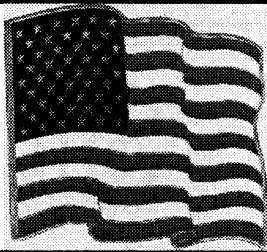


It's official, we now have a new president. Throughout this issue, we have few articles pertaining to the post-election events and opinions **Page 3 & 5**



SPSU has a YouTube account? Check on Jessica's article to learn more **Page 2**



January 25, 2009

Now with 30% more Opinion than your average College Paper

Volume 63, Issue 3

Quality Enhancement Plan

Jonathan Meek
Web Manager

What is the Quality Enhancement Plan? As I sat down to interview, Prof. Bob Brown, this was one of the first questions I asked him. He stated that this was a formal statement to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) of how the faculty and staff were going to improve the teaching atmosphere within SPSU. This is plan is very important to the school because it is apart of the SACS accreditation that school works on every couple of years. However, it begs the next question of what does this mean to all of us, the students. Prof. Brown explained that this ultimately helps the students out because the main focus of the plan is on the students and helping them become better engaged in the classroom. The plan comes from the faculty designing specific learning outcomes that have to show in a quantitative way there has been improvement.

Upon asking about who was directly responsible for this plan, Prof. Brown said he is main person in charge of implement-



The SACS symbol

ing the plan while the rest of the faculty has created committees to develop better ways to achieve their main goals with the Quality Enhancement Plan. Prof.

Brown explained it was his job to take those committee ideas and organize them into a uniform plan to be submitted to SACS. This prompted me to ask what

the plan was and how it was formed which Prof. Brown broke it down for me. Prof. Brown said a committee was formed by the faculty and they began looking at the school, which the biggest problem they found was with advising. So initially, the plan was focused on advising and then they started asking faculty and students for input and found that students were saying they needed better preparation for studying and doing schoolwork on a collegiate level. This lead to the development of a plan was focused in two areas: helping students be better prepared to do schoolwork on a collegiate level and advising.

The plan starts up in Fall 2009, all entering freshman will be taking three classes with the same 25 people. These classes are SPSU 1001, their major introduction class (i.e. CS 4002), and ENGL 1101. The reason

behind this is it provides students with other students that they can talk to and study with since they will be in the same classes together. However if the student is a transfer student in Fall 2009, then the ENGL 1101 class will be changed out with the STS 2400 class. Prof. Brown pointed out that all these classes are required for graduation so this new plan will not interfere with graduation plans. To improve advising, the faculty have been working with advisers develop roadmaps for students to follow so they have visible way to see their progress in college.

I asked Prof. Brown about current students and he stated that they could take the SPSU 1001 course, which is a free one-hour course from the school to help them with study habits and time management. Unfortunately, there does not seem to be a way to make the class taking part of the plan retroactive but that students could go to their advisor and work on a roadmap to see how much they have longer in school.

To Our Readers

Jonathan Meek
Web Manager

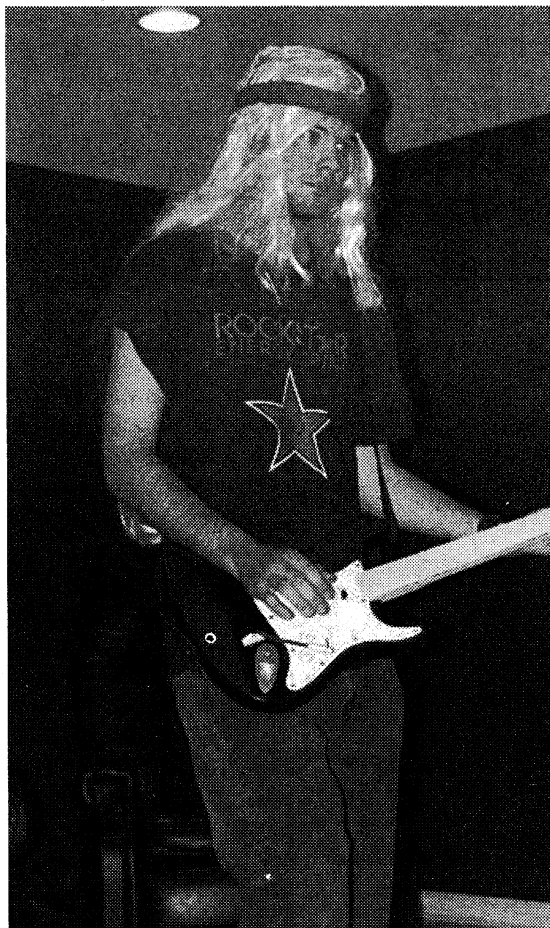
As many of you notice last term, we put out only one or two papers for The Sting. In part, we wish to apologize for this failure on our part. We had many computer issues come up which ranged from corruption of InDesign files to computer just going completely out. I would list the full here but I know that would take up more time and space than is needed as I worked on all of them. Whatever the problem, we still should have delivered something to our readers, at least, in the online edition of the Sting.

However, what surprised all us the most how actively interested people were in getting a copy of the Sting. I was constantly asked by my friends and others who knew I worked on the newspaper when was the next issue was coming out. I think most of us on The Sting failed to realize how popular the paper is and even though people may never agree with our content,

they will read it. With this new heightened energy, we wish to let you all know of a few changes that are happening:

New Editor-in-Chief

We have a new editor-in-chief, Sean Fine, who is junior student in Software Engineering here at Southern Polytechnic. You have seen most of Sean's work with video games over the past three years. In part, he is the guy responsible for their now being a gaming section to the newspaper. Sean has also been doing the layout on the paper for about the same period of time, so it is in thanks to Sean that we actually have a paper that fits on the paper it is printed. I know that doesn't seem like a big deal but I don't like having my article cut off and Sean has done a wonderful job making sure that doesn't happen. Overall, Sean is awesome guy and having joined the paper around the same time as him, I know it is pretty good hands.



Behold the new Rock king (see: Editor)

Photo credited by: Sean Fine

www.thesting.org website

Around Christmas break, our website, www.thesting.org, went offline and hasn't made an appearance since. Unfortunately, that is due to failure of one important little hard drive that has our data on it. As the IT guy in the group, I have been working on getting the website back up but it has been a slow and painful process. Rebuilding a server is a pain in the butt, especially if you have other projects (i.e. articles to write). However, the

goal is to have it up and running by the middle of the term if not sooner.

As we said, we appreciate the continued support of the paper and while we had a rough semester, I see this one going a lot smoother than the last one. If you have any desire to work on the paper or offer advice on how we can do things better, please stop by the office on Friday afternoons at 12:30 or so when we are having a meeting or shoot us an email at stingeditor@gmail.com. Once again, thanks.

Section	Page
News	1
Organization	2
Opinion	3
Entertainment	8
The Back Page	8

Espanol	How important is it to know Spanish? Christiaan Funkhouser has a article about it
Page 3	

Religion and Politics	How much do Religion and politics go hand in hand? Is there a middle? Check out Christiaan Funk Houser's article further in
Page 4	

Dos and Don'ts of Driving	Jarrett has a long (and I mean LONG) list of what he thinks you should know about driving. Take a look
Page 6-7	

!	After a extended break from writing reviews, Sean has a review about a particular title that's just crept past one million sales already. Go read his review.
Page 8	

Learning While Earning

Linda Quick

Career and Employment Relations

Southern Polytechnic State University is in partnership with hundreds of companies employing our students while attending school. The experience gained enables the student to apply coursework to real world work. Employers rate our students among the best!

The programs offered through the Career and Counseling Center are our Cooperative Education and Internship Programs. Following is a brief explanation of both programs.

COOPERATIVE EDUCATION (CO-OP) PROGRAM:

The Co-op Program allows students to alternate periods of work with academic study. Co-op students work full time with the same employer on an alternating semester schedule, gaining in-depth experience not available in the classroom. Students must commit to work a minimum of three (3) work semesters with that employer and maintain any GPA requirements associated with the assignment.

The minimum GPA allowed is 2.0. For purposes of full-time status, during the work semesters the student is classified full-time for insurance or for any other need requiring maintaining full-time status.

