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Hilltopics Staff

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# HILLTOPICS

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## Point-Counterpoint: How will the way Bush responds to recent criticism affect his legacy?

### ***Bush's criticism is overstated; Now is the time for bipartisanship***

by Kyle Snyder

As someone who follows politics and current events on a daily basis, I have had enough. As an avowed conservative, I naturally call out the mainstream media for constantly sensationalizing events in Iraq, and the Democrats and liberal pundits whose constant criticism of the Bush administration has only worsened after the 2004 elections.

However, I am also one to question the direction in which my own side of the political spectrum is headed. I will be the first to admit that digesting the endless stream of negative news involving President Bush, Dick Cheney, Karl Rove, Lewis Libby and Tom DeLay has not been easy. History will ultimately judge these individuals and how they responded to the challenges they currently face, but with three years left in his presidency, the time has come for Bush and the Republican Party to cement their vision for America's future. Reconciling the differences on each side of the aisle won't be easy, but the American people are tired of the negativity and pessimism surrounding a government that needs to point this country in the right direction.

As poll numbers show support for the war in Iraq continuing to fall, many continue to criticize the president on the decision to go to war in the first place. As difficult as this may be for some people to realize, that decision was made almost three years ago, based on credible evidence from a multitude of sources. The debate over WMD and the reasons for going to war is now officially a waste of everyone's time. There should only be two words on the minds of every senator and representative, both Republican and Democrat: exit strategy. The work that American soldiers and workers have done in Iraq to rebuild public infrastructure that was previously abused by Saddam Hussein's regime has largely gone

see **BUSH** on page 4

### ***Bush needs to be held accountable by media; Now is the time to be partisan***

by Michael Hogenmiller

The time for partisanship is now. The country is at war, the economy is suffering through an energy crisis, and thousands of Americans lost everything in one of the worst natural disasters to hit the states in recent history. Some will call for cooperation, for a unity that will allow the government to "get the job done" and take care of its people. I completely disagree. If there is a time for the administration's opposition to call out in protest, to rally behind a common cause and to stand up against the other side of the aisle, that time is now.

The national deficit is at a record high, increasing at a record rate daily, and all under a Republican president. Bush is an incredibly irresponsible Republican when it comes to fiscal policy, and I'm bewildered by the fact that small-government Republicans aren't outraged. If the Republicans aren't going to speak for themselves, then the political left should. Rally behind the cause and promote fiscal responsibility, Democrats. Otherwise, everyone's children will be paying off our debts, both Republican and Democrat.

Two highly influential and powerful Republican political elites are facing criminal trials. Tom DeLay, former House Majority Leader, has been indicted for fraud, money laundering and other related charges, and the vice president's Chief of Staff, "Scooter" Libby, has been indicted for obstruction of justice and perjury. The president has remained tight-lipped, refusing to comment.

The federal government's response to Hurricane Katrina was disastrous. Governmental leaders were inexperienced and quarreled over marginal power and menial responsibilities. Americans died, were left stranded or became refugees.

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**Be Heard:** Got an opinion? *Hilltopics* is always looking for good submissions and interesting feedback. Email your thoughts to [hilltopics@hotmail.com](mailto:hilltopics@hotmail.com).

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## Where does the Asian continent fit into what SMU claims is a internationally useful education?

***With the Middle-East at the center of modern life, we should teach Arabic***  
by Yasmin Awad

All we hear about is the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Saudi Arabians give us our oil. We're butting into the domestic problems of Syria and Lebanon. The US is spending billions a year to fight a war with Iraq. And now that North Korea is out of the way, Syria and Iran are probably next.

Open any newspaper, TV news show, or Ann Coulter book (but I wouldn't waste my time on that) and you'll find that Arabs have been the center of most international affairs and the target of most modern bigots.

Now, more than ever, it's important for Americans—and at least some SMU students—to learn Arabic.

