

The Daily Tar Heel

95th year of editorial freedom

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Free to criticize, free to teach

Imagine Chancellor Fordham censuring a UNC professor for publicly opposing the Pittsboro Street extension, on the grounds that the professor appeared to be presenting the University's official position.

While the professor merely gave his opinion as a taxpayer, he is told in no uncertain terms that he violated the school code. This scenario sounds extreme, but it is precisely what happened at N.C. State last week.

On Oct. 30, Chancellor Bruce Poulton reprimanded an associate professor for signing his title to a letter to The News and Observer criticizing the Centennial Campus plan, which would expand the State campus. Poulton accused Denis Wood of appearing to be speaking on behalf of the school or the Board of Trustees, and said he should not use his title again when criticizing the plan.

Poulton's charge is ridiculous and unfair. Nowhere in the letter did Wood say he was speaking for the university, and his title appeared only under his name. In stifling the dissent, Poulton infringes upon the academic freedom

board opinion

of faculty to criticize the university without fear of retribution. Also, he is embracing a double standard, considering that State's head basketball coach appears in countless advertisements across the state.

The chancellor stresses that he was not trying to stifle opposition from professors to the plan, which he strongly supports, and which Wood has been an outspoken critic of since its beginning. But his action not only infringes on Wood's right of expression, it also smacks of an attempt to stop criticism of a pet project. Whether this was his intent, it is hardly positive for administration-faculty relations.

Poulton was not a master of tact in this instance, and maybe that is simply his style. Chapel Hill is fortunate that Fordham has not stifled his faculty members, and probably would not.

What started out as a relatively private letter from Poulton to one professor has mushroomed into a weeklong debate that reflects poorly on the entire UNC system. The next time a professor criticizes a university plan or policy, his chancellor should remember that academic freedom defines a true university.

Put heart, soul into learning

Five blocks from the Edgewood Exit off of I-85 in Atlanta is the Martin Luther King Jr. Historical Site. It is made up of a cluster of red brick buildings and an enclosed freedom walk which frame a bright blue, layered waterway. At one end of the pool are fountains. At the other rests the memorial tomb.

In the cluster of buildings are meeting rooms, gift shops, offices, a historical time line and a statue, "Behold." In one corner of the exposition hall is the sign, "Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday, 1986." It is simple, with black letters about ten inches high on white posterboard.

In 1988, two years after the federal government established the holiday, and 20 years after King's murder, UNC will recognize the date for the first time, due to the action of the N.C. General Assembly last session. It is about time. King's vision of whites and blacks harmoniously united in mutual respect and dignity should never be allowed to fade. It must always be striven for — heart, mind and soul.

But King spoke out about more than racism in this country. Among other things, he spoke out about education.

Today, some people have argued that education should be segregated, not by race, but by interests and intellect. A tenet of this argument is that a person cannot learn from

someone outside of his or her field who does not share his or her interests. Removing conflict from these disinterested souls would lift up education.

To a small degree this argument rings true, and indirectly that is the reason for honors courses and classes limited to majors. But to a greater degree it is wrong in its prejudice of what a soul can offer.

Students can learn from everyone — from everything — if the mind is kept open. Narrowing experiences only narrows the person.

But the greatest fallacy, and the most perilous aspect, in the argument for removing conflict with varying souls is the underlying idea that education is everything. Education is a lot, but without action what is it at all?

Maybe the bottom card tucked in the wooden carousel that was perched on the counter of the gift shop in Atlanta said it best, "Everybody can be great. Because anybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't have to know Einstein's Theory of Relativity to serve. . . . You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love."

The words were Martin Luther King's. Remembering them, and learning with an open mind, is what is needed. — Jon Rust

non sequitur

Worshipping at the roundball shrine

All basketball and football fans — true Tar Heels — have made the early morning ticket pilgrimage several times this year. The Dean Dome is Mecca for those lost souls who don't get block seating, and lines extending several city blocks are not unusual.

Most believers can tell exactly where their seat is located merely by glancing at a basketball ticket. Their mental map of the Dome layout shows everything, including the correct entrances and closest bathrooms.

Such knowledge is expected of students in the Basketball Belt of America, where Woody Durham is bishop and the sports pages are the Koran.

Some pilgrims go even further than memorizing stats and joining over the DTH picks-of-the-week, and join cults of sport — for example, the band and the Carolina Fever Club, where worshippers engage in rituals of ecstatic howling and dancing.

But many of these so-called believers are sinning by omission. These infidels go through the motions, but have never examined the heart of their faith, the soul of their beliefs — the Memorabilia Room.

