

12-2-2014

Independent - Dec. 2, 2014

Luis Badillo

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Recommended Citation

Badillo, Luis, "Independent - Dec. 2, 2014" (2014). *The Independent (1988-present)*. 490.
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INDEPENDENT

NORTHEASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY



Tuesday, December 2, 2014

www.neiuindependent.org

Vol. 34 Issue 8

CANCELLED

Communication on Course Cancellation

Maya Wagner

Course cancellations at NEIU have been an ongoing concern for professors and students for quite some time. According to Enrollment Management Services, drawn from Banner (the University's student database), NEIU has cancelled over 200 class sections per year since 2010.

Richard J. Helldobler, Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs stated, "When I arrived in January 2013, professors and students were being notified as late as the first week of classes. That was not a good practice for faculty or students. We are now finalizing the schedule two weeks before the semester begins, this allows faculty and students to plan better should a schedule alteration occur."

For students such as sociology junior Peter Chan, however, the cancellations have proven to be more than a hassle. Chan explained, "There is a very real concern, when registering for classes and planning my academic future, to be mindful of class cancellations."

The university culture influenced by class cancellations has a great effect on the attitudes held by both faculty and staff. Class cancellations send a very disempowering message to students. Personally, this makes me feel that my investment in my own education is going underappreciated by NEIU decision-makers."

Instructors such as professor Cyndi Moran from the CMT department have seen firsthand how the course scheduling policies have impacted students' lives in a negative manner.

"I'm an advisor. I have close to 80 major advisees, plus I have other students, so I'm in my office all the time helping students," she said. "I've sat down with students and tried to help them substitute another class and trying to find for a working student a class to replace a Tuesday/Thursday class and the

Northeastern Illinois University

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Look Up Classes

Nov 29, 2014 04:50 pm

Sections Found

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Register Add to WorkSheet New Search

Sections of courses with low enrollment risk being dropped.

best we could do is a Monday/Friday morning and it screws up their ability to work."

Some faculty members have also echoed their frustration with the current policies. Sociology and gender studies instructor Michael Armato said, "I think they're super damaging to the university. I think they're super damaging for students, their time to degree. I think they hurt enrollments. I think they hurt student morale. I think it's alienating to the students that are trying to come here and of course they're damaging to the instructors who are trying to teach courses and make a living."

When asked about what efforts the administration is taking to reduce the high number of cancelled classes, Helldobler responded, "We are working to schedule as conservatively as possible while offering as many sections at optimal times to meet demand so students and faculty have more confidence in what is posted in the schedule will run. We have instituted wait lists for most courses which allow us to determine demand and add sections when needed."

In an NEIU targeted announcement Helldobler also spoke on the assembly of a Task Force on Enrollment Management and Course Scheduling. Its mission is "to discuss these issues (course cancellations) and make recommendations on how we might improve our scheduling, registration and decision-making systems around the course schedule."

The Task Force will be comprised of a variety of different members from different departments and will initiate work in the spring of 2015. Helldobler's goal is that recommendations made by the Task Force will be implemented in time for spring of 2016.

It is important to note that students do not need to wait for administrative action to help alleviate the scheduling crisis. Moran gave some words of advice for students who want to know how to take action. "Register sooner than later. I ask my students every day in class 'Have you registered yet?' and there's still ones who haven't

done it yet. The sooner we get students registering, the sooner we get a picture of how classes are going and that's really necessary."

Moran continued, "We know our students register late. If we could get them to do it a little bit sooner that would help. Let the chairs know, let the faculty know, let the provost know, let the deans and the president know that you need courses. Let people know that this cancellation impacted you negatively. Let people know you're not getting what you need. We need the student voices to get out there."

Moran's words tie closely with

Helldobler's as he explained that students should check their emails regularly and be aware of the communication the university is making with them. He further explained that there are myths floating around concerning registration such as payment to register and being unable to get into a course that has a pre-requisite you're currently taking.

"Communication is a two way street, we can send information to students but they have to be responsible and read it," says Helldobler.



Photo by Luis Badillo

How many courses will get dropped next semester?

A LOOK
INSIDE...

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A PEDROSO INSTALLMENT
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THROUGH THE EYES OF AN EXCHANGE
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WRAPPING UP THE 2014
SPORTS YEAR
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"WHY TORTURE IS WRONG, AND THE PEOPLE WHO
LOVE THEM" AT THE STAGE CENTER THEATER
PAGE 9



NEWS

University Professors Meet to Remember Strike

Luis Badillo

With recent professor and student protests occurring on campus over the last several months, professors gathered to commemorate the 10-year anniversary of the 2004 professor's strike here at NEIU.

Members of the University Professionals of Illinois (UPI) clad in green union t-shirts met again in the Golden Eagles Nest to discuss not just the events from a decade ago, but to talk about the challenges the union faces today.

President of NEIU's UPI chapter Sophia Mihic spoke at the event. "I'm a little worried that they think we don't have the resolve to strike," said Mihic. "So we're remembering 2004 to remind everyone of the resolve we had."

Though there was a focus on financial matters at NEIU, various professors spoke to other concerns.

Dr. Laurie Fuller spoke about course cancellation policies and the testimonies gathered from students

in UPI questionnaires. "So we've gathered 175," said Fuller. Of those who filled the questionnaire, 61 percent said that they "had courses cancelled" and another 50 percent said that the courses they have been registered in have been cancelled.

Dr. Fuller also read of some of the student reactions after having their courses cancelled. In the questionnaire, students attested to having to take courses they did not want among other consequences, including an account of a student taking an entire semester off. "The rationale that we get from the administration is that we're cancelling courses because we're trying to save money," said Fuller. "But if a student takes a whole semester off, think of all that course money that we're losing."

Dr. Fuller then touched on two potential policies, one regarding the removal of department heads and another that allows for the dismissal of a professor if not adhering to "acceptable technology use."



Photoby Hailey Boyle

Ten years later, and still strong. UPI shows their colors.

The meeting also hosted several criticisms of President Dr. Sharon Hahs and the administrative decision to use eminent domain to acquire six properties on Bryn Mawr Ave. Several members of the audience chimed in and labeled the decision as "immoral" and cited it as

an example of "mismanagement of the university."

The 2004 strike, which occurred on November 20 of that year as reported by the Independent, lasted for 20 days after negotiations between the UPI and school officials failed to find a resolution