Setting aside current problems concerning Arabs, Arabic is an important language in the world. Arabic is one of the world's oldest languages. It is the official language of 22 countries, and it's not only spoken in the Middle East. Since it is the language of the Quran (the book of Islam), millions of Muslims in other countries speak Arabic as well. It is the fifth most widely spoken languages in the world.

Arabic had to be learned after the Middle Ages since the Arabs had developed much of the sciences, math, and poetry we still use today. We've even changed from Roman numerals to Arabic numerals.

Less than one percent of U.S. collegians studying any foreign language study Arabic.

SMU offers classes in Chinese, French, German, Hindi, Italian, Japanese, Russian, Spanish, and Latin. Latin? No one speaks Latin anymore. I know much of English comes from Latin, but if you really want to enhance your English, just take an English class.

The Arabic language carries the identity and culture of millions of people. If you don't understand the language, how can you understand the people? And where there is no understanding, there is no peace.

I went to the Middle East last summer. Luckily for me, many of the people there are fluent in English. English is taught starting from second grade in public schools. The people there use our products. They know our actors and singers. They love Brad Pitt and Oprah.

But many Americans still think Arabian is just a breed of a horse and the Middle-East is Kentucky and Tennessee.

As a journalism major, I have to take 8 hours of a foreign language. Even though I'm fluent in Arabic, SMU doesn't yet consider it a language worth offering, and I'm now spending many of my afternoons struggling with Spanish.

I'll leave you with a few terms every American should know. Iraq is Arabic for Vietnam. Islam does literally mean peace. *Habibi* is "my love." And *Allahu-Akbar* means "God is great" – not "Kill all Americans."

*Yasmin Awad is a sophomore journalism major.*

***Tiny Asian Studies dept. demonstrates SMU's false effort at Asian ed***  
by Amanda Wall

Ever met an Asian Studies major at SMU? How about someone majoring in African or Middle Eastern Studies? Though I am told these rare specimens do exist, I tend to think of them like those fish who live in the deepest, darkest part of the ocean. How do they exist in such inhospitable conditions? How do students who wish to study anything non-Western survive at SMU?

Besides Asian, African, or Middle Eastern Studies majors (which SMU doesn't offer and can only be had through an individualized major), I also haven't met any International Studies majors with specializations in those areas. I've met a couple people who used to specialize in Asian Studies, who have since given up trying to scrape together enough classes from SMU's pathetically Western-centric curriculum. A person can major in European or Latin American Studies with little trouble and confusion, but attempting to tackle a program of study concerning any country east (or south) of Greece is an exercise in resourcefulness, patience, and humility.

The list of non-Western History classes are awkwardly lumped together under the all-encompassing heading "African, Asian, and World History." One might as well label it "All Those Other People." Good luck actually taking these classes, though. Few are offered on a regular basis, and some are simply no longer offered. Non-Western classes in Political Science are much the same: few in number and rarely offered. Dr. Takayuki Sakamoto is the only political science professor in the department who specializes in Asian politics; his class on Japanese government is often the only class of its kind available. The Religious Studies Department can boast a few more Asian-centric classes, but usually offers only one of these classes each semester. In the Clements Department of History, there is only one professor who was hired this year to teach courses in Middle Eastern History. Professor Sarah Scheewind, who was the only professor teaching Asian history, left last semester for the University of California at San Diego, a school with a tremendously stronger Asian Studies program.

What kind of sense does it make to ignore an entire hemisphere? China—one of the world's greatest superpowers and the U.S.'s biggest trade partner—is relegated to about four regularly-offered classes on this campus. Japan is similarly ignored. India, Pakistan, Indonesia, North Korean, and South Korea might as well not exist to Dedman College.

In our increasingly global society, it is imperative for universities to make global politics and history important and available to their students. This is especially important for SMU as, with the help of our new Provost, Richard Blocker, we seek to strengthen our liberal arts programs and gain national recognition. Doing so will be absolutely impossible without strong programs in Asian Studies.

