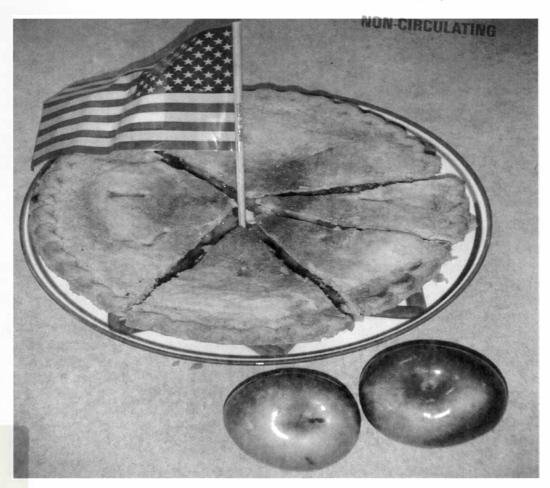
SERIALS DEFFATM2004 Volume 3

MAJORITY WINS? 2005



Minority Party Politics Does The U.S. Hold The Best System?

Humanities And Humanities: The West/NonWest Dichotomy An Attempt To Balance The Western Humanities Courses With Their Counterparts

France's Ban on Muslim Headscarves Preserving Secularism Or The French Identity?

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EDITOR'S NOTE

MiNT is proud to present its second issue of Spring 2004, what we think – and hope you will find – to be a hallmark of improvement from our previous issues.

In lieu of the U.S. presidential elections this year, MiNT examines the effectiveness of the nation's voting system, as well as takes a brief overview of how elections are conducted in other parts of the world. The Western world upholds democracy as the pinnacle of civilization but Justin Murphy's insightful examination of recent election trends show that the "majority wins" concept isn't always a crowd-pleaser. The binary system to which U.S. presidential elections are inclined—as do most American political or social issues, tending to form pro- and anti- camps — shortchanges those whose perspectives fall in between the two extremes.

Similarly, Janine Giordano and Xue Yun Li's comprehensive and illuminating analysis of Geneseo's Western Humanities requirement points out that the simplified West/non-West dichotomy approach of our liberal arts education may prove backdated in this increasingly complex and globalized world. Many of us unquestioningly sign up for the eight credits, wanting to just get it out of the way. In identifying the limitations of the current syllabus, I encourage all of us to read the article and consider revising our existing syllabus to be more all encompassing and one that doesn't limit our views to boundaries that are increasingly irrelevant in today's global situation.

At MiNT, we strive to break away from existing frameworks of ideology and urge for the setting of new boundaries to include sidelined perspectives that, more often than not, provide a valuable contribution. Since its inception in Spring 2003, many of our readers have welcomed MiNT as a much-needed voice on campus. As a graduating senior, I am proud to have been a part of this contribution, as are my fellow MiNT graduating seniors, Senior Editor, Emily Telfer, and Interim Art Director, Li Ling Lee. We know that MiNT is in the good hands of its newly elected editorial team, led by Xue Yun Li, and trust that the Geneseo community will continue to be supportive in our efforts to expand in our scope and vision.

Tionales

Fiona Lee Editor-in-Chief

MiNT Magazine welcomes readers' responses Send your letters to: mint@geneseo.edu

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Cover Design by Fiona Lee

Humanities and Humanities: The West/Non-West Dichotomy

by Janine Giordano and Xue Yun Li



 $\mathbf{W}_{\mathsf{hat}}$ is the best form possible government? What is morality and is it necessary? What significance differences among humans? To what extent does private property, freedom of religion and universal education make citizens free? The questions are as endless

as the possible answers. If we spent a dozen more credit hours on these questions in our present Western Humanities courses, we probably would not be wasting a moment. But would we have asked every necessary question to really probe the Humanities?

What are we supposed to study in Humanities I and II? When the courses were introduced over thirty years ago, they were described – and still are in our course bulletin – as a "search for moral and political alternatives and meaning embodied in the institutions, culture, and literature of Western Civilization." But thirty years later, in a more interdependent world, do these parameters of our present course require updating? Many of the faculty and students we interviewed agreed that the incorporation of that negatively defined "Non-West" is an important topic to brainstorm. We will also discuss some of the possible "alternatives" to the current course.

But before we can re-strategize, we need to examine and define the assumptions that have gone into the design of our present course. Most notably, what is the "West?" Is it a geographical, cultural or economic construct? Does the present move toward globalization matter in how we define Western Humanities? Dr. William Cook explained that every student in Geneseo should be acquainted with the Western tradition because this construct is being inherited worldwide. He stated: "Whether you were born in China or whether you were born here, the bottom line is that every Geneseo graduate is going to live in the Western world, and the very few that don't are going to interact with the Western world, and it's important to know what the basic traditions and intellectual ideas are." He also explained how the Western tradition already includes so many systems of thought, and thus, learning the Western tradition is not simply about learning what it is, but how it came about. Taking this into account, is the purpose of Humanities, then, to study culture?

According to Dr. William Edgar, we should be wary of twisting the Humanities from their primary purpose of studying "human beings." Studying "cultures" can quickly transform into some version of social science whereas the Humanities core works principally to cover literature, history and philosophy. Dr. Joseph Cope and Dr. Tze-Ki Hon both told us that they teach the Humanities as a civics or ethics course. Dr. Cope explained, "I try to make a concerted effort to relate the texts that we read to

ongoing contemporary problems, questions, debates..." Dr. Carlo Filice called Humanities a course on the "foundational works." He explained, "For me it's a way of talking about the history of ideas...the crazy ones and the great ones." For Dr. Maria Lima, the present American civilization is elucidated through the study of foundational works, the inconsistencies in "thought," as well as controversial issues embedded in them. Based on these responses, the purpose of the Humanities is, in many ways, to continue the debate about what a good, educated citizen should know. So then why choose to focus only on Western thought?

Many problems arise when we try to define Non-Western traditions by what they are not. The issue strikes a similar chord with Dr. Beth McCoy's now famous first response paper question, "What is non-African American literature?" What does it mean to be defined by a tradition that holds the power to define something as separate from it? Is this necessary for academic purposes, or should we work on re-conceptualizing the West/Non-West dichotomy in light of more recent scholarship on global and revisionist history, and meanings of "exploration?"

