

The relevance of humanities today

◆Daukas and Kircher suggest that humanities are still practical in technology-based society

BY EMILY DINGS
Staff Writer

The Guilford College web site lists "an unflinching pursuit of truth" as part of the college's creed. The fusion of technology and truth encapsulated here reflects the attitude leading to the radical changes that have visited Guilford over the past year.

Curriculum changes indicate a desire to streamline disciplines. Faculty reduction and the consolidation of humanities subjects (such as first-year English and history) are rooted in a concern for "relevance." Vast expenditures on computers, smart cards and internet access suggest that technological literacy should be synthesized into a liberal arts education to ensure their practical applicability. Jeff Jeske, who chairs the Curriculum Committee and is the coordinator of curriculum revision, commented "Higher education generally is tilting more towards developing skills and competencies, information technology and quantita-

tive reasoning."

Parents and administrators envision students leaving graduation like baby birds pushed out of a nest. They fear that students will have grown too dependent on the comforting threads of the humanities that have sustained them over the past four years, and will be wholly unprepared for a society which treats this area of study as a luxury rather than a valuable skill.

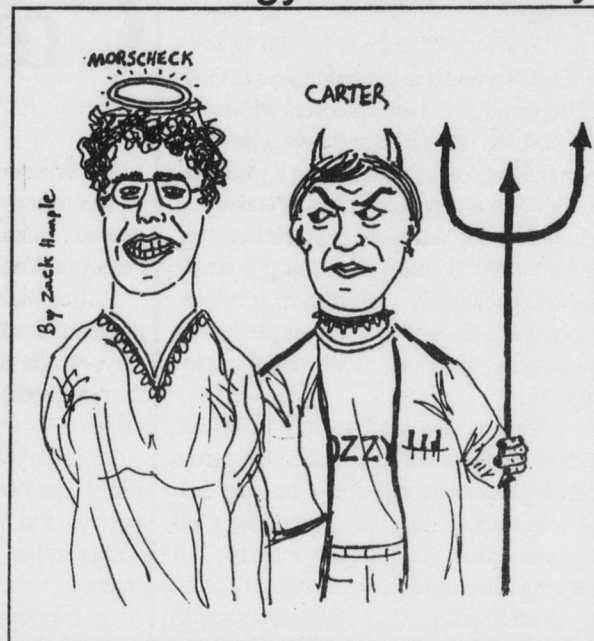
History professor Timothy Kircher and philosophy professor Nancy Daukas claim that this handicap is an illusion. Both professors decided to study and teach their disciplines despite a lack of encouragement from outside influences.

Kircher came from a family of engineers who shook their heads at his decision to pursue studies in the humanities. Only his grandfather supported him, arguing "let the kid do what he wants!" Daukas was met with a warning from the American Philosophical As-

sociation printed on the front of her GRE; it stated that jobs would be very scarce and that applicants should only continue with the exam if the study of philosophy was of intrinsic value to them. After careful consideration, she went back to take the test. Her parents met her decision with "incomprehension."

I asked the two professors a central question: does it undermine the intrinsic value of your discipline to focus on its practical relevance in contemporary society?

Both Daukas and Kircher state that the distinction please see **HUMANITIES** on pg. 8



Kircher and Daukas are living proof that you can get a job (sort of) with a humanities background.

PHOTO BY AGNIESZKA FRANKOWSKI

Carter and Morscheck Go to the Movies

◆This Week: *Lost In Space*, starring Gary Oldman, Matt LeBlanc, now playing at Brassfield

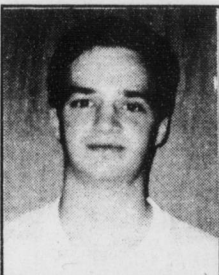


PHOTO BY BECCA LEE

BY JONATHAN
CARTER
Features Film Critic

Let's get one thing straight: *Lost in Space* was a crappy TV show. Besides having incredibly bad stories, it influenced many people to believe

that science fiction is meant to be campy and silly and nothing else. But the new movie based on the series has partially redeemed the name.

Having said that, the movie, like many sci-fi movies, has predictably generic characters and dialogue. Oh well. You can't have everything.

The story follows the Robinson family's trip through space after the villainous Dr. Smith (Gary Oldman) endangers their ship, forcing them to use the ship's hyperdrive, which throws them across the galaxy. Arriving in uncharted space, they run afoul of some giant spiders, crash on a desolate planet, and then get involved with an interesting time-travel situation that gets convoluted but is still light-years ahead of what happened on the TV show. (Did I mention how bad that show was?)

Unfortunately, between action scenes the movie attempts to be heartwarming. Professor Robinson realizes that he can't save

the families of Earth if he can't deal with his own. Will teaches the robot what friends are. Aww...Don't worry; action scenes in this movie are never far away.

William Hurt, who was good in the recent *Dark City*, is lamentably miscast and both he and Mimi Rogers woodenly portray Mr. and Mrs. Robinson. Oldman attempts but fails to be as menacingly threatening as the original Dr. Smith without camping it up. Of course, I don't know if that was possible anyway.

The rest of the cast is made up of hot young stars like Matt LeBlanc (*Friends*), Lacey Chabert (*Party of Five*), and Heather 'Rollergirl' Graham (*Boogie Nights*), who all do decent jobs with the material they're given.

For anyone who hates the show or hasn't seen it, don't worry. Besides the characters' names, the basic situation, and the voice of the robot (still done by Dick Tufeld), the movie has nothing to do with the original series. The goofy stories and effects of the 60's have been replaced by extraordinary special effects and banal characters, the standards of 90's movies. It may not be wonderful, but it's far better than things used to be.

Lost in Space defines the term 'eye candy,' with its astounding effects but also manages some interesting plot twists and genuinely exciting moments. Anyone who wants two hours of escapism should love it. (By the way, the TV version was really bad.)



PHOTO BY AMY ROUSE

BY PETER
MORSCHECK
Features Film Critic

Lost in Space presented me with yet another object lesson in how preconceptions can color your outlook on a film.

I'm not big on new science fiction and I didn't particularly like the old TV show, so naturally, I wanted to skip this one. It turned out to be, though, one of the most fun films I've seen in the past few months, the perfect way to escape real life on a Saturday afternoon.

The year is 2058 and the Robinson family is set to go on a ten-year trip to colonize distant Alpha Prime, as Earth will be completely uninhabitable within a few decades. Unfortunately, a group of rebels called the "Global Sedition" sabotage the mission, leaving them drifting in the far reaches of an uncharted system, decades in the future.

What makes this film more than barely watchable is the family dynamics: we have the father, a scientist so obsessed with his work that he's neglected his wife and kids; an older daughter who's done the same; a pre-teen brat who can't believe she's forced to leave her friends; and Will, a ten-year-old genius who

works in vain for his father's love. Throw in a supporting wife, a rogue fighter pilot enlisted at the last minute, and a traitorous Dr. Smith, shamelessly overacted by Gary Oldman (*Romeo is Bleeding*, *Air Force One*), and you get a film which tries at more depth than your usual sci-fi fluff.

Even though there were some blatant rip-offs from *The Trilogy*, namely a well-staged dogfight in the beginning, and later sexual tension between a couple which screamed Han Solo-Princess Leia, the film managed to hold its own on so many levels: family drama, action film (with scary spider aliens), suspense (What to do with evil-traitor-guy?), and convoluted time-travel mystery. I thought it worked. *Lost in Space* is a good (not great) film which I heartily recommend to those interested in movies for escapism, even if (like me) you are skeptical of the science fiction genre.

