

## In This Issue...

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Like other “Great Books”-type programs at institutions of higher learning across the United States, the Lynchburg College Symposium Readings (LCSR) program prompts students to consider how our lives today have been shaped by the people who lived before us. Students in the LCSR program read classical and seminal works in all disciplines and look for parallels between ideas from the past and issues in today’s world. Faculty members who teach in the LCSR program encourage their students to think critically about their readings and to express their interpretations clearly in both written assignments and in oral presentations. This seventeenth issue of the *Agora* includes a representative sample of essays produced in LCSR courses together with several papers written by students from other institutions belonging to the Association of Core Texts and Courses (ACTC). Just as the ancient Athenian *agora*, or marketplace, functioned as a venue for the exchange of ideas, so does this modern-day namesake in online journal form present challenging and thoughtful ideas for our readers.

In the first article, “The Mystery of Points, the Viciousness of Circles, and the Controversy of Lines” **Dr. Danny Cline** (Assistant Professor of Mathematics at Lynchburg College) discusses Euclid’s postulates of geometry. Dr. Cline demonstrates how mathematicians have questioned fundamental assumptions about the ways we define space and how we can fine-tune our critical thinking processes by tracing the historical development of these important concepts in geometry.

**Tao Tan**, a recent graduate of Columbia University, won the Kendall North Award for the best essay in this issue of the *Agora* with his paper, “Nobility of the Warrior: Etiquette, Empathy, and Emotion.” Tao considers the ethical dilemma facing a warrior: during peacetime,

the norms of behavior are based on codes of nobility and civility, but on the battlefield, a warrior is expected to attack and kill the enemy. By referring to Homer, Confucius, and the ancient Japanese *Tales of the Heike*, Tao explains how this dilemma can be reconciled without compromising one's ethical standards. In 2008, when we are facing growing numbers of servicemen who return from the world's war zones with post-traumatic stress disorder, this topic is highly relevant.

Another award winner is **Justin Lerche**, who wrote "*Boumediene v. Bush*" in a course on Constitutional law. Dr. Peggy Pittas chose Justin's paper for this year's LCSR Program Director's Award as the best *Agora* essay dealing with a social problem. The legal case, *Boumediene v. Bush*, which deals with the status of the detainees at Guantanamo Bay, is being considered by the U.S. Supreme Court in the current session. Justin uses Article I of the U.S. Constitution, the Federalist Papers, and previous Supreme Court decisions to argue that the Guantanamo Bay detainees should be afforded other legal alternatives compared to what they are currently experiencing.

The next paper continues the theme of dealing with repercussions of 9/11. **Conor McFarland** wrote "Muslim Immigration: the Effects of Domestic Policy on Security in the United Kingdom" in the wake of the London bombings in July 2005. Conor explains how the British government has attempted to deal with the tensions generated by the growing population of Muslim immigrants in the United Kingdom over the last thirty years; some approaches have been more successful than others.

The next two papers both deal with social change from historical perspectives. **David Sutton** in "How the English Reformation Produced a Tale of Two Churches" explains how the Anglican Communion developed into two branches: high and low church. The differences in

liturgical practice, and to a certain extent in attitudes to faith, became evident during the English Reformation in the sixteenth century. David's reassuring discussion illustrates that a worldwide church has been able to remain united for roughly four hundred years despite the deeply embedded tensions stemming from different attitudes and approaches of its members. In his paper, "Jefferson and King: Changes for America," **James Young** analyzes attitudes toward the use of violence in two key moments of change in American history. Prior to the Revolutionary War, Jefferson and the other Founding Fathers considered war and the violence it entails to be inevitable; however, during the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, Martin Luther King, Jr., stuck firmly to his belief in non-violence. James emphasizes the fact that both Jefferson and King hoped that events of their troubled times would lead to a more peaceful society, which could promote the rights of American citizens.