Faculty members have proposed a number of reasons why Non-Western traditions should be studied apart from the rest of the world. Some mentioned the dearth of necessary faculty with expertise in Non-Western cultures and languages, others noted the need for professors to rethink and restructure their purpose in teaching "moral and political alternatives." Still others have mentioned the obvious language barriers. Many of us read the Romance languages to understand original texts, but few read Native American, Asian and African texts in their original form. According to Dr. Ron Herzman, this would limit our faculty's ability in choosing the "Great Books" outside of the Western world. Another common response is, of course: "Another core course!? I'm overloaded to finish my program as it is!"

There seems to be some consideration among the faculty about expanding the Humanities to make them more inclusive. Dr. Ron Herzman mentioned that our Provost-to-be, Kate Conway-Turner, suggested that "maybe it's time to de-Westernize Humanities." In addition, Dr. Edgar has stated that the faculty has been considering whether or not to include the Koran in the curriculum for years. However, Dr. Cope described the hurry to get through every important text in the Humanities as a "death march." To add some texts, he said, "we would have to excise other[s]." Dr. Cook also saw the dilemma, "What one-third to one-half of the curricula do we want to cut out to incorporate others in?"

While most people agree that Non-Western texts should be included, they also agree that present Humanities courses already require heavy reading, numerous assignments, expansive tests. But and whatever the logistical admittedly problems, and there aren't are many,



Continued on Page 4

we deceiving ourselves in thinking that Western culture and ideas emerged apart from the rest of the world? Aren't we cheating ourselves by learning it this way just because it is more convenient?

On her way back from Sundance Books at the beginning of the fall semester, Xue was nervous about having to read all 10 Western Humanities books in only four months. She soon found out that the texts weren't to be studied in their entirety. Aside from feeling cheated of the money she spent buying those books, she was disturbed by the idea of superficially skimming over 10 great texts that many have spent a lifetime studying. She wondered how anyone could do justice to 10 of the world's greatest texts in just 16 weeks? It seemed impossible, yet she still came out of Western Humanities I in love with Plato and Machiavelli. But the shock came during Winter break while speaking to a friend who was taking an Asian-American history class. As her friend rambled on and on about the Asian-American legacy, Xue's head drooped as she began to realize that she knew nothing about the people who came before her. How did she come to the point where, after 14 years of American education she couldn't contribute anything to a discussion of even Asian-American history?

From the first time she heard of the Humanities courses, Janine knew that they would be a chance to see the progression of Western literary, philosophical and cultural traditions — finally. When she took Humanities I in Rome, she carried her texts all over the city and was thoroughly delighted to read St. Augustine's Confessions sitting in the upstairs ledge of the Coliseum. Yet, for as much as she learned about ancient Greece and Rome, she thinks that at least ancient China and India should be included in the "traditions" of the ancient and medieval world. Humanities Il was one of her favorite courses, but thinking more critically about Locke, Swift, Rousseau and Marx has made her certain that these texts are only the eloquent tip of a much larger iceberg. They discuss exploration, establishment of governments, and the will of "the people," but what about the Native people? Why are their voices continually silenced? According to Janine, the Humanities II course should put slavery, colonization and exploration in the context of pre and post-contact native cultures, economic history and the literature/culture of imperialism. Furthermore, texts of the Cold War need to be creatively and carefully selected for close readings that stretch outside the West. But would this settle the West/Non-West dichotomy? Or, would this simply put our present construction of the "Non-West" into Western context? What should we be striving toward?

Now What?

As modern communications information and technologies connect our world in new ways, an understanding of global cultures is pertinent. Europe's once fragmented landscape has joined into a Union. A 1-800 call to Compag representatives connects you to India. A McDonald's is readily available in almost any country. Immigration has become the basis of the United States labor force. Not only are political and economic borders disappearing, social trends aren't even restricted by nationality anymore. In this context, it is foolish to ignore the Non-Western Humanities in Genesco's core curriculum. To gain a competitive edge and, more importantly, to become valued global citizens, Geneseo students should be as well educated in the Non-Western Humanities as they ideally should be in the Western Humanities.

One of the college's goals is to attract diverse administrative, faculty, and student bodies. Every year, more

and more students of "Non-Western" heritage enroll in Geneseo. Whereas in the past, the Western Humanities courses did address most of the needs of students with Western backgrounds, doesn't an increasingly diverse student body demand a Non-Western Humanities course? The Humanities can be framed however we like: Dr. Edgar teaches the Humanities as courses on "human beings," Dr. Cope and Dr. Hon teach it as courses on citizenship and ethics. Dr. Filice teaches them as the study of ideas, and Dr. Lima teaches them as lessons on thought and debate. These aren't the only frameworks for teaching the Humanities. The Humanities is about intellectual progress through history. The interchange of diverse ideas yields intellectual progress - not the spreading of similar ways of thinking. If what we call the Non-Western world will eventually come into contact with the West, and what we call the Western world with the Non-West (with study-abroad programs, company outsourcing and international tourism), why continue to hold this dichotomy? We have brainstormed methods of integrating

what Dr. Lima has called the "ghettoized" Non-West into the present core curriculum. Here are some alternatives we have considered and some commentary on these options. Non-Western **Traditions** Replace the core requirement with a Non-Western Humanities course. This would allow students to see the progression of the Humanities from the perspective of native cultures throughout the world. But, do we continue to reassert the West's hegemony in world history by lumping all "native-ness" into one single course? Furthermore, requiring one course in the Non-Western Humanities but two in the Western Humanities would emphasize a hierarchy. 2) Since traditional notions of national economies and governments are breaking down and global corporations and political unions are on the rise, add a course devoted to contemporary issues and global awareness. A contemporary issues/global awareness course would expose students to world current events as well as the cultures and institutions such events occur in. But it would not fulfill the need for a balance between the Western Humanities courses and their Non-Western counterparts. Many Non-Western cultures are heavily influenced by the West. To study the Non-Western world from a contemporary angle would do injustice to their pre-colonial cultures. 3) Add another requirement focused on the Non-Western world but make it a choice between a few alternatives. For example, allow a choice between taking courses in the Eastern Humanities, South Asia and Middle Eastern Humanities, and the Humanities of Native Cultures in the Americas. A choice between specific required courses would give the student more flexibility and increase students' total knowledge of the Non-Western world. The hierarchy would still be intact and choosing one course over another would leave students without knowledge of the other alternatives. The beauty of the current Western Humanities courses is that they leave all students of Geneseo with a common education. The same effect should result with a course on the Non-Western world. Restructure the entire Humanities curriculum. Install three required Humanities courses arranged chronologically, to incorporate the Global Humanities

where texts across the world are studied in equal depth.

