election day coverage...

Talk with John Tuforo...

Labor at Bard...
democrats gain control of red hook, thanks to bard

By Sarah Leon

As it turns out, the “300” posters plastered all around campus were not a call to action by Bard and Red Hook Democrats’ initiatives to lobby at least 300 Bard students registered in Duchess County to come out and vote on November 6th. This mission, historically unprecedented but logistically feasible, was accomplished.

Students living on and around campus in the zoning district of the Barrytown polling station, located at St. John’s Episcopal Church about a mile from campus. There had been much fanfare pre-election about the possibility of bringing a polling station to main campus, which would have eliminated the need for the helpful but time-consuming half-hour shuttles to and from the church. Posters around campus have boasted “300: The Fight Against disenfranchisement Starts at Home,” a part of the Bard Democracy agenda to make political representation right here on campus a reality.

The Red Hook village of the campus polling station, Democratic candidates for Town Supervisor, Red Hook’s youth, the Energy Action Coalition decided to provide thousands of able-minded eager individuals with resources that they could use in their own communities across the country, and that Bard gets a polling station, the bulk of their decision will be based simply on Red Hook’s recommendation. According to Chris Munn, Treasurer of the Bard Democrats, “If the democrats get elected, we will work to put up a polling station on the Bard College campus for Bard students, 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anglophilia and imperialism: a discussion with Ian Buruma

BY FRANK BRANCLEY

On the ruthlessly rainy Saturday morning of Parents Weekend, four intellectuals gathered in the stage of Olin Hall to discuss a subject that has enjoyed tremendous popularity in recent years: Ian Buruma, Henry R. Luce Professor of Human Rights and Journalism at Bard and a regular contributor to the New York Review of Books was the authority of a talk that included President Botstein, professor Deidre Alberts and moderator Byron Adams the scholar-in-residence of the 2007 Bard Music Festival.

Professor Alberts focused her energy on identifying a persistent major literary figures of England who she believed were key in affecting a strong sense of national character for the British Empire. In 19th century Britain there co-existed two notions: imperialism and national identity. Apparently there also existed two separate Edward Elgars: one a musician of merit, the other of barbarism, both of the center of Bard’s Music Festival. Elgar is largely considered to be the first English composer to achieve international significance after the death of Henry Purcell a very successful Baroque composer. Alberts extended the traditional application of Elgar to Rudyard Kipling (“a prophet of British imperialism” for Orwell). Both figures were extraordinarily applied to a variety of roles including British Empire was for many liberal Jews a refuge. The Scots, cites Buruma, were for example the main builders of the English empire and most of those in the English army were Northern Irish. Yet it “is the minorities of empires that are usually on the side of the imperialists. The British Empire was for many liberal Jews a place where one was safe.” The question of imperialism is dramatically different for those who struggle to live outside the empire.

President Botstein noted how the stretch of imperialism even envelops intellectual circles. Isaiah Berlin was an Eastern-European Jew and an English nationalist. For Botstein, trained in European History (PhD from Harvard), imperialism traditionally carried a dynastic element where the monarch demanded loyalty. In searching for a particular place where Anglophilia manifested, Botstein located it in German culture, especially in German music. “England became a place of style.” The extension of tolerance to minorities was made possible under the same conditions in which liberals were “emasculated by rationalism.”

The talk as a whole was unjustifiably brief and barely skimmed the surface of either the meanings or origins of imperialism. This was inevitably the result of scarce time. The resources were clearly in abundance. It was clear that Buruma and Botstein especially had internalized an impressive breadth of knowledge on the subject. All the same, the event was probably intended as more of a prelude to the Symphony (and as a taste of the highly coveted “liberal education”) than a committed meditation. This is unfortunate. Imperialism continues to be a reality in a myriad of ways. It has a long and complex tradition in the political. Colonizers, murders and bulls and yet bore the creation of human rights and dignities as well. Those who protect under banners of progressive liberal ideology are often its strongest perpetrators. It has a unique relationship with Anglophilia. One cannot hope to consider one without examining the other.

new red hook democrats promise bard polling station

FROM PAGE ONE

analyze the economic situation of a country as separate from its political and cultural situation, as well as its historical past. Thus it is no wonder that Edun LIVE works solely with NGOs and not government bodies through the minority of tard openly make efforts can be made. Rather than working from the bottom up, it transplants from above a system of values which it presumes will be successful.

Edun LIVE explains in its Barnes and Noble's management handbook, that Africa’s share in world trade has dropped from 6% in 1980 to 2% in 2002 and even though the continent accounts for 12% of the world’s population, Edun LIVE hopes to increase Africa’s global share to 12% of the world’s population. Edun LIVE hopes to increase Africa’s global share to 12% of the world’s population.

It is the minorities of empires that are usually on the side of the imperialists.

-Ian Buruma

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FROM PAGE TWO

Babysitter Wanted

looking for a mature, vibrant and kind person to care for my two children, ages 3 and 6, in our three-bedroom home. Children are bright and well-behaved. Will need someone educated, 6-10 hours a week, $12 per hour, for the right person. For more information, contact maw34@ebean.com or call 836-5335.
Students bike to capitol the green torch relay

BY NICOLE HALPERN

The Green Torch Relay marks yet another step this generation of students has taken in demanding that our political leaders take action against the destruction of our environment. Students from all over the country ran, biked, paddled, marched and paraded to their state capitol states in order to deliver their Green Torch, an invitation requesting that state and local representatives join them for their Focus the Nation events.

Focus the Nation, the largest national teach-in in United States history, will take place at schools across the country, including Bard on February 1, 2008. Students, faculty, staff, members of the community, and their elected officials will congregate under one roof to discuss plans for mitigating climate change. At Bard there will be workshops and lectures all day, concluding with a round-table non-partisan discussion about how we can curtail the environmental crisis that is becoming the legacy of our generation.