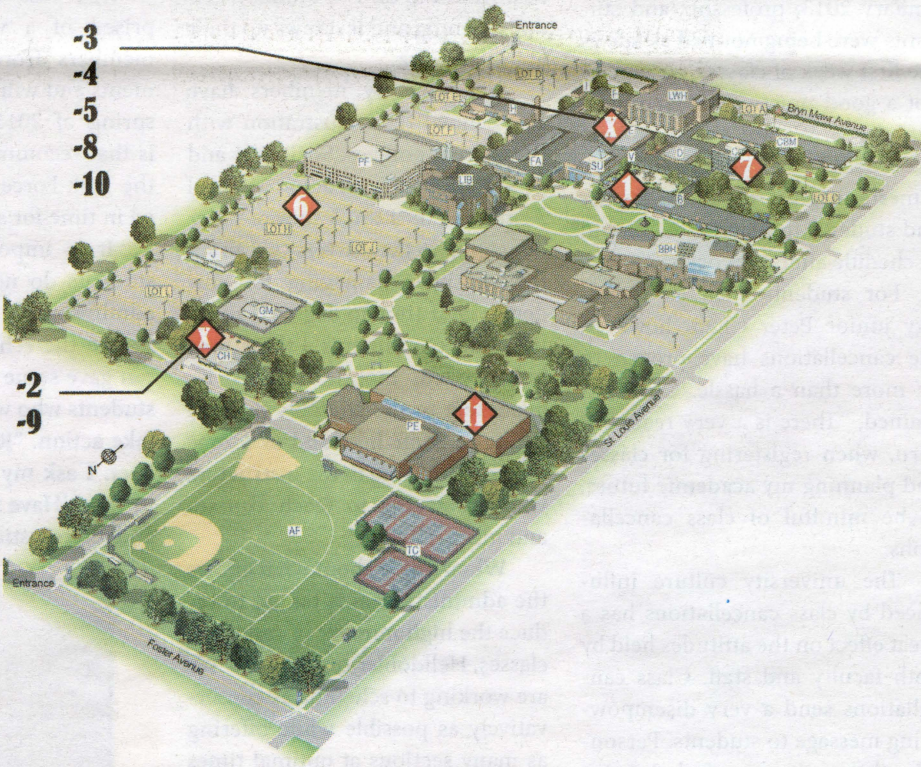
when meeting with a federal mediator. The two parties finally settled on a contract for a 3.5 percent raise and after a member of the Board of Trustees donated \$400,000 of his own personal funds.

NEIU Council of Clubs

Allocations
for the week of
November 23, 2014

Student Organization	Event	Date of the Event	Allocated Dollars
Hillel	Hanukkah Lunch & Learn	12/02/14	\$423.00
IYSSE	Tsar to Lenin Documentary	12/03/14	\$360.00
Alpha Psi Lambda	Founder's Week	02/09/14	\$1,042.56
Phi Iota Alpha	Immigration Workshop	01/22/14	\$568.00
	Culture & Identity	02/12/14	\$568.00
	US Hispanic Leadership Institute Conference	02/12-02/15	\$1,530.00

For more information on how to apply for CoC funding, contact Elvis Guzman at e-guzman13@gmail.com



Map provided by NEIU, edited by Emmanuel Gonzalez

Police Blotter

The following offenses occurred from Nov. 4 to Nov. 19:

1. B Building, Nov. 4, an unknown offender wrote graffiti on a bathroom stall inside the men's washroom.
2. Daycare Center, Nov. 4, the fire alarm was accidentally set off after electricians were working on the fire panel.
3. E Building, Nov. 4, an unknown offender wrote graffiti on a bathroom stall inside the men's washroom.
4. E Building, Nov. 5, an unknown offender wrote graffiti on a bathroom stall inside the men's washroom.
5. E Building, Nov. 5, an unknown offender wrote graffiti on auditorium wall; facilities were notified for clean-up.
6. Parking Lot H, Nov. 10, an offender struck and damaged a parked vehicle. After being issued two citations, she was released to parent.
7. C Building, Nov. 10, an unknown offender pulled the fire alarm. CFD responded

and reset the alarm.

8. E Building, Nov. 15, an unknown offender stole bagged coffee and pastries from Café Descartes.
 9. Daycare Center, Nov. 16, CFD responded to a fire alarm, no sign of smoke or fire was detected, and alarm was reset.
 10. E Building, Nov. 16, an unknown offender stole a bag containing a camera, microphone, and batteries during a dance event.
 11. PE Building, Nov. 19, the fire alarm went off, no sign of smoke or fire, CFD responded and reset the alarm.
- The following offenses were not mapped:
- Foster & Drake, Nov. 11, a driver was issued four citations and an I-bond for being found driving without lights, no insurance, a revoked license, and transporting liquor.
- 5500 N. St. Louis Ave, Nov. 14, two citations and an I-bond were issued for a driver disobeying a stop sign and driving with a suspended license.

Deciding Artistic Direction against Oppression

Michael Lackovich

Nobel Peace Prize-winner Lech Walesa attributed controversy to his award by disturbing the peace of the LGBTQA community, stating they should be in the back of the room or “behind a wall” of parliament. He further stated that gays, as a minority, should not force their agenda on the majority. They should “adjust to smaller things”.

Despite the recommendations of the University Advisory Council and the various efforts put forth by

students to remove Walesa’s name from a classroom building at NEIU, it still remains today. In memorial of the open dialogue that occurred around the name, the university decided to commission an artwork that would commemorate those voices. The Lech Walesa Dialogue is available on NEIUport under the Campus Initiatives section.

The call went out to artists to provide proposals that would represent this unresolved campus conflict. Predominant artists throughout the world responded and the list

was distilled to three finalists. These finalists have presented their proposals in presentations to staff and students over the past two weeks.

All of the artists respect the accomplishments of Walesa as the laborer who freed the Polish people from communism. At the same time, they expressed extreme disappointment for his homophobic comments. At least one presentation quoted Walesa’s gay son’s admonishment to his father about his homophobic statements.

Kasia Ozga presented her proposal, a twelve foot inverse bust of Lech Walesa in a concrete brick. It was a work in negative space. This would give the impression of a focus and unfocus of the bust as one would walk by. It was unsettling to the LGBT and supporters. The fear is that it would end up as another tribute to the controversial person rather than explaining the conflict he generated on our campus. Extensive feedback was given to the artist on how it may better represent the conflict.

The second artist, BJ Krivanek, provided two differing propositions. One would be colored lighting upward in the Bryn Mawr alcove ceiling. Chromatic rotation of colors would be displayed with a single word, “WALL” hanging down from the upper structure over the staircase to the parking lot. This symbolizes the comments about



Provided by Krivanek

A model of what Krivanek’s piece might look like.

putting gays behind a wall.

His second proposal would be to have the words, “I WILL NOT APOLOGIZE TO ANYONE” in the same location of the aforementioned “WALL”. In place of the chromatic display would be an LED banner scrolling diverse words from pillar to pillar across the staircase. As a gay man, he feels that it is important to address the social and historic aspects of this struggle.

Wojtek Sawa, a gay Polish artist, also expressed deep sadness at the actions of Lech Walesa. His installation would be in the pitted area outside of the Lech Walesa Hall. Monitors buried under a swirling mass of river stones would project messages of struggle, conflict and injustice towards LGBTQA people globally. It would also allow the installation to be updated as society changes to

address injustices in women’s rights and discrimination towards people of Muslim faith.

It would be a living piece of art, with a never ending awareness to struggle and evolution. From the pit rise three pillars. The pillars would have photographed hands rising from the pit of darkness to the hands reaching from the top of the pillars to assist or rescue those in the pit. Sawa hopes that this would become a location for performance art in the nice weather.

“The defense of our rights and our dignity, as well as efforts never to let ourselves to be overcome by the feeling of hatred – this is the road we have chosen,” were once powerful words of Walesa that with time may hope to speak truth of NEIU’s current situation.



Kasia Ozga giving her presentation.



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Photo by Michael Lackovich



Participating in the groundbreaking is Angelina Pedroso, Anett Zlotorzycki, Sharon K. Hahs, Frank Ross, Juan Guardia, Chris Zavacki. (From left to right)

Expanding Community

Michael Lackovich

On the afternoon of Monday, Nov. 24, in the first snow of the winter season, the groundbreaking for the expansion of the Pedroso Center took place. Located at the far end of the B Building at NEIU, the Angelina Pedroso Center for Diversity and Intercultural Affairs was established in the spring of 2011.

The original mission of the cultural center was to address the needs of African American, Asian and Latino/a students. Shortly after the center opened, a work group decided to add the needs of Women and LGBTQA students, according to President Sharon K. Hahs.

