

# The Undercurrent

"It was as if an underground stream flowed through the country and broke out in sudden springs that shot to the surface at random, in unpredictable places." Ayn Rand

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## Harry Potter and the Half-Stumped Critics

by Gena Gorlin

By now few of our readers have eluded the fairy dust that has settled all over the world since *Harry Potter* first cast its spell. This summer Rowling seemed to have yet again bewitched entire populations, as young and old, rich and poor, college professors and elementary school kids all stormed the bookstores at midnight on July 16th to get their hands on the sixth installment of the series.

J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series, as few need reminding, tells the story of a teenage wizard who tackles the kinds of challenges that confront "real" children in grade school—unfair teachers, school bullies, demanding sports, overwhelming homework loads—in the midst of an epic battle, fought with wands and witchcraft, between good and evil.

The allure of *Harry Potter* has held its diverse audiences entranced for years. The series' first three installments maintained top positions on the *New York Times* adult best seller list until the *Times* deliberately removed it. Numerous sources, including *Publisher's Weekly*, maintain that *Harry Potter* is "the fastest selling book in history."

But what is all the fuss about? Why the universal appeal of what appear to be children's fantasy books?

A clue to the answer lies in the explanations put forth by two prominent ideological camps that are usually butting heads in the ongoing "culture war": Christians and Leftist academics.

Despite many fundamentalist Christians' opposition to the series (on charges of seduc-

tive witchcraft) many Christian scholars have joined postmodern intellectuals in confessing their "addiction" to *Harry Potter*. In so doing, both sides have volunteered lengthy analyses defending the books—often against their own ideological kind.

John Granger, a "traditional Christian" by his own description and author of multiple books praising *Harry Potter*, claims that the source of the books' popularity is "their ability to meet a spiritual longing for some experience of the truths of life, love and death taught by Christianity but denied by a secular culture" (*Looking for God in Harry Potter*). Granger argues that *Harry's* moral universe offers a stark alternative between good and evil and nurtures the reader's confidence in the benevolent divine. For instance, in every

climactic encounter between *Harry* and his mortal villain, the evil *Voldemort*, *Harry's* great capacity to love and his loyalty to the good are decisive factors in his victory.

More broadly, as Christian *Potter* fans point out, *Harry's* moral choices are essential ingredients in his struggle for survival throughout the books. Granger likens the series to C. S. Lewis' *Chronicles of Narnia*—which is well known for being infused with deliberate Christian allegories. Francis Bridger, a theologian and pastor, maintains that "like Lewis, Rowling is an intensely moral writer" (*A Charmed Life: Spirituality in the Stories of the World's Most Famous Seeker*).

On the other hand, the same Christian authors seem hesitant to claim that Rowling's morals are  
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## FREEDOM FROM PEOPLE OF FAITH

by Thomas A. Bowden

They call themselves "people of faith," and they are waging war against a basic principle of American government: the separation of church and state. Complaining that our secular culture has improperly banished God from government, religious conservatives are working tirelessly to inject faith-based decision-making into America's legal system.

This conservative onslaught requires a bold defense of the secular state—by people of reason.

Although that defense must encompass all branches of government, today's battleground is the courtroom, where judges find themselves under relentless pressure to legitimize religious dogmas such as the sanctity of the God-given soul (the *Terri Schiavo* case, anti-abortion laws, stem

cell research), the literal truth of holy scripture (laws against homosexuality, displays of the Ten Commandments in courthouses), and the recognition of God as master of the universe (creationism, prayer in public schools). The First Amendment, conservatives declare, guarantees only freedom "of" religion, not freedom "from" religion.

To their credit, secular judges have valiantly resisted the religious right's persistent advances. In response, frustrated conservatives are leveraging their newfound dominance over Congress and the presidency in a crusade to emasculate the judiciary.

Whether it's senators limiting filibusters, or Congress threatening to reorganize the court system, or President Bush decrying "judicial activism" while nominating compliant federal judges, conservatives are targeting secular judges as enemies.

No, the "people of faith" are not calling for a Christian theocracy—yet. For now, they simply want to establish religious faith on an equal footing with reason as a legitimate method of governmental decision-making. But if they succeed in this, the eventual emergence of government by clergy is all but assured.

A proper defense of the secular state must penetrate to fundamentals. It is insufficient, for example, to criticize Christian evangelicals for imposing their own narrow creed on a diversely religious citizenry. Such superficial criticism implies that faith-

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# 9/11: How Our Teachers Help Us Forget

by Audra Hilse

We have forgotten 9/11. Back then, four years ago, we all swore to “never forget” the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Everywhere you turned, American flags, waved proudly in the wind and bumper stickers declared our solidarity as a nation and reaffirming that pledge: “We won’t forget!”

What has happened to that vow? The flags and bumper stickers are being forgotten, slowly but surely. In a few more years, most people will scarcely even notice the anniversary anymore.

How can this be? How can such an important and seemingly unforgettable event as the attacks of 9/11 be forgotten? The answer is simple: we forget because we do not understand the historical significance of 9/11. What explains this is largely unrecognized: we do not understand this significance because, thanks to modern education, we don’t understand the historical *principles* that explain it. Today’s teachers deplore the idea of generalizing from historical examples to learn the principles that explain them.

But what is it about 9/11 that makes principled thinking so necessary? Isn’t it obvious that these terrorist attacks were important? Haven’t the causes

of them already been identified? We’ve been given a whole long list of them, after all: American support for Israel, the continued presence of American troops in the Middle East, the mess left in Afghanistan after the Cold War, a “radical fringe group” of Muslims who hate the West for these incursions . . . the list goes on.

If you try asking for the essential, underlying cause that explains why *this* fringe group successfully attacked America, when similar disaffected groups around the globe did not, the reply is quick and incredulous: “Essential causes? Don’t be simplistic! We live in a complex world!” Did a history teacher ever ask you to list the seven causes of the Civil War, or the fifteen causes of the fall of Rome on a test? It’s the same issue. We are told that it is *impossible* to generalize from specific situations to find the guiding principles of history.

Most of us come out of school never questioning this, yet *this* is the tragically simple answer to the general misunderstanding and failing recollection of 9/11. History is a subject which most vitally requires principled thinking, as it provides the proper context in which to judge

human action. But when we are taught that generalizing from past consequences is impossible, the implication is that we should divorce each new conflict from the sum of human history and solve it “pragmatically”—by trial and error. But historically, this strategy has had disastrous consequences!

We are often told that, when conflicts between nations arise, it is always best to try a peaceful, diplomatic solution first. But is it actually good to spend weeks, months, or years negotiating with the leaders of Islamic theocracies or other terrorist states? Neville Chamberlain spent years “negotiating” with Hitler, giving him time to consolidate his war machine and begin his conquest virtually unopposed. By the time anyone had the courage to stand up to his plans of world domination, a long, horrific war was necessary to stop him. Keeping in mind the Islamic tyrants’ openly stated goal of a world dominated by Islam, judge for yourself whether this principle of “peaceful diplomacy” is always the best solution.

