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Hilltopics Staff

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HILLTOPICS

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week of october 6, 2008

Candidates Miss the Point on Healthcare Reform

When someone starts talking about universal human rights, certain words come to mind: freedom, right to vote, free speech, opportunity, pursuit of happiness. In today's world, though, one more category is quickly becoming recognized as a legitimate human right – access to quality healthcare. According to a report from the U.S. Census Bureau, over 45.8 million Americans are lacking this critical right. In the most prosperous country in the world, 45.8 million people do not have access to healthcare. This issue has been largely overlooked in the media and in political debate until recently as it has developed into a hot topic issue in this year's upcoming presidential election. Barack Obama and John McCain have significantly different stances on the issue. Obama feels the most important issue of improving U.S. healthcare is to offer universal health care, which is insurance for every American. John McCain's policy stance is to offer subsidies to families



to pay for their own insurance policy and allow the sale of insurance policies across state lines. Both candidates' plans have massive flaws.

First, McCain's plan will not necessarily decrease the amount of uninsured Americans, nor will it comprehensively reform American healthcare. Obama's plan is not fool-proof, either. In today's political environment, it is easy to claim the desire to insure everyone and to fix U.S. healthcare with one singular change. This is a naïve opinion that ignores the true facts. Instituting universal healthcare without other comprehensive change will transform us from a broken private healthcare system to a broken public healthcare system. As a future physician, I want every American to be capable of getting appropriate healthcare coverage. In America today, doctors are under attack from insurance companies. All

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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@gmail.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.

Conscientious Consumer Beware: So-called Ethical Products May Not Stand Up to Claims

by Rachel Porter

Lately there seems to be a growing interest in ethical consumerism, or buying products that are made with the particular goal of avoiding exploitation of humans, animals or the environment. According to some sources, ethical consumerism has increased at a rate as high as 15% per year since 2002. While by no means rampant, this trend certainly has a growing presence on the SMU campus. In the bookstore you can now buy not only recycled but entirely sustainable notebooks printed with soy ink, and the Hughes-Trigg market now offers several varieties of fair trade tea as well as vegan meal options. Though ethically conscious products such as these have long been available to those who knew where to look, they are becoming more and more appealing to people who don't belong to the granola-munching crowd. In the past week alone I have discovered a decorative line of sustainable school supplies at Target, vegan Adidas basketball shoes, and even vegan Urban Decay makeup at Sephora.

Because of the jargony nature of "positive buying" it is easy to get lost in terminology.

In case you aren't exactly up to date, here is a quick guide:

Fair trade: This is when the producers (in developing countries) get a fair payment for their product. Most fair trade products are marked with an official label, so you know what you're buying.

Cruelty-free: This means the product was not tested on animals.

Vegan: These products do not contain leather or any sort of animal by-product. Their production does not involve the exploitation of animals in any way.

Organic: These are products (food, cotton, wine, shampoo) that have been grown or produced without genetic modification or pesticides. Organic produce does not pollute the Earth (unlike its chemically enhanced counterpart) so it's more environmentally sustainable.

Second-hand or recycled: This reduces waste because

the product now has a new owner, instead of being tossed into a trash pile.

Locally produced: The term "local" is used fairly flexibly, but these are products that are sold in the general region in which they were produced. In theory, locally produced products give the local economy a boost and keep local people in jobs. Local produce also has a smaller carbon footprint (amount of energy taken to make and transport the product).

The fact that the ethical consumerism movement is brimming with technical terms, in conjunction with the growing popularity of ethical products is perhaps what is enabling "greenwashing," a word invented to describe products which are inaccurately described as being environmental in some way or another in order to raise prices or promote sales.

An environmental marketing firm called TerraChoice in a survey last year of 1,018 products that made environmental claims shockingly found that the majority of them were fraudulent in some way or another. They composed a guide called "The Six Sins of Greenwashing," to

help consumers determine which products are actually environmentally conscientious and can support their claims. Most of these "sins" should also be kept in mind when shopping for ethical products in general. Npr.org provides this summary:

The Sin of the Hidden Tradeoff is committed by suggesting a product is "green" based on a single environmental attribute (the recycled content of paper, for example) or an unreasonably narrow set of attributes (recycled content and chlorine-free bleaching) without attention to other important environmental issues (such as energy, global warming, water, and forestry impacts of paper).