The work group identified generated a 67 page report with 19 recommendations to addressing the needs of LGBTQA and women on Northeastern campus. This resulted in creating university policies and initiatives including the LGBTQA and Women's resource centers.

This building expansion will

move these two resource centers into the Pedroso Center. President Hahs said that the Center will evolve to address the needs of our NEIU community.

The expansion will provide much needed space for additional programs and services, programs that foster diversity and student inclusion.

Plans for the 2,500 square foot expansion include space for the Women's Resource Center and the LGBTQA Resource Center, which are currently located down the hall from the Pedroso Center. There will be an additional Gender Neutral restroom and a Lactation Room for nursing mothers.

At the groundbreaking, Anett Zlotorzycki and Christopher Zavacki spoke on behalf of students who made use of the Center and how it enriched their experience at NEIU.

Namesake Angelina Pedroso braved the snowy cold to break the ground for the building expansion. Later she greeted guests to the Center inside for a warm reception.

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The Independent is published every other week except during summer and semester breaks.

Deadlines are eight (8) days prior to the issue in which a contribution is to appear. Views expressed in letters are those of the university community and not those of the Editorial Board.

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Technical Issues: The Computers Down in B-103

Steven Villa

Like many other students at Northeastern, I am fairly dependent on the various computer labs dotting the campus complex. And I, like many other students, have noticed the alarming number of out of commission computers in B-103—our largest, most well lit, and most accessible computer lab.

For the longest time I thought it would be best to leave well enough alone. After all, messing with a potentially compromised computer can lead to disastrous, life-threatening results. This all changed one Tuesday morning when I was presented with an urgent need to check my email. All the available computers were taken, and my supposed smartphone was refusing to boot-up.

There were, at the time of my investigation, a total of eight computers—seven Windows and one Mac—with out-of-order sheets flipped over their screens. These maintenance notices didn't bear much information: just the dates on which they were removed from service. They were far-reaching in B-103: the earliest dated to August 24th and the latest to October 20th.

There weren't too many options available. I could have provoked the wrath of the blue-hooded man who lay asleep near the corner of the lab, his face deeply and contentedly buried into his keyboard.

I could have taken the long three-minute walk to Lech Walesa Hall. Or I could have indefinitely hit my phone against a desk, in the vain hope its spirit would break before the screen would.

It was to my surprise that, when I sat down and flipped the maintenance page over the monitor, the computer seemed to work perfectly. It booted without incident and was even connected to the internet.

"Usually, every semester, they update the computers and stuff," said Ayed Syed, one of the Live Assistants on duty in B-103. "We go around every fifteen minutes to [check the computers]... [When something is wrong], Live Assistants go to the website and make a digital report."

Syed was helpful, but he didn't have an explanation for the out-of-commission computers. For further information, he directed me to Terry Abbruscato, one of NEIU's resident tech wizards and the University's certified Dell technician. "I take care of all the problems on Dell machines," said Abbruscato. "If there's anything wrong with the hardware on any of the computers, they're on this desk." Abbruscato motioned to an empty desk behind him. "When it comes to software it's usually done on location."

Danny Slivon, a student and Lab Assistant working for NEIU, said, "Sometimes we do need maintenance and the only way we can keep them up for full-timers



Photo by Luis Badillo

No drinks, food or phones, and sometimes no computers.

(the name given to the senior full-time IT staff) is to keep them closed for a minute."

Abbruscato specified that the problem with the affected computers was not a hardware or software malfunction, but was rather due to the easily dislocated cords running down the center of the desks in the lab. "They're like phone jacks," he said. "They're a little bigger but it doesn't take much to kick them out. We're trying to rectify that problem, and we're going to be getting that done over [winter] break."

Abbruscato also mentioned the printer computers, highlighting a lesser known benefit of their networking. "If for any reason [a student] can't print in a particular lab, they can go to any lab [in the school] to get their printing out." This is a very helpful tip for anyone who has ever waited in a long,

excruciating, line to print. Once sent to a printer, the file is available anywhere on campus.

While I would still, selfishly, prefer those computers upgraded immediately, it makes a lot more sense for Student Computing Services (SCS) to consolidate all of their maintenance and upgrades into the winter break. The campus will be relatively free of students then, and there should be enough time to fully troubleshoot the computers in B-103, and the rest of the campus computer labs, without interference.

Since it seems we'll still have to wait a bit for B-103 to be fully functional, I'm just going to have to hope that students are little bit more respectful of other people's time—and don't spend theirs watching YouTube videos and browsing their Facebook walls.

The Threat of Trickle Down Internet

Lauren Barry

Earlier last month, President Obama weighed in on the issue of enforcing new regulations on Internet service providers to make the Internet a fair playing ground.

The President supports net neutrality, as it states on the White House web page: "Most Internet providers have treated Internet traffic equally. That's a principle known as 'net neutrality' — and it says that an entrepreneur's fledgling company should have the same chance to succeed as established corporations, and that access to a high school student's blog shouldn't be unfairly slowed down to make way for advertisers with more money." This opinion is received favorably by many net neutrality supporters such as Sen. Al Franken (D- Minn.) who claims that enforcing rules that would keep the Internet equal are "about reclassifying something so it stays the same. This would keep things exactly the same that they've been."

However, the idea of an equal opportunity Internet has also re-

ceived some backlash. Franken's comments were a response to Sen. Ted Cruz's (R-Texas) statement that new rules in favor of net neutrality would allow the government to be "in charge of determining pricing, terms of service, and what products can be delivered."

In correlation with Cruz fear mongering about government control, fellow anti-neutrality supporter Mark Cuban attempted to deflect the suspicion that corporations would have an unfair advantage if they had access to higher quality service in an interview with The Washington Post. "There haven't been examples of all the bad deeds that net neutrality proponents have said would happen," Cuban said. Yet, he did later admit that "the finger was pointed at two examples" of Comcast deliberately slowing down competitors' websites. Innovation has become a key word on the anti-neutrality side of the debate. Many opposed to regulations argue that Internet service providers such as Comcast and Verizon are as Gene Marks said in a Washington Post blog

"large companies with hundreds of thousands of employees that have invested billions in the infrastructure that we now call the Internet. And they will continue to invest to make it better (and it needs to be better). But only if the motivation is there." Does this make sense?

Sure, these companies have invested billions into technology, but only because that technology makes them billions with or without privileging already successful companies. This line of reasoning is reminiscent of the "Trickle-Down" economics popular during the Regan era which has been recently been labeled as a failure, most notably by Hillary Clinton in October of this year. Though the Internet is a wonderful tool, one that provides tons of opportunity to those who would otherwise be alienated from it, it's still not easy to make a successful business from scratch, especially when you compete with media giants. Companies like Comcast and Netflix already have an upper hand in the current Internet climate; they can pay more for ads and

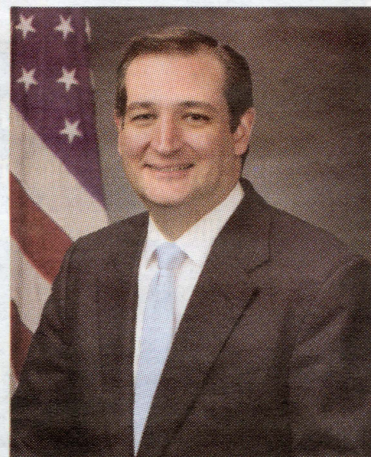


Photo courtesy of cruz.senate.gov

Senator Ted Cruz shows he lacks an understanding of the issue when he called net neutrality the Obamacare for the internet.

placement in search engine results. Allowing companies already excelling to act like greedy children at the detriment of potential innovators would be ridiculous.

