# Rank-o-philia

Seventh Annual Undergraduate Research Conference

April 7 and 8, 2004

*Discipline is an art of rank, a technique for the transformation of arrangements. It individualizes bodies by a location that does not give them a fixed position, but distributes them and circulates them in a network of relations.*

- Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*

*The poet ranks far below the painter in representation of visible things, and far below the musician in that of invisible things.*

- Leonardo da Vinci

Thematic Option Honors Program
University of Southern California
# Background and Purpose

The Thematic Option Honors Program, part of the USC College of Letters, Arts and Sciences, is the University of Southern California's general education alternative: an interdisciplinary program of academic rigor that encourages exciting and vibrant discussion among its community. Each year approximately 200 outstanding freshmen from all majors participate in a unique combination of core courses, supplemental theme courses, writing classes and tutorials.

This conference provides an opportunity for undergraduate students to enrich their academic experience by publicly presenting their ideas and research. In response to a general call for papers, Thematic Option students developed topics under the theme "Rank-o-philia" to be presented as part of a panel. Topics are reflective of students' various disciplines and interests and focus on issues ranging from politics to popular culture. Each panel is composed of three to five students, with a faculty member or Thematic Option writing instructor serving as the panel's chair and respondent. An opportunity for questions and answers follows after the presentation of papers at each panel.

# Rank-o-philia

The term "rank-o-philia" refers to our obsession with ranking things, whether they be works of art, football teams, films, or political candidates. A country that holds democracy and political equality among its most cherished ideals also measures success on the basis of moving up in competitive rankings rather than moving laterally. Ranking has given rise to an inventory of experts who wield power in imposing order and, in turn, determine what counts as knowledge and what resurges discursively as history and significance. Foucault argues that ranking is a technique that when done successfully transforms humans into docile bodies equipped to serve the state; but if we accept Foucault's argument, how do we reconcile this "technique" with the ethic of individualism, that glimmering ideal that drives us to distinguish ourselves relative to others? For this conference we have solicited papers that investigate the implications of our culture's preoccupation with ranking. How does our love of rank interplay with matters related to, but not limited to, epistemology, identity, society, scientific progress, and cultural values?

Student Conference Coordinators:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Emmanuel Caudillo | Kelsey Dixon | Stephanie Gilbert |
| Nicole Jilly | Choon-Kyu Lee | Charles Mallison |
| Jennifer Noble | Jenna Pedley | Shir Pridonoff |
| Kristen Taylor | | |

Student Art Committee:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Ananda Jacobs | Jamie Lee | Marie Lu |

# SCHEDULE

<u>Wednesday, April 7</u>

4:00 pm          **Keynote Address** by Professors Percival Everett and Jim Kincaid
                             Department of English
                             USC College of Letters, Arts and Sciences

5:00 pm          **Buffet Dinner**

6:15 pm          **Panel Presentations**
                             Urban Identities - Room A
                             Idols and Ideals - Room B
                             From Margin to Center - Banquet Room
                             Putting Women in their Place - Pub

7:30 pm          **Break**

7:45 pm          **Panel Presentations**
                             Driven by the Dream - Room A
                             The End of Innocence - Room B
                             Who's In Charge Here? - Banquet Room
                             Social Status: A Matter of Life and Death - Pub

<u>Thursday, April 8</u>

5:00 pm          **Panel Presentations**
                             T & A (Talent and Achievement) - Room A
                             If I Can Make It… - Room B
                             The Outsiders - Banquet Room
                             The Final Word - Pub

6:15 pm          **Buffet Dinner**

7:30 pm          **Panel Presentations**
                             Extreme Makeovers - Room A
                             Putting Hierarchies Back Together Again - Room B
                             Another Brick in the Wall - Banquet Room
                             Rank-o-philiacs Anonymous - Pub

# Urban Identities

**Moderated by Alison Tymoczko, Department of English**
**WEDNESDAY, APRIL 7**
**6:15 – 7:30**
**ROOM A**


**Kevin Mahaffey**


Smile, You're on Candid Camera: Changing Notions of Surveillance in Postmodern American Culture

Recently, surveillance has become somewhat of a pop-culture fascination. From the reality TV shows permeating every network's line-up to the web camera phenomenon of the late 1990s, surveillance has become more a source of entertainment than ever before. Benjamin Franklin's quote, "Those who would give up essential liberty, to purchase a little temporary safety, deserve neither liberty nor safety," has long served to exemplify the American panoptic, "Big Brother" notion of surveillance. Relying on historical analyses, I will contrast traditional perceptions of surveillance in American culture with new notions brought about by the advent of reality-based entertainment. In postmodern America, reality-based entertainment has perverted our society's previous notion of surveillance by allowing us perceive it as a source of freedom and entertainment. Instead of resisting the reduction of privacy, people are embracing surveillance as a benign improvement of everyday life. If we continue such a trend, will society be better for it, or will ubiquitous surveillance serve to quite literally implement Foucault's panopticon, as theorists believe, thereby eliminating privacy and liberty?


**Matt May**


The Skyscraper as a Cultural Measuring Stick

The skyscraper started out as a practical response to an economic problem – prohibitively expensive land. But it quickly took on symbolic characteristics. These giants came to represent money, technology, power, and prestige, and people have become very attached to skylines for that reason. The representative meaning skyscrapers have assumed makes them a kind of "measuring stick" that our rank-o-philiac culture uses to compare companies and locations with each other, and this in turn fuels the race to build the tallest skyscraper. Having the tallest building will prove which company, city, or country is the most powerful and prestigious. The symbolic value of skyscrapers is so great that terrorists have chosen them as the targets of choice in inflicting maximum psychological distress on a population.


**Jamie Morton**


Beneath the Façade in Los Angeles

Every city has its own personality, one which outsiders may easily gauge, but which seems imperceptible to the city's naturalized inhabitants. Los Angeles's personality is hard to distinguish at first,

however, because it hides behind a façade of wealth, glitz, and glamour.  Beneath this mask, Los Angeles reveals itself as an exceptional model of capitalism, particularly because of its tendency to alienate people from each other and from nature.  Thus, we can use Los Angeles as a model of industrial capitalism—a system obsessed with reaching the uppermost echelon of society—to examine the effects of pollution, car culture, ambition, and pride on the relationships of people to each other, to nature, and to themselves.

**Rebekah Sanders**

In Back Alleys and Underground: The Chinese Independent Film Community Thriving in the Shadows of Communism

In the Chaoyang district of Beijing, there is a small, dark doorway, almost imperceptible at night, leading underground into the film club Trainspotting, where Chinese artists and Western expats view the latest indie cinema.  Independent film, called "underground," is illegal in China. Westerners are just stumbling upon China's vibrant community of independent filmmakers, as I did upon Trainspotting while visiting Beijing, since modern politics have forced the art into the shadows.  The subject is so new, sources must be primary: interviews with the directors and scenes from their films become the basis for interpretation.  How do these underground movies compare/contrast to "above ground" films from Hong Kong or Taiwan?  How is reality portrayed versus symbolic political allegory?  Finally, how will the discovery of the underground Chinese film community affect Western cinema?

**Sarah Schuessler**

Gentrification: Destroying the Last of the Bohemians

"An artist is at home everywhere.**"**

This proverb sounds like a credo that a Bohemian artist might adopt, but it could also be a developer's response to the issue of the gentrification of Bohemian neighborhoods. Because it was a cheap but interesting place to live, Venice Beach became one such neighborhood of Bohemians—artists, musicians, writers, and other low-income residents—whose lifestyles contributed to a cool, creative scene. But in a nation consumed with the desire to move competitively upward, it was only a matter of time before market forces began to transform this hip but somewhat scruffy neighborhood into a trendy, affluent one. What role has marketing played in redefining Venice Beach? Will the last of the Bohemians be caught in a vicious cycle, continuously relocated because of greedy realtors? Starting with the origins of Venice Beach, working up to its current state, I will examine gentrification's influence on the Bohemian.