This event, which will be taking place at over 1,000 colleges, universities, high schools and other institutions, has the potential to put the environmental policy and climate change at the forefront of the political agenda for the upcoming election in 2008.

On October 26, 2007, students from Bard College, Vassar College and the College of New Rochelle assembled at the historic Eldonford Inn in Red Hook, New York at 8:15 a.m. to kick off their relay. They departed Red Hook at 9:30 a.m. and arrived in Hudson at 11:30 a.m. to deliver the Torch to Congresswoman Kirsten Gillibrand’s office. Upon arrival in Albany three hours later, they met with students from Skidmore College, and proceeded to walk to the Federal Building to deliver their invitations to representatives from the offices of Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton, Senator Charles E. Schumer and Governor Eliot Spitzer.

Sophomore Molly King, member of the Bard Environmental Collective explained her participation in the event. “What we’re doing, as youths interested in preventing climate change and working to protect our future environment, and how we live now might have some small effect on how we will live [in the future],” said King. She added that the Green Torch was a personal feat for her because it was the longest bike trip she had ever taken: she wound up biking all but a three or four mile section of the 50-mile relay.

Green Torch co-organizer Nolan Gardner, expressed his desperation for climate action: “After Florida, Venice, San Francisco, the Netherlands, and others are submerged, after hundreds of thousands of people all over the world starve or are displaced, we will have no choice but to unite and deal with climate change.”

Green Torch co-organizer Sofia Belenky participated in the Green Torch Relay to generate conversations about solutions and to intensify the movement for a greener future. Both agreed that power in numbers isn’t just a cliché, it’s an irrefutable truth. The greater this movement is, the more change it can affect.

Students involved feel that the Green Torch Relay was a successful first step in expressing that climate change is our most immediate and universal problem. Our generation is beginning to realize that, and through the promotion of and participation in events like the Green Torch Relay, we are demanding change and inspiring others to do the same.

Red Hook climate change action group provides participants with breakfast before they departed to the capitol.

Bard, Vassar, and New Rochelle bikers board the bus at the beginning of their journey.

Green torch participants at their second and final stop in front of the federal building with the environmental representative of Governor Spitzer.

Fall dance show in review

BY ALEXANDRA CORRIGAN

The dance moderation projects, which debuted the weekend of October 27th, Parent’s Weekend, started before the show actually began. Uncostumed individual dancers buzzed around Fisher Lobby, performing little epiphanies and collisions. Depending on the greeting used (“whats up” “hey” or the person’s name) the dancers in Grace Converse’s first show twisted around each other, clapped hands, or performed some other entertaining mix to the usual queues waiting to enter.

Converse, the choreographer, described the roots of this piece as coming from “ideas I’ve had in the past couple years about integrating dance into daily routine and also ‘regular’ space.” It sought to subvert the stage and the eternal division between the audience and the performers.

After the audience was seated, the first performance began. The dance, choreographed by Claire Lutz, played upon relationships, as two female dancers performed an elaborate, movement-focused initial dance. The next, in contrast, featured a man playing Twister. The performance was both playful and dark, speaking to the intricacies and cruelties of male and female relationships. Grace Converse, also the choreographer of the second piece, described it as a meditation on trust, “and how in establishing a general distrust of people (in this case women) tend to control or play games to counter the negative or disgusting elements of these exchanges.”

Relationships were further examined in the next two pieces, which dealt with multiple performers and their interactions. In the third, choreographed by Magdalene San Millan, dancers lifted their arms up and linked their movements, connecting with each other in various ways. The fourth performance, a moderation piece choreographed by Natalie Golbuth, was framed by the synchronicity of the dancers and the subsequent breaks with movement. Dancers crossed the stage, they broke halfway, and the lights flickered in the end.

The idea of a break in movement followed through the next few acts as well. “Death of a Dancer,” choreographed by and performed by Magdalene San Millan featured an eloquent series of movements as she was shot three times, once in her arm, once in her leg and once in her stomach. The next act, by Emma Byrkman, portrayed struggle even more prominently. Multiple dancers opened the act reciting poetry by Margaret Atwood alluding to famine. Ultimately, the act shifted from discussions of famine to ideas pertaining to a universal struggle. The dancers rolled, moved downward, and found themselves isolated behind a cloth in the far back right corner.

The next act was a movement of high energy and virile music, highlighting two dancers, also the choreographers, Mer Mietzelfield and Abbie Paris. Next, however, the performers resuscitated the uncomfortable and painful process of unloading shots in the leg and once in her arm. The last movement alternated from elegant ballet poses to smooth and rapid kicks.

The last piece, choreographed for moderation by Kalia Feldman-Klein, ended on a more positive note, giving the audience their final taste of dance, emphasizing and appreciating movement for the sake of movement. Overall, each piece featured in the dance moderation projects was distinct, yet through the show flowed continuous themes, and an elegant presence.
Distance is so ethereal. I can stand so close but be mountains and rivers and plains away, a footstep between but a year apart. I feel connected to everyone by a sky that stretches the length of true space between us. Multitudes of strings, each stretching out to one or another, and they envelope me like a cocoon. Spin me round, unravel me and see how close we are. How a pull towards one leads more distance out toward another. How it’s a tug of war.

And you, I wonder if you’ll even pick up on this, or if you’ll keep ignoring it all. But that’s always my flaw--too subtle, too shy. You’re so far away that I’m invisible to you. I want to be my own version of the three croons, controlling those strings. I want to pull closer to you and see me. Fear of self to collapse within you. But I’m too afraid that the string will slice through my palms, and it reminds me how effortless it is to be left behind. Alone within these mountains and rivers and plains.

