

# HILLTOPICS

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## Rules dilute Presidential “debates”

by Courtney Underwood

If you did not happen to watch President Bush and Senator Kerry square off on Thursday, don't worry; you didn't miss a debate—at least nothing more than a postmodern spin on a debate. Under today's stringent regulations, candidates are under no obligation to answer the questions posed to them, and they are also forbidden to address or respond to each other.

However, the debate wasn't quite as bad as the 32-page memorandum, which stated its rules, seemed to suggest; after reading about “flashing red lights” and the size of each candidate's dressing room, I was expecting a half time show to give our entertainers a rest. But with these questions, don't expect entertainment. God forbid we actually see confrontation during a debate or hear a question that might throw a candidate off balance; even the next debate, where audience members will be asking the questions, their queries will not only be pre-approved but will be asked by “soft” Bush or “soft” Kerry fans. We wouldn't want any crazy undecided voters asking about an issue that might make either of the candidates stumble and actually answer a question.

Moreover, while expecting a direct answer to a question during a political debate would be overly optimistic, if not stupid, do we really want to forbid the candidates from directing questions at each other? But wait, they can ask each other questions if they are rhetorical—that makes sense. Furthermore, since we don't want anyone getting too rowdy, candidates are not permitted to move from the designated area behind their precisely measured podiums—that's good news, I was worried about a fist fight breaking out if they got too close.

While it may have been nice to have a real debate where Kerry could invoke Reagan's voice saying, “There you go again” or  
see **DEBATES** on page 3

## Bush suffers Texas-sized defeat

by Douglas Hill

As a Republican, I have some advice for the GOP: fool me once, shame on you; fool me twice, stop debating Democrats named JFK on television.

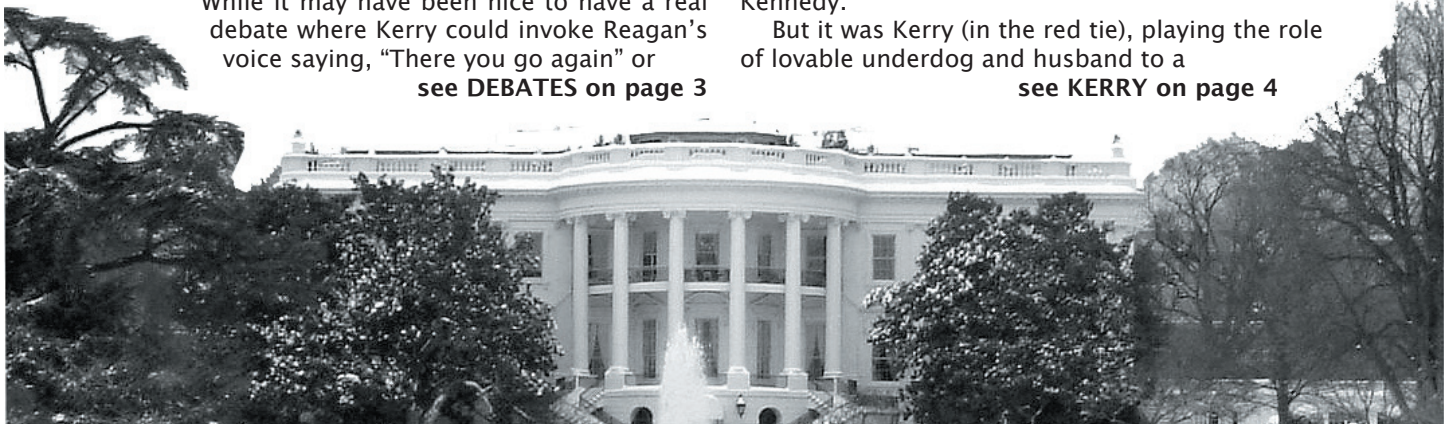
In 1960—when presidential debates were actual debates—John Kennedy took Richard Nixon to school in the first televised presidential debate. Kennedy went on to win the presidency, and many historians believe the image he was able to convey in that first debate was a major reason.

The names have changed a little, the faces have changed a lot, but the story is exactly the same. The Massachusetts Democrat makes the less-charismatic Republican look slow, mean, rude, and not quite tall enough to be a good president.

The crucial difference between Thursday's debate and its predecessor of 44 years is what was at stake. In 1960, there were no real expectations because no one knew what could possibly happen in a TV debate. In 2004, however, both candidates had specific goals for what constituted a “win” in this “debate,” and it may be that both candidates met their criteria.

Bush (the one in the blue tie) went into the night with a lead of more than five points (gasp!) in many polls. Thus, he had one primary objective: don't screw up. Using that criterion, it seems fair to say that he got a win. Despite wasting much of the night dropping names of world leaders and shocking the world by correctly pronouncing them, Bush looked competent. He looked far from stellar, but he also managed not to look like Pa Kettle next to the walking, talking, wind-surfing Northeastern elitist stereotype who is John Kerry: something Nixon failed to do next to Kennedy.

