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Hilltopics

University Honors Program

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## Hilltopics: Volume 4, Issue 2

Hilltopics Staff

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# HILLTOPICS

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volume four, issue two  
week of september 17, 2007

## Give the Drug and Alcohol Abuse Task Force a little more time before you make you opinion

by James Longhofer

There has been a lot of discussion of the Drug and Alcohol Abuse Task Force ever since it was appointed in June to look at ways that SMU can deal with and prevent substance abuse among the university community. Most of the discussion has been overwhelmingly negative, and rumors have spread that the Task Force is planning on recommending all sorts of drastic changes, including making SMU completely dry, or getting rid of the Greek system. During last week's Student Senate meeting, the two co-chairs of the Task Force were thoroughly interrogated about every aspect of their appointments, their mandate, and whether SMU would adopt a "realistic" view of alcohol. I'm amazed by the amount of vitriol and anger that has been directed toward the Task Force before it has even made any recommendations or done anything. Maybe we should give this thing a chance before ripping it to shreds.

People have attacked the Task Force from all sides. While Greeks fear that the panel is a tool to end their way of life, the *Daily Campus* Ed Board has accused the Task Force of just being a toothless PR stunt that needs to investigate its own members. No one seems to be willing to give it a chance

or to see its potential as a way to help SMU reflect on its culture, make changes, and heal after the tragedies of the last year. As of now, the Task Force is scheduled to make its recommendations to President Turner in December and is currently in the process of doing research. It's been meeting with student groups and has created a new website that links to all the substance abuse resources on campus. While this may not seem like much yet, it also seems harsh to criticize this group before it has had a chance to complete its mission. Regarding the fears within the Greek community, I would like to point out that four Greek students are members of the Task Force and I doubt that they would willingly take part in the dismantling of a system that means so much to the SMU community.

There are, of course, some flaws with the Task Force. It would be great if it was more transparent and if it was more active in soliciting opinions from the general student community. For example, a couple of public town hall meetings where all students could come and express their views and concerns see "The task force..." on page 7



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We welcome submissions from all members of the SMU community. Letters to the editor should be up to 300 words in response to a previously published article. Contributions should be articles of up to 300-600 words on any topic or in response to another article. Please email your submission to hilltopics@hotmail.com by Wednesday at 7:00 PM to be included in the following week's publication. Special deadlines will be observed for breaking campus events. The opinions expressed in *Hilltopics* are those of the authors solely and do not reflect the beliefs of *Hilltopics* or any other entity. As such, *Hilltopics* does not publish anonymous articles.

## America & Iran – Why We Shouldn't Listen to the Chickenhawks

by Ben Wells



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possibly lead to conflict. After all, the false information that Iraq was trying to acquire precision steel tubes (used to process enriched uranium) on the international black market was the justification that President Bush used in order to carry out the United States' invasion and occupation of Iraq. While the polarizing forces in American politics have taken up their camps on this issue, I think it is wise for us to take a step back and examine the situation logically and reasonably.

One interesting thing to take note of is the discourse that is taking place in popular American media involving the "issue" of Iran. Much of the rhetoric on both sides of the aisle matches that from before the invasion of Iraq. Retired U.S. Supreme Allied Commander General Wesley Clark (who has been an extremely vocal opponent of using the United States military to occupy or invade Iran without using diplomacy first) was recently on Fox News discussing his views on Iran–U.S. interaction. He stated that he fears that the powerful U.S. military seems (to outside observers at least) to be bogged down in the Middle East, and that we should be wary of committing more U.S. assets to a conflict with Iran. He proposes using diplomatic channels which have not yet been utilized by the United States. He stated that we are not in a conflict like World War II and if we choose to invade and occupy the Middle East, then we as Americans will need to be willing to raise an army of twelve million men to go and invade said region.

I bring up Wesley Clark's interview because of the interesting response of one woman in the audience. She proclaimed loudly that Iran was "holding a gun to our head" and that she did not agree with the Retired United States General (a man educated in the ways of war and leadership). This mentality

As popular American media continues to trumpet the "Iran–America" show-down regarding Iran's enrichment of uranium, it seems that history is starting to repeat itself. Iran has firmly stated that it is enriching uranium for peaceful nuclear power-generating purposes, but the fact that enriched uranium can also be used to produce nuclear weapons has been

course of fear that could

possibly lead to conflict. After all, the false information that Iraq was trying to acquire precision steel tubes (used to process enriched uranium) on the international black market was the justification that President Bush used in order to carry out the United States' invasion and occupation of Iraq. While the polarizing forces in American politics have taken up their camps on this issue, I think it is wise for us to take a step back and examine the situation logically and reasonably.