The Sin of No Proof. Any environmental claim that cannot be substantiated by easily accessible supporting information, or by a reliable third-party certification. TerraChoice says "no proof" occurred if supporting evidence was not ac-



cessible at either the point of purchase or at the product Web site.

The Sin of Vagueness is committed by every claim that is so poorly defined or broad that its real meaning is likely to be misunderstood by the intended consumer. Examples include : “chemical free” (nothing is free of chemicals; water is a chemical), “non-toxic”, “all natural” (Arsenic is natural. So are uranium, mercury and formaldehyde. All are poisonous.)

The Sin of Irrelevance is committed by making an environmental claim that may be truthful but is unimportant and unhelpful for consumers seeking environmentally preferable products. It distracts the consumer from finding a truly greener option.

The Sin of Lesser of Two Evils. These are “green” claims that may be true within the product category, but that risk distracting the consumer from the greater environmental impacts of the category as a whole. Examples include organic cigarettes and “green” herbicides and insecticides.

The Sin of Fibbing is committed by making environmental claims that are simply false.

The fact that so many counterfeit products are surfacing is a testament to the popularity of this movement. However, it is too soon to tell whether positive buying will continue to be a growing trend, or if it’s just a passing fad. People are willing to spend an extra dollar or two for a cute notebook printed on recycled paper, but are they willing to make significant sacrifices or lifestyle changes? PETA, or People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals recently sent a letter to Ben Cohen and Jerry Greenfield, cofounders of Ben & Jerry’s Homemade Inc., urging them to replace cow’s milk they use in their ice cream products with human breast milk. This letter was a reaction to reports that a Swiss restaurant owner will begin purchasing breast milk from nursing mothers and substituting breast milk for 75 percent of the cow’s milk in the food he serves. While this proposal is to most people a bit stomach turning, it makes for a good indicator. If ever I witness someone eat ice cream made from human breast milk rather than risk harm to a cow, I will truly have faith in the longevity of consumer consciousness.

Rachel is a junior English major and can be reached at rporter@smu.edu

Health Care

continued from page 1

medical professionals have something called medical malpractice insurance. This covers them against lawsuits from patients in case something goes wrong. Insurance companies have steadily and dramatically increased the premiums, as they recognize the absolute need that doctors and others have for this insurance. Another issue is the lack of medical malpractice tort reform. This applies to medical malpractice court cases. As it stands now, there is no limit in many areas on non-economic damages. This means the awards for pain and suffering go unchecked. Often, patients end up using medical malpractice suits as a means to makes thousands or millions of dollars without having to do anything. Trial lawyers actually wait in some hospitals to talk patients into suing their doctors. We still mainly utilize a paper medical system, when switching to an electronic system would save us millions a year. We focus on chronic care, meaning we wait until people are sick to treat them, instead of embracing preventive care. Preventable diseases and health risk factors such as obesity and smoking continually plague our system, costing us hundreds of millions of dollars, if not more, and jeopardizing patient health. Drug companies overcharge for prescriptions, limiting patient access and increasing national costs. Until we address these issues on a national scale with high priority, nothing we do will fix our healthcare system. Universal healthcare is the ultimate goal in America. We must fix medical malpractice insurance and the malpractice court system, embrace new technologies, focus on health education and preventative medicine, and address the corruption and waste of our pharmaceutical industry. Until we do so, we will not cure our healthcare system. And until one of the candidates recognizes and states this, neither will be right about the U.S. healthcare policy.

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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 ?

we’re listening at hilltopics@gmail.com

In Defense of Hip Hop

When people discuss the merits of different musical genres, they often dismiss hip-hop as lacking in substance, importance, and/or intelligence. Perhaps Soulja Boy hasn't been the best ambassador, but I think that writing off hip-hop is wrong. In fact, I think that hip-hop is the most culturally relevant, significant, and insightful music today. Hip-hop tells us about

our
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Hip-hop
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we live in.
For these
reasons,
hip-hop
matters
more
than any
other
current
music.