But it was Kerry (in the red tie), playing the role of lovable underdog and husband to a  
see **KERRY** on page 4



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**Media:** Why is diversity in print important? *Hilltopics* is here to show you

**Campus life:** The Department of Multicultural Student Affairs serves SMU's minority students. What's its past and what will its future be?

**On the web:**

Visit our webpage ([smu.edu/honors/hilltopics](http://smu.edu/honors/hilltopics)) to hear what students thought of Thursday's debate.

## Race relations improved, not perfect *Students look forward to day DMSA is no longer needed at SMU*

by Emily Jordan and Andrew Baker

Some would say we attend Southern Methodist University where white kids rule the roost and dominate all aspects of campus. However, if you walk around campus and open your eyes, you will notice that roughly 20% of all SMU students are minorities.

Minority students have an interesting history at SMU. Take, for example, the first integrated class at our institution. Back in 1966, during the tenure of Chancellor Willis M. Tate, the University admitted a handful of African-American students. Although they had managed to gain admittance, they had not attained the status all Mustangs deserve. So, in 1969, a group of determined African-American students staged a sit-in in the office of Chancellor Tate in order to voice their concerns and to demand a resource center on campus to support African-American students. Subsequently, the precursor to the Department of Multicultural Student Affairs was founded.

Today, the DMSA functions as a resource center and a place of support for all minority students. Additionally, the office seeks to build an understanding of and appreciation for other cultures and other students.

Specifically, the DMSA's Orientation of Minority Students seeks to make new Mustangs feel comfortable and welcome in an environment that some see as neither. This summer, the DMSA conducted its third such orientation program, in which approximately 300 people participated. Parents, mentors, and new students came together to ease the transition from high school to the Hilltop. The question is whether such programming is necessary and proper at SMU today.

The answer is two-fold. First, such programming is currently compulsory. As the history of African-American students at SMU can attest, a demand for such programming has and does exist. Potential new students frequently contact the DMSA wondering whether they will truly be accepted, both on paper and in practice, at Southern Methodist University. As long as these potential new Mustangs feel nervous and reluctant to join our community, we must continue to make every effort to bring them into our family.

On the flip-side, in the long run such programming and the very existence of the Department of Multicultural Student Affairs discourages full social and emotional integration. By emphasizing differences, however well intentioned doing so may seem, we de-emphasize the commonalities that make us all Mustangs. It is good to know that SMU cares about every single student and values the presence and participation of everyone. However, just as there was a demand for a resource center in 1969, the desire of the future must ultimately be to close the doors of the Department of Multicultural Student Affairs. The day the doors close is the day that the campus is undoubtedly open to everyone. Then and only then will we be able to say that we are all Mustangs, and the mission of the students involved in 1969's sit-in will be accomplished on an entirely new echelon that adequately responds to the needs of the current social milieu.

In order to escape the bounds of meaningless rhetoric, every student must take an interest in the holistic integration of our community. This could include activities that are not only open to all students but are also appealing to all students. Scheduled events that provide the means to ho-

## An ode to the SMU collar pop

by Gaines Greer

In this modern world of horrific warfare, partisan politics, and vitriolic campaign ads, seeing individuals and institutions suffer at the hands of unfair attacks has become an everyday occurrence. Such assaults on the innocent must be fought by those who are capable of providing resistance, and so today, I feel myself called to defend a recent, but vital, SMU tradition, one that is much belittled and frequently denied the respect it deserves. The poor, helpless victims in this case are the flipped collars of SMU's polo-clad population.

Surely you've noticed the phenomenon. And the first time you saw it, you were probably confused as to why an eighteen year old appeared to look as if he or she had gotten dressed in the dark. But upon closer inspection, you might have realized that the vertical collar had, in fact, been ironed and starched and—gasp—purposefully framed around the face like a light pink version of Count Chocula's vampire ensemble.

A lot of naysayers cringe at the flipped collar, seeing it as a return to the 1980's. But nearly the entire undergraduate population of SMU was born during those ten years, so they can't have been all bad, right? Others decry the trend for being too "preppy," but come on, is being crisp and put-together really so terrible? Conversely, *Cosmopolitan Magazine* advised its readers this summer to try flipping their collars to add "a splash of color around the face."

I'm no fashionista, so when I defend the flipped collar, it's not due to my adherence to some stylistic principle. Does it look ridiculous? Admittedly, yes, it does; and anyone who says differently is either lying or delusional. But the next time you walk across campus, try looking at the flipped collar from a different angle, one that doesn't take this fleeting trend too seriously. After all, seeing someone sporting a popped collar is a lot like catching someone singing along to the radio in their car: it makes you shake your head because he or she is making a fool of his or herself, but ultimately, it makes you smile a little, too.