INTERNSHIP PROGRAM:

The Internship Program is a short-term work experience in a professional environment allowing the students to gain work experience in their field of study. Students work and attend classes simultaneously. The minimum GPA is 2.0. Interns typically work between 20-30 hours weekly. Our employers are quite flexible in scheduling hours as they understand the importance of the student's education.

Students who want to participate in either program must meet the following requirements:

- Be registered full time when applying
- Have completed 24 semester hours, with at least one semester completed at SPSU
- Must have declared a major
- Have a minimum 2.0 GPA

Surveys and polls from employers tell us that an overwhelming majority of employers report that they have either an internship or co-op program in place, or both. This is exactly the trend that Career Services professionals see on a daily basis.

We consistently hear from employers that they use co-op and intern programs as the most important method to their overall recruiting strategy. The investment of time and resources is

small in comparison with the caliber of employee they hire. For students, the obvious advantages are career related hands-on work experience, earning a competitive salary for school and tuition expenses, an opportunity to network with professionals to develop self-confidence, and to improve opportunities for post graduate jobs.

It is my pleasure to work with any student seeking to enhance themselves professionally by obtaining work-related experience. Our employment programs can assist students in their career decision-making process while providing support for their educational expenses-- what a win-win opportunity!!

If you are interested in pursuing one of these options, the first step is to attend an orientation. Our schedule of sessions is posted on our web.

The
Sting
www.thesting.org

Sean Fine, Editor-in-Chief

Jon Meek, Web Manager

David Allen Spivak, Copy Editor

Christiaan Funkhouser
Jasmine King
Korey Kolberg
Rultz Raymond

Twila McConnell
Jessica McNally
Jason

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Sting welcomes letters praising or criticizing editorial policies or opinions. Letters should be typed or neatly printed, double spaced and should not exceed five hundred words. Letters must include a name, address, and phone number for verification purposes, but names can be withheld upon request. Unsigned or unverified letters will not be printed. *The Sting* reserves the right to edit letters for style, content or size. All letters are run on a space-available basis. Please send all letters to *The Sting*, Southern Polytechnic State University, 1100 South Marietta Pkwy, Marietta, GA 30060, or drop them in the box outside of our office in A252, or e-mail stingeditor@gmail.com.

ORGANIZATIONS

Articles written by organizations to inform the campus of activities and events are welcome. Articles must be submitted in electronic format (e-mail, disk) by the deadline printed below. All such articles are subject to editing for style, content and size, and are run on a space-available basis.

JOINING *The Sting*

Any student paying Activity Fees is eligible to join *The Sting*, though final decision is made by the Editor-in-Chief. We prefer creative students who have passed English 1101. Come to our meetings Friday at 12:30 PM in A252, upstairs in the student center, or call (678) 915-7310. This includes YOU, all you so-called members that never attend. *The Sting*: It's not a job, 'cause a real job pays more.

DEADLINE

Deadline for the next issue is **The Weekend of January 31st at 11:59 P.M.** Articles submitted after this time will not be printed in the next issue of *The Sting*, except through special permission.

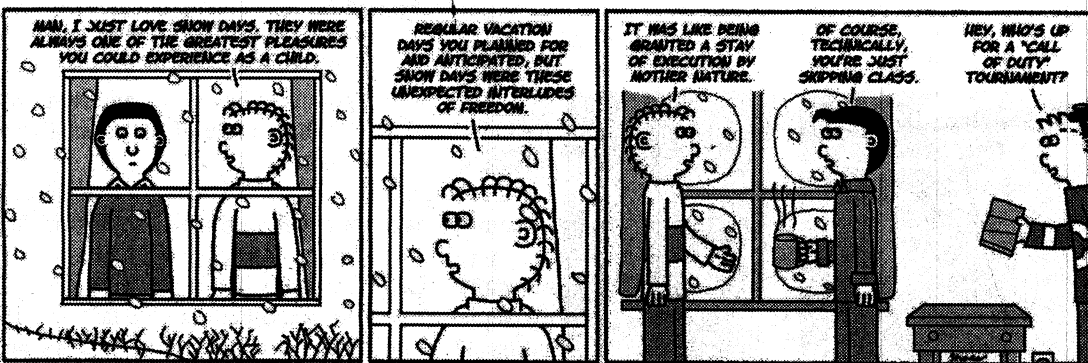
SUBSCRIPTIONS

Subscriptions to *The Sting* are \$1,000,000 per semester or \$5,000,000 an academic year. All subscriptions start with the first issue of the succeeding semester. Checks for subscriptions should be made payable to *The Sting*. Please subscribe, Somebody. Please?

PRICE

The Sting offers to every student, faculty, staff member, alumni, and official visitor of Southern Polytechnic State University copies of each issue numbering up to 0.25% of the print run for the respective issue. Every copy above 0.25% is to be purchased according to a price set by *The Sting*. Taking more copies of an issue than 0.25% of the print run of a particular issue is THEFT and a criminal offense.

Last-Ditch Effort



SPSU's YouTube

Jessica McNally

Senior Staff Writer

Howdy, I have created something for all the students on campus, a bonafide YouTube account for all students to use. This idea was inspired by the Video Production and Multimedia classes on campus. Some of the work done in those classes is already up; go see what your fellow students have posted!

Follow these quick and easy steps to upload videos:

1. Go on the internet and type in www.youtube.com

2. In the right hand corner click the "sign in" link.

3. the user name is: spsus-student the password is: pac-man12

4. Once you have signed in, go to YouTube's home page and



click "upload video"

This is a community website built by students for students, please treat it with respect and be thoughtful of the content you post. You may notice that the username and password are both given; ev-

everyone has a key to this site! Please tell us a little about yourself and your video in the description section. Share your voice with the rest of us! All student organizations are invited to share their videos too. This can be a really great resource for student organization promotion videos. Disclaimer: The SPSU Student YouTube site in no way reflects the academic or administrative positions of the university and is not an official product of Southern Polytechnic State University.

President Obama, the floor is yours

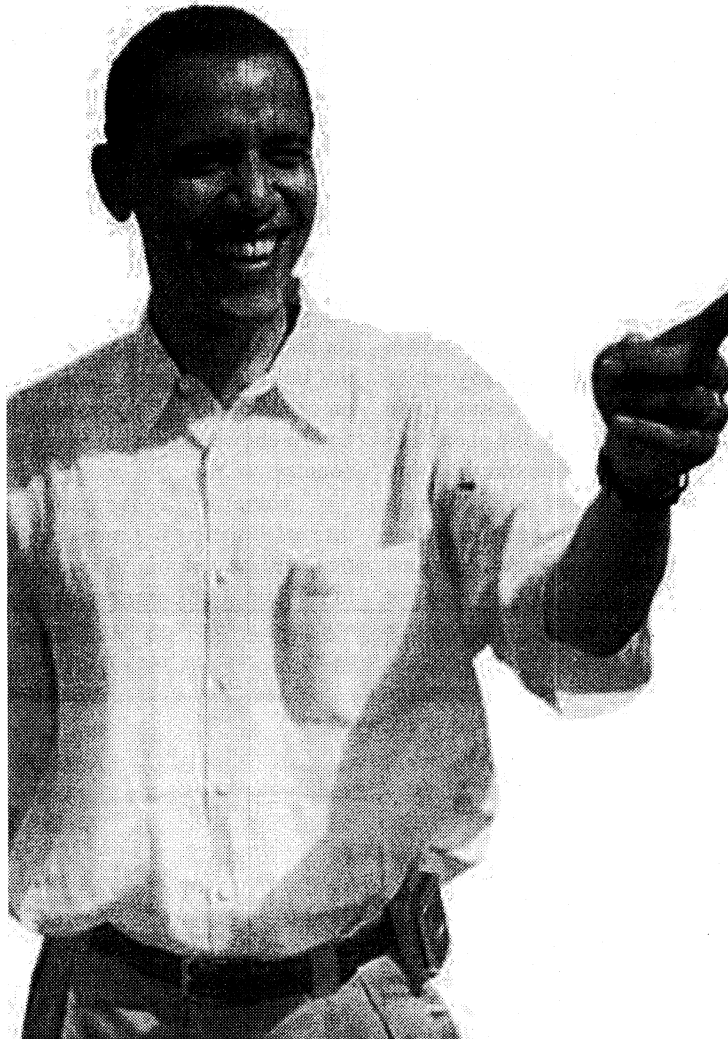
Jonathan Meek
Web Manager

It has been over two months since the election was concluded and President Barack Obama was declared the winner. Now that the party confetti has been cleaned up and all the campaign buttons have been put away to sell on eBay at some later date for hundreds of dollars. The questions remains: What does President Obama need to handle?

