

September 2007

PRINCETON TORY

The Annual Freshman Issue

*Inside: Advice for Incoming Frosh,
Writing Seminars, and the Eating Clubs*

THE PRINCETON TORY

September 2007
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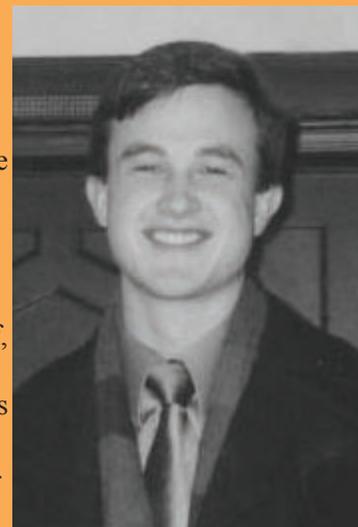
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From the Publisher

Dear Princetonian,

You, one of Princeton's newest students, are holding its oldest political magazine. The Tory is produced three times a semester entirely by undergraduates. Its staff includes some of Princeton's most accomplished and interesting daughters and sons. Wesley Morgan, a sophomore on our staff, spent last summer as an embedded journalist in Iraq at General Petraeus's urging. Christian Sahner, Editor-in-Chief Emeritus, is the only Princetonian to win the Rhodes scholarship in the last two years. The Tory is widely known among alumni as a voice of reasoned dissent from a campus culture of moral latitude and left-wing platitudes.



When the Tory was founded in the '80s, its purpose was to combat the effects of left-wing ideology. Today, our mission is more difficult; though we still fight our opponents on the left, we have entered into a less simple struggle against apathy. The prevailing indifference infects the campus papers that should fight against it. The Tory's natural ideological foil, the Nassau Weekly, is blessed and cursed by talented writers who take ideas less seriously than they do themselves. Meanwhile, the Daily Princetonian, while carrying valuable reports, is too tied to the University establishment to assess its growth and progress.

The Tory's staff--small as it is--remains tight-knit, and getting involved is simple. We are in need of writers, artists, computer whizzes and everyone else interested in helping advance the causes of God, country and family. Or at least some combination—our ranks span the conservative spectrum, and we welcome serious intramural debate. We will be holding our first meeting at 9:00pm the first Wednesday of classes. Come to the fourth floor of 48 University Place for pizza, drinks, and schemes. If you can't make it, shoot us an e-mail. And welcome to campus.

Yours conservatively,

Matthew Schmitz '08

Letters to the Editors:

tory@princeton.edu

P.O. Box 1499, Princeton, New Jersey 08542

The editors welcome, and will print, letters on any topic.

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MY CONSERVATIVE CONFESSIONS

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE CLASS OF 2011

Emely Peña '09

Dear Class of 2011,

My freshmen year began like any other – I cried myself to sleep every night missing my mom, my dad and my dog. I attended every study break imaginable helping along the freshmen-15 I would gain by June; I promptly read all my assignments, attended every lecture, and took an hour to get ready

experienced my first brush with readin', writin' and liberal dogma. Indeed, my pre-K teachers were less than shy in expressing their undying support of Bill Clinton, perhaps unaware that the unsuspecting four year olds who sat at their feet were hanging onto their every word – political ramblings included. But as I advanced from my ABC's to simple sentences, and from my 123's to division problems, so too did I exchange the old axiom of "Bill Clinton is always right!" for its logical converse, namely that "Re-

I stepped through the Fitz-Randolph gates on the defensive, armed to the teeth with my New York Times in one hand and a Starbucks latte in the other. And I didn't step outside my comfort zone when choosing courses either. Instead, I signed up for Latin and Math, my two potential majors at the time, along with a course on Early Christianity taught by Professor Elaine Pagels and a writing seminar on the Culture Wars, for which my arsenal of epigrams stood ready for battle. But for the first time

in my academic life, I was forced to actively think for myself rather than passively internalize my teachers' opinions. I began to slowly realize that the intellectual tradi-

Reason forced me to challenge the liberal tenets I had grown up with in New York City public schools, and by the end of the year, managed to push my views to the right.

for each of them. By the end of the year, a few of these routines had changed for me, but something more significant happened too, a change of worldview: to put it one way, I would never been writing in this magazine one year ago. So as you continue to struggle through courses, relationships, and extra-curricular activities, I'm sure more than a few of you will experience both trivial and far greater changes like those I underwent over the course of the past year. I write to you not as an expert on Freshmen Year survival – as mine was far from perfect – but as someone who experienced significant transformation.

For around this time last year, my brain declared war against itself. Reason forced me to challenge

the liberal tenets I had grown up with in New York City public schools, and by the end of the year, managed to push my views to the right.

To understand where I stand today, I have to take you back to where it all began: P.S. 79 in the Bronx. It was there that I

publicans are always wrong!" After a three year period of intellectual stagnation in M.S. 45, I arrived at DeWitt Clinton High School where I encountered great liberal rhetors shelling out pithy one-liners – classics like "No Tax Cuts For The Rich," or "Redeate Bush in 2004." Public school demagogues like these brought to completion the project that had begun in nursery school, giving inner-city Latinos like me the intellectual ammunition and political savvy to get into small liberal arts colleges. There, it was hoped that our minds would be sharpened by a liberal knife, and our smugness would

flourish. This plan was perfectly realized for most of my friends, who were shipped off to places like Wesleyan, Bard, and Haverford, but perhaps by some divine intervention, I ended alone up at sleepy Princeton, where I could not have anticipated the changes I would undergo.

tion that had formed me did not possess a monopoly on absolute truth, but in fact, possessed an inherently flawed perspective on the truth. As I thought about it more, the plan which my liberal schoolmasters had laid out for me was beginning to go awry – if I had gone to a college like Grinnell or Smith, where conservative thought is utterly stifled, I might have continued on the straight course, but as I was quick to discover, the ideas of right-wing Princetonians – especially the trio of conservative boys in my writing seminar, my orthodox Jewish roommate, and magazines like the

Tory – not only carried currency on campus, but they made sense. Their arguments shot actual bullets while my liberal allies and I continued to shoot blanks. But I still stuck to my guns, continuing to fight with hollow weapons, and fearful of where my nascent doubts would lead me.

Around this time last year, my brain declared war on itself.

