

American Studies killed by neglect

It's an old story, and unfortunately for University students, an increasingly familiar one.

Call it a casualty or a victim of bureaucratic red tape. You can even label it a result of inadequate funding. Call it what you will, but the American Studies program is just one more in a list of academic departments suffering at the University.

There are a variety of reasons why the four-year-old American Studies program will no longer be offered. Budgetary shortfalls have caused the University administration to make drastic cutbacks in the last few years. "Slicing off the fat" is what it's called. Cull down academic departments as much as possible.

Sometimes, though, the administration's carving knife slips and a viable, healthy department gets axed.

Nobody is savoring the demise of the American Studies program. It's pretty much a case of the shrugging of administrative shoulders and the powers that be saying, "Oh well. We regret it, but we have no other choice."

There's a large opinion gap on the importance of the American Studies program. Some point to the relatively low number of majors (60) as a sign of a small department deserving to be cut. But there are plenty of students in other majors who take American Studies courses throughout the year.

Bottom line: Should the American Studies department have been dropped?

From this corner, the answer is no. We see the need for program cuts. We recognize that as long as the current level of higher education funding remains as is (somewhere near the "pathetic" level), there has to be a tightening of the financial belt. Administrators have tough choices to make, such as what should be cut, and what should be spared.

Still, the American Studies department should not have been cut. Given the relatively low cost of running the program and the fact that most of the classes needed for a AS degree are already sections in other departments, another decision could have been made. The savings the administration expects to receive by ending the AS program just won't materialize.

It is ironic the University should have to cut its own programs. The reason for higher education is knowledge, and by taking away potential interests from students, the University is only hurting its credibility. This is self-cannibalism of the worst kind.

When will the lawmakers, both locally and nationally, realize the importance of higher education and the need to make it accessible to everyone? By forcing colleges and universities to slit their own throats for financial reasons, we risk becoming a society in which only the rich elite gets educated.

The loss of the American Studies program is only a symptom of the entire state higher education disease.



Letters

Theft

Citizens of our community should be aware of a theft from the New Zone Art Gallery that took place over the weekend of April 14-15. Sculptures by Kirsten Henjum and Debbie Cornitus were taken.

It is difficult enough trying to make a living as an artist without having to deal with theft. All members of our community are hurt by theft and vandalism. As artists, we feel personally, emotionally and spiritually violated.

We would appreciate the return of these pieces as they are irreplaceable.

Kirsten Henjum
Debbie Cornitus
Eugene

Cinco de Mayo

In the May 2 article "Student team monitoring parties," Wayne Parker refers to last year's May 5 riot as the "Cinco de Mayo riot." This bears an implication that the riot was a result of Cinco de Mayo and perpetuates the exploited stereotypes of Cinco de Mayo and the Latino people as a whole.

Every year, businesses including stores and restaurants use this annual event to promote sales at the expense of exploiting the true significance of Cinco de Mayo. The riots had nothing to do with Cinco de Mayo.

These last few days, that will go on through the weekend, will be a celebration of diversity and Cinco de Mayo. We would like to see a cultivation of respect for other cultures and would like people to be sensitive in the language they use when referring to different cultures and cultural events.

This weekend, we are celebrating an authentic Cinco de Mayo, for it is a celebration of our culture. We would like the University and the whole community to celebrate with us remembering that Cinco de Mayo is an occasion for celebration, not for exploitation.

Edward Beanes
MEChA

Violent bugs

Yes Gary Darby, *The Simpsons* (ODE, April 27) does portray abusive behavior in a humorous way. I don't deny I find it more than a little amusing, but you've missed the whole point.

Satire makes its statement by exaggerating the subject to the point of absurdity, quite often crossing over what some consider the lines of offensiveness. Satire works best when it cuts close to the bone; no one is ever upset by bad satire.

Matt Groening is showing us how stupid some of our behaviors are by giving us *The Simpsons*. The family isn't really that far removed from reality; we see a lot of ourselves in their actions and that's why it's funny. Bart is just an extension of any bratty little kid you've had to deal with, so we can identify with the problems he creates for the rest of his family. I know I created a few problems for my family when I was a kid.

Anyway, my point is give Bart a break. *The Simpsons* is nothing more than good satire and a break from the monotony of everyday life.

P.S. If you want to see some really abusive cartoons, watch some old Bugs Bunny sometime.

Frank Phillips
Physics

Bunchers

I'd like to take a moment to address pet owners who are also in favor of animal research. If you think the cruel experiments are conducted only on "special" animals bred for that particular purpose, you are dead wrong. In fact, your own pet is in danger of being one of those millions of animals researchers mutilate yearly in the name of science.

"Bunchers," people who steal dogs and cats and then sell them to animal dealers who in turn sell them to laboratories, are in the Eugene area. Last October the sale of pets to dealers from bunchers became a felony, but the enforcement of this new law is minimal.

Since attending the University, I have been astounded at the number of "lost pet" signs posted on campus — futile attempts to recover animals that may well be on their way to another university's laboratory.

So if you think that the cruelty of animal research isn't a part of your life, remember that it could very well become a part of your pet's life.

Misha Dunlap
Eugene

Diminish

Gay and Lesbian Pride Week is very important to a lot of individuals. It represents the opportunity for those who are gay and lesbian to actively voice their opinions, frustrations and emotions. It is also a time for positive light to be shed on an issue that is enveloped in negative attitudes.

"Being gay not 'bad' but not easy" (ODE, April 25) quickly eliminated any positive feelings that could have been evoked in last week's coverage of gay and lesbian lifestyles. The frank reporting of Tadd Tobias' and Ed Moreno's sexual activities described with the word "rowdy" was absolutely unnecessary.

One has to question the judgment call of the reporter to write the statement in the article, and the professionalism of the editor to allow the statement to go to print. I can safely assume if I was interviewed about my relationship with my fiancé, descriptions of our sex life and how "rowdy" it is would not be printed.

The purpose of last week's activities and articles was to ease homophobia and sexual discrimination for all who feel they are oppressed. Gays and lesbians are struggling to have their choice of lifestyle accepted and acknowledged by society and positive coverage will hopefully ease their struggle. It is unfortunate that the decision of a reporter and editor can diminish the gains that are already so difficult to achieve.

Beth McKnight
Journalism
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