Located in the most sacred bowels of the Dean Dome, the Memorabilia Room is a collection of artifacts and relics. Bronzed

track shoes, Sun Bowl trophies and retired jerseys adorn the glass-encased pedestals. The thick rug and soft couches mute the noise of inconsiderate heretics.

And on one wall, in the quietest part of the chamber, is a memorial to the Pope of Hoops, the God of Sport — Dean Smith himself.

Walking through the ambulatory, visitors see a wooden panel reaching up to the ceiling, with an arched window of glorious stained glass. In the center of the window is a portrait of the pontiff, his smiling visage bestowing peace and absolute on all who stand before him.

Hushed onlookers often bow before the chapel, and leave tokens of faith — ticket stubs, small coins or the burnt remains of a Smith Center hot dog.

Beneath the wise and placid appearance of his Holiness is his date of birth, with a space to fill in the date of his inevitable demise.

Those who journey through the Memorabilia Room rarely emerge untouched. To be a true Tar Heel, one must experience it personally. Everyone should make the trip — all that stands between damnation and salvation is the sinful laziness of weak men.

If you do go, light a candle for the Syracuse game.

Readers' Forum

Text plus film still equals emptiness

James Surowiecki
Sports Editor

When Bret Easton Ellis' first novel, "Less Than Zero," appeared, critics hailed it as a vanguard piece, praising the book's honesty and Ellis' sparse prose. The work evoked disturbing comparisons. Ellis' supposed depiction of the anguish of youth linked him to Salinger. Hemingway was mentioned, due mainly to a similarity in style rather than any similarity in talent or vision. Perhaps most disturbingly (simply because of the seriousness with which the parallel was drawn), "Less Than Zero" was compared favorably to the early work of Fitzgerald.

There is an audaciousness about Ellis' novel which undoubtedly seduced many readers. "Shocking" is the word that first comes to mind upon finishing the book, and that word was a recurring presence in the reviews. Ellis does not refrain from recording, or imagining, the reality of life when one is young and rich and corrupt in Los Angeles, and forces the reader to wade through endless vignettes depicting meaningless sex, excessive drug use, and more meaningless sex, all done to the rhythm of MTV.

That rhythm is more than a pervasive image in the story, though. It is a rhythm that defines the book, which Ellis constructs in short, flashy sections that are connected to each other by only the flimsiest of threads. Only the fact that Clay, the emotional cipher of a narrator, maintains his presence through his telling of the story saves the work from becoming completely incoherent. One remembers "Less Than Zero" as a series of images, pictures without substance. The plot is irrelevant, as is undoubtedly development of the

characters. It is the sleekness of the book and the shock value of what Ellis shows that matter. The work is a collection of literary videos, and Clay is the laid-back V.J.

"Less Than Zero" was a major success, going through innumerable printings and consolidating the inroads made by Jay McInerney's "Bright Lights, Big City." And while the publication of Ellis' newest work, "The Rules of Attraction," has opened the eyes of many critics to his shallowness and absolute lack of literary ambition, he has nevertheless become something of a celebrity, a darling of publishing houses and the subject of articles in national magazines.

"Less Than Zero" is now a movie. But the style and the images of the book, which made Ellis a star, have been abandoned in the film. The makers of the movie cleaned up the story, transforming it from a plotless record of passionless anomie into the story of two lovers struggling to find security while battling to save their friend from the evil of cocaine. Clay is no longer the infuriatingly empty narrator who tolerates the decadence of his existence because he doesn't care enough to do otherwise. He has become an infuriatingly sappy moralist, condemning his obviously corrupt world without ever examining himself.

The fascinating aspect of the work's transformation involves the motives of the film's director. In order to make "Less Than Zero" more acceptable, he stripped the book of the only thing which makes it interesting: its excessiveness. The endless sexual encounters Clay and his so-called friends engage in are reduced to a handful. There is no mention of Clay's bisexuality, nor of any of the book's even less savory aspects. The plot assumes a value (albeit a tiny one) independent of the images.

Most important, though, is the difference in Clay's attitude, for that difference changes the barrenness of the book into the false sentimentality of the film. And that change in turn reflects the need of the director to make a movie with a message, with a moral spine, with an ending that is hopeful if not happy.

One thinks of "The Natural," which was changed from a cynical, harsh book about the fall of heroes into an elevating, if maudlin, film about success in the face of adversity. Without equating Ellis to Bernard Malamud, a similar alteration has been worked with "Less Than Zero." The movie attacks the absence of values in Clay's world, a criticism so obvious that it entails no revelation, and is therefore without value. But the point of the book, if it had one, was that there was no point, that life simply is. And by taking that perspective away from Ellis' work, the director also took away whatever interest the book possessed. People are afraid to merge. Except in the movies.