So to those of you out there who curse us collar-flippers for refusing to wear our polos like "normal people," calm down and try taking the popped collar at it's face-framing value: it's just harmless fun.

*Gaines Greer is a senior English and German major.*

listically integrate SMU include but are not limited to athletic events, Mustang Idol, and Mane Event. Furthermore, we as individual students should be open to daily interactions and friendships with people of other backgrounds. In an environment where segregated activities are deemed necessary, it is also necessary that we each strive to eliminate cultural barriers by having us versus them become we. Any student who buys into racial stereotypes must come to a common understanding: we are all Mustangs.

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*Emily Jordan is a senior political science major.*

The Department of Multicultural Student Affairs is located on the third floor of the Huges-Trigg Student Center. The office can be contacted through email at [dmsa@smu.edu](mailto:dmsa@smu.edu), by phone at 214-768-4580, or on the web at <http://www.smu.edu/dmsa>.

## Academic textbooks: a legacy of turning common sense into nonsense

by Craig Zieminski

Little can exacerbate the feeling of utter violation that accompanies the biannual trip to the bookstore. After grabbing an optimistically small shopping basket, students engage in the pre-semester Trail of Tears, swallowing numerous sticker shocks as the woefully insufficient basket bows under the weight of an \$800 stack of textbooks.

Unfortunately, the greatest disappointment often comes when the eager college student flips open the textbook and finds that he or she has paid \$100 for pearls of wisdom such as: "Checklist 3.2: How to Clarify Your Objectives...[Step #4] Clarify what you mean by each objective,"<sup>1</sup>. No, the book is not written in the style of ancient Chinese philosophy, where tautological statements often have profound meanings. Instead, this laughable checklist is a prime example of academicization, the art of translating common sense, elementary principles, and other non-academic thoughts into quasi-educational material. However unbelievable it may be, the author is honestly explaining that to clarify your objectives, you should clarify your objectives.

The spread of academicization is a direct result of the captive audience principle. Except for extremely clever students, who avoid the inevitable through inconsiderate mooching of textbooks from caring classmates, everyone enrolled in a course must purchase the required texts. Under normal circumstances, most consumers would not purchase a book that ingeniously notes, "an attitude is a positive, negative, or mixed reaction toward any person, object, or idea," (book's emphasis)<sup>2</sup>.

There are two approaches for professors to take when dealing with academicization. The sullen path is to structure the course around the woeful text, which necessitates eons of staring at flash cards but does little to truly cultivate the mind. The course will be excruciatingly difficult because rote memorization is needed for those lovely exam questions that require regurgitation of arbitrary lists (see Checklist 3.2) and definitions (see attitude). An argument can

be made that advanced studies in any subject require firm knowledge of elementary material. Obviously, this claim is true, but drilling overly complicated definitions is not the optimal method for achieving this foundation; because academicized subject matter is usually memorized, not learned, the long-term benefits are minimal.

Students gain much more from these courses when the academicized book is a reference but not a requirement. Professors can present elementary principles in a practical fashion and focus the class on applying these concepts. The textbook is an ad hoc reference guide, available when clarification is needed without continually diverting students from intellectual growth. If a student were not required to memorize a particular author's list of 'fifteen advantages of improving intra-family communications,' then perhaps she would analyze the underlying subject matter and deduce her own list.

Luckily, most professors at SMU feel the same way about

academicization and apply their own expertise and alternative resources to circumvent its pitfalls. In Strategy, a business school course, many sections forego the textbook entirely, instead using case studies and journal articles for reading materials. Students are asked to analyze situations and synthesize solutions, not memorize a laundry list of terminology. It is no coincidence that these sections are very highly acclaimed by B.B.A. students.

Investigate the level of academicization when selecting courses by talking to current students and flipping through the required readings. Otherwise, your next trip to the bookstore might be painful for an entire semester.

### Notes:

- 1 - Dessler, Gary. *Management*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2004. 61.
  - 2 - Kassir, Saul. *Psychology*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2001. 506
- Craig Zieminski is a senior accounting and economics major.



Textbooks seem too complicated? Look for instances of academicization to simplify your studying. Sometimes the most complicated parts of a text are truly the most elementary.

## Debates devolved into nothingness

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Bush could tell Kerry, much like Lloyd Bentsen told Dan Quayle, "Senator, you are no John Kennedy," at least Kerry did not change his position again and Bush only looked mildly confused—although he did say and use the word "vociferously" correctly. Imagine what would happen if we put the two candidates in a room, asked them questions they were not prepared for and let them respond to each other; with these two candidates it might be depressing, but it would surely be entertaining—it might even look like a debate.

Courtney Underwood is a senior psychology major.