# Idols and Ideals
**Moderated by Professor Edwin McCann, School of Philosophy**
**WEDNESDAY APRIL 7**
**6:15 – 7:30**
**ROOM B**


**Sumayya Ahmad**

The Pursuit of *Perfectibilité* through Plastic Surgery

The pursuit of *perfectibilité*, one of the defining characteristics of modern society, has been part of human thought since ancient times. People constantly thrive to improve themselves, both internally and externally. The most immediate and conspicuous metamorphosis that one can undergo is a physical alteration. Through the medium of the human body, a person can express their internal perceptions of beauty and physical ideals. The modern prevalence of aesthetic surgery in society is unprecedented. Individual reasons for getting plastic surgery include psychological distress caused by defective features; desire to eliminate classification with an ethnic group; and escaping the body's natural aging process, among others. There are several historical and cultural factors that have influenced body alterations that include equating physical beauty with inner character, sociological superiority of physical traits, and desire to achieve eroticism. Through examining the historical significance of bodily attractiveness, as well as scrutinizing the trends of plastic surgery in modern times, it can be inferred that plastic surgery caters to the human desire for *perfectibilité*.


**Zachary Goldman**

Punked Out: Evolving Ideals in the Punk Movement

One of the most easily identifiable, anti-authoritarian movements of the last half century is the punk rock movement. The movement began as a reaction to corporate music. Today, many claim that the punk movement has "sold out". The movement has apparently lost its ideals, becoming part of the mainstream. This presentation will investigate whether punks today neglect the central beliefs of the movement, as well as what exactly those beliefs are. It will contrast findings on today's punks with research on the bands that started the movement. All in all, it will seek to determine whether the original punk groups of the 1970s were truer to the punk ideals than groups today, or whether money and fame also motivated the original punks.


**Kim Machnik**

American Top 40: Ranking Change and Modernity

Change is intrinsic to the ethos of American popular culture. The continual, almost frenetic rate at which new trends and codes emerge is reflected in the American Top 40, the most popular system of rating

popular music in the United States. Music is valued for its newness, and often its transgressive nature; on the popular music plane, challenging the status quo is, ironically, a norm. This piece takes a historical and cultural look at the establishment of American popular music as progressive and superlatively current. It considers the sources and development of American popular music and the Top 40 ranking system, as well as the effect of popular music as the possession of America's youth. It also references the relationship of performers to the ethos of change and re-invention throughout the history of American popular music. Finally, "American Top 40: Ranking Change and Modernity" addresses the cultural implications and origins of the values of constant evolution and up-to-the minute modernity.

**Oscar Moralde**

Lords of the Box-Office: The Hollywood Aesthetic and the Adolescent Mindset

Rarely does high art truly comport with pop culture; the natures of what appeals to the "elite" and what appeals to the "masses" almost always differ. And when one talks about the cinema, the term "masses" conjures the image of the teenage demographic and its lucrative disposable income. Of the top-grossing films of 2003, the majority were in genres that appeal traditionally to the adolescent male: science-fiction, fantasy, and action. There are cultural and psychological markers in these films that resonate with the teen. An examination of why most of these blockbusters fail to appeal to the cultural gatekeeper while hitting the heart—and the wallet—of the teenager will illuminate the extent that the adolescent dollar has shaped the aesthetic landscape of Hollywood.

**Natalie Pang**

High School Cliques, Popularity and Alienation

"After all, high school is a microcosm of the real world, with lockers."

It is within this microcosm that America's youth undergo the profound transition from adolescence to adulthood and it is within the halls of high schools that teenagers "choose" their social identities. In this difficult transitional period, America still finds the motives behind high-school murders such as Columbine a complete conundrum. The media blames the media for the promotion of violence but perhaps these violent actions can be attributed also to the frustration of failing in a rank-obsessed country. This paper examines the role of cliques and popularity in high schools and the immense alienation that results in the Darwin-esque struggle for success and the dynamics and motives of hazing and bullying.

# From Margin to Center

**Moderated by Professor Jasmine Aimaq, School of International Relations**
**WEDNESDAY, APRIL 7**
**6:15 – 7:30**
**BANQUET ROOM**


**Cassandra Beatty**

Breasts, Bikinis, and Body Shots: The Unnecessary Culture of Spring Break

"One week of non-stop partying meant to blow away
so many brain cells that you won't even remember your name!"
- from the film, *Welcome to Spring Break*

Whether a wet T-shirt contest or an all-you-can-drink wristband, college students are looking for an experience found only in the culture of spring break. Different tours and vacation destinations accommodate for every recreational desire. However when roughly 95% of college students admit to consuming alcohol while on vacation, spring break becomes the mecca for wild behavior. But which taboos prioritize a breaker's vacation and why? Which locations offer what activities, and why do college students – with plenty of opportunity present in their newly independent lives – feel compelled to re-invent their rebellion elsewhere? Young adults have ample access to almost every indulgence on the campuses of their home universities, so what is it about the booze, sex, and clubs abroad that makes for ideal travel?


**Eric Jensen**

Class and Rebellion in David Fincher's *Fight Club*

In "Class and Rebellion in David Fincher's *Fight Club*," I consider the film as a commentary on the attractiveness of anarchy to the modern consumer culture-driven worker. As the film progresses, more and more white collar and blue collar employees buy into the ideals of violent rebellion against modern social constructs and becoming, "a slave to the Ikea nesting instinct." Through examination of modern criticism of the film as well as classical psychoanalytic and Marxian interpretation, I seek to find out what drives both the corporate and blue collar working classes to seek refuge from the ranking inherent in consumerism in violent anarchist rebellion.


**Marie Lam**

Men's Versus Women's Perceptions of the Ideal Woman

Look into any bookstore and one will find at least one bookshelf dedicated to self-help books. Within this section of self-help books, there are books written for the sole purpose of teaching women how to be the type of women that all men want – how to be the ideal. However, what exactly is the ideal

woman? Men and women have different perceptions about the ideal woman due to the overly self-critical nature of women. The differences in the definitions of the ideal woman are important because females are constantly modifying their behaviors in ways that they believe will fit better into the mold of the men's ideal woman, without realizing that the ideal woman to both genders is not the same.

**Mindy Menjou**

Swastika Chic: Taboo-Breaking, Ambiguity, and Punk Rock

Rock music has a rich and storied political past, one of the most bizarre chapters of which has been the early punk movement's flirtation with fascist imagery. The original punks were not Nazis, so why did they sing songs about concentration camps and wear swastika armbands? Using the lyrics to the Sex Pistols' "Belsen Was A Gas" as a starting point, and then researching the history of punk and the words of the punks themselves (either in the form of lyrics from other songs or statements), I have discovered that there are no easy answers. While the punks' incorporation of fascist imagery into their look and their lyrics can, in part, be chalked up to a desire to shock, it was not all about being shocking for the sake of being shocking. It was about calling into question the meanings of these things in an attempt to rob them of their shock value or to at least force people to think about why these things might be considered shocking in the first place. The deliberate ambiguity of the punks' message was engineered to highlight the fact that, while it may be a human tendency to think in terms of simple binaries (e.g., the good guys vs. the evil-doers), the world the punks inhabited was really far more ambiguous and complicated than that.

**Patrick Wood**

From Outcast to Addict: Standing in the Shadows of Western Culture

The genetic component of addiction has, in recent years, been researched and focused on extensively, but biology alone cannot account for the downward spiral of millions of drug abusers. In "From Outcast to Addict," I will directly link the effects of alienation from the societal mainstream, from Western culture's contemporary portrait of the healthy individual (the healthy, happy, heterosexual, educated extrovert), with a dangerous attraction to drugs and alcohol. My paper, using figures from William S. Burroughs' *Junkie*, *Leaving Las Vegas*, and *The Thirsty Muse: Alcohol and the American Writer*, examines a harsh irony: American society rejects these sensitive, highly insightful, individuals only to discover that many are artists of the first order.

