gollum's obsession with the Ring.

In many ways today, the drug addict has become an almost trite depiction of any major addiction. However, when one uses it to reflect on Gollum's character, as Thomas Shippey does in his book *The Road to Middle Earth*, the analogy becomes both a very powerful and a very useful tool in understanding the force the Ring has upon Gollum. Shippey writes that "All readers probably assimilate Gollum early on to the now-familiar image of a 'drug addict.'" (106), and it seems that he has hit home with this analogy. In Gollum's interaction with the Ring, he is, indeed, like the heroin addict Shippey describes. Readers learn in the *Lord of the Rings* that after having had his first taste of the Ring's power, Gollum becomes more and more attached to it, to the point that his entire existence becomes contained within the Ring. Eventually, like the addict, he gives up friends, family, possessions – all for the object of his desire. By the time Bilbo discovers Gollum in the bowels of the Misty Mountains, he resembles nothing of his former hobbit self. He has become a "small, slimy creature" (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 78) reduced by his obsession to a pathetic existence in the dimness of the mountain. Although he does not use the Ring so much now, Gollum does not need to, for his self is almost entirely consumed by it, "the thing was eating up his mind... and the torment had become almost unbearable." (Tolkien, *LOTR* 55) Frodo bears the Ring for eighteen years, actively for even fewer; Gollum bears the Ring for almost five hundred. Witnessing the corruption the Ring wrought in Frodo, the very fact that any sliver of Sméagol still exists within Gollum is nearly a miracle. Even more miraculous is the fact that Sméagol is yet able to gleam out, fighting "almost to the end to let that 'chink of light' penetrate the darkness in which he lives," (Arthur par. 65) and wrestling to experience passion for things other than the Ring. Powerful, very powerful, though not yet encompassing, the Ring still exerts its growing ascendancy over all within Gollum.

As powerful as desire for the Ring is within Gollum, its attraction is double-edged. Although desire draws Gollum, it also inspires a fear within him, a fear of Sauron, a fear of losing the "Precious" forever. This fear is especially evident in the utter terror Gollum exhibits in the Dead Marshes. At the coming flight of a winged Nazgul, Gollum "would not move. He stood shaking and gibbering to himself until with a rush the wind came upon them..." (Tolkien, *LOTR* 629) Twice more the Nazgul come, and twice more Gollum cowers in abject fright at their flight. Captured upon a time by Sauron, if Gollum can be reduced to a shivering wreck by the fear compelled by the Dark Lord's emissary, how much more must that fear be of the Dark Lord himself? Interestingly, though, Gollum's fear of Sauron is rooted in something other than that of a fear of physical pain or punishment – it is grounded in a

fear for the Ring. Unlike the other minions of Sauron, for whom fear of their master demands loyalty and absolute devotion, in Gollum this fear inspires hatred, almost rebellion against the Dark Lord. He hates the crimson gaze of the lidless Eye more intensely than the brilliant light of the "White Face," and dreads Sauron's finding of the Ring more than the beams of the sun. One cannot imagine an orc exhibiting this degree of resistance to its master's will, quite the contrary. Upon discovering the Ring or its bearer, a minion of the Eye would snatch both away for the nearest Nazgul to deliver to Sauron, just as Grishnakh attempts to do with Pippin. It would *not* beg him "Don't take the Precious to Him! He'll eat us all, if He gets it, eat all the world," (Tolkien, *LOTR*, 637) as Gollum does to Frodo. Some piece of Gollum, unsullied by the influence of the Ring or perhaps due to its influence, still urges him to resist Sauron. He is still partially his own, still capable of rebelling against the domination of the Dark Lord.

For all his dominion, there is one quality that Sauron lacks, one that is foreign to him absolutely. In power to dominate, the Dark Lord lacks the strength to love, and it is in this that Gollum rebels against the Lord of the Ring. More than by any act driven by fear of Sauron, Gollum's actions driven by love of Frodo are a rebellion in total opposition to the nature of their master. Beginning with a grudging vow of loyalty, Gollum's devotion to Frodo develops into a love, "...without parallel in our modern literature... neither filial nor sexual but the tentative unbelieving response to a caring so unlikely that it seems heroic." (qtd. in Arthur par. 23) In Frodo, Gollum encounters something he has lacked for hundreds of years – respect. Frodo, knowing the suffering that Gollum has experienced due to the Ring, "respects Gollum's difference and appeals to their common denominator of hobbitness..." (Chance 71) In Frodo, Gollum witnesses what he *should have been* as a bearer of the Ring, and recognizes what he can still become. Gollum, a hobbit who has fallen to the Ring, meets Frodo, a hobbit who resists its wiles with the entirety of his being, and he realizes that there is yet hope. By their "hobbitness," Gollum grows to love Frodo, not only for the kindness shown him, but by the example of true "hobbitness" Frodo displays. An idea is planted in Gollum's mind, an idea of the possibility for the good to, if not triumph, then to resist to the end. Ultimately, this idea, this devotion to Frodo and the ideal hobbit, will become the key force working in Gollum's psyche, either driving him to the purifying fires of redemption, or to fall, betray the good, and be cast into the punishing flames of damnation.

Determining what occurs in Gollum's "wretched heart between the pressure of the Eye, and the lust of the Ring that was so near, and his groveling promise made half in the fear of cold iron," (Tolkien, *LOTR* 631) is not an easy task, but is critical to understand the driving forces behind his final actions. Indeed, the pivotal moment holding the Ring in the depths of Sammath Naur is the one most crucial instant in all of Gollum's stretched life. It is in this moment that all of the forces raging within his beaten body are the keenest, and it is the choices that are made in that instant which will decide his redemption.

Gollum's actions on the stairs of Cirith Ungol are among the most tragic in Tolkien's work. It is here that Gollum's love and devotion for Frodo begin to triumph over his inveterate selfishness, only to be halted at the last moment by the importunate Sam. Tolkien writes of Gollum, gazing at the

sleeping forms of Sam and Frodo,

“The gleam faded from his eyes, and they went dim and grey, old and tired... shaking himself as if engaged in some interior debate... he came back, and... very cautiously he touched Frodo’s knee – but almost the touch was a caress... could one of the sleepers have seen him, they would have thought that they beheld an old weary hobbit, shrunken by the years... an old starved pitiable thing.” (LOTR, 714)

Gollum is here on the verge of repentance, his trembling touch aching to grasp the goodness Frodo sees in him. The gentle force of Frodo’s care for him has risen until it is ready to wash him clean in a flood of forgiveness. This cleansing is stalled, however, by the unfortunate intervention of Sam, who accuses Gollum of sneaking with the result that “the fleeting moment had passed, beyond recall.” (Tolkien, LOTR 715) Tolkien calls this turn of fate “the tragedy of Gollum who at that moment came within a hair of repentance – but for one rough word from Sam.” (Letters 96) But why should this moment of repentance be “beyond recall?” Sam, for his part, has never spoken kindly to Gollum; it would seem improbable that Gollum should be influenced in such a dramatic way by yet another insensitive remark. Instead, Sam, by scolding, strains the precariously balanced emotions within Gollum’s psyche – desire for the Ring, hatred of Sauron, love of Frodo are all turned into one, conglomerate madness.

Driven by his madness, Gollum loses control of his rationality and, for the first time since his capture on Emyn Muil, attempts to steal the Ring from Frodo. This encounter between the two ring-bearers on the face of Mount Doom is worthy to be highlighted, specifically in one, deciding detail. Attacking his master, Gollum is thrown to the ground and Frodo commands, “Begone, and trouble me no more! If you touch me ever again, you shall be cast yourself into the Fire of Doom.” (Tolkien, LOTR 944) The command that Frodo here issues will have consequences that neither he nor Gollum could conceive. From the face of Doom, doom is cast upon Gollum.

Doom does not lead to destruction, or at least not immediate destruction in the case of Gollum. His madness has yet further to carry him in the footsteps of Frodo. Elizabeth Arthur, in her critique “Above All Shadows Rides the Sun: Gollum as Hero” believes that in Sammath Naur, the fiery heart of Sauron’s realm, all of Gollum’s actions are blanketed by the excuse of his madness. She writes, “If Gollum is mad then he is clearly no longer morally responsible for his actions and though he has completely failed in his ability to resist evil, he himself is neither evil nor good any longer...” (par. 41) This explanation is fine for what it is worth, but would not seem to do Tolkien the justice he deserves for the extremely intricate situation within the core of the mountain. Indisputably, Gollum is mad at the moment of his attack on Frodo in the Sammath Naur, yet, even if he were not, Tolkien believed that the outcome would have been the same. Gollum, mad or sane, good or evil, “... at some point not long before the end he would have stolen the Ring or taken it by violence (as he does in the actual tale).” (Letters, 330) So, for the moment, Gollum’s action in stealing the Ring, even his mauling of Frodo’s finger, would appear to be almost moot, at least regarding his redemption. What are truly important are Gollum’s actions

after taking the Ring.

