

# THE NITTANY PRIDE

*Student Newspaper of Penn State New Kensington*

Vol. V No. 3

nittanypride.wordpress.com

March 2011

# ESPAÑA TRIP



Parc Güell (Photo by Deborah Sillman)

Business Club Hosts Annual Etiquette Dinner

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Fix A Faulty System: Grade Your Profs & Classes

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College of Criminal Athletes

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PSNK Students Embrace Spanish Culture

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Cannibalism: The Smart Choice

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## NITTANY PRIDE

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## Business Club Hosts Annual Etiquette Dinner

By Melissa Gemballa

Once more, it is time for college students to prove that they can present themselves socially in ways quite contrary to those depicted in the movie “Animal House.” That means learning which water glass you can drink from, how to properly butter your bread, where to put your napkin if you leave the table during the meal, and how to eat and answer interview questions at the same time. All this and more will be revealed at Penn State New Kensington’s annual Etiquette Dinner, scheduled for Wednesday, March 30, from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. in the campus Conference Center.



Penn State etiquette dinner  
(Photo by Melissa Gemballa)

The Etiquette Dinner is hosted again this spring by the Business

Club in conjunction with Career Services and made possible through a generous donation from the Alle-Kiski Society, the local chapter of the Penn State Alumni Association, and the assistance of the Student Activity Fee. Although open to the public, it is intended to provide instruction to those most in need: college students who will need to know how to put their best foot forward in order to join the ranks of the gainfully employed.

“Many people see that the Business Club is hosting the Etiquette Dinner and think that means it’s only for business students. That is absolutely not the case!” declared Business Club President, Grant Schoenfelder. “It is a great opportunity for students of all disciplines to learn useful skills that will help them in the job market during and after the interview process. It is my hope that students take a hold of this opportunity and get all that they can out of it.”

This year’s event sees the return of etiquette expert extraordinaire, Susan Timko. The Associate Director of Career Services at Heinz College, Carnegie Mellon University, Timko has professionally presented on

the topic of etiquette for more than ten years. She will address not only basic dining etiquette but also how to handle awkward situations and how to make the most out of networking opportunities.

Guests will be served a three-course dinner, prepared by Dan Tokarek of AVI Fresh. The menu features entrée choices of roasted chicken with pepper cream sauce or pasta primavera and sides of red potatoes and green beans. New York-style cheesecake with lemon blueberry sauce will be dished up for dessert.

The event is open to the campus and the public. Administrative, faculty, and staff members as well as community members are invited and encouraged to attend. Ticket prices are \$15 for students and \$25 for non-students. Tickets are on sale now through March 25 in Café 780 during common hour. Space is limited. Contact Grant Schoenfelder, Business Club President, at (412) 613-1471 or Jim Shields, Career Services Coordinator, at (724) 334-6065 for more information.

## Tuition Rates Increase

*By Craig McNair*

As gas prices rise and employment rates fall, Penn State students are forced to pay increased tuition fees. The 5.9% increase is said to be in reaction to the recession's effects on the state's largest public university. Penn State campuses, including Altoona, Berks, Erie and Harrisburg, will face a \$470 increase in 2010-11 tuition costs. All other commonwealth campuses, including Penn State New Kensington, will see an increase of \$450.

According to a July 10 article in the Post-Gazette, Penn State President Graham Spanier stated that administrators can "recognize and share the economic hardships being faced by Pennsylvania, especially by our students and their families. We also know that our mission and success remain absolutely critical to the future of Pennsylvania." Penn State was the first to set its tuition rate for the 2010-11 academic year, and the newly established rates are part of a Penn State trustees approved operating budget of \$4 billion.

Penn State students are voicing their opposition to the increases through rallies and protests at University Park. According to the July 10 Post-Gazette article, Lara Sittler, State College senior, said, "it just seems like there's no way that it's all due to the economy. Walking around campus, you see all the construction and stuff. It shouldn't be that expensive to go to college. It seems a little unnecessary to me."

"WE ALSO KNOW THAT OUR MISSION AND SUCCESS REMAIN ABSOLUTELY  
CRITICAL TO THE FUTURE OF PENNSYLVANIA."

An article in the Centre Daily Times stated that about 50 to 75 Penn State students convened outside of the Shields Building in protest of the seemingly endless tuition rate increases. A statecollege.com article from February 22, wrote that around 200 students attended a rally at Old Main in opposition of the recent tuition increases. At the rally, Penn State junior Travis Salters said, "we're not here because we hate Penn State. If we hated Penn State we wouldn't be here. We've had the meetings; we've had the talks. The time is now."

Those students from out-of-state attending the main campus will see cash increases of \$1,142, while Altoona, Berks, Erie and Harrisburg campuses face increases of \$720 a year. All out-of-state commonwealth campus students will face \$688 increases. Penn State also approved an increase of \$12 in the information technology fee for full-time students with State College students also seeing an additional \$6 jack up in their student activity fees.

<http://www.post-gazette.com/pg/10191/1071811-454.stm>

<http://www.centredaily.com/2011/02/22/2536255/penn-state-students-march-in-protest.html>

<http://www.statecollege.com/news/local-news/penn-state-students-rally-against-high-tuition-without-a-vision-the-people-perish-666265/>

# CAMPUS LIFE

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## More Than a Degree...

By Melissa Gemballa

When alumnus Ashley (Mazur) Traini walked across the stage at Penn State New Kensington for graduation ceremonies in 2005, she was handed a bachelor's degree in Business Administration. She left the campus with much, much more, however. Love...true love.

Traini met her husband-to-be, Dewey Traini, at a summer leadership conference at Seven Springs. She therefore officially credits Theresa Bonk, Director of Student Affairs and coordinator of that particular trip, as their matchmaker. Although Dewey was an Electro-Mechanical Engineering Technology (EMET) major and Ashley was not, they soon discovered that they had many other things in common. She was an orientation leader; he was an orientation leader. She played softball (center fielder on a team that won the state championship); he played baseball. She was president of Stage Band; alas, he was not, but he soon joined. And so the storybook romance continued, ending in wedding pictures taken on the grounds of Penn State New Kensington in August of 2007.

Not quite four years into this marriage, Traini admits that it hasn't all been pretty birdsong and catnip. She first had to get her husband, not renowned for his love of felines, to accept Felix, her black and white, 20 pound couch potato...I mean, cat. But accept he did, now sometimes exhibiting as much concern for Felix's welfare as he does for his wife's. I'm not saying that's a bad thing!

Traini is currently employed as an order planner for Allegheny Technologies, Inc. (ATI) and handles all things titanium. Did you know that the Zambonis used to smooth the ice during Pittsburgh Penguin games feature titanium in their construction? I did, following this interview, as well as many other useful facts about titanium. She recalls her days in the classroom, stating that "at least you knew when class was over. At work, that meeting that was supposed to end at three may still be going strong at four."

When she is not working, Traini is extremely fond of travel, embarking on two to three trips every year. She cites the Caribbean locales of Riviera Maya and Jamaica, as well as Disney World, as among her favorite destinations.



Penn State alumnus Ashley Traini and cat Felix  
(photo courtesy of Ashley Traini)

Traini has accompanied PSNK students and faculty on several international trips also, including this year's trip to Spain. Having made the same trip eight years ago as a student, she was looking forward to rediscovering a particular place in Seville that served "paella deliciosa."

It was her love of travel and Penn State that first attracted Traini to the Alle-Kiski Society (AKS), the local chapter of the Penn State Alumni Association. As she attended more and more events sponsored by the AKS, she became more and more involved in its inner workings until she finally accepted a position as a board member. Her first major hands-on event as a board member was coordinating, along with fellow alumnus Vera Spina, the Alumni Central Tent at last year's Fall Festival.

When asked to offer some advice to current students, Traini responded with, "Enjoy this time, especially time with friends." She further advised, "Skip the occasional class. I know that sounds bad, but you can't skip work. Enjoy those little freedoms while you can."

Find Ashley Traini and other local alumni by searching "Alle-Kiski Society, Penn State Alumni Association" on Facebook. For more information about meetings or events, contact Melissa Gemballa, SGA Alumni Affairs Rep, by e-mail at mag5320@psu.edu.

## Fix A Faulty System: Grade Your Profs & Classes

By Kelly Haugh

The Penn State scheduling system is flawed. You're effectively flying blind, expected to choose the right courses on little more than a wing and a prayer, or in this case, a course name and time. Half the courses listed for the Fall don't even have a professor yet. All you can do is hope that the math class you picked won't be completely over your head and the professor won't be confusing or completely worthless.

Scheduling shouldn't be a crap shoot. Especially with all the technology, you'd think there'd be a better way to give students a realistic idea of what they can expect in each class. The "more" link that's given on each course listing rarely gives any useful information no matter how

main campus. That information doesn't really help us and is, in fact, misleading. Besides the fact that the basis for grades and course content may be completely different, there might also be huge discrepancies in when the course is offered, which could lead to major scheduling problems if you're unlucky. Imagine that two courses you need are offered at the same time. The information provided says that Course A is offered once a year and Course B is offered every semester, so you decide to take Course A and pick up Course B next semester. What you don't know is that Course B is only offered once every two years at PSNK. Because you trusted the official site, you may have just screwed yourself.