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by average Americans mirrors that from before the Iraq War in which normal citizens (perhaps thanks to popular media) have a paranoia that the enemy is knocking at the door and that the only way to save ourselves is to occupy said enemy's country. For anyone who has studied political history, this is not an uncommon occurrence—our prop-

ing up of puppet regimes in Iran and Afghanistan, and friendly relationships with dictators like Saddam, Pinochet, and other despots is always preceded

by a claim that the enemy is near, and that we must get in bed with less than savory individuals in order to save ourselves.

General Clark astutely pointed out that Iran had no gun to hold to our head; it was in fact we who were occupying the region (Iraq, Iran's neighbor), and they are the ones fearful of a heavy-handed U.S. presence in their backyard.

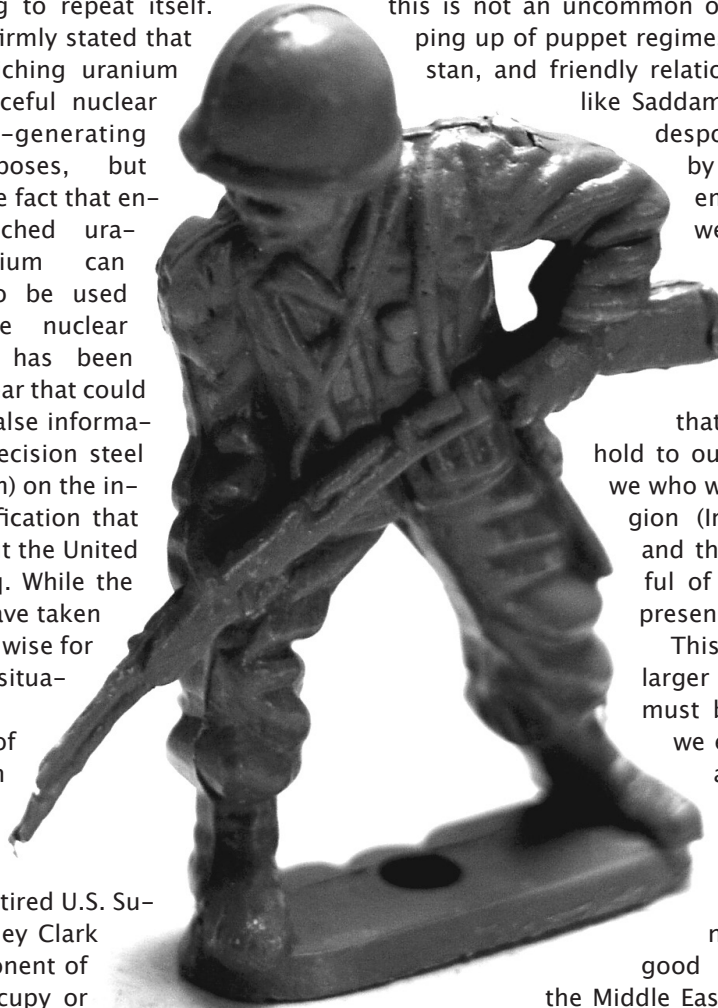
This discourse brings a larger question to mind that must be analyzed. Why are we even framing an issue around Iran–America relations? Many would say that it is our government's close ties to Israel—a nation that is not on good terms with many of

the Middle Eastern regimes. General

Clark pointed out that we are not in the same position as Israel—we do not live in close proximity and we have the ability to use diplomacy, much to our advantage. Israel and Iran inherently do have friction—Israel has never signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (which would logically make Iran push for nuclear armaments), and Iran's unsavory leader spouts anti-Semitic nonsense on a daily basis.

