

THE DAILY TEXAN Editorial Board

Curt Besselman
Associate Editor

Matthew Connally
Editor

David Bezanson
Associate Editor

Viewpoint opinions expressed in *The Daily Texan* are those of the writer of the article. They are not necessarily those of the University administration, the Board of Regents or the Texas Student Publications Board of Operating Trustees. Opinions expressed in staff or guest columns are those of the writer.

Letters submitted to **Firing Line** should be fewer than 250 words, and guest columns should be no more than 800 words. Bring submissions to the *Texan* basement offices at 25th Street and Whitis Avenue, or mail them to *The Daily Texan*, P.O. Box D, Austin, TX 78713. Letters may be edited for length, libel and *Texan* grammar/punctuation style.

VIEWPOINT

CLASS STRUGGLE

Why I don't go to class anymore

As an experiment, a TA in my English class yesterday compared *Hamlet* to movies of the *Star Wars*-James Bond genre (although the similarities between *Star Wars* and Bond flicks, as well as between *Star Wars* and *Hamlet*, broke down later in the discussion). The TA asserted that such movies are harmful because they objectify women.

I guess *Hamlet* is harmful, too. Which raises the question: If it's so harmful, why is it being taught?

The answer, nowadays, may not have anything to do with the play's merits. Even so-called canonical "texts" are now usually treated as illustrations of modern political and psychological theses. It is very risky to apply modern (and very reductive) concepts to literature or culture of the past.

Hamlet has been analyzed and delved into thousands of times since its writing, and the issues it deals with are so complex that we still don't entirely agree about Shakespeare's intentions. But the kinds of generalizations that modern academics make — such as the generalizations that all sexual women were viewed as whores and women in general viewed as property — don't do justice to the play or to history.

At one time, Marxist critiques of societies which Marx could not possibly have understood made for good mental calisthenics. But after four years in the College of Liberal Arts, it all seems very trite to me.

A recent article in *Harper's* about the "co-dependency" cult called pop psychology "the art of blaming somebody else." The phrase can also be applied to what is called multiculturalism, and in fact most of what is taught in the humanities these days. The obsessive inquiries of academia into power relations — like Marx's characterization of history as the oppression of one class by another — attempt to reduce human nature to a kindergarten-level materialist morality play. Powerful men/Europeans oppress voiceless women/non-Europeans to maintain power. No other explanations are looked for — one paradigm fits all.

This rhetoric does not teach students to take responsibility for themselves or their ideas — it teaches them to take the Eichmann defense: "I was only following orders." Any wrong action can be blamed on the oppressive power of the patriarchy.

The maddening part is that these academics believe that by harping on the theme of oppression long enough, you can inculcate it into students' psyches. Fortunately, many of us know b.s. when we hear it. While Freudian analysis sometimes makes for entertaining lectures, a lot of students would prefer to learn something real. Sorry.

— David Bezanson