This avoids issues of hierarchy and enhancing divisions.

Resistance will be strong, but who is to say it shouldn't Continued on Page 6

Integration in Action

by Joe Marhamati

There is a small but significant revolution occurring in Geneseo. Certain members of the student body are becoming increasingly dissatisfied with the level of segregation among their peers. They are also finding that opportunities to interact with a diverse group of students are limited. Too often, students are not exposed to the various types of diversity that the College finds important. Their solution to this problem is profoundly simple: create clubs that reinforce integration rather than segregation.

The vast majority of clubs at Geneseo are integral to helping students of specific backgrounds, majors, and lifestyles find similar others. However, they also have the unfortunate effect of segregating the student body. One of the

most exciting aspects of entering college is the exposure to new ideas, beliefs, backgrounds, styles, personalities, and cultures. With this in mind, we should not settle for anything short of exposure to a maximally diverse group of students. If we each resolve to join one new club that is based on something which cuts across all groups, we will find ourselves much more open to new ideas and integrated with our fellow peers. Ultimately, everyone at Geneseo should find him or herself in situations that make it harder and harder to ignore those who are different. To do this we need to create clubs that are based around things that any college student will find interesting. I don't doubt that most Geneseo students appreciate the clubs and organizations that have helped them adjust by introducing them to students with whom they can sympathize (i.e. ethnic clubs, major-related clubs, groups of various creeds). But what is perhaps most important to many students is, I believe, the implementation of more groups that center around activities that we can all share. This will ultimately be the most effective means of integrating our college community.

The first club to offer this type of general interest is Movie Club. Groups of students who are dissatisfied with the movies playing at the Geneseo theatre have already begun taking themselves and their friends to Rochester in search of slightly more enlightening films. Movie Club could provide discounted memberships to the Little Theater and a charter bus to drop students off at East Avenue on Sundays, when films are free for students. If the Livingston County charter system, which drives to Rochester on weekends anyway, was used to organize these trips, then any student could go. In the process of taking the trip, they would be in a position to meet all kinds of different students.

Another recently organized club is the Bike Club. Mike Morrissey has refused to accept that Geneseo students cannot cut across the fundamental aspects of their identity (again, with respect to political, ethnic, or social borders) to share simple interests that encompasses everyone. He sent out a Whats-Up digest message last March, and the immediate response astounded him. There was,



and currently is, a large constituency of students who want to go biking around Geneseo and meet all types of different peers. Bike Club also serves as a model for the types of groups that will help further integrate the college.

A third club recently instituted is European Club. Mariya Petrova also recognized that Geneseo lacks the means necessary for students to experience the full range of diversity offered by the school. She is now the founder and president of a club that will offer students insight into the history and majesty of the continent, as well as potential trips to Europe available to all students. She says that she wants to increase communication between the continents. The club is not a specialized, or creed-

related club, but was founded solely with the intent of giving all students the chance to learn more about the continent of Europe. Her initiative serves as a prime example for how students can facilitate integration among their own peers.

In terms of other ideas for clubs, a campus-wide book club could provide students with a chance to greatly expand their intellectual horizons by meeting people of different backgrounds and discussing material they find interesting. A well-organized tennis club could potentially offer students the chance to play year-round with indoor memberships, and coordinated play when the weather is nice. Similar sporting clubs could be offered to allow students to play the sports they love throughout the year. A basic activities club could provide reduced-fee, weekly campus- wide opportunities for students to go see a Bills game, take advantage of the new ferry to Canada, or take nature walks in Letchworth State Park. A music club could take students to shows in Rochester, Buffalo and Syracuse in charter buses.

In addition, more money should be given to media organizations with the intent of creating more diverse programming. With more funding, the campus radio station could give students the chance to buy whatever music they want to be played on the air. Imagine how interesting and diverse a radio station could be with the funding to purchase whatever music students want! Instead of being a mostly Indie-music station, the radio could expose us to the wide range of existing music genres of which we have never heard, but of which many students have great knowledge. The campus television station could make more substantive programming capable of reaching a wider audience and attracting a more diverse body of students if they were better funded and supervised. The same goes for the Lamron. It could benefit from better funding by allowing a greater and more diverse body of student writers the chance to increase the length of their newspaper, perhaps with an op-ed page. Properly spent, more funding to media organizations could help curb the current trend of homogenous information and entertainment. These are just a few ideas on

Bridging The Gap

 \mathbf{M} ike Porter is your typical male student at Geneseo. As a sophomore, Porter, who is blond and Caucasian, makes up the majority here on campus. However, on Tuesday evenings, he becomes the minority. This happens when Porter attends meetings as a member of Korean-American Student Association (KASA).

His experience with the cultural group began when he was enrolled in "Introduction to Sociology" during the fall semester. Taught by Elaine Cleeton, the course was a requirement for Porter's Sociology major. As a part of the curriculum, Cleeton requires her students to attend three cultural club meetings of a student organization on campus with racial and ethnic backgrounds unlike their own. They are then required to report back on their experiences being the "outsider."

Porter reflects back to his first KASA meeting: "Honestly, when I first walked into the room I did feel slightly out of place. Not unwelcome, but conspicuously different. It was a great experience in that I now have an idea of what minorities feel like in American society."

According to his professor, Porter is far from being in the minority here on campus. Cleeton states that 92 percent of Geneseo students are Caucasian. Because of this, her class has had an impact on the lives of many of her students. "Many

white students write that they would never have visited one of the clubs had I not assigned the project. They find their beliefs about identity and discrimination challenged and expanded. Many join the clubs, becoming engaged in social justice activism."

Christine Park, a fellow member of KASA, is a sophomore with Korean heritage. She says: "I think that would be great if more non-Asian people came out to KASA. There's not that many right now. I think it would be great if all the cultural groups can just come together and learn about each other's culture. And that will break down a lot of the cultural walls people have."

Students who never take Professor Cleeton's class may be missing out on a significant experience. Cleeton "When white students attending Geneseo become acquainted with members of ethnic and racial groups outside their experience, they begin to see the world differently."

"I never realized the advantages and necessities of having experiences with people who were different from me," Porter says. "Being able to talk to [Asian students] I realize, of course they're just like everyone else. And people in general are the same regardless of race and ethnicity."

Continued from page 5

how to permeate the boundaries of a segregated college and allow all students the chance to acclimate themselves with their peers.