# Putting Women in Their Place
**Moderated by Jennifer Dobbs, Department of English**
**WEDNESDAY, APRIL 7**
**6:15 – 7:30**
**PUB**


**Christianne Amodio**

Sweet Posse, Six-Pack, and the 4DQ: Girl Aggression and the Power of Cliques

Stereotypical girls are defined as caring and compassionate. Their gentle and nurturing typecast, especially in comparison to the rough and tumble image of the adolescent boy, emphasizes the placid temperance of the teenage girl. In the last few decades, however, teen movies and feminist sociological studies have illuminated the hidden hostility in female adolescents. Unlike young boys, adolescent girls do not demonstrate physical aggression; girl sadism is indirect. Beneath the sweet, polite exterior of the American girl, ages twelve through eighteen lays a harsh, manipulative, center. The adolescent girl does not punch; she wounds with her words. She does not form friendships, but instead alliances. Her battles take place in the classroom, in the cafeteria, and by her locker before homeroom. She wields her power by sitting at a new lunch table or deliberately "forgetting" to invite her old best friend to her birthday party. She does not feel guilty if she spurns a friend to be part of the popular clique, ironically regarded by her peers as the "sweet posse." My paper serves to discuss the weight and consequence of adolescent cliques, and the relationship between girl aggression and the echelons of popularity in American middle and high schools.


**Melissa Causey**

American Politics: Democracy or Phallocracy?

Are American politics still a men only club? After looking at such books as Simone De Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* and Colette Dowling's *The Cinderella Complex: Women's Hidden Fear of Independence* as well as other sources such as the careers of Hillary Clinton and other prominent female politicians, scholarly research data from modern gender and sociological studies, and popular representations of the American political world, I wish to argue that women are still being excluded from politics and that this is due to both social convention and, in part, their own choice. In many cases, women are still underrepresented in the highest positions of American political power and those who manage to enter the political ranks find themselves "defeminized."

**Karen Clark**

A Modern Day Cinderella Story

A form of ranking manifests itself through our social hierarchy, which is shaped by society's definitions of fashion and beauty. Why do we need to conform to these accepted norms of appearance and what pushes us to consume more products to achieve the perfect look? Visual and textual analysis of popular films such as *She's All That* and *Clueless* illuminate the phenomenon of girls transforming their physical appearance in order to move up the social ladder. In these Cinderella stories, an ugly duckling is made over into one of the pretty, popular girls, radically altering her place in the world. Sociologists like Juliet Schor explain why we continue to purchase products to change ourselves "for the better" while films like *Carrie* depict possible consequences of being a social pariah.

**Kate Peck**

Holy Hierarchy

Though certainly widespread today, the practice of ranking is by no means unique to the modern age. The evolving roles that women played in the medieval church were just as susceptible to the process of comparison and ordering that is omnipresent in our everyday lives. This system of ranking affects the way information comes down to us: those who are less deserving of praise and attention are more likely to be lost to the historical consciousness. I intend to investigate this ranking system among female saints which was broadly applied in the late medieval ages by focusing on some of the "royal saints" of Central Eastern Europe, especially Saints Elizabeth and Margaret of Hungary.

**Megan Standard**

Beauty Pageants and Cultural Identity

Each time a beauty contest occurs there are inevitable protests from feminists protecting the value of true womanhood. America sees a basic controversy: unfeminine women trying to escape objectification versus feminine beauties exemplifying and promoting the traditional ideal. However there is much more to the pageants and their criticism than these minimal perspectives. From Sarah Benet-Weiser's *The Most Beautiful Girl in the World: Beauty Pageants and National Identity*, I examine the compilation of papers that she procures and their relation to how these pageants and rankings promote and detract from cultural identity. Colleen Ballerino Colhen's *Beauty Queens on the Global Stage: Gender, Contests, and Power* offers the unique perspectives of both the feminist critics and the contestants themselves. Both texts will allow me to study the core of the beauty pageant, the motivations and effects of the contests themselves. Primary sources will be the negative reactions to beauty pageants in Nigeria in 2002 and to Vida Samadzai, Miss Afganistan in 2003, but also in the more positive approach exhibited in movies such as *Miss Congeniality*. I intend to examine all of these media as examples of perspectives about beauty contests and their purposes, creating an integral picture of what a beauty contest is in relation to the larger world arena.

## Driven by the Dream
**Moderated by Professor Anthony Kemp, Department of English**
**WEDNESDAY, APRIL 7**
**7:45 – 9:00**
**ROOM A**

**Natasha Huang**

How the Ranking of Foreigners Affected their Lives

I conducted a study on the Immigration Act of 1924 because I was interested in how immigration policies affected Asians in the United States.  I decided to use the Immigration Act of 1924 as a springboard for exploring immigration policies in general, because it was somewhat of a culmination of several "harbinger" immigration policies over a span of about half a century.  I will be using *America is in the Heart* by Carlos Bulosan as my primary text to analyze.  This book portrays the lives of Filipino, Chinese, and Japanese Americans all over the United States in the years before and after the turn of the century, and I will attempt to draw conclusions about how their lives were influenced by the various immigration policies of the U.S.—The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the Gentlemen's Agreement of 1907, and, most importantly, the Immigration Act of 1924.  I will look at the various acts themselves and provide descriptions and explanations in my paper.  I will also find other Asian American literature written either during or about that time period, such as short stories by Sui Sin Far, to see how much impact (direct or indirect) the immigration policies had on the lives of Asian Americans.

**Douglas Mason**

Identity and Self-expression in the Information Age

With the advent of the internet and with it a virtual world to parallel the real world, several questions remain on how parallel such a virtual world can be.  What added obstacles does the internet pose to self-expression?  How are national boundaries maintained and transgressed?   And adding to these questions is the issue that lies at the heart of our so-called "global economy":  How are cultures (and sub-cultures) inherently snubbed in the ranking schemes of the internet due to barriers in language, ideology, technological savvy and economic disadvantage?  An answer to these questions, or even a redefinition, could go a long way to place oneself in the "new/global economy of the Information Age/Superhighway brought to you by Microsoft® (or Apple®, depending on your disposition)."

**Kimberly Nguyen**

Young, Pissed Off, and Overachieving: How the Model Minority Myth Affects
Young Asian Americans

Asian Americans are often defined in terms of the model minority myth: smart, successful, obedient, quiet, and passive. As a result, Asian Americans are often viewed as technical and non-aggressive, rather than artistic and outgoing. The model minority myth negatively affects the Asian American community as well as other ethnic minority communities. Because of the model minority myth, aggression in young Asian Americans is often overlooked and rarely addressed in society. I will examine the aggression and alienation in young Asian Americans in *Better Luck Tomorrow* in Freudian terms, while analyzing scholarly criticisms on the film, and trace the roots of the model minority myth in historical texts and reveal the individual and psychological consequences of the myth on the entire nation.

**Derek Peters**

Tinseltown's Bohemia: Finding a Place for Hollywood's Creative

Picturing the archetypical Bohemian produces an image of a convention-abandoning, poverty-stricken artist defying mainstream culture in his sunlit Parisian garret. A new type of Bohemian, however, is emerging among opposite surroundings: the decidedly non-Bohemian film industry. Despite the budgets, mass-marketing, and unoriginality driving Hollywood today, they're there: the unconventional actor, director, or screenwriter. Every year, we rank the industry's most powerful members, the Bruckheimers and Spielbergs and Cruises. One pop culture outlet, though, attempts to counterbalance its own "Power List" and rank Bohemian-like creativity. Showcasing "the most creative people in Hollywood," *Entertainment Weekly* releases the annual "It List." Using this list as a launching point, I plan to discuss how Bohemians are finding their way into Hollywood, despite the industry's best efforts to generate money instead of art.

**Gianelle Smith**

From American Idols to Movie Stars: Who Rules the Celebrity Hierarchy?