For many years, America has been the pre-eminent capitalist nation in the world. I know what you're thinking: here comes another rant from some leftist, hippie college student about the evils of capitalism. Wrong. I'm not Karl Marx and I'm a big fan of money. But I do acknowledge that capitalism both influences and promotes a certain set of cultural values. Namely, it promotes money over everything else, because in our society, money is power. Hip-hop centers on money. Sometimes hip-hop meditates on the pursuit of money. Other times, rap music simply celebrates the possession of money ("Got Money" anybody?). Rap music reflects our society's obsession with material gain. Listeners of all ages, races, and backgrounds connect with the music because fundamentally, we're all chasing paper. I may not have the same experiences as these rappers, but I have felt the ambition for advancement that these rappers talk about. Coming from deprived backgrounds, forgotten by society, these rappers are the new

underdog, the new archetype for the American hero in the 21st century. These aren't clean-cut, family-friendly heroes, but they are men willing to assert their own independence and establish a life outside of poverty. The fixation, the obsession with material betterment represents the new American Dream. More than any other genre, hip-hop glories in

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self.

More than any other musical genre, hip-hop eschews idealistic abstractions and meaningless metaphors for an in-depth exploration of concrete reality, of the world as it is, not as we wish it were. Hip-hop acknowledges and confronts the uncomfortable elements of life in America. It dares us to challenge society rather than retreat into meditations on ourselves. Songs from this genre speak to society, not solely to the individual. As a result, hip-hop is more meaningful. Hip-hop not only mirrors America as it is, but it contributes to the creation of America's future.

Chad Cohen can be reached at ccohen@smu.edu

SMU is getting green: not with envy, but with slick new bathrooms

by Josh Wood

A strange event is occurring on campus--something so subtle and yet so widespread that it has happened in most buildings on campus and yet only about one half of the student population is aware of its existence. I am talking, of course, about the proliferation of those strange, orb-like urinals that are being installed in the men's restrooms across SMU's campus. This newly designed urinal does not require any sort of flushing mechanism; as one student commented to me earlier, "I guess someone finally figured out...gravity works." Also, the interesting contours of this new design reduce any "splashback" effects—a vast improvement over the first waterless urinals implemented in the restrooms in the Embrey Engineering building a year ago. Note: if you ladies are confused by some of the terminology used in the previous sentence, just ask a fellow male student.

By this point, you may be asking yourself, "Is he really writing an entire article on some oddly shaped bathroom fixtures?" The answer to that question is, of course, not really. There is a bigger picture involved here. While SMU may be deeply entrenched in some aspects of policies and overall improvement projects, the university's approach to the increasingly popular environmentalist movement is admirable—I am not just talking about urinals, I am talking about entire buildings. For instance, when the J. Lindsey Embrey Engineering Building was designed, the architects crammed as much energy efficiency into one building as was humanly possible. Through the use of natural lighting and water-efficient landscaping, as well as an emphasis on using materials within 500 miles of the construction site (to cut down on transpor-

tation-related environmental impacts) and the recycling of construction waste, this building was awarded a gold rating of energy efficiency by the U.S. Green Building Council. The resulting positive press surrounding this SMU building and the environmental efforts behind it might have traditionally

benefited the university in the local and national spotlight, but other significant results also surfaced. Most importantly, it heavily influenced the decision to apply this environmentally conscience design process to the many new campus buildings under construction or in the planning phase. By continuing to stay green-minded with such large future projects, SMU is declaring that this university-wide environmentalist surge isn't simply a fad—it is very much here to stay.

These large scale projects may seem to dominate SMU's commendable efforts to procure a green image, but we should also keep in mind that our school has been getting the smaller things right for several years now. For instance, students living outside of campus take advantage of SMU's fuel-saving public transportation meth-

ods, and those annoying parking police are cruising around campus in energy efficient golf carts. There are recycling containers in a large number of classrooms and in the halls, and, of course, the guys get all-new-high-tech-no-flow urinals. We should all appreciate the efforts of those involved in improving the image of our university and simultaneously saving the planet, one porcelain orb at a time.