James Surowiecki is a senior history major from Cheshire, Conn.

Protect rights of the unborn

To the editor:

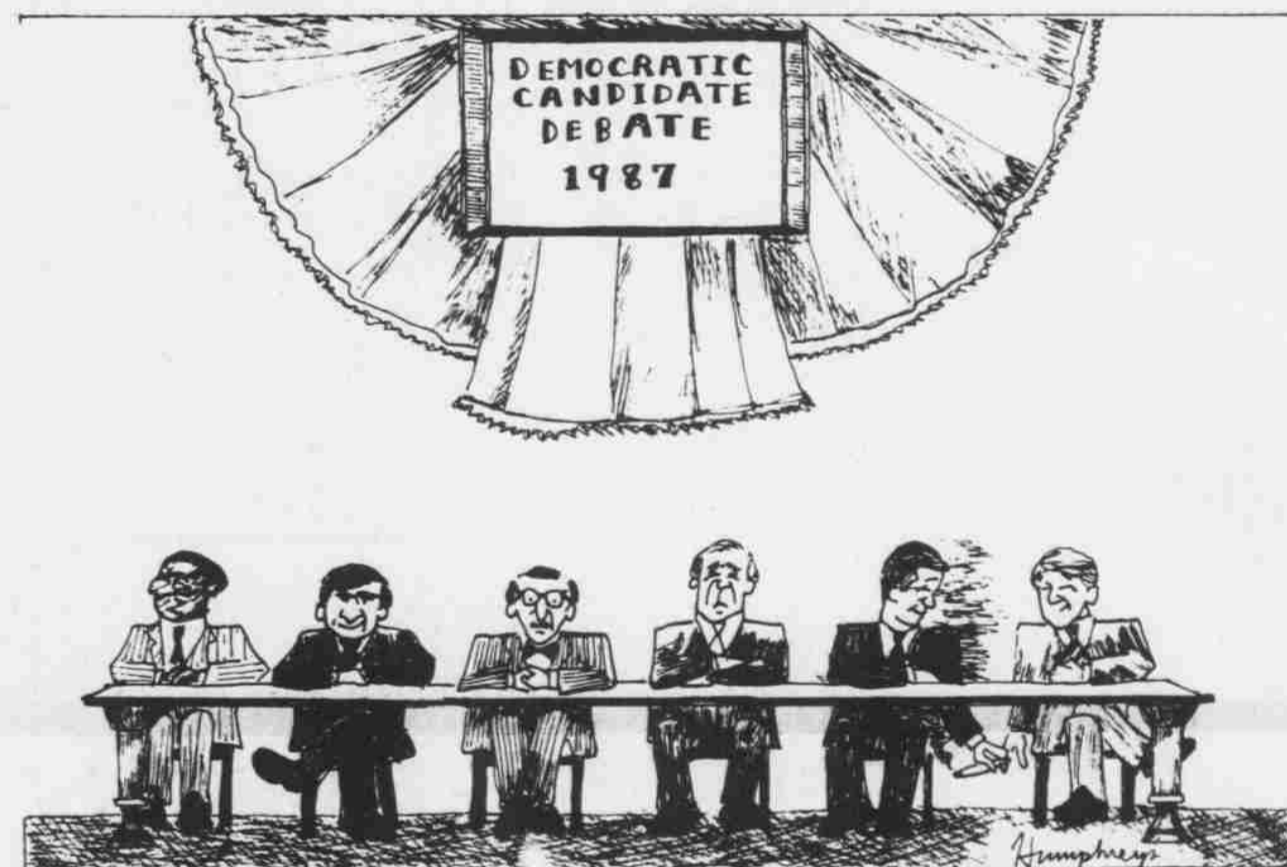
UNC is not known as a campus where human rights violations are tolerated. On the contrary, the student body, or at least a vocal part of it, has many times raised its voice to decry atrocities which take place throughout the world. Already this semester, we have heard the defense of rights of many groups: the rights of blacks, the rights of women, the rights of homosexuals. We have campus groups that protest the lack of rights in such places as South Africa and Central America.

Could it be, however, that while pointing our fingers at the speck in our brother's eye, we have missed the log in our own: the national crime of abortion. It seems that there are few people in our society that will stand up and defend the rights of the unborn, and emphatically declare that abortion is wrong.

A woman does have a right to control her body. The problem is that her baby is not her body; it only grows in her body. It has its own DNA, its own blood type, its own finger and toe prints; it never was and never will be her body. She only contributed half of its genetic code. To accuse violently a nation of stripping its inhabitants of rights while passively and quietly applauding the destruction of those unborn whose rights have been more than denied pushes to the extremes of hypocrisy. It is sad to think that an unborn eagle has more rights in this nation of ours than an unborn child.