By adopting new and interesting clubs that are potentially appealing to all students, integration will follow. The college has made a first big step by implementing the Knight Spot, where everyone can go to dance, have a good time, and expect to meet a wide variety of peers. But there is much more work to be done. I believe that the problem of segregation is less an unwillingness of students to cross boundaries, and more a function of an inadequate number of clubs that, by their very nature, welcome everyone. While ethnic, sexual, political, and religious groups are important to help students adjust and find others with whom they can relate, they ultimately are a means to segregating our college community. My intent is not to condemn these clubs, but rather encourage everyone to either join a club that promotes integrating students by basing itself on something universal, or consider potential clubs that they themselves could start. The possibilities for all kinds of clubs are endless, as is Geneseo's potential for becoming a more integrated community.

Responses to this editorial may be sent to mint@geneseo.edu

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be fought? The Western Humanities courses themselves met much resistance when they were first introduced. Now they are glorified as the courses that make Geneseo a unique institution. It is better to integrate the Non-Western world into the core curriculum through painstaking means and strong resistance than to beat around the issue superficially.

Issues of practicality and do-ability still exist. There just aren't enough faculty members presently with the necessary insight and expertise in Non-Western traditions for such a restructuring to take place right away. But people don't skip meals because the utensils and food aren't laid out in front of them. Rational people either buy or prepare food and find the utensils to eat it with. Although a banal comparison, this shows the necessity for motivation and hard work to achieve satisfaction and strength. Geneseo's core curriculum, although healthy, is still not strong enough to face the larger world. Geneseo took the baby step of trying to obtain a diverse student, faculty, and administrative body-why not go the extra mile towards a fully integrated core curriculum? Recognizing that public colleges do not have as much liberty as private colleges do with resources, Geneseo still must re-hire, re-train, and re-structure.

Geneseo is not just responsible for preparing its students to enter the so-called "real world" that is the United States work force. Today, Geneseo is responsible for the successes of its graduates in the real real world—the global work force. Although this may seem most applicable towards business majors, even "domestic," non-profit organizations and the most patriotic citizens will eventually be faced with more global concerns: your "domestic," non-profit organization may seek international sponsors, a "Non-Western" neighbor may move in, your children or grandchildren may be involved in inter-racial relationships, or another war may break out in your lifetime. In a world where the welfare of one nation depends on the welfares of other nations, retaining an archaic, nationalistic outlook is imprudent and outright ridiculous.

Responses to this editorial may be sent to mint@geneseo.edu

The Struggle For Asylum: Women Refugees Await Alvarado Case Decision

by Arlene Brennan

The United States has always presented itself as a champion of equality and defender of human rights in the world. However, the government's reluctance to allow Rodi Alvarado, a battered wife from Guatemala, to seek asylum in the U.S. after being refused legal protection from the Guatemalan government against her husband, questions the U.S.'s claim to being the protector of women's rights.

A decision is currently pending from United States Attorney General John Ashcroft on whether Rodi Alvarado, a Guatemalan battered wife, should be allowed to seek permanent refuge in the United States or be sent back home. This decision will have enormous implications for those seeking asylum in the US from gender-related abuse.

Alvarado was married in 1984, at the age of 16, to Francisco Osorio, a former soldier. Shortly after the wedding, Osorio began a series of violent assaults on his wife. The beatings persisted over the next ten years. Rodi's husband raped and sodomized her, and broke windows and mirrors with her head. He dislocated her jaw and attempted to kill her unborn child by kicking her in the spine. He would also commonly resort to using weapons such as pistols or machetes to further threaten her.

Rodi made numerous attempts to seek protection from Guatemalan police and courts. They refused to intervene in the matter, calling it a "domestic" issue. She made attempts to run away, but Osorio would always find her and then beat her unconscious.

Desperate to save her own life and having exhausted all alternatives in Guatemala, Rodi Alvarado fled to the United States. In California she sought help from the San Francisco Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights. Their legal efforts were successful, and in September 1996, a San Francisco immigration judge granted her political asylum. Unfortunately, the grant of asylum was appealed by the Immigration and Naturalization Service to a higher court and was reversed by the Board of Immigration Appeals. The repeal went forward, although the court believed Rodi's testimony that Osorio had sworn to kill her if she returned to Guatemala and acknowledged that the Guatemalan government would not protect her from her husband.

Anti-immigrant groups argue that if the US accepts refugees that are endangered by private citizens, it will be

flooded with asylum claims. However, when the American government began to grant asylum to women fleeing female genital mutilation, there was no increase in the number of refugees. In addition, immigration officials have stated that they expect no increase if the Alvarado asylum case is approved.

Last month, the Department of Homeland Security submitted a legal brief advising Ashcroft to uphold asylum for Alvarado. The department is currently constructing new regulations on gender-based asylum, and many human rights groups are worried that in the post- 9/11 atmosphere of anti-immigration the regulations would be more restrictive.

The United Nations has recently offered guidelines on gender persecution. Many states have already recognized government-tolerated, gender-related violence as a basis for asylum, including Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand. If Ashcroft recommends that Rodi Alvarado's asylum case be denied, it could limit women fleeing honor killing, sexual slavery, domestic violence, and other human rights violations. The regulations could also limit claims of persecution committed by non-state actors (such as a husband, in Alvarado's case).

The acceptance of Alvarado's asylum case would send a powerful message to the world: that the US treats crimes against women with utmost seriousness, and protects women seeking help. Adenial of this case would potentially set a more dangerous example.

March is nationally recognized as Women's History Month. It is crucial that we remind our leaders of their responsibilities to protect the rights of women. Countries around the world should be encouraged by our example to accept women's rights issues as human rights issues. While Homeland Security has unfortunately become necessary, it must remain within the confines of reason, and not impede the principles of freedom that are the essence of our national spirit.

You can play your part by joining Amnesty International's campaign to urge the U.S. government to grant asylum to Rodi Alvarado and other women applying for gender-related asylum.

Log on to www.amnestyusa.org/women, then click on "take action." You can sign petitions and letters to help various human rights causes.

Amnesy International meetings in Geneseo are held Thursday nights at 7:30 p.m.in College Union 329. Alvarado's case and many others of importance are addressed at weekly meetings.

