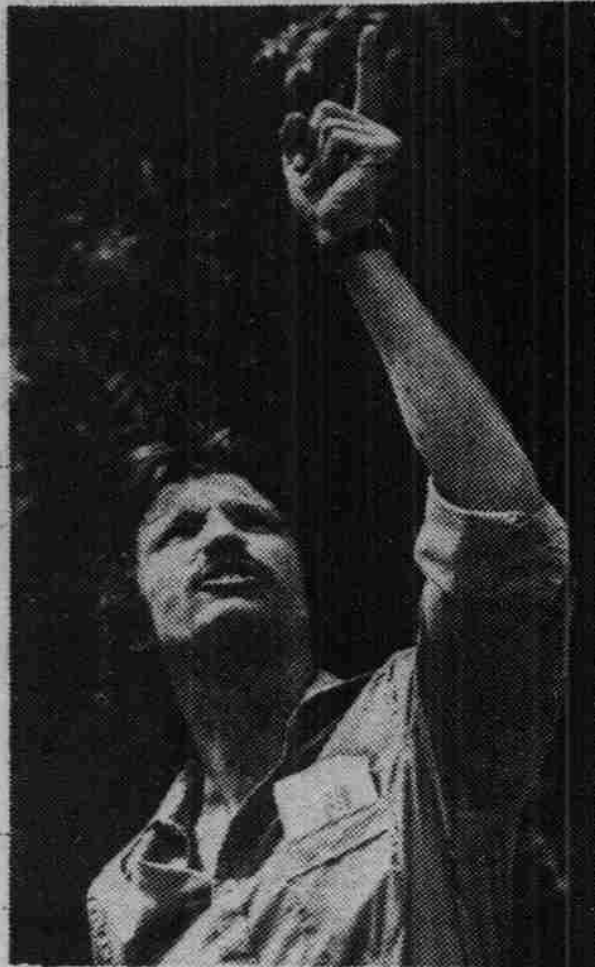




# The Point

The point. Politicians, speakers, salesmen, and almost everyone else has used it. But UNC English professor James Seay has made a point of understanding the metaphysical implications of it.

By VIKKI BROUGHTON  
Staff Writer



DTH/Billy Newman

It should be pointed out that in the beginning, people laughed at James Seay's theory of the Point. But Edison and Einstein were also scorned at first. Such is the fate of great thinkers.

The point of departure for this story began about 10 years ago with a photograph in Seay's Mississippi hometown newspaper, *The Panolian*. The photograph is of L.C. Grasel, owner of the local John Deere dealership, pointing at a huge hole in the steel door of his Mosler safe that had been dynamited by burglars.

This was one of history's finest moments, according to Seay, a UNC English professor who says he did not realize the profound metaphysical implications of Brasell's point at that time. A year or so later another photograph appeared in *The Panolian* that drove the point home.

This second photograph was a used-car ad showing Jimmy Meek, a salesperson, cramped up against a T-Bird. Due to space limitations, Jimmy has one arm thrown across the roof of the car and the other pointing at the T-Bird. At once, Seay was reminded of Brasell's point and

the philosophical theory of the Point began to evolve.

But this is really beside the point. "The important thing about those photographs is the fact that the two men are pointing in a way that focuses attention on the Other, without diminishing the integrity of the Self," Seay says. "That's the basis of the Pure Point—a giving over of the Self to the Other and an invitation to the beholder to behold That Otherness. It's a totally selfless act."

"Of course, this gesture is often perverted when it's delivered in a way that calls attention to the Pointer instead of the Other. But the worst perversion is when the Pointer points at him or herself."

Seay's theory of the Point was finally given its due respect as a major philosophical insight when Watergate made the news.

"My theory gained credibility when Watergate broke. Everybody in Washington was pointing, usually at each other," Seay says. "Photographers and cartoonists picked up on it right away."

In fact, Political Points are the largest category of Points in Seay's Point File,

which contains more than 1,000 Points in the form of photos, drawings and objects d'art sent to him by friends and strangers who read about his theory in an article Seay wrote for *Esquire*.

"Politicians are always pointing," Seay says. "They want to appear selfless and concerned with others."

The second most active category is the Entertainment Point, according to Seay. "Entertainers are always pointing a lot, but pervert it when they point at themselves, which a lot of entertainers do," he says. "They're always drawing



## A few points...

Some famous points of our times: U.S. Sen. Jesse Helms (top left); Stephen, the prophet (left); "Heroes of the Goodwin Sands," courtesy of the Gernsheim Collection, University of Texas (top right); and Andy Griffith (right).

attention to themselves. It's just another form of upstaging."

There are also Sports Points, Spiritual Points and Traditional Points.

"Sports Points are a natural because there's always something to point at like balls, nets, pucks, goalposts or other players."

Seay says the Point is a universal gesture that crosses all cultures and boundaries.

