

The Concerned Student: Valentine's Day is lacking real passion

Saint Valentine's Day fell upon us this week, arriving with its usual fare of pink-themed gifts. But this year seemed to bring a growing number who didn't care that this Tuesday was more special than other Tuesdays. Indeed, this Valentine's Day dissent seemed to extend beyond those stuck in perpetual single dom.

There are generally three types of people on Valentine's Day. There are those who observe the holiday and try to make it a memorable occasion. There are those who care just enough to swing by a card store at the last minute. Finally, there is the anti-Hallmark contingent who find the day to be ruined by our ultra-consumer culture. For us, the day is something akin to an exam: you can't avoid it, so you just wait for it to pass.

Valentine's Day lingers not as a holiday but as a vehicle for greeting card companies and Russell Stover's, ignoring that people truly in love have 364 other days to create such a narrative. Quite simply, Valentine's Day has lost too much of its tradition.

Feb. 14 once honored a man whom the Christian Church declared a martyr and saint. While I advocate separating church and state, I'm disappointed that we forget how a man died for his cause. Dropping "Saint" from "Valentine's Day" shows how self-centered we are: Valentine's Day is now a time to either plan dates or wallow

in self-pity.

If we do think about someone other than ourselves, we often express it through generic, mass-produced means: We can stop at a gas station for fake flowers and a stuffed bear.

The tradition of giving cards began in the 1700s. Since we don't have to make them anymore, we don't have to be original. In kindergarten, our cards employed a heart-and-Ninja Turtles motif; as adults, our card themes graduate to cartoon dogs, puns and more hearts. The advent of E-cards makes it so we express our love cheaply and easily.

We need new Valentine's Day traditions. We should still give on that day. But instead of handing out plants' severed reproductive organs, we could start giving something more meaningful, like ourselves. There was a blood drive Tuesday, but if you missed it, go to the next one. If needles and blood make you squeamish, then give to a heart or organ donation organization.

Valentine's Day is a day for love, but love is an unlimited abstract concept. Don't wait for one day next year to demonstrate how much you love one person. Start now, and start with everyone.



Maureen Zahn

THIS WEEK IN HISTORY ...

Feb. 11, 1531 — King Henry VIII is recognized as the head of the Church of England.

Feb. 14, 1946 — The first all-electronic computer is unveiled.

Feb. 16, 1923 — King Tutankamen's burial chamber is opened.

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and succeeded. They need to hear from those who didn't quite make it and failed out. Students need to get a sense of life after college.

The administration should send speakers to Conover. The speakers need to inspire and motivate, leaving students with a goal. The idea is to have students leave the speech with something valuable to consider. Success starts with inspiration, which is the first step toward an intellectually stimulating environment. The current program of C-cash only gives Conover residents

incentive to attend events with the potential to win prizes. Most of these events do not guide students toward having a dream and setting goals. My program calls for the American Dream as an incentive.

Like the saying goes, "You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make it drink." Students need to plan for their future and examine all the aspects of an opportunity, drawing from the stories of those who have been there before. With a little effort from both sides, a truly beneficial experience can be given to freshmen that they will carry throughout — and beyond — their college years.

The Face-Off:

Is the cancellation of 'Arrested Development' a scourge upon TV?

Most American sitcoms are awful. They all have a similar rhythm: set-up, punch line, exaggerated canned laughter. They are poorly acted and shot so it seems there are only three possible camera angles. There is rarely ever a deviation from this mind-numbing formula.

I had lost all hope in the American sitcom until November 2003 when a show called *Arrested Development* premiered. I have been a devoted fan ever since, but there are not enough people who join me. The show — despite winning many awards and critical acclaim — has awful ratings. No one will watch it, which really aggravates me. This show was my savior and it brought the message that all hope is not lost for the sitcom genre. It is truly one of a kind. *Arrested Development* is a brilliant show and the fact that it probably will be canceled is a travesty.

