

Daily Nebraskan Editorial Board University of Nebraska-Lincoln

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EDITORIAL

Missing the mark

Number grades won't work in all cases

If a plan before the Academic Senate is passed next month, students at UNL will know precisely how well they did in their classes.

Letter grades would be eliminated under the plan. A number grade equivalent to a student's grade-point average would be assigned instead. A student with a high B-plus might receive a 3.6 instead of a 3.5. Likewise, a student with a low A might receive a 3.7 or 3.9 instead of a 4.0.

If that sounds complicated, it is. Professors would no longer simply be able to assign students letter grades within defined parameters. They would have to determine that one student earned a 3.7 and another a 2.2.

The argument for the system is that it would make grading at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln more exact. Students would no longer barely miss a letter grade either way. They would be assigned a number grade that would show exactly how well they did.

But there are several problems with the system. In science and math classes, assigning precise grades would not be difficult. But how would number grading work in more subjective courses like English?

The system also could hurt students who excel. Under UNL's current system, an A translates into a 4.0. But how many professors would give their students perfect grades? The system could end up lowering the GPAs of students who receive A marks.

On the surface, adopting a system to more accurately grade students sounds like a good idea. But the Academic Senate needs to come up with a better plan before they attempt to change the way students are evaluated at UNL.

It has to end

Nelson takes step against youth violence

Our adult world is so riddled with problems that we sometimes forget today's youth do not live in a carefree world of lollipops and hopscotch.

Growing up in the '90s is scary. Guns. Drugs. Gangs. Today's young people face temptations and obstacles their parents never dealt with or dreamt of.

When young people succumb to these temptations, the results are tragic. Although they seem like children, youths do commit adult-sized crimes. Many of today's youth offenders are murderers and drug dealers.

As it is, the legal system is ill-equipped to handle this new breed of young criminals.

To address this problem, Gov. Ben Nelson presented LB988 to a Senate subcommittee Wednesday. This bill outlines Nelson's youth crime package.

Nelson plans to fight youth crime with three weapons: detention, prevention and intervention.

LB988 would make the sale or transfer of a firearm to a minor a felony. It would help schools keep guns and drugs from their hallways by making it easier to confiscate illegal items.

Because current youth centers and confinement facilities were not designed to deal with violent offenders, the bill proposes a new facility especially for them.

The bill also includes education and treatment programs to help strengthen families and warn younger adolescents about gangs.

It may be too soon to determine how effective each part of Nelson's package would be, but he has already taken an important first step.