"The Point is a traditional gesture that goes far back in evolution. I've even got pictures of apes pointing."

Seay has a Point System for contributors to his Point File who receive titles for sending in very special Points. The ranks include a Pointer of No Return, a Grosse Pointer, a Pointillist and a Pointer Counter Pointer. Seay has proclaimed himself Point Blanc.

"Max Steele, the director of the writing program here, has earned the title of Disappointer," Seay says. "He's always



telling me about interesting Points he's seen but never sends them to me."

Seay constantly has to watch out for bogus entries. "I've been sent photographs with dotted arrows and lines. Some people will do anything," he says pointedly.

Seay says the Point is no longer a real challenge to him so he is working on the philosophy of the Touch. A bogus contribution to his file, *Michaelangelo's Creation of Adam*, was supposed to be a depiction of a Point. But Seay says it was actually a Touch, which sparked his interest in a new philosophical undertaking.

"I'm working on the philosophy of the Touch right now but I'm not ready to go public with it yet."

What's the point to all this philosophical pondering?

"It's just something I do in addition to teaching poetry writing and literature. It keeps me sane."

## Campus Calendar

Public service announcements must be turned in at the box outside the DTH Offices in the Carolina Union by 1 p.m. if they are to run the next day. Each item will be run at least twice.

### ACTIVITIES TODAY

Carolina Indian Circle will meet at 7 p.m. at the Campus Y.

The UNC Ski Club will meet at 7:30 p.m. in Room 215 Carolina Union.

Madelyn Murray O'Hair, outspoken atheist, author and attorney, will speak at 8 p.m. in Memorial Hall.

There will be a general body meeting of the Association of Business Students at 3:30 p.m. in Room T-5 New Carroll Hall.

Coffee, Beer, Never Fear, a one-man, one-act play, performed by Durham playwright Aden Field, will be presented at 7:30 p.m. in the Carolina Union.

There will be a Teague House Council meeting at 10 p.m. in the Teague lobby.

AIESec will hold its first Board of Advisors meeting for the 1978-79 school year at 2 p.m. in the Faculty Lounge on third floor, Old Carroll Hall.

There will be a mandatory meeting for all men interested in running with the UNC Crew Club this spring at 7 p.m. in Room 215 Carolina Union. All men and women interested in coxing/swimming should be there.

Joseph Carter will speak on "Cries in the History of Life" at 8 p.m. in Room 313-A of the Alumni Building.

Vaclav Fabian of Michigan State University will speak "On Local Asymptotic Minimax Estimation" at 4 p.m. in Room 324 Phillips Hall.

The Educational Policy Committee will meet at 3 p.m. in the Frank Porter Graham Lounge, Carolina Union.

Kurt Parkum of the Bowman Grey School of Medicine will speak on "Health Insurance in Denmark: The Rise and Demise of Consumer Participation" in Room 207 Hamilton Hall.

The Toronto Exchange will meet at 9:30 p.m. in the Carolina Union.

### UPCOMING EVENTS

If you are interested in supporting the struggles of the Iranian people against the Shah and his U.S. backers, come to the meeting of the Committee to Support Iranian Liberation at 7 p.m. Tuesday in the Frank Porter Graham Lounge, Carolina Union.

AIESec will hold a general meeting at 3:30 p.m. Tuesday in Room 204 New Carroll Hall. Present members and interested persons are invited.

Start your Thanksgiving right with "Something to Depend On," a Christian Science lecture by Ruth Hanks of Chicago, Ill., at 5 p.m. Tuesday in the balcony of Great Hall, Carolina Union.

The Table Tennis Club will meet at 7 p.m. Tuesday in the Tin Can.

There will be an important meeting of the Collegiate Chicanos at 6:30 p.m. Tuesday in Room 213 Carolina Union. All members and interested students are invited.

The Pre-Professional Health Society will meet at 7 p.m. Tuesday in Room 107 Berryhill Hall.

Media Board will meet Tuesday in the Carolina Union. All members please attend.

Gay Presence at the Medical Center will meet for lunch at 12:30 p.m. Tuesday at Room 203 Berryhill Hall.

Two films about China, *The Forbidden City* and *Arts and Crafts of China*, will be shown at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday in Room 100 Hamilton Hall.

### ITEMS OF INTEREST

Ushers—Sign up for PRC's next play, the comedy *Cold Storage*, on second floor Graham Memorial. *Cold Storage* will run Tuesday, Nov. 28-Saturday, Dec. 16.

Seniors and graduate students in radiologic technology,

rehabilitation counseling, medical technology, physical therapy, pharmacy, speech and hearing, nursing, School of Public Health, occupational therapy and surgeons assistant programs are invited to discuss job opportunities with recruiters from various hospitals and agencies from 10 a.m.-4:30 p.m. in Carrington and Berryhill Halls.