A few incidents, however, forced me to stop and think. The first came in my seminar on the Culture Wars during a discussion about legalizing marijuana. At the time, I argued that “yes, marijuana should be legalized” – the drug, I reasoned, had some medicinal value, and if the government could step in to regulate it, black markets and drug-related violence might end while taxation might create extra revenue for positive

of institutional religion – namely orthodox, catholic Christianity – in shaping the early Christian period. Instead, she forced the Gnostic gospels on us in order to advance her own decidedly modern, liberal agenda. For example, in one such gospel, Mary Magdalene is depicted as Jesus’ favorite apostle, and this, in Professor Pagels’ opinion, provided justification for women in the priesthood. But rather than turn me away

had taught me and the friends I had grown up around – especially the ghetto people in the corner of my block who complained about government apathy, yet racked up their welfare checks and the food stamps to sell to local bodegas. I felt no sympathy for their condition, knowing well enough that hard work could have moved them from those street corners; I in fact felt ashamed that my country would fund such laziness

and corruption. But most of all, I felt betrayed by my smug upper-class high school teachers who, in spite of the lethargy and corrup-

As I advanced from my ABC’s to simple sentences, and from my 123’s to division problems, so too did I exchange the old axiom of “Bill Clinton is always right!” for its logical converse, namely that “Republicans are always wrong!”

government projects like education or welfare. One girl in the class, however, pushed me further, challenging me to explain why all drugs shouldn’t be legalized. It seemed like a no-brainer to me: why encourage a stoner nation? Why enable people to destroy their own lives and the lives of others through drug abuse? But she was resolute in her idea that drug intake was a personal choice, regardless of its moral, social and political repercussions – if a person utterly destroyed his life, she said, that was his own choice and we had no right to stop him. I was ap-

alled, to say the least. Such an extreme, albeit logically consistent view, forced me to rethink my position on the drug wars – it was going to be cocaine, heroin, and marijuana or no drugs at all. Having come from a neighborhood that is crumbling under the weight of local drug wars, I realized that there was no middle ground between the views of my drug-happy classmate and the case for criminalizing all drugs, and I was sold on the latter, more conservative view.

from religion with her anti-Catholic views, she sparked an insatiable curiosity about my faith, awakening the dormant Catholic within me. As I moved towards my second semester, my family (fearful for my job prospects after Princeton) attempted to push me away from the Classics Department and towards Economics: I reluctantly took Econ 100, a course which would ultimately complete my conservative transformation. During my

tion around them, viewed the struggles of the poor through a idealistic, yet profoundly skewed lens, concerned more with liberal indoctrination than academic knowledge.

But I rejected their ideas and my own politics shifted – I swapped liberal ideological one-liners for sound conservative principles and I exchanged cold secular reason for the truth of my Catholic faith. I cannot possibly retell in a couple of pages all the experiences which in so short a time

For the first time in my academic life, I was forced to actively think for myself rather than passively internalize my teachers’ opinions.

A second experience occurred in Professor Pagels’ course, in which I plunged into religious texts for the first time with a truly critical eye. The course asked us to check our faith at the door, implying that Christian religious commitments were incompatible with scholarly historical criticism. To my surprise, each time I examined an orthodox gospel, my Catholic self overpowered my intellectual rearing and I found significant meaning in each line. Pagels, however, continued to disregard the significant influence

first few weeks of class, Professor Harvey Rosen introduced me to the principles of fiscal conservatism, using reason alone to demolish many ideas I had been taught from childhood. Tax cuts, to give one example, as many of us already know, are actually a legitimate way to improve the economy for both corporations and consumers. I, on the other hand, had been taught that tax cuts were simply a Republican ploy to make their constituents wealthy and keep the poor downtrodden. Capitalism wasn’t the force preventing certain Bronxites back home from achieving something greater, it was a quasi-egalitarian system which continually punished the hardworking and rewarded the lazy.

By May, I was shocked and angry. I realized that I had been brainwashed to blindly believe, to fight for unfounded tenets taught as unwavering truths. I went home last summer continuing to question everything, skeptically glaring at the very people who

changed my perception of the world, the countless epiphanies and discussions, or the chance meetings with those who would bring me to fine organizations like the *Tory*. I still question the views placed before me, and I will continue do so throughout my years in Princeton for this “conservative transition” is far from over. But in short, class of 2011, ‘09, and whomever else will listen, the moral of this story is a hackneyed one – keep an open mind, for a university (even a liberal one like Princeton) is a place where opinions are traded, beliefs reformed, and worldviews realigned. **P**



Emely Pena '09 is a sophomore from the Bronx, NY. She is a resident of Butler College and hopes to major in the classics

RELIGIOUS CONSERVATISM

CATHOLICS AND EVANGELICALS

AT PRINCETON

Brandon McGinley '10

“The way to deal with superstition is not to be polite to it, but to tackle it with all arms, and so rout it, cripple it, and make it forever infamous and ridiculous. Is it, perchance, cherished by persons who should know better? Then their folly should be brought out into the light of day, and exhibited there in all its hideousness until they flee from it, hiding their heads in shame. [...] On the one side was bigotry, ignorance, hatred, superstition, every sort of blackness that the human mind is capable of. On the other side was sense. And sense achieved a great victory.”

So pontificated one of the most celebrated satirists and insufferable egoists in American journalism, H.L. Mencken, in the aftermath of the infamous Scopes Trial of 1925. The fundamentalist Christians of Dayton, Tennessee, won their case but achieved a public relations nightmare hardly paralleled in recent times. And so fundamentalism’s first foray into the tempest of American politics was an unmitigated failure.

But why hearken back to Scopes in order to introduce a discussion of the politics of Catholicism and Evangelicalism at Princeton? And good Lord, why quote H.L. Mencken, one of the great anti-Christian revelers of the last century, in a piece devoted to the discussion of the faith he so despised?

The analogy is surely not on the religious end, as a comparison between the denizens of Dayton during the Roaring Twenties to the contemporary Princeton Evangelical Fellowship would be foolhardy. The contempt of Mencken, however, is clearly paralleled in the modern academy, where faith is too often shunned as superstition. Furthermore, the political history of Evangelicalism and fundamentalism informs us about later national movements and, to an extent, the politics of faith at Princeton.

After receiving a sound editorial beating from journals across the country, fundamentalist and Evangelical Christianity receded into the traditional shadows of quietism and pietism, reserving faith for personal reflection and individual soul-saving, unwilling to expose their deeply held beliefs to a scornful national gaze. Against this backdrop we can examine Catholic and Evangelical intellectualism and political involvement both in the community at large and at Princeton.

To the naked political eye, the so-called “religious right,” which seems to dominate the conservative discussion on traditional social and moral issues, is predominantly Protestant and Evangelical (although it must be clarified that the term “Evangelical” can apply to individuals across a broad spectrum of Christian denominations). As Politics Professor Robert George notes, however, this was not always the case: “Evangelicals came late to the pro-life movement – but now they are equal partners with Catholics in the movement to defend human life,

and many of the most effective leaders of the pro-life movement are Evangelicals.”

This tardiness can be attributed to “strong traditions” of quietism and pietism within Evangelical Christianity, as well as to the profoundly negative experiences stemming from its debut in the political theatre. But once the Republican Party helped this potent electoral bloc to overcome its stage fright, the modern Protestant and Evangelical “religious right” was formed.

Although one easily recognizes the size and noisiness of the national Evangelical political right, it does not take a particularly shrewd observer to recognize that conservative social activism at Princeton, specifically in the Anscombe Society and Princeton Pro-Life, is dominated by Catholic students. This is doubly strange considering that, although Catholicism is a traditional Christian faith, American Catholics represent a political coalition considerably to the left of their Evangelical Protestant brethren.