In contrast to this, consider some historical examples in which our enemies were met with overwhelming retaliatory force,

not appeasement. Consider the Barbary wars of the early 19th century. The Barbary pirates, living in north Africa, were attacking U.S. merchant ships headed for the Mediterranean. European powers urged diplomacy and negotiation, paying a yearly tribute to the Barbary thugs. But in two separate wars, Presidents Jefferson and Madison sent the U.S. Navy and Marines to invade and punish the Barbary states. Jefferson merely recognized a threat to American interests by a bunch of thieves and murderers, and dealt with them as such.

The pirates never bothered U.S. ships again.

Another example is the U.S. defeat of Germany and Japan in World War II. The fire-bombing of German cities and the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki had the (correctly) desired effect of breaking the will of those nations to fight, not only stopping their quests for world domination, but discouraging aggression for decades to come. Japan, in particular, would have fought a U.S. invasion down to every last man, woman and child—and many hundreds of thousands more American soldiers would have died before the

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## Freedom From People of Faith

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based governmental action is permissible if representative of all beliefs, when in fact our Constitution forbids it.

America was established for a secular purpose: the protection of individual rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. The Constitution neither mentions God (except to forbid religious tests for public office) nor imbues government with any religious purposes.

Individual rights can be protected only by a secular state whose every action is grounded in objective fact and guided by reason, not blind faith. By way of illustration, consider the importance of rational methodology in the field of criminal justice.

To justify an arrest in a proper legal system, the police must have probable cause, and to win

a conviction, a prosecutor must establish guilt beyond a reasonable doubt, based on objective evidence. If justice is to prevail, each governmental decision must be taken without regard to anyone’s religious faith.

Any admixture of religious faith guarantees injustice. In the Dark Ages, a prosecutor would submerge the defendant’s arms in boiling water, and if the scalded flesh became infected, that was taken as a sign of God’s disfavor, mandating a guilty verdict. Adopting that benighted era’s essential methodology, today’s conservatives demand that judges accept “God’s will” as a legitimate basis for punishing homosexuals, science teachers, stem cell researchers, and a host of others. This is the collapse of criminal justice, as surely as if Jewish judges were rejecting testimony from atheists, or Catholic jurors were relying on scripture to convict Protestants.

Centuries of history demonstrate that faith-based govern-

ments spawn persecution, torture, and endless bloody warfare. Today’s religionists may insist that this time will be different, but their evasions cannot eradicate the inherent connection between faith and force. Since faith entails overriding reason in favor of emotion, religious disputes are necessarily unresolvable through rational persuasion, leaving force as the only weapon against heretics and infidels. No wonder religionists so often lust after government power.

If “people of faith” choose to act irrationally in their private lives, they are free to do so. But if there is one institution that must be held rationally accountable for every single action it takes, it is the agency that can lawfully use guns, prisons, and lethal injections against legally disarmed citizens.

Separating church from state does not guarantee victory for the rational protection of individual rights—secular irrationality is possible, indeed commonplace—but such separation is indispensable

nonetheless. This is why issues like abortion, gay rights, and “Intelligent Design” creationism merit so much attention. Once judges begin accepting religious feelings as valid decisional factors, the secular principle cannot survive, and the disintegration of society into sectarian strife must soon follow.

“People of faith” began this war, and so people of reason must now end it—by zealously defending the secular state, and vowing never to allow faith and force to be united under the American flag.

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# THE COLLECTIVIST CLUB

## CAMPUS CLUBS AND THE NEED TO BELONG

by Rebecca Knapp

Thousands of college freshmen across America wandered the tables of campus club fairs this fall. Many, staring at the sea of brightly colored posters, felt a pressure to find a niche—to adopt an identity by the act of joining a club, a religion, or a frat that advertises an identity ready-made for adoption.

There is a pervasive trend amongst student groups that caters to this pressure, encouraging members to join by implicitly appealing to their desire to belong. Frats are the most obvious example. Fraternities and sororities do not pretend to offer anything more than group membership: brothers and sisters who you will like, and who will like you back, by sole virtue of the fact that you are all loyal to the same group.

You do not join a fraternity because its other members share your own, independent values. Fraternities and sororities follow elaborate hazing and initiation rituals in order to create the illusion of a bond between their members where no real bond exists. The shared experience of walking roped together across the quads singing drinking songs (to choose a reasonably vanilla example) is less a bond of brotherhood than a bond of idiocy. There are no shared values or mutual respect or common causes which lead to the formation of Greek societies. There is merely the desire to have somewhere to go on Saturday night—the desire not to be alone.

Ethnic societies appeal to the same desire to belong, in a different way. Here, it is race that is offered up as the reason to join the club. Come hang out with the Chinese Students, because you are Chinese! Join the Latino Students—you're one of us, aren't you? You are a social misfit if you, a black student, do not elect to become a Black Student, a card-carrying member of the appropriate racial group.

Here, the color of your skin, the shape of your facial features, and your un-chosen genetic code—not the desire to share chosen values—are upheld as the basis for meaningful relationships and as reason enough to spend hours at club meetings and activities. The Black Students Association does not exist for students of any race who are interested in Black history or

African culture. Sure, they may admit them, if they're worried about being accused of racism. But the club's *raison d'être* is students who are black, irrespective of their independent interests, attitudes, or opinions.

Some may argue that ethnicity is a legitimate value to share in a campus club. To the extent that ethnicity refers to a particular dance, or cuisine, or dress, a club could obviously be built around students interested in enjoying that value. But to the extent that ethnicity means a racial or cultural label, it is not a valid basis for a club. It isn't an interest like math, or literature, or a hobby like cooking or bicycling, or a skill like painting or playing Scrabble. It is not an activity that you enjoy. Ethnicity is not something to be proud of any more than it is something to be ashamed of. It is not an *accomplishment*; it is simply a conglomeration of the accidents of your birth.

As it is with frats and ethnic clubs, so too with religious clubs. In this variant, it's an offer of shelter from the cold, hard world, and a safe haven where students can forget they are individuals with individual responsibilities and lean on the collective identity of the church. The Campus Crusade for Christ website laments: "College students often find themselves in an environment that is tearing away at their moral and spiritual stability. They can feel trapped by the pressures of academic life and the deep need to be accepted by their peers."

