

WENDY MOTT

# Homework mars end of school

School is almost over. Everyone keeps telling me so. But for some reason, it doesn't feel like school's almost over. When school's done, doesn't that mean it's summer? And wouldn't summer mean the nice days outnumbered the bad?



**There was a time when the end of a school year sent me into a perpetual state of happiness. Now it sends me into a state of panic.**

If summer's almost here, students, clad in cutoffs and ratty T-shirts, should be piled around Broyhill Fountain drinking in sunshine. Instead, students, clad in cutoffs and ratty T-shirts, shiver across campus, dodging raindrops and cursing inaccurate weather reports.

On the rare occasions when the sun peeks out of its hibernation, everyone goes nuts and tries to lay out. And if it's possible to tan through mountains of goose bumps, they might be accomplishing something.

I'm no different. There's only one word to describe my complexion — sallow.

It doesn't seem fair. Usually students can get their tans during spring break, then come back to school and maintain. Any tan maintenance taking place this year is being purchased.

Just last spring the trees had buds and everyone was well into the warm season when that pesky blizzard swept in and canceled school.

A blizzard this year would warrant no more than a yawn from university officials.

"School's almost over," they'd say, looking out over the expanse of glittering white. "Skip the shoveling."

Surely school can't be almost over when I haven't even sent my sweaters home.

School's end should mean lazy days, picnics, barbecues and Nebraska's version of beaches. It

shouldn't mean registering for summer classes, looking for internships and worrying what your address will be a month from now.

This was the time of year for class parties and outside recess every day. The jungle gyms were mine for the taking each and every lunchtime.

Now, recess means little more than a short trip to a yogurt store downtown or five minutes of Frisbee on campus. And even these moments can't be enjoyed because of the sense of guilt looming over you for shirking some sort of responsibility somewhere.

Once upon a time, this was the time to turn in books and damage reports and get an approving smile from Mrs. Davis as she checked your name off the list.

This year we'll turn our books in

and get ripped off, no matter what condition the books are in.

There was a time when the end of a school year sent me into a perpetual state of happiness. Now it sends me into a state of panic.

I used to look forward to the last days of school as an end to hours of homework.

Now I see the final days of the semester marked by days of studying trying to make up for lost time.

What are we supposed to do about all those projects we heard about in the first week of class and put off as long as we possibly could? There's no where left to put them.

I'd give a great analogy here, but I'm afraid my professor might read it and find out just how far behind I really am. As it stands now, I can always say I was talking about another class I've been blowing off for the last three and a half months.

I have six — count 'em six — papers left to write, as well as the usual barrage of tests, quizzes and assignments to complete before the oh-so-stringent dead week policy goes into effect.

The time to study is finally upon me. I've got to bury myself in the stacks of Love Library and plod away. The only thing that can keep me from it would be a sudden rash of warm, sunny weather.

Sunday was a nice day; maybe there's hope for me yet.

Today's forecast: colder and windy with a 60 percent chance of rain. Extended forecast: crappy.

Just my luck.

Mott is a senior news-editorial and English major, an associate news editor and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

GARY YOUNG

# Political sphere isolates selves

Upon leaving the theater after watching "Falling Down," I could immediately predict the conventional review wisdom on the film. "It's a story about a white male who can't handle giving any ground to non-white non-males." My expectations were more than realized to say the least in a Newsweek cover story on the movie entitled, "White Male Paranoia."



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The author's words were predictable. White males, so the reviewer thought, were increasingly marginalized by a culture committed against them. In view of history — and of course he trotted out Columbus, Thomas Jefferson as a slave owner, etc. — they apparently deserve the bashing they are getting. And thus, when the race-gender-ethnicity evangelists insist on imposing turnabout, white males should stop complaining, and so to speak, take it like a (white) man. Thirsty for revenge, the reviewer had only shrill platitudes against — you know who — white Eurocentric patriarchal males.

The boredom provoked by reading this article's simpleton view of history was only occasionally relieved by the bitter shrill of a lively quote: "The white guys who run the business world are a bunch of shallow, bald, middle-aged men with character disorders. They don't have the emotional capacity that it takes to qualify as human beings. The one good thing about these white, male, almost extinct mammals is that they're growing old. We get to watch them die."

Forgive the quoted: If it were not for inclusion of such frightening quotes, race-gender-ethnicity arguments become something that puts even academics to sleep. Boring.

To be sure, "Falling Down" is a much deeper film than the problems of the white American male. The plot is motivated by a much more substantive and incisive theme than the victimization of white men. Rather, the film is about the increasing isolation of the Western self, and its victims are of every race and gender.

Michael Douglas' character, D-Fens, — who, by the way, is not balding — finds himself in peril. Having lost his job through defense cuts and his marriage through lack of self-control, the film ironically begins with him surrounded by people. He is in a traffic jam that anticipates the entire film: thousands of people, every one alone amongst all the rest. Each person behind his or her own steering wheel and with independent travel plans.

The isolation builds as D-Fens moves through his day. All around are people who refuse to give the slightest courtesies. Most either will not or cannot speak to him. That they don't speak the same language matters less than that they cannot connect with one another in any language.

In one scene, for example, D-Fens attempts to buy breakfast at a fast-food restaurant. Of course, breakfast ended at 10:30, and D-Fens is one minute late. As a result, the manager insists — in an all-too-real, mechanical-like tone — that D-Fens order from the lunch menu: "That's not our policy, sir, it's 10:30 and therefore

you have to order lunch. That's our policy."

The film is filled with this type of bureaucratic disconnection. And as it moves on, D-Fens longs more and more to engage with any human.

The center of the plot, then, is a simple pursuit: D-Fens wants to enjoy his daughter's birthday. D-Fens' thirst for community enrages him; he desperately wants a community to live in, a validation that he is not isolated, not alone.

His condition speaks to that of the Western self. Worn out from a life of intense individualism, modern man's understanding of community is only as an environment for self-validation. Stripped of a social substance in the culture, the political sphere now dominates nearly every square inch of Western life.

But the currency of the political sphere — pure power — is unsatisfying to the longing soul. For D-Fens, self-validation becomes wielding an Uzi at innocents. In today's community of pure politics, Uzis are shrill demands for individual rights.

Of course, D-Fens' use of violence only results in further isolation. His temper and self-control push his wife and children away. He never gets to his daughter's birthday party. In the end, his claim on community at the end of a gun results in him only being killed by another who was much more powerful.

Like D-Fens, the West finds itself more fragmented — its people more alone than ever. When the community is purely political, we have nowhere to look but to power as an antidote for our lonely souls.

Unless we re-establish our connections with others, unless we reconstruct a social sphere, we will, like D-Fens, end up destroying ourselves. One thing we can be sure of: Such a social disintegration will not be discriminatory — the losses will go far beyond the beleaguered white male.

Young is a first-year law student and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

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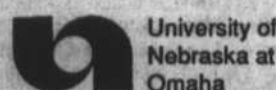
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