

Educational system can lead to deception, 'hollow credentialism'

In "Book smarts remain most valid in evaluating students" (July 20, ODE), Scheid argues against critics of the present grading system and in favor of the construction of grades as a measurement of "book smarts." Scheid's primary error is that he argues against a straw-person critic of the present grading system. The main problem of grading as it currently stands is not that book smarts are inapplicable to the so-called real world (which is all too often thought of as the professional world) but that current evaluative methods do not give an accurate picture of even book smarts. Multiple choice tests, the most infamous being standardized tests such as the SAT, are a more apt measure of preparation specifically for standardized tests and talent for filling in the proper bubbles while under pressure rather than any sort of conceptual mastery.

GUEST COMMENTARY

Scheid goes on to argue against the notion that our current grading system encourages cheating, explaining that those who cheat truly will not prosper because their methods will be ineffective in their roles as employees. While it may be the case that employers place their workers under a great deal of scrutiny, lest their profits be siphoned, we still cannot maintain the notion that this sort of social pressure has largely eliminated cheating in the professional world. Put simply, cheaters do prosper. This is especially evident if we look to

the epidemic of white-collar crime. In *The Rich Get Richer, The Poor Get Prison*, Jeffrey Reiman estimates the monetary and social costs of white collar crime, as are measured in US dollars, human injuries and deaths, respectively, to far eclipse those of street crime. Indeed, crime does pay, and we learn this first in pursuit of grades rather than currency.

Scheid finally argues that the present grading system is effective in teaching youth to "follow directions and respect authority." Future white-collar criminals aside, I have to concede this point to Scheid, but I ask, is this really a good thing? While obedience would be a virtue if authority were infallible and the status quo were the best possible societal arrangement, history has shown this not to be the case; rather, we have seen some of the worst atrocities committed in the name of authority with the justification that one was "just following orders." If we are to transform society into a form that is more humane and more just, we must begin with a critical analytic mindset so that present social structures may be judged, refined, and creatively replaced. If such a mindset is to be cultivated on a wide scale, we need to begin in our educational system. The present regimented system of grades based largely on standardized tests cultivates not this critical mindset but rather hollow credentialism, on one hand, and opportunistic deception, i.e. cheating, on the other.

Andy Kohnen graduated from the University in 2004.

In physician-assisted suicide issue, Oregon law gives doctors power

Freedom is so little understood in this "land of the free" that it is often confused with its opposite. Case in point: Oregon's 1994 Death With Dignity Act, which a federal appeals court recently shielded from attack by U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft.

The law permits what has come to be known as physician-assisted suicide. It and the appellate ruling have been hailed as victories for patient autonomy and the right to commit suicide. Indeed, the *New York Times* editorialized. "The voters of Oregon acted with great humanity when they decided to allow terminally ill people to determine when they have suffered enough."

But did the voters really do that? A closer look at the law shows they did not.

The law only allows a patient who is expected to die within six months to ask his doctor for lethal drugs. The doctor can say no, as he has every right to do. But since a patient cannot end his own life without the doctor's consent, the law is no milestone for freedom.

What happens when a patient makes such a request of his doctor? The state's

requirements are "stringent," according to Dr. Peter Goodwin, a long-time family physician and an emeritus associate professor in the Department of Family Medicine at Oregon Health and Science University. They include, Goodwin writes, "the attending physician's diagnosis/prognosis and determination that the patient is informed, capable and acting voluntarily."

Note that the attending physician must be convinced that the patient knows what he's doing. Whether or not you think doctors have a special ability to see the absence of volition in an action (I don't), this requirement is hardly consistent with "allow(ing) terminally ill people to determine when they have suffered enough."

The law also states, "A consulting physician must examine the patient and the medical records and concur with the attending physician's diagnosis/prognosis and assessment of the patient."

Dr. Goodwin comments: "If the attending physician or the consulting physician thinks the patient may suffer from a psychological disorder causing impaired judgment, the physician must refer the patient for evaluation and counseling. No medication may be prescribed unless it is certain the patient's judgment is not impaired" (emphasis added).

What terminally ill patient in great pain could not be said to have impaired

judgment? What's the difference between a judgment that's impaired and one that clashes with the doctor's? In a conflict between a patient and a physician, who prevails? The doctor, of course. How can there be "death with dignity" when the patient must humbly petition the doctors, then meekly wait for a unanimous ruling?

Whatever one thinks of the legal merits of Attorney General Ashcroft's attempt to use federal anti-drug laws to thwart Oregon's voters, physician-assisted suicide is a fraud. As Dr. Thomas Szasz writes in his book *Fatal Freedom: The Ethics and Politics of Suicide*, "The term 'physician-assisted suicide' (PAS) is intrinsically mendacious. The physician is the principal, not the assistant. He determines who qualifies for the treatment and prescribes the drug for it."

The Oregon law is about giving power to doctors. If individual freedom were the concern, we would simply repeal the drug laws and recognize each adult's right to buy any kind of drugs.

Why empower doctors? Suicide isn't a medical issue. It's a moral issue.

Sheldon Richman is senior fellow at *The Future of Freedom Foundation*, author of *Tethered Citizens: Time to Repeal the Welfare State*, and editor of *The Freeman* magazine. srichman@conwaycorp.net

Kentucky Fried Chicken should improve treatment of chickens

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals' recent undercover investigation of a Kentucky Fried Chicken slaughterhouse run by the second-largest chicken company in the U.S. has opened my eyes to the reality of the chicken industry.

GUEST COMMENTARY

Workers were filmed stomping on birds, kicking them, and slamming them against floors and walls. They also ripped off chickens' beaks, twisted off their heads, spat tobacco into their eyes and mouths, spray-painted their faces, and tied their legs together for laughs — all while still fully conscious. The investigation was conducted at this location because it was the site of a KFC "Supplier of the Year" award ceremony.

Chickens are probably the most abused animals on the planet. They have their sensitive beaks seared off with hot

blades and are crammed into tiny cages with the decomposing remains of other birds. Hundreds of thousands are left to starve to death, and huge numbers die as a result of long journeys in extreme weather conditions. Basically, any and all abuse is allowable when it comes to chickens, who are, in fact, remarkable animals with distinct personalities and intelligence that, if allowed to develop, is as advanced as that of cats and dogs. Most importantly, they feel pain, just as we do.

The video is almost beyond description — workers at a KFC slaughterhouse stomp, kick, and slam birds against walls. How bad does it have to get before KFC changes the way it treats chickens?

For more information and to see the video for yourself, please visit <http://www.KFCCruelty.com>.

Curtis Taylor lives in Eugene.

buy sell trade

fashion that pays to be me

Buffalo EXCHANGE
New & Recycled Fashion

131 E. 5th Ave (between Oak & Pearl) 687-2805 BUFFALOEXCHANGE.COM

Welcome to

OVER 100 TEQUILAS AND MARGARITAS TO CHOOSE FROM!
NEW LUNCH MENU AND EXPANDED DINNER MENU!

Not just another Mexican Restaurant

FOOD THAT IS BOLD, EXCITING & SPICY

THE PATIO IS AN OASIS THAT TRANSPORTS YOU DOWN SOUTH.

Best of Eugene

MEXICAN & SALVADOREAN RESTAURANT • 900 WEST 7TH AVENUE • 683-9171

- Homemade Soups
- Fresh Salads
- Fresh Pizza • Hamburgers
- Fish & Chips • Pastas • Ribs
- Microbrewed Beer and full bar
- Homemade Root Beer

199 E. 5th • Eugene • 686-2739 • www.steelheadbrewingco.com