The answer? Jesus, of course. "Jesus Christ provides the hope and purpose in life that people are seeking." If your peers don't accept you, don't worry, Jesus will! His followers will welcome you into the flock with open arms, and membership in the group will give you the stability you've been craving. Hell, when Christianity was in its heyday, it roused entire populations to march across Europe and hack the Turks to pieces. That wild-eyed soldier with the cross blazoned across his chest was filled

with the conviction that an army of self-righteous church-goers was galloping behind him. The mild-mannered student with his tasteful gold cross, tapping you on the shoulder to ask you to attend a bible meeting, is filled with that same self-righteousness: "I belong. I'm safe. Join us, and you'll be safe, too."

Kappa Sigma Delta, the Organization of Hungarian Students, the Student Followers of Confucianism—there is a name for the mentality they appeal to: collectivism. They are all of them collectivist. They all treat individuals as interchangeable members of a group, meaningful only as units of a larger whole. Accordingly, they offer students an organization that can give them meaning by making them members of that group.

With collectivistic belong-

***"Being black is not a skill you can develop. Being a Christian does not give you independent interests that you enjoy."***

ing as the criteria for club formation, absurd offspring organizations mushroom forth. The Black Economic Students. The Latin American Mormons. The Hawaiian Law Students

Bikers' Society. The Baptist Medical Students. The Pan-Asian Liberal-Arts Students for the Preservation of the Environment...for Pete's sake, what does being Black add to an interest in or knowledge of Economics? What does being Latin American add to being a Mormon, or being a Baptist add to the study of Medicine? Nothing. The distinctions are humorous because they are arbitrary.

Not all clubs are this way. There is a clear divide between these clubs, based on the collectivist need to belong to a group, and others, based on chosen values. Contrast collectivist clubs with an organization like the Chess Club, whose members get together to play a game that they all enjoy, or to learn how to play it. Or take the Calligraphy Club: its purpose is to allow participants to practice and appreciate a difficult, beautiful art form. And don't forget the Debate Team—its members meet to learn and practice debating skills.

The football team, the photography club, the pottery club, the astronomy club—all are based on chosen interests and skill sets that members wish to develop and celebrate through participation in club activities. It's the opposite of the collectivist clubs. Being black is not a chosen interest, and it is not a skill that you can develop. It is an accident. Being a Christian does not give you independent interests that you enjoy; it gives you a false sense of security that substitutes for the activity of pursuing values. And joining a frat... well, we don't really need to revisit that one.

Advocacy groups form an interesting sub-set of the value-based clubs. They appeal to chosen intellectual positions. Members of Amnesty International, the Young Democratic Socialists, the Students for George W. Bush, etc., participate because they share beliefs and want to advocate them. It's a valid form of expression, and definitely a legitimate basis for a club.

It's just a shame that most of what advocacy groups advocate is...collectivism. Leftist groups promote the racism of ethnic clubs in the form of affirmative action, and Conservative groups use religious collectivism to chant pro-life mantras and anti-stem cell research slogans that do not hold up to rational examination. Groups that subordinate the individual (the frats, the ethnic clubs, the religious clubs) are only putting into practice what advocacy groups—on and off campus—have been preaching for decades.

But the Chess Club is still out there. And so is the Debate Society, the Swing Dance Society, Campus Radio, and the Improvisational Comedy Group. Such clubs are often struggling and in the background, but they are the representatives of individualism on campus. They appeal to your independent values, not some neurotic need to belong. Join them, and forget the collectivist creeps.

It's just too bad there is no group to explicitly advocate individualism. Except, of course, the Objectivist Club.

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# THE ANTI-SCIENCE CONVERGENCE

by Don Watkins III

The anti-science right is on the march. Whether they're opposing embryonic stem cell research, evolution, the effectiveness of condoms, therapeutic cloning, or Terri Schiavo's medical diagnosis, conservatives are standing firmly against science whenever it conflicts with their vision and values.

"You should allow the Word of God to drive your understanding of the evidence," says one opponent of evolution. Famed conservative newsman Tony Snow calls for puncturing "the myth of scientific invincibility," and teaching schoolchildren that science is mere "inspired guesswork." Leon Kass, chairman of The President's Council on Bioethics, calls his own critique of human cloning "one of those instances about which the heart has its reasons that reason cannot entirely know."

The right's hostility to science isn't surprising. Science is based on the premise that knowledge depends on reason rather than revelation, evidence rather than emotion, facts rather

than faith. Such an outlook is incompatible with religion and therefore with the right, which is explicit about its religious agenda, regularly condemning the left's "secularism" and "scientific fetishism."

And what about the left? Is it really a bastion of reason and science the way the right claims it to be?

Consider the environmentalist movement. Environmentalism is generally considered to be a scientific movement, its views based on facts discovered by climatologists and ecologists trying to understand nature. But the warnings and prescriptions issued by environmentalists are often anything but fact-based.

In 2004, the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment issued "Impacts of a Warming Arctic," a report that proclaimed, "Global warming could cause polar bears to go extinct by the end of the century by eroding the sea ice that sustains them." Yet the facts contained in the group's own report clearly disprove their claims: they show that

the temperature fluctuations recorded by the group represent, not a continual warming trend, but the warming phase of a warming/cooling cycle; they show that these temperature fluctuations cannot be the result of increased manmade emissions of greenhouse gasses; they show that, at worst, human activity has caused a .6 degree Celsius rise in average global temperature since the start of the Industrial Revolution, even though average global temperatures can naturally fluctuate more than three degrees. To top it all off, the group's key finding clashes with all available evidence, which indicates that the population of polar bears has actually *increased!*

Such a massive departure from the truth cannot be the result of honest error—it can only be achieved by people who believe that misrepresenting the facts is a virtue when it serves a noble cause. Yet such is the mentality of the environmentalists, and while this case is striking, it is by no means

unique. Whether the issue is global warming (or global cooling), DDT, acid rain, the depletion of the rainforests, or the Alar scare, every single environmental panic has been shown to be, if not completely baseless, then wildly exaggerated. "We have to offer up scary scenarios," said Stanford University Environmentalist Stephen Schneider, "make simplified, dramatic statements, and make little mention of any doubts we may have. Each of us has to decide the right balance between being effective and being right."

To be scientific demands more than a science degree. It means basing conclusions on facts rather than searching for (or creating) facts to confirm one's convictions. Yet despite environmentalism's consistent record of false predictions, faulty methods, and deceptive claims, the left continues to embrace the environmentalist cause.

The reason is obvious—the left isn't pro-science at all.

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## The Half-Stumped Critics

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particularly Christian—or even religious—in nature. Bridger, even while drawing parallels between Lewis and Rowling, admits that "unlike Lewis's world of Narnia . . . the symbols, issues, and plots used in the Potter books, and the issues dealt with, are more complex . . ." In what way are Rowling's ethical lessons "complex," then, despite their portrayal of good and evil as absolutes?

