

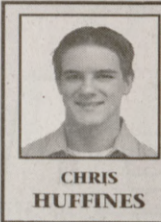
new road
Christians detain
ear Mount of Olives

Crash-course dummies

Popular book series lowers educational standards, cannot be used as substitute for teachers

JERUSALEM (AP) — A group of 21 foreigners, including 13 Americans, were detained in recent years in the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem. The detainees, followers of the House of David, were arrested on suspicion they were plotting to harm public safety, police said. One of the 21 was later found to have had a valid return plane ticket. The others — 13 Americans, three British citizens and two Canadians and an Australian — were given 15 days to appeal, officials said. Israeli officials are criticizing two groups were part of the group for Christians to the Holy Land. Group members have said they oppose violence and have mainly been engaged in building housing for victims of the 1994 riots and clothing for the poor. Israeli authorities fear the end-timers will act to bring about the apocalypse and hasten the Christ.

Abraham Lincoln educated himself by reading, yes, but also by tirelessly practicing what he learned and by seeking out people to teach him. By definition, books are static. Books do not change. The art of writing something down is to preserve it, unchanged, for all time. However, learning is dynamic. Students learn and change, and they see the world and how they learn changes with them. As a topic is discovered, it leads to branching out into other areas, creating a constantly changing

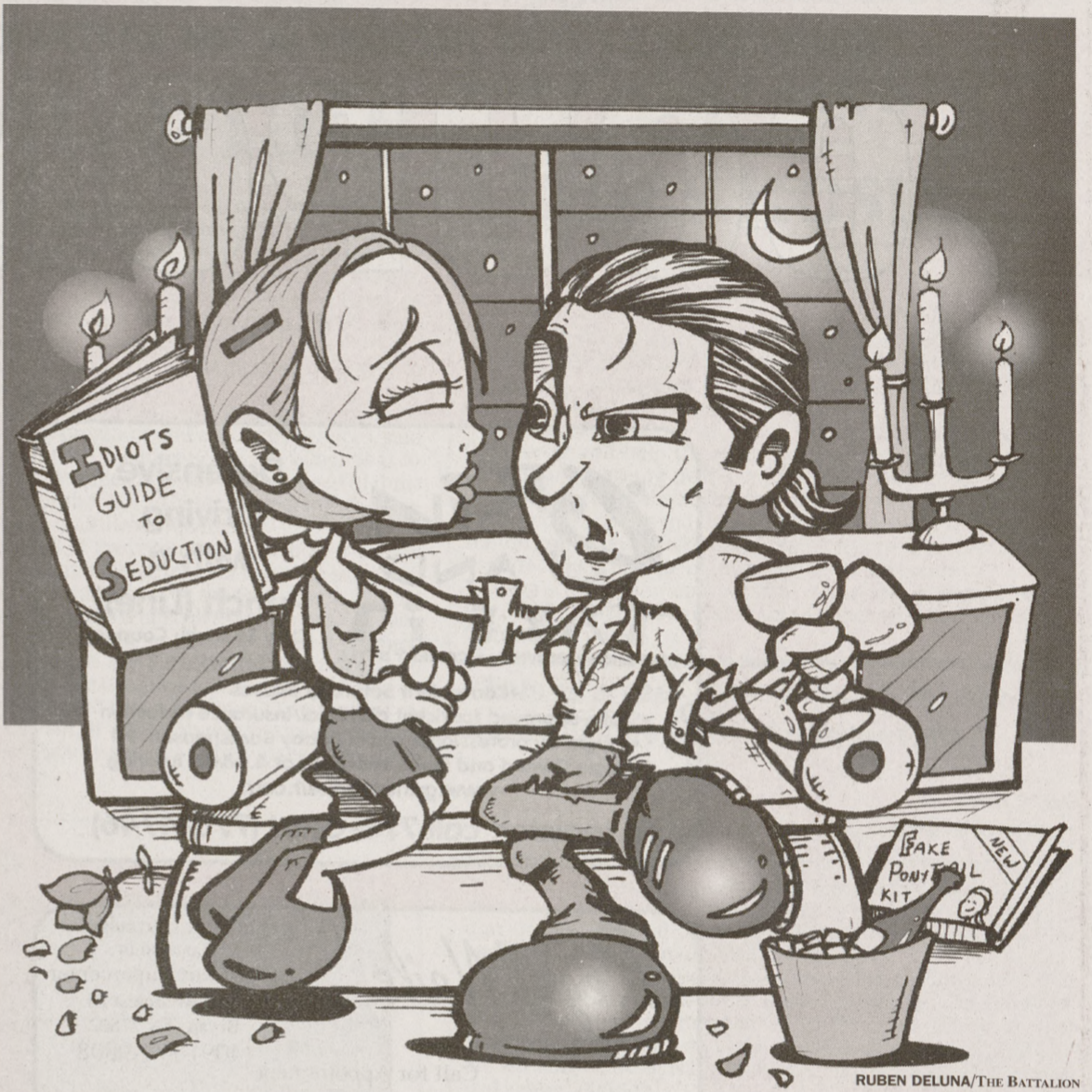


CHRIS HUFFINES

environment. A static book trying to dynamically teach is like trying to make apple juice from oranges. Teachers answer questions from students. Teachers alter presentations of material to suit students' needs. Teachers build a relationship with their students. Teachers can answer questions. Books just sit there. They may have the right style, or lack thereof, to pander to millions simultaneously. Weighed together, teachers are far more effective. (They may also grade on a curve.) While many readers of these books, the idiots and dummies of the world, can and do consult others and so avoid this pitfall, many others take the books at face value and assume they are complete guides. These