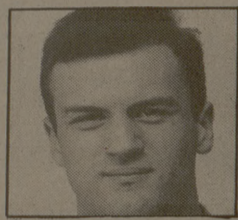


Opinion

A little liberal arts benefits all

I cannot stress more strongly the value of a broad education. I am a liberal arts major, specifically political science. Most students outside of the College of Liberal Arts are generally ignorant as to what a major in the College of Liberal Arts entails.



Glenn Murtha

What's so great about a liberal arts education? A broad education provides the backbone for a strong and progressive society by providing individuals with insight into *human nature* through courses in history, literature, philosophy, math, science, etc. If an individual is aware of how our culture reached its present state and why the people within the society act in the manner in which they do, the individual can more readily deal with the problems faced by the society and the people within the society.

Unlike, for example, business or engineering, which require more than half of the total degree hours in the major, no department in the College of Liberal Arts can require more than 33 hours in any major field of study.

You may understand why a person acts a certain way in a certain situation, but liberal arts helps you understand how history and culture have molded this person to respond in the manner in which he does.

A major in political science, for example, is somewhat misleading. I am not taking all of my upper division classes in political science. Last semester I had one, this semester two. The remainder of my hours fall within other liberal arts disciplines, science, math and a large number of free electives. For this reason, I consider myself more of a liberal arts major than a political science major.

One reason why I am so sympathetic to the causes of minorities and the oppressed results from what I have learned in various political science classes. For example, in a democracy, majority rule can often overlook the interests and needs of minorities. Whenever someone condemns another who is different, someone who doesn't conform with the actions of the majority, I immediately think of the brilliance of our founding fathers who recognized this tendency and instigated measures in our Constitution to protect minorities from what Alexis de Tocqueville dubbed the "tyranny of the majority."

Dedication to a broad, liberal arts education is sadly lacking at this University. No university can be great without a strong commitment to the liberal arts. Presently, Texas A&M offers only 5 doctorate degrees in liberal arts fields — American history, economics, English, psychology and sociology — miniscule in comparison to the University of Texas. We offer no degrees in music or art, pitiful for a university of this size.

Humans tend to fear things which are different. People who are different often make us feel insecure. We react with condemnation. We claim that the different people are strange or weird and wish that they would conform with the rest of us. We've seen it time and time again — blacks, Jews, gays and the handicapped. We often overlook the fact that people are people with human emotion and feelings which can be hurt.

The tide is turning. The college recently added doctorate programs in psychology and anthropology and is considering expansion for the departments of philosophy and political science.

So many of the great classics have taught valuable lessons in human nature. In Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* we see how society casts out those who

don't conform with the rest. In Camus' *The Stranger* we see how a man is condemned to death not for the crime he committed but for his emotionless response to the death of his mother. In Shakespeare's *King Lear* we see the mistake Lear made by giving his estate to his children before his death.

We see how great works characterized the culture of their time and profoundly affected our own — John Locke's influence on Thomas Jefferson and the Declaration of Independence, Darwin's evolutionary theory and its effect on Christianity, Marx's attempt to deal with the Industrial Revolution. By learning from the past, we can prepare for the future.

Liberal arts majors are not hot job prospects. We are living in a world of growing specialization. Industry wants people with specific skills. But don't let initial job prospects mislead you.

Initially, you are probably better off financially with a degree in business or engineering. But degrees in these majors tend to lose their value. If you're looking for that job at the top of the corporate ladder, a liberal education can help. A great many corporate chiefs have majors within the liberal arts. Specialized skills can only go so far. A top position in a corporation requires knowledge of people and areas of which a liberal education can give the edge.

I'm not suggesting that everyone should be a liberal arts major. Obviously, we need scientists, engineers and business people. What we do need is an expanded core curricula in the liberal arts for all students. A few more courses in literature, philosophy, the social sciences, etc. will hurt no one and will benefit everyone.

The problem with a liberal education is that its incredible value cannot be appreciated until you receive one.

Glenn Murtha is a senior political science major and a columnist for *The Battalion*.

Mail Call

Letters to the Editor should not exceed 300 words in length. The editorial staff reserves the right to edit letters for style and length but will make every effort to maintain the author's intent. Each letter must be signed and must include the address and telephone number of the writer.

Impressed and dismayed

EDITOR: We, as freshmen, attended our first Silver Taps ceremony of this year on Feb. 4. We are quite impressed by this unique tradition and the spirit of honoring those who have died.

After the first Silver Taps of the fall semester, several letters were sent to *The Battalion* concerning those who were not quiet on their way out and from the ceremony. This is understandable for those who have not attended a ceremony before.

However, we were dismayed to find one junior in the Corps of Cadets speaking loudly and laughing on his way back from the ceremony.

The Corps of Cadets prides itself on upholding the traditions of Texas A&M, so we find it especially disturbing that this one junior does not himself feel this same pride.