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS:
Has there been a personal topic on your mind? A moment that you can’t get out of your head, maybe even just a visual image you feel obliged to put down into words. Something honest. Your identity will be protected. The catch is that whatever you want to say, whether it’s a confession about picking your nose, declaration about secretly loving moderation, or even just a small story about an experience you’ve had—it must be real. To misquote A Few Good Men: we can handle the truth, the question is—can you? Submit to obsever@bard.edu, keep it small (around 300 words) and be sure to specify it’s for ObserverUS.

At this point, two other faculty members from the candidate’s division, known as Divisional Evaluators, write a report based on the EPC report. The candidate’s file is then discussed by the faculty of the candidate’s division, known as the personnel committee. The committee then writes its own report on the candidate and sends this to the president, who makes the final decision. Each voting body decides based on its own analysis and is not obligated to agree with the decision of the body before it. This means that unanimous student and faculty support for a candidate may not prevent the president from denying tenure. 

During the past few weeks, the halls, doors and email accounts of the Bard community have been plastered with messages asking both students and faculty to write testimonies for those professors entrenched in the process of tenure review. However, with these testimonies due to the Dean’s office by November 18th, many students may not understand what tenure is and its crucial importance to both themselves and the selected candidates.

The achievement of tenure renders a professor nearly impossible to fire. “It almost never happens,” said Chair of the Faculty Evaluation Review Committee (FERC) and Classics Professor James Romm. As long as a professor does not break their contract with the school, their position is safe. “If someone is not teaching as well or stops publishing, they cannot be fired,” said Dean of the college Michelle Dominy. Indeed, she could not recall any tenured Bard professor being dismissed during her time here.

Tenure is not without its pitfalls however. According to Romm, it potentially removes some of the incentive for a professor to publish and produce new work. “The college is essentially making a leap of faith, as to whether or not a candidate is a life-long scholar,” said Romm, stressing that it is precisely the gravity of this leap that requires those involved in tenure review to be meticulous. The importance of this commitment was echoed by Dominy, who noted that “making the best decision for the college is critical because when you tenure someone, you tenure for life.”

The process of tenure review is initiated by the Dean (Dominy), who directs the faculty and student body of which professors are up for review and solicits written testimonies. The student-based Educational Policies Committee or EPC, works in conjunction with the dean by first actively petitioning for testimonies in niche and then examining them alongside Student Opinion of Teaching and Course (SOTC) forms. The EPC attempts to find common trends among the comments and testimonies, as they relate to the scores provided on the SOTC forms, and in turn uses this information to write a three-page report on the given faculty member.

Dean Michelle Dominy discusses faculty tenure

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While this makes tenure review appear socially rigorous, Dominy explained that “institutions must be quite conservative because the risk involved is so high.” She estimated that close to seventy percent of reviewed candidates were tenure.

Despite the relatively high success rate, tenure is an extremely stressful time for those members of the junior faculty who face review. Dominy explained that candidates are often “under the pressure of time, attempting to succumb to the somber task of raising a family” while being scrutinized by their colleagues.

Romm, who was first denied tenure and finally awarded it, several years later, by a reversal of the president’s vote had an intimate knowledge of this stress. “In a close-call case like my own, one cannot avoid the feeling that one’s entire career may ride on some very small matter,” said Romm. “A tenure denial can easily end a career built up over ten years or more, or at least, force a dramatic change in venue.”

The process of review then, can be essential to the livelihood of Bard professors, which is all the more reason for students to closely consider and respond to requests for written testimonies. “Here at Bard, student testimony is a primary factor in alloting tenure,” said Romm. EPC chair, Gustafson heartily agreed, “I know they’re taken very seriously.”

The Environmental Collective Meets Every Tuesday at 7PM in the Root Cellar

From now on, The Observer will be publishing a couple pieces each issue by students anonymously. We all have something to say that inhibition and social constraints prevent us from sharing. We hope that creating a forum of this kind gives students the freedom to be open with their community.

Edited by Mischa Nachtigal

I did something new the other day: I’m a senior here and despite being around for several years I had yet to go on the famed Flinthillwood trail. You know, it’s the path around the side of the field that leads right down to the river. I realize that this is something everyone usually does within the first month of L&T but for some reason I never went. I thought about doing this with my parents one of the times they visited but instead… I kept waiting. Then came the other day and it was time. I don’t get to exercise as much as I’d like, but this was a day where I felt intensely inspired thanks to an earlier conversation with a professor.

[The quote is being misinterpreted, and it does not seem to fit the context of the story.]

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You probably know him as the teacher with the leaf-loving dog. The much-loved Beta is not his only claim to fame; Matthew Deady, a highly-regarded physicist. He boasts a B.S. in physics and mathematics respectively at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, a Masters in mathematics at the same institution, and a Ph.D. from MIT.

Observer: Tell us what got you started on this path in life, why did you get into physics in the first place?

Deady: Well I was always good in math and science as a kid. I won math contests and science fairs. I was a really terrific student in my classes. But I didn’t have physics until my senior year of high school. Then I had a really terrific teacher, Joe Meyer, who really pushed me into thinking about not only just studying some science or math, but to study physics in particular. And when I got to Illinois I really could not decide between physics and math. So I ended up doing both, just stayed at it the whole time.

Observer: In your long relationship with physics, you have come to gain a deep understanding of the subject. In your very enlightened opinion, what is physics about?

Deady: I don’t know how enlightened I am. But, physics [attempts to] find fundamental explanations of things in the physical world. The physicist is trying to look at something as basic as possible. Which means you get a lot of the big ideas. For instance we’re interested in taking a lot of different phenomena and thinking of them in terms of some common concepts that might not be obviously the same. For instance, what holds molecules together, what the friction is when you walk across the floor, and also, what makes lightning. They don’t appear to have anything to do with each other, but actually all these things are all particular applications or particular examples of a fundamental force. We’re trying to find the common thread of different things, and reasoning out what the common thing is. We think that if you try to think of the smallest, most basic pieces of everything.