Unlike stories written to instruct kids in Judeo-Christian morality, the Potter books see Harry rewarded, not for adhering to the rules of his elders and authorities, but for defying them. As Connie Neal explains in *What's a Christian to Do with Harry Potter?*, "If one is looking for a simple message of 'Don't break the rules!' forget the Harry Potter books." (p. 179).

For instance, to rid Hogwarts of the menacing beast that terrorizes students in *Chamber of Secrets*, Harry and his friends break countless rules, such as taking a

teacher hostage when he threatens to upset their plan of rescuing their classmates. Their criterion for action is not "what does the Bible say?" but: "what actions must we take to save our friends?"

Christian authors cite the books' portrayal of love as the hallmark of Harry's morality. But unlike the Christian love extolled in the Sermon on the Mount, Harry's love is *not* unconditional; his affection, like that of his headmaster Dumbledore, must be earned. It is his dearest friends and most loyal supporters, like Ron, Hermione, and Sirius, in whom he invests his love. Harry's love certainly does not extend to his enemies. He values neither Professor Snape nor the bully Draco Malfoy, and he burns with positive loathing for those—like Voldemort and Bellatrix LeStrang—responsible for murdering his loved ones.

Unlike the selfless, dutiful Aslan—the lion hero of Lewis' Narnia tale who lets himself be butchered in a Christ-like sacrifice—Harry's developing virtues are egoistic. Rather than running counter to his selfish, practical concern for the joys of this world, his virtues actually

further his enjoyment by guiding him to protect himself and those he loves.

Besides, if the Potter books' "ability to meet a spiritual longing" is what accounts for the books' wild popularity, then why have C. S. Lewis' books never approached Rowling's unprecedented sales records? And if it isn't some alleged religiosity in the books, then what is it that makes Harry's world so irresistible?

Most of the secular intellectuals who have tackled the success of the Potter series have an answer. They point not to the books' spiritual guidance, but to their grimly vivid realism. Unlike the many Christian fans who emphasize the moral clarity and the victory of the good in Harry Potter, academic critics theorize that the books' appeal stems from their real-world complexity and moral uncertainty.

Amanda Cockrell, a literature professor at Hollins University, observes that Rowling "has departed from the imaginary into the real" (*Harry Potter and the Ivory Tower*). "She has abandoned the realm of high fantasy and laid her story in contemporary England, rather than in the imaginary and

medievally flavored otherworlds of Middle Earth or Earthsea." Indeed, wizards shop, commute in trains, and, of course, attend grade school.

Edmund Kern, an assistant professor of history at Lawrence University who wrote a book in praise of Harry Potter (*The Wisdom of Harry Potter*), is particularly fond of its "merg[ing] the fantastical and the mundane." As Kern observes, "[young readers] encounter . . . drunkenness and violence. Life is not pristine. The death of a likable, righteous character proves that acting morally is hard-won and that being good does not guarantee being rewarded." In a similar vein, Maria Nikolajeva writes in "Harry Potter—A Return of the Romantic Hero" that "the appeal of Harry is exactly that he is . . . an ordinary clumsy and bespectacled boy. . . . A boy who is disobedient and curious. . . . He is not above playing dirty tricks on his foster family by using magic, and he does not hesitate to wear the invisibility [cloak] to sneak around like a typical . . . trickster." By contrast, she criticizes the standard "fairytale heroes," whom she critically

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# Studying Your Way to Ecstasy

by Ray Girn

This September, waves of students arrived on college campuses and readied themselves for the academic challenge ahead. Armed with lists, schedules, planners, and budgets, they sought out classes, classmates, bookstores, dorm rooms, financial aid offices. There it was, that energetic, refreshing, busy to-and-fro of individual students carefully figuring out and enacting their plans of action in pursuit of their educational ends.

Sadly, the coming weeks will reveal that many college students are in fact quite passive about pursuing their goals. Rather than making and abiding by purposeful choices, they will go through the year regularly compromising their plans, distracted by the lure of television shows, dorm parties, and flashing AIM icons.

On the face of it, the reason for this seems obvious: being purposeful takes work. It means thinking about when to study, what to study, how to study. To stay on top of your game, you will have to figure out what days

and evenings to take off, what errands to prioritize, what entertainment to pursue. And then you will actually have to do the studying—and a lot of it. With so many tempting distractions, is it really surprising that some students will find it difficult to stay the course?

When a freshman impulsively abandons his plan to prepare for tomorrow's test by accompanying his roommate to a movie, he is aware, at a gut level, that he is blindly departing from his carefully chosen course of action. If he could put into words the unspoken excuse that he makes for himself, it would be something like "I know I planned to study, but I feel like having fun." On the face of it, it's hard not to sympathize—the poor guy isn't committing a crime, he just wants to enjoy life.

But he is committing a crime: he's stealing enjoyment from himself. Will he actually enjoy life more by indulging such an impulse? He might enjoy *that night* more, but that's not the same thing. What if he fails the test and has to retake the

course—what effect would that have on his life?

The freshman's essential error is *not* that he decides to see a movie instead of study. There are, after all, many cases in which such a decision makes perfect sense. His error is that he doesn't decide at all. He doesn't think. He abandons thought and acts on the impulse of the moment.

In so doing, what the freshman really abandons is the goal of enjoying life. After all, why is the test important? Why is he at college? Why does he want to educate himself? So that he can make money doing work that he enjoys. So that he can enjoy life.

The issue is one of hedonism vs. happiness. Pursuing hedonistic pleasure means reacting to whatever impulse you feel, without considering future consequences. Pursuing genuine happiness means trying to live a *life* of pleasure. Any human value—a Friday night movie, a college degree, a successful career, a fulfilling marriage, good health—is the product of sustained, thought-

directed action. A person who characteristically fails to act according to a thoughtfully chosen plan will not even be able to stay on top of simple things like paying bills, buying groceries, and remembering birthdays, let alone be able to achieve profound values like an enduring romance or a Ph.D.

So if we need to be long-range, does that mean long years of ascetic grimacing while we wait for pleasure to come? No. The student who thinks and plans also plans his short-term pleasure. In fact he is the only one who is capable of appreciating the pleasures big and small that life has to offer.

It is easy to overlook the fact that we study to enjoy life. For an animal, rewards motivate and follow directly from successful effort—a wolf hunts, then it eats. For a human being, whose goals are long-range, rewards don't usually follow so immediately. The effort you exercise in planning and studying for a calculus test is rewarded, but it's hard to map out the ex-

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## The Half-Stumped Critics

(continued from previous page) describes as "possess[ing] a standard set of traits: strong, brave, clever . . ." and whose "moral qualities are impeccable." For Nikolajeva, Harry is only partner, but part-typical (and recognizable) teenage boy.