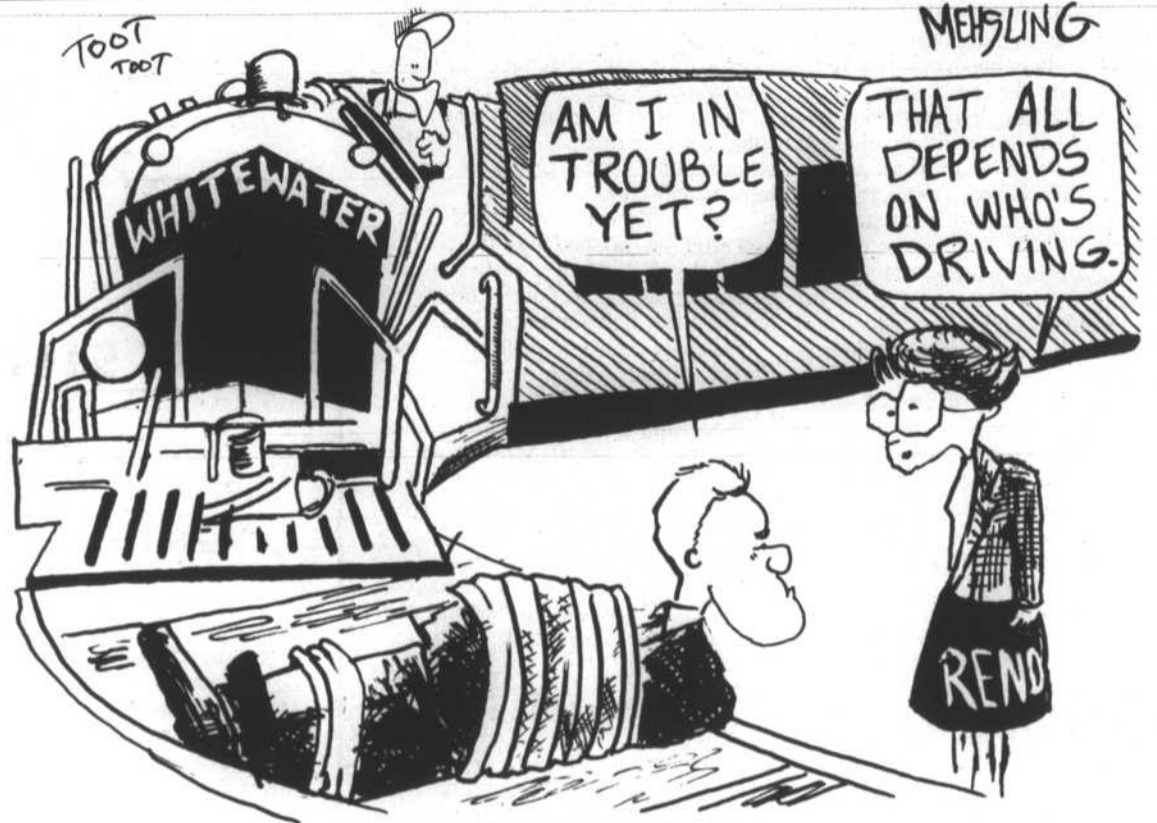
It is time for Nebraska's legal system to catch up with the crimes of its children.

EDITORIAL POLICY

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LETTER POLICY

The Daily Nebraskan welcomes brief letters to the editor from all readers and interested others. Letters will be selected for publication on the basis of clarity, originality, timeliness and space available. The Daily Nebraskan retains the right to edit or reject all material submitted. Readers also are welcome to submit material as guest opinions. The editor decides whether material should run as a guest opinion. Letters and guest opinions sent to the newspaper become the property of the Daily Nebraskan and cannot be returned. Anonymous submissions will not be published. Letters should include the author's name, year in school, major and group affiliation, if any. Requests to withhold names will not be granted. Submit material to the Daily Nebraskan, 34 Nebraska Union, 1400 R St., Lincoln, Neb. 68588-0448.



E. HUGHES SHANKS

Decades portrayed inaccurately

Lately, we hear and speak a lot about the '60s and '70s. It's as if they've been rediscovered, as if we've uncovered hidden treasures.

But if I hear one more thing about how great the '60s and '70s were, I'll scream.

I received a letter recently that brought back bad memories of times past.

To put my frustration with the letter and overexposed decades in perspective, we need to go back to where this whole mess actually started. The Cold War. The 1950s, damn it.

Just when I thought I'd gotten over it, "Big Brother/Sister" reared its ugly head, and I cracked. A letter from Financial Aid came last week and sent me off the deep end.

Apparently, the processing center for my student loan was unable to confirm whether I had registered with the Selective Service.

"They found me," I thought.

But then I thought: "Wait a minute. I'm too old. Besides, five years in the Navy, five years in the Air National Guard and a 10 percent disability exempt me. Don't they?"

You may not understand how a letter from the university could send me crashing back to the Cold War, but the events of the past leave profound residual effects.

I remember a time when my peers and I lived in fear that we would be drafted, that our number would come up. Someone — we weren't sure who, maybe the government, maybe the Big Brother/Sister we heard so much about — was watching us, and if they wanted to find us they could and they would.

Picture this: the invention of television, Charles Starkweather, Dwight Eisenhower, Richard Nixon, the Cold War, George Orwell, the Manchurian Candidate, Sen. Joe McCarthy and



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most importantly, a lack of global communication.