WE'RE ALL REQUIRED TO STEP OUTSIDE OF OUR MAJORS ,  
AND OUR COMFORT ZONES, AND TAKE A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF  
CREDITS IN DIFFERENT DISCIPLINES, BUT HOW CAN YOU POSSIBLY  
KNOW WHICH GENERAL EDUCATION CLASSES ARE RIGHT FOR YOU?

long or detailed the description is, in part because it has absolutely nothing to do with the specific class you'll be taking here at Penn State New Kensington.

Take, for example, the description of PHIL 103: Introduction to Ethics for Fall 2010, which states, "Students will be graded on quizzes, re-writing and expanding quizzes, a collaborative project, and a comprehensive final exam." From that description it's no wonder some students were unprepared and surprised by how writing-intensive Dr. Irene Wolf's class was last semester. There were no quizzes or collaborative projects in the traditional senses of the terms. Instead, most of the grades came from papers, take-home essay tests, and a speech on an ethical issue. As a writer, I personally preferred that setup to being quizzed on memorizing terms, theories, and concepts, which is what some of the science-minded people clearly had expected.

This is the problem with Penn State's system. Every campus runs classes their own way, uses different books and content, and offers classes at different times, but the registrar's office only provides information that applies to

I know you're probably thinking that this is what advisors are for but, let's face it, we don't always check with them every semester. And yes, I'm aware that Penn State has placed that nifty little disclaimer near the bottom of the informational page that says, "Note: Class size, frequency of offering, and evaluation methods will vary by location and instructor. For these details check the specific course syllabus."

My question is: What syllabus? The one we can't access until the first week of classes after we're already enrolled in the course? Because that doesn't do me a whole lot of good in March when I'm scheduling for the fall semester. And if they acknowledge that all the information they provide is wrong and varies between campuses, then why bother putting it up in the first place?

Most of us probably don't look at that kind of information too closely when we're dealing with major requirements, because it's not like you have a choice in the matter anyway. The real problem comes with the plethora of classes we need to be considered good liberal arts students. We're all required to step outside of our majors,

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and our comfort zones, and take a certain amount of credits in different disciplines, but how can you possibly know which general education classes are right for you?

You tick that little box for GH or GS and twenty classes pop up. You may not be familiar with the subject matter, and you don't know the professors or how they operate their classes. Are they good at teaching science to non-majors, or do they spout technical jargon and expect you to understand? Is the math used in that physics class too complex for someone who hasn't taken math in three years? There's no way of knowing that under the current scheduling system until it's too late.

Let's say you're someone who doesn't test well, and you absolutely stink at math. One statistics class bases everything on tests while another derives a portion of your grade from weekly homework assignments. Wouldn't that be nice information to have?

The Nittany Pride says yes, which is why we've started a project in the hopes of filling the current informational void by giving students the chance to review their classes and professors. We're asking students to help out their fellow classmates by passing on anything they wish they'd known before they took a class, and we're promising complete anonymity to encourage everyone to be brutally honest and to protect them from any possible professorial payback. Whether it's good, bad, or ugly, we want to hear about it...as long as it's the truth.

JUST THINK OF THE FRIENDS YOU CAN SAVE BY ADDING YOUR EXPERIENCES  
AND ALL THE PAIN YOU MAY AVOID THANKS TO OTHERS WHO'VE ENDURED  
BORING OR IMPOSSIBLE CLASSES AND STRICT OR KNOW-NOTHING PROFESSORS.

Our hope is to provide students with a real picture of as many classes as possible so they can make informed decisions and find the classes that are right for them. Never again will we be forced to sit through a class where the professor spends the first twenty minutes of every class trying to hook up his computer (and yes, I'm speaking from experience). Just think of the friends you can save by adding your experiences and all the pain you may avoid thanks to others who've endured boring or impossible classes and strict or know-nothing professors.

We also want to provide students with a place to air their criticisms and concerns. Too often an entire class of students will commiserate about not understanding the material, or they'll complain about the professor being ineffectual, unintelligible, or completely confusing. You can even talk to past students who've taken that class and they'll say the same thing, yet no one usually risks going to the professor. That lack of communication is understandable because you never know how a professor will take criticism. Will he try to learn from it, or lash out and say you are the problem? Since this program is anonymous, you won't have to worry about that. Students can be free to make their voices heard and maybe, just maybe, if that professor sees enough comments he'll try a little harder to explain things next class.

Hey, it's worth a shot. What have you got to lose?

Send your reviews, comments, criticisms, and gems of knowledge to:  
nittanypridenews@gmail.com

We also invite students and professors to send us their thoughts on Penn State's scheduling system. Think you have an idea to make it more effective? Let us know!

## Bend Over For Budget Cuts

By Kelly Haugh

Pennsylvania Governor Tom Corbett released his budget proposal March 8, and education funding was on the chopping block. The immediate reaction from the media and the public was outrage. University officials throughout the state were quick to cry foul and voice their concerns about increased tuition and the impact on students. While I believe there are better things to slice from the budget than education, like the bloated salaries of all the fat cat legislators, I think Corbett also has a point.

“This fiscal crisis is a time to rethink state spending on higher education,” he said during his budget address. “Despite state subsidies on higher education, tuition has continued to increase. If the intent was to keep tuition rates down, we failed.”

Every year we have to pay more for the privilege of receiving an education from one of Pennsylvania’s fine state schools, and don’t even try to pretend that’s only to make up for inflation and cost of living increases. So why is every state school suddenly acting like the sky is falling and a tuition hike is news? It’s because now universities will have a bad guy to blame when students and parents complain. They have basically been given a green light to jack up the price as high as they want, because now they have a fall guy.

The budget cuts provide their tuition increases with a thin veil of legitimacy to hide behind, just like the greedy gas companies who rake in record profits year after year while inflating prices every time there’s a hiccup in the Middle East. Yeah, I’m sure they’re just passing on their increased OPEC costs to the consumer, just like the universities will do with Corbett’s budget cuts. As Corbett pointed out to KDKA Radio, Penn State has received \$3.5 billion in state funding since 2000 and, during that same time period, they’ve more than doubled tuition, illustrating once again the disconnect between tuition hikes and real world causes.

The truth is, Penn State’s state funding will be cut in half. However, according to the Pittsburgh Tribune-Review, state funding only makes up between 8 and 9 percent of the school’s total costs, so it’s really only losing around 4.5 percent of its funding. It doesn’t sound quite as devastating when put in that perspective, especially given the toilet the economy is in right now. Yet Penn State President Graham Spanier said the budget cuts might even force the school to close some campuses, according to a March 10 article in the Valley News Dispatch. That seems to be taking it a little far.

Consider, for a moment, that Nobel Prize-winning economist Milton Friedman once said that any budget can be cut by 10 percent. His actual solution to balancing a budget was to cut 10 percent across the board and let each individual department figure out how to deal with the reduced funds. Penn State’s proposed 4.5 percent loss is well within that 10 percent range, so one would think this group of “educated people” should be able to make this trimmed down budget work without killing their students.



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Corbett asked virtually the same question on KDKA, wondering why the universities seemed intent on causing panic instead of looking for an effective solution. “Why would you put it on the backs ... of the students and scare the students and the parents without saying, ‘Wait a second. That means we have to cut 4 percent – not 50 percent – 4 percent of our operating budget. Let’s go see if we can do that first before we start talking about tuition increases.’”

Corbett went on to further criticize Penn State’s board of directors, who will be holding their next board meeting in the heart of New York City at the luxurious Helmsley Hotel. It’s nice to know where all those tuition hikes have been going. Just once it’d be nice to see the bellyaching university elite trimming those bloated amenities that do nothing for the student instead of skyrocketing tuition so they can live it up on our dimes, but we all know that will never happen. The university’s position is clear, and Penn State students had better get ready to bend over.

[http://www.pittsburghlive.com/x/valleynewsdispatch/s\\_726740.html](http://www.pittsburghlive.com/x/valleynewsdispatch/s_726740.html)

[http://www.pittsburghlive.com/x/pittsburghtrib/business/columnists/markowitz/s\\_727137.html](http://www.pittsburghlive.com/x/pittsburghtrib/business/columnists/markowitz/s_727137.html)

<http://pittsburgh.cbslocal.com/2011/03/11/corbett-defends-budget-proposals-with-griffin/>

<http://pittsburgh.cbslocal.com/2011/03/11/pa-governor-corbett-defends-budget/>

## DROP US A LINE

*Have a comment, question or rebuttal?*

*Are you ticked off at something we said?*

*Know of a story or issue we should be covering?*

*Want to join the  
Nittany Pride team?*



**NITTANYPRIDENEWS@GMAIL.COM**

*or leave a comment on our site:  
[nittanypride.wordpress.com](http://nittanypride.wordpress.com)*

## Where Has the Nittany Lion Gone?

By Melissa Gemballa

Has anyone seen the Nittany Lion lately? Not that many weeks ago, I could count on seeing him in the field house, prowling the sidelines, sitting amongst the fans in the bleachers, or performing those one-handed push-ups for which he's become renowned in the middle of the gymnasium floor. But now that men's basketball season is over, I just don't know where to look for him. I've heard rumors that he was at Westmoreland Mall not too long ago, and someone from SGA said they saw him at the Alumni Bowlathon on Sunday ... finding him, however, is more difficult than convincing JoePa to retire.

