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## Hilltopics: Volume 7, Issue 1

Hilltopics Staff

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## GAME OVER, CALIFORNIA

By: Amanda Oldham



It was recently brought to my attention that in November the highest court in the U.S. Judicial system will be discussing a subject near and dear to my heart: video games. Particularly, whether or not the sale of violent video games to minors should be illegal.

California made a big old fuss back in 2005 by passing a law that forbid the sale of said very violent

video games to minors, and not liking the outcome in the courts, have appealed to the Supreme Court. It seems as though they're hoping for a more favorable outcome despite arguing that they don't need proof to prove that violent video games correlate to more violent people.

Personally, I think it's a non-issue and should have been dismissed a long time ago.

For one, there already is a system in place that stops minors from purchasing violent video games without parental consent. The Electronic Software Rating Board (ESRB) takes games before they're released and stamps a letter on them to describe the audience the game is intended for: E for everyone, T for teenagers, M for mature adults, etc. Not only is the rating put right on the front cover of all video games, it also says the reason why the game received that rating,

*GAME, continued on page 6*

## OF SQUIRRELS AND MEN

By: Parul Dhar

My first day of school went a little something like this: I hopped out of bed, turned my swag on, took a look in the mirror and said, "Good morning." I had the confidence of the Old Spice guy since I thought I'd swan dive into the start of the best day of my life. As I stepped out of the residence hall, I marveled at the scenery and enjoyed the cool morning air. Soon, though, I discovered something that had the power to stop my momentous feeling of euphoria.

Squirrels were everywhere: falling out of trees, stealing random fruit-like objects, and even staring creepily at who knows what. See, where I'm from, squirrels were extremely humble creatures. They were never in anyone's way, and sometimes I would catch them looking both ways before crossing a sidewalk. But here, even Kanye West's ego can't measure up to one of a squirrel. They cross any path whenever they feel like it. Some even followed me for a certain time and gave me a look with those crazy eyes, as if I was a walking acorn. I was literally dodging them on my way to class, instead of the norm, where they were supposed to dodge me. Right

*SQUIRREL, continued on page 5*

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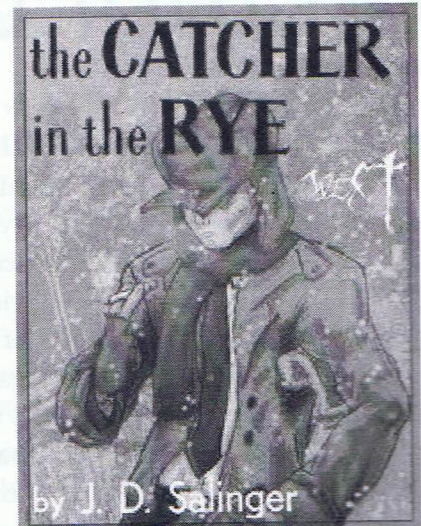
## IN DEFENSE OF HOLDEN CAULFIELD

By: Brandon Bub

I find that whenever someone asks me what my favorite book is I usually have a difficult time offering an answer. It's not just because I feel like I've read too many good books to choose from (even though I certainly wouldn't deny this). Rather, my reluctance stems from the response I've grown accustomed to hearing whenever I tell people that my favorite piece of literature is *Catcher in the Rye*. "Really?" they invariably ask, "I always hated that book." Of course people are certainly entitled to their own opinions: to each his or her own, right? But I find it surprising that a book hailed for so long as one of the landmarks of twentieth century literature could fall out of favor with so many people my age. My high school English teacher grew up in the '50s and '60s and always felt he could identify with Holden's struggle, yet when we read this book for the first time in my pre-AP English class, the response was nearly unanimous: the book was boring and Holden needed to learn to get over himself. I think this could easily reflect a generational gap, especially after I consider that when Salinger first published this novel he employed stylistic techniques that would make most respected authors cringe and discussed "vulgar" topics that surprised and offended many readers. Part of the novel's appeal was how much it shocked its audience,

but the themes Salinger touches upon are tame in comparison to what our generation is exposed to on an everyday basis. So does this mean that the book has lost all of its appeal and is irrelevant for today's audience? I should hope not; in fact, I think Holden's story is timeless.