Yet even while extolling its "mundane" qualities, the academics admit that Harry Potter is not "the boy next door," and that the magical world hardly resembles grim routine. Nikolajeva, even while differentiating Harry from the standard "fairy-tale heroes"—such as the children of C.S. Lewis's stories—admits that Harry is "brave, kind, and he has a strong sense of justice." In contrast to the relativistic, ambiguous characters of many modern children's stories, Harry Potter represents "the fortunate attempt to reintroduce the romantic [hero] into children's fiction." Though intellectuals like Nikolajeva do not *focus* on Harry's moral virtues, they cannot help observing that he exhibits them.

Furthermore, despite all the teenage awkwardness and looming threats, Cockrell observes that Rowling possesses a quality "unusual in a tale with as dark a theme as hers: she is funny." From fat ladies moving around from portrait to portrait, to the not-quite-decapitated Gryffindor ghost, Nearly Headless Nick, even the darkest moments in Harry Potter are colored by light-hearted humor and imaginative anomalies.

So, one cannot help wondering, what is it that so magnetically draws readers back to Harry's world? The moral heroism, or the gritty reality of life?

Perhaps the quickest way to the answer is to ask Harry's most devoted and ideologically unprejudiced fans—the kids.

Kathleen Malu, an education professor and mother of two, did just that (*Harry Potter's World*): she interviewed her 12-year-old son's classmates, who were halfway through reading the second book in class. One, named Tia, responded: "When I was reading I was thinking about school and which teacher was like my teacher in the story. I had a teacher like Professor

Snape at my old school." Across the country, a fifth-grader named Alaina wrote a thank-you letter to Rowling, explaining: "When I thought about it, I knew I wanted to be like [Hermione Granger]. I knew the grades that I wanted were like Hermione's marks. So I thought, 'Hermione, I shall be.' Wow! . . . My life had suddenly changed. From F's and D's to A's and B's, I really felt successful. I enjoyed learning new things. I had nice friends. . . . I loved school, but most of all, I loved to read!"

Alaina, like Tia, recognized the familiar and realistic in Harry Potter: the grades, the teachers, the search for loyal friends. But in those familiar features, she also saw an inspirational moral message. The world of Harry Potter resembles our world—it confronts its characters with the same dilemmas, struggles, and choices. But the way Rowling portrays those experiences, far from being mundane and random, is in fact dramatic, exciting, and spiritually fulfilling: it inspires kids (and adults) to seek the excitement and thrill of discovery in their *own* lives.

Kids emulate Harry and Hermione not for their Christian

orthodoxy (which they prominently lack), but for the practical lessons they learn about earning good grades, forming successful relationships, and living happy, fulfilling lives. The practical values they pursue (such as friends, good grades, and innocent teenage antics) are the ends to which their virtues (like justice, self-control, and independence) are the means. In short, Harry's *morals are practical*; they enhance his life in the real world, an idea that neither the Commandment-abiding Christians nor the morality-shunning Leftist intellectuals today would recognize.

*Harry Potter* offers a world where the physical details of reality and the sublime concerns of the spirit, two elements so hopelessly at war in our culture, are united. That the books resonate with such a vast cross-section of the culture, cutting across politics, ideology, and age, suggests a basic and universal truth—that *virtue is practical*, the real world is dramatic and exciting; and in the real world, we *can* be heroes.

Gena Gorlin is a sophomore enrolled at Tufts University and the New England Conservatory.

## The Anti-Science Convergence

(continued from page 4)

No one is more explicit about this than the left itself, at least when they are speaking off the record, safely tucked away inside the walls of academia. In their book, *Higher Superstition*, Paul Gross and Norman Levitt catalogue the academic left's assault on science from all quarters of the social sciences: post-modernist, Marxist, feminist, multiculturalist, and, of course, environmentalist. Each of these schools, sometimes distinct from the others, sometimes not, has its own complaint about science. Science, say the post-

modernists, is just our culture's particular faith, no better than any other culture's myths. Science, say the Marxists, "is really 'bourgeois' science." Science, say the feminists, "is poisoned and corrupted by an ineradicable gender bias." Science, say the multiculturalists, is "inherently inaccurate and incomplete by virtue of its failure to incorporate the full range of cultural perspectives." Science, say the environmentalists, embodies "the instrumentalism and alienation from direct experience of nature which are the twin sources of eventual (or imminent) ecological doomsday."

Each of these claims, while different, reduces to the same lament: "Science doesn't cohere with our ideology, so something is wrong with science!" And this is the tragedy of today's intellectual mainstream: *both* the right

and the left are fundamentally opposed to science.

Some might object to this characterization. After all, they argue, the right and the left both respect science at least *some* of the time. But this is like calling a medical study reliable if only some of its data was fabricated. To be pro-science is to be pro-science without exception. It's to stand for science on principle, not just when it happens to confirm one's particular dogma.

But as bad as it is, the assault on science is just a particularly ugly manifestation of the philosophic fundamental that motivates both liberals and conservatives: both liberals and conservatives are anti-mind.

Liberals claim that man can know nothing—his mind is impotent, trapped in a "cultural construct," or a "gender

matrix." "Man's mind is impotent," agree the conservatives, "most of all the 'intellectual elites.' Man must therefore surrender his mind to God." Whatever their superficial differences, both sides share the same basic principle: *man cannot think*, and so must abandon his quest for the truth.

To defend science, one must first defend man's mind. And if one wants to defend man's mind, one must replace the baseless acceptance of ideological dogma with a passionate, unwavering commitment to the truth. One must stop searching for facts to fit one's vision, and fix one's vision on the facts.

*Don Watkins is a freelance writer and senior editor of Axiomatic (axiomaticmagazine.com), an online magazine for Objectivists.*

## 9/11: How Our Teachers Help Us Forget

(continued from page 2)

war on that front was over. Once again, America and her allies recognized a very real threat to free nations everywhere, and used whatever means necessary to make sure that threat was ended.

These examples are just a few of many, but the pattern remains the same. There is definitely a principle that can be learned from them: an overwhelming use of force against a threat to freedom will frighten aggressors away and break the will of those who support them, whereas appeasement only emboldens the aggressors and sends the message that they can get away with more and more. *This* is the kind of principle that should be identified and used in foreign policy and other areas of life—but isn't.

Take another example: we've all heard the phrase "One man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter." Have you ever stopped to think about whether or not it's true? Let's look at what the words in this sentence really mean, and see. First of all, to equate a terrorist with a freedom fighter is to make the assumption that terrorists are fighting for freedom. But freedom means *freedom of the individual from government control*; this is what the Founding Fathers of America understood and fought for.

But is this what the terrorists are fighting for? No. They are fighting to force their brand of

religion on, not only the people of their own countries, but the rest of the world as well. They are not fighting so that individuals will be free to live their own lives (and to choose their own beliefs), but to give governments absolute, religious control over every aspect of an individual's life. Now can you equate a terrorist with a freedom fighter?