Persons interested in participating in Crossroads' Summer 1979 Work-Travel-Study Program in Africa may contact Edith M. Elliott at the Campus Y.

The University Counseling Center has limited openings in a Personal Growth Group from 3:30-5 p.m. on Thursdays. Call for an appointment at 933-2175.

Interested volunteers who would like to assist at the 1978 Appalachian Handicrafts Bazaar, please come by the Y office and sign up.

All students are invited to submit proposals for the Carolina Symposium, a biennial forum exploring a particular topic through various media. Information may be obtained through Sam Sockwell at 968-9305 or Tim Sullivan at 942-7938.

Any graduate student interested in serving on the Chancellor's committees please contact the GPSF office at 933-5675.

The Minority Advisory Program sponsors tutoring sessions for freshmen from 7-8:30 p.m. on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays. The sessions are held in the Ehringhaus Coffee House on Mondays, the Hinton James Coffee House on Tuesdays and the Morrison first floor conference room on Wednesdays.



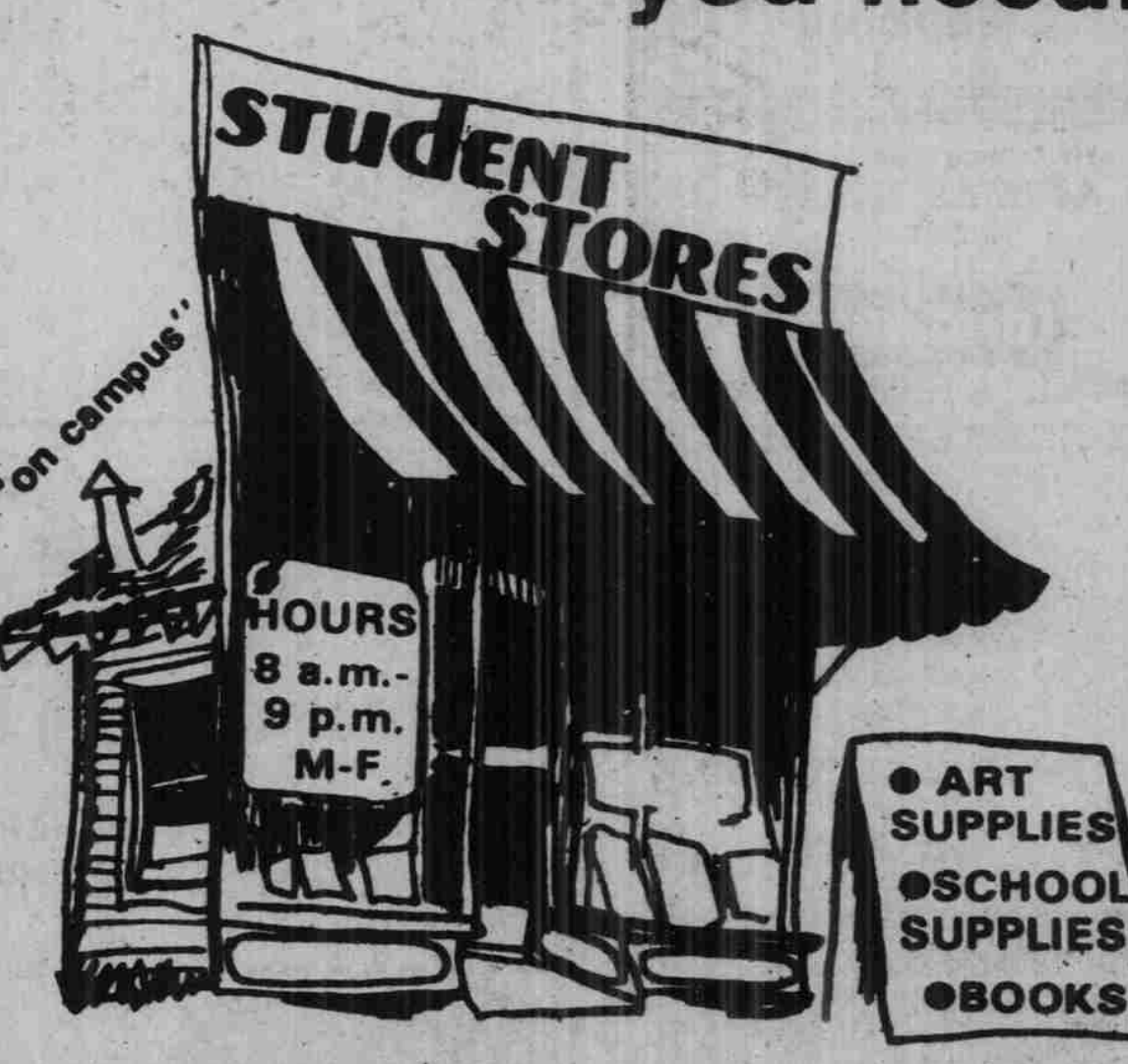
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