Who I can find easily enough is the young man inside the Nittany Lion costume: Josh Barry. Freshman Barry assumed the mascot mantle (or should I say mane?) last October following the retirement of Jon Skaggs. He edged out the competition in front of an eight-judge panel, perhaps because of his novel solution to a problem situation. When asked to act out what he would do if a child seemed afraid of him, Barry simply acted more afraid of the child. His first appearance came at the annual PSNK Turkey Trot in November, winning a tough and sometimes dirty race against fellow student and official 2010 turkey mascot Joe Mandak III.

Barry, a graduate of Highlands Senior High School in Natrona Heights, can be found in various places on and off campus. Look for him in the halls conducting tours for perspective students as a Lion Ambassador; look for him serving up your favorite \$5 footlong at the local Subway, or enjoying a math class in his quest to become a meteorologist or a veterinarian or something that involves math. Look for him in Jewart's Gym executing a back flip into the foam pit during a Parkour Club session, or just hanging out by the pool table in Café 780.

Barry is enjoying his stint as the Nittany Lion, especially his participation in community events, like New Kensington's Holiday Kickoff Parade, where he can interact with young kids. Even the heaviness of the costume doesn't dampen his spirits, although it does restrict his movements somewhat. And he claims that the costume doesn't smell one bit. I'm not willing to call his bluff on that one.

Naturally athletic Barry, a member of his high school track, wrestling, and football teams, aspires to become the Nittany Lion mascot at University Park after his two years at PSNK are finished. His politically correct advice to students, young and old, is to "work hard at school." His true feelings, however, are revealed in a later sentiment, "Unleash your inner animal!" Many people feel that donning a mascot costume allows you to do just that. But, Barry, with his affable smile, easygoing manner, and pure joy in being is proof that you don't need the costume. You just need to be you.



Above: The Nittany Lion and a turkey.  
Below: The Nittany Lion at the Turkey Trot.  
Photos by Melissa Gemballa



## College of Criminal Athletes

By Kelly Haugh

Stories of student-athletes involved in crimes seemed to dominate sports news last football season, especially locally, as both Pitt and Penn State players found themselves in cuffs. A six-month Sports Illustrated and CBS investigation into the increasing instances of crime in college football found that Penn State is tied for fourth, with 16 players having a criminal record heading into the 2010 season, though it's important to note that the study only looked at the Top 25 teams ranked prior to the season.

It could have been worse. Pitt ranked first with 22 players who'd been arrested, but that doesn't make the high ranking any easier to swallow for Penn State fans who pride themselves on JoePa football. Our identity as a school has always been linked to our football team ("We Are Penn State") and the belief that we are better than

transgressions with pitiful excuses so we can get back to cheering them on the field or laughing at their TV show, and it's past time we all stopped acting like enablers by repeatedly proving that the rules don't apply to them.

Newsflash: Being young and under the pressure of the public spotlight doesn't give an athlete a license to go wild and break the law, and we need to quit writing off such actions as the growing pains of overwhelmed young men. It's just the opposite: we should expect more from these athletes than we do normal students because they chose to take on the added responsibility of playing football for Penn State.

It's time we stopped justifying and started crucifying. Every time we let athletes get away with little more than a slap on the wrist for their crimes, we're condoning

**8.1% OF SCHOLARSHIP PLAYERS HAVE CRIMINAL RECORDS, WHICH MEANS WE'RE ACTUALLY REWARDING CRIMINAL BEHAVIOR WHILE LEAVING SOME LAW-ABIDING ATHLETES OUT IN THE COLD.**

everyone else even when we're losing, because our teams always behave with class. Joe Paterno wouldn't settle for anything less. He's always been concerned with making good men, not just good football players, and that sets his teams apart at a time when too many people are willing to give out free passes to anyone who can throw or catch a ball.

Paterno's principles made it easy for us to put Penn State up on a righteous pedestal, just as the Rooneys and Mario Lemieux elevate the Steelers and Penguins to a higher moral standard that lets us sit on our high horse and judge the follies of other organizations. Maybe it was naïve to believe we were so far removed from the thuggery some other programs (i.e. the Miami Hurricanes and Florida Gators) are known for, or maybe we just weren't willing to accept anything that would make our school look bad. Either way, overlooking the matter has only made things worse, and now we're part of the problem.

Society as a whole has a tendency to let the so-called "talented people" off the hook for their actions instead of forcing them to take responsibility. We brush off their

their bad behavior and ensuring they have no reason to change. This sets the precedent for other athletes that they can get away with anything if they're good enough, so it's no wonder more football players are getting in trouble.

The Sports Illustrated investigation found that 7% of all players (1 in every 14) on those top 25 teams had criminal records. Even worse, 8.1% of scholarship players have criminal records, which means we're actually rewarding criminal behavior while leaving some law-abiding athletes out in the cold. Obviously, something's not right with this picture.

The NCAA and every university in the country needs to take a serious look at how they're handling, or should I say mishandling, crimes committed by student-athletes before it's too late. This culture of compliance and "boys will be boys" attitude needs to change. How players conduct themselves off the field should matter just as much as what they can do on it. We should expect our athletes to behave as examples for the community and act as ambassadors, not embarrassments, for the school.

# SPAIN TRIP

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## **PSNK Students Embrace Spanish Culture**

*By Jimmy Baker*

NEW KENSINGTON, Pa.- Every other year, Penn State New Kensington presents its students with an opportunity to travel and embrace the culture of a foreign country during spring break. Thanks to the hard work of Dr. Bill Hamilton and Maria Franco DeGomez, forty-five students, along with other faculty, staff, and alumni, were able to explore Spain in a way that was never done before.

PSNK is dedicated to giving its students a well-rounded education by providing them with the opportunity to learn about and embrace different cultures. Every year, a different country is chosen to be the focus country for the year. Through that particular year, many cultural events happen on campus that focuses on that particular country. While they do not travel every year, it still allows the students to explore the different regions of the world.

Our trip began early in the morning at the Pittsburgh International Airport, where we had an early check-in. After the long process of getting our tickets and going through security, we made our way to the terminal and waited to board our plane to Newark, N.J. After a delay, we finally made our way into New Jersey. Fortunately for us, we had a long layover scheduled, which allowed us plenty of time between our connecting flights.

THANKS TO THE HARD WORK OF DR. BILL HAMILTON AND MARIA FRANCO DEGOMEZ, FORTY-FIVE STUDENTS, ALONG WITH OTHER FACULTY, STAFF, AND ALUMNI, WERE ABLE TO EXPLORE SPAIN IN A WAY THAT WAS NEVER DONE BEFORE.

On Sunday we arrived in Barcelona, Spain at 9:00 a.m. We were greeted with warm weather and a beautiful day. At the airport we met our tour manager for the week, Ali. Ali was born and raised in Australia, which came as a shock to most of us. Once we boarded the coach and headed into the city, it was time to start sightseeing. We stopped at the peak of Montjuïc for some views of Barcelona. Montjuïc was also the site of the Barcelona Olympic Games in 1992 and the 1929 International Fair. After a brief walking tour of the city, we were left to explore Las Ramblas to find some interesting Spanish food to eat for lunch. Finally we visited La Segrada Família. The cathedral has two very different facades: the original work of Gaudí, and newer sections.

Monday was a new day for all of us. After finally getting a chance to rest, we were up and ready to move early in the morning. This was day two in Barcelona. In the morning we had the opportunity to visit Gaudí's park, Parc Güell. Next we all toured the Barri Gòtic, better known as the Gothic Quarter. After visiting this part of the city, we had some free time in the city to do a little bit more exploring on our own. A number of people visited the Christopher Columbus monument at the end of La Rambla. The tower features a statue of Columbus standing on a globe pointing to America. The globe is an observation deck overlooking Barcelona and the sea. After another long day it was off to the train station where we made our way to the second city of our trip, Granada.

The group finally arrived in Granada Tuesday morning after a long train ride across the country. We met our guide for the city, Paco. We were first taken to the Alhambra to begin our guided tour of the beautiful city. After spending time there, the group had the option to visit the Carthusian monastery and the cathedral where Isabel and Ferdinand are entombed. Unfortunately, we were not allowed to take pictures, but it is something that the group will always remember. After a long day we were finally able to eat dinner. The group also had the option to see a flamenco show in Albacín and view the Alhambra at night as well. This city was very different from Barcelona. The people of Granada spoke next-to-no English, which was a challenge for the group. However, it is an experience they won't forget.