Sevgik, Kimberly "Why is the US Turning Away Victims of Domestic Violence?" Marie Claire. Oct. 2003.

http://www.uchastings.edu/cgrs/campaigns/update.htm

http://www.amnestyusa.org/actioncenter/actions/action10591.pdf

Asylum for Abused Women, The New York Times, March 19, 2003

Outside The U.S.: Electoral Systems Around The World

by Emily Telfer

It is easy for Americans to perceive our electoral system as being the ideal system, as other systems are rarely examined. As it turns out, the plurality system of the U.S. is less common than the full representation systems. Out of the 211 states and territories that have direct legislative elections, only 68 use plurality, while 75 use full representation. And when one looks at states that are considered to be most democratic, a much higher percentage uses full representation. The widely accepted Freedom House study shows that out of 45 countries with a population of at least two million, and a high average freedom score, only the United States, Mongolia, Canada, and the United Kingdom use the plurality model. So what do other countries use, if not our system?

FRANCE: (MPS) The Two Round System

Voting takes place in two rounds, the first round being the same as the U.S. elections process where the winner must have the majority vote. If no candidate receives the majority vote, it goes to a second round of voting to determine the winner. This system has the added disadvantage of having increased costs for the second round of elections.

MEXICO: (PRS) Mixed-Member Proportional

Half of the members of legislature are elected by the FPTP style, with one candidate as a representative for the district. The other half is elected by the previous style of Party List Proportional Representation, where the party achieves its proportional number of seats.

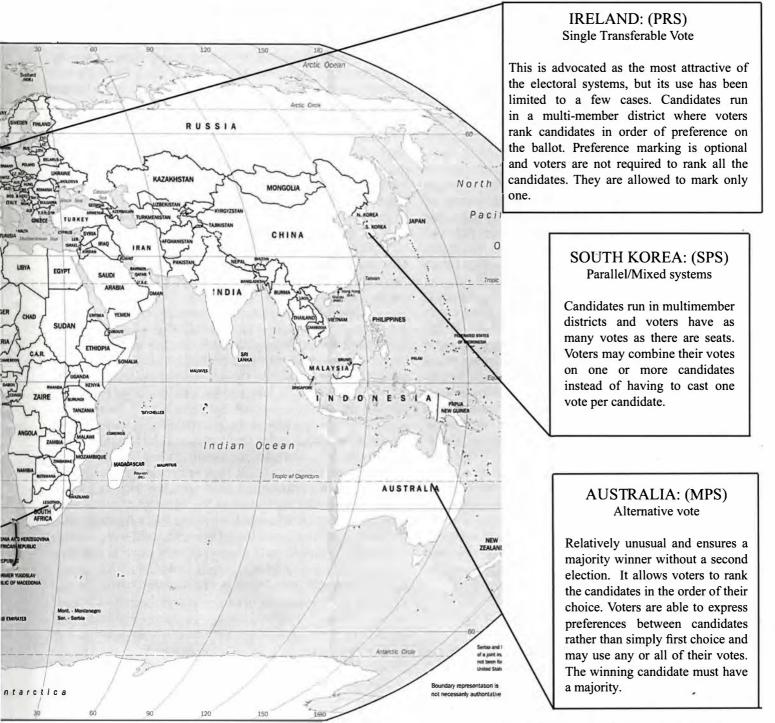
SOUTH AFRICA: (PRS) Party List Proportional Representation.

This is the most common style in PRS. Each party presents a list of candidates to the electorate voters voting for a party. Winning candidates are taken from the lists in the order of their position on the lists. There are two types of list systems: closed system-voter casts a vote for the party as a whole; open system-voters express a preference for specific candidates.



Due to the complexities of the world's many electoral systems, their descriptions are often simplified. This article, even more so. There are hundreds of electoral systems currently being used, with even more versions of these forms, but they have been simplified to three broad categories, and within these three categories are numerous subcategories.

- 1. The majority-plurality system (MPS) requires the winning candidate to have a majority or plurality vote, ensuring the representation of the plurality of the voters. This system, however, denies fair representation to third parties and minority groups, produces manufactured majorities, encourages gerrymandering, discourages voter turnout, and creates a high level of wasted votes.
- 2. The semi-proportional system (SPS) is usually considered inferior and used little worldwide. As its name implies, this system falls between the proportional and majority systems.
- 3. The proportional representation system is considered the main alternative to plurality systems and is predominant among advanced western democracies. Elections are held in multi-member districts where the number of seats a party wins is proportional to the amount of its support among voters.



Minority Party Politics

by Justin Murphy

Although this year's presidential election is still six months away, analysts are already predicting, with some certainty, that the contest will be determined largely by the turnout and performance of minor party voters — a projected 8 to 10 percent of the electorate. In other words, either George Bush or John Kerry will win the presidency thanks largely to voters who cast ballots for a third candidate whose position more closely resembles that of the opposing major party. The most recent and most famous incident of this phenomenon, of course, came in the 2000 election, when Al Gore lost a significant amount of support to fellow left-winger, Ralph Nader.

Nader, Pat Buchanan, Ross Perot — these are the leading actors in the uniquely American tragicomedy that is minor party politics. Without the ability to gain tangible political power, they cannot help but fail in recruiting funds, votes, or experienced politicians. Meanwhile, unsuspecting voters are bullied into a choice between two parties that, in fear of alienating supporters, are currently racing towards an unhappy centrist medium. In a nation of such diversity, true democracy cannot thrive when citizens lack the opportunity to cast a meaningful vote for a number of different candidates.

The U. S. currently employs an electoral system known as pluralism - the basic winner-takes-all format. If, for instance, candidate A were to win 400,000 votes while candidates B and C win 300,000 each, candidate A would be elected. The consequences of this system for a minor party are numerous; the most obvious is that, as in the given example, a politician can be elected against the will of the majority of the electorate, something that has indeed happened a number of times in American history. Votes cast for anyone but the pluralist winner have no value, no matter how many of them there may be. Parties suspected of being weaker are shunned by voters who, understandably, do not wish to waste their ballot. The same thought process applies to sponsors who do not wish to waste their money, politicians who do not wish to waste their time, and the media, which does not wish to waste its resources either. Essentially, pluralism poses a series of insurmountable obstacles for minor parties that could otherwise have a significant voter base.

The alternative to pluralism is proportional representation. Under this system, single member districts are consolidated into multi-member delegations. The number of party candidates elected from this larger district is proportional to the number of votes that

the party receives. Granted, there are also a few problems with proportional representation. First, it works only in corporate bodies, such as the House of Representatives. Second, it puts the focus more squarely on the platform, stripping minor parties of what, thus far, has been their greatest asset—the allure of a charismatic, recognizable leader. As a result, voters are forced to support an entire party rather than just a single politician, and may have to accept the simultaneous election of someone they did not support.