This invites the following questions. Why are Catholics so much more involved in what is regarded as “conservative” activism at Princeton than in the community at large? And why is there a deficit of Evangelical leadership in these causes compared to what one might expect? A final point of curiosity is whether this phenomenon is unique to Princeton or rather common throughout the academy.

One of the most important distinctions to be made in understanding the flourishing of Catholic activity within the academy is the necessity of engaging in intellectual debate on the terms of the secular intelligentsia. As Professor George describes, “it remains the case that Catholics tend to be a little more comfortable engaging secular liberal arguments because they draw on an intellectual tradition that views moral problems as questions not only of faith, but of natural law.” Reverend David Kim, director of the Manna Christian Fellowship, agrees that “Catholics have had a very robust intellectual tradition resulting from prominent Catholic thinkers such as Thomas Aquinas and have an elevated view of reason compared to Protestants.” In the modern secular academy, only the handiwork of the mind, rather than of the spirit, is considered acceptable.

Therefore, Catholics have the advantage of historic intellectual rigor that allows them to take on even a largely secularized academy on its own terms. This

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needs more staff.**

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Wednesday, Sept. 19 at
9PM on the 4th floor of 48
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is not to say that Evangelical theology is intellectually unsound, but that Protestantism in general does not have a comparable history of appeals to reason, rather than to Biblical revelation, that would allow the comfort that many Catholics can feel under the pressure of secular liberalism. As Rev. Kim notes, “Protestants like Luther have questioned the human ability to reason and have called reason a whore – it will do whatever you ask.”

But under modern pressures this seems to be changing. Professor George adds with confidence that “Evangelicals are appropriating this tradition for themselves – reaching back to the great medieval and early Christian thinkers – and quickly becoming comfortable making natural law arguments.” This trend, however, is hardly universal. Former Anscombe Society founding member Cody May ’07, who is an Evangelical Reformed Baptist, points out that “many Evangelicals [...] think that natural law does not provide an appropriate foundation for ethics or meta-ethics,” opting instead for “Biblical divine command theory” under which “the nature of right and wrong is that which is in accordance with and contrary to, respectively, the commands of God.” But in the secular academy, such argumentation is and will continue to be strictly out-of-bounds.

Although Professor George notes that “leading Evangelicals have dedicated themselves to making up the deficit in intellectualism by stressing the cooperative relationship of faith and reason, and encouraging an intellectually richer form of Christian faith,” all too often they are treated in the same manner in which Mencken dispatched all faithful Christians. Therefore, within the confines of the academy, it is understandable that Catholics would take leadership roles defending traditional values using a form of reason amenable to their faith for centuries, while Evangelicals may feel more comfortable focusing on more specifically spiritual goals. As such, Jon Keller ’09 describes the mission of the Princeton Evangelical Fellowship, for which he serves as student president, as one of “bringing people to Christ and making disciples.”

The twin traditions of quietism and pietism also reinforce this focus. Keller adds that “we believe primarily in loving God and our neighbor and the profound transformation a life for Christ has. [...] [W]e do not teach politics; we teach discipleship.” Another suggestion, put forth by Anscombe Society and Princeton Pro-Life member Nate Angell ’09, is that “some Evangelical students [...] are wary of being identified with social conservative activism because of the baggage of labels like the ‘Religious Right’ or ‘Christian Fundamentalists’ and the stereotypes associated with them.” Finally, as Keller notes, while both Evangelicalism and Catholicism consist of “many people from many different backgrounds,” the theological consistency coming from the top of the Catholic Church’s unique hierarchical structure may serve as a unifying force.

But at Princeton in particular, it seems that at least the early membership of socially conservative activist groups was determined just as much by chance as by deeper religious and political phenomena. Both May and Jonathan Hwang ’09 describe a similar tale of the founding of the Anscombe Society by a group of “mostly Catholic” friends. Hwang, who is the vice-president of Anscombe and active in the Princeton Evangelical Fellowship, says that they “knew each other through Catholic circles,” so the initial plurality of Catholic students in the leadership was “in-

cidental.” Furthermore, the Society tended to “expand through word of mouth” and naturally through those same “Catholic circles.” In the past year, however, both the membership and the leadership have diversified.

For some, though, the Catholic tone of particularly the Anscombe Society, which as a matter of policy forgoes any religious affiliation, has gone beyond its founding. Not meant as criticisms but as statements of fact, both May and Hwang note that most of the speakers attracted by the Society are Catholic in background, though not necessarily in message. As May puts it, “this is a result largely of the leadership and faculty support being primarily Roman Catholic, but [...] once this trend is started, Evangelicals are less likely on the whole to be drawn to the meetings, [the] lectures, active membership and leadership.” Although the group is not officially Catholic, some view it not surprisingly as *de facto* Catholic. (There is nothing pernicious going on, as some distraught campus liberals might have it; young organizations are understandably homogenous. And in any case, dismissals and rebuttals of Anscombe or Pro-Life messages will have to wrestle with the secularly accessible arguments these groups have marshaled, instead of falling back on an unexamined and thus irresponsible equation of religious affiliation with irrational superstition.)

May also points to the presence and power of the Aquinas House, as well as Catholic scholar Professor Robert George, who “supports and equips students who want to participate in these types of causes on campus.” Professor George notes that “Princeton Pro-Life and Anscombe should probably make a special effort to increase Evangelical participation” and that “the great causes served by PPL and Anscombe [...] unite Evangelicals and Catholics despite their theological differences.”

Professor George asserts, however, that Princeton has the most vibrant Christian community of any university with which he has been affiliated. This is important not only for Christians of all traditions, but for the wellbeing of the university as a whole. Heeding the formidable Christian tradition’s contributions to reasoned reflection can only increase the vibrancy of our political and academic discourse.

There is still much that can be done to reach a stable equilibrium between Catholic and Evangelical involvement in traditional moral and social causes on campus, but there are clear signs of activity in both communities. As Manna Christian Fellowship Director Rev. Kim reflects, “perhaps it is because the Catholics have been doing their work on some of the big issues of our day that we are able to focus on others.” He celebrates the “many areas of overlap” between Catholic and Evangelical concerns and urges that “we ought to work together for the welfare of our society and world.”

And that, my dear Mencken, is anything but superstition. **P**



Brandon McGinley is a sophomore from Pittsburg, Pennsylvania.

THE CONSERVATIVE READER

THE ESSENTIAL READING LIST FOR ALL COLLEGE CONSERVATIVES

Stefan McDaniel '08

"You said I was not serious about being an anarchist."

"There are degrees of seriousness... I have never doubted that you were perfectly sincere in this sense, that you thought what you said well worth saying, that you thought a paradox might wake men to a neglected truth."

Gregory stared at him steadily and painfully.

"And in no other sense...do you think me serious? You think me a flaneur who lets fall occasional truths. You do not think that in a deeper, a more deadly sense, I am serious"

Syme struck his stick violently on the stones of the road.

"Serious!" he cried. "Good Lord! Is this street serious? Are these damned Chinese lanterns serious? Is the whole caboodle serious? One comes here and talks a pack of bosh, and perhaps some sense as well, but I should think very little of a man who didn't keep something in the background of his life that was more serious than all this talking—something more serious, whether it was religion or only drink."