But how does this affect America? We as a nation have many of our own problems both domestically and internationally to deal with; this is not our fight. The onus is on us to decide how we want to steer the geo-political theater in this situation. If the chickenhawks want to start World War III (attack Iran, Iran attacks Israel, Hezbollah takes over Lebanon, the EU comes to Israel's defense, Chavez stands by Iran and

see "Who's war is it anyway?" on page 7



## Uniting Americans in front of the TV: The Law & Order Ticket 2008

by Sterling Morriss and Clare Taylor

Already the primary season is well underway in the 2008 presidential election. On both sides of the political spectrum, anyone who even gives a care this early on in the game can choose to watch the one of the Democratic debates du jour on CSPAN or hear about Gov. Huckabee's second place finish in the pointless Iowa straw poll on CNN. With so much going on and an election still more than a year away, I've prematurely contracted the election year blues.

There's only one remedy to this illness: a Fred Thompson ticket...with Sam Waterston as his Vice-President. That's right, I'm talking about those two actors from Dick Wolf's poster child, Law and Order. You know Law and Order, that show about the kindly older lawyer who teaches cynicism to a group of ever-changing supermodels/assistants. I know I'm not the only one who's been entranced by the ease with which DA Branch (played by Thompson) and ADA McCoy (Waterston) spout off the fanciest legal jargon. Even when they lose a case, which is about as rare as McCoy's legal partner being anything larger than a size 2, they do it with such style that you still feel like they won. We could definitely use that in a President: imagine Branch and McCoy talking about the war in Iraq. Their complex sentences and correct pronunciations would assure every American that these guys are smart, and can consequently lead us where we need to go (wherever that may be). Let's just say President Thompson would be the opposite of President Schwarzenegger in The Simpsons Movie: he would both lead and read. Yes friends, the Law and Order ticket will provide the country with a much needed new direction.

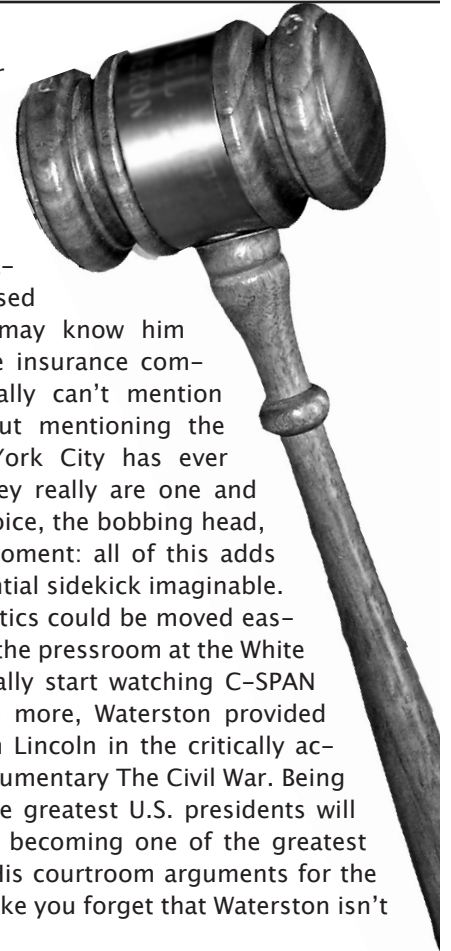
Let's look a little more into the personalities behind this great bid for presidency. Fred Thompson is a Republican candidate who spent the summer creating exploratory committees to gauge public interest in his candidacy, and just recently officially announced his bid. Despite his other qualifications for the job (something about being a former Senator and one of the guys that brought Nixon down via the Watergate hearings), it is Thompson's role on quite possibly the greatest TV show ever that garners our vote. And I don't know if you've seen a picture of his wife or not, but if that's not a First Lady in the making, I don't know what is. Sure, she's 30 years younger than him which makes him look even more geriatric, but that just means she's hotter by comparison!

Move over Jackie O, Jeri Thompson will soon win sexiest First Lady and First Trophy Wife.

Who then is Sam Waterston, our proposed Vice President? You may know him from those boring life insurance commercials, but you really can't mention Sam Waterston without mentioning the toughest ADA New York City has ever seen, Jack McCoy. They really are one and the same. The raspy voice, the bobbing head, the intensity of the moment: all of this adds up to the best Presidential sidekick imaginable. McCoy's courtroom antics could be moved easily and successfully to the pressroom at the White House. Heck, I'd actually start watching C-SPAN again for that. What's more, Waterston provided the voice for Abraham Lincoln in the critically acclaimed Ken Burns documentary The Civil War. Being the voice of one of the greatest U.S. presidents will surely translate to his becoming one of the greatest U.S. vice-presidents. His courtroom arguments for the right to privacy will make you forget that Waterston isn't actually a lawyer.