*Amanda Wall is a sophomore English and Spanish major.*

## Saying bye to SMU: diary of a December graduate

by Dawn Jenkins

When I graduated from Plano East Senior High in the spring of 2002, I wasn't sure what to expect of my transition to Southern Methodist University. Now, three and a half years later and one month away from graduation, I'm even less certain of what to make of my college experience. I guess this is the time that I'm supposed to pass on any wisdom or whatever to the young'uns, so here goes.

Life was rough as a first year, but it gets better. Before, whenever someone would ask me, "How do you like SMU?" my first response was inevitably, "We have a beautiful campus." I can honestly say that my appreciation for SMU and all it has to offer has greatly expanded since then. The following are my recommendations for getting the most out of your college experience.

1) Break out of the bubble. Perhaps the greatest choice I made - both in terms of academic and personal growth - was to leave our beautiful campus and seek out different opportunities. My sophomore year, I took a leap into the unknown and lived with a French family for four months during the SMU-in-Paris program. When learning a foreign language, there's no substitute for actual immersion in the culture - it's incredible. I strongly encourage all of you to consider studying abroad; even non-liberal arts majors can take a semester off from their engineering or chemistry courses and knock out a few perspectives and CF courses overseas - I promise you won't regret it. Internships are also an excellent way to get off campus and build your professional skills. At our age, any work experience is good, especially if you don't plan on staying in academia for the rest of your life. I spent a semester assistant-teaching high school French, and it was quite rewarding. Finally, any SMU alum will tell you that Taos is always a good idea: the scenery is breathtaking, the workload is manageable, and it never hurts to give up the cell phone and the TV once and a while in favor of white-water rafting, hiking, and fishing excursions.

2) Talk to your professors. I know this sounds about as nerdy as "listen to your parents," but your profs might actually know a few things that you don't. Find a prof you really like and chat with them during their office hours. For the most part, SMU hires Harvard-class professors who are down-to-earth and truly care about their students (unlike many of their ivy league counterparts), and you're missing out if you don't take advantage of all they can offer you, whether it's advice on which courses to take, which grad schools to check out, job opportunities, or just a listening ear.

3) Find your balance. College is all about discovering your limits, your strengths, and your weaknesses - and trust me, my own have become glaringly apparent in the last three and a half years. Learn how to drink responsibly, how to get along with all sorts of people, how to survive "community living," how to manage your time without overloading yourself, and how to try new things. Look back on your time at SMU without regrets - even if you've made a few bad decisions - think positively, learn from your mistakes, and move on. College is not the end-all, be-all of existence; there's more to life than frat parties and ramen noodle diets, and if you play your cards right, it only gets better from here on out.

*Dawn Jenkins is a senior International Studies major.*

## Courses to avoid: *Hilltopics*'W Awards

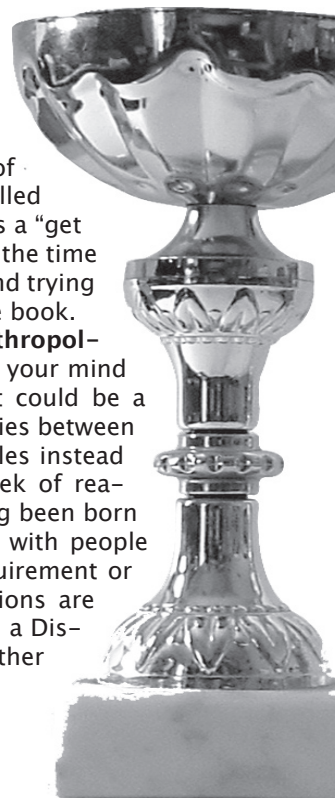
Last week we editors gave you our course recommendations for Spring registration. Now we present an even more useful list: the list of classes to avoid. These are the courses that, once drop day rolls around, you're going to wish you'd never invested time in. That's right, they're the classes we all take—and then withdraw from. So without further ado, here they are, the 2005 "W Awards," courtesy of your *Hilltopics* Editors:

**EMIS 1305 (and the IT requirement in general)**— This course is a frustrating drain of time on so many levels. First, the professor likely knows you're only taking it because it's required; therefore, said prof "teaches" with a chip on the shoulder, trying to make it appear as if this is the most significant class offered at SMU. We all know it's not. Second, "teaching" of the course is more rambling about tech terms and leaving you to your own devices in lab. Third, and most importantly, in this Information Age, if students do not have a working knowledge of Word, Excel and PowerPoint by the time they enter a university, that should be addressed much earlier in their education and not for \$795/credit hour at SMU. Your best bet would be taking the IT waiver exam, or, if you must suffer through the course, write an honest evaluation of your experience - the school should make an effort to improve this course offering, if it must be offered at all.