Unfortunately, I don't have a crystal ball and cannot predict what our future will hold but there are many areas that President Obama will be facing as he is sworn in. Here are the three I think will be most critical in his four-year term, in highest to lowest:

Economy

Our economy has recently tanked in the past couple of months as we have seen massive layoffs from companies and watched our auto industry reach the verge of collapse. The housing market has crashed because we, as a nation, were playing stupid economics. We were loaning money to people who didn't have the money to pay for a normal house and then giving them 20% more house that they already couldn't afford. No wonder it all came crashing down, it was real simple, we made very bad loans



With a smile like that, maybe there is a hope for the future

Photo credited by: <http://obamarama.org>

and now we are paying for it in the housing market. Mr. Obama has the ability to dictate whether the start-up of the economy is going to come from the private

sector or its going to be more government bailouts.

International Affairs

Our international affairs are a strangled mess right now. We

are fighting two wars within the Middle East. Most of our allies are no longer there with us and are calling for an end. Internationally, we have been perceived as a big bully and interferer of other's affair. Obama has so far re-appointed Robert Gates to stay on as Secretary of Defense, which this author believe is a great move. Mr. Gates has done benchmarks for the wars and continually evaluates the effort there. While this will win with some conservatives, Mr. Obama will have to figure out a way to end the war or keep it going with more public support. Along with that, Mr. Obama will need to handle dealing some of our common allies, Russia and China, in a different way since they have been slightly more aggressive towards others in the past few years.

Domestic Affairs

While most of the domestic affairs are linked to money, there are a few that probably should go Mr. Obama's list. The top one on mine is the repeal of the US PATRIOT ACT, which has done nothing but given more US law enforcement agencies more power to abuse our 4th amendment right. We have the technology to where a search warrant can be granted within 20 or 30 minutes so there's no reason whatsoever that there is a loophole for law enforcement to just

to start breaking down doors or wiretap someone due to "national security" issues. There is a reason for a search warrant, it is to show probable cause before you start wiretapping or breaking down doors. Another item is offshore drilling, which has managed to be locked up for over a year now. It would be nice to decrease our energy dependence as soon as possible and this appears to be easiest way to do it in the short term. Funding for education is another what will probably get thrown around, especially after the by and large failure of the No Child Left Behind Act. I understand the idea of holding public schools accountable but to start pulling funding instead of seeing what tools are needed by the school to help bring to a passing status, that's just stupid.

In conclusion, President Obama has a full plate ahead of him and it appears his transition team is actively working on getting things set up. As with all things, only time will tell. President Obama, here is best of luck to you on all your endeavors as our next President.

Spanish and you?

Christiaan Funkhouser
Staff Writer

Learning Spanish is a requirement for many of the majors here on campus, and it's not an easy task either. If you're like me, it's near impossible. I don't learn the way that Spanish is taught in most every school. This isn't an indictment on the teachers, because you'll see, if you keep on reading, that the teachers at Southern Polytechnic State University are top notch and care about students. But, I have a hard time memorizing endless grammatical rules, and the gobs of vocabulary. I wish Spanish in schools could be taught as we, here in the United States originally learned English - by association. Think back to elementary school. Were you conjugating verbs while learning how to talk? Were you told to make flash-cards or given lists of words and what they meant? No! In elementary school they focus on association, associating a chair with what a chair is... etc.

However, that's neither here, nor there. My point is that not everyone learns the same, and while I have a feeling that because we're a public school, our learning styles will have to conform to specific standards. Our professors here at SPSU understand this and I've noticed, as is in my case, that they're willing to help us through extra credit, class exercises, conversation classes, etc.

What I'm writing about today is something that will help everyone who's in my position and who tries really hard, studies, but it's just not



"Me llamo es... what?"

Picture credited by: blog.redfin.com

clicking, as well as lovers of all things Spanish. The Spanish Club

"Tertulia" is to the rescue. Whether it's meeting at a local Latino restau-

rant. This semester they have been to a El Salvadorian Restaurant in addition to a local Mexican joint. One of the reasons I was very reluctant to go is that I thought I'd be surrounded by native speakers, and we'd have to speak in Spanish the entire time. This isn't the case, a lot of people who go to Tertulia are students struggling with Spanish just as I am.

You don't just have to talk about Spanish, politics, current events, music, girls, . My being a part of many clubs, thought that just as a debate club debated, and a political science club talked about political science, a Spanish club would have to talk about Spanish. One can only talk about present participles for so long. However, Tertulia doesn't just go to eat. They also go to film festivals (most of which will get you some kind of extra credit) and other Latin American events and festivals. There shouldn't be a need to mention that with a bunch of people going to the same destination car pooling is always an option.

I have also noticed a clear positive significant correlation (fancy statistics talk) between those people in my Spanish class that are around a lot of native Spanish speakers as opposed to people like me, who aren't really. The absolute best way, in my opinion, to learn a language is to practice it. What better way than a short Spanish emersion. Dr. Nuhfer-Halten is helping to put together SPSU's study abroad trip to Spain. I was able to talk with her about the program.

For the low price of \$3895

(and I'm not being sarcastic), you get round trip tickets to Europe, from New York (leaving from Atlanta is an extra fee) you get, "aire fare, room, board, and health insurance." Dr. Nuhfer-Halten mentioned. The days are spent in classes, while, evenings and weekends are left for you to explore Spain, hit the clubs, and even get a Euro-pass to explore Europe. You also get food every day except for Sunday nights. Did I mention that there will be three days spent in Paris, where breakfast is included. The best part is that the next time you register for 12 hours or more, up to 6 credit hours in some sort of Spanish class will be added automatically.

People who are interested need to get in contact with Dr. Burnice Nufer-Halten on the third floor, of the J Building, her office is J-308. While you're up there, make sure you check out the pictures, and statements of previous participants. If you can't make it up there, send her an e-mail at bnuhferh@spsu.edu. If you don't want to talk to anyone and just want to surf for information check out the website www.foreignstudy.com and click on the Madrid four week program.

All in all, while Spanish may not come easily to all of us, SPSU offers many ways to help students who are struggling, IF you know your options and aren't afraid to do new things. If you aren't struggling with Spanish, are fluent in it, or aren't even in a Spanish class but love Latin culture check out Tertulia, or get in contact with Dr. Nuhfer-Halten about the trip to Spain.

The Middle Religion and Politics

Christiaan Funkhouser
Staff Editor

Hi Everyone! This new school year has led me to re look at things. Changes in the political atmosphere has lead to changes in me. New leadership that is continuing the old policies is the change we hoped for. And believe uh me, I have decided to change, I know uh it's a change you all have been hoping for – a change for the future. I hope to uh change things for the uh future of this country, which I am uh proud of uh but is stupid, racist, and hates women. Hope is the only thing that can change it, but before it can change because of hope, we must change to be uh hopeful, hopeful for uh change. Change to uh hope, instead of change to fear. It is at this time uh that hope and change can uh only hope to change.

Just kidding. Don't worry! I haven't changed into the merciful messiah (thanks Rush Limbaugh). Instead, I've written in playful, yet honest and accurate parody to illustrate that in today's politics (ahem, the democratic party).

Politics is a very touchy subject as is religion. I plan on doing both in one form or another, which comes as a shock to most people. I'm currently getting my degree in Social and International Studies with a Concentration in Political Science with a focus on the Soviet Union from its conception with Lenin through its basic demise with Nikita Khrushchev, then I'll be heading off to seminary for my Masters in Divinity with a concentration in Philosophy and Ethics.