What it boils down to is that a Branch/McCoy, excuse me, Thompson/Waterston bid would be about the most exciting thing to happen to CSPAN since they cancelled Book Notes. What's more, the union marks an end to party divisions; sure, Thompson's a conservative Republican, but anyone who has watched Law and Order can unequivocally tell you that Waterston's character fights social injustice like a libertarian. So, be ye Democrat, Republican or one of those crazy 3rd parties, vote Thompson/Waterston come next November. There is only one place that Democrats and Republicans unite as simply Americans, and that is in front of the TV. Make it happen, America.

*Sterling Morriss and Clare Taylor are Hilltopics and SMU Alums, Class of '07. They also watch entirely too much Law & Order.*



**Do you have an opinion about...** politics, music, class, television, football, shopping, intramurals, fraternities, movies, tests, the Mavs, sex, restaurants, religion, sororities, driving, study abroad, Umphrey Lee, fashion, news, the war, parking, technology, magazines, bars, baseball, the weather, professors, the Mustang Band, dating, books, nightclubs, Texas, the Daily Campus, pets, club sports, or anything else ?

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## You may know him as Professor, Dr., or if you are really bold, you may refer to him as the infamous

This academic year, *Hilltopics* will be sitting down with various members of the SMU community in hopes of initiating a very open and frank conversation on our university and its future. This week, I sat down with Dr. David Doyle, director of the University Honors Program and Professor of History. Dr. Doyle is currently working on his first book, an examination of male sexuality at the turn of the last century.

### How is your book coming along?

It's going o.k., but not as fast as I would like. This semester I'm working every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday morning—at least as long as I can sustain it. The book centers on upper class male sexuality and gender norms in New York and New England—and I attempt to chart a world where such norms are far different from those we are familiar with. Further, I have found that in many ways the 19th century is a time of more, not less tolerance for diversity in terms of sexuality and gender roles. Right now I'm trying to bring in the sexual enigma of Henry James (as a well known American) into the project. I plan to use him as sort of an introduction, and then use the research that I have on so many other Americans to fill in the blanks. If all goes according to plan, my conclusion will circle back to James and the 1895 Oscar Wilde trials as they were understood in America.

### Now I'd like to talk with you about how you came to SMU. You went to school in New York; you are originally from New Hampshire and Vermont. What brought you to Dallas and why have you stayed?

Well, you know the real reason I came to Dallas was because my partner (of 20 years) got a job in Dallas and I was a graduate student still trying to finish the Ph.D. By then I had taken my oral exams, but was still working on my dissertation. I am open in telling people that I really disliked Dallas the first few years. Maybe because I grew up in New England, I'm not really sure, but I was plotting my escape at every turn. Today, I really like SMU—I like the students, I like the faculty, and increasingly I like Dallas. I think it is an in-

teresting city; there is a lot going on—with the many changes taking place, it is much like living through another gold rush. It is so pleasant and easy to live here that when I go back to visit [New York or Boston], I think, "oh my god, how did I ever leave this?" But by the third day, it becomes overwhelming and I'm ready to return to easy street.

### How did you come to SMU?

My first connection to SMU was through one of my favorite graduate school professors, Carol Berkin: she knew Dr. [Edward] Countryman [of the History Department]. So he emailed me and told me about the Dallas Social History Group—a group of historians, mainly social historians, who meet the last Friday of every month during the academic year, and present their research or articles for others to listen to and critique. That was really my lifeline at the beginning. It was a great way to charge your batteries, you know. I started teaching in the history department back in 1998 and started [as Honors Director] in 2003, so last year's graduating seniors were the first to have me as their honors director all four years.