books are advertised as complete guides. However, they cannot be treated as complete guides, or readers may well become complete failures. Second, these books attempt to deal with complex issues in a prescriptive manner. Prescriptive techniques, colloquially known as "how to" methods, are not the best way to deal with complex issues. Instead of trying to understand something, prescription conversely takes the reader towards a specific goal, which greatly oversimplifies the nature of the situation. For example, *The Complete Idiot's Guide to the Art of Seduction*, its companion book, *The Idiot's Guide to an Affair-Free Marriage or First Aid for Dummies* treat complex issues dealing with the health of people and relationships prescriptively. Unfortunately, life is not a spice rack, and it is impossible to how-to one's way

through it with anything more than bare adequacy. The foreword to *The Complete Idiot's Guide to the Art of Seduction* even admits this limitation. "At first glance, seduction is an intangible subject that doesn't easily lend itself to a 1-2-3, "how-to" approach," the author said. Everyone is different, and trying to lure them into bed, developing trust or treat their pain all require an individual touch that has been simplified out of these books. Prescriptive approaches not only deal poorly with complex issues, they also have the unfortunate side effect of forcing those who follow them onto one set path. It is like following someone else's directions to get somewhere. Once the driver has made a wrong turn, the directions are useless and following them only makes the problem worse. Unfortunately for the idiots and dummies, there is no good way to tell if one has lost one's way. Knowing that would require experience in the area the book covers. This lack of experience is why they bought the book in the first place. *Idiot's Guides* and *For Dummies* books are not entirely useless. Many titles are perfectly adequate. And, if the reader bears the books' limitations in mind, these books can be broad introductions to any category. But these books are advertising themselves as complete resources, and they are only hurting their consumers with their prescriptive, static approaches.

Chris Huffines is a senior speech communication major.