Annelise Weiner '89
Rica Bowman '89

Don't let it happen again

EDITOR: I'm very upset with the MSC Council. Wednesday I attended Dr. Piccolo's presentation on Love and Sex in the '80s. Unfortunately, my parents were not around to keep me from going. Nor was I personally well-developed enough to realize that such a presentation would be so informative and eye-opening before I went.

In the future, I hope that the MSC Council will do a better job of shielding me from such presentations, lest I become a well-adjusted, comfortable and open-minded person. Please don't let this happen.

Kevin Klein

Class ring found

EDITOR: I found somebody's class ring in Deware Field House on a racquetball court. It's a 10k gold, Class of '83 from Clear Creek ring. The name is on it, with the initials RMR on the inside. It has a red stone and seems to be a girl's size. If the ring is yours or you know whose it is, call me at 7903.

Tom Krauss

A no-no by the book

EDITOR: Karl, Karl, Karl, it seems you have succeeded again. Mike and Debbie Foarde were a little bit angry, wouldn't you say? It seems you hit their soft spot (the one so near and dear to their hearts). We hope they were not placing judgement on you, because last we heard, that was a no in their book.

Patrick J. Posey '88
Dwayne B. King '88

For issue of importance

EDITOR: For three years now I have had to put up with the idiotic editorial complaints from self-righteous, radical fuddy-duddies that *The Battalion* is liberal for this campus.

The Mail Call section of the paper should be a place where students address issues of importance, not to put down other people's views in a silly, illogical dialogue saying nothing more than "I am right and you are wrong" (Communist, Atheist, etc.).

A good example of this was the letter "And God said to Karl..." Mike and Debbie Foarde. Here are people who have lived in a world of their own, where everyone is conservative, God-fearing and right. When these people are exposed to people of other views, they get all defensive and mad and start writing ridiculous letters about how these non-conservative, non-God-fearing, and blatantly wrong people should go to hell.

What irks me the most is that these people defend everything they say — "God likes it this way" or "God thinks this is good", not with an intellectual stance like "it is necessary to do such-in-such for the benefit of mankind, etc.)."

Now don't get me wrong on this point, one can still be a Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, etc.) and believe as they do, but if you can't argue your opinions in an intellectual way, you have no reason to argue in the first place.

I respect Karl Pallmeyer's column. I do not agree with everything he writes, but I do not go saying that he should go to hell for it. Sometimes I wonder if he writes certain things in this column just to get the type of response he gets from people like the Foardes.

Robert Martin '87

Correction

The address in Thursday's letter concerning the fund to rebuild the space shuttle 'Challenger' was incorrect. Contributions should be sent to Space Shuttle Fund, P.O. Box 51-L, Colorado Springs CO 80901. The Battalion regrets the error.



Laughing at OPEC oil barons

There are some people who are laughing because the oil barons have to sell spare oil at \$17 a barrel. I don't happen to be one of them.



Art Buchwald

It's true that OPEC had every intention of sticking it to the non-oil-producing countries, but that doesn't mean we should all be acting like Chicago Bear fans.

foreign port. Fortunately they don't know about my watch business.

"Why watches?" I asked him.

"When oil was \$36 a barrel I bought 10,000 watches to hand out as tips to the hotel help when I traveled abroad. Now it turns out the watches are worth more than my oil. Don't you need a timepiece that will tell you the phase of the moon?"

I said, "I can't believe you're that broke. What about the military equipment you bought? That's got to be worth something."

"Master Charge took it all back when I missed two payments."

"I never thought I'd see a Middle East prince down on his luck."

"Neither did I," El Glamie said. "The last time I was in Washington I slept at the White House. Now I'm sleeping across the street."

"In a hotel?"

"No, in Lafayette Park. Do you know what is driving the price of oil down? It's greed."

"I thought that's what drove the price of oil up. As I recall it was OPEC's greed that almost bankrupted the world."

"That wasn't greed. That was supply

and demand. There wasn't enough oil to go around so we had to raise prices."

"But doesn't the reason they tumbled also have to do with supply and demand?"

"No, that was lust. Everybody who was pledged to drill so much crude cheated and caused a glut. Then because of the glut they had to produce more crude which produced more crude and then it was just glut, glut, glut."

I asked the prince, "How can you expect OPEC to honor their quotas when they are in hock up to their ears for so many of the good things in life? I would think you would keep drilling even if you got \$5 a barrel."

"I would," the prince said, "only I don't own the oil. The insurance companies do."

"How come the insurance companies own your oil?"

"I borrowed \$100 million to build a new airport and air-conditioned polo field."

"Why would you do that?"

"To attract tourists so my country no longer has to depend on oil."

Art Buchwald is a columnist for the *Los Angeles Times Syndicate*.

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