Hopefully the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) will realize this and act on the words of President Obama (which you can listen to at: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/net-neutrality>), so we can avoid a world of Trickle-Down Internet service.

Thanksgiving?! Whaaaaat?!

Karol Dubrawski

Imagine you are waking up on the fourth Thursday of November. You get out of bed with the first rays of the sun around 9 a.m. You eat your breakfast. You leave for school or work.

There's no turkey. No day off resting in your bed or watching TV, and going through the wall on your Facebook page is not your most serious and most important task of the day. You are neither going all the way to your uncle's or aunt's house, nor are you hosting your numerous family for a grand dinner which will cause regrets to all those who just let themselves forget everything in the havoc called a Thanksgiving dinner.

There's no Thanksgiving. Turkeys are safe and they indulge themselves on their farms. Calmly walking around and waiting for their time to shine in the soup or on the plate. This is not their moment of truth. No one cares to annihilate them, because who would like to spend more than three hours to get them ready on just a random

day. A day like any other; there's no Thanksgiving Day in the rest of the world.

As an exchange student, I've never experienced Thanksgiving Day. Well, maybe through the crap load of American movies talking about it. About all the rush to make everything in time, the family reunions and lots and lots more love stories (it seems that in the U.S.A. you can make a love story even out of the culinary instructional program or from a document about getting your car ready for winter). Besides that, it was my first time (by courtesy of Daniel Fiddler and his family who invited me and were very kind hosts. Thank you.).

Describing this celebration from the viewpoint of a European and a Catholic, I could write, "it's just another Christmas Eve" (were I a Jew, I'd say, "another Hanukkah" – but they are even more hardcore – Hanukkah is eight days of eating more than it seems to be humanly possible). Thanksgiving is all about getting pregnant with the food, meeting your family and slacking off. Though, no gifts!

If you don't count the hardships

for your organism, it's really nice to have another pretext to be a lazy glutton together with your family. All the "how is it going?", "why are you not married yet?", "where's what's-his-face?" and the rest of holiday gossiping.

I spent a really nice time at Daniel's home. Getting to know his family. Discovering new kinds of food. Stuffing myself with the stuffing, the turkey and all the other tasty dishes. Playing pool while sipping wine. Watching American football out of the corner of my eye. Listening to all the conversations that seem to be an annual tradition. It's really a lot like Christmas.

The thing that caught my attention the most is that most Americans are not really sure why there is a Thanksgiving Day. Every year they talk it over, they present a few theories and they just switch to the next topic on the agenda. Later, that evening, Daniel told me that it's just many stories in many places and they all seem to be truth. The one that has the most solid basis is about Lincoln who made it official in 1863 to enforce the unity between the South and the North.



Photo by Daniel Fiddler

A classic Thanksgiving dinner, or what is left of it.

The one thing I cannot fully understand about this time is Black Friday. I don't get why shops want to get people out of homes, away from their families, to hunt for a toaster or a pair of shoes, which are 10 percent off. I know that "money rules the world" but...why hinder the big celebration, if you can do it a week later?

Guess I'd have to be a native to understand it better.

Welcome to United States of America – the young country of fast foods, Black Friday and many other things that are fun for you, but not for your health. The country

that is far behind Europe in many matters and far ahead of it in many others. The country that celebrates Christmas Eve twice, but not all the people are fat and rolling. The country where people are very open not only to their families, but also to strangers. The country that is so much different, but so similar to Europe.

Disclaimer: Daniel Fiddler is the editor of the Arts and Life section of the Independent and is mentioned in this article.

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MAN ON THE STREET

What are you doing for the holidays?

Debbi Rodriguez



"Honestly, I'm just going to work on my PowerPoint presentation, finish that and work. Work hard as I can; make that money, pay bills and enjoy shoveling snow."

Aldin Mujcimovic
International and Comprehensive Politics
Graduate Student



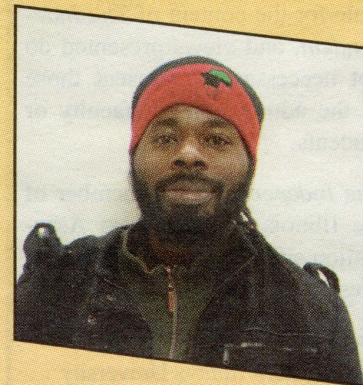
"I am going to Seville to meet my great aunt for the first time. I'm hoping to enjoy the holidays away from consumerism and the cold weather."

Tania Ginez
Studio Art
Senior



"For Thanksgiving, I will be going to Cedar Rapids, Iowa to spend time with the family and friends as well to take advantage of Black Friday sales and do my Christmas shopping."

Vanessa Riano
Economics major, Spanish minor
Senior



"I will be celebrating Kwanzaa with family and friends. I will also be looking for employment upon graduation."

Prince Lahad
Economics
Senior

Photos by Debbi Rodriguez

SPORTS



Photo by Eric Enfermero

Abreu was fourth in MVP voting in his rookie season.

Mr. Chicago Sports, 2014

Alejandra Franco

It was a tough year for Chicago sports fans. Despite no team bringing a championship to the city, one athlete stood out from all the rest, White Sox rookie first baseman, Jose Abreu. There was some backlash at the beginning of the season when the White Sox signed Abreu on a six year, \$68 million contract. Many wondered whether or not Abreu would be able to pay dividends as a rookie and on such a large contract, but Abreu's talent began to show almost immediately.

With the retirement of White Sox legend, Paul Konerko, Abreu had a lot of work to do in attempt to replace the beloved veteran first baseman. He not only took over the responsibility, he made the team his own. The White Sox finished the season in fourth place in their division. Meanwhile, Abreu finished the season with the highest slugging percentage in the league (.581).

While the White Sox were falling behind in the American League Central to the Tigers and Royals, Abreu was making a name for himself winning the A.L. Player of the Month and Rookie of the Month at the beginning of the season, in April. He went on to win them twice more in June and July. Then came the All-Star break where only the players with the best performances in the first half of the season are chosen to play and Abreu was selected as a reserve.

After the All-Star break, Abreu was selected as A.L. Player of the Month once more in July. Even though it was only his rookie season, Abreu was quickly relied on to provide offense when the team needed him. He finished the fourth in the league in runs batted in with 107. Abreu's big bat was the sole reason for many White Sox victories.

Louisville Slugger is the company that manufactures the bats used in MLB. Every year, they choose the players that used their bats best. These players are chosen based on how many hits and runs they produced. This year, there was no debate about the A.L. first baseman that did just that, and Abreu took home the 2014 Silver Slugger Award.

But perhaps the greatest personal achievement from Abreu came at the end of the season. In professional baseball, rookies are often slow to adjust. They find themselves in over their heads more often than not because of how much faster the MLB game is than any other baseball league across the world. Abreu did not let that impact him. The Cuban youngster was the deserved winner of the 2014 MLB Rookie of the Year of the American League.

All these awards and all this recognition in just his first year--it makes it that much more exciting to look forward to seeing what else Abreu will do next year, and how he will continue to earn every penny of that contract.

Sports Year In Review

Julio De León

The year is coming to an end and another year of winners, losers, surprises and disappointments are in the history books. From incidences and scandal to heroics and transcendence, the year 2014 has proven to be a memorable one for sports. While some notable careers have come to an end due to retirement, such as those of Paul Konerko, Chauncey Billups, Derek Jeter and Commissioners Bud Selig and David Stern, there has been a myriad of young talent that will ensure sports' popularity will continue to ascend. Within the four major sports, the end of the year signifies the time awards are handed out and recognition is awarded to those athletes and teams that have dominated sports headlines.