I've noticed something though. When I talk to my friends about religion, for the most part, conversations can get heated but when it ends, we're able to more easily say, well, "I guess we just have to disagree." And leave it at that. However, conversations with friends about politics tends to get heated and stay heated. I was talking with one of my friends at a weekly get together and we consistently talk about religion, but it seems that politics make the conversation get awkward. They seem to become more passionate, even on topics where we have the

same end goals, if we differ on how to achieve them politically we normally end up changing the topic quickly.

Another friend of mine explained that her parents, one of whom was a Christian and the other an Atheist lived a happy life until she was 16 and they began to bicker about politics and it tore their relationship apart. They were able to be married over 16 years with major religious differences, but when the one got involved into watching and following politics is ended up destroying the relationship.

Why is this? In my attempt to figure this out, I have come to

friends." Than it is to say, "You're a conservative? I'm a liberal, we can still be friends." Now, I'm not saying it's impossible, or hard to be friends so to speak, it just seems that politics is a much more volatile subject.

I think it really boils down to this. Even on political issues, religion is a personal choice. I am a Christian. I have no power whatsoever to force anyone to believe the same as me. Even in political issues, the sheer fact that I'm a Christian has to ability to force someone to not get an Abortion. (Yes, I believe that as a Christian one should be against abortion.) Thankfully, we do not

enment aside from constitutional reasons including: most taxes, government subsidized and run education, government health-care, social security, government bail-outs, prolonged use of welfare and unemployment... etc. I believe that an individual person can do much better than what the government could offer and for less. If, I indeed, get my way my beliefs would be FORCED on other people. They wouldn't have a choice except to leave the country.

Therefore, by the pure nature of politics it's something that will be volatile as opposed to religion. But, some people are

that ripping ligaments off a human being because they don't want it is an absolutely disgusting and revolting thing.

If someone doesn't believe that life is special and sacred, and rather that the individual is what is important they will, logically, be more prone to supporting what's in the best interest of the pregnant woman. Since they don't consider it a life until a specific stage of development vacuuming the brains out of a blob of flesh must be no different than vacuuming other areas of a woman's body after a pregnancy.

Because there is that core belief difference the person on the side of human rights from conception sees the abortion issue as a black and white government sanctions holocaust against those who have no writes because they are not "wanted" and try and stop it. Whereas the pro-abortion person will see the pro-life person as trying to invade their "rights" of privacy (not something that exists in the constitution) and trying to force their beliefs on the pro-abortion person. They see it as an attempt by others to force them to live according to someone else's standards.

Both beliefs are strong, and both influence political policy. I will admit I have a hard time wrapping my mind around the general belief of a pro-abortion person and therefore cannot objectively represent their viewpoint but I hope my analogy made sense?

In closing, my point is that politics and religion are two hugely divisive topics. But, politics is more so because it forces the beliefs of a certain group of people on others. Religion has a place in politics, but only so much as it influences our personal beliefs. Since everyone is religious that is having, "a set of strongly-held beliefs, values, and attitudes that somebody lives by" everyone has a point of view and reasons for believing as such. I talked about how my religious beliefs, without getting into scientific proofs, for my reason of being pro-life. I also tried to articulate the viewpoint of a pro-abortion person and failed, but did a decent job trying to prove my point.

I hope you all have an awesome rest of the week, if you have any questions or comments, feel free to write a letter to the editor, or send me a personal e-mail at mr.funkhouser@gmail.com.



Jay salvation

Photo credited by: <http://caosblog.com>

a couple of the following conclusions; the first is that, "Obama is a mack daddy. He pimps white women and black women... I haven't trashed Obama... his African, in-heat father, went a-whoreing after a trashy white women... Obama was born trash! This long legged freak called Obama." The honorable James Manning from ATLAH ministries received a lot of flak from people because of those comments. This type of rhetoric is relatively unheard of from religious people towards non-religious people in terms of religion.

Now, granted there are those people who call non-Christians sinners (which is really more of a statement of fact to them versus a derogatory fact) and Muslims, who call non-Muslims Infidels etc... However, it seems that on average there's no one on the religious or spiritual side calling non-spiritual people idiots, or saying they're stupid for not believing the same way.

For some reason when two people disagree on religion it's easier to say, "Well, our views just oppose, but we can still be

have a country that specifically makes laws based on religious preference – while many of our laws are derived from Judeo-Christian law they are not put into place just because the leaders were Christian.

So, my religious beliefs doesn't enforce laws or change another individual's lifestyle just by virtue of what I believe. Because, in the United States – the best country in existence easily – we have the freedom to believe what we want, however we want.

HOWEVER.

When we look at things politically, things change. Government and Politics involve us giving up certain freedoms in exchange for privileges and certain rights.

I'm a Reaganite Conservative. Also known as a Communitarian Liberal, or a Neo-Conservative, you can check out thesting.org for past issues where I've previously defined those. Because I believe in personal responsibility and limited government my beliefs would cause me to vote against any expansion in the gov-

more concerned about religion in politics? They feel that politics and religion are wrong, that any political decision made from the basis of a religious belief is wrong? I can't accept the premise of that belief, because no decision can be made without ones religious beliefs getting in the way. Religion, as defined by Microsoft Encarta is, "a set of strongly-held beliefs, values, and attitudes that somebody lives by."

By this definition, a theist and an atheist are covered and are therefore subject to their religious beliefs becoming part of their political beliefs.

I believe that all life is a gift from God, that their creator, regardless of the race, what they will do in their life, and whatever imperfections their body starts with or will eventually have, loves all beings from the point of conception. This belief, when brought into the political realm will force me to be pro-life, and anti-euthanasia. The idea of destroying a life in the womb is no different to me, from murdering a baby right after it's born. The thought that some people believe

THE TENSTONE PAPERS

HOW REPUBLICANS CAN GET WITH THE TIMES

Jarrett Bell
Staff Writer

As all of us know, the United States of America has made history in the month of November-America spoke and has elected its first minority president. In the midst of history being created, there was a clear repudiation of President Bush's policies by increasing the Democratic control over the House of Representatives and the Senate. Despite the Democrats failing to have a supermajority in the Senate to block filibusters, the Democrats have the most control of Congress since 1994. President Obama, like many other Democrats running for offices in Congress, enjoyed broad support from all groups of people. Republicans, on the other hand, did not enjoy such broad support. Even more noticeable, Republicans typically do not enjoy such diverse support from many people whether they are in control or not. However, this particular election highlighted to me personally that the Republicans will need to make some changes in their own platform to truly compete with Democrats if they want to regain and maintain control.

First, I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge that both parties in the American political system are too extreme for the American people. It is clearly easy for the relatively few Americans to side with a particular political party because some people are as extreme as the party that they side with. Democrats and Republicans both have ideas that are much too extreme for the tastes of the American people. The American people are much more moderate and are willing to consider either party in the face of adversity. The American people are willing to switch and support the other party if the other party has been at the reins for a considerable amount of time has not delivered on their promises or have put the country in such a dire situation. Unfortunately, we are in those times now that the country is in a dire situation and the American people want to give the Democrats a try to see what they can do to return prosperity back to the people. Republicans, at this particular juncture, are the extreme party which the American people said 'No' to. However, we will see that at some point in time in the future the American people will say 'No' to the Democrats in the same fashion because of how far they want to pull the country left. As a result, America will always be in a constant tug of war between left and right in a way that keeps America balanced and gradually eases the country into new times and gradually changes how the country thinks. Gradual progressive movement is how America remains a stable, powerful, yet a modern force in the world today.