Although “in the chambers of Sammath Naur one’s judgment must also be suspended,” (Shippey, 110), Tolkien believes that for Sméagol “an effect of his partial regeneration by love would have been a clearer vision when he claimed the Ring.” (Letters, 330) Gollum is again returned to his previous state on the Stairs of Cirith Ungol from whence he had been snatched by madness, he is once again a mere hairsbreadth away from redemption – but this time with clarity never before possessed.

Holding his gory trophy, Gollum’s mind snaps back into focus. He sees, to his joy and satisfaction, that he has again his “Precious,” but also sees his master lying, bleeding, in the dust and feels the corrosive fear and hatred of the Dark Lord bubbling within himself. Gollum knows that Frodo has claimed the Ring for his own, that Sauron must have his entire will focused on Mount Doom, and that he would be entirely incapable of preventing Sauron from obtaining the Ring. All of this occurs in an instant, and Gollum recognizes that “the only way to keep it [the Ring] and hurt Sauron was to destroy it and himself together.” (Tolkien, Letters 330) Gollum is left with a choice between two goods, the two forces compelling him now that his desire for the Ring has been satisfied. He can either choose the good of destroying the Ring for his devotion to Frodo, realizing that the best thing he can do for his master is prevent him from becoming a Gollum himself, or he can choose the good of destroying the Ring out of hatred and fear of Sauron. But, it would be absurd to believe that Gollum could choose either of those options, when Frodo, who had resisted the Ring with all his strength, was not even able to destroy it.

Like the heroin addict, futilely trying to destroy his supply of drugs, Gollum would simply be incapable of destroying the Ring on his own. Instead he has a third option – to destroy himself. Gollum “hated it [the Ring] and loved it, as he hated and loved himself;” (Tolkien, LOTR 55) in the end, his love of the Ring would conquer his love of self – Gollum would throw not the Ring, but *himself* off the precipice into the fires of Doom. However, this act would conclusively decide Gollum’s fate as unredeemable. In casting himself off the edge, not to save Frodo or to destroy Sauron, but to prevent his separation from a mere object, Gollum would be committing a grave wrong, “the damned individual who loses his own soul because of devotion to evil.” (Christensen, 10) True, by his self-sacrifice Gollum would save Middle-Earth, but he would not be performing the sacrifice with the intention of saving Middle-Earth. His intention, unlike if he sacrificed himself for Frodo or to defeat Sauron, would be directed inward, to the self, not to others. He would be placing the worth of a *thing* above the worth of a life, something Christian philosophers have always deemed immoral. Fortunately, Gollum is prevented from committing this atrocity. In an event of catastrophic proportions, he slips. The doom Frodo proclaimed on the slope of Mount Doom is realized, and Gollum falls to death – and redemption.

The final situation of Gollum is one into which Tolkien says even he “would not like to inquire.” (Letters, 234) However, it does seem that one could examine Gollum’s final intentions to draw a conclusion as to the likelihood of his redemption. If Gollum did wish the good as much as his worn body could, it would seem most probable that in the last moments of his fall, he

does achieve redemption. He is *so* close to reconciliation, perhaps even closer than on the Stairs of Cirith Ungol, that it almost seems impossible for him not to be redeemed. True, although Tolkien does say that “we have to face the fact that there are persons who yield to temptation, reject their chances of nobility or salvation, and appear to be damnable,” (Letters, 234) it cannot be denied that Tolkien scholar Jane Chance strikes a tender chord, asking: “Who is to decide what service is, who is to decide what betrayal is – who knows absolutely?” (72) Indeed, in the end, Gollum still has the chance to achieve nobility, to achieve salvation – who are we to say he does not? His fall is, of all things, not a fall from grace. It is a fall of redemption.

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“Swan Song” *continued from Pg. 3*

guitar, body-shaking bass, and pounding drums, and Unclaimed Freight had to give it to them. Now, he stood ready next to his three bandmates, as red lights swooped over the stage and Dan played that first power chord. This was their chance to end things right with one final goodbye to the multitudes. The swan song: the last song of the night. His fingers arched over the E string, ready to pound away the heavy riff. The drums entered.

Marques Sandman had done this many times before, but it never got old. He was a rock star, like he always wanted to be. His hair was long; mahogany locks grazed the top of his shoulders. Dark brown hair grew on his upper lip and chin, thicker there than the sporadic follicles on his unshaven jawline. He looked the part. He looked like a rock star.

His arms and chest were busy, covered with tattoos of all kinds. Fans of the band tried to make sense of what they all meant, but the truth was that he didn’t even know what they meant. Like most good rock stars, Sandman spent most of his free time partying. This wasn’t always the case, but when Unclaimed Freight hit it big, Sandman changed. The more success the band had, the more Sandman had to fit the image of the rock star. Every night after a show, he would go out and have a few drinks with his bandmates. The nights when a few drinks turned into a few too many drinks were the nights when Sandman would wander back to the hotel alone. And in turn, those nights became the mornings when he would find a new tattoo somewhere on his body. He would wake up with a dull pain in his forehead and a stinging pain in his arms or chest.

His most impressive and most recent tattoo was carved into his chest. He woke up with a stabbing sensation near his breastbone just a few hours before he took the stage in Boston. It was undoubtedly his strangest tattoo to date. Luke 6:37 was engraved in thick red letters above a bald eagle that clutched a six string bass guitar, which strongly resembled the one that he currently held in his hands. The body of the bass faded into stars, which fell onto his stomach and spelled out a word: Peace. Sandman had no recollection of getting the tattoo or of why he felt strongly enough about the image to have it burned into his body for the rest of his life, but he didn’t care. Sandman believed that each of his tattoos was a sign of something. There had to be some reason why he got them and that thought comforted him. When he looked into the mirror and saw the words and pictures that littered his ink-filled body, he knew that things were going to be ok.

The four members of Unclaimed Freight leapt into the air and crashed back to the floor, finishing the swan song and their set, this time for good. Dan yelled “Good night, Boston,” but his words were lost in the thundering applause and screams from the crowd. Sandman grabbed Dan’s hand in his right and the drummer’s hand in his left and, along with the singer, the four bandmates bowed collectively. Rising and smiling with complete satisfaction, he slapped the drummer on the back. He had reached his peak, the apex of his profession. His sweaty arm glistened in the glare of the overbearing lights. He saw the woman’s name tattooed in untidy letters in his forearm and knew that everything was going to be ok.

The name on his arm was Jenny, and unlike his other tattoos, he knew why he felt the need to get her name etched into

his body. She was the only love he would ever need. When Marques stared into her blue eyes, his palms turned sweaty and his face went numb. She had long black hair that flipped upwards with a single soft strand that draped over her face, obscuring one of her eyes. When she laughed, that lock was jostled loose, revealing the hidden sapphire as she threw her head back. Those eyes, and that hair, and her body all seemed to radiate a vivid glowing light. She was brighter than everything else in the room.

They had met each other a couple of years before the show in Boston, while Jenny was still in college. Unclaimed Freight had been playing one of their first shows at a bar on campus and when their eyes met before the first song, Sandman fell completely in love. In his mind, his life was perfect after that moment. He knew everything about her and she knew everything about him. There was no possibility for a greater match between two people. Sandman knew without a doubt that they would always be together. When he made it big with Unclaimed Freight, she gave up her studies and came out on the road with him. He couldn't have been happier.

They had been on the road together for six months now. Sandman thought that things were still going well between him and Jenny. Sure, he didn't get to spend as much time with her as he wanted to, but the love was still there. There were rehearsals, then shows, and then going out with his bandmates after that. Jenny didn't like going out with the four guys, but Sandman couldn't stay back with her. He had to be a rock star. He and Jenny managed to spend all of Sandman's free time together, however, and as far as Sandman was concerned, a little time with Jenny was better than no time with her at all. With the band achieving such great success and with a beautiful woman by his side, Sandman was sure that nothing could bring him down from his high. Unfortunately, he was wrong.

After their collective bow at the Garden, the four members of Unclaimed Freight went backstage to their individual dressing rooms. Sandman walked into his and shut the door behind him. His adrenaline was still pumping from the show, and he was ready to spend a little time with Jenny and then to hit the town. Strangely, Jenny wasn't there waiting for him. She always waited in his dressing room for him. Sandman got a funny feeling that something was wrong, but it quickly passed. Before going out to find his girlfriend, he went over to a black bag that was lying in the middle of the room. After rummaging around for a moment, he found what he was looking for: a half-empty bottle of gin. He unscrewed the top and took a long drag of the stiff alcohol. Now he was ready for the night.