People love competition. Talent shows such as *American Idol* and *Star Search* are (and were) all about singers competing for stardom, but with one difference: the process of determining the winner. While judges determined the winner in *Star Search*, the voting public determines the American Idol, thereby presenting a different breed of celebrity—one that is driven by the public. But after weeks of competition are over, what's next? Winner Kelly Clarkson and runner up Justin Guarini of *American Idol*'s first season, for example, rushed to become movie stars with their box office flop *From Justin to Kelly*. Singers constantly try to become movie stars, thus presenting the existence of a celebrity hierarchy with movie stars, rather than singers, at the top of the ranks.

# The End of Innocence
**Moderated by Professor Lawrence Green, Department of English**
**WEDNESDAY, APRIL 7**
**7:45 – 9:00**
**ROOM B**

**Merrill Balassone**

Bullies in the Bleachers: Parents Fouling Youth Sports

The beating death of Michael Costin by fellow hockey dad Thomas Junta in July 2000 brought youth sports violence to the national forefront.  From the carefree world of sandlot pickup games to using "drafts" and "free agency" to create Little League powerhouse teams, youth sports now more closely resemble the professional leagues.  This paper will discuss the influences that put parents past the breaking point at youth sports events: the desire for lucrative college sports scholarships for their kids and a decline in family and religious life that puts increased identification with their child's sport team.

**George Ding**

Adolescent Suicides in Japan

Japan is known as the land of cherry blossoms, kimonos and fast-trains.  In the recent years, another thing commonly seen in Japan can be added to this list: suicide.  Japan has a long history of suicide, ever since the days of the samurai suicide was looked upon as a redemptive act.  However, suicide today has come to stand for something different.  In the past few years adolescent suicides have been on the rise, with the latest trend being online suicides—suicides organized on websites whose participants are people that have never met before but share the same goal.  My paper investigates the likely causes of adolescent suicide and speculates on possible solutions to this pervasive problem in modern-day Japan.

**Robbye Good**

Miniature Soldiers: The Game for Superiority

For a practice that is largely viewed as immoral, it is astounding that there are approximately five million child soldiers used in today's global warfare. One can find in various testimonies of former child soldiers the human desire to climb the ranks of society that motivates this continuous use of underage recruits. What keeps children in the rank and file is the army yearning to be named the victor, the adult officer wanting to be the revered ruler, and the child desiring to define himself by the gun he carries. Furthermore, in tumultuous nations where the future is uncertain, people search for identity by the assertion of their superiority in a practice that many people of this world frown upon.

**Monika Lind**

Reject This: A Recasting of College Admissions Competition

In his *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, Sigmund Freud calls puberty a process and recognizes the primacy of the individual. The college admissions system, in contrast, requires adolescents to act like adults while stripping away students' autonomy. My paper proposes that it is this conflict, the rejection of Freud's vision of adolescence by the admissions system, that generates intense feelings of competition in high school students. Studies, reports, surveys, and Orson Scott Card's novel *Ender's Game*, however, reject the assumed inevitability of the conflict? There is a way out of this mess.


**Jonathan Lurie**

"My Wild Teen is Out of Control!": the Spectacle of Teen Boot Camp
and the Rebellious Teenager in American Society

Maury and other daytime television talk shows have garnered success by portraying the spectacle of Teen Boot Camp. Scantily clad and rebellious teens are paraded onstage while the audience (of mostly mothers) is shocked and horrified at the danger these teens present to society. At Teen Boot Camp, the teens go through rigorous physical conditioning, emerging normal and fit to reenter society. This study examines the presentation and creation of the delinquent youth in society by analyzing Maury and Teen Boot Camp in terms of Foucauldian conceptions of power and discipline. I also look at the way that parents consume the spectacle of boot camp and who gets their blame for creating teenage delinquents. I also address Dr. Phil's more subtle psychological approach to discipline.

# Who's in Charge Here?
**Moderated by Dr. Molly Engelhardt, Thematic Option Program**
**WEDNESDAY, APRIL 7**
**7:45 – 9:00**
**BANQUET ROOM**

**Alex Brazier**

Exploring the Evolution of Age Gaps

The time period of prominent authors like Jane Austen was one in which a woman was supposed to marry while she was on the tail-end of her adolescence and she should marry a person who was many years her senior. Age gaps were normal; if an age gap didn't exist because a woman was too old, or a man was too young, it was taboo. Times have changed, though, and the revolution caused by feminism made what used to be the acceptable standard into today's anomaly. Because women began demanding and receiving equality in so many different aspects of society, we think that relationships should be completely, inherently equal. Therefore, we see relationships between two people of dissimilar age as abnormal, improperly motivated, and wrong.

**Kelly McElroy**

The Long Ladder: Taxonomy and Hierarchy in Anthropological Thought

"This notion consists in having a true idea of the objects; objects are distinguished and known by classifying them methodically and giving them appropriate names. Therefore, classification and name-giving will be the foundation of our science"
-- Carl Linnaeus

In 1877, Henry Lewis Morgan proposed that cultures progress from savagery to barbarism, culminating in civilization. Early anthropologists modeled their studies on naturalists' taxonomies of the plant and animal world: social evolution structured this taxonomic ideology. Today, despite the revelation of cultural relativity, evolutionary hierarchy continues to pervade the field. Just flip through any introductory textbook: moving from "simple" to "complex," authors describe "pre-state" societies before "industrial" cultures. Can we classify and name cultures without ranking them? Is it ever possible to have a "true idea" of culture?

**Dru Pollini**

Learning to Be Normal: The Infantilization of the Insane

Those whom society labels "insane" constitute an underclass that does not enjoy all of the rights and responsibilities "normal" citizens reserve for themselves. Because the goal of our treatment of the insane is to "educate" them to normalcy, our perceptions of them and of children are similar. The similar legal status of children and of the insane along with the portrayal of the insane in the works *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, *Death of a Salesman*, and *Girl, Interrupted* reflect society's perception of the mentally abnormal as child-like. A comparison between our treatment of children and of the insane explains our frequent failure in improving the lives of the insane as a result of our habit of denying their adulthood.

**Maxwell Turner**

Blinded by the Crime: Heroes and Villains in an Age of Pedophilia

If there is one thing contemporary American culture loves more than ranking, it is arguing about rank. When it comes to morality and sexuality, though, there is one act which we seem to agree ranks as the most vile of offenses: pedophilia. Is this atypical unanimity a sign of some sort of common sense of moral good? Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita* and Martin Scorsese's and *Taxi Driver*, suggest that the unique position of the pedophile in society is something not nearly so wholesome. In fact, as each work forces its audience to reconsider characters condemned or glorified by society due to their relationship pedophilia, Nabokov and Scorsese provide warning that perhaps we are too quick in our judgment, and, in our paranoid condemnation of pedophilia, we blind ourselves as a culture to the true complexity of the humans involved.

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# Social Status: A Matter of Life and Death
**Moderated by Tanya Heflin, Department of English**
**WEDNESDAY, APRIL 7**
**7:45 – 9:00**
**PUB**


**Matthew Carter-Tracy**


An Inferior Death: Inequalities Carried to the Grave


According to Homer, we all "die an equal death - the idler and the man of mighty deeds." There is no arguing that a departed hero is deader than a deceased idler, for dead is dead. However, a hero's burial is always grander in scale than an idler's. In fact, most eminent individuals have conspicuous gravesites and some even have ornate burial chambers. Gravesites, then, serve as a medium of inference about a person's status in life. Accordingly, heroes remain illustrious in the eyes of posterity while the dead idler remains an idler. Using research from Californian graveyards, then, I intend to show that the inequities of our time resonate posthumously.


**Jessica Gillette**


Boys, Bags, and Bohemia


*Sex and the City* began as a television program showing the lives of urban, upper class women. One of these women, Carrie Bradshaw, lives the twentieth century equivalent of a Bohemian lifestyle. She writes a weekly column based on the dating and sexual exploits of herself and her friends, all single women. By examining the change in how the four main characters rank the things in their lives and how their values evolve from the first to the last episode it can be seen that the show moved from an accurate portrayal of a modern Bohemian lifestyle to the embracement of traditional values such as monogamy, marriage, and family. These changes will also be examined in the light of the values of network television, Hollywood, and the general public and how the general public's values changed in the six years the show was on air.