RUBEN DELUNA/THE BATTALION

Dagestan this summer aimed for a series of apartment bombings in Russia that killed people. With Russian troops occupying Chechnya's northern third and gradually toward Grozny in the north, east and west, there increasingly appeared a growing Russian control over Chechnya. TAR-Tass reported that the Russian side met with the Russian side over the black box that was shot down, as well as the soldier they said was the

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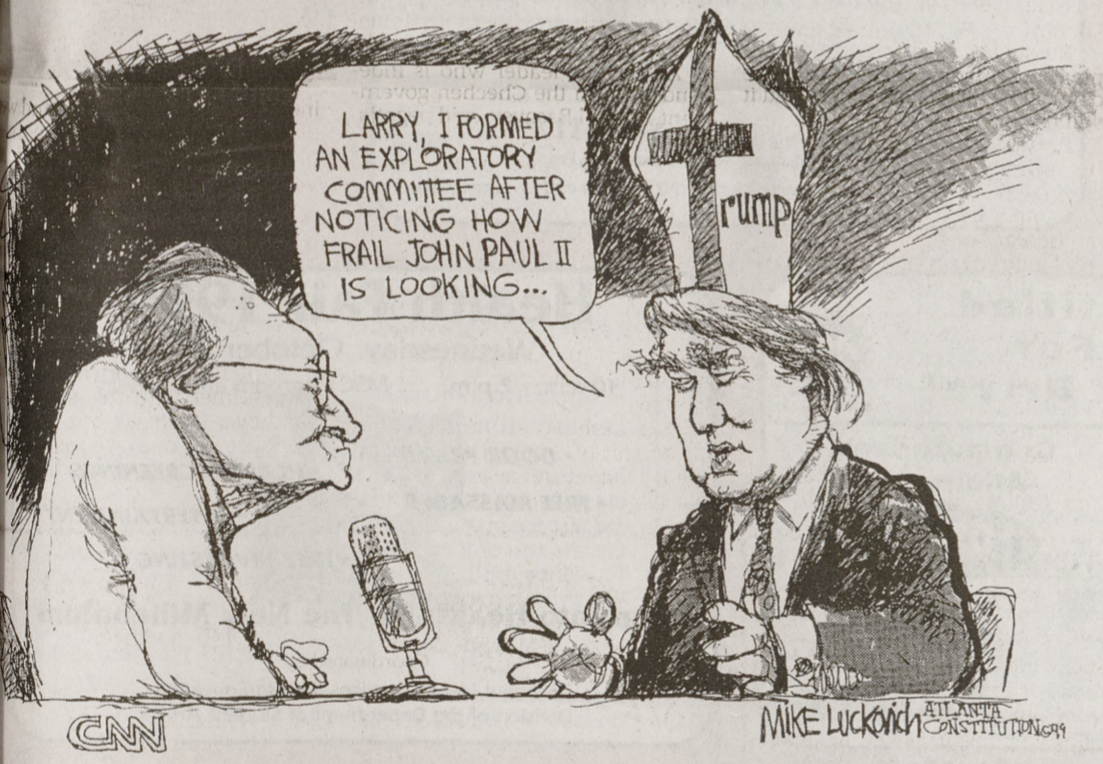
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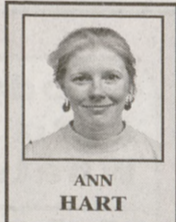
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Liddy Dole proves money matters too much in presidential politics

Liddy Dole just threw in the towel. She has given up on running for the president. The problem of raising enough money is one most candidates face, and she is not the first to succumb to the impossibility of winning an election without an astronomical budget. The loss of Dole as a candidate is a national tragedy and an American disgrace. The entire country ought to mourn the fact that the first woman ever to be a serious presidential contender has had to quit the campaign for a petty reason like lack of funds. Dole was able to raise a respectable sum — \$4.7 million. Most people would consider that a sizable sum. The trouble is that her two major competitors in the Republican Party have 15 to 20 times the financial resources she had while she was running. The problem is not that Dole needed more money. The problem is that there ought to be some kind of limit on the obscene amounts of money expended in pursuit of the presidency. Years ago, rumor had it that any child — the kid next door, the kid from the wrong side of the tracks, anyone — could grow up to be president of the United States of America. People were especially proud to be Americans because their children were assumed to be on a level playing field. It seems the public has been corrected of that notion once and for all. Not only is it not possible for just anyone to become president, it is nearly impossible for anyone to become president unless they are in a financial position to buy the office. The days of the level playing field are nothing more than a fond memory. Eventually people will forget they ever existed. Perhaps they already have.



