

I'm really, really sorry

Apologies offered for everything that got lost in semester's mix



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Ladies and gentlemen, I got the blues.

It is almost 4 on Wednesday morning. I am on the second paragraph of this week's column, which was due Monday at 8 p.m.

And that is the least of my worries.

In about four hours, my roommate, a health nut engineering major, will wake me up. He'll probably be chipper, because he went to bed about three hours ago. He's going to insist that I go running with him.

Five years ago, when I was a top-10 member of what USA Today called the 23rd best high school cross country team in the nation, I'd have been OK with that. Now, though, I'm sucking on a Marlboro Medium and wishing, not for the first time, that I could hit a reset button on my college

career — or on this semester, at the very least.

Lord Almighty, this week could have gone better.

I'm going to use the next 20 or so column inches to bitch and moan about it.

I'm not asking you to sympathize with me. I'm not even asking you to read the whole thing.

I'm just asking you not to hate me for it. If my colleague Todd Munson can get fan mail by rambling regularly about his everyday life, the least you guys can do for me is not complain if I try it for a week.

Besides this column, I have not one, but two write-ups due for biology lab Wednesday.

I want to apologize in advance — except it won't really be in advance, because this will be printed on Thursday — to my teaching assistant, Kay.

Kay, at least one of my lab reports will probably be late. I know you're not surprised. I just want you to know how bad I feel about this. I have no excuse, except that "Midnight Run," starring Robert DeNiro and Charles Grodin was on cable Tuesday night. Sometimes art just sucks me in. I wish I could get that excited about enzymes.

I would also like to apologize to my Introduction to Broadcasting professor, Peter Mayeux.

Professor Mayeux, I missed your class on Monday. This is not notewor-

thy in and of itself — it was just one of many Monday sessions I skipped.

Looking through my syllabus, though, I realized that this particular Monday happened to feature our second test of the semester.

I might come talk to you about this. I'm not sure yet. For some unknowable reason, it's much easier for me to confess my irresponsibility in print, before a potential audience of thousands, than I think it would be in your office.

Besides that, the syllabus also says that make-up tests will be given only if you're notified of absences in advance. To be honest, I don't remember notifying you in advance that I'd be sitting at home in my boxers instead of taking the exam.

The syllabus also says make-up tests will be essay tests. I imagine that since I haven't read the required chapters, an essay test would be much harder to pass than the standard multiple-choice.

So maybe we'll just let that test go, and I'll have to ace the next three.

Next, I want to apologize to my sometimes math instructor, Krista Taylor.

Krista, you probably don't remember me, because you haven't seen me for about a month now.

See, I signed up for your class because I needed an extra four or five credits to be a full-time student.

I wanted to like the class. Robert Heinlein wrote: "Anyone who cannot cope with mathematics is not fully human. At best he is a tolerable sub-human who has learned to wear shoes, bathe and not make messes in the house."

And I agree. I wanted to increase my mathematical ability. I just didn't want to do it at 9:30 in the morning, every morning, while I was trying to pass Advanced Reporting at the same time.

I've switched your class to the pass/no pass grading option, Krista, so it won't hurt my grade-point average. And I just want to let you know, you can put the "N" in the grade book. I might show up for the final, just for giggles, but you almost certainly won't see me until then.

I also would like to apologize to the many agencies to whom I owe money — my credit card companies, Sprint and Lincoln Electric Service among them — believe you me, as soon as I have some more money, I'll pass it on.

I'll even offer a half-hearted "I'm sorry" to Aliant Communications, although I think it's a crock of horse poeey that they expect me to pay them on time when they have repeatedly screwed up my account, disconnected my service erroneously at least once and when their 35-cent pay phones will not give me change for two quarters.

To those of you who've read this far, I'd also like to apologize. Just so all of you know, I am well aware that my life could be worse. I could be living in war-torn Bosnia or elsewhere in the Third World right now. Scariest still, I could be one of those boys from the Alpha Tau Omega Fraternity house, who were listening to — with God as my witness — that Celine Dion song from "Titanic" while they built their Homecoming thing Tuesday afternoon.

Last of all, I want to apologize to my mom and dad, who, I'm sure, have read this far and, I'm more sure, are not pleased. Um, sorry?

My story, as you can see, is a sad one. In an interview in this month's Playboy, Mike Tyson described himself — seriously — as "one of those rare flowers who blossom in adversity." I am not like Mike. I have seen the rocky face of academic greatness looming before me, and I have not conquered it. Instead, I have fallen asleep halfway up it.

On a more positive note, I only have to make it through this semester, and then I will graduate and be free. And, gloomy as I may make my situation sound, I'm pretty sure I'll pull through. It's happened before.

Now I'm going to do some biology. If I'm lucky, I'll get a couple hours of sleep in before I have to put on my running shoes.

Rest in peace

Tupac Shakur left controversial legacy of musical honesty



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Last month marked the second anniversary of the death of rapper Tupac Amaru Shakur, a unique, controversial artist whose life was trapped between a world of fame as an artist and a world of street life as a gangsta.

For those of you unfamiliar with rap music, Tupac Shakur was, to many, a legend.