Observer: People wonder what physicists of today do. Some have a firm picture of Newton sitting under an apple tree and coming up with his mind managed to find... You probably know him as the teacher with the leaf-loving dog. The much-loved Beta is not his only claim to fame; Matthew Deady, a highly-regarded physicist. He boasts a B.S. in physics and mathematics respectively at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, a Masters in mathematics at the same institution, and a Ph.D. from MIT.

Deady: I really pushed me into thinking more about the real world, then I fail as a teacher. I want them to see the world differently than they did before. I want them to look at the real world, to see that the world has order in it and say “wait a minute, I can figure out these why this is happening that way.” So, to become a physicist you just oo into asking things about around you that puzzled them. We just find a way to systematically try to answer those questions.

Observer: Tell us a little about physics in Bard.

Deady: Bard physics is remarkably stable. I’ve been here for 20 years and it’s been three of us here in those years. There’s a group of scientists who are firmly committed to teaching. We’ve firmly committed to teaching. We’ve got a stable, solid, liberal arts environment which means we think that our audience is going to have one foot in the real world, and we really want to reach out to them. So we’ve spent a lot of time creating courses and then some courses that any student would be able to do who wants to get to understand more about what are they’re doing. It’s a small department. Having a small department means that we can really focus our attention on a lot of individual attention. So when one of us is teaching a course, the others all know that course well enough that students could ask any one of us and get the right help for it.

We want to do is help everyone build up their understanding of what the universe is like out in the real world. The more viewpoints they have, the more systematic methods they have to approach things.

No: You have been involved in a number of physics majors what they would want to ask a physicist and a majority wanted to know how to solve a simple problem. A student asked me how does one figure out laws of nature can allow a slip in time, a fall in the past. Is that even possible? What are the fundamentals of physics? Asking are you? We’re really trying to move towards a system that would help us do a better job of trying to answer and science. Is physics about? I think everyone can learn to think systematically, and that is what physics is about. I think physics is something everybody can do even if they have a horrible high school experience. I mean physicists are just kids who got into asking questions about around them.

Observer: And leave the time travel to the movies?

Deady: Well I think it’s fun. Those kinds of science fictions and questions are often the reason that some of us get interested in physics in the first place. So, I’m not going to disparage them and say that they’re silly because they’re not. But time is very complicated. Maybe within my lifetime, probably within our lifetime we would come to a better understanding of time.

Observer: What advice do you have for the non-physicist major who hopes not to cross paths with physics ever?

Deady: If you think of the smallest, most basic pieces of everything. Those two things are all particular applications or particular examples of a fundamental force. We’re trying to find the common thread of different things, and reasoning out what the common thing is. We think that if you try to think of the smallest, most basic pieces of everything.
Anyone who has read the seminal work If You Give a Mouse a Cookie or spent an irreverent evening at home with a tissue box and rented a copy of Mousehunt starring Nathan Lane and an unreasonably aggressive white quadruped, already knows that mice are perhaps the greatest threat to national security faced by the current administration. What business then, have the scientists at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, riddled with hubris as they are, in the construction of a super mouse? The answer is either “every right” or Hillary Clinton depending on your party affiliation.

Moral ambiguities aside, the Ohioan researchers have unearthed a potentially massive discovery—by forcing the over-expression of a specific gene through scientific, scientists produced a certain enzyme. Which enzyme you ask? Why phosphoenolpyruvate carboxykinases, of course. Moving on, this enzyme, intellectually abbreviated to PEPCK-C, spurs the activity of skeletal musculature whose cells are chock full of mitochondria (“The powerhouse of the cell”). The result is a mouse who could kick the Energizer Bunny’s android ass, assuming the goal was to run aimlessly on a treadmill for hours upon hours. And so it is.

But wait (you say with moist eyelashes) can’t my favorite professional baseball player Barry Bonds use this基因 to steal another record from the other ball player? Probably, one day. But the desiccated hands of our honored hero are spinning out their lactic acid. They are observed to live as long as three years—the equivalent of watching an eighty-year-old human pop one out in her water dish.

In lab trials the modified mice ran over three miles at a speed of sixty-five feet per minute on a treadmill, for up to six hours before stopping. I ran the numbers and that’s the equivalent of running to Red Hook in four seconds, give or take. The bottom-line is this: mice are gaining on us, slowly but surely and due mostly to our own efforts.
On Monday the 29th, Dr. Andrew Light delivered a lecture-presentation entitled, "On the Promise of Peril of Ecological Citizenship: The Case of the Chicago Wilderness." Light, a candidate for the position of director at the Bard Center for Environmental Policy (BCEP), his presentation revolved around an imperative to get the public involved. "What they wound up doing," explained Dr. Light, "is that the CWP was designed to involve the change' being that the CWP was designed to involve the action of the individual members of society, this culture of nature would imply the daily lives of individuals is worth living. The alternative is a culture that feels justified in "effectivity" is slightly compromised in the short-term. "All other things being equal, increasing and improving public participation in environmental processes outweighs effective criteria," said Dr. Light. "Aristotle emphasizes the rewarding of virtue; its larger environmental purpose by martyring the narrow agenda of the CWP compromised the black and white 'all or nothing' approach of the CWP, should be claimed for environmental management."