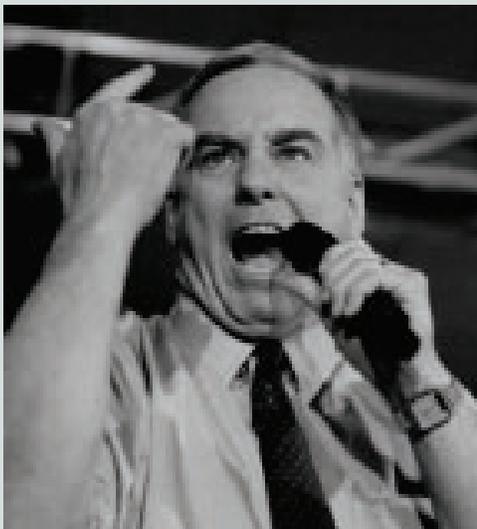
-The Man Who Was Thursday by GK. Chesterton

John Stuart Mill famously called the Tories the 'stupid party'. It would be too reflexively anti-intellectual to treat this as a *compliment*, but certainly the allegation should trouble no conservative's repose. Unfortunately, many seem to fear that this allegation tells damnably against us, and so react with rabidly proud stupidity, or by making the ludicrous suggestion that all *really* smart people are conservatives.

This is not necessary. We may grant that the clear majority of the well educated, even the clear majority of the intelligent, tend towards liberalism. We may duly admire a man like Mill's considerable mental gifts and achievements and admit that the mental castles he builds are more beautiful and better planned than anything within our capacity even to dream. But we should feel free to note that our little shanties, however ragged, actually exist and may be lived in. Any real democrat respects the dignity of the generality of men enough to let them run their own affairs, and the generality of men are, for better and for worse, very different from John Stuart Mill. Politics is a messy, practical, very human affair, and mere intelligence, considered only as the power to reckon rapidly or to theorize grandly, is of limited value in a sphere where sheer experience counts more.

That said, it remains the case that we shall be regularly asked to produce our 'principles' for inspection before we are admitted to civil debate. So long as we steer clear of ideology, then, no harm can come of reflection.

Many dimensions of the conservative outlook are captured by the books listed below, but first a summary answer to the question, "What does it mean to be a conservative?" Strange as it may seem, I firmly believe that political conservatism is, at its core,



Angry? Frustrated?

Tell us what you're
thinking...

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nothing more than thought and coordinated action put at the service of love. Yes, love. A conservative dislikes and distrusts the impersonal, mechanistic but necessary evil of the State but loves that tremendous network of human relationships vaguely called “civil society.” He loves subsidiary institutions (the families, clubs, teams and churches) because they socialize, civilize and educate men in a thousand and one ways, and give them a sense of identity, responsibility and independence. This deep, abiding love most properly eventuates in good, honest laughter, the sign of joyful habituation to this mad and beautiful world of Man. The shrill bitterness in so much conservative writing is regrettable and suggests that many of us are, like some of our liberal friends, forgetting that there is much more to life than politics. Fanatical devotion to party politics suggests that a man is looking for something, anything to deal with his existential boredom. Most conservatives will have dramas and fascinations on a far grander level to occupy their time and energy.

A Portable Conservative Reader (Russell Kirk)

This anthology of classic conservative texts is, by now, itself something of a classic. It begins with the musings of the Old Whig himself, Edmund Burke, attacking the logic of the French Revolution, the first and paradigmatic mass attempt at implementing utopian ideology. A particular treat for those dismayed by the apparently compelling views of Peter Singer is Benjamin Disraeli’s straightforward and entirely effective attack on the utilitarianism of his own day. His arguments remain wholly solvent against contemporary utilitarianism, which is by far the most straightforwardly stupid and useless “philosophy” to be embraced by any substantial number of apparently intelligent men.

The Human Condition (Hannah Arendt)

Perhaps because her most famous piece (Eichmann in Jerusalem) was written for the *New Yorker* and she loved Continental philosophy, one is wont to think that Arendt was a woman of the Left. But although it would be misleading to call her a woman of the Right either, the vision she lays out in *The Human Condition* should warm the conservative heart. Her obvious love of life and its bounty, of Aristotelian virtue, personal freedom, and the “world,” meaning the distinctly human, more-than-biological realm of history, myth, religion, and art, the realm of great men, words, works and deeds, should inspire the level of affection and reverence for the human project that is appropriate for those who take freedom seriously.

Democracy in America (Alexis de Tocqueville)

Alexis de Tocqueville was one of the most intelligent and perceptive men who ever wrote, and *Democracy in America* remains one of the best books about either democracy or America ever written. Read it.

On Hunting (Roger Scruton)

The polymath Roger Scruton gives the lie to the claim that conservatives must be stupid. More importantly, he is as funny as hell. Scruton has written many excellent books explicitly on conservatism, but none of them is as compelling an expression of the conservative mind as this. In this ancient pastime, Scruton finds a perfect point of departure to explain the joys and philosophical significance of being part of something larger than oneself and to

treat of the uniquely humanizing effect of tradition, of hierarchy, rules and pageantry. The brief and delightful *On Hunting* perfectly illustrates the point that conservatism, because un-ideological, is best approached indirectly.

Four Quartets (TS Eliot)

These poems are beautiful, deep philosophical meditations on time, death, life, eternity, history, faith, love...and all that.

Ten Philosophical Mistakes (Mortimer Adler)

Facts are more important than theories and common sense matters more than philosophy, but that is no excuse for letting our opponents believe that the goddess “reason” is on their side while our views are based on vague, poetical graspings. Behind many of the ideologies of the age lie philosophical assumptions about fundamental metaphysics, about mind, matter, freedom, human nature, human rationality and agency that are, at best, debatable. The late, truly great popularizer of philosophy, Mortimer J. Adler pinpoints and refutes ten characteristic errors of modern thought, tracing them to their sources such as Hume, Descartes and Locke—all giants with whom a philosophically-minded conservative should be very proud to wrestle, but even keener to defeat.

Screwtape Proposes a Toast (CS. Lewis)

C.S. Lewis’ follow-up to his classic *Screwtape Letters* is not nearly as well known as it should be. In it he skewers modern banality, mediocrity, conformity and joyless sensualism, drawing a crucial distinction between the conformist and amoral behavior that democracies *like* and the virtuous, independent behavior that in reality *sustains democracies*.

The Naked Public Square (Richard John Neuhaus)

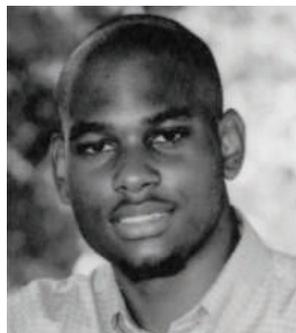
The incomparable Richard John Neuhaus’ classic treatise on the proper relations between religion and politics in a pluralistic society remains a must-read.