Biggest Disappointment- New Orleans Saints Many anticipated the Saints would win the Super Bowl after the breakout season Jimmy Graham had with 16 touchdowns. This added to what was an already lethal offense led by Drew Brees. With the chemistry of having played multiple seasons together, this year's Saints team had the makings of one of a historically great offense. However turnovers, injuries and decaying defense have led them to a 4-7 record. Despite their egregious record, the team remains in first place in the pathetic NFC South division. It is not too late for them to make a late run, but after being assumed as a serious contender, the Saints are 2014's most disappointing team.

Best Coach- Darryl Sutter, Los Angeles Kings There are not many teams that are capable of coming back from 0-3 deficits in a playoff series let alone winning three straight game sevens on the road en route to a 4-1 series rout of the New York Rangers in the Stanley Cup Final. This was despite having to overcome in-game deficits in that series as well. Sutter created a mental resolve among his players in the locker room that had gone beyond their physical abilities--a key for any coach.

Cinderella Team- Cleveland Browns In a city that is starved for a Super Bowl championship and has enjoyed very little success in its history, this season, Cleveland fans have a football team they can be proud of. After just two playoff appearances in the last 25 years, this year's team, featuring quarterback Brian Hoyer and one of the league's stingiest defenses, is just a tie by the Bengals from first place in its division. The team has shown toughness and grit on the field, overcoming injuries to key players and winning ugly. To finally see a team that has been a punching bag for the last decade start to fight back and win has the Browns in serious position to make a run for a playoff berth.

Best Rookie- Jose Abreu, Chicago White Sox According to ESPN, only four rookies have batted over .300, hit 30 or more home runs and contributed 100 runs batted in--all of them have won the Rookie of

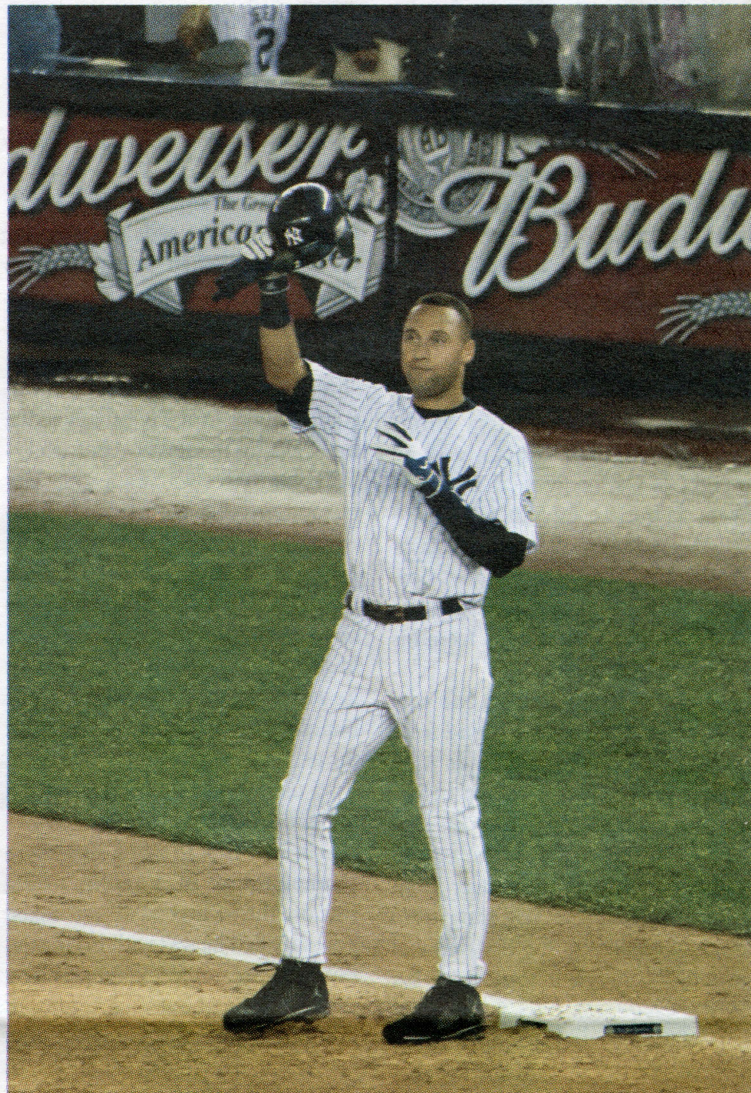


Photo by Chris Pluck

Jeter is ending his illustrious career as a 14-time All-Star and five time World Series champion.

the Year award, and Jose Abreu is no exception. After signing a big time six-year, \$68 million contract, Abreu delivered and is proving to be the heir to the rich history of great White Sox first basemen such as Paul Konerko, Frank Thomas and Ron Kittle.

Comeback Story- Dominic Moore, New York Rangers The then San Jose Shark disappeared from hockey during the playoffs in the 2012-13 season. The reason was later revealed, that his wife, Katie, was battling a rare form of liver cancer and ultimately passed away in early 2013. Moore took an 18-month leave from the NHL during and after his wife's death. Last season, Moore decided he was ready to return to the ice after receiving several offers. After agreeing to sign with the New York Rangers, he ended up becoming a key piece in the Rangers' run to the Stanley Cup Final, including a game-winning goal in the Eastern Conference Finals. The Rangers rallied around the hardship faced by their teammate and that unity sent them to their first Final since Mark Messier's team won it back in 1994.

Greatest Moment- Derek Jeter's Walk-off in Final Game at Yankee Stadium From the heroic World Series home runs, the opposite field doubles, the dive into the stands and the famous "flip" play against Oakland in the Division Series in 2001, Jeter has done it all throughout his 19 year career.

It was the Captain's final game at Yankee Stadium donning the Yankee pinstripes and the moment called for him to deliver one last magical moment; the same magic

gave him the nickname Mr. November. It was a perfect end for the sure hall of famer. This kind of moment is what makes sports special.

Best Player- Peyton Manning, Denver Broncos With every week that passes this NFL season, the 38-year-old Manning continues to cement his legacy as potentially the greatest football player in history. He is on pace to break the NFL single season passing touchdowns record for the third time in his career and already has the most passing touchdowns ever after breaking Brett Favre's record of 508 on Oct. 19. If Denver continues to play at a high level led by Manning, and the team's success continues into the playoffs, that long coveted second Super Bowl win will come into fruition for No. 18.

Best Team- San Antonio Spurs Two or three years ago, the Spurs were supposed to be "done", too old to compete for a championship. Washed up. Done. But this year, they proved the naysayers wrong. They manhandled the Miami Heat in five games in an NBA Finals rematch for the franchise's fifth banner. With the dominance of their "big three," the Spurs have a system that prioritizes acquiring players who are experts in ball movement, strong defense, three point shooting and high basketball IQ. Through this, the Spurs were able to overcome the Miami Heat team that featured LeBron James, Dwyane Wade and Chris Bosh. The Spurs four Finals wins were by an average of 18.25 points; this dominance and masterful display made San Antonio the best team in 2014.

Questions Rise About Derrick Rose

Alan Pearson

After what seemed like an eternity the Bulls season finally arrived. The hype was built up all summer for a potential championship contending team. Chicago sports are not exactly at its highest right now. The Cubs and Sox (while promising) are not very good right now. Who knows what the Bears are even doing anymore, and as for the Hawks, well they are still good. But this is Chicago, one of the largest sports markets in the world, and we have only one contending team? That all changed this past NBA offseason.