Sandman left his dressing room, bottle in hand, expecting to see Jenny walking towards him, but she wasn't there. He turned to the large man guarding his door.

"Has Jenny been by?" he asked. The security guard shook his head. Sandman took another long pull from his bottle and walked towards the large crowd of people who were accumulating a short distance away. His bandmates must have given the ok to start letting fans come backstage. Sandman noticed the singer and drummer in the middle of the crowd. Each of them had their arms around a pair of beautiful women. The drummer caught Sandman's eye and waved him over.

"Have you seen Jenny?" Sandman yelled over the crowd of people.

"What?" the drummer yelled back. He managed to detach himself from the two women he had his arms around and walked over towards Sandman.

"Jenny," Sandman said again, "have you seen her?"

"No, man. I'm sure she's around here someplace. Come party with us for now. I'm sure she'll show up soon."

"I'll catch up with you guys in a minute. I've got to find Jenny first. Maybe Dan's seen her." Sandman began walking back towards the dressing rooms. The drummer grabbed his arm and Sandman turned around.

"Hold on, hold on, Marques. I'm sure she'll show up soon. Let Dan be for a while." There was something in the drummer's face. His eyes were shifty; they couldn't stay focused on Sandman's eyes. His hands were clammy too. Sweat dripped from his fingertips and soaked into Sandman's sleeve. Sandman got the funny feeling that something was wrong again, but this time it didn't pass. He ripped his arm out of the drummer's hand and walked towards Dan's dressing room.

"Come back with us, Marques," said the drummer behind him. Sandman didn't take his advice. Outside of Dan's dressing room door, he took a final pull from his gin, emptying the bottle. Then he pushed the door open, and his life changed forever.

Apparently, the sublime life that Marques Sandman thought he was living was nothing more than a charade. When he pushed open Dan's door, he found Jenny there, her lips locked with the man who was supposed to be his friend. It took Sandman a little while to figure out what was going on. He heard the nauseating sound of their lips smacking together and saw the two of them embracing one another. The image stunned him. When he recovered from his moment of stupor, his hands shook with rage. He didn't know why Jenny was doing it and the explanation could wait. All that mattered was that Dan was kissing her and he had to suffer. With a grunt, he threw the gin bottle, but it landed softly on the couch to the side of Jenny and Dan. They turned just in time to see Sandman lumbering towards them, his arms flailing wildly at the guitar player. It was no use. He was clearly outmatched. All of a sudden, he felt a sharp pain in his temple and then, everything went black. All he remembered were her cries for him to stop.

Massachusetts General Hospital: 15 Months and 28 Days Ago

Marques Sandman sat up in his hospital bed. It had been three days since his fight backstage at the Boston Garden. His arm was in a sling and the whole left side of his face was bruised. It didn't hurt physically anymore; the emotional pain of losing Jenny hurt a lot more. He pushed the button on his bed for more morphine. That helped a little.

She came by a few days earlier with his three bandmates. He wasn't entirely sure what they said to him though. Soon after the doctor showed him how to use his pain medication, Sandman learned that his morphine drip machine was broken. He was able to push the button as many times as he wanted without the machine cutting him off. When the four of them walked in the room, the pain of seeing Jenny and Dan together flared up inside of him. He frantically pushed the button

until their faces blurred together and their words became incomprehensible.

Even in his drug-addled state, he did remember a few things:

He remembered her crying and telling him that he was never there for her. He was only hurting himself by partying all the time. He lost her and he was losing himself.

He remembered Dan saying that he should have told Sandman everything and that he was sorry for hitting him. He wanted to remain friends.

He remembered the other two saying that they still wanted Sandman in the band. He was a great bassist and a great friend. They said they could work things out.

"I'm done. Get out, all of you," was his only response.

That was his last day as a member of Unclaimed Freight. Sandman was out of the band, replaced with a less talented and more photogenic bassist. Jenny left him for good and he wasn't going to see her again. He pushed his morphine drip over and over. Nothing was ok and nothing would ever be ok again.

The Black & Blue Bar: Present Day

Sandman gripped the needle in his right hand as he bit down on the belt in his mouth. The leather cut into his cheeks and forearm as it squeezed his arm taut, and his veins bulged. The thin tip of the syringe loomed steadily over his arm for a moment before he forced it down through his skin and into his bloodstream. Slowly, he depressed the plunger. He had done this so many times before, but it never got old. His forearm was pockmarked from the hundreds of previous puncture wounds. Yet even with the scars almost entirely obscuring the untidily scrawled tattoo beneath, he could still make out the name it spelt. That name was the constant reminder of the night she left him, taking everything he ever wanted with her. He wouldn't be able to forget until the name was gone.

The singer yelled something to the effect of "Get off your butt," but Sandman paid no attention. He was just some young punk. Some kid trying to make it in this business, but Sandman knew he wouldn't. They always fail. He didn't know why he even bothered to play with these guys anyway. Maybe it was because they were the only ones that would take him. Maybe it was because he had hit the bottom, and he didn't know what else to do.

He certainly looked different than he had in his glory days. His mahogany hair was fading to gray, more from stress than from old age, and was now long past his shoulders, gnarled and mangy. His beard was also matted and long, like Lennon on Abbey Road. The rest of his body looked just like any other drug addict. He was thin and pale, and his eyes were bloodshot with dark circles underneath. What he wore was always the same, torn pants that were three sizes too big and faded shirts with emblems that were worn off long ago. He really didn't care, though. He just had to look the part.

"Come on, old man," the punk singer began, "You seriously got to stop. What is this? The fifth or sixth time I've caught you? We're trying to get noticed out here, but no one's gonna take us seriously if you're stoned out there every time we

play. You're still a great bass player, but no one can tell when you act like this."

"Maybe the bass isn't the problem," Sandman mumbled.

"What's that supposed to mean?" asked the punk, moving over towards Sandman's stash.

"It means that I can play better halfway coherent than any of you young punks can. It means there are a thousand other bands out there who sound exactly like you guys do. We've been doing this thing for over a year now and we're still playing in the worst bar in Massachusetts. I ain't the problem."

"You're not the problem, huh?" said the singer, trying hard to stay calm. He looked at the label of the bottle near Sandman's used syringe: Morphine. He sighed.

"That's what I said."

"Well maybe it's true that we aren't the most original sounding band. And maybe we aren't the most talented guys you've ever played with, but you don't think you could help us out by playing clean? Try playing with all that emotion and pain you're trying to hide with this stuff." He picked up the case holding Sandman's needles and bottles.

"What do you know about my emotions?"

"I know that you ran into some hard times in the past. Your girl left, your bandmates walked out on you, you lost everyone you cared about in one night. I can't imagine what that's like. But you spend all your time judging and condemning them for their actions. You ever think about why they did what they did? You weren't there for any of them. You were too preoccupied with getting that next high. All you did was make them condemn you for your actions. Let it go. It's in the past. Forgive and you will be forgiven."

"I can't forgive, Dan."

The singer smirked.

"Then you're never gonna find peace." He paused, with Sandman's morphine in his hand, shook his head, and laid the pack back down next to the bassist. "Listen, we're going on at seven. You've got," he checked his watch, "a little more than 20 minutes. If you decide you still want this, get cleaned up and rock out there like you used to. Otherwise, this is it." He walked away and pulled back the curtain. Before walking through he said,

"And my name's not Dan, it's Lucas."

Sandman sat motionless for awhile. If it hadn't been for the tourniquet around his arm and the needle lying next to him, one might have thought that Lucas' words had had an effect on him. Yet his stare wasn't of quiet contemplation, but instead it was of emptiness and drifting in his chemical stupor. The curtain before him ruffled again. Sandman figured it would be Lucas coming back to yell at him. Yet, the man that walked before him was someone he had never seen before.

He was a giant of a man, well over six feet, perhaps even seven, and had a girth twice the size of any normal man, but probably three times that of Sandman, given his impoverished, drug-ridden state. The man's face was just as imposing. A smooth, shaved head, a square jaw, and the largest hooked nose that Sandman had ever seen. He was dressed in all black. Sandman's six string bass was in his right hand. The man's grip was so tight on the instrument that it looked like the neck might snap. The sight of his bass calmed Sandman down a little, but the sight of the gargantuan man still terrified him.

“Who are you?” he stammered, his speech incoherent out of fear, drugs or a combination of the two.

“Bar Security,” the large man grunted. He took two steps forward and extended his arm and Sandman’s bass out towards the junkie. He pointed his other arm out towards the curtain. With his black sleeved arms outstretched in this manner, Sandman realized the man must have had an eight foot wingspan. He stood up from his seat and grabbed his instrument. The large man moved his mouth and walked through the curtain. Sandman, too high to comprehend what was just said, simply followed.