Despite these drawbacks, proportional representation is vastly superior to the system currently in place. It would place a step between the grassroots level, at which minor parties are often wildly popular, and the presidential election, in which they currently have no chance. They would be able to run meaningful campaigns and voters and sponsors would be more willing to support them. Major parties, meanwhile, would need to become more concise in their policy to differentiate themselves from other parties. This would stop the current trend towards spineless moderation for Democrats and Republicans. They would also be more likely to incorporate important components of minor parties' platforms, such as environmental issues, into their own. Real national concerns could replace personal attacks on the campaign trail. Most importantly, it would create a new world of possibilities for American voters, who would be free to choose from a theoretically infinite number of parties without fear of wasting their votes.

Many Americans, though dissatisfied with the quirks of our electoral system, are not aware that another option exists. The fact is that the United States, the birthplace of democracy, is one of a few countries in the world holding pluralist elections. The reasons are clear—there are simply too many possible positions on too many issues for voters to have to choose between only two stances. In a proportional system, a fiscally conservative environmentalist or a pacifist feminist could both expect to cast a vote with confidence, rather than having to hold their nose while deciding between the lesser of two evils. Indeed, the infusion of fresh ideas and faces into the political arena would probably lead to a badly needed increase in voter turnout. It is upon the United States, a nation that holds itself as the vanguard of democracy, to give its citizens a meaningful ballot, one which covers the full spectrum of political sentiments. Only with multi-party politics will voters be able to truly claim their own personal liberties.

Responses may be sent to mint@geneseo.edu

France's Ban On Muslim Headscarves: Preserving Secularism Or The French Identity?

by Janhvi Patel

Imagine that the girl in the picture is sitting behind you in class during a midterm exam, when all of a sudden the teacher asks her to leave the classroom. She tells the girl that her hijab, or headscarf, is interfering with everyone's test-taking ability, especially her own. The teacher then proceeds to walk down the aisle until she sees a cross tucked in your shirt and asks you to leave for the same reason. After the outrage at someone infringing on your rights to freedom of religion and expression pass, you might ponder the logic of how her headscarf and your cross affect learning in the classroom. This same question is currently being heavily debated in many European countries.

Unfortunately, on February 10, the French parliament passed a law, by an overwhelming majority of 494 to 36, that banned the wearing of religious symbols in state schools. Though this law prohibits the wearing of all religious symbols, including the Jewish kippa, the Christian cross, and the Sikh turban, it disproportionately affects Muslim girls who wear hijabs. Unlike the wearing of the cross or the kippa, Muslim girls often have a religious or family obligation to wear headscarves. In addition, while there are only five thousand Sikhs in France, France is populated by nearly six million Muslims. The supposed purpose of the law is to provide an equal opportunity for education by creating a neutral learning environment. The headscarf is seen as something that may impinge on learning experiences by hindering the integration of students, especially Muslim females.

There are many reasons Muslims wear the hijab, some of which include modesty and cultural assertion. It is, however, commonly viewed as an oppressive symbol forced on women by a patriarchal Islamic society. While this may be true in some cases, can the French government really be so blind to the hypocrisy of *forcing* women to not wear them? Since schools are public institutions, the French government believes it has the right to interfere. However, by banning the headscarf, many of these Muslim women will not be allowed to attend school and benefit from a western-style education.

If the ban seems to accomplish the opposite of its intended purpose, then there must be other motives. What's the fuss over a headscarf anyway? The fact is that secularism is heavily embedded into the French national identity. Since the revolution of 1789, which ended the domination of the Roman Catholic Church over the state, an anti-clerical atmosphere emerged. In accordance with the old saying, "When in Rome, do as they do," many people believe that the French have every right to insist that people living in France should conform to French core values. After all, there are a number of Islamic countries, such as Iran, that require women to wear headscarves in public. This would be a sound argument, except France claims to be a secular republic. The French has shown its similarity to these countries by a poll that suggested 70 percent of the population agrees that immigrants should completely assimilate into French culture. In the last couple of sentences, I was trying to falsify a common argument people have, which is that if countries such as Iran insist on women wearing hijabs, regardless of their orientation, then why is it wrong for France to do the same? The flaw in this argument is that these countries have a national religion and don't claim to be a secular state, but France does.

The upcoming elections for an unpopular right-winged government accounts for why action has now been taken. Little needs to be explained about how this legislative action will divert attention and possibly gain votes from that 70 percent of the population. The ban is clearly a political move. Currently there are 6 million Muslims in France, 1.8 million of which are French schoolgirls. According to a 2002 government statistic, only 2,000 of those girls wore headscarves. This is hardly comparable to the problems of rising unemployment, government attacks on services' and workers' rights, and slow economic recovery. The government is obviously trying to assuage French apprehension over "perversion" of their "French identity."²

The goal of this law is not to integrate society, but to assimilate its' immigrants through the elimination of diversity in hopes to retain the "French identity." With the borders between European countries getting thinner and the growth of Islamophobia, many French are scared of the influx of immigrants. The law specifically targets Muslim immigrants, whose assimilation is the hardest because there is a visible symbol, the headscarf, of their diversity, combined with the fact that there is a general fear, perhaps unjustified, of them. The use of secularism by the French government is merely a cover to keep outsiders out. With changing times, French identity needs to be redefined for France is constantly evolving, regardless of efforts made otherwise.

¹ "Question and Answer," BBC on the Web 17 December 2003 < http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/3328277.stm>. ² Taheri, Amir. "Viewpoints: Europe and the headscarf," BBC on the Web February 10 2204. http://bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/world/europe/3459963.stm

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http://www.schnews.org.uk/sotw/images_sotw/fareena-alam.jpg

LEISURE

Robert Reich's "The Work of Nations"

by Xue Yun Li

American schools started to resemble industrial systems of mass production. Children were, in a sense, put on a conveyer belt to be fed information in classroms, and then to take standardized tests to prove their competency. Those who performed well went on to become executives of corporate bureaucracies; those who performed poorly worked in corporation factories.

A somber note to all disillusioned college seniors: the "real world" is probably worse than you think, more complex than you've ever imagined it to be. In his book, The Work of Nations, published over a decade ago in 1991, Robert B. Reich predicted the growth of a global economy – a phenomenon that is being realized today.

Reich thoroughly explains the emergence of the American Corporation and America's resulting dependence on it. However,

as communication and transportation technologies developed and immigration became a powerful source for the American work force, a global web began to form. With intense international competition, "high value" took precedence over "high volume" production. As a result, one must have superior intellectual and creative abilities today to be a competitive employee prospect. Americans are now no longer competing, as a unit, with other countries; each American is now in his own boat. To conclude, Reich addresses the still-relevant problem of increasing gaps in incomes between the rich and the poor, a side effect of the globalized economic world.