**Lilyanne Ohanesian**


"Queen Bees," "Wannabes," and Social Hierarchies as a Survival Adaptation of Adolescence


Sociologists contend that exclusive social networks and pecking orders first appear in adolescence. The idea of being classified by an ephemeral index of popularity has been much maligned, but can such a process ever be beneficial for the adolescent who is struggling with identity formation? In this time of ambiguity and conflict, it is the person who refuses to "fit in" and assume a ranking among his peers who is at a disadvantage. Examining the depictions of hierarchies within and of groups in popular culture and recent news items, I will explore how a strict sense of our relationship to others stabilizes the way in which

we define ourselves as well as the unique role of rankings as a bulwark against a seemingly hostile world of chaos.


**Kelly Proctor**

The NFL and American Social Values

Professional football, like many sports, reflects social standards and ideals.  The NFL embodies American ideas of success, morality, and fair competition.  Analyzing what the NFL chooses to emphasize about its reputation and what it chooses to downplay reveals what the majority of Americans value and what they do not.  In an effort to promote itself as a respectable institution and proponent of fair competition, the league employs a system of rankings and playoffs to determine an uncontested champion.  This paper explores the connection between the NFL's self-image and its reception and subsequent integration in to American value systems by examining gambling, advertising, and competition.


**William Suto**

Discontinuity or Persistence: The Planter Class in the Postbellum South

Since the 1950's there has been an ongoing scholarly debate about the effect of the Civil War on the planter class in the south. Opinions range from the theory that the planter class was completely destroyed to the idea that the planter class managed to persist in the same form as before the war. I will discuss the economic and political changes wrought by the Civil War and examine the effect that these changes had on the social structuring of the south. The central question of my research is whether or not the significant economic, political, and lifestyle changes after the Civil War restructured the social hierarchy, specifically the dominant planter class. If so, how were the changes interrelated? If not, how did the planter class manage to survive in the face of such drastic change to their way of life?

# T & A (Talent and Achievement)

**Moderated by Professor Catherine Crowley, Department of Occupational Science**
**THURSDAY, APRIL 8**
**5:00 – 6:15**
**ROOM A**


**Kate Crisalli**


Objectivism: Setting Man Free From Men


As a product of the twentieth century, the philosophy of Objectivism is a fairly new school of thought.  In our modern times, its ideas have enjoyed a controversial welcome, as well as a long-standing (if infamous) popularity on college campuses everywhere.  The philosophy was developed by Ayn Rand, a Russian-born American writer, who believed in "the concept of man as a heroic being, with his own happiness as the moral purpose of his life, with productive achievement as his noblest activity, and reason as his only absolute."  This paper explores the competitive nature of Objectivism's "culture of achievement," and considers the cultural implications of Rand's changing readership over the past five decades.


**Elizabeth Johnson**


"Nothing funny, I just like talent": The Bohemian Social Hierarchy


Bohemians tend to have a social hierarchy based on talent, but "normal" society has a hierarchy based on wealth.  The Bohemians live in a greater society where most regularly interact with this "normal" society, and the two different social ranking systems clash.  This conflict is illustrated by Baz Luhrmann's films *Moulin Rouge* (2001) and *Strictly Ballroom* (1992). Luhrmann's films demonstrate the implications of the Bohemian's deviant hierarchy, showing both its positive and negative aspects. However, at the end of both films, the Bohemian ranking system is shown to be superior despite the conflict it tends to cause. Thus, Luhrmann's two films are a fairly accurate representation of the Bohemian social hierarchy; however, the representation is from the Bohemian's point of view.


**Tim Kowalczyk**


The Million-Dollar Q.E.D.


The methodology of mathematical research has been evolving rapidly over the past century.  Before the advent of the modern university, the overwhelming majority of developments in mathematics were made by individuals with pen and paper.  While logical pen-and-paper proof remains the focus of mathematics, computational methods are gaining significance as technology improves, and collaborative research is taking the place of individual scholarly inquiry.  To complicate matters, offerings of prize money for elusive proofs have increased exponentially in recent years.  Can the modern collaborative nature of mathematical research be reconciled with competitive prizes?  Is it even worthwhile to rank mathematical

achievement through a prize system?  Historical trends along with the prize system suggest that mathematics, despite present trends, will always hold a place for the individual.


**Julia Paajanen**

A Rave Review: A Study of Dance Used to Escape Society and Reach Enlightenment

From present-day raves to the angel rings in Kundera's *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*, dance is used with the express purpose of leading to enlightenment. Both instances employ spontaneity and frenzy to escape the pressures and conventions of society. The common goal of the individuals involved results in the creation of a new microsociety concerned solely with the pursuit of happiness through dance. The microsociety examples of raves and the ascending angels in Kundera's novel will be explored in terms of the relationships of the new group with society as a whole, as well as the role of dance and enlightenment in the interactions within that new group.


**Joyce Sutedja**

Photography or Pornography? Drawing the Distinction between Art and Obscenity

In the age of anti-censorship, with society becoming more open and liberal, the line drawn between obscenity and art becomes subsequently blurred. Nudity and sexual explicitness become incorporated into everyday life. The boundary bearing the distinction between art, something considered morally superior, and obscenity, often viewed as a shameful thing, is continuously pushed further than before, to the point where the limit itself becomes subjective. With this lack of order, even the lewdest may be considered art and passed on to the higher tiers of mainstream culture, yet definite rules cannot exist without seemingly muffling the people's freedom. When do art and obscenity then, for all intents and purposes, become one and the same? Eventually, what was considered voyeurism may be considered artistic taste.

## If I Can Make It…
**Moderated by Dr. Mary Beth Tegan, Thematic Option Program**
**THURSDAY, APRIL 8**
**5:00 – 6:15**
**ROOM B**


**Lien Doan**


From Yellow Peril to Model Minority: The Status of Asian Americans
and its Effects on Adolescents


In the past several decades, the population of Asian Americans has increased significantly in the United States.  And yet, the term "model minority" that was used to stereotype them back in the late 1960s is still widely used to characterize Asian American youth today, despite the tremendous diversity that exists within the group due to differing ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, and generation status.  This stereotype portrays all Asian American teenagers as being passive, competitive, and exceedingly successful academically.  I will question the validity of the model minority image, examine how this depiction distorts the perception of and attitude towards Asian Americans among the general public, and identify the many serious emotional and psychological issues that it raises among Asian American teenagers.


**Paige Feldman**


The Nouveau Bohemian: The Role of the Misfit in 90s Teen Movies


In the late 1990s, teen movies returned with a vengeance; dozens of films within a few short years were made that were both about and targeting teens. Within almost every one of these movies lay a misfit, the lowest ranked stereotype in any teen movie, an artist of some sort who is scorned by her socially accepted peers. Typically, the misfit is the female lead, and main love interest for a very cookie cutter, All-American male lead. Because of the inevitable romance with the popular male, these women have the opportunity to become victims of the status quo. I will be exploring how these nouveau Bohemians' choices as a result of their affiliation with the All-American guy affect their status as a Bohemian and rank in the social circles in high school and college.


**Aaron Fullerton**


When the Pawns Play Themselves: The Struggle for Control as Seen in Reality Television


Thanks to the recent explosion of reality television, seemingly anyone can enter the world of entertainment.  Once in front of the camera, though, reality television participants become characters in a narrative and, therefore, pieces in the game the producers are playing.  The control over a character is as much in the hands of the cameramen, the editors, the directors, and the studio as it is in the hands of the actual character, if not more so.  Appropriately, the most common storyline in these reality shows is the

pursuit of power. The methods, however, are modified since these characters recognize that games such as "Survivor" are manufactured realities—or unrealities—and to truly gain power, they create and fulfill roles (hero, rebel, peon) with varying degrees of success.