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The group boarded the bus Wednesday morning and began the two hour coach ride to Seville. When we arrived in the beautiful city, we headed straight for the Cathedral. Here we had the opportunity to climb up 35 ramps to the top of the bell tower, where we were greeted with a beautiful view of the city. The Cathedral was built where a Mosque once stood. After the Reconquista, it was turned into the bell tower. Something special about this particular Cathedral is that it is said to be the resting place of Christopher Columbus.

After our tour of the Cathedral we were off to meet our guide, Aurora. The group was taken to Plaza de España for a group photo. This was where we learned that the plaza was built for the Spanish-American exposition. Something special about the Plaza is that there is a section dedicated to each territory of Spain.

Our final stop in the city was the bullring. In Spain, bullfighting creates controversy, as to whether it should take place or not. Regardless of the fact that most people are against the sport, bullfights still take place and are legal in some parts of Spain. Despite the rain, the group enjoyed their time in the city. After a long day, we finally checked in to the hotel, and prepared ourselves for the bus ride in the morning. We were finally heading to Madrid!

On Thursday morning we once again boarded the coach and began our six hour ride into Madrid, the capitol of Spain. Madrid was different than any other city that we had been to. While most of the young population was focused in

THE PEOPLE OF GRANADA SPOKE NEXT-TO-NO ENGLISH, WHICH WAS A CHALLENGE FOR THE GROUP. HOWEVER, IT IS AN EXPERIENCE THEY WON'T FORGET.

Barcelona, Madrid's population mainly consisted of business people. Thankfully, that day we had free time to go and explore the city. Most of the students took the opportunity to explore the night life of the city with Ali, the tour manager, while others just explored the city.

Friday was our final day in Spain, and we knew that we needed to make it count. In the morning we took a driving tour of the city and met up with another guide, Angela. From there we went and toured the Royal Palace of Spain. After the palace we went to the Prado. The Prado is a world-famous art gallery which is home to some famous paintings by Velázquez and Goya. One piece in particular that we were encouraged to see was Las Meninas. Students were encouraged to take a hand mirror with them and view the painting through the mirror. It is said that if you look through the mirror, you can see the painting in an entirely different way.

After that, the group had more free time. Some chose to explore the city more, while other visited the Reina Sofia museum. We ended our trip with a lovely farewell dinner at a fancy restaurant with the group. We enjoyed tapas, a main course, and dessert. On Saturday morning we packed our things, and left for the airport.

Traveling to Spain was something that the group will never forget. It was a wonderful experience for the students, faculty and staff that had the opportunity to travel to the magnificent country. Once again, I personally would like to thank both Maria and Dr. Hamilton. Without their dedication to the students, this trip would not have happened.

Penn State New Kensington will continue to give their students an opportunity to travel abroad and allow them to embrace other cultures. Rumor has it that the campus will be planning an international trip to Africa in the near future.

# SPAIN TRIP

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## PSNK Spring Break International Trip To Spain

*By Andrew Tsou*

UPPER BURRELL, Pa. – During the 2011 spring break, 45 students, faculty, staff and alumni from Penn State New Kensington spent a week in Spain.

The trip was organized by Bill Hamilton, the Assistant Professor of Biology at PSNK, and Maria Franco-de Gomez, the Instructor of Spanish at PSNK. In past years, students have traveled to countries such as Italy, China, and France.

“We asked students where they wanted to go,” Franco-de Gomez, said, “We had a survey, asked for suggestions, and went from there. We went to the countries that were suggested most often, if possible.” For example, according to Franco-de Gomez, Australia was a popular choice among students one year, but the flight would have been too long for the short timeframe available.

According to Franco-de Gomez, the international trips are associated with the university’s focus on academics.

“There’s always a class required for the trips,” Franco-de Gomez said, “Sometimes we offer more than one. For example, when we went to China, there was an art class and a philosophy class.”

Arlene Hall, the Director of Academic Affairs at PSNK, said that this class requirement is important for the international experience.

“In order for us to have an international experience, we need faculty to lead the groups, because it’s our practice to embed these experiences in an academic course,” Hall said, “When I first came into this office as the DAA in 2001, the only international trips that were available were through University Park. And I made the commitment to engage faculty, to ensure that we had at least one academic embedded trip abroad, each year, and that I would support that by supporting the faculty to arrange and embed the experience in their courses.”

This academic requirement creates a lot of work for the faculty involved in planning the trips.

“Every trip has to have a course that’s sponsoring it, so we have to have a detailed syllabus,” Hamilton said, “We have to say what the students going on the trip...will do, we have to indicate where we are going to be staying, how we are going to get there...so it all starts with what we want to do, and then the university approves it, and we start filling in all the blanks.”

Along with providing an educational experience, diversity is a major impetus behind the trips, according to Franco-de Gomez.

“We decided that most students in this campus come from rural areas, and we thought these trips would help open their eyes to new cultures,” Franco-de Gomez said.



Canal in Granada.  
(Photo by Andrew Tsou)

# SPAIN TRIP

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“In some ways, our students come from very non-diverse backgrounds,” Hall agreed, “Western Pa. doesn’t have a very diverse population. So anytime you can get students to have an opportunity to move into a diverse environment, that’s a learning experience, one that I think forever changes them, because now they look at how things are in a different part of the world.”

“I’m sure the food was different for students. The language was different. With each city that they visited, they got an understanding for the history of the region.”

Everyone came away from the trip with a different place or experience that they found particularly memorable.

“For me, La Alhambra was amazing to see,” Franco-de Gomez said, “The way they built it, all the science and mathematics they used for the building. It’s hard to believe that they did that.”

“The La Alhambra was pretty cool,” Shanna Williams, a student at PSNK, agreed. “Especially because the whole thing wasn’t indoors. You got to walk around outside, and they had the fountains and stuff. They had fountains everywhere in Spain. I thought those were really pretty too. I wish we had fountains here. We don’t have anything like that here. We don’t have those big beautiful churches, we don’t have fountains.”

However, Williams said that her “favorite thing was definitely the churches, especially the cathedral in Seville, because it was just so detailed and immaculate. It was really intriguing to see what they could do before they had the technology we have today, not to mention just how it’s lasted all these years. The preservation’s pretty amazing.”

Other travelers also appreciated the history of the sights in Spain.

“Seeing the buildings that were constructed back in the 12th and 13th centuries, that are still standing and still operational, is something that we don’t have in this country,” Hall said, “As far as we go back is 300 and some years. Our history is relatively short compared to the history in Europe.”

“I loved just thinking about the fact that here, when we see things that are old, they’re not nearly as old as Europe,” Amy Rustic, the Reference Librarian at PSNK, agreed, “We have things here that are a couple hundred years old, and they have things that are many, many, many hundred years old.” Rustic also added that she “loved walking around Granada. I loved the maze of the streets. I just loved all of the hidden back places and back ways you could walk.”

Not everyone’s favorite memory was of a specific place. Hamilton said that one of his best memories of the trip came after viewing Guernica, a painting by Picasso.

“We all just wanted to sit somewhere, and we went in the hallway and they had these funny block things to sit on,” Hamilton said, “There were about six of us sitting there, talking about art, talking about our old college experiences.”

(Continued on next page)



Gardens outside the Alhambra.  
(photo courtesy of Deborah Sillman)

# SPAIN TRIP

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We had a lovely 40 minutes or so, just resting ... before we plunged into the next part of the day. I think those were the best parts.”

Most travelers tended to stay in small groups during free time. The large number of people on the trip had its pros and cons.

“I felt that the group didn’t have the opportunity to connect well as a group,” Franco-de Gomez said, “I didn’t have the opportunity to talk with several students about their impressions of the trip.”

“I think many of our smaller gatherings were the best,” Hamilton agreed, “Because when you have a group of 45 and get all 45 together, you can’t really talk to everyone. You can’t interact with them. The way we planned this trip was to have a group activity and then as much individual time as possible.”

However, according to Hall, the large group size was necessary in order to reduce the cost of the trip.

“For smaller groups, the cost goes up significantly,” Hall said, “Thirty-five and over is what they use for the large groups, and if you took a group of 12 students, that would double the price for the trip, and that would price some students out of the trip. That’s the reason why we include alumni and faculty: to bring the cost down for the trip.”

The low cost of the trip was one of the reasons cited by those travelers who said that PSNK students should take advantage of future international trips.

“We put together a \$4,000 trip for \$2,000,” Hamilton said, “Most of that was Maria, who’s marvelous in the negotiations to get the trip prices down. Then we looked around for grant money to get that reduced even further. This year, most students got \$400 off of that price, and so for \$1,600 you got a week in Spain.

“You got airfare, you got the opportunity to be in a foreign country, you had the opportunity to be immersed in a foreign culture, and that doesn’t just happen. That is a deal that is just beyond belief. So I strongly recommend that anybody who has that opportunity should take it. I know money’s hard to get, but it’s definitely worth it.”



La Plaza de España (Photo by Andrew Tsou)

“It was definitely worth the money,” Williams agreed, “How can you see that many cities and that many sights in that amount of time for that amount of money anywhere else? Besides, you’re in college. If you’re going to go on a trip like that, now’s the time to do it, because once you settle down, it becomes less and less likely.