Just to provide a little more proof, take a look at some other examples of people who have fought, not for freedom, but for a mystical ideology (like Islam). The Crusades and the Inquisition, both consequences of the Christian ideology, are excellent examples where the aggressors claimed to be working for a good cause (whether "freeing" the heathens of the Arabia from Islam or "protecting" the innocent from heretics), but were in fact working against true freedom of the individual.

For a non-religious example, look at Nazi Germany. Hitler used the supposed mystical superiority of the "Aryan race" to form a nation-wide cult bent on "freeing" the world from the Jews and other inferior races. But is freedom really what they were fighting for? Not if you mean freedom of the individual.

The principle to be found here, then, is that mystical ideologies lead to dominating, destructive aggression. But—keep in mind the first principle we identified—they can only do this in the modern era if free, rational nations pander to them and allow such behavior to go on.

Phrases such as "One man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter" are common in our culture today. Yet, if we are care-

ful to stop and properly define the terms involved, it quickly becomes clear that they don't add up. The consequences of letting this kind of mistake pass are abundantly clear after a quick look at history—and the same kind of thing *will* happen again this time, if we do not learn that it is possible to think in principles and to learn from the past.

Now, with this in mind, perhaps we can puzzle out why so many Americans have forgotten 9/11.

We all know that the attacks on September 11th were a tragedy. Why? Most people will answer that it's because thousands of innocent lives were lost, and it was here on American soil. But the same thing could be said of Hurricane Katrina. There have been destructive hurricanes before and there will be again. But a bloody terrorist attack by primitive religionists on the most technologically advanced nation on earth is a different matter.

Here is where the principles we identified before become important: on 9/11, America was attacked not because she lacked the means to defend herself, but because she did not use those means. For twenty years or more, the U.S. government failed to respond to increasingly audacious attacks by Islamic terrorists, and appeased governments that supported them. Abandoning the tradition of Jefferson and Madison, our leaders instead embraced the strategy of Chamberlain—and met with the same consequences.

This is the real tragedy of September 11th.

But because most people do not understand those principles, and don't see how we got to the

point where America was—and still is—engaging in appeasement, they also don't see that this is the root source of all the trouble, don't understand that this is what makes the events of 9/11 so significant, and therefore don't remember 9/11. In their minds, the terrorist attacks have been reduced, essentially, to the level of the hurricane disaster: a lot of people dead, but what's to be done about it? We shrug and move on.

Given the true nature of and reasons behind the attacks, this mental attitude on our part could not be worse: without an understanding of the attacks, and a suitable response to them, more and worse attacks will be directed at us, and eventually some of them will succeed no matter how good our security. Unlike hurricanes, our enemies can sense our cowardice.

Principled thinking, as used in the above examples, can be applied to all different kinds of ideas and questions, in all areas of life, and is thus vitally important to learn. However, it is an absolute necessity for understanding issues like 9/11 and the "War on Terror." We must learn what the proper response to such attacks is, and be able to evaluate whether or not the war is an appropriate response. Even some rudimentary thinking on this subject should make it apparent that knowing how to think in principles is not merely a matter of having a good education—it is, literally, a matter of life and death.

*Audra Hilse is currently a sophomore at Lawrence University. She is majoring in history, and also enjoys philosophy and fiction writing.*

# CAMPUS SURVIVAL, UNDERCURRENT STYLE

Ah, back to school. The crisp autumn air, the stroll down the Quad, the hustle and bustle of campus. Time for Boola Boola, Hoya Saxa, Chu-Chu-Ra-Ra and all the rest. But this year, for the first time, Joe College sets foot on campus with an unbeatable ally: a fresh copy of *The Undercurrent*.

And not a moment too soon. Arrayed against Joe College is a set of unprecedented obstacles threatening to derail his education and his future.

So what are these obstacles? Bush administration budget cuts? An uncertain labor market? That crusty old dean? Far from it. The leading threat to your future is your college education . . . or lack thereof.

The threats range from the mundane to the metaphysical.

Sitting in your dorm room, you now face innumerable distractions in competition with your education: LiveJournal, Facebook, fall rush, video games, parties, and the roommate stumbling home at 4AM. It takes discipline to get an ed-

ucation these days. At *The Undercurrent* we love to see you in focus, so we gladly offer up advice on how and why to integrate work with fun (“Studying Your Way to Ecstasy”).

But even the disciplined student faces a dizzying array of choices on campus, and needs the wisdom of experience to guide him. Choosing a student organization is a case in point. All too many campus clubs seem to be geared towards students seeking escape from the responsibility of education, rather than a complement to it; towards taking comfort in an artificial group identity, rather than shared values and interests. Thus *The Undercurrent* furnishes you with a handy shopper’s guide to these clubs (“The Collectivist Club”).

Sadly, when it comes to mind-expanding coursework, the pickings are slim. Students at today’s universities have the opportunity to excel in a range of classes related to the professions, but when it comes to the humanities—the cornerstone of

a proper liberal education—our educators have defaulted on cultivating in us a concern for the universal and the timeless as expressed in the Western canon. It is little wonder, then, that students lack a historical perspective that allows them to evaluate even the most crucial issues of the day (“9/11: How Our Teachers Help Us Forget”).

Faced with an endless parade of readings in the folklore of !Kung tribesmen and the sociology of the Trobriand Islanders, is it any wonder that we take refuge in the (by comparison) larger-than-life and epic tales of one young Harry Potter? A schoolboy like ourselves, Potter convinces us that even in the face of great obstacles, growing up can be magical. If only the cultural critics of the left and right (begrudgingly admitting their own affection for Potter) could understand why this is true (“Harry Potter and the Half-Stamped Critics”).

But we can’t expect the cultural left and right to understand literature, not when they don’t

even want to understand the basic tenets of the scientific worldview. The imminent convergence of religious and postmodernist forces against all that is holy and rational grows more ominous, even as we speak (“The Anti-Science Convergence”).

Say what you want about the postmodernists, but some of us think they’re too silly ever to make much of a real difference. The religious right, on the other hand, has centuries of experience to draw on in laying waste to the values of the intellect. From the Inquisition to the Scopes Trial, religion has threatened the values of liberal education and returned with a vengeance even after its many temporary respites (“Freedom From People of Faith”).

But fear not, young scholar. There is much to learn in college, if you approach it with the right attitude, armed with the proper principles. At *The Undercurrent* we hope to supply you with these principles as we have learned them from Ayn Rand’s philosophy of Objectivism.