It was a crummy little bar. There were about fifteen, mostly empty, little tables spread out on the floor. The floor was littered with puke and spilled bottles of beer. The actual bar sat along the right side. A tired looking man with a gray beard leaned behind the one broken beer tap. Besides that, there wasn’t much else in the room. On the whole, it could only fit about seventy five people. And there weren’t nearly that many.

Sandman stepped out from behind the curtain, and squinted at the room around him. For a second, he thought he was in Boston again. He felt the rush of that first power chord, the energy of that screaming crowd, and that sense of accomplishment after finishing their swan song. But when his mind moved towards the thought that Jenny would not be waiting backstage for him, he came crashing back to reality. She wasn’t waiting then, and she wouldn’t be waiting now.

He took his place on stage and felt a pressure on his shoulder. It was Lucas, with a glass in hand.

“It’s water. Drink,” he said, and walked past. Sandman obeyed the imperative and swallowed the glass in one gulp. He attempted to set the empty glass on the amp behind him, but with his judgment impaired, he miscalculated the depth. After teetering on the edge for a moment, the glass slipped off and crashed to the ground, breaking into tiny, multi-pointed glass shards. The lights above the stage glinted off the glass pieces, leaving them shining like stars against the black floor they rested upon.

The noise of the crashing glass startled his bandmates. The drummer and guitar player looked at Lucas with clear looks of disgust at the old man. Lucas turned to the broken glass and just shook his hand. Apparently, he didn’t care what happened to the washed-up junkie. A few of the few people who were actually in this audience pointed to the mess on the floor. The others, like Sandman and the comatose bartender, didn’t pay enough attention to care.

A feeble attempt at a power chord sounded over the quiet room. The crowd stared back. Sandman couldn’t even make out their faces. The few colors that he could make out blended together to form shapeless images. The bright lights burned his eyes, forcing him to squint to be able to concentrate on the task at hand. His fingers were suspended over the E string, ready to come in at the appropriate time. When Lucas’s voice kicked in, Sandman followed, his fingers plucking, keeping time. A cold sweat broke out over his body. He was shaking. He tried hard to keep focus, but his mind wasn’t cooperating.

He wasn’t quite sure how long she had been standing there when he finally noticed her. But at the end of the second

song, when Sandman lifted up his head and looked out in a daze, he saw her face. It was the only thing that he could make out, as clear as he remembered it years earlier. Her hair was a bit longer, a different shade maybe, and her face had a few more wrinkles, but he still knew it was her. She glowed.

Sandman stumbled at the sight of her. He never expected to see her again and the memories that came back to him caused his legs to go weak. His arms shook harder now. He had so many things to say, he didn’t know where to begin. He had to get to her; he had to touch her one last time. He pulled his guitar strap over his shoulders and tried to set it on the ground. His arms were shaking so badly that it slipped out of his hands. It crashed to the floor, falling on top of the broken shards of glass. He didn’t care; it didn’t matter anymore.

He took a small, awkward step. His knee buckled under the weight and he fell to the ground. His chest was heavy. There was immense pressure in the left side of his body. He tried to lift up his right arm, but he couldn’t feel anything. He crawled out to her illuminated body. She was smiling back at him, inviting him towards her with an outstretched hand. Sandman stuck out his left hand to take hers. He reached out, his hand trying to touch....

His arm fell to the floor. The realization that his demise was imminent came upon him. It was his chance to say goodbye to the world and to make things right. There would be no encore. Something that was important to him long ago flashed into his mind and he knew what was to be done. His lips formed the words that he had to say.

“I’m sorry, Jenny. Please forgive me.”

When he closed his eyes, he heard a voice say that everything was going to be ok. And then, at peace, Marques Sandman finished his swan song.

QDQ Writing Contest Honorable Mention: “Conflicting Worldview Assumptions”

By Krista Griffith

Kurt Vonnegut and C.S. Lewis may well be considered polar opposites when contemplating their beliefs and outlooks on both this life and the next. As prominent writers of the twentieth century, both have captured audiences for the depth and profundity contained in their works. However, this profundity stems from prominently conflicting perspectives, as Vonnegut writes from a self-proclaimed Humanist and Postmodernist position, and Lewis, from a conservative Christian standpoint (Veith 127). While Vonnegut and Lewis share remarkably similar conceptions of the true nature of Time, their thoughts regarding this topic represent the extent to which I believe these two authors may be considered similar. In fact, these conceptions become the fundamental reference points from which their worldviews wholly and significantly diverge. Furthermore, I believe the central aspect of their widely divergent worldviews is

evident through a careful analysis of the aforementioned departure point of their theological, cosmological and anthropological assumptions as revealed in their works. Ultimately I believe that it is Vonnegut's anthropological stance and Lewis' theological position that define their conflicting views of Reality. In addition, I believe their opposing positions reveal significant implications with regard to the meaning of life.

Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five*, clearly conveys the atrocities characteristic of war. This anti-war novel presents Billy Pilgrim as a victim of a harsh and unfeeling society in which he has become "unstuck in time" (Vonnegut 29). This condition warrants that Billy does not experience Reality as a series of successive events. Instead, certain events in his life evoke memories that lead him to experience other moments of his life, past or future, to which he then literally journeys as a result of time travel. This phenomenon of time travel is revealed to Billy by alien-like creatures called Tralfamadorians, who kidnap Billy and place him in a zoo on their native planet, Tralfamadore. The Tralfamadorians serve as the means by which Vonnegut unveils profound assumptions regarding the true nature of Time, which remains unrecognized and unknown by the earthlings who live as if Time were linear. While reflecting on his experiences with the Tralfamadorians, Billy explains, "All moments, past, present, and future, always have existed, always will exist...It is just an illusion we have here on Earth that one moment follows another one, like beads on a string, and that once a moment is gone it is gone forever" (Vonnegut 34). Thus, Vonnegut forwards the claim that although humans may view Reality in a way in which seems logically consistent with their corporeal existence, Reality itself actually operates and exists apart from what humans think or believe about it.

Surprisingly, C.S. Lewis, a well-known Christian author, Theologian and Philosopher, reveals a similar conception regarding the nature of Time in his own work in order to illustrate theological truths. He explains, "God, I believe does not live in a Time-series at all. His life is not dribbled out moment by moment like ours: with Him it is, so to speak, still 1920 and already 1960" (*Mere Christianity* 168). He continues by declaring, "...God is outside and above the Time-line. In that case, what we call 'tomorrow' is visible to Him in just the same way as what we call 'today.' All the days are 'Now' for Him" (*Mere Christianity* 170). Lewis reveals his belief that the essence of Time is indeed nonlinear. Humans, who possess limited faculties given their imperfect nature, are incapable of interpreting Reality in the way in which it objectively exists. Thus, humans' conception of Time is not consistent with Reality as it truly exists apart from human consciousness.

Vonnegut and Lewis' explanations are analogous in that both claim to reveal the objective status of Time as it exists and operates outside the realm of human perception. Vonnegut claims that humans merely do not recognize this defining aspect of the universe, while Lewis claims that such knowledge is available only to an omnipotent and omniscient God responsible for creating and sustaining the universe. Although on the surface Vonnegut and Lewis seem to reveal compatible cosmological views of the universe, their understanding of

Time ultimately serves as the defining departure point from which their contradictory worldviews can be properly understood and assessed. A worldview is "a lens formed with certain assumptions by which one understands, interprets and acts upon reality" (Pladson, Bible notes). A person's worldview is determined by certain fundamental theological, cosmological and anthropological assumptions upon which he bases his beliefs. I believe Vonnegut and Lewis' worldview assumptions are revealed through a careful analysis of the implications of their views on Time, which clearly disclose the anthropological and theological positions of both authors.

Vonnegut, on the one hand, utilizes his view of Time in order to further an agenda regarding what he believes to be the nature of human beings. A Tralfamadorian serves as Vonnegut's "spokesbeing" as he declares, "All time is all time. It does not change...It simply is. Take it moment by moment, and you will find that we are all, as I've said before, bugs in amber" (109). This view leads Billy to realize and acknowledge that humans do not possess free will. Instead, they are victims of an unsympathetic Fate, which determines and controls the entirety of their mangled existence. I believe Vonnegut most clearly depicts this denial of free will through a Tralfamadorian who describes the set nature of the future. Billy informs the Tralfamadorians that he desperately desires to transform Earth into a planet of peace rather than one characterized by violence, war and death. The Tralfamadorians are shocked by his lack of comprehension. They inform him that wars will certainly never cease on Earth, and that the history of the future has already been written and recorded without possible revision. Thus, free will, a concept discussed exclusively on Earth according to the Tralfamadorians, is useless given that humans cannot alter predetermined Reality.