ANN HART

If the guy with the fattest wallet gets to be president, and the country is following the golden rule — whoever has the gold makes the rules — then the whole concept of representative democracy just got replaced with market-driven government. Through clever marketing approaches, the candidates market themselves to the voters. Whoever presents the prettiest package gets the public to choose them. Often the public gets sold a bill of goods — without any goods behind it. Whoever has an agenda to push can do so with a few well-placed campaign contributions.

Not only is it not possible for just anyone to become president, it is nearly impossible to win without big bucks.

And democracy takes a hit. What if, rather than selling the presidency to whoever can afford to buy it, the whole campaign thing were revamped? Suppose the government put in place some ground-rules that "abridged" the right of free speech in a very carefully thought-out way. Suppose, instead of allowing the spin doctors to have their way with the campaign, the only campaign advertising permitted were issues-oriented with no dirt. What would happen? Suppose, instead of needing every cent they can scrape together to buy advertising, the candidates were limited to using only the air-time the government provided, and only for speeches and debates about issues. Suppose there was a rule that said that if a candidate

broke the rules they would be thrown out of the race, like a foul in ice hockey, only with much greater stakes. At first there might be a problem getting anybody to pass muster. But eventually, when they saw that the public meant business, the fast crowd would move on to some less important line of work, like entertainment. Then the real public servants could come forward and attempt to persuade the American people they could and would do the job to the best of their ability. Then voters would have a choice, and it is likely the choice would include more women, minorities and maybe even the kid next door. Then perhaps, one could read an unsigned speech and know which candidate wrote it because they would be saying different things about the issues, instead of all saying the same thing. And maybe then, the government could govern. To critics who support the present system on the basis of "if it ain't broke don't fix it," the reality of the situation is that the present system would be in better shape if it were broken. A look at recent history will verify that the quality of the candidates is eroding for various reasons, not the least of which is the enormous sums of money they must raise in order to stay candidates. Money is not generally an enabling thing, and the dire necessity the candidates face to raise it does not encourage rigid honesty and scrupulous conduct. There comes a point beyond which it is unreasonable to expect morally upright behavior, and the current election process passed it long ago. The system is not broken, it has dissolved into chaos. Americans have a choice about whether it continues, even if they no longer have the choice of having a woman president in the year 2000.

Ann Hart is a senior English major.

MAIL CALL

Let's not compound the problem with the legalization of drugs. Gary Blackwelder Class of '02

Companies are not responsible for cure
In response to Caesar Ricci's Oct. 22 column.

Ricci is correct in stating that Africa is suffering terribly from the HIV-AIDS virus. I absolutely agree that something must be done for these people. However, it is not the responsibility of pharmaceutical companies to develop a vaccine. They are just companies and their main objective is to make money, not save the world. The well being of a group of people is their responsibility and that of their government.

Ricci's statement that a vaccine found for the specific subtype of AIDS found in Africa will put an end to the disease's rampage is entirely inaccurate. Stopping the rampage of one subtype will not stop the present or future rampage of the other strains. As far as vaccine development is concerned, the efficacy trials for current possible vaccines (developed by government cooperations of both the U.S. and other countries) are currently held in Africa. The percentage of people in

Western Europe and the U.S. makes it extremely difficult to run a statistically accurate trial. Having a 25 percent population affliction makes it much easier and more accurate to study the effectiveness of a vaccine than a study in the U.S., where less than 1 percent of the population is infected. Also, the current vaccines are 60 percent or less effective. From an individual standpoint, this is risky. Second, education is administered with the vaccine. We in the U.S. are generally educated as to how the virus spreads, but many people in Africa are not. Regardless of the effectiveness of the vaccine, the education helps immensely. It would be inappropriate for pharmaceutical companies to be held responsible for the entire human race. The ultimate responsibility lies in the government of the people governed and the people themselves.

Stacie D. Green Class of '99

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