The most salient fact of Holden's story is that he's the protagonist of a coming-of-age novel, but rather than accept maturity as a goal he resists it in every way he possibly can. He's too afraid to call his childhood friend Jane Gallagher for fear that she might have changed, he lambasts his brother D.B. for going off to Hollywood and "being a prostitute," and he clings to his little sister Phoebe because she embodies the innocence that Holden rapidly finds himself losing. Salinger takes the traditional concept of the bildungsroman and turns it on its head, refusing to romanticize the process of growing up and instead exposing the pain that normally goes along with it. And this, in my opinion, is what makes the novel so beautiful: we may not like how Holden behaves in the story, but his attitudes are ones that almost any young person can relate to, and it is comforting to know that you're not the only one who goes through it. As college students, I think all of us can agree that the adult world, though it offers us innumerable opportunities, can



be a frightening and even corrupting place, and sometimes it doesn't sound so bad to just be the "catcher in the rye," holding onto our youth at any cost. This is of course an immature and unviable life philosophy though, as we all have to graduate at some point or another. But Salinger didn't write this book for the reader to emulate Holden (even though Mark Chapman might disagree); rather, his story serves as an example for us to learn from, to better cope with a world that oftentimes just isn't too nice of a place to live in. I encourage you all to keep this in mind and maybe give the book another chance if you didn't like it the first time; you might find it to be a bit better than you remembered.

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## DALLAS: GOOD SHERIFF OR WILD OUTLAW? Garter Lecture presents various accounts

By: Bekah Boyer

High Noon on an otherwise uneventful September Monday brings to mind a gun-slinging tumbleweed and other stereotypical western tropes - indeed, the presentation at McCord Auditorium seemed reminiscent of a show-down. "It's so exciting," honors program director Dr. David D. Doyle emphasized upon announcing the speaker for the Garter Lecture to be the lauded author and Ohio State professor, Harvey Graff; yet, the critical historian seemed less than enthused to face a roomful of protective Dallasites. Graff's book, *The Dallas Myth*, is a study on the cultural landscape of a city with whom the former UTD professor is well acquainted. "[Graff's] stories about his own experiences in Dallas helped clarify many of the ideas he puts forth in his book," comments sophomore Emily Williams. Before publication, Graff revealed

his intention to title his manuscript *Dallas: City at the Crossroads*, an apt metaphor since Graff sees Dallas to be the intersection of two (paradoxical) myths: Dallas is simultaneously a city with "no reason to exist" that is "destined for greatness," thus personifying the "Big D" as the manifestation of an amorphous American Dream. His articulation of this argument earned him a reputation, bordering on infamy, amongst members of the new honors seminar, who read the work for their class. Graff, who also specializes in the social history of literacy, charged the audience to read with an open mind, a technique he claims to have employed when "reading" the city of Dallas. To Graff, our city runs amok with symbols ripe for the cherry-picking: every building, contract, and neighborhood is fraught with contradiction and hyperbole to create

a "Dallas Way" that both makes and un-

makes this American city. One might be prompted to ask Dr. Graff, who admittedly grapples with the psychoanalytic implication of his personal obsession with the Dallas TV show, if a cigar is ever merely a cigar. Ultimately, the lecture painted a picture of Dallas as a, in Graff's words, "fractured mosaic": as multi-layered and varied as the myriad opinions of it.

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### Corner Riddle

A Cowboy rides into town on Friday. He stays three days, then leaves on Friday. How is this possible?

*Answer on page 8*

## THE ONLY ISSUE THAT MATTERS

By: Jack Swearingen

Not that there aren't other pressing events and happenings going on in the world in September (I mean, I'm sure they're out there somewhere), but as I religiously checked my P.O. box between classes, the only issue that mattered in September was the novella-sized beacon of hope in a world surrounded by a gross over-abundance of pastel shorts, Raybans, and Sperry's.