The picture that Dr. Light hoped to communicate became clear very quickly: 1) man's current material culture is not sustainable 2) sustainability efforts that do not incorporate cultural transformation are most 3) larger structures will change as a result of shifting cultural values because that is the premise of a democracy. Under these presuppositions it is clear that environmentalists ought to maintain an active dialogue within every local community, cultivating a sense of ecological citizenship within the public sphere and only appealing to legislation in an "us versus them" fashion as a last and desperate resort. For Dr. Light sustainability is largely a matter of inspiring people to desire the incorporation of environmentally sound modes of being into daily life. The alternative is a culture that feels entitled to turn a blind eye towards its own actions because of the belief that it will be able to hire specialist firms to mop up the blood.

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As long as we live in a democratic society, the potential for significant change depends on the values of a critical mass of citizens.
Listening to a history lecture before taking a trip to the Colosseum, drinking a beer at a café with a view of the Eiffel Tower, studying philosophy on the banks of the Thames. Practicing Chinese at the Great Wall. Students at Bard have studied all over the world, from New York City and Germany to Japan and South Africa. Along with the chance to study at a foreign institution, studying abroad also affords students the opportunity to gain a sense of another culture.

While the chance to visit a foreign country, try amazing foods, and meet new people would appeal to most students, Dean of International Studies, Jonathan Becker believes that studying abroad would have a clear reason for wanting to study abroad. “Bard’s philosophy is not that all students should study abroad,” said Becker. While many colleges boast that a high percentage of their programs in which the students were enrolled. Becker says that, at last tally, around forty-two percent of the student body studies away from Bard (this includes Bard’s BGIA program). This figure is impressive, seeing as the Executive Committee must approve each student’s application for a leave of absence in order to transfer credits. This process ensures that the programs in which students are enrolling are academically adequate. Students should think about what would be best for them in terms of their Bard education, financial situation and goals for studying abroad.

Students have three options when choosing to study abroad. The first option is to choose a study abroad intensive language program, which usually involves four weeks of study in a foreign country after an intensive study in class, independent semester or year-long trips that are not run by Bard, and Bard-run study abroad programs, such as the Bard Globalization and International Affairs program in New York City. These Bard-run programs, including the intensive language programs, a student’s financial aid usually travels with them. For non-Bard programs, Bard financial aid does not apply, but Becker says that Bard does not discourage students from matriculating directly into a foreign university, especially since this is often cheaper for students. Tim Palma, a junior who plans to study in Paris next semester, says that it’s important to remember that there are also a large number of independent scholarships available for students, such as scholarships through the Academic Year Abroad program, and the Gilman scholarship. Becker states that, although some students are not able to go abroad due to financial reasons, many students are able to find the funds through sources other than Bard.

Each program, run independently or through Bard, affords students with various opportunities. Some programs require that students live with a host family, which is important for a student who chooses to study in a foreign country in order to improve their language skills. Students who choose to live in dormitories with other students at the college.

Some programs and institutions also give students the opportunity to study in other disciplines, volunteer, or participate in an internship. Students should research programs to find one that best fits their goals and what they hope to gain from their experience.

The general consensus among the students, faculty and administration interviewed was that studying abroad through Bard is not a hard process. A student must apply to their respective foreign university or program, and sometimes includes letters of recommendation. They also must apply for an academic leave of absence. The Executive Committee then reviews their application and the program they are attending. If they have already been accepted, they must complete a 3.0 GPA or above, and the Executive Committee approves their application, their credits will be transferred to Bard. If approved by the registrar, classes taken abroad can fill distribution requirements. Students have the opportunity to choose a pass/fail grading system, which allows them the opportunity to fully experience their classes and activities without worrying about the effect on their Bard GPA, especially if their coursework is done in a foreign language. Even if they do not factor into their Bard GPA. Almost all students who choose to study abroad do it junior year, after moderation, to avoid complications in terms of working on their senior project. Whether the student chooses to go first or second semester, or even for a whole year, depends on their academic plan at Bard and the program they choose to use.

Study abroad is a very positive experience for many students. Claire Weber, a senior who studied abroad in Paris last semester, says she “would definitely recommend it” and that “it definitely gives you perspective.” She spoke about how it was nice to get outside the “Bard bubble” for a while, especially in terms of working on her music major. Palma reiterates these thoughts, saying that he is looking forward to taking a break from academics at Bard. Odile Chilton, a French professor, believes that studying abroad is “absolutely essential” for language acquisition and an appreciation of culture. She recalls students who, although they had been unhappy with their host family or classes, still returned to Bard having greatly progressed in terms of language skills. Palma agrees that, even if he were not a French Studies major, he would still want to study abroad for the experience and the opportunity to improve his language skills.

For students interested in studying abroad, Manishka Kalupahana runs a study abroad library located in Annandale House. Students can also find more information on the study abroad website at www.bard.edu/globalstudy.

### Matthew Ready

From Page Six

some of the questions that I could ask about strings, about vibrations are now [better] informed than they were when all I had was basic physics knowledge. Doing research with my physics mentor has helped turn out some new ideas that I had not thought about before.

Q: What advice do you have for physics majors out there who are trying to make it today and for those still trying to decide if physics is for them?

D: One of the great things about being a physics major is that it really doesn’t narrow down what you could go into afterwards. What being a physics major does is train you to think in a certain way and to do physics whatsoever. We have students who go on to financial work, community organizing, farming, all sorts of applications. What their physics knowledge gives them is an attitude of “gee I can figure this out. I can find out what the fundamental rules are and put that together in an interesting way.” What we teach you is how to take whatever the situation is, treat it like a problem, find out more about it, and then attack it. My advice is find something you’re really interested in doing and figure out how to take the methodology and the approach that something taught you in to apply to that problem.

### Feature

Bard’s philosophy is not that all students should study abroad.