### Are you boring?

(if so, ignore this ad)

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## Kerry wins important debate

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bazillion dollar ketchup fortune heiress, who was Thursday night's real victor. He had a more ambitious goal: look more Presidential than George Bush. He, too, seems to have met his goal.

Kerry looked like he had given serious thought to the possibility of not being at war in Iraq forever. Bush said Prime Minister Allawi's name a bunch of times. Kerry looked like he had at least read a book or perhaps watched a documentary or two about non-proliferation. Bush didn't, but he did a great job of mispronouncing "nuclear."

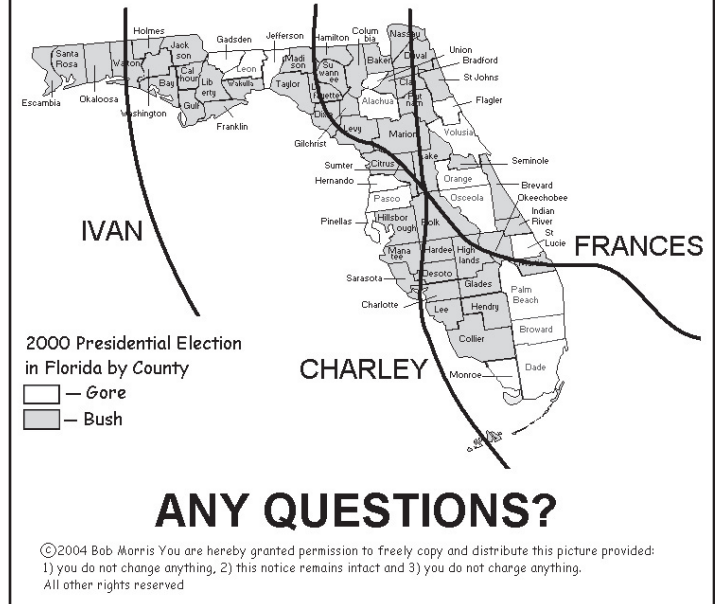
In the final analysis, Kerry looked interested in being the President and leading the world, while Bush just looked like he wanted to get re-elected really, really badly. Bush didn't have as much at stake going into Thursday night as Kerry did, but he cannot afford to stay on the defensive for the next two debates. Bush must develop a bolder goal than to be mediocre.

Bush now needs to prove that his ideas can compete with Kerry's. Kennedy demonstrated in 1960 how effective mass media can be as a political tool, and it is now Bush's task not to let Kerry use it to continue to break down Bush's lead.

*Douglas Hill is a sophomore international studies and philosophy major.*

## Editorial Cartoon

### GOD vs. BUSH



## A diverse student body deserves diversity of opinion in print media

*Not all Mustangs are the same breed of pony, so Hilltopics is here to give them all a voice. It's up to you to speak up!*

*by Jared Dovers*

What you're holding in your hand is important! From *Common Sense* to *The Onion*, diversity in the media plays an indisputably positive role in our country, but not at our school. *Hilltopics* is here to change that. You've probably heard that before the muskets won the American Revolution, the printing press was delivering dissenting rhetoric to the public. While I am not Thomas Paine and *Hilltopics* probably won't incite wars, it is the stuff of a revolution.

The thought is this: *Hilltopics* was born out of the incessant bitching of you, the students. For years, the editors of this paper have listened to students share their beefs about the administration, the faculty, the "parking Nazis," and Dining Services. But it wouldn't stop there! It seemed students had opinions about politics, religion, world affairs. From bake sales to anti-war protests, SMU seemed ripe with people who had something to say. So then the thought occurred: there is a diversity of opinions at SMU—the editors at the *Princeton Review* be damned. Only one problem left: all these opinions with no worthwhile way to express them.

*Hilltopics* was formed on a hunch that some of you out there could use a forum to share your opinions with your fellow students. All the time, we hear men in suits throw around the catchphrase of "academic community," and while the content of *Hilltopics* is not restricted to the purely academic, we are hoping to open up a different type of community among you—a community of those who would like to hear and be heard about topics as varied as the possibility of being drafted to the possibility of getting something besides a sandwich at Hughes-Trigg.

We've broken our backs (and our GPAs) getting this thing into your hands—now it's up to you.—so let's see it. From the SMU Students Against War to the Young Conservatives of Texas, we want to see what you've got to say. Viva la revolución!

*Jared Dovers is a senior philosophy and religious studies major.*

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We welcome submissions from all members of the SMU community. Letters to the editor should be up to 300 words in response to a previously published article. Contributions should be a 300–600 word article on any topic or in response to another article. Please email your submission to [hilltopics@hotmail.com](mailto:hilltopics@hotmail.com) by Wednesday at 8:00 PM to be included in the following week's publication. Special deadlines will be observed for breaking campus events.