The overriding theme of the time encapsulated a drab, cold, dark, dank climate. Ironically, we weren't talking to the Eastern Bloc countries, but we were listening.

We were perfecting "space-age" technology to look at, to listen to, to spy on and to duplicate all we could. We weren't even safe from ourselves back then. To hell with Russia.

The '50s were rich with irony.

Black soldiers served alongside whites in Korea, but they couldn't be served alongside them at most metropolitan lunch counters stateside.

In 1954, our benevolent grandfatherly president — a professional soldier and killer of men, women and children, Dwight Eisenhower — presented a paper to the United Nations entitled "Atoms for Peace." Within a year he launched his first nuclear submarine.

Pop culture has a way of imitating history without actually reliving it. It doesn't need to be relived. However, if you're going to wear our clothes, walk our walk and talk our talk and continue to haunt us, listen up!

Pop culture emphasizes just one side of past events and treats them as true historical images. We have failed to credit some of our more sinister

sides. For example, we fondly remember hula hoops, but what of the thousands of fallout shelters we built?

Early modern political theorists warned that we could not withstand ownerships of the media by large single bodies and, 30 years ago, we believed them. They were wrong. Later, alarmist intellectuals thought we'd be blown to bits or controlled by "Big Brother/Sister." They too were wrong.

We have proof that Orwell was right to some extent. My guess is there are plenty of young folks today who know who "Big Brother/Sister" was/is. And no doubt many would welcome a wider window to the world than the glossy Madison Avenue one we now call Time-Warner or MTV.

All of our sources of information and entertainment are owned by just a few people. Today we refer to media giants and megacorporations by name. We even delight in knowing their wedding plans, such as those of Donald Trump and Marla Maples. Where once we referred to a single street, Madison Avenue, we now know "Big Brother/Sister" by name, and we appear to be quite comfortable with him/her.

I'll probably never leave my Cold War fears and paranoia behind me. I'm still pissed about that letter.

Shanks is a political science graduate student and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Kepfield

Sam Kepfield's last column (DN, Jan. 18, 1993) started to make a very good point. Of course he ruined it with his drastically incorrect assumptions, but I actually started to applaud him.

The column argued that although abortion is supposed to be one of the core tenets of American liberalism, it violates other liberal beliefs by being applied in racist, sexist and possibly homophobic ways. Kepfield's mistake was in assuming he had caught all liberals in great hypocrisy when in fact many of us have always seen legal abortion as the lesser of evils. There is even a group called Feminists for Life who say just what he did about abortion harming women. Many people of color and disabilities rights activists are either opposed to abortion or very wary of proclaiming its virtues because they also see its dangers.

His greatest mistake was to assume there is some monolithic group of people called LIBERALS who all think exactly alike and question nothing. Abortion is one of those issues tearing across and apart both liberal and conservative camps.

It is unwise to compare abortion-rights advocates to Stalin and Hitler because it then allows others to compare abortion foes to Andre Ceausescu, the tyrannical former leader of Communist Romania who made abortion a treasonable offense. Is Kepfield more comfortable with that company?

Trevor McArthur senior teachers college

Parking

Now that the "green space" north of the Nebraska Union will finally be a reality, Chancellor Spanier could offer the ultimate "good faith" ges-

ture: exclusive parking for physically challenged students, staff and faculty in the lot directly west of the Administration Building. Because there are so few marked spaces for the physically challenged in the core of campus, this lot would allow easier access (the ramp entrance is right there) to the Administration Building, where services for the physically challenged are housed; Love Library; and the Nebraska Union.

Because Spanier decided it wouldn't be an imposition for physically challenged faculty and staff to walk to campus from a more remote lot, he and the other administrators shouldn't mind either. Let's be a leader in providing services for the physically challenged as well as developing a reputation for a "beautiful, green campus."

Alicia A. Law retired UNL employee