With that said, in order for Republicans to effectively pull

back to the right when they get the next opportunity (and it is absolutely true that Republicans will be pulling to the right after the election), the GOP would need to find ways to appeal to diverse amounts of people. It would be grossly incorrect if it was said that all minorities of any kind do not align with the GOP. However, it is a true statement that not many minorities are willing to give the GOP the light of day. There are many reasons for that and they are very complicated. Without getting too far into those reasons which would warrant another discussion, one can look into crowds where GOP supporters rally and the crowd appears to be homogenous-Caucasian Americans. Looking at

candidate is running if they are not running for President. First, the party must realize that the more pressing issues for people are taxes, health care, whether or not they will have a job, etc. These are more pressing issues to most people than whether or not abortion is legalized, for example. The GOP needs to focus more of their messages into issues that have broad appeal to all Americans-whether they live in the inner city or the distant suburbs and exurbs; whether they are Caucasian, African American, Hispanic, Asian, etc; whether they make a million dollars a year or ten thousand a year- as well as offering alternative plans to what the Democrats are proposing.

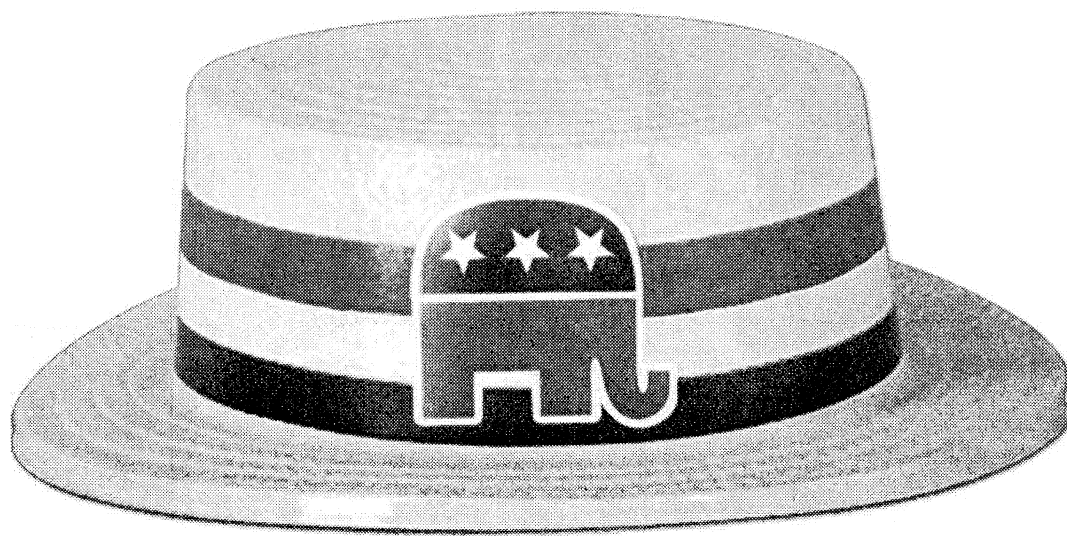
they are. The GOP truly needs to take the time to understand different people of races, ethnicities, cultures, classes, lifestyles, etc. To do this, the GOP would need to retool their approaches to appeal to the groups of people that are distrustful of them. When the GOP start addressing and understanding real issues that affect real people and do so by putting forth alternative solutions without the alienation of others, their image can improve for the better. Improving the party's image can increase their chances of winning elections in heavily Democratic districts and will put the Democrats on the defensive.

In conjunction with the second point, this will require

box and at least consider new norms that the average American is willing to consider. One has to be willing to adapt and change with the environment. Not changing with the environment that one is in will lead to those unwilling to change being left behind; not being able to adapt to new circumstances results in one not being able to prosper. Republicans must realize that if you put a pot filled with water on a stove with the fire burning, the water will begin to boil when it reaches a certain temperature. They cannot expect for a pot with water to be on a stove that is on not to boil after a certain amount of time. However, they need not worry about the water instantaneously boiling

because that won't happen- and that is how America is. America has to warm up to change before it can be done- the GOP must do the same as well. Not warming up to change will result in being out of touch with the people of America.

The GOP's basic ideal of a smaller government has merit and warrants consideration- but the other baggage that comes with their basic ideal does not and that baggage will plague them until they can begin to address the real issues that affect people today. However, I do not feel that the issues outlined are the only issues that are facing the party-



FYI - This Image is a attention grabber

Photo Credited by: images.buycostumes.com

the Republican National Convention would be a clear indication of this, let alone looking at rallies of GOP candidates. Democrats, on the other hand, appeal to many types of people- minorities such as African Americans, Hispanics, Women, Gays and Lesbians, and classes of people such as the working class. Such broad appeal can eventually undercut the GOP long term without finding some way to appeal to other types of people.

How can the GOP and its Republican candidates be able to appeal to broad types of people? Issues such as abortion and gay marriage are party staples; however, these issues are not the only issues that can make or break an election. The GOP needs to start making real issues their party staples. Furthermore, the party's stance on the current party staple issues, as well as the opinions that come out from party members can quickly alienate people that can be deciding factors in elections, depending on the area that a specific

Secondly, the GOP also has image problems that they must work on as well. The GOP can easily be seen as pro-business and not so much about the average person, for example. The party can also be seen as religiously intolerant, as many of its extreme religious conservatives tend to speak for the rest of the party which can intimidate and anger voters that the party may most likely need at some point in time in the future. These are just two examples of image problems that if the party does not make true commitments to show they are not intolerant of others and do not care about average people, the GOP not only solidifies these images in the minds of the people affected but also will face harder times in trying to sell their message since the party did not try hard enough to dispel the images. For the GOP to get with the times the party would need to wholeheartedly demonstrate- and demonstrate on a consistent basis- that the perception of them within some groups of people is not what

change. In my opinion, Republicans are very unwilling to change and accept new ideas, particularly in the social arena. This plays into whether or not tradition should be discarded. The reason why tradition is an issue is because a considerable amount of the party's issues is about what it has been and that's how it should stay. Tradition should not be discarded; however, while many people welcome having tradition as it provides guidance in handling situations, tradition cannot provide guidance to every situation that arises. In such cases where tradition cannot properly address, it cannot always be properly applied and thus creative solutions and out of the box thinking will be necessary to address those particular issues. Therefore, I feel that tradition has its place but it cannot be effectively used in every situation to resolve modern issues.

Hence, I'm under the impression that Republicans, particularly conservative Republicans, are not willing to think out of the

but the ones discussed are issues that are likely to cost them votes if the party does not actively work to rid themselves of these issues. In order to do so, the party needs someone who understands these primary issues- someone who will not forget tradition but is not afraid to welcome new thinking and new approaches to new situations. The Republican Party needs someone who can find a way to tailor the party's platform to a diverse crowd of people and to tackle issues that are TRULY important to ALL, not a select few. When the party can get someone that can energize and be inclusive as well as modern, then the party can truly be reflective of America. Until then- or until the Democrats really make a blunder that pisses off the American people, the Democrats will appear to be more in sync with America than the Republicans.

THE TENSTONE PAPERS DRIVING CATECHISM -DOS AND DONT'S

Jarrett Bell
Staff Writer

Before beginning this installment of the Tenstone Papers, we must define what catechism means. For those who are Catholic, you know what the canonical meaning of this word is. However, for those who do not know, the dictionary.com definition states that a catechism is "an elementary book containing a summary of the principles of the Christian religion, esp. as maintained by a particular church, in the form of questions and answers." However, usage of this word in the context of this writing will be used by the word's other definition, which is "a form of instruction by means of questions and answers," according to dictionary.com. By using this particular definition, this writing will be in this format.

This driving catechism is going to be no holds barred, as it comes from personal experience of observing drivers on the road who have committed actions that are detrimental to the flow of traffic and safety of those that are sharing the road with them. While I am no perfect driver either and perhaps not truly qualified to write a catechism on driving (and nobody is really qualified, we must note), there are many drivers on the road that do not appreciate the actions of some people which can lead to aggressive driving and road rage. This catechism is meant to make people more aware of what to do and what not to do when operating a motor vehicle to minimize the aggressive driving and road rage. How should you merge onto the highway at the end of the acceleration ramp?

DO NOT expect to merge onto a freeway at 45 miles per hour (for example) when the people on the interstate are driving at freeway speeds of 65 miles per hour or higher. DO NOT stop in the acceleration lane. DO NOT go to the end of the acceleration ramp where there are no dotted white lines.