## Studying Your Way to Ecstasy

(continued from page 5)

act causation (it might mean a better job years later). You, unlike an animal, can lose sight of the justification for putting forth the effort—you can forget that your reason for studying is your desire to enjoy life. This is why every student counselor that you’ve ever had has advised you to put aside lots of time and money for leisure and entertainment. Leisure and entertainment help you remember that you’re working so hard, not out of duty or obligation, but for the sake of pleasure. Rewarding yourself for hard work gives that work an emotional reality—it shows you what you’ve just been achieving for yourself.

In this way, the pleasure of watching a movie or going out dancing after writing a test is just like the satisfaction of the wolf eating after hunting, transfigured into a human context. For a wolf, the effort of hunting

produces the pleasure of eating. For you, the effort of studying produces the self-esteem that comes from knowing you are securing pleasure many years down the road, and that self-esteem is what enables you to enjoy a date, a movie, or a night out with the boys. You know you deserve it.

And there is, of course, the joy of the doing itself. Just as the wolf enjoys not only the meal but also the hunt, so you can enjoy the effort of studying. Work is effort, but it should not be pain. If you seek out work that you love, the process of pursuing pleasure itself becomes a pleasure.

A student who accepts the idea that his purpose at college is to earn a life of enjoyment will not feel that there is a conflict between working hard and having fun. Such a student plans to enjoy life both today and in the future, and so sticks to his plan. When unexpected opportunities arise—he wins free tickets to a concert, say—he neither sticks militantly to his work plan nor abandons his work plan, he just revises

his schedule to see whether he can fit it in (and because he is organized, he can). This is the approach of the many students who live it up on the weekends while staying on top of their courses, jobs, errands. The rewards they pursue—food, video games, sports, novels, movies, parties, bars, clubs, conversation with friends, road trips, sex—are healthy and desirable values...because they are pursued thoughtfully. It’s not as though enjoying the student life precludes being a good student.

The student who does *not* grasp the relationship between studying and enjoying life will feel that there is a conflict between working hard and having fun. He *will* feel like tomorrow’s test is what is keeping him from that party he yearns to attend—and will therefore struggle to resist the pull. He may even sincerely tell himself he intends to study, but in the teeth of a tempting phone ring or IM pop-up that conviction dissipates.

Pleasure is the result of action—and action, for a human being, means thought-guided action. To the extent that a stu-

dent fails to grasp the importance of thinking as a means to enjoying life, his *modus operandi* will be not action but reaction. He will constantly be reacting unthinkingly to things that seem worth having or doing *now*, without due consideration of what is actually good for his life and happiness. A student who find himself tempted to abandon thought for the sake of pleasure should remind himself that what he is abandoning is pleasure. He should see the distraction for what it is—a temptation to give up the pursuit of happiness because it seems to hard—and then instead of blindly indulging it he should apply his mind to the task of squeezing every ounce of pleasure he can into his life, today, tomorrow, and into the future.

*Ray Girn graduated last year from the University of Toronto, and now teaches math and science at a private elementary school in Orange County, California. He is a student at the Ayn Rand Institute’s Objectivist Academic Center.*

# SPEAKERS, EVENTS, MEETINGS

All dates & times subject to change or cancellation. For more information, contact [mail@the-undercurrent.com](mailto:mail@the-undercurrent.com)

## New York University (New York, NY)

THE AYN RAND LECTURE SERIES IN NEW YORK CITY

**What:** Public lecture, "Global Capitalism"

**Speaker:** Dr. Andrew Bernstein, professor of philosophy and author of *The Capitalist Manifesto*

**When:** Friday, Oct. 28, 2005, 7:00pm

**Where:** Room 900-series, Kimmel Center

**Contact:** Kara (nyuoc\_president@yahoo.com)

**Description:**

"Although leftist agitators continue to protest global capitalism, they overlook the key points in the debate. In Europe, North America, and Asia, the capitalist nations are, by a wide margin, the wealthiest societies of history—with per capita incomes in the range of at least \$20,000-\$30,000 annually. What are the deeper principles making possible the freedom and wealth enjoyed under capitalism—and lacking in its political antipodes? How has capitalism already greatly enhanced the lives of millions of human beings in formerly impoverished Third World countries? What can the men of the free world do to further promote the spread of capitalism into the repressed nations of the globe? These are the questions addressed in this talk."

**What:** Public lecture, "Creationism in Camouflage: The Intelligent Design Deception"

**Speaker:** Dr. Keith Lockitch

**When:** Tuesday, Nov. 8, 2005, 8:00pm

**Where:** 10th Floor, Kimmel Center

**Contact:** Kara (nyuoc\_president@yahoo.com)

**Description:**

"For decades creationists have sought to replace evolution with the Book of Genesis. But defenders of evolution have consistently prevailed in the schools and the courts of law. This struggle for intellectual survival has led to the evolution of a new "species" of creationist, better adapted

to its inhospitable environment. The new creationism goes by the name of "intelligent design" and poses a greater danger than old-style creationism. In this talk Dr. Lockitch will examine the intelligent design movement, focusing on its similarities and differences with standard creationism. By hiding its religious essence behind a cloak of pseudo-science, the movement seeks to make itself more palatable to intellectuals and the general public. And because today's academics—including the most passionate and vocal defenders of evolution—are incapable of answering its most fundamental arguments, the doors of our colleges and schools are ominously open to primitive mysticism masquerading as science."

**Further info:** The Objectivist Club at NYU, <http://nyu.objectivismonline.net>

## THE FOUNTAINHEAD SEMINAR SERIES

**What:** Seminar meeting/discussion of Ayn Rand's masterpiece

**When:** Each meeting begins at 7:00pm, on the following dates: Monday, Sept. 19, 2005; Monday, Oct. 17, 2005; Monday, Nov. 14, 2005; Monday Dec. 5, 2005

**Where:** Room 907, Kimmel Center, NYU

**Contact:** Kara (nyuoc\_president@yahoo.com) Pizza and soda will be provided free of charge.

## Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (Troy, NY)

**What:** RPI Objectivist Club meetings

**When:** every Thursday, 8:00pm-9:00pm

**Where:** Student Union, Room 3511

**Contact:** Lisa Rogers, [rogerl@rpi.edu](mailto:rogerl@rpi.edu)

## Colgate University (Hamilton, NY)

**What:** Public lecture, "Religion Vs. Morality"

**Speaker:** Dr. Andrew Bernstein, professor of philosophy and author of *The Capitalist Manifesto*

**When:** Tuesday, Sept. 27, 2005, 8:00pm

**Where:** Love Auditorium,

Olín Hall  
**Contact:** Richard Denoncourt, [rdenoncourt@mail.colgate.edu](mailto:rdenoncourt@mail.colgate.edu)

**Description:**

"Conventionally, most people believe that morality can only be based in religious faith—that in a world without God no principles of right and wrong could exist. Related to this, philosophers have long held that no objective, fact-based, rational code of values is possible. Regarding both points, this talk shows that the exact opposite is true. The purpose of morality is to guide human life on earth—and religion is utterly incapable of it. Flourishing life requires a code of secularism, rationality, egoism and freedom. Religious faith clashes with every principle of a proper moral code, and, as such, has led, and can only lead to, hell on earth."