## Jane Lopes

Actors Acting: Academy Award Speeches and their Relationship to the Audience

Although the producers of the annual Academy Awards attempt to animate each year's show with new hosting shticks, edgy graphics, and witty presenter dialogue, the Oscars is a show brimming with tradition. Acceptance speeches are one of these traditions and these short presentations are just as filled with precedent (and the desire for differentiation) as the show itself. Both the live and home viewer is either consciously or subconsciously affected by the speech and both of these audiences have an effect on the professional livelihood of the star. The live audience can decide if they will work with the star and the home audience can decide whether they will see the star's future movies. The winner has to cater their speech to these disparate yet equally important audiences.

## Crystal Perl

*Office Space*: A Guide to Surviving Disillusionment in Modern America

Modern American literature is saturated with characters that are dependent on the illusions of the American Dream. It could almost be considered a literary fact that abandoning those illusions leads to death or institutionalization. Note how these quintessential literary figures perish alongside their delusions: *Death of a Salesman*'s Willy Loman commits suicide; *The Iceman Cometh*'s Hickey and Parritt beg for their deaths; Gatsby is murdered. The narrator from *Fight Club* and Blanche from *A Streetcar Named Desire* are spared from death, but are rendered mentally unstable. Due to this literary fact, modern American literature is seriously lacking in well-adjusted, self-actualizing role models. My project examines this literary crisis and then presents the character of Peter Gibbons from the film *Office Space* (1990) as an underestimated, but truly revolutionary literary hero. Unlike the others, he dispels his illusions while sustaining his life, sanity, and satisfaction.

# The Outsiders
**Moderated by James Penner, Department of English**
**THURSDAY, APRIL 8**
**5:00 – 6:15**
**BANQUET ROOM**


**Aaron Brown**

Japanese-Americans and World War II Internment: The Pain of Silence

For many members of the Sansei (third) generation of Japanese-Americans, the silence of their Nisei (second generation) parents as to their experiences in United States internment camps during WWII is confusing and unthinkable. Why exactly do so many of the evacuees who went through the internment remain silent? For some it is a cultural stigma; they feel humiliated and shamed by their experience. For young children who grew up in the camps, their parents didn't speak out so why should they? Yet one of the biggest reasons is that Japanese-Americans have become trapped in a "victims' Olympics" wherein their experiences of suffering are deemed 'not enough' to merit witness. It is only with the fervor and energy generated through the campaign for redress in the late 1980's that Japanese-American survivors of the camps have begun to tell their stories so that the internment will never be forgotten.


**Lindsay Gordon**
Spawning Drones: Disciplining Deviance Through Rank
*[Y]oung children, even when out of control, do not have the power to destroy their mothers,*
*but mothers who are out of control feel that they may destroy their children.*
--Elaine Heffner, *Mothering*, 1980

From their earliest ages, children are force fed, along with their daily vegetables, the American mantra of success through healthy competition. The grammar school quest for the Student of the Month bumper sticker transforms with age into the cutthroat quest for the American Dream. Consequently, the individual grows to be defined and controlled by his rank and role within society. This hierarchical ranking system has become so natural to Americans that they now are terrified by those who do not conform to it, including their own children. In this paper, I will explore the growing societal fear of adolescents and the contradiction that, while we define children as pure and innocent, we demonize them as rebellious deviants. I will explain the reasons that this intense fear exists and present the extreme measures to which society will resort in order to quell that fear, including literally destroying juveniles.


**Patrick Hou**

Not Just the Quiet Type: The Impacts of Asian Silence in Media on Asian American Psyche

Though we consider ourselves in a nation less racist than a number of decades ago, stereotypes of the silent Asian American still litter American media. Males are portrayed as the completely foreign martial

arts master, the isolated nerd in high school, or the emotionally devoid black-adorned Triad gangster. Women are exoticized, given the role of a quiet seductress or as the passive, docile foreign beauty who never objects. Originating from long-held notions of Orientalism, this theme of the silent and mysterious Asian in American media does inevitably have an effect on the culture of present-day Asian Americans. Asian Americans are being fed roles that they are expected to fulfill, resulting in the rejection of their Asian heritage in place of the more accepted American view. Through an examination of printed and filmed media, this essay will examine to what extent silence in the media has impacted the self-identities of Asian Americans.

**Sarah LaCour**

Moving Out of the Watch Tower: The Role of Panopticism in *Ourika*

More than being the first novel to describe the emotions of a black woman in French society, Claire de Duras's *Ourika* is a social critique of the consequences inherent in Panopticism. Despite being aware of the gaze directed upon her, the young woman is unable to change the color of her skin to comply with the ideals of her society. Written by a white aristocrat and placed in the era of the Revolution and Reformation, this is the ultimate tragedy, a tale of self-loathing and death. What can we learn from this text, and what standards should we apply to ourselves and others?

**Sarah Levy**

The Sinister Side

Studies have been done to assess the mortality rate, learning abilities, probability for cognitive disorders, athletic skills, and correlation of homosexuality in left-handed people. The conclusions have been wide-ranging, suggesting little progress in the area of laterality studies. These studies have led to a left-hand/right-hand binary in business marketing strategy, resulting in new marketing strategies focusing on handedness in culture. This trend has resulted in a reification of the ancient binary system of ranking with the right hand always coming out "right."

# Getting the Last Word In
**Moderated by Marci McMahon, Department of English**
**THURSDAY, APRIL 8**
**5:00 – 6:15**
**PUB**


**Anne Aubert-Santelli**

Slang on the College Campus: A Threat to University Ideals?

Traditionally defined as "institutions of higher learning," universities function in part to help young adults mature intellectually, an important part of which is the acquisition of a more sophisticated vocabulary and manner of speaking. First year students are the initiates to the preferred "academic discourse," and as such they learn quickly what language is not appropriate within this classroom community, and more importantly perhaps, that their relative success with the "superior" mode of expression will inevitably "rank" them among their peers. Yet, despite the pressure placed on initiates to the academic discourse community, as soon as the student leaves through the classroom portal, a notable change occurs in his or her speech patterns: the student's lexicon become reduced to sometimes incomprehensible smatterings borrowed from movies, music, subcultures (i.e. "gangster" lingo), et cetera. Indeed, as a nexus where various discourses converge, the college setting ironically fosters the use of slang amongst students. Significantly, the use of this questionable language actually seems to work to resist the very notion of college as a place of "higher" education. More importantly, however, slang becomes a vehicle through which the student learns about him or her self (creates a sense of identity) within the new community.


**Vince Lee**

Sticks and Stones: Your Words Will Only Fuel Me

The word "nigger" has had an interesting history. Before the advent of the politically correct, the racial epithet was used as most insults were, as a means of degrading. The word's function was to rank a person below another by basis of ethnicity and race. It was a putdown, meant to put darker-skinned persons in their own separate social category, lower than the common, and widely acceptable, white man. Interestingly enough, the use of the word "nigger" is now to proudly announce that isolation from the common white. The word has been stripped of its oppressive power, and now exists, in exclusive employment of blacks, as an empowering mark of distinction.


**Bryce McFerran**

The Morphing Descriptors of  Male Adolescence

The stage of development currently termed as adolescence has long been recognized as a shifting, ambiguous period.  From the amorous Medoro of Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* to the hyper-individualistic

Stephen Dedalus presented by Joyce, adolescence is a time of dramatic personal transformation. With this in mind it is not surprising that the presentation and description of adolescents in literature have distinctly evolved. Beginning with the presentation of the Virgilian view of adolescence, I will trace the alteration of the way in which the adolescent is described in literature. I intend to reveal the steps and shifts which come between the stately Trojan cavalry boys of *The Aeneid* and the ultra-violent "droogs" which terrorize the world created by Anthony Burgess in *A Clockwork Orange*.