“Not to mention that once you graduate you won’t have the money, because you’re going to be looking for a job and not be able to do it for a while. If you have the impulse to do it, do it now.”

Rustic agreed that travel is important for college students.

“For students in particular, it’s a great opportunity to see something that’s different from what you see every day,” Rustic said, “I think these trips are a great segue way into doing a study abroad program, which I think is very important and was very important to my development. When I graduated college, I did a study abroad program, and it was one of the best experiences of my life.”

Despite some unforeseen setbacks, the group had a positive experience.

“It was a good trip,” Hamilton said, “At the end it was hampered by the weather; that was unexpected. It was supposed to be the dry season. But I think everyone maintained their sense of humor and maintained their sense of adventure.”

# SPAIN TRIP

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## Experiencing Spain: Tony's Story

By Anthony Joint

Eighteen Penn State New Kensington students returned home from a week in Spain on March 12. This trip coincided with the annual spring break.

Traveling to a foreign country is a great experience. Many of my fellow students had yet to experience life in a foreign country. This PSU-sponsored trip allowed us to experience many aspects of Spanish culture. The trip was full of excitement. We had a chance to meet new people, practice our Spanish language skills, eat new foods, and experience a lifestyle very different from our own.

One of the most exciting aspects of this trip for most of us was freedom. While in Spain we had no classes, no homework and no projects. We were free to enjoy the Mediterranean climate in Barcelona and Grenada. We were free to take a stroll down La Rambla and eat in a café without being rushed. In fact, if you were in a hurry, you were not in sync with your surroundings. With the exception of the subways, most everything was just a bit slower.

Speaking of the subways, Madrid and Barcelona had very nice systems. We were free to go anywhere in the city we wanted with a one-euro ticket. But something interesting happened along with all the freedom. I have to admit I'm not the most social guy all the time. Many of the students on the trip I had not really met. Sure, I had seen most of them in the halls, but I had never really interacted with most of them. The Spanish 130 class and those who went to Spain represented a cross section of the Penn State New Kensington student body. There were students from all different semester standing and schools of study. The trip allowed us to meet each other and make friends we might not have otherwise.

We can always talk about the educational value of the trip. We saw art, historical landmarks, and practiced our language skills, but that was not all we learned in Spain. The trip was enriching in many ways, and I am grateful for the experience.



La Plaza de España (Photo by Andrew Tsou)

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# CURRENT EVENTS

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## Nuclear Power: Still A Viable Energy Source

By Andrew Tsou

Between mine collapses and nuclear reactor meltdowns, the papers are full of energy-related disasters, and the impetus to locate safer energy sources continues to grow. Some such sources already exist. As a blog article on [forbes.com](http://forbes.com) pointed out, solar power is an extremely important option to pursue. Unfortunately, the costs and space required in order to harvest solar energy have hindered its potential. While solar power should certainly be refined and encouraged, until it becomes a means of supplying us with the requisite levels of energy, other methods must be relied on; one of these is nuclear power, which should be used far more than it currently is.

A paper presented by Dr. Bernard Cohen, a professor at the University of Pittsburgh, claims that nuclear power “guarantees the world an everlasting supply of fuel without affecting resources sorely needed for other application.” Most of the objections to nuclear power are not based on its limitations or consumption of natural resources, but rather on other drawbacks; most prominent among these are the safety risks inherent within the venture (although one would be hard-pressed to suggest a viable means of energy production that does NOT have serious risks).

Constructing nuclear reactors in isolated regions would solve many of the safety problems, as would creating, refining, and enforcing stricter safety regulations. According to [ucsusa.org](http://ucsusa.org), the Nuclear Regulatory Commission in the United States has failed to properly regulate nuclear power; accordingly, the venture is riskier than it needs to be, and it is even rather fanatically suggested that should we opt for reprocessing (a means of making waste, um, less wasteful), the possibility of terrorists stealing easily obtained plutonium would be a serious concern.

Admittedly, nuclear power is problematic even beyond the obvious safety concerns. A 2003 MIT study concluded that “nuclear power is not now cost competitive with coal and natural gas.” That said, the study also recognized that costs could be significantly reduced with changes in the industry and in governmental policies. The website of the Union of Concerned Scientists, [Ucsusa.org](http://ucsusa.org), claims that government subsidies are required in order

to make nuclear power cost-effective; whether this is a positive fact or not is debatable. The aforementioned site claims that subsidies would conceal the true costs of nuclear power and thus “diminish or delay support for more economical and less risky alternatives like energy efficiency and renewable energy.” However, this is more a public relations issue than it is an argument against using taxpayer funds to support one of the better means of energy production currently available to us.

Waste disposal is also a problem; however, the MIT study suggested that further refining the “open, once-through fuel cycle may offer waste management benefits as large as those claimed for the more expensive closed fuel cycles.” [Nuclearnow.org](http://nuclearnow.org) has even suggested that “Integral Fast Reactor technology will enable us to turn the vast majority of what is currently considered waste into energy.”

The recent nuclear disaster in Japan has served less to discredit nuclear power than to illustrate the logical fallacies that humans are prone to. Nuclear power might have the potential to cause headline-worthy disasters, but when one compares these disasters to the harm caused by the slow-'n'-steady environmental problems caused by, say, coal, it's arguable that nuclear power is still superior to a lot of the other energy sources we have available right now. Just as we cannot swear off oil simply because of the BP disaster, we have to consider nuclear power as a viable energy source ... at least for now.

<http://blogs.forbes.com/ericsavitz/2011/03/15/solar-stock-rally-extends-as-japan-nuclear-crisis-grows/>  
[http://www.ecolo.org/documents/documents\\_in\\_english/nuclear\\_advantage\\_Cohen.en.htm](http://www.ecolo.org/documents/documents_in_english/nuclear_advantage_Cohen.en.htm)  
[http://www.ucsusa.org/nuclear\\_power/nuclear\\_power\\_101/](http://www.ucsusa.org/nuclear_power/nuclear_power_101/)  
<http://web.mit.edu/nuclearpower/pdf/nuclearpower-summary.pdf>  
[http://www.ucsusa.org/nuclear\\_power/solutions/](http://www.ucsusa.org/nuclear_power/solutions/)  
<http://www.nuclearnow.org/>

## **Cannibalism: The Smart Choice**

*By Andrew Tsou*

It's no secret that humans are a wasteful species. We leave nearly brand-new items for the garbage men to pick up, think nothing of using up limited natural resources at an amphetamine rate, we bury our dead instead of consuming them...

Yes, between our irrationally sentimental attitudes to the human body (even a deceased one) and a distressingly pervasive social attitude towards cannibalism that goes unchallenged simply because people will not even consider that it might be an erroneous belief, our insistence on burying or cremating deceased humans is indirectly contributing to the worldwide hunger epidemic (c.f. an article published in the U.K.'s Daily Mail).

There are factions that argue against the production of livestock simply for the purposes of slaughtering them for meat; the common argument is that this is harmful not only to the animals but to the environment, due to the vast resources required to produce a relatively little amount of meat (for more details, please consult an article published in the Washington Post; the URL is provided below). If we used human meat instead of beef and pork and poultry in our cooking, these problems would be lessened, if not eradicated.

I have never understood the attitude that holds that consuming material produced by one's own species is in some way disgusting. You wouldn't give a horse an open-tongued kiss or engage in oral sex with a bull, yet you probably wouldn't hesitate to engage in similar activities with humans. Similarly, an article published on guardian.co.uk described the recent manufacture and sale of ice cream made from human breast milk. Frankly, this is far less disgusting than consuming milk from cows, providing, of course, that the human milk is duly pasteurized. What sort of twisted people are we to find the consumption of cow milk normal and the use of human milk for any purposes other than breast-feeding to be abhorrent?

...I'm not suggesting that we go out and slaughter people simply for food. It's just that from a practical point of view, with all the people dying of natural (and some not-so-natural causes) every day, it seems rather wasteful to simply consign these bodies to what amounts to a trash heap. According to the CIA's World Factbook, the worldwide death rate is 8.37 deaths per 1,000 people per year; given that the same source gives the worldwide population as nearly seven billion people, this works out to approximately 150,000 people dying each day. Is there doubt in anyone's mind that this is a significant, distressingly unused source of sustenance, even if the entirety of these bodies cannot be adequately harvested for food? This source of meat might not completely solve the worldwide hunger problem, but it would certainly help.

Our society is littered with backwards ideas that continue to interfere with its potential for advancement; ignore the smokescreens thrown up by politicians who insist that all of the blame lies with so-and-so. The problem is with us, and the sooner we recognize the folly of dismissing "do-gooders" (since when is it wrong to want to do the right thing?), sluts (hey, gotta keep the species going somehow, right?), and cannibalism, the better off we'll be.