The Napoleon of Notting Hill (G.K. Chesterton)

This delightful novel, which reportedly inspired Mahatma Gandhi to fight the British, illustrates the heroic grandeur of local patriotism, clubs, insignia and Other Excellent Things.

The Man Who Was Thursday: A Nightmare (G.K. Chesterton)

Apart from being hugely entertaining and funny, this most popular of Chesterton’s novels represents the author’s existential agon with the forces of madness and evil which constantly seem poised to destroy us. **P**



Stefan McDaniel is a senior religion major from Kingston, Jamaica

TAKING TIGER MOUNTAIN

HOW PRINCETON'S PROGRAM IN CHINA HAS BOUGHT ACCESS AT THE PRICE OF ACADEMIC FREEDOM

Matthew Schmitz '08

The thaw of ice-encrusted Old Nassau this year was a reminder of the less visible yet more drastic warming in relations between Princeton and China, America's one-time Cold War adversary. Over the last twenty years the University and the Communist state have forged increasingly close bonds exemplified by Princeton in Beijing, or PiB, the University's flagship language-immersion program. PiB sends scores of students to the Chinese capital to learn its language and culture. But as foreign officials have censored course materials and barred entry for Princeton professors, the Chinese policy of punishing its academic critics has hit home. Princetonians have discovered that in a land of knock-off polos and pirated DVDs, the price of free speech can be surprisingly high.

In the fall of 2004, President Tilghman visited China as part of a tour of Asia. The visit was intended to demonstrate that the once-brittle relationship had become a fluid, friendly exchange. Her visit, however, met with sharp criticism from some on Princeton's East Asian Studies faculty, who faulted her for not addressing China's efforts to control professors' speech. Professor Perry Link, the co-director of Princeton in Beijing, criticized Tilghman for not discussing with Chinese officials their 1996 decision to permanently bar him from entering the country. Link's exclusion from the country is widely

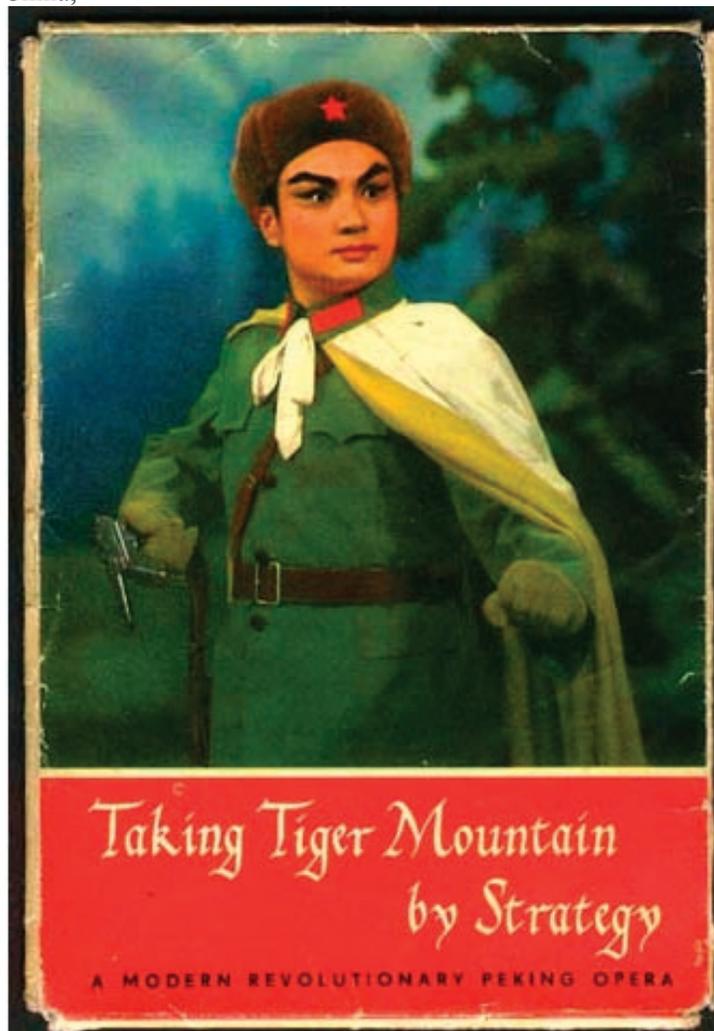
viewed as retribution for his vocal criticism of the Communist regime. Instead of pressing Chinese officials on the decision, Tilghman informed Link that she would be discussing the matter only

the Philadelphian Society, an exclusive religious fraternity dedicated to personal holiness, founded Princeton-in-Peking at the request of the International Young Men's Christian Association. Princeton in Peking operated according to a progressive ethic where religious, educational and scholarly aims were naturally advanced in parallel. In an era when morning Chapel attendance was mandatory for all students, Princeton planted its foot abroad by establishing a religious mission with educational goals. After the decisive victory of Communist forces in 1949, Princeton-in-Peking was forced to move its operations to Taiwan and other Asian countries. To reflect the change in focus, the program was renamed Princeton in Asia.

The University would not reestablish a beachhead in mainland China until the founding of Princeton in Beijing. Perhaps nothing speaks more to the breakdown of old barriers than the sight of the crumbling stone of the Great Wall, or "Changcheng," peppered with preppy Ivy-leaguers intent on snapping Facebook photos. For many of these student-tourists, the

desire to learn the language is based on a steadfast belief that the center of gravity in the global economy is shifting to China.

In a relationship that has long been complicated by factors as varied as communism and colonialism, the latest chapter is one of the most troubled.



with the American ambassador. Some believed Tilghman had passed on a one-time opportunity to speak directly to the Chinese officials that could reinstate Link's right to entry.

Princeton and China shared strong ties long before names like Mao and Malkiel appeared on the scene. In 1905

According to Professor Link, Chinese-American scholars often watch their words and work carefully, fearing retributions against relatives still living in China. Dr. Li Shaomin, a Hong Kong-based professor who received a Ph.D. in sociology from Princeton, was accused of being a spy and detained by the Chinese government. Dr. Shaomin was able to regain his position only by “lying low,” that is, by avoiding criticisms of the regime.

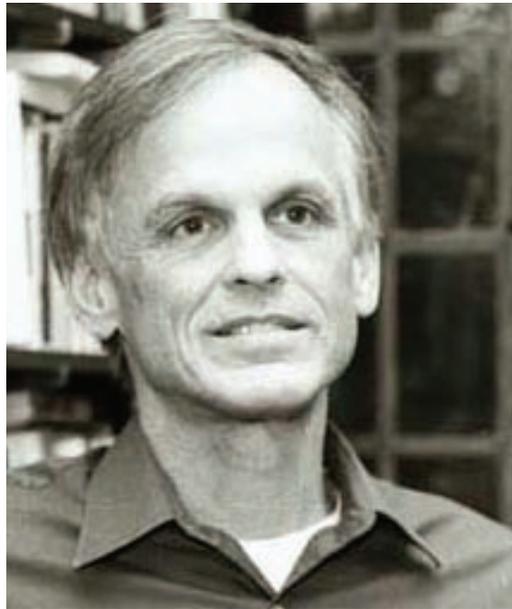
According to a *Princeton Alumni Weekly* article, when Link asked officials why he had been barred from the country, they said, “You know the answer.” Link’s colleague, Professor C.P. Chou, is still allowed in the country despite using texts that displeased officials at Beijing Normal University, Princeton’s partner for the language program. Chou’s program prompted a strong backlash when a former Chinese national who taught for PiB published an attack article about the program called “The Infiltration of American Ideology Through Language, Through the Material of Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language.” The government reacted by banning so much of PiB’s course material that Chou was forced to write a new, non-critical textbook, called, with perhaps a touch of irony, “All Things Considered.”