Josh Wood is a senior electrical engineering major and can be reached at jlwood@smu.edu

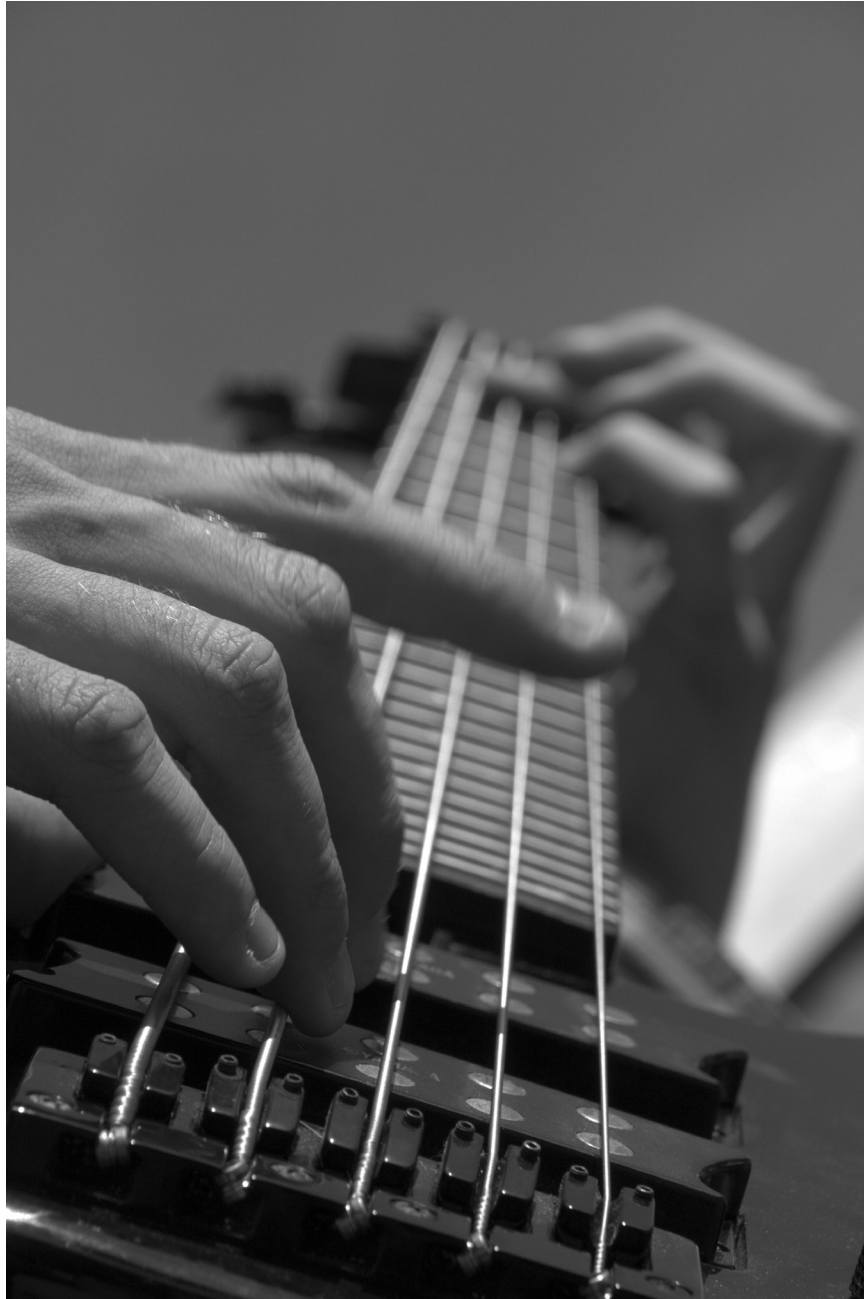


Need Some New Music? Try These On

TV on the Radio

Dear Science,

TV on the Radio isn't content with the indie club circuit, they seem to have their aim on something greater. With legendary live shows and near perfect records, the band is on its way to becoming the arena headliner most indie bands are afraid to become, and from the sound of *Dear Science*, TV on the Radio aren't frightened at all. *Dear Science*, is sure to go down as one of the top albums of 2008, and maybe even the decade, featuring trancey hooks and hypnotizing rhythm. The album never lulls, and while it keeps its odd, seemingly dysfunctional feel, this album is much more palatable than any of their previous efforts. Every track is immediately listenable, and tracks like "Golden Age," "Crying" and "Dancing Choose" are downright danceable with pop-aspirations. "Halfway Home" launches the album, sounding expansive, soaring and roaring for five minutes. "Crying" commands you to put on your dancing shoes and features a hasty, bouncy rhythm and Adebimpe switching between narrating and falsetto yelping. "Dancing Choose" features a gorgeous interchange of Adebimpe's and Malone's vocals, and gives you little choice but to dance. The hopeful "Golden Age" draws comparisons to David Bowie, and the optimistic, upbeat rhythm is both infectious and entertaining with brass sprinkled upon the song's electric base. The melancholy "Family Tree" is beautifully haunting, with the



anti-war "Red Dress" swiftly picks up the pace afterwards. "Love Dog" is another poignant, elegant song that tugs at your heartstrings. Then "Shout Me Out," starting soft, and

ending loud and distorted, builds into yet another amazing track. We hear near rapping in the crunchy, twisting "DLZ," one of the most intriguing songs on the record. *Dear Science*, draws to a close with the brassy, shimmering "Lover's Day" ending just as strong as the album begins. TV on the Radio may have begun their career under the radar, but just like their songs, they are building and expanding into something great. Keeping their dysfunctional, yet impeccably beautiful music, while making the tracks more accessible and straightforward, suits the band well. If they continue at this pace, TV on the Radio are sure to become legends of the arena, leaving us all in their wake.