Without an opportunity to impact the world for good through making one's *own* decisions, I believe this view of human nature demeans human existence and ultimately reckons it a meaningless sojourn without direction or purpose (Short 114; Burgass 181). A Tralfamadorian echoes the inherent meaninglessness of life by asserting, "Well, here we are, Mr. Pilgrim, trapped in the amber of the moment. There is no *why*" (Vonnegut 97). Thus, Vonnegut's infamous and oft repeated refrain, "So it goes," fits well within the confines of his anthropological assumption that the events of life "cannot be avoided since man and robot both live in a universe in which there is no such thing as free will" (Schatt 86).

I believe Vonnegut's critical anthropological assumption determines his cosmological and theological positions and therefore shapes his entire worldview. Without direction and purpose as the foundation of human life, the world itself, filled with aimless humans trapped in amber, becomes devoid of objective meaning. I believe Vonnegut clearly depicts his cosmological stance as his Tralfamadorian spokesbeing explains the Fate of the Universe. He says, "We know how the Universe ends - and Earth has nothing to do with it...We blow it up, experimenting with new fuels for our flying saucers...So it goes" (149). Thus, without purpose at the root of human existence, the world of *Slaughterhouse-Five* is stripped of meaning (Mendilow 7).

Similarly, without the existence of free will, man cannot be ultimately blamed for the state of the world or the evil that

exists within it. Instead, human beings, comparative to millipedes according to Tralfamadorian thought, become victims of cruel Fate (Vonnegut 110). Vonnegut himself claims his study of Anthropology taught him that “nobody was ridiculous or bad or disgusting” (10). According to this belief, humans are either characterized as good or neutral, and thus are undeserving of the pain and suffering so often experienced in life. Without humanity to blame for the violent, pain stricken state of the world, Vonnegut must shift the blame to another source. While not definitively stating his theological assumptions or blaming God himself, I believe Vonnegut transfers the majority of the blame to Christian doctrine and the flaws he believes to be found therein. He claims that the inherent flaw of the Gospels centers on their toleration and even encouragement of violence so long as the sufferer is defenseless and powerless. (Vonnegut 141).

I believe Vonnegut’s anti-Christian ideas ultimately serve to replace the Christian God with the alien-like Tralfamadorians, who represent the highest form of divinity acknowledged in the world of the novel (Schatt 93; Detweiler 234). These god-like figures who operate independently and outside of Time, ultimately “press the button” that destroys the Universe because “the moment is *structured* that way” (Vonnegut 149). Consequently, these beings become god-like figures that control the Fate of the Universe and thereby replace man’s need for the God of Christianity. Thus, Vonnegut’s anthropological viewpoint regarding human nature ultimately informs his cosmological and theological assumptions, which are all clearly observable in *Slaughterhouse-Five*.

Conversely, C.S. Lewis’ view on Time informs his theological assumption, which is defined by his God-centered worldview. His worldview demonstrates the inherent meaning, purpose and dignity of each person. Harold O.J. Brown, a leading theologian and C.S. Lewis Scholar, captures Lewis’ anthropological assumption in the following way: “What is necessary is to remember...that we are not blind products of time plus space plus chance, but we have a dignity that comes from God” (Williams 134). Thus, Lewis’ anthropological stance ultimately suggests an overarching plan for each person’s life (Chan 317-318). However, in contrast to Vonnegut’s unalterable Fate-centered universe, Lewis holds that men have the capacity to make their own decisions, both good and evil, given that they do indeed possess free will.

Within this framework of understanding, the Incarnation of God in the form of Christ becomes *the crucial point* of salvific history and the climax of all human history, rather than the *central flaw* of the Gospels as Vonnegut claims (Sprague 54). Lewis believes that evil exists as a result of mankind’s ungodly exercise of free will, and it is therefore defined as the privation of good (Larrimore 56). In order to combat evil and bridge the extensive gap between sinful humanity and the Holy God, the Father sent Christ into the world in human form to live a perfect and holy life, die and rise again. As the perfect Creator and focal point of history, God is the ultimate standard by which humans should measure their lives. Lewis proclaims, “There is but one good; that is God. Everything else is good when it looks to Him and bad when it turns from Him” (*The Great Divorce* 106). Thus, when humanity’s free will rebels against the perfect standard, God,

mankind then becomes responsible for the evil and violence their decisions produce.

Unlike Vonnegut, however, Lewis does not regard all human pain and suffering as evil. Instead, he regards it as a necessary part of human existence through which God shouts to his creatures. Human suffering “is [the] megaphone [used by God] to rouse a deaf world,” call men to Himself, and ultimately make them “perfect through suffering” (*The Problem of Pain* 91, 105; Larrimore 329). Thus, C.S. Lewis’ understanding of Time serves as the fundamental framework for understanding Christian theology. In addition, Lewis’ theological beliefs inform other pertinent aspects of his anthropological assumptions regarding the existence of free will. I believe his anthropological stance serves as the basis for his cosmological standard.

Lewis’ view of free will implicates the existence of a meaningful universe in which such a will can be properly exercised. Dr. Scott Burson, a C.S. Lewis scholar, supports this assumption by asserting that “Lewis believes every free choice, as well as the whole history of the material world, is woven into the great screenplay of life in [the] single timeless act [of creation]” (77). Thus, the world becomes the stage in which the meaningful drama of God’s redemptive story of creation is performed.

This Christian cosmology asserted by Lewis also implies the existence of a standard by which performers can successfully execute their part of the drama, as well as determine whether or not an action can be characterized as good or evil. Lewis believes this standard, God, is the Creator and Director of the drama who casts his creatures as certain characters based on their gifts and abilities. This drama can only be seen in its entirety by the Director of the work. The performers and audience can merely experience the current scenes of the drama as it unfolds within a set period of Time. Thus, unlike Vonnegut’s cosmology and theology, which focus on the meaningless nature of the world, Lewis believes God is sovereign over his creation and aids his creatures on their journey of life. This journey of life exists to them as a series of consecutive events in which there is a necessary and permanent connection between “time and being” (Durie 14). This viewpoint clearly opposes Vonnegut’s ideas, which are illustrated through Billy Pilgrim’s condition of being “unstuck in time.”

Kurt Vonnegut and C.S. Lewis hold vastly differing anthropological, theological and cosmological assumptions upon which I believe they base the entirety of their worldviews. While both forward comparably similar conceptions regarding the true nature of Time within their works, I believe these conceptions become the focal points from which their worldviews diverge. I consider the foundation of Vonnegut’s worldview, as portrayed in *Slaughterhouse-Five*, to rest on his denial of free will and the implications this doctrine naturally produces. Lewis’ position greatly differs from that of Vonnegut because Lewis’ worldview is based on his theological assumption, which defines the major tenants of his cosmology and anthropology. The worldviews of these two prominent authors, as clearly portrayed in their works, have had profound influence in shaping the ideas and thoughts of American culture during the twentieth century and beyond.

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QDQ Writing Contest Honorable Mention: "Whoops, sorry its Illogical and Inconsistent: Abortion Politics and Voting in Modern America"

By Michael Perlmutter

I. Abstract:

Even prior to the landmark United States Supreme Court decision *Roe v. Wade* in 1973, the issue of abortion in the United States was hotly contested. Following the Court's decision, the firestorm only grew in intensity and scope, even to the present day. During the intervening thirty years, it has been widely argued that the Court's decision radically changed the social and political landscape of the United States. While this may be true if one is observing the appearance of both pro-life and pro-choice organizations and the accompanying wars and skirmishes between them, it is not true if one examines the impact of abortion politics on election results. While a slight majority of Americans self-identify as pro-choice, preference for one side or another does not seem to concretely impact the way that Americans vote—even Americans for whom this issue is deeply personal and serious. Historically, and in recent elections, Americans have declined to cast their ballots on this supposedly pivotal issue. This paper notes the wide gap between the so-called ferocity of public opinion and a seemingly contradictory response to it, and offers a potential explanation for this case of outward hypocrisy. Perhaps most importantly, this paper seeks to illustrate the great division between Americans' perceptions of life itself and their failure to adopt a stance on abortion consistent with those beliefs. Further, what may clearly be seen is that despite enormous social and economic costs, the practice of abortion is still defended by roughly half of this country's voters. There is no outwardly obvious reason for Americans' failure to vote on the issue, except to note that the American electorate views abortion in a deeply flawed manner.

II. Introduction:

Commonly tagged as one of the great "wedge issues" of American politics, there has of yet been no concrete analysis of the numbers themselves and why abortion laws stand as they do in a country where roughly half of the population is vehemently opposed to the practice. Thus, it is not so much that the practice of abortion exists, but rather why it is widely prevalent with relatively few restrictions, and why polls generally indicate that overall, Americans—however grudgingly—assent to at least a limited availability of abortion. Even limited, "in the year 2000, there were just over 1.3 million [my emphasis] abortions...In the year 2000, a quarter (24.5 percent) of pregnancies ended in abortion" (Francome 2004, 19). Even in South Dakota, the site of the latest attempt at an outright ban on abortion, the population remains heavily conflicted (Riccardi 2008, 1-2). What emerges from an examination of the data is the unveiling of an inconvenient truth for the American electorate:

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that overwhelmingly, the American people equate the practice of abortion with murder, and yet continue to advocate for its continuation.