When the Industrial Revolution and capitalism joined forces in America in the early 19th century, there came a relatively new notion that a great economy brings great power. Before, a nation's wealth was synonymous to the wealth of the monarch, not to that of the citizen. Corporations provided jobs for unskilled workers and supposedly made improvements in the everyday citizen's standard of living through corporate research and development. Reich noted: "The well-being of citizens was linked to the success of the national economy, which depended in turn on the success of its giant corporations" (34). Support for national corporations, thus, became a public responsibility; mass production demanded mass consumption. Reich notes that by the 1950s, "Americans took it as their patriotic duty to consume" (45). Even American schools started to resemble industrial systems of mass production. Children were, in a sense, put on a conveyer belt to be fed information in classrooms, and then to take standardized tests to prove their competency. Those who performed well went on to become executives of corporate bureaucracies; those who performed poorly worked in corporation factories.

Eventually, other countries developed industries as efficient as – or even more efficient than – those of the core American corporation. Because foreign imports were cheaper and threatened the stability of American corporations, protectionist policies came into effect. However, the more protectionist America became, the worse off it was in the global economy. Industries that relied on the cheap prices of imported goods suffered from profits squeezes. There was a tendency for imports to be sneak across borders. Finally, since protectionism



causes consumers to pay extra for domestic goods that can be purchased cheaper from foreigners, standards of living are not enhanced. Realizing that warding off foreign competition was impossible, American corporations joined them. National corporations lost their boundaries.

Corporations became "global" through their use of resources from various parts of the world. A simple pen can now have

parts produced in five different countries. The ink may be from India, the plastic casing manufactured in China, the design made in Japan, the springs in Korea, its advertising centralized in Germany and the financing done in America. As the global economy evolves, competition gets tough. Increasingly, corporations are beginning to emphasize value over volume. High value adds to corporate profits since value cannot easily be copied. Thus, valued employees are no longer your unskilled average Joes; they are creative problem-solvers and designers, whom Reich calls "Symbolic Analysts."

With the changing nature of business follows a changing view of what makes an employee valuable. Reich classifies employees as either: 1) Routine Producers who perform repetitive tasks that require little or no intellectual thought or creative insight, 2) In-person Servers who also perform simple and repetitive tasks but provide services that must be done person-to-person, or 3) Symbolic Analysts who are problem-solvers, problem-identifiers, and strategic-brokers. As manufacturers start to disappear and organizational hierarchies flatten, Routine Producers disappear. While In-person Servers may still be in demand for certain tasks that require face-to-face interaction, their services are slowly being replaced with automation.

On the other hand, demand for Symbolic Analysts is rising steadily. Symbolic Analysts think and solve problems through "the manipulation of symbols—data, words, oral and visual representations" (178). Symbolic Analysts are designers, engineers, directors, planners...who "simplify reality into abstract images that can be rearranged...and...transformed back into reality" (178). The competition between Symbolic Analysts is global, although Reich argues that the United States will continue to produce the most and the best symbolic analysts because its educational system is geared towards developing the necessary skills of Symbolic Analysts: abstraction, system thinking, experimentation, and collaboration.

Using his account of economic history, Reich explains why the rich are getting richer and the poor poorer. The

Continued on Page 13

Augusten Burroughs' Running With Scissors

by Marta Vandenberg

Augusten Burroughs shares his quirky and chaotic upbringing in his latest novel, Running with Scissors. The book offers a humorous perspective on what otherwise could be considered a traumatic adolescence.

The book begins as the Burroughs family disintegrates and

the parents divorce. His mom, as Augusten describes, begins to go crazy; "Not crazy in a lets paint the kitchen bright red! sort of way. But crazy in a gas oven, toothpaste sandwich, I am God sort of way." But who could blame her? Her son boils his change and fantasizes about spending three hours polishing thrown out glass coffee tables with Windex. He refuses to go to school unless his hair resembles a perfect sheet of glossy blond (picture the Ken doll's hair) and his greatest dream is to rule over his own beauty product empire. After the divorce, she sends Augusten to live with her psychiatrist, Dr. Finch, who appears to be even crazier than she is. In between seeing patients, Dr. Finch sneaks off to a special room in his office that he proudly calls the Mastorbatorium, takes of and care his needs.

The Finch household is filled with extended family and even patients. The family includes two daughters,

one who resides with a family of hippies, and a six-year-old grandson named Poo Bear, who still runs around naked and shits wherever he pleases -- all to the delight of the rest of the Finches. They also participate in something called Bible dipping, a way to read the future by examining Dr. Finch's turds.

Over time, Augusten relaxes his judgments of the family. He drops out of school, takes various prescription pills, and adopts an existence more in keeping with the family's lifestyle. Eventually, at 13, he reveals his homosexuality (an obvious fact from the start) and meets Neil Bookman, the thirty-something-year-old adopted son who lives in a shack behind the house. Augusten

is delighted to meet another gay man but becomes confused after Bookman forces him to have oral sex. Augusten gets over his initial fears and the two become lovers in a twisted, statutory rape kind of romance, where they alternate between manipulating each other and being extremely dependent on each other.

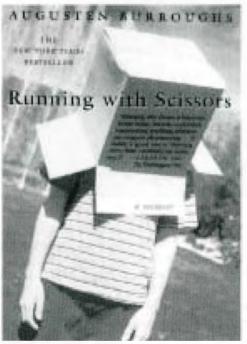
Augusten finds a comrade in Natalie,

Dr. Finch's daughter. She dreams of

Augusten finds a comrade in Natalie, Dr. Finch's daughter. She dreams of working at McDonald's and gravitates towards abusive relationships. Eventually, he and Natalie decide to abandon all the insanity and move out together. After a series of small successes and giant failures, Augusten decides that he cannot live in his crazy mother's shadow or follow the eccentric Finchs' footsteps. He ultimately decides to go to New York City, the one place where he could be himself and finally fit in.