DO accelerate down the acceleration ramp. DO enter the right lane BEFORE the acceleration ramp ends.

EXPLANATION: The purpose of an acceleration lane or ramp (let us use 'ramp' for simplicity) is to get your car up to the speed of the freeway, hence the purpose of an acceleration ramp. That means at the bottom of the ramp, where you are at the gore point between the acceleration ramp and the right lane, you should be going at approximately highway speed. This can be plus or minus five miles per hour. When you are going at this speed, you can seamlessly enter the freeway with ease without having to stop traffic in the right lane so you can accelerate to what was their speed. If you are going at highway speed at the bottom of the ramp, then you can get into the right lane before the end of the acceleration lane. People become aggressive drivers and have road rage because ignorant drivers

wait until they get to the very end of the acceleration lane to get in and they are going well below the speed of the right lane. Consider a congested but moving freeway and people cannot move over to the left to let people in the interstate yet they are going approximately 60 miles per hour. Now consider that you have someone at the bottom of the acceleration ramp going 45 miles per hour, scared to press the gas pedal and they wait till the very end to attempt to merge into the highway. That's how accidents occur; that's how road rage takes hold; that's how aggressive driving takes place. This person is now disrupting the traffic flow of the interstate and the end result is traffic jams and/or accidents. Finally, let us address the problem

to existing highway traffic.) Now consider the driver finds a space to get in but there's a big rig truck carrying 8 cars to be transported going at 70 miles per hour that is in the right lane and cannot move to the middle lane(s) because cars in that lane are going faster. Now this driver decides to take this spot. How is the truck supposed to slow down to let this car in? This driver's poor choice and possible lack of knowledge of basic physics in attempting to get in this spot is likely to cause an accident and can result in a fatality.

How should you use the left lane?

DO NOT get in the left lane and drive the same speed as the person you're "passing." DO NOT act

you have idiot morons that move to the left lane and they want to go the same speed as the car.

Before continuing, one must admit that the book does say that you must not exceed the speed limit when passing. However, the speed limit is perhaps the number one rule that is broken and will always be since they are artificially low for the design of the interstate highway system (but that is not in the scope of this discussion.) It will not hurt to speed up and move out the way to let others behind you pass as well. There are some people that act as if they are scared to touch the gas pedal because they will use more gas. You have to pay for gas already since you have moved your car and have used gas to do so. If one

those drivers who are in the left lane who want to pass. For drivers that want to pass, they should not have to "dip and dodge" slow drivers so they can get to where they need to go. Those who want to "fart around" need to be in the right lane to eliminate traffic flow obstruction.

If you are the only person in the left lane that does not mean you stay in the left lane until people come up behind you. There are too many people that are "left lane hogs"- people that stay in the left lane no matter who is behind them or if people have to go around, etc. These people are one of the most dangerous drivers because they are grossly impeding traffic flow just because they don't want to get off of cruise (we'll come back to that)



It's important to follow the rules of the road. It could save you a pretty penny or possibly your life.

Photo Credited by: z.about.com

of stopping on the acceleration ramp. At least in the State of Georgia, there are actually acceleration ramps. In places where there are acceleration ramps, as a driver, you have no business stopping completely. One finds it truly amazing that people do not understand the laws of Physics. Unless your car can go from 0 to 60 instantaneously, then stopping in the acceleration ramp must not be done (unless there is bumper-to-bumper traffic on the interstate.) To understand this, consider that the speed limit on this highway is 70 miles per hour and somebody driving a 4-cylinder Toyota Camry acts like they are scared to drive and do not know how to "pick-n-choose" their way in ("Pick-n-choose" is analyzing the traffic in the lane to be merged into and knowing which spot your car will fit in seamlessly at highway speed without causing disruption

scared to press the gas pedal- you have to pay for gas anyway! DO NOT stay in the left lane after passing the other car- you are obstructing traffic! DO NOT use cruise control in the left lane.

DO use the left lane to pass if necessary. DO press the gas pedal to pass the other car. DO let others pass you if there are a line of cars behind you. DO use cruise control in the right lanes ONLY.

EXPLANATION: In order for us to take the driving test we had to read this thick book which essentially was Driving 101. This book told us that the right lanes are "travel" lanes while the left lane is the "passing" lane. Since the left lane is for passing, that means if you are going around the car in front of you because they are not going at an adequate speed, you move to the left and you pass and get in front of that car. Aggressive driving and road rage occurs when

is so concerned, leave your car at home and get on mass transit or carpool! Otherwise, step on it and move out the way for the sake of traffic flow and safety!

To understand this, consider a four lane highway that is congested but traffic is moving with a speed limit of 70 miles per hour. The three right lanes have people that are going roughly 63 miles per hour. You're in the left lane doing 70 miles per hour. A car from the lane next to you get in front of you going 64 miles per hour and is riding side by side the car it is passing. There are a line of cars behind you going about your speed. You have to hit the brakes because this car is now riding side by side and not passing. Now you are pissed off because the lane was clear and this driver is scared to press the gas pedal. This particular driver is now impeding traffic flow and is imposing a danger to

or don't know what "get to the right" means. After you pass, you are to ALWAYS get to the right and free up the left lane. What if the police and the ambulance need to come? You do not want to be in the way of other drivers or emergency vehicles.

As just mentioned, cruise control is grossly annoying for drivers who want to pass and someone in the left lane is using it. Cruise control is meant for cruising and cruising is done in the right lanes ONLY. Cruise Control should not be used in the left lane because other drivers may not (and most likely is not) going the same speed as you. Drivers in the left lane have the intent to pass- cruising at speeds like all the other lanes impedes traffic that wants to pass. Finally, it is certainly not recommended that you use cruise control at speeds in which you are passing everyone on the freeway- then

THE TENSTONE PAPERS

DRIVING -DOS AND DONTs- Part Deux

you pose a risk for everyone on the road with you. Hence, if you feel the need to use cruise control (and presumably you will use it at slower speeds), then stay to the right- for the sake of traffic flow and safety!

How should I operate my vehicle when I see the police on the side of the road dealing with an incident?

DO NOT slow down to a crawl on the interstate, especially if you are in the left lanes. DO NOT speed past the police car. DO NOT continue to drive like a snail more than a quarter of a mile after you pass the police car.

DO slow down for police officers but not to a crawl. Do move a lane over from the police car as law requires. DO resume normal interstate speed or normal surface street speed after passing the police car.

EXPLANATION: By law, you are required to move over for a police officer that is stopped on the road, which is understandable because of the safety of the police officer and those stopped. What is not understandable is how people who are lanes away from the police officer decide to slow down below the speed limit. The police officer is busy handling business- how about minding your own business and stop obstructing traffic? It is beyond aggravating for drivers who have places to go to have other drivers slow down to below the speed limit to look at what is going on (whether it is an accident, the police officer stopping a car, etc.) If you are that nosey and need a full cup of hot, smoking drama, then pull over to the shoulder and get out your car and become a spectator. Being any and slowing down to almost a complete stop just to look at the activity is dangerous because you are not only impeding traffic flow but you can cause an accident because you needed a high dose of activity. One should slow down because of the police- not to be a busy-body. For those that are farthest away from the cop (meaning if the cop is on the right shoulder and you're in the left lane) then slowing down dramatically is not necessary- keep traffic moving!

Now after you pass the police car, why is everyone still doing under the speed limit? If the police are handling business, as mentioned before, mind your own business and keep going. Traffic jams start not only because of spectators but because people decide let me know continue to drive like a snail for a mile after passing the cop and acting as if they are afraid to press the gas pedal. If the police are not chasing you down for a violation then continue about your business and press the gas pedal. Obstruction of traffic is just as much of a violation as reckless speeding is- so keep it moving.

Should I drive in or with a group of cars on the interstate?

DO NOT drive in or with a group of cars. DO NOT obstruct traffic.

DO NOT create an unsafe driving environment.

DO allow space around you for own protection. DO your part to keep traffic flowing smoothly.

