

OPINION PAGES

Our
VIEW

Fatal flaw

Dead Week procedure needs to be changed

UNL needs to revamp its Dead Week policies as the next step in the line of many to becoming an academically rigorous university.

Instead of one week in which professors (if they follow the rules) cannot give tests, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln should set aside two days without class.

Students could use these two days — perhaps the final Thursday and Friday of dead week — to study for final exams, pack up their residence hall rooms or apartments and tie up any loose ends before semester's end.

A two-day break would put UNL in line with many of its Big 12 Conference peers, such as the University of Missouri-Columbia and the University of Texas in Austin, which both allow their students two days to gear up for finals.

UNL's Dead Week simply doesn't allow enough time for students to put a great effort into studying.

With many classes having final papers and projects that are due during Dead Week, students can't be expected to give final exams their all.

Instead, many students resort to last-minute cramming, which certainly cannot foster the type of learning for which UNL, in its pursuit for academic quality, strives.

The extra studying time the two-day break would provide could allow professors to re-evaluate their final exams and perhaps make them more difficult or comprehensive in keeping with academic rigor.

With the current Dead Week being mostly like any other week, some professors may shy away from creating a true "final" exam — one that covers material from the entire semester.

Those professors who already give a daunting final exam would be met on testing day by better-prepared students who have had ample studying time.

Though a two-day break would not be a "cure-all" for UNL's mediocre academic credentials, it could perhaps lessen its reputation for easy classes by allowing time for students to study for harder final exams.

Aside from creating a more academically stringent environment, the two-day break from classes would allow students to pack their residence hall rooms or apartments.

Many students have to balance paper writing and studying time with tidying up their homes to beat the clock on soon-to-expire leases or residence hall contracts.

Though some students undoubtedly would waste the days off by partying, drinking and procrastinating, most would take advantage of the much-needed study time.

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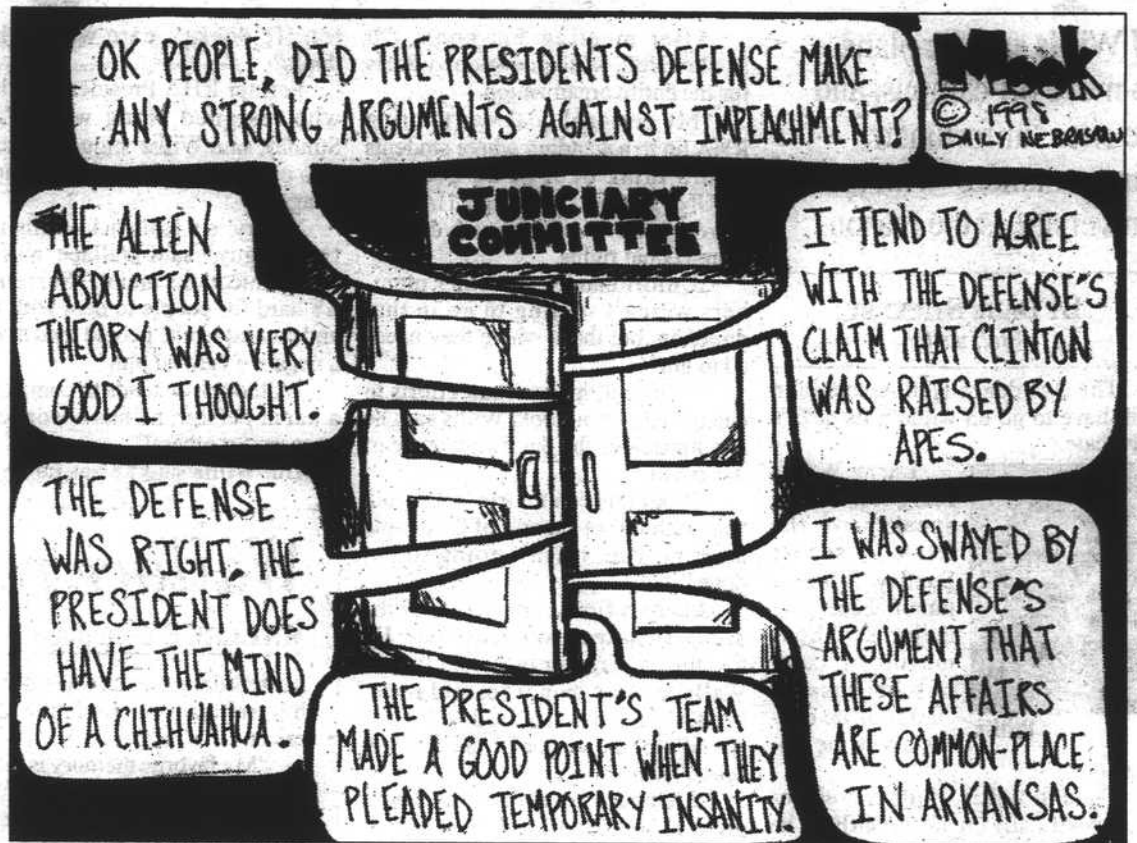
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Mook's
VIEW



Guest
VIEW

Paying tribute

Professor's dedication deserves mention

RICH STAMLER is a junior philosophy major.