The book is both humorous and disturbing. At times, it's hard to believe that these events actually took place, and even more unbelievable that Burroughs survived them without ending up in a mental institution. Some parts, especially the very well-detailed and graphic love scenes between the young Augusten and much older Bookman, are guaranteed to make you gag, or at least squirm,

unless you're a member of NAMBLA (North American Man Boy Love Association -- a pedophile organization composed of older heterosexual males who believe that it is their right to have sex with young boys.). Burroughs shows his unbeatable spirit by thriving despite all his setbacks. And despite the horrendous occurrences of his life, he does not pity himself. It's clear that his humor is what allowed him to survive such tumultuous times. The character flaws and the portrayal of real life, without the sudden appearance of all the answers at the end, make this book a breath of fresh air compared to all the other manufactured stories of happily-ever-afters that sum up life in a neat little package.



Continued from page 12

American's value as an employee is in his education and his intellectual abilities — not his nationality. However, not all have access to the education of the Symbolic Analyst. Budding Symbolic Analysts are often the children of current Symbolic Analysts. Symbolic Analysts have the money to educate their children in topnotch schools, to live in environments that foster symbolic analytic development, and to hire tutors to address their children's specific needs. Thus, while Symbolic Analysts are getting richer, Routine Producers are losing their jobs and In-person Servers aren't being paid a living wage, leaving no room for socio-economic mobility.

Reich's solution to the problem is to channel federal and state funds to education — especially public education. This will create a more leveled playing field for the development of

Symbolic Analysts. Unfortunately, the government still seems to be living in the time of the American Corporation and not in the age of a global economy It is almost oblivious to the need to increase the value of education and the value of its youth. If it wants to dig the American economy out of its hole, it needs to reverse its trend of spending less and less on education.

With expertise, Reich paints clear pictures of both the historical Core American corporation and the emerging global economy. Think you're ready to step into that world? Think again.

Reich, Robert. E. (1991). <u>The Work of Nations. New York:</u> Vintage Books.

Punk Compilation CDs

by Marta Vandenberg

Next time you're in a music store, take a gander at the section labeled Punk Compilations. This section is often overlooked because most people go directly to the artists that they're familiar with and the CDs they've heard advertised.

What are these punk compilation CDs and why are they worth looking at, you ask? They are CDs that are put out by smaller record labels to attract new listeners to their bands. Some notable

series collections are *Punk-O-Rama*, *Hopelessly Devoted to You* (Hopeless Records), and the ones put out by Fat Wreck Chords. These CDs showcase the best song, or sometimes two songs, that a select artist has recorded up to that time. They mostly feature somewhere between 10 to 20 artists, though sometimes there can be as many as 50 (double CD issues). The best thing about these CDs? They are oh-so-very cheap, costing from around 3 to 6 bucks.

Most mainstream people assume that since these compilations are so cheap they must be pretty crappy. Not true! The reason that they are so cheap is because small companies produce them as a form of advertising. They wouldn't be very effective if they cost almost as much as LPs.

There are many advantages to these CDs. First, they expose you to new artists. You get to hear the style of music before buying a full length CD. Since the closing of Napster and the prosecution of people using Kazzaa and other illegal downloading programs, it is getting harder to swap music for free and hear songs before buying them. There is always the option of using the relatively new Apple iTunes, but it's not exactly free, with full length CDs costing around \$12. Second, if you like a particular song from an artist and hate the rest of the CD you can just buy a \$4 compilation instead of dropping \$15 for the artist's full length. Third, a lot of these compilations feature previously unreleased music, songs that are becoming harder to find without peer sharing programs. Fourth, when you buy the CDs of new artists you've heard and liked on a compilation, small labels have a greater chance of survival. A lot of artists leave lesser known labels in favor of the giants because they aren't selling enough music. Your support means that the whole music industry won't be manipulated by two or three conglomerates that charge exorbitant prices.



The only drawback to compilation CDs is that big companies can put them out as well, such as the Now That's What I Call Music! series. The difference is that instead showcasing bands or unknown songs, these CDs are filled with one hit wonders that already play on radio stations once hour. And, for the most part, the "artists" on these CDs are signed by music moguls that tell them what to say, how to dress, and what to sing. Since there are only two

or three major music labels, that would explain why all the mainstream artists sound the same and follow the same trend. Not only are these CDs filled with generic, saccharine pop tunes but they cost about \$18 (plus shipping and handling, if you fall for one of those late night TV commercials).

So, next time you're in a music store and aren't sure of what to buy, pick up some punk compilations (4 for the same price as a *Now* CD). You can wow your friends with all the new noteworthy songs you heard and the new bands you discovered. Then in about two years you can have a grand laugh when you turn on the TV and see MTV proclaim them the new artists who've just recorded their first CD. Here are some great choices:

Punk-O-Rama 8 (2003) - 2 CD set
Stand Outs: I Am A Revenant (the Distillers), The Idiots Are
Taking Over (NoFX), Makeshift Patriot (Sage Francis), As
Wicked (Rancid), Train of Flesh (Turbonegro)

Survival of the Fattest (1997)
Standouts: Justified Black Eye (Nufan), Nation States (Propaghandi), Sleep (Lagwagon)

Hopelessly Devoted to You Vol 3 (2000) Standouts: Watermark (Weakerthans), Boy with Monkey (Samian), Already Gone (Mustard Plug)

A Poet on Stage, Talking to Bush

by Svetlana Gelman

"We suffer!" in cafes and nightclubs while smoking blunts and taking E trying to get laid.

"You are to blame"
for our peace
for our ignorance of
"The bombs falling"
somewhere far away
on a nameless soldier
"into my soul
and ravaging my body."
Well stuffed with chicken
and beer, right now.

"I, no, we! Can not live like this!" although, we don't want to starve either or have our friends blown up, regularly or have something more real to worry about then the neighbor's dog shitting on our lawn.



http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/in_depth/middle_east/2002/conflict_with_iraq/my_war/default.stm#

http://www.bbc.co.uk/manchester/news/2003/03/20/suhair salam.shtml



While at a friend's house

by Svetlana Gelman

How would you like to watch your home bombed on national television?

Its not very nice, and not very remarkable in a small nation riddled by bombs.

Lets add a factor.

Lets add a woman breastfeeding her child next door to the bombing,

her head blown off.

How would you like a brand new orphan – in your arms?



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Corrections: The following citations were missing from the previous issue Pg. 5 "We all Deserve the Freedom To Marry" Chronicle photo by Frederic Larson http://groups.msn.com/LambdaWeeklyVoices/sanfranciscocelebratespg2.msnw Pg. 11 "Sturges Photograph"

http://www.geneseo.edu/~pplant/Sturges.htm

Pg. 11 "Swastika flag image"

 $http://www.hostultra.com/\sim Exidor/Swastika/Swastika.htm \# Pictures \% 20 \& \% 20 Postcards$