



ENQUIRY

VOL. IV No. 20 | CLINTON, NY. WEDNESDAY, MARCH 8, 2017

A publication of the AHI Undergraduate Fellows // Free thought and discourse

① *The Open Curriculum*
#OpenCurriculum

② *The Importance of Peaceful Protests*
#PeacefulProtesting

③ *Melania as FLOTUS*
#MelaniaAsFLOTUS

The Open Curriculum

By ANDREW JUCHNO
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Hamilton students and admissions officers alike extol the value of our open curriculum. For applicants who were restricted by stringent high school graduation requirements, colleges with minimal distribution requirements have a certain allure. I remember sitting in Chemistry class my senior year and dreaming of the day I would no longer have to take science classes. This initial appeal, however, wore off soon after my first semester.

It may seem innocuous to, as the Hamilton website says, “choose courses that reflect your interests,” but prospective students should be

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wary of the consequences of such a curriculum structure. For example, it is entirely plausible that in an upper-level Government seminar, not a single student has read the classic works of political philosophy.

The open curriculum allows students to avoid challenging themselves by providing them with opportunities to take classes their peers have identified as “less strenuous.” Instead of taking a class that focuses on analyzing Nietzsche’s works, for example, students too often choose to enroll in courses where only a brief engagement with Nietzsche’s political thought (via a quick Google search) is necessary. In opting out of the mental discipline required for detailed study of such a topic, students do themselves a disservice.

I cannot, however, entirely fault students for avoiding classes reputed to be particularly difficult. We are, in large part,

heirs to an academic culture that overemphasizes the importance of a strong grade point average. Beginning in middle school, and probably even earlier for some students, parents and teachers conflate grades with intelligence levels and overall success. Although the common understanding that good grades equate to a good future is true only to an extent, increasingly competitive college admission standards incentivize students to put stock in this belief. Inculcated with it at an early age, they have little reason to reassess such a value structure after coming to Hamilton.

Students’ tendency not to challenge themselves speaks to a wider attitude toward Hamilton’s role in shaping their future. On campus, there is a general sentiment that Hamilton functions as a gateway to financial prosperity, one example of which is the Government department’s emphasis on law school admissions. As a result of this careerist culture, students look for instructors who seem to hand out A’s with little discretion so that future employers can see what

continued on back page

The Importance of Peaceful Protests

By FRED POLLEVICK
STAFF WRITER

On February 27, Hamilton was fortunate to host Diane Nash, one of the most influential civil rights activists of her time, for an address in the chapel. As a student in Nashville, she helped organize lunch counter sit-ins and worked with both the Freedom Riders and the Selma Movement.

Of the many lessons and experiences Nash shared with the Hamilton community, one stood out in particular: the importance of peaceful protest. She emphasized that had protests turned violent, the civil rights movement would not have been nearly as

This Week’s News in 140 Characters

EDITORIAL REPORT

- Meet the Press** @MeetThePress · 2h
"Certainly the Russians have to be chortling at their efforts to sow dissension in this country." - Former DNI Director James Clapper #MTP
86 404 661
- Robert P. George** @McCormickProf · 16h
The violence at Middlebury was a supermacroaggression against the values that gave us institutions of learning and justify their existence.
8 86 209
- Political Junkie.** @politicobsessed · 22h
During the campaign, wasn't there some story about how Trump and his aides were paranoid that Trump Tower was bugged?
1 2 4
- Donald J. Trump** @realDonaldTrump · 5h
Is it true the DNC would not allow the FBI access to check server or other equipment after learning it was hacked? Can that be possible?
16K 14K 49K
- John Schindler** @20committee · 3h
Ultimately, you're ok with a sitting POTUS publicly accusing his predecessor of high crimes without offering any evidence -- or you're not.
135 1.8K 3.8K

PEACEFUL PROTESTS *cont.*

successful. In the context of the current political climate, it is important to listen to Nash’s words and reflect on them.

At college campuses across the United States, too many protests are not peaceful, and one wonders if that trend will worsen. In early February, individuals at the University of California-Berkeley caused more than \$100,000 in arson damages while protesting the controversial journalist Milo Yiannopoulos, who was forced to cancel his speaking engagement due to concern for his safety. Damaging campus buildings and threatening the life of the speaker are not constructive ways to

“Damaging campus buildings and threatening the life of the speaker are not constructive ways to demonstrate opposition to an event.”

demonstrate opposition to an event. Engaging in such savagery not only endangers people, but is bad for the university’s –

Melania as FLOTUS

By SAM BENEVELLI
STAFF WRITER

The tradition of the First Lady taking up a social cause during her time in office developed from Dolley Madison’s role as a hostess at the White House while her husband James was president more than 200 years ago. After the recent presidential election, we have a new First Lady, Melania Trump, along with the new president. We have also lost a vital role model in Michelle Obama – a dignified and caring woman who, while not all agreed with her, always carried herself with respect.