The next two papers both deal with literary texts. **Haydar Ali**, a student from Henry Ford Community College in Dearborn, Michigan, has written "Sexism in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*." The female characters in Conrad's novel play a relatively minor role, but Haydar analyzes the small number of passages involving women to show how attitudes, which would be considered blatantly sexist today, were widely accepted as normal a hundred years ago. In her paper, "A Twist of Two Turns: the Protagonist Who Almost Was," **Moni'ca Brown**, a student from Norfolk State University in Norfolk, Virginia, also applies feminist critical theory to a novel. She focuses on Henry James' novel, *The Turn of the Screw*. Moni'ca sees the governess, the main character in the novel, as largely vulnerable as she faces a number of ambiguous situations, which prevent her from emerging as either a true hero or a villain. In different ways, both Conrad and James present women as subservient in a society that was largely dominated by

men. Both Haydar and Mon'ica make it clear that women today enjoy much more equality than their predecessors of a hundred years ago.

Another student writer who discusses a well-known novel is **Rachel Moore**. In her paper "Lessons from *Brave New World*," Rachel focuses on ethics: what would a world of unchecked scientific progress combined with unchecked governmental control be like? Huxley paints a grim picture of this future world with no opportunities for individual freedom or social responsibility, and Rachel provokes us to consider the implications for choices we are likely to face in our world in the near future.

The next two papers were written in art history courses. In her essay "Irving and Delacroix: The Use of Beauty to Transcend Time, Culture, and Reality," **Shannon Melchior** examines the similar viewpoints of the French painter, Eugene Delacroix, and the American writer, Washington Irving, both of whom lived and worked in the first half of the nineteenth century. Because they both participated in the Romantic Movement, they emphasize exotic locations, dramatic events in history, the role of emotions, and aesthetic appeal. Shannon effectively describes the cross-disciplinary similarities in Delacroix's and Irving's approaches to their painting and writing. In her paper "The Symbiotic Relationship of Religion and Art," **Ashley Brown** goes back in time to the Renaissance and the Reformation. Ashley clearly describes how paintings by da Vinci, Michelangelo, and Durer reflect the contemporary changes in attitudes towards faith and the church, changes which had a large impact on the lives of everyone in Europe at that time.

The final two essays in this issue of the *Agora* were written in Senior Symposium, a course in which Lynchburg College students interpret LCSR readings and public lectures on contemporary issues in terms of their own experiences and opinions. In "Woodrow Wilson: The

Folly in Europe and the Future of Foreign policy,” **Lee Elliott** discusses the influence of President Wilson’s approach to foreign policy on subsequent U. S. foreign policy decisions. In “Shut Up and Teach,” **Cameron Seay** argues that the policy of separation of church and state should not mean that students in public schools in the United States need to be deprived of the opportunity to learn about the Judeo-Christian religion.

All of these *Agora* writers have given us much food for thought, but the instructors who supervised the writing of these papers also deserve thanks for encouraging their students’ intellectual development. From Lynchburg College, they are Dr. Lorna Dawson (Lerche), Dr. Clifton Potter (Sutton), Professor Marie O’Connor (Young), Drs. Peggy Pittas and David Freier (Moore), Dr. Leslie Layne (McFarland), Dr. Delane Karalow (Melchior and A. Brown), Dr. Kate Gray (Elliott), and Dr. Candace Todd (Seay). From other ACTC institutions, the supervising faculty members are Dr. Elizabeth Irwin at Columbia University (Tan), Dr. Paige Laws at Norfolk State University (M. Brown), and Dr. Michael Daher at Henry Ford Community College (Ali).

This year, the *Agora* editorial committee considered roughly fifty submissions; unfortunately, we could not publish all of them. However, we hope that the increased participation of students at other ACTC institutions in addition to those at Lynchburg College and the greater public exposure provided by the *Agora*’s current online format will result in an even larger number and an even more competitive pool of submissions next year.

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*Agora* Editor