A cough drop tucked in one cheek and enough smile to let you know he still has good teeth, this professor appears more vegetarian than carnivore. After fall semester, he slips out the southern back door when Nebraska weather erupts into insanity, and nature is withering dead all over.

Politically, one may find him left of center, but he's one professor who keeps his mind wedged open. With a cargo bay full of data and time necessary to turn a great ship, this instructor still navigates to broader horizons.

His countenance shines as an encouraging spirit even though classes are often dominated by the herds of the apathetic or frustrated student. He honors passion, realizing its better fruits may need to drag one kicking and screaming via the dogmatic summit or through the cynical abyss to jump-start one into life.

Defending his trenches with a poker face, he challenges students on who holds the better hand. Even winning, he'll share the pot and roll out the proverbial keg. Overtly playing the passive type, he would not put his tail between his legs and bridle himself from kicking the tar out of stupid or evil historical figures.

Students, still wet behind the ears with amniotic fluid and provincial agendas, may think this political philosopher has some agenda against God, country, and even apple pie until his method is unveiled, to challenge campus rugrats on what makes good gods, country and yes, good apple pie! I digress; therefore, I think. (DeRich)

Enough charades already! Who is this unmasked, horseless seasonal sojourner? It is none other than Professor Phil Dyer tucked away in a humble temporary office on the fifth floor of Oldfather. This tribute is not just one buffoon's voice. I have talked to many other campus community clowns of like experiences. None had a legitimate case against him, especially those who thought he would be an easy A. Some have changed degrees; others just took any course Dr. Dyer would teach.

Even after 33 years of military life, before his professorship, this professor never blows his own horn; so I must on behalf of all! Per life, one

only finds a few mentors like this. Being one who selfishly hoards his toys, I regret revealing his name, knowing I will have to share the sandbox. Whether or not you like political science, now is the opportunity to introduce yourself to a standard of teaching excellence.

When the weather is good in Nebraska (an oxymoron), I challenge you to take a class from Dr. Phil Dyer, and add a twinkle to your eye and a bounce to your step. He is seeking retirement with a vengeance so your opportunities are limited.

What's it like hanging with the likes of Professor Dyer? Greenhorns who feel they have fallen into enemy camp will find he can stomach any political agenda as long as common sense overrides nonsense. He is of the pragmatist bent supporting the right to any ideology that "will get you through the night" keeping demons and indigestion at bay.

Moreover, this professor won't profess over his neophytes like some academic snob hobbling on stilts, slipping and swaggering around the higher-browed regions of the ivory tower.

Like a graying uncle, he treats the younger "urchins" as his own and nontraditional students as brothers. He fosters a true Socratic environment hoping to invigorate the lecture with diverse agendas, devil's advocates, and may, on occasion, invite the devil himself. Let the dialectic fun begin! He breakdances with the likes of J.S. Mill, who was convinced that truth is only manifested when it collides with error, evil, and competitive recipes for apple pie.

I would prophesy that his lectures would resurrect Socrates if not dust and ashes blowing across the Greek landscape. Summing up, it's like Thanksgiving Day with relatives who don't throw food. Dr. Dyer makes everyone feel round dessert (pie) will be shared, even if there are a few verbose swine at the table.

How well does he work in a pressure cooker? That's where bombastic individuals come in! As a buffoonish nontraditional, wallowing in a state of radical moderation, I have a lot of worn baggage. My first real encounter, equivalent to Spock's Vulcan mind-meld, was when I challenged him to give an example of what is expected of essays. I critiqued the example until the ink was tearing

up on the hapless letters. Without blinking, Professor Dyer persisted in reasons to get at least one toenail back down to planet earth.

Through the course of the mind-meld, it became evident that he had given an example of his own work. My drawers filled as I thought, "This is no way to start off a class!" Awestruck in the wake, a well-justified grudge never reared its ugly head.

Though my first essay drafts collapsed under their own weight leaving me staggering like a drunken sailor in the middle of the grade range, Dr. Dyer has a method to rehabilitate youthful madness. Students can rewrite papers until they have crawled or clawed as high up the grade scale as desired. I crawled, in diapers, securing a decent grade, but not without much sweat and a few tears (my inner child is whispering to come out). He reads between the lines of the struggling student, salting them with a touch of mercy, revealing the disciples' mettle or other inorganic compounds.

Professor Dyer expects all verbal rubble and compositional flaws to be extricated from essays. He also expects rumination, like cud-chewing bovine, long enough on his views until his extracted nutrients have found one's bloodstream. However, after one has dragged his or her tail down the traditional path, he will allow students to take their own tattered flag of democracy and plunge it into history's steaming accumulated heap. What is of great virtue is this professor mentors under the wings of mercy, not between the rock and the hard place of justice.

If this professor smoked, it would probably be a pipe; though he is not the typical scholar frantically digging scholastic holes in which only scholars would want to peer, or fall in, as the case may be. He works better in the shadows inspiring radical moderates, hoping that their idiosyncrasies will not find their way back to misinterpreting his lectures.

He is a TEACHER, in the fullest sense, seeking to instill passion in students, the hope of the future — our last and only hope that someone will be present in our futures to carry our bedpans. Without kingdom or throne, long live philosopher kings like this. Long live Professor Phil Dyer!