Tupac's music developed a whole new style by introducing a concept Tupac described as "thugism" and "ghettoism." These are just slang terms for street life. Tupac promoted "Thug Life," which was his passion, and he was not afraid or ashamed to speak about his history.

Tupac was a talented rapper whose raw lyrics and rhymes triggered off the rage of a tough urban existence that seemed a blueprint of his own troubled life.

There is no doubt Tupac has left a distinctive impression on American culture. In his short 25 years, Tupac touched the lives of many through his music and movies. But many people forget to acknowledge the work Tupac did for his community and his efforts to improve and change street life. His voice was so distinctive that his words tell his story.

The media portrayal of Tupac as a tattooed, hopeless thug has focused our attention on his alleged crimes, instead of his music and his message. Tupac's life should be celebrated, as he had many good qualities that many people failed to recognize. The name Tupac can never be forgotten. The name Tupac Amaru means "shining serpent," and his last name, Shakur, means "thankful to God."

Tupac brought the reality of street and gangsta life to millions who lis-

tened to his music.

I never really appreciated rap music until Tupac's music was brought to my attention. I love Tupac's music now more than ever. I think we never really appreciate certain things until they are gone. Sometimes it's too late. However, a man like Tupac was so original that his words to live by are unforgettable.

Once known as "America's Most Wanted," Tupac was finally caught when his life came to a tragic end after a drive-by shooting.

Tupac was very outspoken, perhaps too much so. Not everyone agreed with his message, but he definitely had a point. He spoke what he described as "ghetto slang" or "ghetto poetry," a language form that perhaps you and I are unfamiliar with. But the people on the streets can relate to it. His words were very blunt, candid and real.

In his song "Brenda's Got a Baby," Tupac tells a story of a 12-year-old girl trapped in the hopelessness of ghetto life and pregnancy. Tupac says, "Now Brenda never really knew her moms/ And her dad was a junkie putting death into his arms/ It's sad ... just because you're in the ghetto it doesn't mean you can't grow."

For a man of 25 years, Tupac achieved what many people will never do. Tupac was influential to his fans and the people on the streets.

I have mixed feelings about this charismatic artist, who now is remembered as a poet because of his rhymes and touching lyrics, despite some of his offensive lyrics. Tupac just spoke about the truth.

Tupac was loved by those who worshipped him and he was hated by those who were jealous of him.

Some young people saw Tupac as a role model, while others saw him as a disgrace to society, a loudmouth who didn't know when to stop.

Many people relate to Tupac because he was a "realist." Tupac was full of drama, excitement and action. He always kept things real and didn't hold anything back.

He was very ambitious. It was his hunger and desire for success that brought him out of poverty.

Tupac's song "Dear Mama" is a classic. Tupac is very emotional in this song as he remembers the stress

he caused his mother. "Mama ... it ain't easy trying to raise a man/ You always was committed/ A poor single mother on welfare/ Tell me how you did it."

Tupac was so fascinated by the whole idea of death that his own death did not surprise many. In his lyrics he speaks about being killed and about his own funeral. Many people believe Tupac was obsessed with death.

In his song "Life Goes On," Tupac expresses his love for those who have passed. He says "How many brothers fell victim to streets/ Rest in peace young niggaz/ Is there a heaven for a G? Be a lie if I never thought of death/ My nigga, we the last ones left."

His whole death is a mystery and many people share the opinion that Tupac is still alive.

What is very much alive is his music, which will stay in the hearts of all his fans.

Looking at the life and legacy of Tupac Shakur, many people would describe him as a genius. He was a clever, unique individual. Tupac went from a nobody to a somebody. From welfare to ghetto superstar to million-dollar man, from rags to riches.

When one thinks of rap music and Tupac, words such as gangsta, ghetto, guns, killings, prisons, drugs, sex, violence, homelessness and poverty enter one's mind. Tupac spoke about brothers killing brothers for money and drugs. These are the issues he dealt with, and these are the problems that continue to disturb our society.

Most of Tupac's music is about death. The sad consequence is that Tupac lived his life the way his music speaks, like a movie

or a story he is telling.

Was Tupac mad, insane or just real? He was a man on a journey, searching for his place in society. He certainly taught and fought his struggles in his songs.

Tupac, I believe, was searching for the truth and for forgiveness.

Tupac was perhaps misunderstood by the media and those around him.

Tupac is still living, always, wherever he is. He is at peace somewhere.

We remember Tupac more now that he is gone.

Tupac wanted to go out with a bang, and he did. He always wondered if there was a ghetto up in heaven. Imagine this concept. Only someone as original as Tupac could create such an idea. If there is a ghetto in

heaven, I'm sure Tupac is living life to the fullest.

Tupac's life may of been wasted, but he certainly had a huge impact for many people of this decade.

Tupac will be remembered as a man on a mission with a message: The truth. The lessons people have learned from him can never be erased. His soul is finally free from this troubled earth and his death is just a part of his life. We can only bless Tupac for all his deeds and forgive him for his mistakes.

His name and influence is still on the streets. People can try to imitate him, but there can only ever be one Tupac. He is irreplaceable. If you feel Tupac's vibe and music, then you are feeling Tupac's spirit.

Always.