Jonathan Becker

French

A look at bard study abroad

By Emily Vertosick

### COME SEE THE OLD GYM IN ACTION!

Upcoming shows include:

**#17: The Spread Eagle**, November 8th & 9th @ 9pm - A sex-comedy themed jazz club musical revue, chocolate provided! Directed by Grace Schultz, Moriah Sterling, and Quinn Gibrigh.

**True Love**, November 12th–14th @ 8pm - A contemporary play directed by Kate Motzenbacher about the actions of one woman causing a community to rethink their values.

**Gypsys**, November 15th–17th @ 8:30pm (Doors open for pre-show at 8:00) - A musical based on the memoirs of burlesque star Gypsy Rose Lee, directed by Rachel Gordon of Bard Musical Theater Company.

**And Tell Sad Sad Stories of the Deaths of Queens**, November 28th–30th (Time TBA) - A Tennessee Williams play of a drag queen living in New Orleans and her quest for self, directed by Shawn Powell. 
**the man might get pregnant if you fuck him that negligently**

BY TESS HALL

I love Bard College. Unlike a surprising amount of my peers, it was my first choice. I applied early, got in early, and have adopted it ever since I stepped on the campus and picked up that faint scent of marijuana always wafting through the upstate New York air. What started to bother me after having been here for a few weeks, and what has recently begun to really piss me off as of late, is this subtle "fuck the man" attitude that not just the hipsters have been touting. This is evident in the startlingly low amount of registered voters on campus, or in the more general sense of pessimism or indifference I've been hearing a lot from my peers when holding a political discussion.

Part of the reason why I was so attracted to this school in the first place was that it was such a great departure from the ostentatiously uncultured, politically ignorant place from where I hail. My parents having been artsy, politically-charged hippies, I was raised to worship Bill Clinton and to covet the day when I could register to vote. The only people in my school with whom I could talk politics were the very few teachers who felt comfortable enough to express their opinions in a place that had a "don't-you-dare-try-to-influence-my-child-with-your-biased-opinions" sort of vibe to it. I can sum up my school with who whom I could talk politics to-influence-my-child-with-your-biased-opinions. This is evident in the startlingly low amount of registered voters on campus, or in the more general sense of pessimism or indifference I've been hearing a lot from my peers when holding a political discussion.

From what I gather, most of us at least have a sense of what's going on in the world or even at this school, and most even have some sort of opinion on it, but a whole fuckload don't seem to care enough to do anything about it. The prime example: voting. It blows my mind that there is even one person on this campus who doesn't vote. (Ok, I can make an exception for the international students who clearly can't.) In a larger, more idiosyncratic state university inundated with drunk blondes, I guess I can't expect the entirety of the population to make it to the polls. But Bard! C'mon, guys. Perhaps the government is a bit corrupt and our "democracy" is more farcical than truthful, but short of actually starting a revolution, voting's all we got. And if every single one of those people that don't think their vote counts voted, it would fucking count.

I am writing this article the night before the local elections, so I can't refer to the voter turnout this election day, and even though I don't expect the numbers to be high, I hope I'm wrong. I truly do, especially because local politics are pertinent to our daily lives here and I can't believe that at a place like Bard, not everyone realizes that.
In response to the overwhelming influx of hate speech, the author of this article against Affirmative Action at Bard, I feel that the highly controversial dialogue what ideologically opposes one another would be more constructive if another argument against Affirmative Action at Bard is introduced.

Anti-Affirmative ideology has been labeled as intellectually dishonest. As if the entire controversy is centered around races feeling they have been unfairly disadvantaged in some aspect of life, and that all races deserve an equal opportunity. I ask this: is race the only factor that places people at a disadvantage? As the American Association for Affirmative Action’s paper states, “The purpose of affirmative action is to give our nation a way to finally address the systemic exclusion of individuals of talent, skill, and ability. How are we to avoid prejudicial treatment and eventually disclose the race and name of an individual?” It does. That is argued in the college application, according to the college application is to acknowledge the lack of opportunities experienced by historically disadvantaged groups and help create ideological and social diversity on campus. Affirmative action is a way to prevent disadvantaged or does it make a person disadvantaged. A picture of being a certain race in a certain social setting do make a person disadvantaged and ideologically diverse. Thus, Affirmative Action should be based on the socio-economically disadvantaged and try to combat any prejudice or bias. In my opinion, the core focus of the Affirmative Action Program at Bard is to help every American have access to the same opportunities and enhance the learning and diversity of the human mind.

If Affirmative Action is to aid people who have suffered from socio-economic disadvantages, then why do we label Affirmative Action writers as racist? If in fact Affirmative Action is a response to the economic and social situations that make a certain African American at a disadvantage in a predominantly Caucasian area is how we will make that person disadvantaged. By not doing so, we are encouraging an anti-Affirmative Action front to express their racist ideas.

It is easy to see that race is not the only disadvantage in a certain area creates diverse views, not the subconscious thinking that makes a person disadvantaged. A Caucasian American (or even a black man) who has grown up in a predominantly white area offers no more diverse views than those who have grown up in a predominantly African American area, or vice-versa. It is certainly being argued that the identification of being between being anti-Affirmative Action writers is considered racist because some people think that other people are thinking of the same thing, or that their writing is racist. If in fact Affirmative Action is to aid individuals who have suffered from socio-economic disadvantages, then why do we label Affirmative Action writers as racist? If in fact Affirmative Action is to aid people who have suffered from socio-economic disadvantages, then why do we label Affirmative Action writers as racist? If in fact Affirmative Action is to aid individuals who have suffered from socio-economic disadvantages, then why do we label Affirmative Action writers as racist?
My last words on affirmative action

psychological system of thought focused on pegging each white male in the same category, the author simply discredits his own words on the matter. I have hope for the future, for I believe that the students of this college will rise up against the prejudices of the past and be united; no matter how the judges choose to rule, we will hold such irresponsible and detrimental behavior at this college to produce a precedent where a blind eye is turned to severe crimes that are so often committed against our community. Let there be no mistake: Gregory, Zakhar, and Elliott have done our community a tremendous disservice. For the sake of their own enrichment, they reintroduced the myths about Bard's past and present, and undermined the hard effort of more exemplary students to make their education count for something other than just the crime. Membership in our community is a privilege, and it comes with certain responsibilities derived from the fact that in our endeavors we are highly interdependent and gladly so. At Bard, we take pride in holding ourselves to a higher standard than the rest of society. It is a privilege, and it comes with certain responsibilities.