## Tufts University (Medford, MA)

**Announcement:** The Ayn Rand Interest Club will hold weekly meetings this semester.

**Further info:** Gena Gorlin ([eugenia.gorlin@tufts.edu](mailto:eugenia.gorlin@tufts.edu))

## Duke University (Chapel Hill, NC)

**Announcement:** Duke Objectivists will hold regular meetings this semester.

**Further info:** Aaron Keefe ([ask12@duke.edu](mailto:ask12@duke.edu))

## University of Chicago (Chicago, IL)

**Announcement:** The Univ. of Chicago Objectivist Club will hold regular meetings this semester.

**Further info:** visit <http://objectivist.uchicago.edu>, or email Rebecca Knapp ([rebkna@uchicago.edu](mailto:rebkna@uchicago.edu))

**What:** Public lecture, "The Failure of 'Homeland Defense'"

**Speaker:** Dr. John Lewis, Ashland University professor of history

**When:** Fall 2005, further details TBA

**Where:** TBA

**Contact:** Rebecca Knapp ([rebkna@uchicago.edu](mailto:rebkna@uchicago.edu))

**Description:**

"With the creation of a cabinet-level Department of Homeland Defense, America has accepted a permanent, institutionalized state of siege on its own soil. But

is this the correct strategy? This lecture examines several cases from history in Ancient Greece, Ancient Rome, the American Civil War, and the decades between World Wars I and II—asking what has happened when great nations, facing attack, have turned to defense rather than offense. The results are unequivocal: the only defense is a good offense. If history is any guide, America should project her military beyond her borders and into the foreign homeland of her enemies. She should leave her cities free and open: as demonstrations of the power and success of freedom. Ultimately the lessons of history illustrate the deep connection between intellectual clarity, moral certainty, and the offensive strategy needed to defeat a ruthless enemy. Only Ayn Rand's philosophy of Objectivism provides the foundations needed for a successful military response to the threats we face today."

## University of Illinois (Urbana-Champaign, IL)

**Announcement:** The Illinois Objectivist Club will hold regular meetings this semester.

**Further info:** email Ryan Dawson ([rwadawson@uiuc.edu](mailto:rwadawson@uiuc.edu))

**What:** Public lecture, "Creationism in Camouflage: The 'Intelligent Design' Deception"

**Speaker:** Dr. Keith Lockitch

**When:** Thursday, Nov. 10, 2005, exact time TBA

**Where:** TBA

**Contact:** Darrin Weathersby ([dweathe2@uiuc.edu](mailto:dweathe2@uiuc.edu))

**Description:**

"For decades creationists have sought to replace evolution with the Book of Genesis. But defenders of evolution have consistently prevailed in the schools and the courts of law. This struggle for intellectual survival has led to the evolution of a new "species" of creationist, better adapted to its inhospitable environment. The new creationism goes by the name of "intelligent design" and poses a greater danger than old-style creationism. In this talk Dr. Lockitch will examine the intelligent design movement, focusing on its similarities and differences with standard

creationism. By hiding its religious essence behind a cloak of pseudo-science, the movement seeks to make itself more palatable to intellectuals and the general public. And because today's academics—including the most passionate and vocal defenders of evolution—are incapable of answering its most fundamental arguments, the doors of our colleges and schools are ominously open to primitive mysticism masquerading as science."

**Further info:** <http://www.uiuc.edu/ro/ioc>

## Lawrence University (Appleton, WI)

**What:** Public lecture, "Religion Vs. Morality"

**Speaker:** Dr. Andrew Bernstein

**When:** Wednesday, Nov. 2, 2005, exact time TBA

**Where:** TBA

**Contact:** Eric Lanser ([w.lanser@lawrence.edu](mailto:w.lanser@lawrence.edu))

**Description:**

"Conventionally, most people believe that morality can only be based in religious faith—that in a world without God no principles of right and wrong could exist. Related to this, philosophers have long held that no objective, fact-based, rational code of values is possible. Regarding both points, this talk shows that the exact opposite is true. The purpose of morality is to guide human life on earth—and religion is utterly incapable of it. Flourishing life requires a code of secularism, rationality, egoism and freedom. Religious faith clashes with every principle of a proper moral code, and, as such, has led, and can only lead to, hell on earth."

## University of Michigan (Ann Arbor, MI)

**Announcement:** The University of Michigan Students of Objectivism (UMSO) will hold weekly meetings this semester.

**Further info:** <http://www.umso.org>, email Jennifer ([jehsieh@med.umich.edu](mailto:jehsieh@med.umich.edu)) with any questions, suggestions, etc.

## Michigan State University (East Lansing, MI)

**Announcement:** MSU Objectivist Club will hold

regular meetings this semester.

**Further info:** Kyle Patrick Steele ([steelek@msu.edu](mailto:steelek@msu.edu))

## University of Southern California (Los Angeles, CA)

**What:** Public lecture, "Creationism in Camouflage: The 'Intelligent Design' Deception"

**Speaker:** Dr. Keith Lockitch

**When:** Tuesday, Oct. 25, 2005, exact time TBA

**Where:** SGM, details TBA

**Contact:** USC Objectivist Club ([aynrand@usc.edu](mailto:aynrand@usc.edu))

**Description:**

"For decades creationists have sought to replace evolution with the Book of Genesis. But defenders of evolution have consistently prevailed in the schools and the courts of law. This struggle for intellectual survival has led to the evolution of a new "species" of creationist, better adapted to its inhospitable environment. The new creationism goes by the name of "intelligent design" and poses a greater danger than old-style creationism. In this talk Dr. Lockitch will examine the intelligent design movement, focusing on its similarities and differences with standard creationism. By hiding its religious essence behind a cloak of pseudo-science, the movement seeks to make itself more palatable to intellectuals and the general public. And because today's academics—including the most passionate and vocal defenders of evolution—are incapable of answering its most fundamental arguments, the doors of our colleges and schools are ominously open to primitive mysticism masquerading as science."

**Further info:** <http://www.uscobjectivistclub.com>

## University of Colorado (Boulder, CO)

**Announcement:** Boulder Objectivist Club will meet regularly this semester.

**Further info:** See <http://www.colorado.edu/studentgroups/objectivists/> or email Jared Seehafer ([seehafer@colorado.edu](mailto:seehafer@colorado.edu))

*The Undercurrent* is a monthly student publication, produced and distributed by college students at campuses across North America.

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