

Student crowned Miss Clackamas

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ydy won locally.
she will compete
Miss Oregon in
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in Chief

beauty and she's brains, and
style and she's grace - she's Miss
Clackamas County!

Miss Clackamas County pageant, a
branch of the national Miss America
pageant, was won this year by Clackamas
Community College's very own graduate,
Jessica Burris.

"It's been an interesting adventure,"
Burris said. "I wouldn't have said I was
an anti-person. I am kind of more anti-

"I got into this because, when I
was in high school, I was always watching Miss
America with my mom and grandma,"
Burris said. "So it's always been like a
tradition."

"I'm a prospective business major, who
will attend University of Oregon,
and I consider pageant competition as
a means to fund her studies."

"I actually just wanted to give it a
try," she said. "I was like, 'You know ...
I can do what I want. I'll just
give it a try.'"

"My 6-foot-2-inches didn't hurt,
because I am so tall, I've always
been kind of fascinated by modeling, but
I didn't want to get into it as a career,"
Burris said.

"The stereotypes and atmosphere of the
pageant world and pageant competition
concerned me as Burris began to explore
the Miss America organization."

"The first thing I did was get a hold of
the director here for Clackamas, and
I asked her a lot of questions," she
said. "Is this a shallow pageant?
Like what I see on TV with Donald
Trump and Miss USA?"

"The Miss USA pageant is a beauty
pageant owned by Donald Trump - who
owns the Miss Universe Pageant
wards the winner with a modeling
contract. There are more catty girls, I would

say, in that (pageant)," Burris said. "They
don't have a talent portion, and I don't
believe they have as much stress on
community service and more philanthropic
things."

Burris maintains that although Miss
America seems like a beauty pageant, it is
more of a community service award.

"You have to do this big interview,"
she said. "It's 10 minutes long in front of
a panel of six judges that are all business
owners in the Clackamas area. They bomb-
ard you with questions about the politics
and the election
right now,
as well as
your plat-
form."

Each
contestant
is required
to have a
project or
platform,
usually a
charity,
to accom-
pany his
or her
campaign.

Burris' platform is music education.
"They want to know what you do, and
what I do is teach children music lessons,"
she said. "Because I'm a teacher, I am
passionate about seeing my students suc-
ceed in life, and created my platform on
after-school music education so I could
help inspire more kids in Clackamas
County to pursue music as a hobby or
career."

"After my
friend's death this
winter, playing on the bass
and piano helped me sort
out my own emotions as
I dealt with my loss," she
added. "I know having mu-
sical skills would have given
him an outlet for his
emotional frustrations,
rather than turning to sui-
cide."

Burris believes that
the overall message of the
competition is community
service and awareness.
However, it always has
and probably will have, in
the foreseeable future, an

apparently superficial
side.

"Of course, because
we're women, they're
like, 'OK, well, you look
gorgeous, so let's have
you in a swimsuit and
make you a sex sym-
bol,'" she said. "That's
how they're market-
ing it, but they're try-
ing to get away from
that and more into 'real
people.'"

"Some of the girls
who win, they're not
stick-thin," she added.
"But they reward you
on how fit you are,
like any sport."

They also reward
women for their
involvement in a
wide array of activi-
ties, which the local
Clackamas director,
or coach, of the Miss
America pageant,
Linda Brume, thinks
is Burris' best feature.

"All my girls are great,
but Jessy is just really well-rounded,"
Brume said. "She is very smart and very
ambitious with her career and education
goals, but she also has plenty of interests
outside of school."

"She is what the Miss America system
is all about," Brume added.

Burris will compete for the Miss Oregon
title June 23 through 28 at the Seaside
Convention Center, in Seaside, Ore.

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Jessica Burris
Miss Clackamas

Anyone interested in compet-
ing or sponsoring Burris can
e-mail her at
jessy.burris@yahoo.com or
Brume at tapdancer60@yahoo.
com. For more information
about the Miss Clackamas
pageant, visit MySpace.com/
missclackamaspagant.



Megan Koler Clackamas Print



Contributed

TOP: Student Jessica Burris talks with others in Rook Hall.
ABOVE: Burris sits with her piano students.

Video games get the spotlight, proving they are more than just a game

English class offers
different look at the
leo-game world

Jess Sheppard
Clackamas Print

It's easy to be skeptical about
the idea of using games, espe-
cially video games, as a medium
for studying literature, but English
Instructor Trevor Dodge has found a
surprisingly effective way to do so in
his class Games and Literature.

According to Dodge, the
American culture is a society in
which "we have ancient texts that
are also in the same backpacks
as name Boys and PSPs and cell
phones."

What this course tries to do is
take some of those things out
and actually ask big questions about
them. "Oh, it's fun," he
said.

The specific piece his students
are required to read and analyze is
"The Inferno" by Dante Alighieri.

It seems, on the first level,
of weird to talk about Dante's
epic, "this grand poem in the

western canon of literature, and
then have someone associate that to
"Devil May Cry," he said. "That's a
discussion point that can only go so
far as far as that particular game is
concerned, but it does offer a larger
cultural critique to study."

Dodge chose "The Inferno" spec-
ifically because it is, among other
reasons, an easier piece to break
down into sections than some of the
similar works used, such as John
Milton's "Paradise Lost."

"I chose 'The Inferno' because,
well, one, it's really sexy," he said.
"It's so visual, too. It's really incred-
ible what Dante is able to do with
language."

Another, more contemporary,
writer being observed in the course
is H.P. Lovecraft.

"A lot of the way people are dis-
covering his work is through gam-
ing," Dodge said. "That's how I
discovered it when I was in college.
I'd never read a lick of Lovecraft,
and there were some friends of mine
who were in the dorm (and) were
playing this game, and exposure to
him, for me, came through gam-
ing."

Dodge plans to hold a table-top
session from the "Call of Cthulu"
series later in the course.

But what do H. P. Lovecraft,
Dante Alleghiri and the video game
"Devil May Cry" have in com-
mon?

They are all, essentially, epic
poems, Dodge said.

During the course of a single
Tuesday, Dodge spoke heavily on
the similarities between modern
games and the traditional epic poem
of ancient Greece.

"That's how it gets its literary
traction," he said. "The fact that I
can teach it in my department, it's
gonna have to have those things
to it."

With that thought in mind, how
can games - particularly RPGs - not
be compared to such classics as
Homer's "The Odyssey"?

The class not only draws on the
epic poem in its original form, but
also examines its evolution from
an oral tradition to its re-imaging
as a novel and, finally, as a game in
today's world.

Of course, a certain level of chal-
lenge is involved in managing a
classroom full of gaming enthusi-
asts.

"I thought we'd be able to play
more games in class," admitted stu-
dent Jamie Kemp, "but otherwise,
the class is really interesting."

Dodge is well
aware of the fact
that, of the indi-
viduals enrolled in
the course, "almost
everyone ... has
a favorite video
game."

"You can hear it
in the discussion,"
he said. "Part of the
trick of teaching
the class is trying to
steer the conversa-
tion off of the rails
of video-gaming,
because it's such an
immediate and pow-
erful medium."

Games and
Literature is only
offered spring term,
but as of last spring,
it is now a perma-
nent class.

"As long as I'm
here, and as long
as it meets enroll-
ment, I plan to teach
it every spring,"
Dodge said.



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Games and Literature Instructor
Trevor Dodge teaches a class through
video games and classics such as "The
Odyssey" and Dante's "The Inferno."