The general obsession with treating the body as if it is somehow sacred demonstrates a depressingly pervasive attitude towards the human form, one that fails to recognize that anything worthwhile or decent about humans lies in their intellects and emotions, not in their crass physical forms. Once a person has died, there is no reason to bury them in an expensive coffin, or to adorn the corpse with fancy clothes and pricey jewels, or indeed, to consign the body to the ground for the benefit of insects. Respect has nothing to do with it; if you want to honor a person, treat them with

(Continued on next page)

dignity while they're still living. It's for this reason that I find laws relative to dismemberment of a corpse completely absurd. If a serial killer is going to mutilate my body, I want him/her to do it *after* I'm dead, because obviously, by then, I'm past the point of feeling pain, and hence past caring.

Just as organ donation should be mandatory, given that it in no way violates one's autonomy, it is a tragic waste to ignore cannibalism as a viable solution to the worldwide hunger problem; hunger is even a problem in the United States, in case you haven't been paying attention. And besides, we would no longer have to waste vast amounts of land and money on graveyards and caskets. But I'm not holding out much hope for change. Did I mention that we're a wasteful species?

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-1350009/Food-prices-rocket-50-global-hunger-epidemic-causes-riots-famines.html>

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/11/15/AR2009111502210.html>

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/lifeandstyle/2011/feb/25/human-milk-ice-cream-sale>

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/xx.html>

## Inception's Reception

*By Craig McNair*

The first Academy Award for Best Cinematography was awarded to Charles Rosher and Karl Struss on May 16, 1929 for the film *Sunrise*. Cinematography is the art of making lighting and camera choices when filming motion pictures for the cinema. Past recipients of the Best Cinematography Oscar include *To Catch A Thief*, *Spartacus*, *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, *The Aviator*, *Avatar*, and now *Inception*.

*Inception* director Christopher Nolan's latest film starring Leonardo DiCaprio is about espionage through an unconscious mind, and has been one of the most critically acclaimed movies of the year. The film received eight nominations at the 83rd Academy Awards for Best Picture, Best Original Screenplay, Best Original Score, Best Sound Editing, Best Sound Mixing, Best Art Direction, Best Cinematography, and Best Visual Effects. *Inception* took home the Oscar statuette for Best Cinematography, Best Sound Mixing, Best Sound Editing and Best Visual Effects. The Golden Globe Awards also recognized *Inception* with nominations for Best Picture, Best Director, Best Screenplay and Best Original Score.

The film's reception has been overwhelmingly positive from both film critics and audiences alike. Peter Travers from *Rolling Stone* magazine said that *Inception* was a "wildly ingenious chess game," and that "the result is a knockout." Roger Ebert of the *Chicago Sun-Times* said that *Inception* is "all about process, about fighting our way through enveloping sheets of reality and dream, reality within dreams, dreams without reality. It's a breathtaking juggling act." Also from the *Chicago Sun-Times*, Richard Roeper gave *Inception* a perfect score of A+ and stated that it is "one of the best movies of the century." The American Film Institute named *Inception* one of its movies of the year.

Despite all of the positive reviews there were still those who felt that *Inception* was too complex and over the top. In his review for *The New York Times*, A.O. Scott stated that "there is a lot to see in *Inception*, there is nothing that counts as genuine vision. Mr. Nolan's idea of the mind is too literal, too logical, too rule-bound to allow the full measure of madness."

## And The Oscar Goes To...Who Cares?

*By Andrew Tsou*

All awards ceremonies are essentially meaningless attempts at appealing to people's crassest attitudes towards art, substituting empty grandeur and smiling celebrities in glittering costumes for a more honest appraisal of the works being considered. Instead of intelligently discussing the merits of movies or records or performances in question, awards ceremonies such as the Oscars simply single out a "winner" in a number of categories, creating the erroneous impression in many people's minds that this somehow confers some sort of importance on the work. I personally distrust the recommendations of anyone who suggests a book, movie, or record to me based on the fact that it is "award winning," because if that's the highest plaudit you can bestow upon a work, it's very unlikely to impress me.

Empty awards ceremonies are detrimental not only to the audience's appreciation of the works in question, but to the future production of art; if there is not an acceptable public forum for intelligently considering the various aspects of a work, then the impetus to create art that is both significant and populist suffers. What's truly offensive about the Oscars, in particular, is the ridiculous amount of press coverage they receive. Actually, scratch that; the most abject aspect about the Oscars is that there are vast numbers of people who are actually interested in them and take them seriously. While debate regarding the intelligence and taste of "the masses" continues in certain circles, the popularity of a ceremony as crass and meaningless as the Oscars speaks poorly for the general tastes of the public.

WHEN YOU WATCH A FILM, ARE YOU LOOKING FOR AN ENGAGING STORY,  
INTERESTING CHARACTERS, IDEAS OR VISUALS THAT MIGHT SERVE  
TO INSPIRE YOU IN SOME WAY, OR ARE YOU WATCHING IT BECAUSE  
JOHN DOE IS HOT AND IN THE PAPERS ALL THE TIME?

There are people who appear personally offended if the "wrong" movie or actor gets an award. Why should anyone care what the voters for the Academy Awards think? It's essentially as meaningful as an election for a high school student body president.

The Oscars amount to Hollywood jerking itself off and pretending that the results are somehow meaningful. Uh-oh, my favorite movie didn't win an award; does that mean I should find a new favorite movie? Was I wrong not to like the performance of the actor who won an award for best actor? The decisions of those in charge of selecting the winners in no way validate or render moot any given opinions. What makes their opinions more meaningful than those of the cinemagoers who saw and loved a sleeper?

The pomp associated with the Oscars further sours any integrity such an event may have; it's not a mere "top ten" list published by a critic at the end of a calendar year. Instead, it's a ridiculous extravaganza fueled by expensive costumes and celebrity appearances. Note: celebrities are bad for movies. Repeat after me: celebrities are bad for movies. When you watch a film, are you looking for an engaging story, interesting characters, ideas or visuals that might serve to inspire you in some way, or are you watching it because John Doe is hot and in the papers all the time? There is no phrase to me that's a larger turn-off than "all-star cast." All that that description means is that the studio hired a group of big names; it says nothing about the quality of the film itself, and anyone remotely familiar with the career of, say, Johnny Depp, knows that there is absolutely no correlation between celebrity and acting ability.

## Don't Help the Aged

By Andrew Tsou

It's a busy Saturday afternoon; there are some supplies you need at the grocery store, so you figure you'll stop by. It'll only be a quick detour, you tell yourself; you only need milk, bananas, and maybe a pack of gum. You'll be out of there in five minutes flat. Unfortunately, you failed to take into consideration the vast numbers of elderly people who insist on clogging up the already narrow aisles and limited checkout lanes with their sloth and poorly positioned carts. As you stand (ever less patiently) by the dairy products, waiting for them to decide which brand to purchase and to determine (by riffling through their pocketbooks) if they have the requisite coupons to make the purchase they are considering a cost-effective one, you ask yourself: why are they here today?

If you were retired, why would you visit a store during the days and times when people who don't have as much time as you are forced to shop? Spare me the arguments about them wanting to keep in contact with people; that's what Bingo nights and bowling alleys are for. Old people who go out shopping on the weekends aren't socializing; they're selfishly interfering with people who would only like to purchase their items and get out, with minimal delay. Old people who go out shopping on weekends clutter up already poorly-designed parking lots (with poorly parked vehicles, no less) and make an already joyless process slightly more painful than losing your virginity to Peter North.

I used to view the elderly with indifference, but now it's turned to outright hostility, an attitude I feel I've earned. Consider old people who make turns onto main roads and just ... stop, taking as long to accelerate to something approximating the speed limit as it'll take me to write this article. Most driving errors are universal; whatever the stereotype may be, I've encountered as many middle-aged and elderly tailgaters as I have impatient teenaged drivers who insist on following you without providing the requisite three second space. However, this practice of driving as if turns necessitate complete halts is a problem seemingly exclusive to the elderly.

The most interesting thing I ever saw an old person do (while in a car) was try to back out of a handicapped spot. The car ended up parallel to the road ... while still in the space (i.e., the car was positioned horizontally against the space). That was pretty impressive, and also an argument for insurance companies charging premium rates to the elderly, not to adolescents; at least teenagers have sharper reflexes and the physical stamina required to drive. Which reminds me, although this is certainly not an observation limited to the elderly, it always amuses me to see a tank-like vehicle with handicapped plates. I am convinced that if one can pilot (hell, get into) a sufficiently massive vehicle, then one is probably not handicapped to the degree that they must park as close to the store as possible. Have you seen some of these trucks? It'd be less physically demanding to jog up Troy Hill than to climb into one of their cabs.

I'm all for the rights of the disabled, but we don't grant driving licenses to the blind (or do we? Have you ever tried driving around Oakland during rush hour?). Similarly, there should be more rigorous screenings before granting licenses to the elderly. Even requiring proof of the ability to duly operate one's turn signals would be sufficient, as far as I'm concerned; frankly, in all practicality, attempting to teach certain people the art of proper acceleration and braking would simply be impossible. I'm a reasonable man, but for as long as the elderly insist on continuing with their selfish shopping habits, I cannot feel much sympathy for them in any real capacity. Should they be shut away, out of sight, out of mind (as the popular parlance goes)? Well, at least Aisle 4 would be navigable, right?