Perhaps most important is the fact that the electorate has never been presented with this contradiction, and as a result, abortion continues to be available in the United States, costing untold billions in healthcare costs and millions of ended lives. What is presented herein is a unique glimpse into the psyche and conscience of the American voter, a glance that shows at once a fundamentally moral public, but one whose resolve to demand the manifestation of that morality in public policy is in desperate need of reinforcement.

III. Review of Existing Literature and Accompanying Commentary:

In order to understand the current political climate surrounding the abortion debate, it is of course necessary to understand the history of abortion in the United States; perhaps most critical to this understanding is an awareness of the significance of *Roe v. Wade*. According to Haussman, the Court in *Roe*,

Did not protect abortion per se. Instead, it established the constitutional right to privacy of a woman when consulting her doctor. This right was completely free from state intervention in the first trimester of pregnancy...the ruling also held that in the second and third trimesters, the state would demonstrate an increasing "compelling interest" in regulating...based on the mother's health in the second trimester and that of the fetus in the third (Haussman 2005, 47).

Interestingly, in the intervening years since *Roe*, the case has come to be seen as providing a de facto constitutional right to abortion, when in fact it does not. Despite the Court's decision, a majority of Americans remain unaware that a majority of states have retained statutory impediments to abortion even after the enactment of *Roe*. Unenforceable under *Roe*, these laws remain nonetheless. Many states have also passed "trigger laws," laws that would come into effect immediately were *Roe* to be overturned. All of this is to say that while a majority (albeit a slim one) of Americans "believe" in some right to abortion, a majority of states have public policies at odds with those beliefs (Rose 2007, 103-106).

Since the Court's decision in *Roe*, there have been other cases directly or indirectly challenging the status quo. One of the most critical of these is *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*, wherein the Court was presented for the first time after *Roe* the opportunity to overturn it. Instead, the Court ruled that Pennsylvania laws requiring among other things a waiting period and mandatory informed consent for a woman seeking an abortion were permissible, while upholding "what three of the justices—Sandra Day O'Connor, Anthony M. Kennedy, and David H. Souter—called, in an unusual joint opinion, *Roe*'s "essential holding"" (Jost, 2003). This case represents a watershed moment: the suit presented the Court with the ability to completely overturn what was even then the controversial case of *Roe*, and even acknowledging that it had been decided poorly initially, it failed to act to overturn. In terms of election politics, the hypocrisy present in the modern abortion debate was very clear in the 2000 Presidential election. During the campaign, then-governor George W. Bush promised to appoint judges to the Supreme Court in line with those Justices most opposed to abortion (Thomas and Scalia), thus ostensibly ensuring an increase in abortion regulations, if not

an outright ban. Predictably, Al Gore "countered by pledging his support for abortion rights and warning of a likely reversal of *Roe v. Wade* if Bush made good on his pledge." Interestingly, both candidates, "appeared to play down the issue to avoid alienating swing voters" (Jost, 2003), an option not surprising in and of itself, but very much so when examining polling which illustrates, as we will see, that such actions by any candidate should be patently unnecessary.

The question of when life begins, or perhaps more saliently, when life becomes "viable" is of course a central issue of the abortion debate, since those who do not believe that life begins at conception often argue the relative merits of abortion based on differing views of life's beginning. It is of course the "liberal" stance that a woman should be permitted to regard a fetus as disposable at any point until such time as the fetus becomes viable, and since the medical definition of viability has changed drastically since the 1970's, the debate is ongoing. It is perhaps this widespread uncertainty about the definition of life itself that may principally contribute to the ongoing abortion debate (Rubin 1994, 105-112). Regardless, a majority of Americans profess a particular point of view regarding abortion, and as we will see, these opinions are largely at odds with those same Americans' beliefs about the beginnings of life.

A plethora of existing literature demonstrates the inherent speciousness of many of the arguments for abortion. Whether these beliefs are informed and intentional or rather a deliberate glance away from any modicum of rationality remains unclear. What is clear, however, is that Americans' views on abortion are deeply illogical, and even those from the pro-choice movement who acknowledge the philosophical truth of life at conception simply choose to ignore these self-professed truths in favor of justifying the use of birth control and abortion. The reasons for this indifference to common logic could be many, but the most obvious explanation seems to be that of an irrational preference for acting in any manner that allows for sexuality free of consequence.

Another of the arguments in favor of abortion stems from the widely held misconception put forth by the eighteenth century thinker Thomas Malthus, which suggests that the overpopulation of the world is a serious and pressing concern. Malthusian population curves have of course been proved wrong, but there persists in the public psyche the notion that global resources are being stretched thin, with abortion as a necessary and expedient way to curb population growth. This is simply untrue. In fact, the world's population is shrinking, and some countries in Western Europe are literally in danger of fading from the map for want of citizens to populate them. Despite overwhelming evidence that food sources are in fact growing to match and exceed population growth, abortion apologists continue to reference the "population explosion" in defense of the practice (Kainz 2008, 366-367). In addition, it is important to note that a rejection of the classical views of sexuality as defined by religious teachings and natural law, "leads not illogically to wide-ranging changes in sexual morality" (Kainz 2008, 368). Combined with the misperceptions regarding a "population explosion", even Christians may be deluded into believing that abortion may be a reasonable, even obligatory, response to the "crises" of the modern world.

IV. Findings and Discussion:

The majority of Americans believe that a woman should be entitled to the right to terminate a pregnancy during the first trimester, but as the pregnancy progresses, more and more

Americans favor increasingly strict restrictions on abortion. Aggregated data from polling conducted over many years shows that American views regarding abortion have changed little since polling began in 1975. Between 1975 and 2003, anywhere between fifty and sixty percent of Americans believed that abortion should be legal “in some circumstances” (Saad 2003, 2). These circumstances vary, but many Americans hold the position that abortion should be available “[to protect] the physical and mental well being of the mother as well as if the baby were to be born physically or mentally impaired... Three-quarters support abortion... [when] the pregnancy is caused by rape or incest” (Saad 2003, 2). In short, Americans are generally supportive of abortion rights when the potential for harm to the mother is present, or when a child may possibly be born less than perfect. It may be a matter of philosophical debate as to whether abortion should be permitted in cases of rape or incest, but it is difficult to summon a cogent political (or philosophical) argument for the taking of life, even if its existence originated in criminal behavior. We as a society do not permit the arbitrary taking of life, regardless of the presence of criminal behavior—that is to say, we do not allow the lynching even of murderers. Thus, we are compelled to seek the rationale behind the “legitimate” execution of those people whom we would rather did not exist. Unfortunately, this profoundly contradictory action is precisely that which we are sanctioning when we permit abortion.

Americans as a whole do not disregard concern for the health and welfare of the mother when forming their beliefs—contradictory though they may be—regarding abortion. Regardless of support for the practice as a whole, approval of abortion plummets when it is sought for reasons such as financial strain, marital difficulty, or as the ultimate form of birth control. This is not to say, however, that a majority of Americans (in this particular poll at least) *discourage* abortion; rather that support for abortion is simply lower when more “selfish” reasons are used as justification (Saad 2003, 2). What emerges even at this early stage is an example of the contradictions inherent in many Americans’ views regarding abortion: it may be acceptable when criminality facilitated the pregnancy, or when a child may be born with less than ideal faculties, but when financial concerns or a lack of desire for more children are the impetus behind abortion, support for the taking of life is suddenly less palatable. This is demonstrated by the fact that 84% support the right to abortion when the woman’s life is in danger, compared to just 39% when finances or family size become the motivators (Saad, 2002, 16). Thus, the question that remains to be answered is, what is a justifiable taking of life?

At the outset, it may be helpful to identify a common misconception regarding the abortion debate, which is abortion as a “women’s issue.” While in a certain sense that might be true, it is more accurate to label it a universal concern for all Americans. This assertion is borne out when examining the enormous cost of abortion in terms of political enmity, economic losses, population deficits of the gravest sort, and degradation of the moral fabric of society. In truth, abortion is better viewed not solely as a women’s issue, but rather one more directly related to socio-economic status and degree of religious predilection. Consistent polling shows that beliefs regarding abortion have little to do with one’s gender; rather it is more accurately predicted by education (and subsequent income) level and the regularity with which one attends religious services: “Religiously devout members of both parties—those who attend their places of worship every week—are much more likely to be opposed to abortion than are

less religious members of their own party.” Thus, one begins to understand why the issue is considered more critical by members of the GOP, for they are the most likely to attend church services on a regular basis (Newport, Saad 2006, 3). Nonetheless, even religiously devout Americans are no different from the rest of America as they hold profoundly contradictory beliefs regarding the practice.

