

OPINION

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Valentine's Day is rooted in ancient pagan and Roman traditions. Today, the holiday is more about commercialization than love.

Real meaning of Valentine's Day forgotten

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Across the world, we set the mood and turn the lights down low on Valentine's Day. It is also the time of the year we spend excessive amounts of money to show our significant other just how much we love them by going all out to spoil them.

"Valentine's Day is most definitely over-commercialized. People have made it all about chocolate and showing off," said Jack Ryan, a freshman at UNC Asheville.

The actions that take place to ensure someone has a great day full of love should be done every day. We over-glamorize this holiday and spend billions of dollars on candy, flowers and chocolate for this event.

With Christmas out of the way,

the beginning of January becomes a perfect time for stores to start setting up their Valentine's Day displays.

"I'm Catholic so I actually know the history of St. Valentine," said Tiana Bush, a senior art student. "It rubs me the wrong way that Valentine's Day is turning into a secular holiday as well as Christmas and Easter. I feel like someone's taken a part of my upbringing and changed it for their own benefit."

Stores go from one holiday to the next very quickly. The meaning becomes lost in the transition and packing up of last holiday's belongings.

"People try to remove the religion from it but you can't do that. You need to know the history," Bush said. "Christians were under the rule of Romans and didn't

have the freedom to marry, so St. Valentine secretly married men and women. Emperor Claudius II believed that single young men made better soldiers than married men and wouldn't allow young men to get married."

In reality, the holiday should be used as a day to remember the saint himself who continued officiating the union of young couples.

Abbi Shelton, a freshman plans to spend the day with her boyfriend.

"I use the day as an excuse to buy him gifts. I don't think Valentine's Day itself is important. It's a reason to do stuff, I guess," Shelton said.

In total, the National Retail Federation estimated Valentine's Day spending is expected to hit \$19.7 billion this year.

Yet many Americans do not even celebrate the day.

According to the National Retail Federation, on average only about 55 percent of Americans engage in Valentine's Day festivities. This percentage will spend about \$143.56 each.

"Me and my boyfriend keep the day pretty low-key and don't spend too much. We go out to dinner at a nice place and enjoy time together," Shelton said.

Valentine's Day often puts a sour taste in some people's mouths. Kristen McCauley, a sophomore drama student, said she does not care about the holiday in particular.

"I don't give a rat's ass about Valentine's Day," McCauley said. "There's more gendered advertisements like women creepily and sexually eating chocolate insinuating that men don't eat chocolate. Who cares?"