It wasn't conformity. It was ushering in a more glorious vantage point of beauty vastly above my own limited view. September was about Vogue, and the only issue that mattered was the one so ungraciously stuffed into my P.O. box by nice ladies in horrible polos. As I flipped through the glossy pages full of people almost too beautiful in their own right, it became abundantly clear that, at the risk of having Meadows rise up in arms, fashion was the highest form of art because it was art that lived. It wasn't isolated in a museum or contained by a curtain or in-sync with some awful beeping thing; fashion, whether tailored at Armani or pulled out of a crate at

Wal-Mart, is a living expression of mass-produced quantity that screams with every thread-count that, of all the things you wore today, you wore this, and that choice means something. It means a lot of things. Essentially, it means what you want it to mean, but in the end it will always mean you. Fashion is not just a status symbol and a means to satisfy the senses, unless you want it to be. I can dress in those overabundant articles mentioned above and say that I fit in here, yet I can wear that same outfit to Texas State and say that I'm better than all of them (although, curiously, we say both of those things far too often on the Boulevard). What we wear is a means to signify what we mean, and, contrary to all those who lie like dogs and say that looks don't matter, what we mean is the most essential question in human existence.



But if fashion is a means of expression (that's such a lame copout of a definition, but we'll work with it), then who cares what Anna Wintour thinks? How can she decide what expresses my will best? Be-

fore she strikes me down with a cosmic death-ray (having a friend



who interned at Conde Nast, FYI, The Devil Wears Prada is true- she could melt a tank in the duration of an elevator ride), let me ask why art majors study the masters, why English majors read the classics, why psychology majors study Freud, why in any profession we look to those who made the greatest strides toward the ideal for inspiration and education. The answer is, even though the greats are flawed, they did it best. The mindset of the modern era is to aim for the objective and settle for the subjective, yet by molding ourselves into those that strove the furthest out of the shadowy cave of our existence, we build on their progress and rush for the light. In order to communicate through any means, we must first learn how society communicates, and then make our own contribution. If we have creativity without knowledge, then we have nothing. Wintour's magazine represents

*continued on next page*



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TREND:  
Fifties Flair

the utmost striving of the greatest art's endeavor to express all in our lives in the newest and most effective ways. It decides the trends and incessantly pushes us further to realize our own individuality and

display it through every stitch since Eden. It represents all of what we were, are, and could be. It represents everything you were, everything you are now, and everything you could be were you to realize the potential of true expression. Society ought not be judged by its laws or culture or enduring historical testament, but rather by its ladies' shoes.

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Opposites  
Attract

*photos from Vogue.com*

## SQUIRRELS CONT.

then I knew squirrels here were to be confident, even to the point where some of them were beginning to scare human beings.

To prove my point, I was walking with a few friends on my way to class. When our paths diverged, I immediately sensed something causing havoc in the bushes. My oh-so wonderful friend decided it would be funny to scare whatever was mysteriously lurking around in nature. I was peacefully walking, and, about five seconds later, a squirrel suddenly launched from the bushes and into my direction. Its eyes were ferocious, its mouth was treacherous, and its tail looked as if it were going to knock me unconscious. I screamed like a hysterical thirteen-year-old girl who saw a glimpse of Justin Bieber. It was extreme and obnoxious to scream like that, but that squirrel seemed to lunge at me without

mercy. Of course, the squirrel decided to move out of the way at the last second, so I wasn't actually attacked. But by that point, I was already screaming, "Hide your kids, hide your wife, and possibly your husband too because they are creeping on everybody out here."

Maybe I'm just paranoid and not appreciating the full value of having squirrels run around on campus. I mean there have been a number of times when squirrels have provided authentic humor for me when I walked to class. Plus, squirrels can be aesthetically admirable. They have super agile skills, which could be interpreted to be the ballet of nature. In this way squirrels are nature's gift of art. Still, I think I may be going too far with that metaphor. Squir-

rels are out of their minds. Their instincts are offset, their ability to panic seems to take over their rationality, and their eyes are spheres of savagery. So wherever you are on campus, be careful because no



matter how beautiful nature may seem to your senses, those squirrels are out there...