It is a curious element of the abortion debate that voter support for abortion *rises* with increasing levels of education. If one is to believe the notion that minorities, teenagers, and the underprivileged are those most in need of abortion, this is an odd finding. Nonetheless, polling conducted in 2003 shows that only twenty-four percent of those with a high school education or less believe that abortion should be “legal in all/legal in most cases,” while a whopping *fifty-eight percent* of those with a post-graduate degree or higher hold the same beliefs (Saad 2003, 3-4). One wonders, then, why the American elite feel so strongly that a demographic other than their own should be entitled to a procedure that they themselves consider immoral.

Of similar interest is the fact that while abortion rates fell overall between 1989 and 2004, the racial disparity in abortion rates did not. In 2008, a report from the Guttmacher Institute found that “the rates now range from 11 per 1,000 non-Hispanic women to 28 per 1,000 Hispanic women and 50 per 1,000 black women. In 2004, 37 percent of all abortions performed in the United States were obtained by black women, 34 percent by non-Hispanic white women, 22 percent by Hispanic women and 8 percent by women of races other than white or black.” What becomes apparent from this report is that minority populations are either the target of the abortion industry, as one Catholic bishop put it, or they are socio-economically disposed to be in a position to need or want an abortion, a sociological phenomenon worthy of examination in and of itself (*America* 2008, 7(1)). Regardless of the reason, it is clear that minority voters are bearing the real brunt of the abortion debate, and they are curiously absent (along with the majority of the electorate) from any attempt to stop the practice.

Religious whites form a significant block of voters, and more precisely, a specific block of voters concerned with abortion. The two do not necessarily coincide; it is inaccurate to say that all religious whites are defined by pro-life ideation. Instead, religious whites *who attend church services on a regular basis* are those who form the core of the pro-life movement. Polling indicates that those who attend church services regularly tend to lean more towards the GOP, and from a voting standpoint, it is important to note that a much more significant number of Republicans who attend church services weekly are opposed to abortion in all circumstances than Democrats who attend church services regularly. Despite the historical opposition to abortion in the GOP platform, in recent years the rhetoric has been toned down in response to polling which indicates that a slight majority is in favor of abortion rights, while voters for whom abortion is pivotal form a relatively small percentage of the electorate. However, neither the GOP nor any other major political entity has ever presented the data as shown herein to the American public, which might, presented with a viable alternative to the current state of affairs, be amenable to an entirely different political landscape in this country.

During the 2000 campaign for the Presidency, opponents George W. Bush and Al Gore made clear what their intentions would be should they be elected. At the time, support for abortion was little different than it is today: “The public is almost evenly split on the issue, with 48% currently calling themselves “pro-choice” and 42% identifying themselves as prolife... 19% insist they will support only candidates... who share their abortion views (Saad 1999, 1). It is also

important to note that while roughly a fifth of voters say that abortion is a critical voting issue, the ferocity of belief amongst those in the pro-life camp significantly outweighs the resolve of those who identify as pro-choice. Politically, this is of tremendous importance: if the GOP (or another interested party) could effectively illustrate to the electorate the error of its ways, that party would generate a following of voters dedicated to the issue and therefore, to the party. Even a small gain could be used to tremendous advantage, considering that the gap between voters of pro-life and pro-choice ideation is quite small. Despite the contradictions in public opinion today, future strategists should not be deterred from pursuing this strategy; the potential political capital is simply too large to ignore.

According to polling conducted in 2007, a majority of Americans stated that they would not want to see *Roe v. Wade* overturned (Saad 2007, 2), and 10% of Republicans listed abortion as important in the concept of “family values” (Carroll 2007, 3). When one considers that 75% of Americans and 85% of Republicans listed family values as either “extremely” or “very” important issues in the 2008 Presidential race, one could logically expect consensus bordering on unanimity. Instead, what one sees is an intense debate and fervent political strategizing revolving around the issue, because the truth is that Americans themselves are unsure of what they really want when it comes to abortion; campaigners lost sleep over the idea that then-Republican front-runner Rudy Giuliani would lose the election because his “pro-choice position [put] him at odds with the majority of the party, and conservative religious leaders recently threatened to support a third-party candidate if the Republican Party [nominated] a pro-choice candidate” (Jones 2007, 2). If in fact Americans were clear on their preferences regarding abortion, it seems that such political maneuvering would be made obsolete in the face of public consensus. Instead, we have an American electorate which, as we will see further, is deeply unsettled on the issue.

The crux of this debate, politics aside, is the question of when life truly begins. Historically, religious leaders taught that life began at conception, and the scientific community rapidly followed suit. Fervent debate continues over whether this fact is relevant in determining the merits of abortion, particularly in terms of whether the zygote or the blastula (which eventually develops into a complete human being), should be accorded the same considerations and rights as say, a five year old child. Interestingly, this debate is rendered largely meaningless in terms of the way that Americans vote on the issue—that is to say, Americans’ views on abortion are inexplicably divorced from their views on life itself.

In a Fox News/Opinion Dynamics poll conducted between July fifteenth and sixteenth of 2003, nine hundred registered voters were asked, “Do you believe that human life begins at conception or once the baby may be able to survive outside of the mother’s womb with medical assistance, or when the baby is actually born?” (pollingreport.com Abortion and Birth Control, 25). The results of this poll are compelling, but rarely, if ever, cited in the popular press. Of those nine hundred voters, 55% said that they believe that human life begins *at conception*, a belief in contradiction with current public support for the practice of abortion. This trend is not isolated to one obscure poll: in 2003, the Gallup Group conducted similar polling and found that 53% of Americans believe abortion is “morally wrong.” Interestingly, women, not men, are more inclined to believe that abortion is morally wrong—49% of men and 56% of women. In fact, by any general demographic indicator, a majority of Americans believe abortion to be morally wrong (Saad, 2003, 2). This trend has

proven consistent since 2001, and since then, Americans who believe abortion to be morally wrong have outnumbered those who believe it to be morally acceptable by 10-15% (Gallup, Moral Issues, 2). This is a strange finding, considering that despite these beliefs, a poll conducted at roughly the same time found that 80% of Americans *also* hold that abortion should be partially or completely legal (Saad 2003, 4); this of course forms the foundation of an intensely illogical system of belief.

Not only are Americans’ beliefs regarding themselves at odds with, well, themselves, they are also contrary to how they perceive each other: In 2001, polling showed that 66% of Americans presumed that their fellow voters believed that abortion should in some way be legal. Only 58% of Americans did in fact hold this belief. Americans were similarly incorrect with respect to the percentage of the public that held abortion to be impermissible in all cases and those who believed that abortion should be universally accessible (Saad 2002, 7-8). This is not to suggest that voters should conform to some ephemeral notion of the “right” view of abortion, but rather that voters are vague when it comes to their belief on the topic, both individually and collectively.

Perhaps the most compelling evidence of Americans’ contradictory opinions and beliefs on the subject of abortion is borne out in polling which asked voters to decide if they believed that “abortion is murder.” The percentage of Americans who say that abortion is in fact murder has increased from 1994 to 2000, but even in 1994, 43% of those polled believed that abortion was equivalent to murder. In the most recent poll, voters were simply asked, “Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Abortion is murder.” In 2000, 57% of respondents agreed that abortion was murder, while 36% disagreed. This and prior polls indicate that a significant segment of Americans equate the practice of abortion with the unlawful, premeditated, and deliberate killing of another human being, an action that our society calls murder. Even if one wished to draw a distinction between murder and the taking of human life, there is no ambiguity here: “Two-thirds of those who do not consider abortion murder nevertheless perceive it as the taking of human life...only 16% of Americans view it as a surgical procedure for removing human tissue” (Saad 2002, 17-18). What is also implicit in these statements is that whether or not abortion is considered murder (an illicit taking of human life), all of those polled regarded the fetus being aborted as human life. Thus, Americans simultaneously object to murder and condone it under the guise of abortion. It has been suggested that Americans’ views on the morality of abortion coincide with their views on its legality, thus debunking the common myth that Americans believe that their personal beliefs should not be foisted on others. However, even this approach is faulty, because it ignores the elephant in the room: Americans have divorced their notions of morality from the reality of abortion itself. The contradiction is obvious when the numbers are presented as above: Americans want abortion even though the majority believes it to be equivalent to murder.