**Heather Pennington**

Magical Realism: Re-Visioning the Subaltern with Salman Rushdie's
*Haroun and the Sea of Stories*

Salman Rushdie created *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* within the literary tradition of magical realism. This genre's suspension of disbelief provides the perfect setting for the creation of an allegory involving the tyrannical Kattam-Shud, "the Arch-Enemy…of language itself," and his citizens, who represent the subaltern (Rushdie 79). Subaltern is society's name for a group that is, as the foremost subaltern theorist Gayatri Spivak formulated, oppressed, or "other." As readers hear of Rushdie's struggle to gain a voice as part of the subaltern, they see his struggle echoed in his characters from *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*. Discovering allegorical references to the current state of politics, readers will realize why Rushdie's writings were declared illegal and subversive in countries wishing to continue oppression of the subaltern.

**Meredith Schulte**

Frozen Truth: Tragedy and Testimony on Mt. Everest

Concern for how literature becomes well-known, well-read and well-respected in popular culture interests me both as an audience to these books and an aspiring author of them. After reading six books about the Everest tragedy of 1996 and articles about those books and the tragedy, as well as investigating bookstores and online resources, I found *Into Thin Air* to be the most widely represented book by far. I think this means that since *Into Thin Air* was both the first account published and received the most media attention, the audience perceives it as the highest quality, which is not necessarily the case. Many things we hold in high rank are there not because of their superiority, but rather their fame.

# Extreme Makeovers

**Moderated by Jeff Solomon, Department of English**
**THURSDAY, APRIL 8**
**7:30 – 8:45**
**ROOM A**


**Joelle Emerson**

Is It Really Rape?: How the American Legal System Ranks Sexual Assault

This essay examines how the American legal system ranks different types of sexual assault, deeming some more worthy of prosecution than others. In the essay I prove that the legal system ranks rapes unfairly by focusing on the actions of the victim rather than simply the crimes of the perpetrator. I look at different types of rape, such as stranger rape, acquaintance rape and marital rape in order to examine the ways in which these respective types of rape are prosecuted. Furthermore, I analyze why this may be the case in American society, and how the American legal system may be informed by societal ideas and morals.


**Christen Farr**

The Veil: Innocent Expression of Faith or Symbol of Dissent

In France today, many Muslim girls are forced to choose between allegiance to their faith or to their country. When they come of age, their faith commands them to wear the veil, *le foulard*; however, the government forbids any form of religious expression within public institutions and school officials are justifiably outraged at the flagrant defiance of the secular laws that they feel make the French system equitable. Recently, the French government responded to this frustration by passing legislation that bans religious symbols in schools specifically. How did a secular government, supposedly blind to religion, make it impossible for children of a certain faith to attend school? And how did Imperialism, colonialism, and enduring prejudice against Muslims influence this decision?


**Molly Hage**

Eating Disorders in Females Stem from Filial Influences

Family is supposed to be a consistent source of support for teenage girls at a time when little is stable in their lives–girls depend on their family to set examples and provide guidance. This dependence, combined with the hormone-charged focus on appearance that becomes a basis for ranking self-worth, makes family a prime cause of eating disorders in teenage females. Seeing her mother dieting and obsessing over her weight, having a negative relationship with or being teased about her weight by her father, being compared to siblings, having to live up to parents' expectations, coping with traumatic events such as divorce or death, and learning to use external sources to rate her value can all readily induce an eating disorder in a young female because they transform the family from a source of solace to one of distress.

**Melissa McMeekin**

Shocking!: Women's Position in the Fashion Industry

Sky-puh-relli. Ever heard of her? Doubtful, because after World War II her name faded away. Despite her low profile, Elsa Schiaparelli is arguably the most influential female in fashion's history. She pioneered women's legs and managed to make fashion into an art through close ties with Dadaists and Surrealists. However, it wasn't until the 1930's that Schiaparelli emerged as, debatably, the first female fashion designer. Even today there are few women designing for a predominately female market. This paper investigates women's rise into the fashion industry and their continuously morphing image, with specific emphasis on Elsa Schiaparelli's influence.

**Tracy Wang**

The Politics of Gender in Snow White

Fairy tales are a large part of our world culture. Sometimes they are tales of human origin and other times they are the classic tale of the prince and princess. One of the most well known is the Grimm Brothers' tale of Snow White. Remade by Walt Disney Pictures into their first feature-length animation, it is a staple of Western society. Released in 1937, Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves* reflects elements of American culture at the time period. For instance, in the fashion of late 1930's America, it was popular for women to have larger eyes, a nose, and a mouth. This can be seen in Disney's Snow White who is drawn with very large eyes. This trend causes Snow White to look very childlike, thus reflecting the male-female structure in the fairy tale. Within the fairy tale, there is a clear dependence of the female on the male. Snow White is the naïve female who, though, physically attractive, has no intellect and does not make any choices for herself. Instead, she depends on the men in the story, the dwarfs and the prince, to take care of her. This strain of male dominance in the story is a reflection of a strong tradition in the human narrative of male domination. This study will delve into the connection between the role of gender in the tale of Snow White and the interplay of gender in late 1930's American life, and the effect of the film on the American public.

## Putting Hierarchies Back Together Again
**Moderated by Professor Peter Starr, Department of French and Italian**
**THURSDAY, APRIL 8**
**7:30 – 8:45**
**ROOM B**


**Andrew Bunting**


The Moral Superiority Complex: Feminist Essentialism and the Burka


The veil that Muslim women wear, the burka, is a source of controversy. To Western feminists it represents the gender-based oppression of a reactionary culture. However, to many Muslims, wearing the burka is an act of piety. In other circumstances, this disagreement would be an issue of self-determination or sovereignty and therefore moot to a certain extent. However, a tenet of Western liberalism, of which feminism is a part, is an eventual global homogenization of values. What happens when the alleged "superiority" of Western values is discussed in terms of human or women's rights? Is it ethically or morally sound to tolerate "cultural differences" when these rights are at stake? If intervention becomes stigmatized, how are rights protected across borders? Should they be?


**Sonya Khan**


The Delusion of Heroism: Virginia Woolf's Septimus Smith


The Homeric hero is an iconic staple of the Western canon, demonstrating with each slash of his sword the importance our culture holds for the categorical ranking of people and events in a forward progression toward the ultimate end and achievement.  But not all fiction lauds this hero.  Virginia Woolf, through her portrayal of the shell-shocked solider Septimus Smith in *Mrs. Dalloway*, shows us a hero whose epic journey ends in neurosis and delusions.  Woolf's choice of a narrative voice that shifts perspective, from third person limited or omniscient to indirect discourse, from one character to another, from one geographic location to another, from one time to another, suggests that humans are nonlinear, rank-o-*phobic* beings.  Examining the Freudian aspects of Septimus's neurosis, this paper explores the implications (for the individual as well as society) of *needing* a Homeric hero.


**Emma Lee**


From Foe to Friend: The Changing Dynamics of the Mother-Daughter Relationship


Relationships between mothers and daughters are never simple.  Generation gaps, culture clashes, disciplinary discrepancies - the list of differences and conflicts is endless.  But over time, as seen particularly through film, it appears that the mother-daughter relationship is changing.  Mothers of the past saw something different in their images of daughters: competition, responsibility, a key to social mobility, a possession, or something to exert control over.  Today mothers and daughters are friends and partners, not

enemies.  While in the structure of the family the parent ranks higher than the child, it now seems that in the overall structure of life the mother and daughter can be ranked equally.


**Josh Letchford**


Apocalypse, Now and in the Past


Both the story of Ragnarok, in Norse Mythology, and *Foundation,* by Isaac Asimov, examine the ideas of dystopia, apocalypse, and rebirth.  Ragnarok, which translates to "doom of the gods," is the death of many of the major gods and the fiery death of the world.  Yet this destruction is tempered, as two humans and some of the gods survive.   *Foundation*'s apocalypse is the death of an empire spanning multiple worlds, leading to chaos, anarchy and despotism.  As one of these stories is set up as a myth, a way of explaining the world, and the other is merely fiction, it follows that there will be some basic differences.  Yet, after disregarding these, there are still fundamental differences caused by the large disparities in culture that spawned these two works, and some of these differences in culture can be inferred from the texts themselves.  By exploring these differences, it may be possible to not only gain understanding in the culture of the ancient Norse, but of this nation's recent past.