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## GAME CONT.

such as violence or sexual content. And if you happen to be under the age of 17 and trying to buy a game rated M without your parents there, good luck with that one, buddy.

Apparently this isn't enough for California, whose original law was struck down on the grounds that it went against the First Amendment by disallowing free speech.

Which brings me to my second point. Video games are a form of story-telling art and thus fall under the protection of Free Speech, so this case should have been struck down in its infancy and never lived long enough to open its foul mouth again. However, as a gamer myself

I am slightly biased. But find me a better medium that draws its audience in the way a video game does, where that audience is actively engaged in the story as it unfolds. Seriously, I dare you.

The government already struggles to define what makes a painting 'art' or not and that confusion bleeds onto this interactive medium. And just as the Supreme Court cannot really find a good definition of what makes something obscene or not, they cannot make a claim that certain games cross a line when it comes to violence. Who draws the line then, the Judge? The ESRB already does that job, so why keep

fighting over an issue that already has a solution? The video game industry has been policing and monitoring itself now for years and, quite frankly, it isn't the government's place to swoop down and take over.

Though I must concede that yes, some video games go way beyond most people's comfort zones when it comes to violence or sexual content, but the few bad apples should never define the whole batch (I'm looking at you, Grand Theft Auto). *Amanda Oldham is a junior Journalism and Creative Writing double-major. She can be reached at [aoldham@smu.edu](mailto:aoldham@smu.edu).*

## Do you have an opinion about...

politics? music? class? television? football? shopping? intramurals? fraternities? movies? tests? the Mavs? club sports? religion? driving? Umphrey-Lee? technology? baseball? the weather? dating? books? night-clubs? pets? Texas? study abroad? art? sororities? news? magazines? food?

## ...Or anything else?

Hilltopics welcomes submissions from all members of the community. Letters to the editor should be up to 300 words and written in response to a previously published article. Contributions should be articles of 300-600 words on any topic or in response to another article. Please e-mail any submissions to [aoldham@smu.edu](mailto:aoldham@smu.edu) to be included in the next issue. The opinions expressed in Hilltopics are those of the author solely and do not reflect the beliefs of Hilltopics or any other entity.



## HONORS DOESN'T NECESSARILY MEAN HONORABLE

I began to ponder while eating dinner with a friend at the Umphrey Lee cafeteria. It was officially a meeting to fulfill a social out-of-class-experience (OCE) for our Wellness I class, but we did not let that constrain our conversation from covering a wide array of diverse and rather unusual topics. I had just made the brilliant discovery that the wall of our booth was actually a pair of French doors (I still have no idea why I did not notice it on previous visits to RFOC) when a student nonchalantly strolled over to our booth and politely requested that we poke her ID into the crack between the doors. My friend and I thought that it was quite an unusual request; however, we did not see the harm in complying. We shrugged our shoulders and did as she asked.

Almost immediately, the card was whisked through the crack by a student waiting on the outside who then swiped in at the counter. My friend and I exchanged quizzical looks. Before we had time to fully formulate our thoughts, we were again surprised by another student quickly reaching across our table and thrusting his ID into the crack. By then, I was upset. The costs of attending college are already sufficiently high without students driving prices up still higher by their unethical conduct. Didn't they make the connection that their cheating would eventually force SMU dining services to raise prices, ultimately punishing

those students who remain honest? Don't students realize that their character, whether good or bad, directly affects the value of an SMU degree? Don't students understand that the public, including potential employers, judges our entire university by the conduct of its students? I felt betrayed.