EXPLANATION: This is a question that can fit some of the other topics discussed. Driving in what can be called as a "herd" or a "pack" of cars is not only unsafe but detrimental to traffic flow in numerous ways. First, when driving in a pack, you lose all security than if you are driving with a small amount of cars. Say for instance due to inclement weather the visibility is not that great but you are in a pack of cars. If one car slams on the brake, if your reaction time is not that good or if you do not have good brakes due to poor maintenance, you will be rear-ending someone and you and others will get hurt. This is typically how car pile-ups occur, to the tune of 10 to 20+ car crashes in types of weather like what is described.

Let us introduce another example. Say for instance that someone is driving a poorly maintained car. You are in a pack of ten cars going roughly the same speed (typically the case for these cars to be in a pack.) The poorly maintained car's right tire blows and the driver loses control of the car. Some of the cars, if not all, will have body damage when it is all said and done.

Driving in a pack is dangerous for traffic flow, as mentioned. Say for instance you are on an interstate that has two lanes in each direction (typical for in the country areas.) There is a pack of cars blocking both lanes doing under the speed limit (or even at the speed limit for that matter.) There are people behind that want to pass but cannot pass because none of the cars want to get over in the right lane to free up traffic. Now a truck gets behind the cars because he needs to pass. Congestion starts to build because the pack is not allowing traffic to pass through.

In each of the three situations, it is clearly evident how driving in a pack is detrimental to your safety as well as everyone else's in more than one way. You want to drive independent from a pack. There is nothing wrong with having a car or two around you. However, if you are driving at the same speed as all the cars around you and all of the cars are relatively close to each other, you are in a pack. Free yourself from the pack by either getting in front of the pack (far enough that if anything happens to those in the pack you are not affected) or behind the pack for the same reasons.

How should I approach a traffic light that is out of order or flashing?

DO NOT run past it as it does not exist. DO NOT sit there and expect the flashing light to come on. DO NOT wait indefinitely for the other traffic to stop.

DO treat the flashing or out traffic light as a four way stop. DO show your intent to proceed though the intersection after following right-

of-way protocol. DO call your local Department of Transportation immediately and inform them that the traffic signal is out. DO use your high beams to signal other drivers, if necessary.

EXPLANATION: This particular issue is very complicated to deal with since so many drivers appear to not realize that the driving book says to treat a traffic light that is flashing or not functioning as a four way stop. It appears that the world goes haywire when the traffic light goes out because there is some dipstick that either blows past through it or does not appropriately take their turn, just to mention two of the most apparent issues. Running past this light is effectively running a functioning red light or running a stop sign. You are a risk to those drivers that are also trying to get through this particular intersection. Another frustrating problem is when another driver decides to sit there and is unable to "pick-n-choose" their way out into the intersection. The driving book states that if you are unsure, you are to yield to the person on your right. These particular people raise the frustration level for all of the other drivers behind them to a new level.

In these situations, what drivers typically forget two things- one, that a signal that is either out or not functioning is to ALWAYS be treated as a four way stop; Two, simple right-of-way rules that determine who is to go first through an intersection. According to the Driver's Manual of New York State (where I received my first license), at intersections not controlled by signs or signals, or where two or more drivers stop at STOP signs at the same time and they are at right angles to one another, the driver on the left must yield the right-of-way to the driver on the right. Another right-of-way rule that people tend to forget is a driver approaching an intersection must yield the right-of-way to traffic already lawfully using the intersection. There are many other right-of-way rules that can be mentioned. If you are not sure, consult your driving manual to review these rules. Knowing your right-of-way rules gives you the power to move through the intersection safely, responsibly, and skillfully. Knowing these rules and most importantly putting them into practice, in the event that you are involved with a crash while following these rules at an intersection, that you will be vindicated of wrongdoing.

How should I make left turn from a two lane road to another two lane road?

DO NOT make your left turn just after the solid yellow line ends (before getting to the middle of the intersection.)

DO get into the middle of the intersection to make your left turn. EXPLANATION: It never ceases to amaze me that so many people do not know how to make left turns. From observation, I see people who make left turns so

sharply that they almost clip cars that are in the closest left lane that is adjacent to the lane that the car is turning into. It looks as if these people turn so close that it appears they hit the car that is waiting. Furthermore, many cars are waiting at the line or before the white solid line at the intersection yet some incapable driver nearly hits them on making a left turn. Half of the time there are people that turn this way to beat a traffic light- other times, they just do not know how to turn properly, even when they have ample time to complete the turn correctly. What if there was ice on the road and it was slick? This person would slide into the car that is waiting lawfully at the line or behind the line and cause an accident. This is a clear demonstration of not driving safely, responsibly and skillfully.

To make a safe, responsible and skilled left turn, if you are on a two lane road turning onto a two lane road, you are required (when lawfully and safe to do so) to get in the middle of the intersection with your left turn signal on and turn left. If it is a four lane highway that you are turning onto, you are to make the left turn into the left lane and then merge to the right when it is safe to do so. In either case, you are to enter the middle of the intersection, regardless if you are turning onto a two lane road or a four lane highway. This is to prevent hitting the car that waiting on the street that you are turning onto.

Should you be the driver that is waiting to continue going straight or turn left and you see cars turning left in front of you from the other perpendicular street going in the opposite direction of you, it is best to stay slightly behind the white line. There will be grossly ignorant drivers who will continue to not operate their vehicle safely, responsibly and skillfully and still turn so close that they will hit you. If you are slightly behind the white line, that will allow for extra protection from these people. Even though this added effort is not entirely necessary since if you are at the line (thus following the rules) the other driver is required to properly make their turn and follow the rules as well, you cannot trust other drivers so its best to protect yourself just in case.

Should I drive and talk on a cell phone?

EXPLANATION: For this particular question, we're not going to have dos and donts. Instead, let's explain why you should not do this at all. When driving, you already have plenty to pay attention to- the car in front, the cars on the side of you, behind you (generally the environment), weather conditions, road conditions, etc. Now let's throw a cell phone into the mix. Your attention is being split between all of those elements listed and now we have a conversation. Now consider that your best friend has gossip and is telling you the scoop; by the fact that you are nosey, you want to

find out. So now you're totally engulfed in the conversation. Your attention is more into the conversation than operating your vehicle safely, responsibly and skillfully. At this point, you are the hazard to everyone on the road.

If the scoop is really that juicy, PULL OFF to the side of the road and put on your hazard signals. Conduct your conversation; when you're done talking, then turn off your hazard signals and signal to get back in the road, doing it safely, responsibly and skillfully. One should not be driving and talking on a cell phone as one is likely going to be driving too slow, not changing lanes in doing your part to improve traffic flow, and most importantly not being totally aware of one's surroundings.

CLOSING - from the Tenstone Corner

After reading this catechism, I certainly hope that you all take note of these experiences. You may not agree with my explanations, but I strongly urge you to observe traffic at all times of day- pre-dawn, morning rush hour, between rush hour (late morning, early afternoon), evening rush hour, and late night. If you have a keen eye and know the rules of the road, you will recognize the issues that were raised. I strongly urge that you do not conduct yourself in the 'dents' fashion as outlined- that you will conduct yourself safely, responsibly, and skillfully in the 'do' fashion.

Finally, as my own personal opinion, if I had my way, I would completely rewrite sections of the driving manual to fit the 'dos' and when taking the driving test, those who exhibit one or more of the 'dents' will automatically fail with no exceptions. Secondly, I would make it mandatory for drivers to learn basic kinematical physics which will help one fully understand driving and prove their knowledge of this with an exam. Lastly, I would like to make it mandatory to have your license renewed every four years and one must demonstrate their knowledge of the rules of the road by taking the same exams like a new driver would. In conjunction with the preceding statement, the tests to get a driver's license need to be much more stringent to weed out those who will not operate a vehicle safely, responsibly and skillfully. Lastly, police put too much focus on speeders and do not appear to enforce the other rules of the road. While reckless, unskillful speeding is dangerous for everyone, police need to focus more on those who are exhibiting the actions discussed, as these drivers are the ones that are truly creating the issues on the roadways. When people learn how to operate their vehicle safely, responsibly and skillfully, there will be less congestion, aggressive driving, road rage, and accidents on America's roadways.