**Rebecca Sawyer**


Science Meets Bohemia: Dian Fossey's Quest to Save the Gorillas


Dian Fossey embodied the clash between Bohemianism and science in her endeavor to save mountain gorillas.  Her method of studying the gorillas' habits – living alone in the Virunga Mountains of Rwanda, neglecting her family and even sacrificing her health – was anything but conventional.  Although this behavior led contemporary scientists to question Fossey's rank as a prominent researcher, Fossey's autobiographical report *Gorillas in the Mist* awarded her international fame.  By drawing on popular and scientific thought concerned with Fossey, this paper will analyze how her Bohemian qualities factored into her ranking both by fellow scientists and an international public.  It will also characterize how the ideology of her work influenced humanity's conception of the biological and social ranking of gorillas as demonstrated by modern conservationist efforts and scientific theory.

# Another Brick in the Wall

**Moderated by Professor Tim Gustafson, Department of English**
**THURSDAY, APRIL 8**
**7:30 – 8:45**
**BANQUET ROOM**


**Arun Antonyraj**


Balancing the Social Machinery


In a society which is unfair and unequal, education can be a balance-wheel by which the social framework can be equated. However, the modern society of the United States has developed a peculiar notion with regards to education. Public high school in the United States is clearly not equal for all students. High schools vary greatly in quality based on the socioeconomic conditions of the community in which they exist. This growing disparity is often addressed in a number of different ways. Several films, for example, have addressed the issue of poor public education. Furthermore, the United States government regularly attempts to address the problems of the public education system. These media, however, over-simplify the problems that the education system faces and fail to consider the depth of the actual problem. While the issue of public education has been acknowledged, the solutions provided are irrational, unreasonable and woefully inadequate.


**Sonia Khurana**


Sexual Repression, Conflict, & the Emergence of the Modern Adolescent:
The Sex Education Movement


Adolescence is generally defined as the period from puberty to adulthood where an adult forms. But, the term "adolescence" was only introduced in the early twentieth century itself. With the onset of a sexual education, that is sexual morality, in the Victorian era, the idea of adolescence surfaced. In *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Joyce shows how Dedalus' sexual urges are suppressed by his religious upbringing, leading him into young adulthood through a rebellious, self-identifying transition period, identifiable with adolescence. In more recent works, adolescence is associated with nonconformity, as youth rebel against sexual repression and other societal norms, in order to find their identities. Through the sex education movement, adolescence becomes a period of nonconformity where identities are developed.


**Leigh Laures**


Rank in Schools: A Tale of Two Countries


The United States and Japan have similar styles when it comes to ranking in schools: both countries rank students according to indicators such as test scores and accomplishments. Ranking in this manner creates competition among students in both countries, which helps drive students to succeed. However,

despite similar systems, American students consistently rank below their Japanese counterparts in basic scholastic subjects and international standardized tests. This curious phenomenon occurs because American students react differently to competition caused by ranking than Japanese students: in our culture, students' drive to succeed (and be accepted into a prestigious college) has transformed the quest for grades, rather than knowledge, into the most important aspect of education.

**Veronica Lehman**

Academic Competition and its Effects on High School Students

SAT scores and grade point averages have long been the standard measure of academic success in high schools across America. While some schools may choose not to openly rank their students according to such academic performance, a proportionally smaller group of academically elite students still exists, creating a division in the student body. Using sources from psychology journals as well as Freudian concepts, this research paper will explore academic elitism in relation to high school students (primarily seniors), and will analyze the environment created by competitive stress, both positively and negatively. Other considerations of this paper will address the delusions of academic rank and the California University School System's proposal to de-emphasize the role of SAT scores in admission procedures.

**Ali Sheikhizadeh**

The College Ranking Spectacle

The *US News and World Report*'s annual college rankings is the source of much criticism from the world of higher education. Experts claim that these rankings increase the hysteria of parents and students as they undergo an already frantic college application process and encourage competition between universities not leading to a better educational experience for students. American culture is one that thrives on rankings and what is needed is not the abolishment of rankings, but an embracing of them by creating more rankings. Competing rankings will feed right into public demand for quantified comparison and chip away at the authority a few rankings hold, solving many of the problems inherent in rankings and increasing the benefits.

# Rank-o-philiacs Anonymous
**Moderated by Michael Miklos, Department of English**
**THURSDAY, APRIL 8**
**7:30 – 8:45**
**PUB**


**Chelsea Cooper**

Marionettes for Murder

In many African countries, children are enlisted for combat service. They are often drugged and brainwashed so as to be more "useful" to military organizers. Under the complete control of the militants, these children have lost their innocence as well as their identities. Former child soldiers have begun to speak out; their written accounts serve as a defense against the violence. In this paper, I will investigate how the children attempt to gain physical and mental freedom through writing poetry. I will also focus on the ways in which the children are still being influenced and controlled, to a certain extent, by the organization which publishes the children's work.


**Linda Deng**

Delusional Diversions in Magical Realism and Modern Society

As dispensers of possible positivity, 'distractions' in both magical realist literature and modern society tend to construct paradoxical views on human perception. With diversions often concentrating attention away from pressing issues, the question arises as to whether this numbness is veritably a 'benefit.' For example, in Kundera's *Book of Laughter and Forgetting*, Tamina's surreal trip to a children's island eliminates her obsession with her memory of her husband; yet, the conclusion of the story, in which Tamina drowns, is not necessarily a cheerful one. Likewise, in more modern situations, even video games have been shown to distract players from physical pains, impairing the sense of reality. Magic and technology thus merge to question why this outcome via diversion indeed ranks first in the human mind.


**Margaret Galvan**

Japonisme: the Foreign Flair of Impressionism and Postimpressionism

By the late 1800s in France, the division between the traditional art authority, the Salon, and the new movements of Impressionism and Post-Impressionism grew due to the introduction of a new style, Japonisme. The Impressionists and Post-Impressionists drew upon Japonisme to infuse their work with a different sense of perspective and style, making their "low" subject matter pieces even more detestable to the Salon, which emphasized moral works and realistic, academic approaches. Utilizing the seemingly flat perspective, defined contours, and other such Japanese practices, the Impressionists and Post-Impressionists further innovated their dissection of light and the world around them in their landscapes, still-lifes, and

other such pieces.  This break with tradition and utilization of Japonisme allowed the Impressionists and Post-Impressionists to create dynamic work influential even today.

## Elizabeth Padgett

<div align="center">Mary Quant's Bazaar Approach to Fashion</div>

Fashion has always been an industry of rank.  From haute couture to department stores, fashion has often been marked with elite formality.  And yet all this changed during the 1960s when designer Mary Quant opened her first boutique, Bazaar, in a little Bohemian neighborhood of London.  Previously shopping had been viewed as a structuralized ritual driven by need for specific items, but the emergence of the boutique transformed shopping into a liberating form of entertainment.  Quant was especially influential in this revolution because by providing ready-to-wear styles targeted entirely towards the modern youth, her boutique redefined shopping by democratizing fashion and releasing it from the social elite. For the first time clothes became a vibrant means of expression focused on the individual consumers as opposed to a formal industry.

## Phil Taylor

<div align="center">Loud, Proud and in Your Headphones: Adolescent Experience in the Age of the iPod</div>

Vito Acconci wrote, "Beware the Walkman."  Adolescents use private music listening to explore a private sense of self, at the same time marking off private space.  This private space is then extended to typically public spaces by headphones and iPods.  The irony of this "private self" is that it is found through a public, commercially created market.  Without social interaction or an expression of the public self, it seems the consequence for adolescents is a conformist sense of a unique experience, and one that is never tested in a public forum.  While the implications may not be as austere as Bradbury's "seashells" suggests, it is nonetheless difficult to imagine a buzzing iPod inciting a riot in the way that Radio Raheem's boom box did in Spike Lee's controversial film *Do the Right Thing*.

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