Whether justifiable or not, it is perhaps easier to understand why voters would favor a woman’s right to abortion when her pregnancy was the result of a criminal act, but when it comes to legitimate—that is to say, not born of criminal behavior—children, Americans maintain a deeply flawed set of beliefs. In some cases, voters support abortion in cases where “the child would be born with a life-threatening illness,” but in others they do not. In May of 2003 when this poll was conducted, a full sixty percent of the electorate favored legal abortion when the health of the unborn child was in question. When asked about a child who would be born mentally disabled, fifty percent believed that abortion should be legal. In *the*

same poll, a later query presented voters with *the same questions presented above*, and in this case, only forty-eight percent believed that abortion should be legal in the case of physical disability, compared to sixty percent above. With respect to a child who would be born mentally disabled, only thirty-eight percent believed abortion should be legal, compared to fifty percent in the first instance; polling conducted a mere four months earlier yielded similar results (*Gallup's Pulse of Democracy: Abortion 2008*, 11-14).

What is interesting to note is that despite the American conviction that abortion constitutes murder, there is little consensus on its permissibility. In fact, despite the contentiousness of the issue, only about twenty percent of Americans say that they vote on the issue. Polling conducted in May of 2008 demonstrates that only 13% of Americans insist on a Presidential candidate who shares their views on the issue. Conversely, 49% say that abortion is "just one of many important factors" when considering a candidate. These figures are roughly equivalent to those of the last two election cycles in 2000 and 2004, and this may explain why abortion issues played a relatively small role in those elections (Saad 2008, 2-4). What is not explained is why such an issue was made of Supreme Court nominations with respect to the issue. In 2000 and 2004, much attention was given to the candidates' inclinations should any seats open on the Supreme Court, and they did so because pro-life voters are much more active than their pro-choice counterparts and subsequently more likely to vote on the abortion issue. Thus, while only a small fraction of voters consider themselves single-issue voters with respect to abortion, this forms a critical portion of the Republican base (Saad 2004, 1-2). Of course, this illustrates quite clearly that the GOP has quite a large percentage of Americans who could potentially be swayed to an intensely pro-life stance.

V. Conclusion:

When one considers all of the data, what emerges is a picture of a deeply divided and disoriented American electorate. On the one hand, Americans have been taught to believe that *Roe v. Wade* represents a fundamental bastion of American freedom and liberty, while on the other hand, the GOP and pro-life groups have made the mistake of counseling Americans to remove a woman's right to choose. The instinctive conclusion is that of course a woman should have the right to choose. It's her body isn't it? Well, yes, but we do not permit the murder of those who inconvenience us, and so there is a discrepancy between our choices with respect to the taking of life. Fundamentally, this nation stands for the protection of individual liberty, and it is under these terms that the abortion debate has been framed, much to the credit of those who wished it to be constructed in this way. Amazingly, the American electorate has been convinced by this rhetoric to abandon their most cardinal belief, namely that abortion constitutes murder, in order to "protect" individual liberty. The pivotal point, of course, is that if society as a whole condemns the act of murder, then logically, it must also condemn the practice of abortion if, as is the case in the United States, the majority of the society believes the two to be equivalent.

Perhaps most important for understanding the current situation is the knowledge that American voters are never directly confronted with the inconvenient truth behind their beliefs. Never in the popular press does one see the demand that the public come to terms with their acknowledgement that abortion is murder and the fact that abortion continues to be supported. Even in South

Dakota, currently home of the nation's only outright ban on abortion, voters struck down an earlier, similar bill even though "Sixty percent (60%) say abortion is morally wrong most of the time" (*South Dakota: Abortion Issue Center Stage 2006*). For many, the realization that they are fundamentally opposed to abortion is not a concern, but for those who waver, it may be the case that they "are people who are basically opposed to abortion but [are] troubled by the exceptions" (Woster 2007). Neither the media, nor candidates for public office have been willing to come forth and present Americans with the inherent contradictions of their beliefs, for fear that such an action would constitute political suicide.

Ultimately, one must recognize that abortion is not an unimportant issue to the American electorate, but that Americans fail to vote decisively in the issue because they are themselves deeply conflicted. Despite the efforts of the pro-life movement, the majority of Americans have not been convinced to translate their conviction that abortion is fundamentally equivalent to murder into a pattern of voting that demands a reformulation of the law to reflect this cardinal belief. At such a time when that change does occur, politicians and the public alike should be prepared to weather a monumental social and political realignment of the sort not seen or imagined in recent history.

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Upcoming Honors Sections and Seminars

Seminars

J-Term 2010

IDSC 480-01 (CRN 10198) Film & Music
J-Term 2010 – M & W 9:00am-12:00 noon Location TBA
Professors: Dr. Christopher Kachian and Mr. Jim Snapko

Fall 2009

IDSC 480-08 (CRN 43211) Math and Architecture
Fall 2009 – R 1:30-3:10pm MHC 160A
Professors: Dr. Chehrzad Shakiban and Dr. Michael Hennessey

IDSC 480-03 (CRN 43231) Nobel Peace Prize Winners
Fall 2009 – T 1:30-3:10pm MHC 160A
Professors: Dr. Bernard Brady and Dr. David Roseborough

IDSC 480-09 (CRN 43234) Green Capitalism
Fall 2009 – T 3:25-5:00pm MHC 160A
Professors: Dr. Michael Andregg and Dr. Shirley Polejewski

IDSC 480-05 (CRN 43235) For God & Country
Fall 2009 – W 5:30-7:15pm MHC 160A
Professors: Dr. Steven Hoffman and Dr. Kenneth Kemp

IDSC 480-04 (CRN 43236) Framing the Family
Fall 2009 – T 8:00-9:40am Location TBA
Professors: Dr. Kris Bunton and Dr. Meg Wilkes-Karraker

IDSC 480-01 (CRN 43155) Code Blue
Fall 2009 – R 9:55-11:35am MHC 160A
Professors: Dr. Stephen Laumakis and Dr. Jolynn Gardner

IDSC 480-02 (CRN 43237) Civil Religion
Fall 2009 – M 2:55-4:35pm MHC 160A
Professors: Dr. Michael Bellamy and Dr. David Penchansky

IDSC 480-07 (CRN 43238) Love, Valour, and Compassion
Fall 2009 – R 3:25-5:00pm MHC 160A
Professors: Dr. Robert Riley and Dr. Michael Mikolajczak

IDSC 480-06 (CRN 40455) Foreign Experience
Fall 2009 – R 5:15-6:45pm MHC 160A
Professors: Dr. Lon Otto and Dr. Ann Hubbard

IDSC 481-01 (CRN 43252) Women in Music and Theater
Fall 2009 – T 1:30-3:10pm BEC 110
Professors: Dr. Amelia Kritzer and Dr. Sarah Schmalenberger

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Classes

J-Term 2010

No Honors Sections are offered during J-Term 2009.

Fall 2009

Economics ECON 251-42 – Honors Principles of Macroeconomics
TR 8:00-9:40 AM Agapitos Papagapitos

English ENGL 190-41 – Honors Critical Reading/Writing
MWF 10:55 AM-12:00 noon Michael Mikolajczak

Philosophy PHIL 214-40 – Honors Introductory Ethics
MWF 9:35-10:40 AM Michael Rota

Theology THEO 101-41 – Honors Christian Theo Trad
MWF 8:15-9:20 AM William Cavanaugh

Theology THEO 101-42 – Honors Christian Theo Trad
MWF 12:15-1:20 PM Anne King

Theology THEO 210-41 – Honors New Testament
TR 9:55-11:35 AM David Landry

Theology THEO 315-41 – Honors Christian Marriage
MWF 12:15-1:20 PM Peter Feldmeier

Chemistry CHEM 115-41 – Honors Accelerated General Chemistry
MWF 9:35-10:40 AM

Chemistry CHEM 115-71 – Honors Accelerated General Chemistry Lab
R 7:30-11:30 AM

Chemistry CHEM 115-72 – Honors Accelerated General Chemistry Lab
R 1:30-5:30 PM

English ENGL 190-42 – Honors Critical Reading/Writing
MWF 10:55 AM-12:00 noon David Lawrence

English ENGL 190-43 – Honors Critical Reading/Writing
MWF 10:55 AM-12:00 noon Catherine Craft-Fairchild

Philosophy PHIL 115-40 – Honors Philosophy of Human Person
MWF 12:15-1:20 PM David Clemenson

Philosophy PHIL 115-41 – Honors Philosophy of Human Person
MWF 1:35-2:40 PM David Clemenson

Theology THEO 215-41 – Honors Christian Morality
MWF 10:55 AM-12:00 noon Bernard Brady

Sociology SOCI 100-41 – Honors Introduction to Sociology
TR 3:25-5:00 PM Meg Karraker

Theology THEO 331-41 – Honors Christianity/World
MWF 10:55 AM-12:00 noon Edward Ulrich

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