Metal Gear Solid 4: Guns of the Patriots

Everything FINALLY falls into place

Sean Fine
Editor-in-Chief

Genre: Action/Sneaking
System: PS3

It's been a long road for the Metal Gear Franchise, 20 years long to be precise, and with a heavy heart, it grieves me to admit that the story of Solid Snake, perhaps even all of Metal Gear, has come to an explosive close. With the release of Guns of the Patriots, many die hand Metal Gear Solid fans have been given a final chapter to conclude the Solid series as Hideo Kojima's places the franchise behind him. But even if it is final, does it stand up to the previous titles above everything else or do confusing plot twists leave this title as unpopular as Metal Gear Solid 2?

Story: Five years after the events of Metal Gear Solid 2, the world and war has changed so drastically that war is no longer about fighting for ideals or defending/assaulting a particular nation. War has become the backbone of economy for the world and the major military businesses of the world have even created special units known as PMCs (Private Military Companies) to go and simply wage war with other PMCs, fighting continuous proxy battles throughout the world.

With these proxy battles taking over the world economy, technologies have also improved, from special weapons to "octo-camo" to the new generation of nanomachines within the soldiers to control emotions, vitals, accuracy and other factors that play into how well a soldier can perform on the battle.

In midst of this world in conflict, Solid Snake has begun to age rapidly for unknown reasons, looking like a 65 year old veteran when he's only about 35 or soon. Snake finds that he has little time to worry about that when main antagonist, Ocelot, whose mind has been completely taken over by Liquid's grafted-on arm, has finally been found somewhere in the middle east. It's up to Snake and only Snake to take him down, yet he soon finds it's never that easy.

The story for Guns of the Patriots is a large finale to wrap up every little plot hole that Kojima has left unfilled in the series, addressing everything from the important question of "Who are the Patriots?" to even the surprising fate of the cast from 1964 setting of Metal Gear Solid 3.

With many characters made returns and cameos, it seems that Kojima wanted to try and pack as much fan service into the game's plot as possible and it works. Nearly all of the returning characters have excellent reasons to make a comeback and in some cases, have excellent final departures from the series, though in some cases, the reasons for appearing just seem for that purpose only, appearing, and in one case of a character's finale, it's done so badly that it is almost embarrassing for the rest of the game.

One thing that is always great about Kojima's games that is that they always have a deeper meaning that what is initially there and Metal Gear Solid's story is no different, presenting heavy themes like what it means to be a soldier and a human being, passing on the torch to the new generation, and wiping the sins of the old generation.

However, there is one major flaw that all the Metal Gear Solid series contains and that is the excess use of cutscenes. This is no big surprise, especially when it comes to Metal Gear, but the amount of cutscenes in this title are so long that it takes over 20 minutes just to get into action to get your first kill. It gets worse when numerous strings of cutscenes have a half-way save point for players to stop if they wanted to. Regardless, I loved the story of Guns of the Patriots, despite the length of its cutscenes.

Gameplay: The Metal Gear franchise has always been a revolution when it comes to gameplay, having become one of the first sneaking games in history, and since then, the franchise has only built upon its greatness. Metal Gear Solid 4 has taken its lessons from MGS3's camoflaage, CQC, and its Subsistence Edition's improved camera and reworked the controls to be a good blend of sneaking and gunplay action.

As Old Snake, you are equipped with two special pieces of equipment, the Octo-Camo suit and the Solid Eye system. The former is a special type of suit that changes it's cover to your surrounding area, allowing you to blend into the environment and become less detectable by enemies. It's an improvement

over MGS3's camoflaage system, no longer forcing players to go into the menu everytime they want to change their camoflaage, yet Konami still allows players to go into the menu and 'store' their favorite camos, though what purposes this might serve other than cosmetic ones is a mystery to me.

As Snake finds himself in the middle of numerous proxy battles, he can convince one side or another that he's on their side, which can help avoid some confrontations later on, though the way the game presents enemies to you, you're more than likely to just get the favor of the 'underdog' side as opposed to the more heavily equipped PMC side of the battle, so it makes the feature kind of limited, especially since it doesn't expand much further than whether or not a side likes you or not.

In terms of gunplay, a new over-the-shoulder aiming system allows players to quickly shift from sneaking to sudden action should they be discovered. It's very helpful and the aiming system makes it easy to should in a general direction and still be able to hit something while making the player still have to work for it. If an over-the-shoulder method of aiming isn't your fancy, then players can shift to an improved first person view that allows players to move themselves while aiming, making the aiming experiences much more enjoyable and accessible.

As far as acquiring guns

acquired by selling excess weapons to the arms dealer, and allow you to purchase special equipment from him yourself and what a selection of guns you have to choose from. From the first section of the game alone, you see that Kojima wanted to pack this game with as many guns as possible. From the M9 tranquilizer to the P90 Sub machine gun to 3 variations of a heavy machine gun, the game is packed with weapons... too many in fact. With so many weapons to choose from, it can become confusing to determine which weapon fits the best scenario. Eventually though, you'll probably pick a set-up that fits your preference (the classic SOCOM pistol and P90 is plenty for me).

The new CQC system however has become significantly more difficult in relation to its MGS3 predecessor, relying on too many inputs of buttons and joystick tilts to make use of the more advanced CQC techniques. In my playthrough, I could probably the times I used CQC on the fingers of my hands, though that could just be how much better then new aiming system is.

In terms of boss fights, all the fights are challenging in some way, be it trying to find your opponent who has a advanced version of your octo-camo or figuring out how to kill an enemy who simply can't die or the epic final fight. All the fights are really fun and give a nice reward for defeating each one.

In the end, the game play is an improvement in many areas though the CQC seems to have taken a step back from the glory that was MGS3. Regardless, the game is still a vast amount of fun.

fully synched mouth movement! The game looks beautiful really pushing the standard for gaming graphics.

It seems that Kojima is so positive that the graphics are the definition of perfection that mild control of the camera in the cutscenes are given to you, as if to beckon you to try and find problems in the game as well as admire the vast amount of detail they've placed in the game.

Sound: Once again, Harry Gregson-Williams has taken the reins in creating one of the most emotional and splendid soundtracks in a video game to date, with epic chase music to subtle melodies that add tension to your sneaking prowess, while adding a wonderful emotion-inducing themes to the more tragic and deep cutscenes. The main 'Love Theme' alone is such a splendid piece of music that completely captures the final chapter feeling that the game seems to be. The soundtrack is great and though the title of best game soundtrack I still have to hold to the previous title of Snake Eater, Guns of the Patriots' soundtrack is still amazing compared to the multitude of games out there.

As far as voice-acting goes, the writing and script are amazing and the majority of actors who played their parts in the pervious games return for this final expedition, including the famous David Hayter, who captures the turmoil that Old Snake endures surprisingly well while still being the Snake we love. Metal Gear Solid's voice track is great, giving high amounts of performance to each of the characters and their emotions.



Guns of the Patriots really shows how powerful (and pretty) games on the PS3 can look

Photo credited by: ps3media.ign.com

over MGS3's camoflaage system, no longer forcing players to go into the menu everytime they want to change their camoflaage, yet Konami still allows players to go into the menu and 'store' their favorite camos, though what purposes this might serve other than cosmetic ones is a mystery to me.

The Solid Eye System is

goes, you no longer do you have to find that specific gun that works for you. You can take the guns from your fallen enemies, though you are left with the problem of Weapon Tag Identification, rendering the gun useless. Enter Drebin, a gun launderer who can take the guns you find and make them usable for a price of "Drebin Points"

Graphics: Team Foxhound has certain taken full advantages of the PS3's graphics system, with some of most beautiful and fully rendered graphics to date, with plenty of details at every corner from the swirling dust clouds in the Middle East to the amazing facial expressions each character portrays to one of my favorite upgrades,

Overall: Metal Gear Solid 4 takes possibly one of the greatest series in the gaming industry and gives it an ending fitting for such a great series. While whether it is the best in the franchise will probably be constantly up for debate, one thing is certain: it deserves to sit amongst the titans of video game history. 9.5/10