### How has the Hilltop changed since you started working at SMU, and is it a good or bad change?

I think it is very good. I really vacillate; one of the things that is so exciting and frustrating about SMU is that we are really on the cusp of doing interesting things. What is so exciting about SMU is the fact there is so much to do. That gets frustrating because there are only so many hours in the day. The reason I mention that is because I think SMU's faculty has always been very strong and I think its student body has become stronger—that is probably the biggest change. I think now the University has to, in a sense, follow—try to keep up. In other words, what hasn't changed is a social scene reminiscent of the 19th century, and a party culture which appears to many as the only game in town. SMU still loses outstanding students who think that is the case. For instance, when I tell students that only 40% of students are Greek, they are stunned because they think it is 99.9%: in short, everyone



## “Triple D”: *Hilltopic’s* Todd Baty gains insight to the one and only Dr. David D. Doyle

by Todd Baty

but them. We need to have intellectual life, simulation, and a sense of community. We have a little bit of that with Virginia-Snider, but we need to do more.

**What do you think is SMU’s niche in academia? Are we to mold ourselves into the image of Vanderbilt, Duke, or Emory, or should SMU strive for an identity of its own?**

We need to create an identity for ourselves, and I think we have. We have always been a strong teaching school, and have found a particular place for the graduate programs with the Center for Southwest Studies. You know, everyone talks about how we have always aspired to be the Harvard of the Southwest, but I think the strength of SMU has always been how available our faculty members have been. And our students do get to know our tenured faculty members, but I think we can do more. There are discussions to create faculty advisors and mentors to further increase this exposure. Again, we want to retain what we have.

**As the University Honors Program Director, what do you think is the UHP’s role in achieving that goal?**

Well, in the short term I think we need to create a sense of intellectual community and raise the intellectual tempo of classes and the campus more generally. In the longer term, I think the goal is to make the Honors Program superfluous. Eventually, we want to arrive at the same place where many of our benchmark universities already are—the assumption that all students are doing honors level work, so an honors program is not needed.

**What have been the major obstacles to these goals?**

I think to reduce or shrink the chasm between faculty and students. Students do meet in small classes, but it’s not enough. Faculty members don’t understand student life. I see advancement on multiple fronts. I see it happening, but this enormous chasm still hobbles what we are doing.

**You have been an outspoken critic of the way in which the university has handled the deaths of three students last year. What, in your opinion, should SMU be doing that it isn’t already? What should faculty members be doing?**

I’ll start with one statement: at a campus-wide meeting, Dean Dee Sisco said these issues are greater societal problems, and we need to understand them in that way, undoubtedly. But I think that SMU is unique in that its Greek system and social network are so entrenched that we have some real challenges in taking on this problem. In short, I really don’t know [how to fix the problem]. As faculty, it is hard because

we are supposed to send [students] out on their own, but we are still supposed to be surrogate parents—at least in some ways. What I try to do is to stay in touch with my students and tell them I am available. If I sense something is wrong, I remind them that my door is open. When necessary, I turn to the campus help available.

**If you could change any one thing about SMU, what would it be and why?**

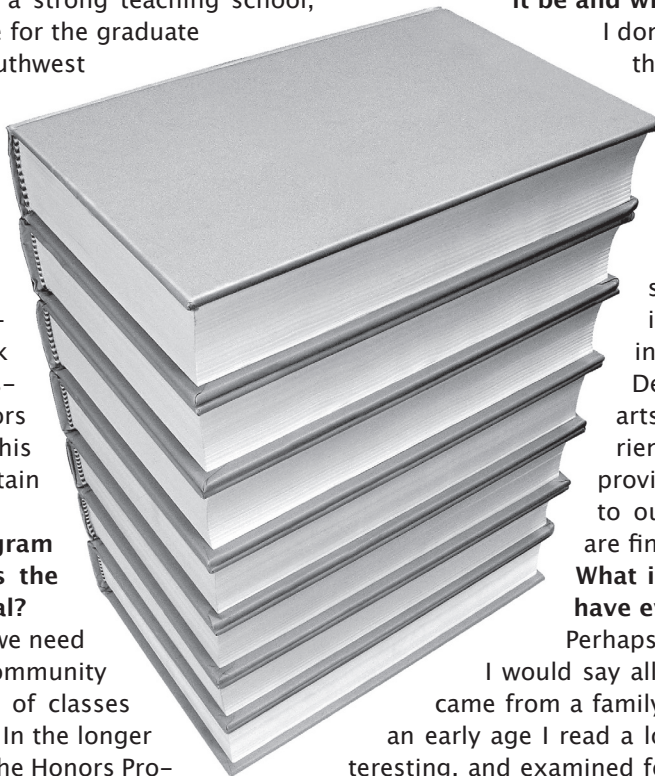
I don’t know if this is too abstract, but this is something I feel very strongly about, and so do many other people on campus. I would like to see more innovation and substance in our academic programs. I think the new capital campaign can help these goals. There are some important programs that are in need of more substantive funding, I think of University Honors, Dedman College, etc., (the liberal arts core of the undergraduate experience). We cannot truly work toward providing a life-changing experience to our students until these programs are financially supported.