**EDU 1110 Oracle**— You'll probably get the same information from one visit to the ALEC than a semester of ORACLE (which should stand for Over Rated Annoying Class Lacking any Enhancement). The class is basically an excessively-long orientation to the tutoring center. Their hints and methods are so time-consuming, you learn that the real way to success is to never do them. The only skills this class will teach is learning how to dodge class.

**ECO 1302 Intro to Macroeconomics**— Since there are so many sections of this class, it's conceivable that you'll end up with a good section—but don't bet on it. Most of the time, your class is going to be filled with students using an econ major as a "get out of college free" card, and a lot of the time you're better off not going to class and trying to figure it out on your own from the book.

**ANTH 2401 Intro to Cultural Anthropology**— This class is designed to open your mind so wide your brain falls out. What could be a study of the differences and similarities between our culture and those of other peoples instead usually devolves into 3 hours a week of reasons you should feel guilty for having been born somewhere with plumbing. Packed with people taking the class only to fill this requirement or that requirement, the class discussions are about as helpful as sleeping through a Discovery Channel Special. Don't bother with this class unless you have to.



## Bush should be optimistic going into mid-terms

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unreported by the major media sources.

The smooth confirmation of John Roberts as Chief Justice of the U. S. Supreme Court offers one of the Bush administration's few recent bright spots. While Harriet Miers brought an interesting "outsider" element as Bush's other nominee, the backlash proved too much for the former president of the Texas Bar Association to handle, and she withdrew her nomination. Some of Miers' strongest critics were those who vehemently support the president, and this ultimately doomed her candidacy. Having filled two vacancies on the nation's highest court, Bush has twice fulfilled what many consider to be the president's most important duty. The American people can only hope that Alito proves as appealing as Roberts and that his confirmation goes smoothly.

Despite the setbacks faced by those around Bush, conservatives have every reason to be optimistic as the countdown begins to the 2006 midterm elections. We can only hope that the Republican Party continues to uphold these beliefs, while at the same time reconciling differences with Democrats, some of whom are still bitter over their setbacks in 2004. The Bush administration and the current Congress have three years left to cement their legacy and continue America's march to the future. Let's hope they make the most of it.

*Kyle Snyder is a junior accounting major.*

## Media need to keep probing Bush's mistakes

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If a storm, one we can track, predict, measure and forecast, could find us that unprepared, how prepared is this administration for an attack that we can't predict, one that we won't see coming?

And, finally, the war. Intelligence...it was faulty, misread, untrue, and yet we don't know why, how or who did it. Senate Democrats pulled a rather unusual political maneuver last week to bring the issue back into the spotlight, but it's not enough. Democrats must insist that fair and thorough investigation take place and that this investigation will absolutely discover how the Bush administration made its dishonest case for war.

Bipartisanship is hostile, confrontational and some would say even mean-spirited, but the competition of ideas, the accountability to which your opponents will always hold you and the drastic need this current administration has for even an ounce of accountability call for a strong bipartisan check on this administration. We must dig into the record and know exactly what the events were that led this country to war. We must conduct criminal trials to find the truths about the charges brought against these Republican politicians, and someone must answer for the government's mistakes, whether it's the inaction of the Katrina response or the irresponsible actions of government spending. The Bush administration has coasted through five years without having to answer for its actions, possible misdeeds and alleged dishonesties. Democrats cannot let them ride out the next three.

*Michael Hogenmiller is a senior political science and music major.*

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