9.7/10

Key Tracks: "DLZ" "Golden Age" "Dancing Choose" "Halfway Home"

Kings of Leon

Only By The Night

The Stills haven't quite broken through to top tier band staWe

often hear bands trying to grow and change their signature sound. Sometimes this pays off, other times it doesn't. Kings of Leon clearly exemplify this trend. Their first two discs, *Youth and Young Manhood* and *Aha Shake Heartbreak*, exuded sexuality and youth, and earned them the nickname "the Southern Strokes". However, *Because Of The Times* saw the Followill boys growing up, sounding darker, harder, and

more ambitious than they ever had. *Only By The Night* continues that trend, and depending on which Kings of Leon you prefer, this album may leave a funny aftertaste in your mouth. The album starts off brilliantly: "Closer" pulls you in, "Crawl" draws you closer, and then "Sex on Fire" unleashes on you. "Crawl" is full of stunning guitar riffs that recall Led Zeppelin, and is by far the most musically superior song on the album. "Sex On Fire" features Kings of Leon at the top of their game, with a slow build to a climatic chorus showcasing Caleb Followill's powerful, unique howl, with dueling guitars and thumping bass throughout. The problem with these three powerhouse tracks kicking off the album is that the band can never match these songs; the album has peaked after 10 minutes. The arena-anthem "Use Somebody" begs for someone worthy of Caleb's love, and "Manhattan" is a beautiful, relaxed narrative about love and corruption that provide some of the final highlights of the album. "Revelry," "I Want You," and "Cold Desert" have the band wearing their Southern roots on their sleeve. The problem is that none of these songs quite grab your attention like the beginning of the album. The song "Be Somebody" may be the darkest, most ambitious track on the record. It's vicious and snarling, beautiful as it is brooding, and saves a fairly mediocre finish to the album. On the whole, the record, while it doesn't exactly let you down, doesn't quite live up to expectations either. *Only By The Night* would be considered a great album by any other band, but because it's from Kings of Leon, one tends to want a little more. The verdict truly depends on which Kings of Leon you love: the youthful, reckless band, or the ambitious, mature one. Here's to the Followill family finding something in between.