Even American-based scholars can face career-ending retribution for writing critically of the Chinese government. In any field where firsthand observation is important, the lines distinguishing research field, office and classroom necessarily blur. By consenting to speech restrictions abroad Princeton has gained access to a global power, but only by remaining silent before the sight of torn texts, intimidated faculty, and derailed careers.

Such trans-Pacific injustices could not seem further removed from the quietude of Old Nassau. However, for professors whose research is dependent on the goodwill of a foreign government, success means remembering that anything published will come under as much scrutiny if it was penned on the B-floor or in Beijing.

Though the imperative to bring students abroad must be weighed against

foreign censorship, the increasing speech restrictions on American campuses should give us all pause, especially since we have reason to believe that the two are not unrelated. University administrators who have hesitated to stand up to China, can sometimes seem even less willing to battle student groups that seek to restrict campus



Dr. Link: burnt visas give you so much more

speech. In one startling episode this fall, for example, administrators at Columbia University failed to provide sufficient security to prevent students from rushing the stage and violently disrupting a speech given by a representative of the immigration-enforcement group The Minutemen.

Concerns that the University has grown too close to the Chinese regime boiled over in another campus incident in the spring of 2006. The crisis emerged when the International Center erected a photograph display in Frist Campus Center to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the establishment of the Tibet Autonomous Region. What should have been an educational display sparked outrage among faculty and staff for portraying the Chinese presence in Tibet in highly positive terms without acknowledging the human-rights abuses that have stained China’s record in Tibet.

The International Center obtained the photographs from the Asian Cultural Club of Edison, NJ, reported the *Daily Princetonian*. Shawa asserted that, “the

Center is using [University] resources in a propaganda campaign for the Chinese government.” Professor Link also met with Paula Chow, the head of the International Center, to urge her to take down the exhibit. Chow immediately acquiesced to their demands by removing the display altogether. In this situation there is a question of whether the display’s bias or the decision to squelch it did the most violence to free academic exchange.

In an incident that crystallized the problems of free and fair speech, the University seemed to act with little deliberation in the exhibits’ erection or removal. First, Princeton’s perceived deference to the Chinese government apparently led to an uncritical acceptance of propaganda photos. One sees a sad form of irony in the possibility that the disregard for free speech fostered by the deepening of Princeton-China love, contributed to the International Center’s decision to dismantle the display. A course that would have reflected a concern for free speech would have supplemented the display with additional pictures rather than dismantle it. Instead, the University moved to appease a group that objected to their speech, just as they have done in China when criticized by Communist officials.

By declining to advocate for faculty members overseas, administrators have enabled an unsettling curtailment of academic freedom at home. As the balance tips toward tighter restrictions on what we and our professors can read and say, the Orange Bubble has started to appear hardly as impenetrable as one might like. Torn texts, invalid visas, and dismantled displays are the damning artifacts of Princeton’s indifference. Supporters of academic freedom will find it troubling to think that some lessons learned by innocents abroad may end up employed back home. **P**



Matthew Schmitz '08 is an avid sportsman and the Weekly Projects Administrator for the Student Volunteers Council. He hails from O'Neill, NE.

WRITING SEMINARS

THE PRINCETON WRITING PROGRAM REVISITED

Leon Furchtgott '09

The Princeton Freshman Writing Seminar, the only core course required of all Princeton students, holds noble aspirations—namely, to teach the art (and science) of academic writing to incoming freshmen. But unlike at such peer institutions as Columbia or the University of Chicago, whose core curricula contain some of the most highly regarded courses and are considered crucial to a liberal arts education, at Princeton the required writing seminar is reputed to be little more than a form of academic hazing—a difficult, hardly inspiring, usually regrettable, and often useless requirement to be fulfilled before starting one's academic career in earnest. But is it really so useless?

To many, the writing seminars seem to taint the overall Princeton intellectual experience. Addressing the incoming Class of 2010 during the 2006 Opening Exercises, President Shirley Tilghman introduced Princeton as a university where one could write poetry with Paul Muldoon or cure malaria with Manuel Llinás. "Pursue your passions, venture where you have never ventured before, pace yourself, serve others, and have lots of fun," she urged students. Tilghman failed, however, to mention that the grandiose academic career she was offering them would begin, not with a glamorous course taught by a famous professor, but with a burdensome one rarely taught by faculty.

Tilghman's speech isn't just an empty boast, however; Princeton's pride in having real professors teaching substantive courses is well deserved. But the Writing Program seems to be the exception. As Professor John Fleming once observed, its faculty, consisting largely of recent Ph.D.s unaffiliated with any department, is "basically guaranteed second-class citizenship." This, for one of the largest academic programs on campus.

Writing seminar topics are problematic as well.

While earlier generations of Princeton students would learn to write while studying Shakespeare or Greek mythology, today's freshmen are offered such academically suspect course options as "The Archeology of Sex and Gender" or "Global Pop Music."

The primary goal of the writing seminars is to turn students away from superficial writing consisting of summary and exposition, and push them towards scholarly work rigorously exploring interesting questions. This laudable goal, however, is in tension if not contradiction with the manner in which the seminars are taught. Asking interesting academic questions requires at least some knowledge of the subject at hand, which presupposes some degree of immersion in the discipline. But writing seminars spend more class time working on writing skills than absorbing significant academic content. In addition, although the writing seminars wish to help

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students bridge the gap between high-school writing--typified by the five-paragraph essay--and a more personal and flexible academic style, they regularly resort to the same high-school-formulaic elements: thesis, motive, complication, and stitching, among others.

Centralized, required courses taught mainly by junior lecturers, the writing seminars thus do not fit the Princeton ideal. But these objections do not make a decisive case against the program.

Ultimately, it is necessary for the Princeton Writing Program to exist and function in the best possible way. Princeton faced a writing crisis in the 1990s, to the extent the faculty voted unanimously to go to a system of writing seminars in 2000. American secondary education generally does not prepare students for college-level

writing, and writing seminars are a necessary attempt to remedy the problem. Unlike chemistry or history, basic writing can and ought to be taught to all students.

The Princeton Writing Program, despite all its unsavory aspects, does manage to help students with their writing, an area where previous programs have failed. According to Kerry Walk, the director of the Writing Program, around 80% of students achieve the program's writing goals. In an interview she added that "students may be surprised to learn that only 4% of freshmen rate the overall quality of their Writing Seminar as 'very poor' or 'poor' (1 or 2 on a 5-point scale), whereas the vast majority—usually around 83%—rate it as 'good' or 'excellent' (4 or 5 on a 5-point scale)." The writing seminars as a whole have a rating of 4.2, which is the average rating of all Princeton courses. This is an impressive statistic for a required course.

