

SEAN GREEN

Registration hellish ordeal

Each March and October students at UNL are forced to endure what amounts to cruel and unusual punishment at the hands of the administration.

This punishment euphemistically is called class registration.

Because I graduate this May (at least in theory), I don't have to endure this torture. Others are not so lucky.

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln tries to make the process as painless as possible. Or maybe they make it as painful as possible — I forget.

For the benefit of those who have yet to register for classes here, I briefly will summarize the process of registering for classes.

Each student is given a packet with all kinds of crap in it, most of which gets lost or accidentally thrown away. A newspaper is inside with page after page of tiny, illegible print.

Be warned about the print in these newspapers. Because it is so small, a student may think he or she is registering for a class but might instead be registering for a strand of his or her roommate's hair.

A class description guide also tells students a little bit about the classes they are choosing.

A typical class description might read:

"Theories of Greek History 202 — an advanced history course examining the political, artistic and philosophical figures of Ancient Greece. Prerequisite — Greek History 101."

It would be unfair to call these class descriptions bald-faced lies. It would be unfair, but not untrue. A more accurate description of a class might read differently.

"Theories of Greek History 202 — a living hell. You will be expected to know the name of every person that ever lived in Ancient Greece. You will have to read the Iliad and the Odyssey (again!) and memorize key sections.

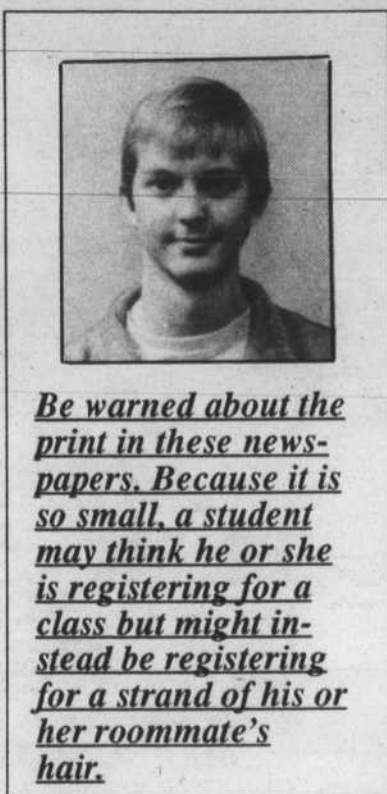
"In addition, you will have to write 12 term papers and present at least 10 of them to the class. You will have to learn to speak and read Greek.

"The final is comprehensive, worth 95 percent of your total grade and is made up of one essay question.

"Prerequisites — you must have brain damage to even consider taking this class."

There are other approaches to writing class descriptions of course. College administrators could learn a lot from those who write the plot summaries on the back of movie rentals.

For example:



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"Theories of Greek 202 — Siskel and Ebert give this exciting adventure in learning two thumbs up. It's another madcap day in the lives of our ancient Greek ancestors, and you can be there to see it.

"The laughs are non-stop as Professor Finbinster (from Night of the Living Dead and Western Civilization 101) takes you on a hilarious tour of Ancient Greece. Guest lecturers include Helen of Troy, played by Julia Roberts (Pretty Woman), and Aristotle, played by Kevin Costner (Robin Hood).

"The tests are easy, the lectures outrageous and there is no homework — EVER!

"And, you just may meet that special someone you've been searching for all your life! Prerequisite — be ready to howl.

"I laughed, I cried, I got an A!" — The New York Times."

Registering for classes also is a nightmare because chances are good that things will go wrong. Forget to fill out one oval, and you'll be spending time in drop-add hell.

Drop-add is usually in the Administration Building, but they move it up to the second floor of the Nebraska Union when business is especially good.

Drop-add also is proof that there are worse things in this world than a visit to the dentist or the gas chamber.

Other things can go wrong with registration.

It is common at this time of the year for college students to have nightmares about those things, and it also is possible for those nightmares to come true.

Most of my fears involve graduation.

I am convinced that I will get a letter two weeks before graduation day informing me I forgot all about a 12-hour geology requirement.

Someday students will be registering by phone, computer or fax machine, and all of the paperwork we do now will be another thing we can complain about to our grandchildren to make them feel like lazy, insolent cretins.

At Northwest Missouri State University, in Maryville, Mo., students already are using computers to help them register.

Northwest has a computerized campus, meaning each residence hall room and fraternity house has a computer hooked up to the university's mainframe.