## Blinded By the Lights

By Andrew Tsou

I don't mind the rain so much as I mind drivers who don't use their lights; similarly, I don't mind night driving so much as I mind vehicles with overly bright lights that are as much an impairment to visibility as darkness itself is. All of the talk about texting and other technology-related driving distractions is very useful, and I applaud the efforts of various groups and legislators to attempt to place bans on dangerous uses of technology while driving. Before you argue that there are numerous, non-cellular ways of distracting yourself while driving, I just want to say that I have yet to nearly be sideswiped by a driver reading "Twilight" or using Q-tips in his ears; when this sort of behavior becomes an epidemic, I will gladly spend my time and energy condemning it. Anyway, although headlight usage does not directly contribute to poor driving, it does create visibility problems that can lead to accidents.

First, let's consider the issue of drivers who don't use their lights during adverse conditions or even mild darkness; I personally keep my lights on at all times, even during sunny afternoons, because it simply makes your vehicle more visible to other drivers. Other countries and locales, such as Canada and the U.K., have adopted legislation that requires all new cars to be equipped with daytime running lights. There is no real drawback to these laws; the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety has noted that daytime running lights "are especially effective in preventing daytime head-on and front-corner collisions by making it easier to see vehicles, particularly as they approach from far away."

One article on a site called [bikeradar.com](http://bikeradar.com) claims that "high-intensity LED lights ... significantly increase risk for cyclists, pedestrians and motorcyclists by obscuring their presence. " Well, yes..."high-intensity" lights will do that, but surely "normal" lights would not pose such a hazard. And speaking of "high-intensity" lights...

I'm not going to get into an argument about gas guzzlers; a greater reliance on small cars will only delay the inevitable exhaustion of available fossil fuels, and if you have to fill up a twenty-something-gallon tank every three days, it's your prerogative as an American with a bank account

and decent credit rating. My problem with gas guzzlers and any other "big" vehicle is that their headlights stare straight into the windshields of those of us who choose to pilot smaller automobiles. This is bad enough if these lights are "regular" lights, but when they're the "white" type that seem closer to the sight of burning magnesium than an ordinary Edison light bulb, you have a problem. There have been times when I have been followed by a car whose lights were so bright that much of the interior of my car was lit up (and yes, it was evening at those times). And there is no real way for me to communicate to this driver that I am displeased with this distraction. Therefore, in these cases, I simply drive ten miles below the speed limit, figuring that if I can't get them to change their behavior, I might as well annoy them a bit.

All cars manufactured or sold in the United States (or anywhere, really) should have several simple features. Headlights should turn on automatically if the engine's running and turn off when the engine is turned off. All headlights should be positioned at the same level, and they should all be of a similar intensity, one that isn't distracting. Ideally, high beams would be inoperable if sufficient light was detected (just as my car automatically turns on the fog lights if a sufficient amount of darkness is detected). Spare me all your arguments about government interference with the private sector; is there really anyone in 2011 who would argue that car manufacturers should be allowed to sell their vehicles without seat belts?

[http://www.infrastructure.gov.au/roads/safety/publications/2003/Cons\\_Lights.aspx](http://www.infrastructure.gov.au/roads/safety/publications/2003/Cons_Lights.aspx)

<http://www.iihs.org/research/qanda/drl.html> (Insurance Institute for Highway Safety website)

<http://www.bikeradar.com/news/article/safety-fears-raised-over-mandatory-daytime-vehicle-lights-29304>

# EDITORIAL

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## **The Value of Public Relations: Turning Genocide Into A Perk**

*By Andrew Tsou*

There are a very limited number of topics that, in our jaded society, are not to be spoken of, lest the speaker be persecuted for daring to breach a certain subject. We've graduated to the point where we can (relatively) calmly discuss the legalization of heroin, discuss suicide bombings in the Middle East, child labor sweatshops in Asia ... oh, but Judaism is pretty much off-limits for any sort of discussion. You know, because of "the Holocaust." Why did I put "the Holocaust" in quotation marks? Well, when you use the phrase "the Holocaust," everyone assumes you're referring to the WWII-era Nazi attempts at eradicating Judaism, but there have, um, been other holocausts. There are a few going on right now, from what I hear. There were plenty of Holocausts before WWII, and one need to look no further than the history of Europeans carrying out mass murders of North, Central, and South American indigenous populations; that includes our own country, folks.

Not for one second is this writer suggesting that there exists any sort of "Jewish conspiracy" relative to the Holocaust, but why is the particular example of the Nazi-perpetuated Holocaust held up as the ultimate (and, to some, only) example of genocide? In fact, even the assumption that the WWII Holocaust was limited to Jewish people is extremely and sadly erroneous; rarely mentioned are the gypsies, Communists, homosexuals, and other groups that were targeted by the Nazis, victims whose numbers can nearly double the oft-quoted figure of six million victims of "the Holocaust." It's puzzling, that's all.

The WWII Holocaust ultimately had benefits for the Jewish people because it turned anti-Semitism into the ultimate taboo. Even the word "Jew" automatically carries with it assumptions of anti-Semitism and possible neo-Nazi lean-

THE IRONY IS THAT, THANKS TO THE HOLOCAUST, ISRAELITES GAINED THE INTERNATIONAL SYMPATHY REQUIRED FOR THEM TO OUST ARABS FROM PALESTINE, AN ACTION THAT, WHILE NOT AS SEVERE AS THE NAZI-PERPETUATED GENOCIDE EVIDENCED SOME SEVENTY-ODD YEARS AGO, IS JUST AS MORALLY QUESTIONABLE.

ings, something that cannot be said for other truncations of racial descriptions, such as "Jap," which, although certainly derogatory, is not quite as forbidden or connotatively ominous as the word "Jew". The issue of referring to "Jew" as a "racial description" is itself a problematic issue. However, the teachings of Judaism explicitly make clear that Judaism is more a race than a pure religion, based wholly on faith.

Consider that amfi.org (the website of Life in Messiah International) states that while "it is possible to be ethnically Jewish and reject the Jewish religion ... such a person is still considered Jewish." Furthermore, Jewfaq.org claims that "the Jewish people are referred to as 'the Children of Israel,' a reference to the fact that we are all the physical or spiritual descendants of the Patriarch Jacob, who was later called Israel. In other words, we are part of his extended family." Although "spiritual descendants" certainly fits nicely with a viewpoint that holds Judaism as a pure faith, the reference to "physical ... descendants" implies a certain value placed on the issue of lineage, on the possibility and importance of tracing one's ancestors back to a certain historical person or group.

An article posted at [religioustolerance.org](http://religioustolerance.org) makes clear that, despite the claimed separation between Jews and non-Jews based on the fact that Jews "are often referred to as G-d's chosen people[, t]his does not mean that they are in any way to be considered superior to other groups." However, as neutral as this classification may be meant to

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be, the focus on any particular group as a distinct “race” that is markedly “different” from other groups (without any moral judgment entering into the picture at this stage) still creates certain problems.

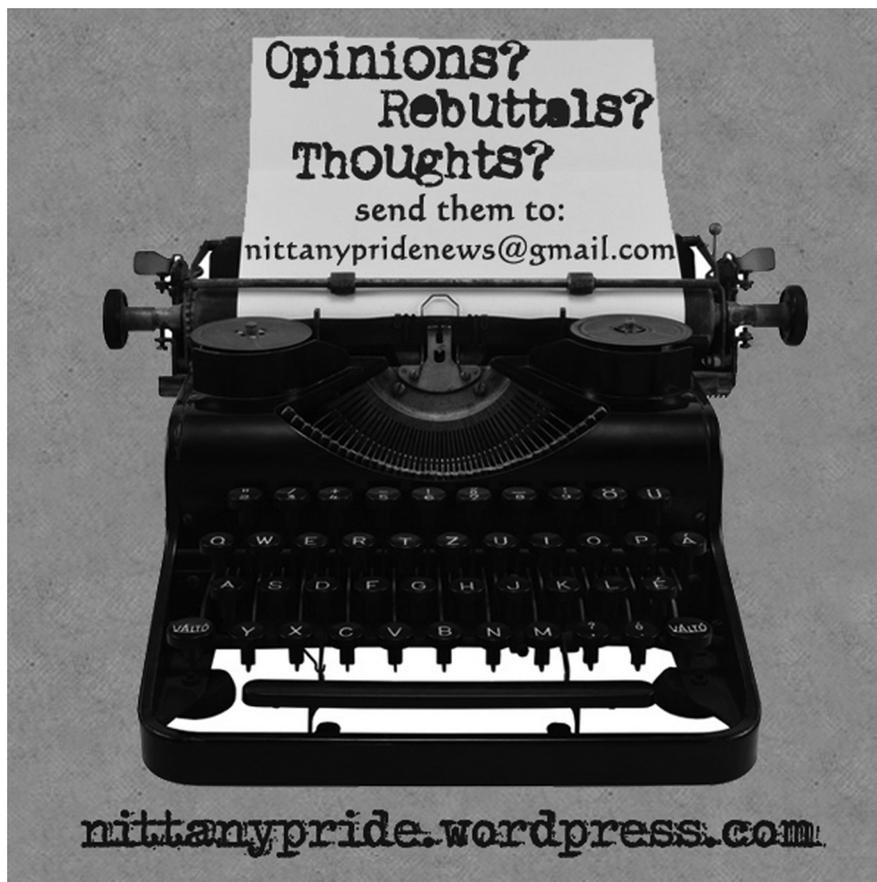
And really, can one be blamed for interpreting this incorrectly? When a group insists on being considered separate from other groups due to a claimed lineage, charges of elitism are bound to be thrown its way, because why else would the group insist on such a form of independence? Is the implication that its constituents are “better” than their less genetically-advantaged brethren? People tend to separate into cliques based on value judgments of other people (witness any high school cafeteria at lunchtime); there is usually some impetus behind partitioning of people, even if this reason is patently unreasonable.