The relative success of the writing seminars can be partially attributed, undoubtedly, to the Writing Program's emphasis on small classes and individual attention. This constitutes a marked improvement on the system of W courses, which was in place in the 1980s and 1990s. The W courses were taught in a lecture-precept format, with famous professors lecturing and graduate students leading precepts. But the emphasis in W courses had been on covering a topic rather than teaching writing, and they had no consistent goals or standards. Students and their writing suffered under this system, and although the



The Princeton Writing Program at 91 Prospect

and substantive material—it would be absurd to return to them. The Princeton Writing Program is considered one of the best in the country, and in spite of the "negative buzz," it is effective in improving the writing of most students.

The program, and its seminars, would be vastly improved by a clear articulation of scope and goals. Understanding the "elements of the academic essay"—what

Kerry Walk views as the language of writing—instead of developing a recipe for writing essays, is perhaps the most important goal of the seminars. But it is also, unfortunately, lost on many students who leave the seminars faithful to formulae.

Perhaps the most salient negative effect of this misplaced emphasis has been to shift focus from filling out

The Princeton Writing Program, despite all its unsavory aspects, does manage to help students with their writing.

an argument to merely furnishing requisite essay elements. Religion professor Martha Himmelfarb has, for instance, noted a significant improvement in the quality and clarity

of students' papers since the establishment of the writing seminars. But she also sees "a significant number of papers that argue for a thesis by providing three or four examples in support of it while ignoring all evidence to the contrary." For her the problem is contained but significant: "While I doubt that any teacher of a writing seminar tells students to ignore evidence that doesn't fit a thesis, it is a problem that a significant minority of students take away this impression." This particular unintended effect may reflect the seminars' emphasis on building a strong thesis—which may lead some students to think that opposing arguments are a sign of poor writing. But this, like the program's other weaknesses, is not beyond remedy.

Reluctantly, then, we must accept the writing program as a necessary part of the Princeton education. Without a question most find the seminars inconvenient, not only for their excessive papers and sometimes risible topics, but because of their longstanding reminder to us that even college students at elite universities lack basic academic writing skills. Weathering C's on papers or having to circle topic sentences may be painfully humiliating for any self-confident freshman, but we must realize that the drastic and varying effective measures of the Princeton Writing Program are a necessary, if remediable, evil. ■



Leon Furchtgott is a sophomore from Bethesda, Maryland. He is a Physics major active with Chabad.

SLANDER AND RETREAT

THE OBSERVER'S ANTICS AND NASSAU HALL'S FECKLESS RESPONSE

Rick Morgan '09

As students across campus were settling into the rhythm of a new semester, Princeton's sophomores were finally beginning to recover from the exhilarating rush of eating club bickers and initiations festivities. For the first two weeks of spring semester, classes and problem sets receded into the distant corners of our consciences, and all our thoughts were directed towards the rumors and news emanating from our beloved Prospect Avenue. This year, while veteran revelers of each club meandered around campus welcoming their new initiates, our university's arcane and sacred traditions drew more scrutiny than the mere silent scorn of Nassau Hall. This year, the year of our Lord 2007, was the year the media decided that the inner-workings of the Princeton eating clubs were worthy of national attention.

The antics of the so-called professional media started when a *New York Times* reporter attempted to embed herself into Tower Club's pickups and photograph the event for posterity, or at least the next morning's education section. Fortunately, the members of this fine club were not fooled by the ruse. Amongst the raucous welcoming and shaving-creaming of those lucky greenhorns who successfully completed bicker, the reporter was driven away by a chanting refrain of "no f---ing comment!" and "Wall Street Journal!"

But the media would not be deterred. With the *New York Times* beaten back and in dismayed disarray, the *New York Observer* stepped into the breach to enlighten New Yorkers and the world about the crucial events occurring on the sleepy avenue south of Nassau Street. With the help of a failed Ivy bickeree who apparently felt that the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune had unjustly descended upon him, the *Observer*

resorted to unethical journalistic trickery to publish a near libelous "exposé" of the eating clubs. Printing unsuspecting students' names, including a damning photo of two Cottage members with the faces only barely shadowed over, and unfairly using one-sided sources, *Observer* reporter Spencer Morgan (no relation to this article's author) did everything he could to portray Princeton's eating clubs in as unflattering a light as possible.

One obvious question that should be asked in light of the media's interest in our campus's

events is why a journalist would see our culinary institutions as newsworthy subjects. Perhaps it was simply a slow news day, perhaps the *New York Times* grew bored of trading national security secrets for quick journalistic gratification, or perhaps the *Observer* was worried that their coverage of the Anna Nicole Smith "story" was starting to lose reader appeal. (In case you didn't hear, she died.) Speaking of which, the only story which could possibly rival the patently absurd un-newsworthy nature of a story about Princeton eating clubs is the macabre marathons of national coverage of the drug-addled, attention-seeking model's tragic passing. However interesting these issues may be, the dilapidated and pitiful state of our national media is a discussion for another time

A more important question for those of us at Princeton is why the administration responded so meekly to the *Observer's* encroachments upon our campus. When approached by reporter Spencer Morgan, Princeton spokesperson Cass Cliatt flatly responded that "the university does not regulate the eating clubs.... The clubs are managed and operated by their membership. It's important to understand they're independent establishments, similar to a restaurant."

Yes, technically, this is true. The university does not run or manage the eating clubs, and there are a slew of reasons why this is a good standard policy. This university's administrations have always seen the clubs as potential liabilities, and the common wisdom among the admissions staff is that their reputations for elitism and quasi-racism drive away accepted applicants and lower Princeton's yield. Therefore, instead of emphasizing Prospect's pluses, the university has effectively adopted a policy of gentle disownment. See no evil, hear no

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evil, speak no evil.

But just imagine, if you will, President Tilghman's response if some media outlet had just insulted and libeled one of her sacrosanct, politically-correct institutions, like the LGBT Center or an ethnic association. There is no doubt that the response would have been aggressive and even pugnacious, and the offending media source, denounced as bigoted and close-minded. In the opinion of this author, such a response would have been not only justified, particularly if the media's use of sources were as unprofessional and unethical as the *Observer's*, but also vitally necessary to maintaining Princeton's prestige.

Princeton's worth is determined in large part by how people perceive this school. However accurate our more nobly humanistic hopes for it might be, a Princeton diploma is a product. And just like any company, this university must protect its product's image by protecting its own. Those who run this fine institution have a duty to protect its organizations and

members, and the Tilghman administration failed in this respect. The fact is, even though the eating clubs do not officially belong

to the university, they are inseparable from Princeton, even finally warranting financial aid from a begrudging administration. When the eating clubs look bad in the press, it makes all of Princeton look bad. If the university allows the media to portray the eating clubs as elitist, sexist, and racist, like it or not, that portrayal will be brought to bear on Princeton itself.

