

# 'Star Trek' . . .

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What Anderson and his colleagues in the department try to do is create a "happy medium" whereby a subject is both popular to the students and relative to philosophy.

*Star Trek* has both these qualities, he said. Followed by millions of "Trekkies" (who prefer the term "Trekkers"), *Star Trek* is as popular today as when it left the air in 1969.

### Star Trek most popular

*Star Trek* continues to be one of the departments' most popular of the departments' mini-courses. Anderson's mini-courses also include the philosophies of Bob Dylan, J. R.R. Tolkien, Ayn Rand, communism vs. religion, the American revolution, and Martin Luther King.

Anderson said he couldn't choose a favorite mini-course. "I like all of them," he said.

But the students do have a favorite—*Star Trek* which had an attendance of 125 last semester, compared to 105 for Dylan, and 101 for Tolkien.

Anderson said he is a *Star Trek* fan himself—to a degree.

"I've seen all of the episodes many times, and have read all the books about *Star Trek*, so that shows some devotion on my part," he said.

*Star Trek* is overflowing with philosophical content, Anderson said, mainly because of the influence of Gene Roddenberry, the show's producer.

Roddenberry injected several characteristics of philosophy into the show, Anderson said. Anderson can give specific examples of Roddenberry's influence.

"The 'Cloud Menders' (a *Star Trek* episode) involved race hatred," Anderson said. "The cloud dwellers and Troglites were the two battling races."

Anderson said the three main characters of *Star Trek* can be analyzed philosophically.

For example, Anderson said, Mr. Spock represents logic, Dr. McCoy rep-

resents emotion, while Captain Kirk represents these two forces intermixing.

While it might seem all fun and games to study a 1960s science-fiction T.V. show, Anderson assured that it is not.

"We illustrate philosophy," Anderson explained. "We leave out the entertaining part and dwell on philosophy."

Anderson said the Bob Dylan class does not listen to Dylan's records, the Tolkien class does not read Tolkien, and the *Star Trek* students do not watch the show in class.

### Depend on popularity

Anderson said course schedules are open to change depending on their popularity. "We drop some, we add some," he said.

The mini-courses are succeeding in helping students become interested in philosophy, Anderson said.

Two students interviewed who had taken philosophy mini-courses agreed with Anderson that they make philosophy a little less scary.

Brendan Kelley, an education major who has taken several mini-courses said, "I think they have redeeming value. They're lighter than the really heavy classes.

"They got me more interested. I took a few other philosophy classes after that," he said.

Bill Barelman, an agricultural economics major who took Anderson's *Star Trek* course, said he enjoyed the class.

"The course gave an already popular program a deeper general meaning," he said.

"It made me more interested in philosophy," he added.

Anderson said that while the mini-courses are helping, it is still an uphill battle to get students interested in philosophy.

"I've talked to people who get out of college and didn't know what philosophy was," he said.

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