**What is the most influential book you have ever read and why?**

Perhaps this is dodging the question, but I would say all of the books that I have read. I came from a family that never read books, but from an early age I read a lot. My life is so much richer, interesting, and examined for having read those books, and I continue to read voraciously any chance I get. Luckily, I am now paid to read books and discuss them with others.

*Hilltopics* would like to specially thank Dr. David Doyle for taking the time to share his thoughts with us.

*Todd Baty is a senior history and music major*



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## Is material wealth a desirable route to happiness? Part two of a two part series

by *Monica Chavez*

Part one's examination of development in Vietnam and Japan begs a tricky question. How do you develop a country without sacrificing quality of life or causing all developed nations to become Wal-Martized carbon copies of each other? And are material gains even the most accurate representation of people's well-being?

According to a 2004 study from the University of Michigan, this might not be the case. Surveys found similar levels of happiness between individuals listed among Forbes magazine's "richest Americans" and the Maasai tribal peoples of east Africa. The Maasai, while poor in comparison to the millionaires and billionaires on the Forbes list, reported being content, their only qualm a lack of access to sufficient healthcare. There is, of course, such a condition as absolute poverty, in which lack of food and shelter has an obviously negative impact on people's reported happiness. The same study found, for example, significantly lower levels of reported happiness among the homeless in places as far-flung as Calcutta and Fresno, California.

The point is it seems perfectly logical that development need not mean BlackBerrys and BMWs for everyone. Food, clothing, access to clean water, adequate healthcare, and a roof over your head ought to be sufficient, with happiness emerging from your relationships with people in your family and community rather than your material possessions.

Unfortunately, it also seems unfair and patronizing to deny developing nations the same extra goodies we enjoy in America and the rest of the developed world. It would be wonderful if, for instance, China would realize the immense strain on the environment and the dangerous foreign oil de-

pendency our automobile obsession has caused for the U.S., and do something to keep cars from becoming as important a part of Chinese middle class life. One billion Chinese hitting the roads in inefficient petrol-powered vehicles is not a pretty thought, and yet it is happening already. And who are we to tell them they shouldn't do it? It would be nice if the Chinese learned from our mistakes, but how can we ask them to when Americans continue to drive around in Hummers and F-150s like there's no such thing as a gas shortage?

And we're not just exporting products that become the objects of a materialistic lifestyle; we are exporting materialism itself. As it happens, this month marks the launch of the great American tome of fashion, *Vogue*, into the Indian market. The intended purpose, according to Priya Tanna, the magazine's regional editor, is to instill in the modern Indian woman "a desire for guilt-free consumption" suited to the current transition "from the 'we' culture to the 'me' culture" ("*Vogue* aims to raise the style bar with India launch," Yahoo! News, 7 September 2007). What's perhaps more alarming than the mag-

azine's goals themselves is that the editor would state them as such; "Buy this thousand-dollar wallet" has become, "Buy this thousand-dollar wallet and feel good about it. In fact, embrace this need for consumer goods and buy the matching purse, pump, and key fob, and, oh yeah, forget your impoverished compatriots who will probably never earn even a fraction of what you'll spend on these overpriced, logo-laden designer goods."

Okay, so the wealth gap in developing countries is a top-

see "Expanding desires..." on page 7



## The task force just needs a little of our time...

*continued from page 4*

would go a long way. All students should be able to see the members and give them a piece of their mind. It seems to me that the Task Force is interested in student opinion, and it is launching a blog where all students can contribute anonymously with ideas or with their experiences with substance abuse. The fact that people can tell their stories truthfully without fear of punishment or reprisal will help make sure that the Task Force knows how students really feel. It would have been better if there were more students on the Task Force, but the students who are currently on the panel are people who need to be there. Having the presidents of Interfraternity Council (IFC) and Panhellenic present makes sense because the Greek community should be able to inform the recommendations made by the panel. Moreover, since there are ways for students not on the Task Force to still contribute and give their opinions, everyone should make use of them.