When class registration rolls around, the students call up the classes they want to take and see if they are open, who teaches the class and how many seats still are available in the class.

However, the process is not completely computerized. Students only use the computer to help them select classes, not actually to register for them. To register, they must stand in long lines and wait for a university employee to type their class selections into the computer.

When I was attending that university, I never understood exactly why they didn't let the students type in their own class selections, but I didn't understand a lot of things about Northwest.

As an individual student, it's easy to complain about the process, especially for me because I complain for a living. But the task of getting 25,000 students registered for classes probably leads to a whole different set of complaints, such as, "Why can't these idiots read directions?" and "Fill in the ovals with a No. 2 pencil — which word don't you understand?"

The only good part about registering for classes is that it ends, eventually — if you're lucky. The only thing to do is get it over with as quickly as possible and hope you don't wind up in a class from hell.

Green is a senior news-editorial major, a Daily Nebraskan senior reporter and a columnist.

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Federal funding of arts pathetically meager

I wish to take issue with some of the points made by Mark Fahleson in his column titled "Federal funding of arts lullaby," which appeared in the Feb. 28 issue of the Daily Nebraskan. First, let me admit to a certain bias as a musician and as a member of the NEA's Choral Panel. Secondly, let me admit to being conservative enough to agree with Mr. Fahleson's dismay at what we both feel have been some unfortunate funding decisions made by the Endowment.

The arts, owing to their creative birth process, are certainly judged with great amounts of subjectivity while criticism has always made the arts scene livelier. But Mr. Fahleson, his three years of legal training notwithstanding, seems to eschew objectivity altogether in attacking all the arts with the broad stroke of his journalistic brush. Labeling symphonies and operas as "innocuous" and wondering "Whatever happened to Norman Rockwell?" give all-too-clear a picture of his meager artistic sympathies. Would he tarnish the reputation of the entire legal profession because of a small number of lawyers who are admitted to the bar and then revealed to be unethical in carrying out their duties?

The monies expended for the Mapplethorpe exhibit (of which the most-publicized photographs represented a minuscule portion of the entire show) and the Serrano urine-submerged crucifix, while controversial and, in my opinion, misguided, represented a minor fraction of the

Endowment's total annual budget. The Endowment helps to support the aforementioned symphonies and opera companies, emerging jazz groups, folkloric groups that promote the music of our own native peoples, composers, visual artists and dance troupes among others. Many of the Endowment's funding decisions are based on an individual's or a group's proven abilities to hone its fund-raising and managerial skills. Endowment awards are hardly "free lunches" and, in most cases, are very modest. The \$250,000 that went toward "Tongues Untied" is a drop in the bucket compared to the production cost of practically any type of movie and reflects "real world" budgets (much the same way a computer science professor earns tens of thousands of dollars more than a music professor). As a case in point, the Endowment's total budget for amateur, semi-professional and professional choirs this year was \$238,000. And don't think the word "professional" means you can actually earn a living from this artistic pursuit! Might I suggest that labeling "Tongues Untied" as "profane" reflects Mr. Fahleson's moral, rather than artistic, views and seriously compromises his objectivity as a journalist?

I would also remind Mr. Fahleson that Sen. Proxmire often targeted the armed forces and other governmental agencies for his "Golden Fleece" awards. Let's face it: our Mapplethorpes and Serranos are their high-priced toilet seats, grossly inflated K-Mart hammers, and other outrageous

cost overruns. And while Mr. Fahleson has every right to take issue with Lee Brozgold's "40 Patriots/Countless Americans," what is his opinion of the "Post Office art" one can find throughout our nation of muscled white men driving golden spikes or leading wagon trains, their wives cowering in the background in covered wagons or busy in the cook tent, being served by Black or Oriental workers while simultaneously being attacked by marauding Native Americans? How politically correct would that be today? Times change. Tastes change.

We need only cast our eyes across the Atlantic where European governments support orchestras, choirs, opera companies and other artistic endeavors with a generosity totally unknown in this country. Why? There is simply a sense of persevering civilization and culture that is inbred in Europe. Even in the former Soviet Union and its satellites, governmentally subsidized, low-priced tickets to arts events gave many people glimmers of happiness, well-being and even a sense of freedom in otherwise dismal lives.

I, for one, will see a better day dawning when a municipality can point to its art museum, the size of its library, or the reputation of its symphony orchestra and community theater with the same pride exhibited for its domed sports behemoth.

James Hejduk
associate professor
music

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