8.2/10

Key Tracks: "Sex On Fire" "Crawl" "Be Somebody"

Cold War Kids

Loyalty To Loyalty

Cold War Kids burst onto the music scene with their 2006 debut *Robbers And Cowards* and their hit single "Hang Me Up To Dry," showcasing a blues-rock band with swagger and piano to boot. With their sophomore release, *Loyalty To Loyalty*, the band does more of the same, without sounding stale and repetitive. The album is a joy throughout, and will have you grooving and nodding in no time. "Against Privacy" kicks off the record, sounding murky and bluesy. "Mexican Dogs" picks up the pace, with thick drumming, reverb guitar, and Willet bearing his soul through his strained vocals. "Every Valley Is Not A Lake" is intense and soulful, and "Welcome To The Occupation" dares you not to shimmy, with bongos, cowbells, and shimmering guitar, along with some of Willet's most pleasing vocals on the record. "Something Is Not Right With Me" is *Loyalty To Loyalty's* first single, with good reason. The song is irresistible; the piano pulsates perfectly with the precise drumming, emotional singing, and grooving bass. "Golden

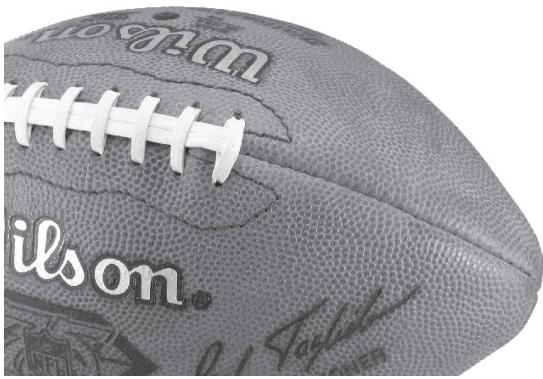
Gate Jumpers"— an ode to suicide— leisurely strolls along with unhurried, effortless vocals and delicate piano, with "Avalanche in B" continuing along at the same pace. "I've Seen Enough" picks things back up, with a catchy beat and melody, showcasing a near salsa tinge. The song "Every Man I Fall For" is sung through the viewpoint of a girl, emoting "Every man I fall for drinks his coffee black/love and hate are tattooed on his knuckles/And my name is on his back." Hillet grasps at his loss of youth in "Dreams Old Men Dream," which features yet another irresistible hook and a very cavernous, atmospheric feel. "Relief" is a breath of fresh air, combining the CWK basics with a synthetic undertone that nearly mirrors Ghostland Observatory, and makes for one of the most interesting moments on the album. Cold War Kids gently bow out with their final piano-driven song "Cryptomnesia," capping off a great record. There isn't a boring moment on the record, and while it may not feature as many stand out tracks as *Robbers And Cowards*, the album, as a whole, is far superior. Every track is a good listen, and things are only looking up for Cold War Kids, as *Loyalty To Loyalty* is sure to snag the band many more loyal fans.

8.8/10

Key Tracks: "Something Is Not Right With Me" "Mexican Dogs" "Relief"

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SMU v. Tulsa
Saturday, October 11, 2008
7:00 PM
Gerald Ford Stadium



Headline of the week: "Eating kangaroos could help fight global warming: scientist"

http://news.yahoo.com/s/afp/20081001/sc_afp/australiacimatefoodkangaroosoffbeat_081001071056

Ah, of course! It wasn't the greenhouse gases or the CFCs. It was the kangaroos the whole time. Little buggers.

- Ed.



Thumbs up:

- Campbell's Soup stock rising despite the economic meltdown. See, chicken soup does cure everything.
- Most TV shows have started their fall seasons. Thank goodness.
- www.thebricktestament.com someone had way too much time on his or her hands...



Thumbs down:

- Constant spam in our student emails
- General chaos and confusion over the economy. We're just students, we don't have to worry...right? Right?
- Midterm crunch...like a breakfast cereal, but with frustration and sleep deprivation instead of marshmallows and crunchy bits.

Upcoming Events:

- | | |
|---------------|---|
| October 13-14 | Fall Break |
| October 15 | Presidential Debate |
| October 18 | Football vs. Houston Ford Stadium |
| October 25 | Football vs. Navy, 2:30 pm, televised on CBS CS |

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SMU Totally Fictitious Fact:

SMU's debate team is famous for its tactic of collectively shouting "#&*\$ YOU!" when the opponent makes a point. We have yet to lose a round this way.