I don't know if the Task Force will really be able to deal with the problems of substance abuse at SMU, but it should be given a chance to do research and make its recommendations before everyone attacks it. Right now no one, including the members of the group, knows what will be presented in December, so it seems shortsighted to criticize it now. Let's wait and see what the Task Force produces. If the student body is unhappy in December when we actually see the results, at least we'll know what we are complaining about.

*James Longhofer is a senior political science, economics, and public policy major*

## Who's war is it anyway?

*continued from page 2*

throws South America into conflict) then they better be willing to put their sons and daughters into conflict. We have relied on our hardworking and patriotic military families long enough—a draft must be implemented logistically and ethically if we expect to occupy other countries on top of Iraq.

If instead we realize this is not our issue to meddle with (since, as Clark points out, Iran has no way of harming us except through Hezbollah—individuals we track and monitor inside and outside of the United States), then perhaps we should pursue hard-hitting diplomatic channels with Iran. It is morally difficult for us to justify an invasion based on the fact that Israel is threatened by nuclear armaments when Israel itself holds armaments over the rest of the region. Iran's crackpot and fundamentalist leader



er should be deposed, but it should be an internal decision of a sovereign Iran, not the occupation force of a beleaguered U.S. military.

*Ben Wells is a Senior anthropology, history, and Asian studies major*

## Expanding desires of the global middle class

*continued from page 6*

ic for another day, but the point is, materialism can cause rather unsavory ironies when juxtaposed with the predominant economic situation in a developing country. But we are faced with the same dilemma as before: how can we criticize the emerging crop of Indian fashionistas when we're so hung up on the stuff ourselves? Even the author of this article will admit to possessing a Burberry accessory here and there, and to having once been a Vogue subscriber herself.

As the global middle class expands and millions find themselves for the first time with generous disposable incomes, the world seems to be moving inexorably toward a soulless future possessed of a need for possessions. The unfortunate thing is, there doesn't seem to be much we can do to stave off this sobering fate. Desire is a powerful human vice, and it can't be swept away from the top-down; corporations certainly have no motivation to discourage a force that's doing wonders for their profits, and governments have no incentive to quell the phenomenon either. In fact, given all the other problems associated with development and globalization generally, it is unlikely that addressing excess consumerism features prominently on anyone's to-do list.

So what to do? In a very real sense, resistance to materialism must come from the consumers themselves, which is why the situation feels so hopeless—nobody wants to downsize in a world that is enthusiastically pursuing the super-size.

*Monica Chavez is a senior political science and foreign language major*





**SMU @ TCU**  
**Saturday, September 22, 2007**  
**7:30**



**Headline of the week:** "Airline Tells Woman Her Outfit Won't Fly" (Associated Press)  
 Southwest Airlines kicks a passenger off a flight for wearing skimpy clothes. This from the airline that had its flight attendants wear short-shorts.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/09/07/AR2007090702939.html>



### Thumbs up:

- To cheaper iPhone, new iPod, and new iTouch. Thanks Steve Jobs!
- To SMU PD looking super cool on their Segways.
- Scientists may have figured out how to burn (salt)water. AWE-SOME!



### Thumbs down:

- To having more away fans than SMU ones at our first two home games.
- To not being able to tap your foot in the bathroom anymore.
- To having a Hilltopics distribution bin being stolen. Please give it back. Seriously.

### Events of interest spotlight:

The Gartner Lecture  
 "Why are we Here if We're Not Magic?"  
 Residential Colleges and the Renewal of  
 University Life  
 Featuring: Robert O'Hara  
 Tuesday, September 18  
 4 PM in the Faculty Club

Robert O'Hara is an evolutionary biologist who has become a strong advocate of the residential college through his website The Collegiate Way (<http://collegiateway.org/>). O'Hara's speech is "Residential Colleges and the Renewal of University Life". This is a must-attend event because a number of people in the SMU administration are interested in adopting the residential college system for SMU.

### Hilltopics Staff

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### SMU Fact:

In 1951, the first black students enroll in Perkins School of Theology, bringing desegregation to Southern Methodist University. Black students audited classes at Perkins in the 1940s, but they were never formally enrolled. The first black students to enroll as undergraduates did so in 1962.

TM