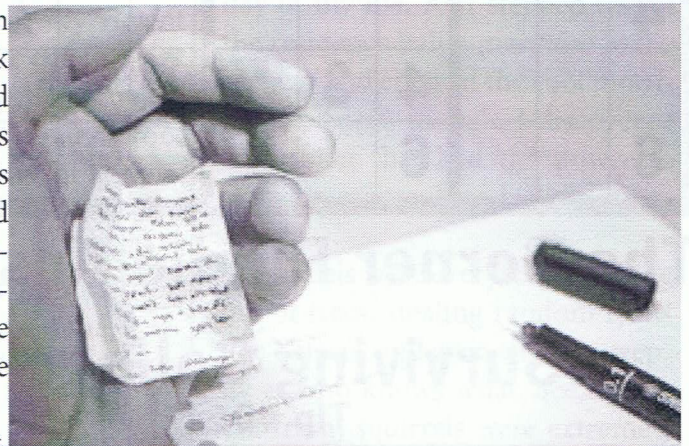
During AARO, we were frequently told that ours was the best, brightest, and most talented class to ever enter SMU. That is all good and well; nevertheless, being special does not mean that one can break the rules or bend ethical standards according to one's whims. The world would quickly become pandemonium if everyone did just as he or she pleased.

Believe it or not, rules were not made simply to spoil fun. Rules were made for our protection, especially the legal drinking age of twenty-one.

Just as the twig is bent, so the tree is inclined. College is a pivotal time, and the consequences of choices made here can affect an entire lifetime. It might seem innocent and fun at the time, but the repercussions of an alcohol violation or the charge of a criminal offence for possessing a fake ID last long beyond one's time in college. A respectable degree is not essential for obtaining and keeping a good

job; an impeccable reputation is. People are watching whether you realize it or not. It is the responsibility of a good leader to set a good example. You never know how your decisions will influence those of another.

College is a time of exploration, a time of freedom. However, with increased freedom comes increased responsibility. Experiment. Pursue your dreams. But stay within the guidelines established for your safety and the safety of others. As



honorable honors students, lead the way in showing your fellow students what it means to be a true Mustang. Increase the value of your education by exhibiting exemplary character at all times; you never know just when it will be noticed and rewarded. The privilege of attending SMU and taking advantage of its world-class opportunities is once-in-a-lifetime. Please don't ruin yours.



## Sudoku!

3	9			2			6
	5		8	6			
2							3
	3		7				
		1		6		8	
				1		9	
4							7
			4	3			5
8			6				3
							2

## My Life Is Average

Today I found a book called "How to Read a Book". I'm so confused. MLIA

Today I was visiting my friend at her university. While walking through campus we saw a sign that said "Please do not attempt to throw the squirrels." I'm oh so very curious. MLIA

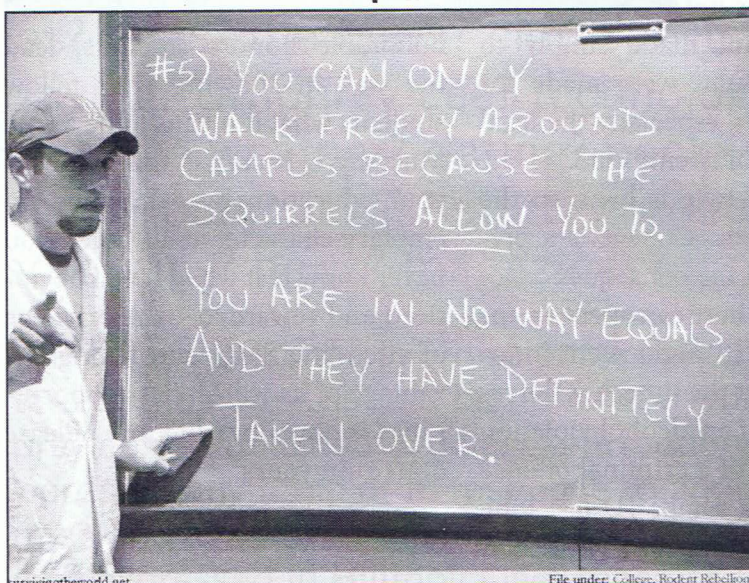
The credit card machine wasn't working in the office and so I pointed and yelled "REPARO!" It immediately spat out the receipt and is working perfectly. Thank you Harry Potter. MLIA

Today, I saw a chicken cross the road. My life is complete. MLIA

## The Corner Riddle Answer: The Cowboy's horse's name is Friday.

## Surviving College

Tip #5



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