On the campaign trail, Melania shied away from cameras and speeches. She hosted a few fundraisers, but that is quite different from making appeals to the general public, and she rarely gave public testimonials. We all remember her catastrophe of a speech at the Republican national convention, when she appropriated large chunks of text from Michelle Obama’s 2008 speech at the Democratic

OPEN CURRICULUM cont.

looks like a stellar transcript.

To the administration's credit, our faculty advisors are told to hold us accountable to the college's mission of academic diversity by instructing us to engage with multiple disciplines. While advisors may seem a practical safeguard against students' temptations to fill their schedules with shallow courses or ones that are too similar to each other, in practice they exercise little control over their choices of classes.

What, then, is the proper way to ensure that students challenge themselves in the classroom?

I believe the onus is on individual departments to increase course requirements for pursuing a major. In doing so, faculty can reevaluate what is necessary to have a firm grasp of their subject, including the study of related ones. By increasing requirements for majors, departments can reinforce the interdisciplinary nature of their fields. Moreover, a basis for this type of reform already exists. Courses that are cross-listed between departments allow students to explore subjects related to their majors. I would encourage departments to add certain cross-listed courses, if they meet the appropriate academic standard, to the major requirements. While complete reform of the Open Curriculum is unlikely, departments can take proactive measures on their own to ensure that students are not academically limited.

PEACEFUL PROTESTS cont.

and its students' – reputation. The same university that is famous for its 1960s protests over free speech seems now to be an enemy of free speech.

More recently, violent protesters at Middlebury College – a fellow NESCAC school – injured a professor as she tried to protect guest speaker Charles Murray from harm. After giving his speech, Murray found a mob of angry protesters waiting for him outside the McCullough Student Center. It is sickening to think that these students attacked a professor of their own college simply because they did not agree with the politics of the speaker she brought to campus.

Toward the end of her talk at Hamilton, a student asked Nash how she felt about the situation at Standing Rock in the Dakotas, and how people can protest peacefully when there are weapons and other threats present. In response, Nash said she understood that kind of situation very well: She

had lived it while protesting in the South. She noted that when a group stoops to the level of violence, their protests have less of an impact. In contrast, Nash argued, the courage and valor it takes to remain strong yet peaceful while being threatened and insulted make a much more powerful statement.

Imagine that this had been the situation at either of these two campuses. Instead of waking up to news about a professor being hospitalized or a building going up in flames, we would wake up to news about students who proudly exercised their First Amendment rights by standing up against what they believed was wrong. Freedom of speech and the ability to peacefully protest are part of what makes being an American so special. So instead of taking up violence, let us become a country of speech, as Nash and her fellow peaceful activists would want.

FLOTUS cont.

convention. As CNN reported: "Melania Trump's speech was warmly received by the rowdy Republican crowd but did not include behind-the-scenes glimpses of life in Trump Tower or other details that might offer some insight into the man behind the image."

The lack of such details in the speech was an early indicator of Melania's current image as a reluctant presidential spouse. In Donald Trump's first month and a half in office, she is much more seen than heard. She makes rare appearances at his major speeches but is never leading events of her own. She has, however, apparently decided what her cause will be

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as First Lady: She will work vigilantly to end cyber-bullying.

While this choice is amusing considering her husband's behavior on social media, Melania has committed herself to fight, for children across the country, against a problem that is currently beyond effective control by parents and school administrators. More generally, she says she will focus on women's and children's issues. Although Melania has yet to begin doing much on these issues, Ivanka Trump has stepped

up to fulfill many duties of the First Lady – attending state events, hosting dignitaries at the White House, and serving as a role model figure for young girls who one day hope to experience corporate success of their own.

Melania also proclaimed that she wants to revive the legacies of Jackie Kennedy and Betty Ford, both of whom were very "traditional" first ladies. Now, Melania may be too young to remember Kennedy and Ford, but they were far from traditional – these women laid the foundation for the active first ladies of the past two decades. The most recent first ladies adopted active roles in their position to take on national healthcare, education, and childhood obesity. Hillary Clinton, Laura Bush, and Michelle Obama heralded a new type of First Lady who uses her position of power in the press and the eyes of the citizens to do good.

Melania will probably not make any impact against cyber-bullying if she continues to lack a substantive presence in the public eye. If she continues to shy away from speeches, hides away in Trump Tower, and refuses to manage her own image and only promotes President Trump's, Melania will fade into obscurity as she sits next to the most powerful man in the country.

CONTINUE THE CONVERSATION

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Melania as FLOTUS

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