The irony is that, thanks to the Holocaust, Israelites gained the international sympathy required for them to oust Arabs from Palestine, an action that, while not as severe as the Nazi-perpetuated genocide evidenced some seventy-odd years ago, is just as morally questionable. As long as “the Holocaust” is synonymous for “do not question anyone who identifies as Jewish,” there will be problems. If descendants of Native Americans appealed to the United Nations, suggesting that all United States citizens (save those with Native American blood) be thrown out of the country, how much of a chance do you think they’d have at being successful? And more importantly, which side would you sympathize with?

<http://www.amfi.org/mailbag/race%20or%20religion.htm>

<http://www.jewfaq.org/judaism.htm#Nation>

[http://www.religioustolerance.org/jud\\_desc.htm](http://www.religioustolerance.org/jud_desc.htm)



## The Right to Choose Death

By Andrew Tsou

Although they're currently off of the American political radar, the subjects of assisted suicide and euthanasia are of interest to anyone living in the country, because in theory, you could find yourself in a situation in which they would be options ... or at least, they would ideally be options.

Currently assisted suicide is only legal in a handful of states in the United States, but there are other countries in which it is entirely legal, most notably Switzerland. In fact, as reported by the BBC in 2006, a woman named Dr. Anne Turner, who had been diagnosed with "a progressive and incurable degenerative disease called supranuclear palsy" flew to Switzerland so that she could obtain pills with which to end her life, after previous, less medical attempts at suicide (such as asphyxiation with a plastic bag) had failed.

To clear up a few terms, assisted suicide and euthanasia are not synonymous (but this writer supports the legalization of both practices). In the case of euthanasia, a third party actively brings about the death of the patient (for example, injecting a deadly drug into the person's arm). In the case of assisted suicide, however, the third party merely supplies the patient with the deadly substance (or mechanism), leaving the patient to bring about his death himself (c.f. the website for the University of Washington School of Medicine). Unfortunately, assisted suicide is not always a practical option, for there are cases in which a person's illness or paralysis is so severe that they cannot even summon up the muscular strength to press a button that would terminate his or her life. Hence the necessity of legalizing both practices.

Essentially, this is a decision about personal choice, and unlike the abortion debate, there is no third party to be directly harmed. Yes, when a person dies their family suffers, but if one of your relatives was in constant pain, suffering from a terminal illness, and expressed a wish to die, wouldn't you want to honor that request? Would you really be so selfish as to insist that they live simply because *you* don't want them to die?

People have the right to dignity, and to free themselves from pain; whatever certain factions may believe, forcing

a person to live in an uncomfortable state is not a means of perpetuating human dignity. This would also be a good time to note that, under the laws suggested by Dr. Kevorkian and others, there would be safeguards to discourage people being "pressured" into agreeing to assisted suicide; for example, interviews and meetings with psychiatrists would be required before a person would be permitted to give their consent.

Some people claim that assisted suicide (any kind of suicide, in fact) is immoral; consider an article published on the website of National Right to Life, which argues that the "sanctity/equality of life ethic" is the primary reason to oppose assisted suicide (actually, for that particular article and others I'm familiar with, it's the only reason). Unfortunately, this is an all but meaningless phrase: "right to life" sounds wonderful, but does that mean that we never fight wars or that we put people in prison for the crime of killing someone in self-defense? Anyway, would anyone argue that it is moral to force a person to live against their will?

If I was in a coma that I probably would not wake up from, I wouldn't want to be a burden to my family; I wouldn't want to be kept alive. I'm not vain enough to think that my mere presence is enough to make them happy, because it shouldn't be. Significant human relationships are not based on mere blood connections or shared histories; they are based on our continued ability to meaningfully interact with each other. All right, if you were in such a situation, you might not opt to end your life, but shouldn't you have that choice?

Although there is not necessarily a correlation between public opinion and the morality of any given policy, it might be useful to undercut populist arguments against legalizing assisted suicide by mentioning that the American public has tended to support legalizing assisted suicide. According to an article published at msnbc.com, a 2007 poll indicated that 68% of those polled said "there are circumstances when a patient should be allowed to die."

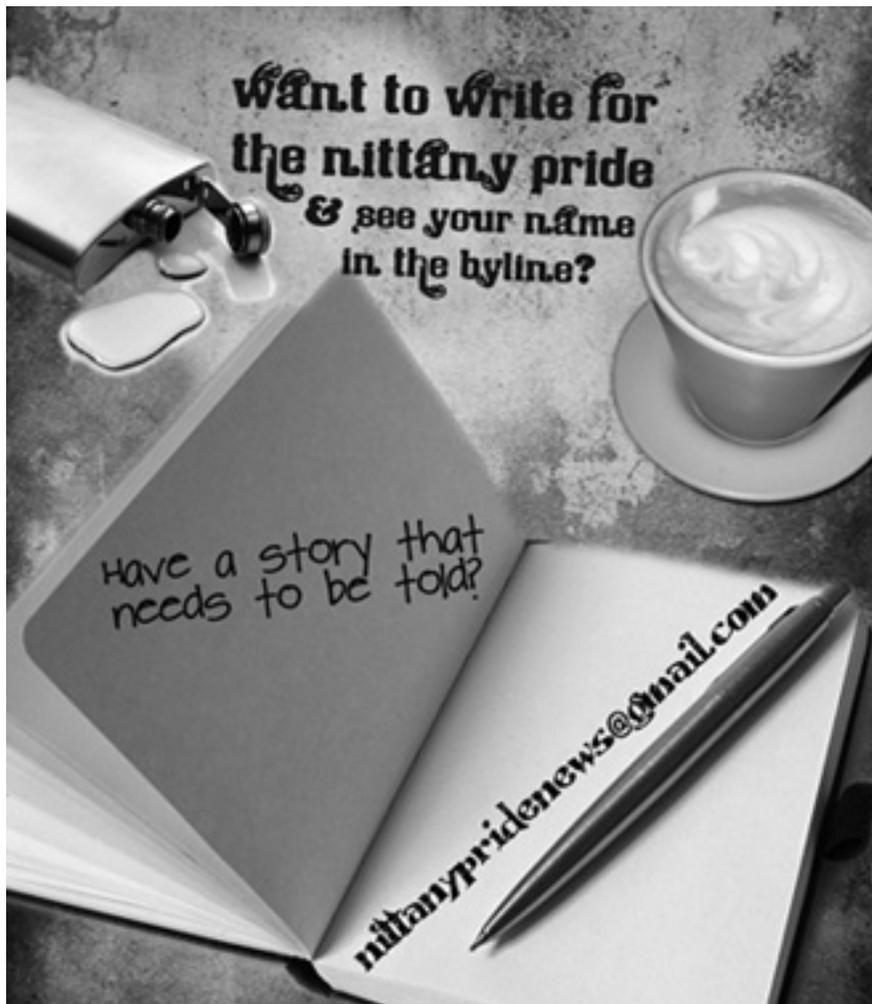
# EDITORIAL

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Many people who oppose assisted suicide have simply not thought very long about the issue (I find this tends to be a common tendency when it comes to “moral” issues). Tellingly, a 2005 study by the Pew Research Center For The People & The Press (as described in the book “Between the Dying and the Dead”) found that among people who had given the issue of assisted suicide “no thought,” a mere 37% approved; however, among people who had given it “some or a lot of thought,” 57% approved.

Suicide, contrary to popular opinion, is not a coward’s way out; in fact, it is one of the bravest decisions a person could make. It is the act of embracing (or at least accepting) the ultimate unknown, the act of throwing off every certain thing that one has come to discover in their life. If someone is at the point where they are willing to face this uncertainty head-on, shouldn’t we honor their decision?

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/health/4625538.stm>  
<http://depts.washington.edu/bioethx/topics/pad.html>  
[http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/18923323/ns/health-health\\_care/](http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/18923323/ns/health-health_care/)  
<http://www.nrlc.org/news/2003/nrl01/wes.html>



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# ESPAÑA