The article also questions my knowledge on minorities and affirmative action by stating that I did not take into account the fact that the United States is a multi-ethnic society and that there are things about the Mayan calendar that seem mysterious, but leap years? "A photo a day and February 29"

In the last issue of the Observer Becca Horowitz wrote, “Bard is a liberal place. One such mystery is the absence of nearly all pictures from the vertical column representing February 29.”

At first I assumed Becca was making a joke, but a joke in that spot seems out of place. So I read it again. OK, Becca had a little brain cramp or somehow missed the news that every four years WE ADD A DAY TO MAKE THE TOTAL UP TO 29. What a worse, apparently nobody at the Observer understands leap years. I’d like to be charitable and assume that the current editors are as impaired as the Observer editors I remember, but I think even my drug-addled classmates would have jumped all over that gaffe. There are things about the Mayan calendar that seem mysterious, but leap years? Not so strange.

Jim Rodewald
Class of 1982
Brooklyn, NY

The General Insider

A Weekend of Exploration, Gender Binding, and Drumming

Sponsored by individual students, GSA, First-Year Experience Office, and Student Activities.
On November 1st, I sat down for a phone call with one of the busiest actors in the world, John Turturro. His filmography is impressive as he goes from the stylized romance & Cigarettes, a film he wrote, directed, and starred in, to Treme, a film he directed and acted in. According to Turturro, the film reflects the neighborhood he grew up in, and it is made with a love of the art that is undeniable in him. He’s seen it twice, once at a rough cut screening a few years ago during studio ownership troubles, and again on Halloween night at the Quad Cinemas in Manhattan. Turturro has made a movie you must see. Romance & Cigarettes is the freshest breath of air to hit the movie theaters in ages. See it at Upstate Films in Rhinebeck starting November 16.

By Henry Casey ‘06

Henry Casey: You made your ensemble indie film, “Romance & Cigarettes,” while Jim Jarmusch had just released his ensemble indie film, “Coffee & Cigarettes.” What was the debate like between you both over titles?

John Turturro: None at all. Hadn’t been making his film over a series of years. I don’t know him, I didn’t know about his project until we had started filming. I’m just glad he didn’t take “Romance” too.

HC: You have this stellar cast of actors: James Gandolfini, Susan Sarandon, Kate Winslet, Mary Louise Parker, Christopher Walken, Aidan (Turturro), Eddie Izzard, Steve Buscemi; was it at all intimidating to get them dancing and singing?

JT: Not really, because everybody trains and gets to know each other. We had theater exercises and games, physical training and they developed into a breathing unit. They’re a great cast and they’re doing something that, as you said, they’re never done. I wanted visceral performers. James is really beautiful, as Susan is strong, Edward for Kate. It’s impossible to be better at that role, as a supporting role, as she is.

HC: The scene where Cousin Xo (Walken) performs Tom Jones’ “Delilah” has been touched on by every critic, from Stephen Holden’s NY Times piece to the great review on Salon.com. It seems so natural for him, any chance that was shot once?

JT: Christopher’s a dancer, we worked on that prior to shooting. In the studio, he didn’t want it to be choreographed. His renowned choreographers are hairdressers. He can still dance, his feet are a little more schooled. We’ve known each other for 20 years now, so we share certain kinds of humor. He’s a big Elvis fan, and so was the cousin of mine I based the character on.

HC: Speaking of Elvis fans, the character Fryenburg (Bobbi Canavale) seemed like another great and picturesque archetypal Linda Ronstadt character. What was the attraction?

JT: Did I? Well, one I won’t say aloud, but I had some. (Pause) Constance, which Mary Louise’s character’s name in the film, Oliver Hardy, cause I was chubby as a kid, Johnny Johnstons, Salo, bird, Captain Affo.

HC: There was something about “Romance & Cigarettes” where the cast felt like a long-term troupe than an ensemble. JT: And that’s what can be amazing about some large cast movies, as opposed to the movies about two or three people. The rest you never see, a few are off in the background, romantically neutered.

HC: Neutered, the last word you’d think of with this movie. I loved some of the more raunchy anachronisms, like Whomestomaster, which was great for Kitty (Sarandon) and for the family that, yeah, I think he was some kid whose last name ended in ‘burg. ’ This comes from my family, and it’s an Italian past time of changing names and cutting them short. When I was trying to come up with a name, I wrote all of them down, and they were things my father and brother made up.

HC: Did you have any interesting made up names?

JT: Did! If I’m not lying also, but, I had some. (Pause) Constance, which Mary Louise’s character’s name in the film, Oliver Hardy, cause I was chubby as a kid, Johnny Johnstons, Salo, bird, Captain Affo.

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and magic, the death of a wrestler-saint, mechanical torture, and women’s teeth rot because they cannot live without the sweet acidity of lime on their tongues.

Salvador Plascencia received the Bard Fiction Prize for his first novel, The People of Paper, published in 2005 by McSweeney’s. He will be writer-in-residence at Bard for spring semester 2008, at which time he will give a public lecture, speak informally with students, and continue his writing.