Could it be that the administration's disdain for the eating clubs blinded them to this fact? It is no surprise that many of Nassau Hall's lofty officeholders sympathize in some ways with the *Observer* reporter and his wannabe Ivy interlocutor. For these left-wing stalwarts, eating clubs generally, and the bicker process in particular, are anachronistic vestiges of an evil past that would long ago have perished in the name of progressivism were it not for tirelessly retrograde alumni and student supporters.

But are the bicker clubs elitist? Well, yes, they are. Of the ten fine dining establishments lining the Street, five use a selective bicker process to admit students who they feel would contribute the most to their club. Anyone who chooses to apply to bicker must surely realize that his admission will be determined by the whims of a club's members. The embittered Ivy bickeree who aided and abetted the *Observer's* ambush journalism should have accepted that he was submitting himself to petty Ivy judgments and taken his rejection in stride, instead of viewing it as a personal insult worthy of media attention.

However, the fact that half of the eating clubs are selective does not make the system unfair. For those turned off by clubs that take members based on connections and a week's worth of humiliations, the sign-ins remain.

But the eating club system is by no means a two-tiered hierarchy with the bicker clubs on top and the sign-in clubs serving as a last line of defense. Most people choose their sign-in

club without having already been hosed, and these other five clubs are every bit as good as the bicker clubs (though Charter is clearly the grandest of them all). There is something for everyone on Prospect Avenue, and instead of buying into false stereotypes, the university should embrace the positive qualities of the eating clubs, if for no other reason than their reliable permanence to Princeton.

While the administration and the various Deans can frown on what they see as the decadence and depravity emanating outwards from Prospect Avenue, unless they intend on implementing a gung-ho program of prohibition and mandated temperance, drinking is here to stay. For all their faults, eating clubs serve a purpose far beyond mere outlets for eating. Instead of a plethora of frat houses, hazings, illicit in-dorm drinking, etc., you've got the bulk of a university's underage drinking isolated to a location off-campus but not so far away that driving is involved, controlled by bouncers and club officers,

and accessible to EMTs in worst-case scenarios. In addition, most of the club drinking is confined to beer rather than hard liquor, and any inebriated (or so-

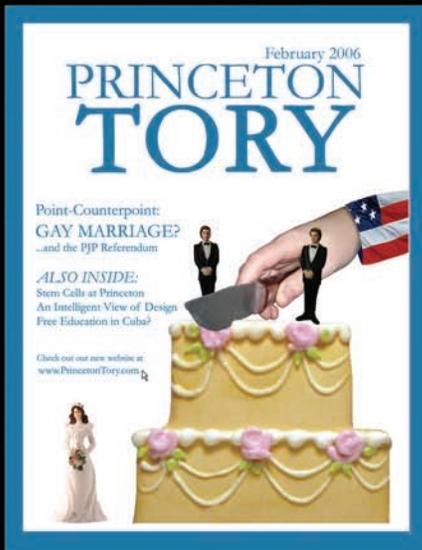
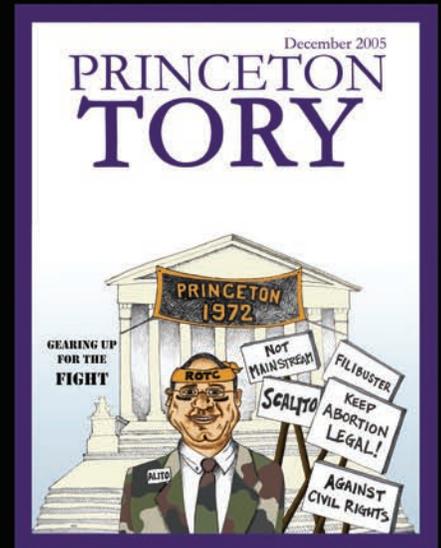
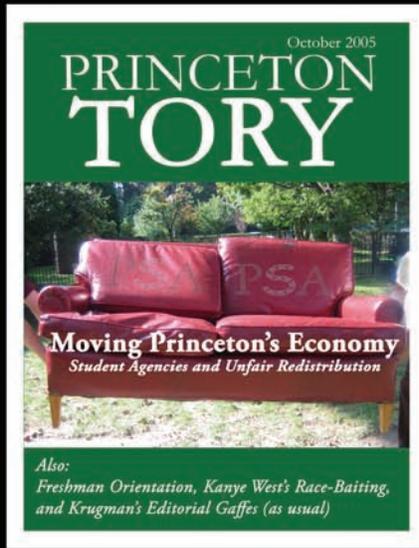
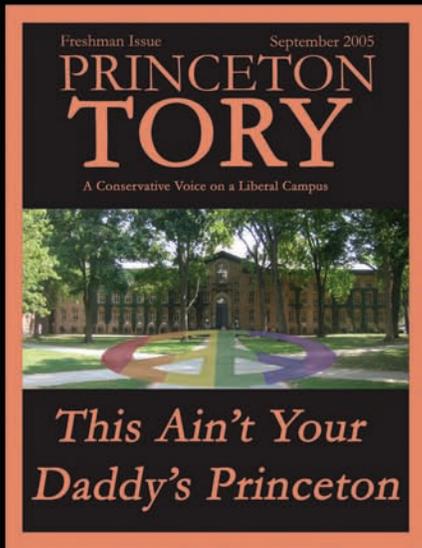
ber) activity is channeled into dancing and conversations under the supervision of peers and officials

When the failed Ivy bickeree spilled forth his alleged grievances to the *New York Observer*, he was playing the role of the naïve fool who was manipulated by an opportunistic reporter with an axe to grind. In this case, the reporter probably set out with the intention of vilifying the eating clubs, and used the emotional immaturity and raw disappointment of one young man to lend his article an aura of objectivity. Sadly, the Tilghman administration allowed this amateurish act of journalistic mud-racking to go uncontested. For potential applicants, the negative portrayal of the eating clubs will only serve to reinforce the untrue stereotypes of this university that the administration should be working to counter. Perhaps next time Tilghman and her cohorts will defend the institutions and traditions that truly define the Princeton experience, for those both inside and outside our campus community. ■

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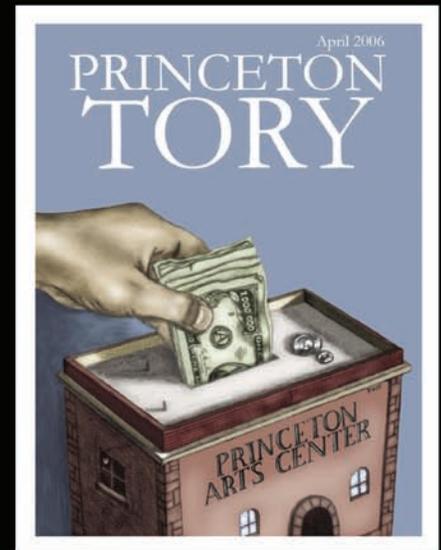


Rick Morgan is a sophomore from Vero Beach, FL. He is a history major and a member of the esteemed Princeton Charter Club. He serves as Production Manager of the Tory.



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