We salute those who stand up for the rights of others. It is good that evils throughout the world are not going unchecked. It is, however, sad to think that there are those who stand up for the rights of baby seals and whales while we slaughter one and a half million of our own children a year, and business goes on as usual. The Silent Majority acquiesces as one-third of the next generation is discarded.

Next week is Human Rights



Week, a time to break from our daily routines to think and to do something about the violation of human rights. We state that abortion, the denial of the rights of the unborn, is not a political issue, a religious issue or a woman's issue; it is a human rights issue. As we speak out against human rights violations, let us not forget those Americans whose rights have been eliminated.

THOMAS JACKSON
Senior
History

MELISSA ADUDELLE
Chapel Hill

Of supply and demand

To the editor:
Is common courtesy dead? An example: class no longer ends when the professor is through talking, but when students begin shuffling papers and slamming books. On the other hand, some professors assume that students have mastered the powers of time and space by allowing them three minutes to get to their next class. And some professors like to assume, period. Especially the economists, but I won't supply that story unless, of course, the readers demand

JIM SUITER
Senior
Business

Keep T-shirt in the closet

To the editor:

Walking to class this morning I was once again overcome with utter disbelief. It was the sixth time I have encountered a student wearing a certain repulsive T-shirt. On this T-shirt are two men engaging in anal intercourse with a large red line through them and the words "Stop AIDS."

I posed a question to the wearer and he brushed me off with a mumbled "late to class." So I am going to extend an invitation to any and all of those people who I have seen wearing this shirt. Who are you and why are you so utterly ignorant and disgusting? Please

forgive my hostility, but you are the kind of people who seem to take some sick pleasure in making life painful for others. In fact, you send anyone with even a grain of compassion into a fury.

And your ignorance overwhelms me. Do you really believe that males engaging in anal intercourse are the only people who contract AIDS? I invite you to read even one journal on how the virus is contracted. And while you're at it, how about putting yourself in the place of a friend, family member or lover of an AIDS victim. How do you think your shirt makes that person feel? Or what about a person who is dying of AIDS?

Your message is painfully clear. It is not one of genuine concern for humankind. Certainly your shirt is not to be seen as a tool of educational value. It is interesting that each of the six people I have seen wearing these shirts has been male. Perhaps it is not only a mark of your anti-homosexual beliefs, but a mechanism to prove your masculinity.

Please make life a more pleasant thing and leave your T-shirts in the closet.

AMY THOMPSON
Senior
Psychology

Academic elitism makes for lonely existence

To the editor:

This letter is in response to James Surowiecki's column of Nov. 5, "Excuse malaise and let us learn."

Jim, it is difficult for me to see your point of view. The professor you mention seems to have a problem. Maybe it is worth a letter to the chancellor or the provost. I don't think, though, the way to change his attitude is through exclusion. Why should we cater to him by denying others a education? If he wants to spend time denigrating his students instead of leading them through educational, intellectual exercises, he has confused his priorities. It is not the students in the class causing the problem, it is the professor. It matters very little how intelligent he is. He must not know his responsibilities as a member of the faculty.

There are 90 sections of English 2 being offered next semester. Let's be glad that most English 1 students, people you would

hate to sit in class with, I'm sure, went on. Some day they might become students worthy of your attention. A lot of people start out in English 1. The way to improve the student body, Jim, is not to write articles about how dumb they are, but to teach them.

Next semester, 85 sections of courses below the 100 level will be taught that focus on the reading and analysis of literature. Not all of them will be full of business majors trying to fulfill an aesthetic perspective. A wise student should be able to find one that has some bright, motivated students. There are some on this campus. Take it as a challenge, Jim.

In the future, when you go to a store, have a pleasant shopping experience and are pleased by the surroundings and organization of the place, take a minute. Be grateful for a person who has pride in his, or her business and runs a clean

shop. Remember that you condemned him in an article in which the first paragraph begins with "I," another has it as the subject of the first sentence, and two paragraphs begin with "this" without an antecedent anywhere. It was a personal opinion, but seven of the 10 paragraphs, I am willing to venture, would get poor marks from an average English faculty member. Which "process" learned in college is benefiting society?

The view that college is not for everyone gives me chills. If people are excluded from places where your highly touted "process" is participating, the fewer will be able to participate. Your article is "horribly elitist." Elitism discriminates, and the more sophisticated it becomes, the more lonely the elitist becomes.

CARWILE LEROY
Senior
Chemistry/History