The offseason brought in big men Pau Gasol and Nikola Mirotic and finally got rid of the dead weight of Carlos Boozer. The Bulls were aggressive and moved up to acquire a young offensive threat in Doug McDermott. Oh, and how could anyone forget, Derrick Rose was set to make his return from his second major injury.

After tearing his ACL two seasons ago, taking a year off and frustrating Bulls fans, Rose made it 10 games into the 2013 season before tearing his meniscus. After his second major knee surgery, he sat out the entire season to recover from that torn meniscus. He then tried out and made it to the U.S. national squad to compete in the 2014 FIBA World Championship.

While he was playing with all of the superstar players and coaches this summer, he received nothing but praise from all of them. They were talking about how explosive he was. They were praising his jump shot. They said he was back to his MVP form. During the tournament he played okay. There was a lot of talent on team USA, so scoring is hard to come by. Not to mention it was his first serious action in over half a year so there was bound to be some rust.

All of these things was leading up to the big question: could Rose come back, after two major surgeries, and play at a high level in the NBA? Of course there are arguments for both sides. Two major surgeries in two years for a player whose game is built with sharp cuts, speed and a lot of contact. Rose beats you with his pure athleticism and healthy knees are essential to his game.

But at the same time I believe in him because he needs to represent for his city. When he the starters are announced at the United Center, Rose isn't announced as "From Memphis," he is announced as "From Chicago." That has to mean something to him. He can't feel like he is letting us down. After everything he has said about this city I want to believe that he will do whatever he can to make sure he brings us a championship. I want to believe that he will spend the countless hours in the gym rehabbing his knees. I want to believe that he will go work on his jump shot for hours on end so he can stay healthy, for us.

I used to feel that way. I wanted to believe that Rose would do whatever it will take to bring this city a championship. In a recent media session, the former MVP was asked how satisfied he was with his season thus far, he responded by saying "I'm thinking about long term. I'm thinking about after I'm done with basketball. Having graduations to go to, having meetings to go to, I don't want to be in my meetings all sore or be at my son's graduation all sore just because of something I did in the past. I'm just learning and being smart."

As a fan of not only Rose, but a fan of the Chicago Bulls, this was probably the worst thing he could have said in this situation. I did not know how to feel. I felt like I was robbed and he just stole that feel-

ing of hope and happiness from me. I know that the Bulls have a great team going right now but in order to win a championship we need him. We need his explosiveness and his leadership on the floor every night.

I asked other fans of the Bulls on how they felt about his recent comments. Tony Isho, a NEIU junior studying CMT said "I felt betrayed in a way. Being a huge D-Rose fan, I got a FatHead of him in my room. I supported him during his knee injuries but now for him to say he's thinking about himself and his future was very disheartening because of the amount of money he is making."

Another student, Joe Sobczak, a senior CMT major said "That's a ridiculous statement to make by Rose after his 14 year \$260 million contract with Adidas. That's a slap in the face to (Bulls owner) Jerry Reinsdorf and the entire Bulls organization after selecting the Chicago native with the first pick."

While he is angering a lot of fans, people do need to step back and understand the process of recovering from injuries as dramatic as the ones he has suffered. Derrick has been struggling with hamstring tightness, which is a common setback to happen when first coming back from a knee injury. Anyone that has pulled their hamstring knows that it can linger for a long time.

His ankles on the other hand is quite scary. It is not just one, but both that are bothering him. Joakim Noah was willing to play half blind after being poked in the eye. Taj Gibson is out there playing with a bad ankle. Gasol is playing 35+ minutes a night with a strained calf. Why is it that they are willing to play through the pain but Rose is not?

This would not be a story at all if Rose would have said something

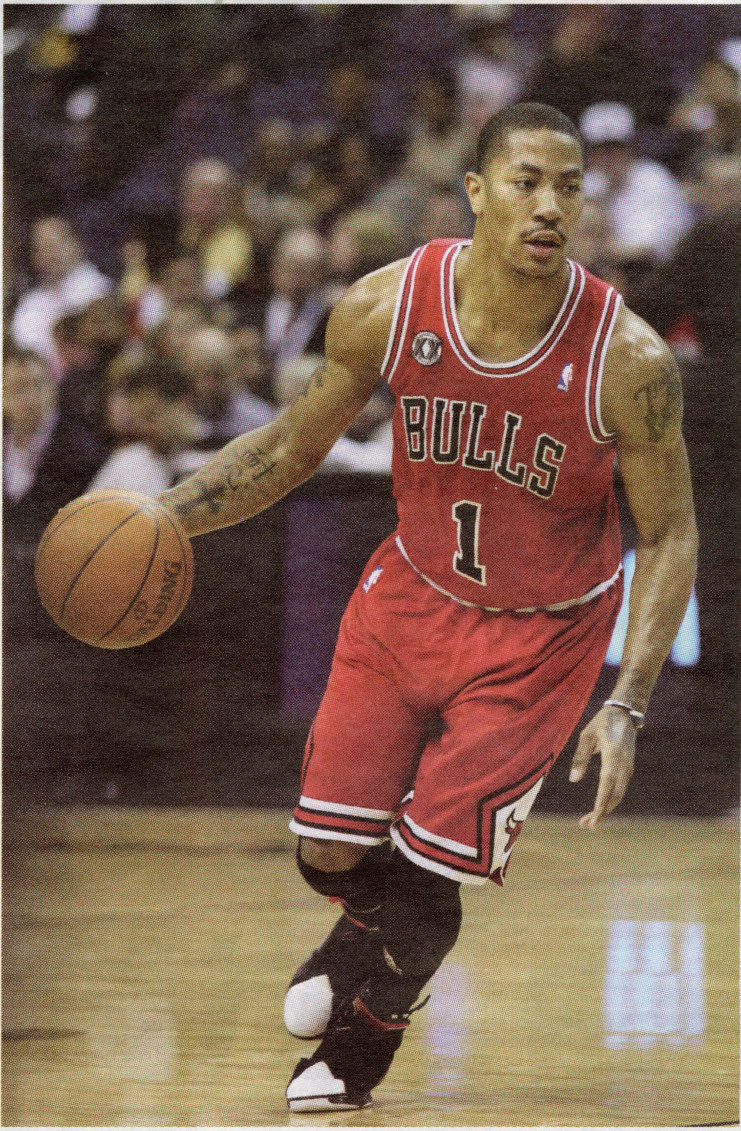


Photo by Keith Allison

Derrick Rose, once a hometown hero, has become one of the most lambasted athletes in Chicago sports history.

like "I am just being cautious with myself because my focus is on the games in May and not the games in November." Reporters would have nodded their heads, thrown a sentence in about him looking for a championship and moved on. Now he has the city that once loved him turning on him. People question not only his physical toughness but his mental toughness as well.