A typical paragraph:

“Sure, that’s why I’ve put in the effort to share it. It’s a laugh with recognition of the truth in humor; people like to laugh, and hopefully help to this movie, even in the editing. & Ethan Cohen have been of tremendous support. I think that’s why we might be able to gain control, to shield ourselves and live our lives for ourselves. ”

Interview from previous page

to use against her husband Nick Murder (Gandolfini). JT: An anachronism? really? I grew up hearing a lot of words like that in my neighborhood. "Whore master," that was more than hoo-ah, that’s hoo-ah, which actually came from "sewer."

HC: The diet of the movie, which is amongst its romance, is what really lets the movie roll. The rapid-fire vulgar rhymes near the beginning.

JT: Those rhymes are connected to the inspiration for the movie, exactly where it comes from, I was reading a Charles Bukowski book called "Women." Looking back, it could’ve been rated XXX. Later I was looking at his poetry and at pop songs lyrics and that’s what inspired this all. To write something that felt like what would have been if Bukowski collaborated with Bruce Springsteen. It’s the world I grew up in. Building-side guys, if you listen to them you realize they’re poets. Same with Casey Stengel, the Mark Twain of baseball. The movie has the need for the spiritual and the need for the flesh. I thought it would be fun to combine them, and especially to have the women get their side of the story out.

HC: How has the support been for the movie, which, if people don’t know, you’re basically self-releasing?

JT: There’s been a lot of support for it. Joel & Ethan Cohen have been of tremendous help to this movie, even in the editing. Audiences love it, part of that is people love humor, people like to laugh, and hopefully it’s a laugh with recognition of the truth in the film. People have really loved it, and that’s why I’ve put in the effort to share it.

Henry Carey (’06) was a Writer and Editor at the Observer from 2002-2006. He works in publishing and loves David Simon’s "The Wire."

Salvador Plascencia's novel The People of Paper received the 2008 Bard Fiction Prize. Plascencia is a writer-in-residence at Bard College this spring. He will give a public lecture and speak informally with students.

Petra Macken has been a member of the Observer editorial board since 2006. She works in publishing and appreciates the music of David Simon's "The Wire."
The smell of fuel oil still lingers in the air around the Old Gym and the Olin parking lot almost five months after the oil spill of November 19, but few people are currently being cleared up by Buildings and Grounds (B&G) staff, and the source is occasionally being overseen by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) officials.

Recent investigation into some of the questions raised in the last Observer spill update (February 23) have yielded several controversial details, as well as provoked even more questions as to the actual truth about the spill.

Many of the previously reported "facts" from B&G staff concerning the oil spill which took place in the federal wetlands near the Olin parking lot seem to conflict with actual written reports released by the NYSDEC. First of all, the actual spill date of which the spill took place was originally reported by Dick Griffiths, Director of Physical Plant, to have occurred on November 19, however he has only recently stated that he reported was November 17, which was justified by his recorded remarks on November 19 which indicated that the leaking tank, tank #8, was on the north side of the Olin parking lot.

The NYSDEC Spill Response and Prevention Program records indicate that the leaking tank, tank #8, was on the north side of the Olin parking lot, heavily impacting the area at the southern end of the lot, near the wetlands. Because of the concentrated damage to this area it was noted by NYSDEC to "check other possible tanks" that might have also leaked nearby. The oil spill was estimated to cover four or five acres of the wetlands (approximately half of a mile).

David Weitz, from the NYSDEC Spills Department for Putnam and Dutchess Counties, was the first representative at the spill site and noted on Nov. 19 that there was "a one-inch layer of product over the surface" of the skating pond north of the parking lot.

The interesting thing about nature is that sometimes it prevents mankind disasters, as exemplified in this case. Weitz noted that a large chunk of ice was preventing a massive pool of oil from flowing downstream in the Sawkill tributary that runs parallel to Route 9G. The pool had formed approximately where the absorbent sponge dam, constructed by Ira D. Conkin & Sons Inc. (the company called in to assist B&G with the clean-up), is currently located.

The dam forms the southernmost boundary of the spill and is adjacent to and immediately behind the homes of Professor Terry Dewsnap and Professor Chinua Achebe and also happens to be in the "front yard" of B&G.

The NYSDEC made several remarks on November 19 which were included with Griffiths' called-in report; most importantly they included the NYSDEC estimate of how much fuel oil had spilled into the nearby wetland. The report says that approximately 2,000 to 4,000 gallons were spilled, yet this estimate was made on the first day the NYSDEC arrived at the site, so the actual number of gallons spilled may be higher. The NYSDEC report states that it is "most likely that more (than 4,000 gallons) actually was lost."

Griffiths' report also stated "the source of the spill to be a "storm drain" that "runs into wetland/ swamp area." It is suspected that the oil leaked from the tank into the storm drainage pipe, according to Weitz. Yet, when questioned about this storm drain, Griffiths denied its very existence. On the other hand, Simmons stated that the oil had flowed "out of the berm and into the storm drain at the south end of the parking lot."

Simmons commented that the clean-up is far from over, even though B&G staff is continually replacing absorbent sponges and sandbags and monitoring the stream everyday. "Every time it rains, more oil is washed into the stream from the wetland," Simmons added. Several questions are still unanswered, and may remain that way unless corresponding facts emerge at a later date.

These include: how much oil actually spilled. Why did Petro-Chem inspection results pass tank #8, while Conkin's inspection test failed it. What are the specifics on the Lewisburg spill and the possible tank leak, at Woods Studio? What is the "inventory discrepancy" mentioned in the Spill Prevention and Recovery Program report? What was the outcome of both the Public Water Source sampling of the stream that was done on November 21 and the soil sampling test done by Conkin? These and other questions have yet to be concretely addressed by any involved party or individual.