The basic premise is the continuous story of the Bluth family and its self-centered life. What makes the show great is the way it tells the story. There is constant self-referencing, inside jokes and breaking of the fourth wall. This show may allude to something that happened either several episodes or even an entire season ago, and a joke can refer to anything in the show as well as anything in reality. The narrator often talks to the audience and interacts with the characters. On the last episode he even said, "Please tell your friends about this show" before the show's Web site appeared on the screen. These are the subtle things that make the show ultra-clever and a shame to ignore. The characters themselves are also quite funny,

developed and well-portrayed.

I have heard complaints that the show moves too fast or is hard to follow, both of which are somewhat true. It is the type of show that requires

the viewer to watch from the beginning in order to understand the characters and why the material is funny. What's more, the characters actually have depth and are three-dimensional.

The show spits out so much humor so fast that it is impossible to catch everything the first time. I've had to watch an episode three times to get it all, but believe it or not, that is a good thing. The show requires intelligence and doesn't tell you where the jokes are. There is no laugh track, but that shouldn't prevent anyone from knowing what is funny.

Cartoon Network's *Adult Swim*, a nightly block of off-kilter television shows, said it perfectly in one of its bumpers. The screen read "Arrested Development. Genius. Canceled." Why do we reward the basic and shun the complex? Why do mediocre shows like *Friends* receive such acclaim while original, innovative shows are ignored? Stop selling yourself short and demand a challenge for your brain. I urge you to see this show from the beginning and follow along with it. Seasons One and Two are currently available on DVD. If you watch them, you will not be disappointed.



Jordan Blum

Arrested Development followed a twisted path during its three seasons. Despite glowing reviews from almost every critic in existence, the show never found a strong viewership base, and floundered in the ratings as it was moved among time slots. Fox recently cancelled the program, and I couldn't be happier to see it go.

Arrested Development is a wretched show that is undeserving of any and all praise. It is bland, formulaic and unrelated to the average viewer. I'll probably catch a bit of flak for that last statement, as *Arrested* fans tend to view the show as the most innovative sitcom to hit the screen in years, but I liked it better when it was called *Married...With Children* or *The Simpsons* or even *Family Guy*. The only real difference is that the characters in *Arrested* were once wealthy.

At its heart, the show is another dysfunctional family comedy. It centers around the "sane one," Michael Bluth (Jason Bateman), whose father built up a business empire from a frozen banana stand and is running from the law. However, Michael is the show's only dynamic character. The rest of the family members are one-note jokes.

There's George Oscar Bluth II, or G.O.B. (Will Arnett), an out-of-work magician; Buster Bluth (Tony Hale), the nerdy mama's boy; and Lucille Bluth (Jessica Walter), Michael's alcoholic socialite of a mother. The show's creators are content to parade their characters' eccentricities in front of viewers rather than giving them witty things to say or do, as if that is enough to elicit huge laughs from the audience. Well, it's not, and that's

why barely anyone who isn't a television critic or an indie kid watches this show.

I am not advocating the Nielson ratings system as a foolproof means for judging audience size, as it is inherently flawed, but the campaign of *Arrested Development* fans to have the show saved is just ridiculous. First, the show already was given more opportunities than it deserves. Each year it seemed Fox would not renew the program because of its horrible ratings. However, it was picked up every time under the assumption that viewers would finally start listening to the critics. They didn't.

Secondly, the campaign to have the show returned to the airwaves seems to be centered around whining and worthless E-mail missions rather than serious action. Here's a thought: Perhaps watching the show every time it was unjustly renewed would have been a good idea. Maybe buying massive quantities of the show's full-season DVDs could have persuaded Fox to give it one last shot.

Lastly, the cancellation of *Arrested Development* is a textbook example of democracy in action. Critics and a few fans do not and should not determine if a show remains on the air. America has voted with its remote controls, and the overwhelming result has been that this show is not worth the time and money it takes to create. The Bluths reached the end of their road. Let's keep it that way.



Bill Greenwood