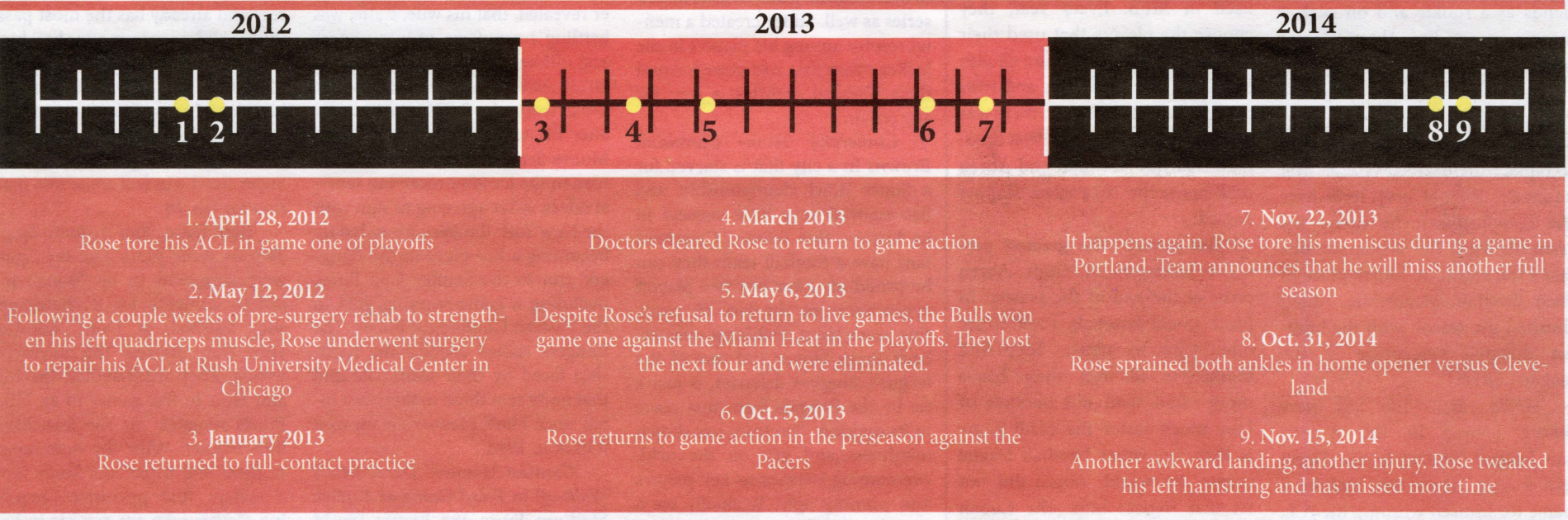
I do not know what to think anymore. One part of me is thinks that his brother told him to say that. Rose has never communicated well with the media. It is not what he does. He was the silent assassin on the court. He let his game do the talking for him.

The other part of me is losing hope in him. After this long, if he does not know how to give a

basic "I want to win now" answer, then what is he doing? Who is really in charge of his life? Does he want to win or does he want a lot of money? All these questions people are starting to ask and nobody, not even Rose himself, has an answer.

This has been the biggest story of the year and has only gotten bigger. He could have defused the situation if he could just give the right answers. Now every move he makes and after every setback, he will have people questioning him. The only way that he can silence the critics is to just play and win. Even though I am tempted to give up on the hometown hero, I am always going to hang on to that little bit of hope that he will figure it out and be our MVP once again.

Following his MVP season in 2010-11, Rose received a five year contract worth \$94.8 million. Since then, his health and unwillingness to play through pain have both been detrimental to the Bulls.



Graphic by Brisa Becerril

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ARTS & LIFE

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Sam Arias Kills it at Uncommon Ground

Steve Villa

Musician and NEIU student Sam Arias headlined at the Rogers Park restaurant Uncommon Ground last Saturday. The venue, a dark, oak-tinged room with red brick walls lined with colorful abstract artwork, was packed—and though it looked like some folks had come for the food or the liquor, it was the music they stayed for.

“You can keep talking,” Arias said to the crowd, wryly grinning as he took the stage draped in the green glow of the headlights suspended from the ceiling. The audience laughed and calmed down, and he launched into his eclectic mixture of R&B, acoustic folk, soul, indie and electronic sounds. Heartfelt genre-defying originals were played along uniquely reimagined covers of songs diverse as Whitney Houston’s “I Wanna Dance with Somebody” and “Heartbeats” by Knife.

It was a good night for music. Unnaturally temperate for this Chicago November, the crowd and the artists were relaxed—whether on stage or at their large oak tables—soaking up the warm ambience exuded by Uncommon Ground.

Navy Brat, a Chicago based indie-singer songwriter, opened the show with a set of folk-tinged indie rock dirges. Though Navy Brat had probably the most straight-forward sound of the lineup—acoustic guitar, percussion and organ,

somewhat reminiscent of Arcade Fire—his music was stripped down and emotionally charged, tackling relationships, isolation and disappointment amidst a feeling of solemn hope.

Madison-based Oh, My Love, a self-described Indie electronic synth-pop band, played between Navy Brat and Arias. They played angelically with high soaring vocals, descending keyboard runs and soft bell sounds. David Dickson, who played keyboards and synthesizer, described vocalist Hannah Luree’s vocals “like being on clouds,” and he was right. There was simply no better description for the softness, range and power of her singing, which reminded me somewhat of Kate Bush.

In the midst of his set, Arias debuted a new song inspired by a talk with his uncle. “I turned 25 last week,” Arias said on stage, “I told him I was doing nothing, and he was really happy for me.”

The lyrics and the music provided a counterpoint for each other, the smooth vocals and instrumentation conveying a sense of uncertainty were paired with the unbridled lyrics, “25, still taking my time,” Arias sang, “I’m breaking with my pride/and I don’t mind...keep me young/the mind tells lies.”

“The more honest or real to itself that music is, the more likely that people will connect to it,” Arias told me, as we sat talking just outside the doors of Uncommon Ground, interrupted briefly by fans, new and old—admirers

coming to congratulate him on his performance.

Arias explained how that song represents what he wishes he had said to his uncle that night. “If you haven’t seen someone in a long time and you had one chance to say whatever it is you have to say, and you say it right there—and you’re done,” he said. “That’s what that song is...I wish I had just said that there, and I didn’t, but it turned into that song.”

Speaking more broadly about the themes and inspiration behind his music Arias said, “Even if a song is about love or whatever, they [often] end up being about other people because that’s how... I’ve learned those feelings through hearing other people’s heartbreaks sometimes...and that’s where the music comes from. Not just from myself.”

Arias relies upon subtlety to connect the many songs and genres he works with. “A big part of my music is that...the songs I write sometimes don’t seem like they belong together...I find similarities in the fine things that connect each song,” he said.

His musical training began with church choir. “In the church, you know, you just kind of get put up on stage and no matter how good you do, you know, you just gotta do it.” This influence is very present in his music today, which is laced with subtle harmonies and swells between tension and release.

This kind of artist bravery is carried deeply into his work ethic. Arias said regarding a thirty-track



Photo by Nancy Valentin

Arias released “Covers for Lovers,” a 30-track EP of cover songs requested by his friends and family.

EP titled “Covers For Lovers” he released in June, comprised of a vast array of songs requested by his close friends and family, “I wanted a challenge, you know, I wanted to cover songs I would never cover, and some songs that I would cover, and see how I could unite all those together like I would do them,” he said.

“Growing up with music has been such an important thing to me,” Arias said. “My goal in music is to create moments in music that

I’ve felt before...It’s really hard to describe what it feels like when you really love a record, or a sound, or a song—[and] that kind of fuels me. Will my music do that to me or will my music do that to someone I care about? That’s what really pushes me.”

Sam Arias is currently working on writing and recording a new EP, and you can hear his original music and covers on both Soundcloud and Bandcamp.

Laughing ‘til it Hurts at Stage Center



Photo by Josefina Esparza

“Why Torture is Wrong, and the People Who Love Them” will play at the Stage Center Theater through Dec. 6.

Josefina Esparza

The Stage Center Theater’s new play is about torture, but it was far from torturous for the audience. Christopher Durang’s “Why Torture Is Wrong, and the People Who Love Them,” took the social issue

of terrorism and made it comfortably approachable. Director Dan Wirth created a high energy factory of laughter.

Panties hit the floor, a witty accordionist serenades and the narrator sings “Puff the Magic Dragon” with the audience. You will sit and wonder how it all comes to-

gether as you laugh uncontrollably.

The cast and crew had a great run for opening week, and the audience had no clue just how energetic the satire would be. Newlyweds Zamir and Felicity, played by Jacob Belser and Hilary Metzger begin a not so loving relationship after a night at Hooters. Married and hilariously unhappy Felicity needs to annul the marriage.

Leonard (Duncan Stephens) and Luella (Beth-Ann Smukowski) bring the play into its prime. Upon being introduced to their daughter’s husband, Leonard is sure Zamir is a terrorist. Luella is almost oblivious to her daughter’s marital problems and is much happier discussing film and television.

Beth-Ann Smukowski’s performance did not fail to surprise. Her instance of insanity was seen in the second act during a rant about her marriage. Her character is aware of her husband’s obsessive patriotism but finds it much more thrilling to

talk about the theatre, which gives Felicity a priceless physical twitch of trauma.

Reverend Mike (Tony Gasbarro) is the born again Christian with a background in adult entertainment. His hippie persona is almost always in amazement. He is sweet, he is lively and he’s still making raunchy films.

Hildegard, played by Carolyn Bowe, is in love with Leonard, who in turn uses this in order to manipulate her. Zamir, who claims to be Irish, is taken upstairs to be tied down and tortured by his father-in-law. Leonard and Hildegard wear butterfly aprons while interrogating Zamir.

The staging was simple, but well utilized. The stage was mainly bare except for a large rotating block. Each side represented different areas of the house: the kitchen, the living room and the torture closet. Each scene was well paced, and although the crew was visible

during transition, each member was quick and subtle.

The lighting and effects created an immersive experience. A smoke machine was used in the second act in order to portray time travel.

The play uses a lot of lighting to give the illusion of time being paused. In “Why Torture is Wrong, and the People Who Love Them,” time and space become malleable, changing outcomes and circumstances in surprising ways.

Durang’s play cannot be completely explained by words. The physical comedy and political ridicule cannot go without a laugh. To see it for yourself, tickets can be purchased at the Box Office. Tickets are \$10 for general audiences; \$8 for students and seniors; \$6 for children 6-12 years old; and free for NEIU students. “Why Torture is Wrong, and the People Who Love Them” will play Dec. 4 and 5 at 7:30 P.M. and Dec. 6 at 2 P.M. and at 7:30 P.M.

Tom Waits, a songwriter with a dedicated cult following, has gained considerable attention in the last decade, though he has been creating thought provoking work since the '70s. His rough edged, eclectic style polarizes many listeners; some think he is a genius, while others find themselves perplexed by his gravelly voice and genre-escaping tunes.

English Professor Timothy Scherman presented his essay "Eluding the Authorities: Tom Waits's Resistance to Postmodernity" at the Midwest Modern Language Association Conference in Michigan last month. The presentation was part of a panel titled "Ghost Cities: The Haunting of Capitalism and Racism" along with Dr. Ryan Poll and Nate Steele. Scherman's research digs behind Waits' carefully constructed persona to analyze why his music resonates with so many listeners, and not with others.

Getting beyond the booze-soaked, streetwise character Waits portrays in many of his projects—the "neo-beatnik stylistic bricoleur" as Scherman called it—is a major challenge in making sense of his work. Scherman demonstrates how the trademark rumbling growl Waits sings with, as well as his caricatured persona, acts as representation of his subjects.

The voice in particular is important because it prevents Waits' sound from being too comfortable, thus making it difficult to commercialize. Scherman postulated that the major theme behind Waits' art

Tom Waits: A Living Ghost

Lauren Barry



Musician Tom Waits is the subject of a new essay by English professor Timothy Scherman.

is to make re-appropriate American music in a way that makes his audience listen to music more critically.

As an example of this, he cited Waits' law suit with the Frito-Lay company over the use of music copying Waits' song "Step Right

Up" (which, ironically, critiques capitalism) used in one of their commercials. Scherman noted that through this, Waits revealed

that his voice itself is a creative endeavor, and that the confusion it produces is a deliberate choice to inspire new consciousness about music for his audience. Yet coming to a concrete answer about Waits' intent with his music is difficult and Scherman's research, which included video footage and audio recordings, displayed how Waits resists being pinned down.

The style of his music continuously changes and even in interviews, he performs and tells tall tales. Nothing he says can be accepted at face value. "Some of you may think that all I have done is turn Waits into the new Bertolt Brecht," said Scherman at one point, connecting his appraisal of Waits to the famous Marxist poet and playwright. Scherman acknowledged how Waits' refusal to stay in one category can make theorizing about him confounding.

Waits' "ghostly resistance" is what makes him such an enduring character and as Scherman was able to articulate, such an engaging artist to study. For those who are turned off by the voice that sounds like, as Scherman's friend put it, Waits "smoked a pack of cigarettes, drank a bottle of whiskey and swallowed a pack of razor blades," this research proves that sound can be a powerful indicator of content. While Waits remains a mystery, Scherman's talk was able to dismantle some of the "grim reaper and grand weeper's" masks and give listeners tools to journey into the patchwork catalogue of this inscrutable artist.

Photo by Anna Wittenberg

David Bowie Is _____.

Abraham Harb

David Bowie wears many hats. He's a singer, artist, actor, fashion icon and all around trailblazer inspiring the likes of Lady Gaga and Arctic Monkeys. His many exploits are the subject of a new exhibit at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago (MCA).

The Victoria and Albert Museum in London arranged the exhibit, and Chicago is the only United States stop. It chronicles his life from his teens in the 1950s to the early 2000s when he retired from touring.

According to the MCA website, more than 600 items complete the exhibit, including more than sixty stage costumes such as the Striped Suit by Kansai Yamamoto, the red platform boots for the Aladdin Sane tour, the Ziggy Stardust jumpsuit, the costume and Poodle prop for his Saturday Night Live performance and the Union Jack coat designed by Bowie and late fashion designer Alexander McQueen for

the Earthling album cover. These recognizable items are contrasted with his personal concert models, visual excerpts, film clips, and handwritten lyrics among other never before seen items, making the exhibit worth the \$25 admission.

The inclusion of not only Bowie's fashion but also the ideas behind his many creations paints a full image of the Bowie generations of people have enjoyed. In addition to his other projects, such as the wallpaper he created for Laura Ashley Home Furnishing in the '90s, the exhibit allows those unfamiliar with Bowie to become acquainted with him.

His artistry collides on all levels—music, fashion, art and private life. Upon entering the exhibit you are provided with a headset that syncs with each section of the exhibit.

The portion with the Ziggy Stardust jumpsuit is interesting because you can see the outfit reflected off mirrors, and behind the mannequin, footage of Bowie wearing the outfit was projected.

Another highlight was flipping through beautifully preserved Bowie records as you listen to him talk about his Verbasizer, something he co-created to generate sentences to inspire his songwriting.

Toward the end of the exhibit you can sit down and view short snippets of movies Bowie has appeared in. On your way out patrons can see his costumes and other priceless facts about his time as an actor. In the final phase of the exhibit you enter a big room that elicits the feeling of a live concert. The walls are lined with floor to ceiling projections, perfectly concluding the experience.

The exhibit is \$25 for adults and teens and \$15 for students, Tuesday through Friday between 10 A.M. and 4 P.M. Tickets are sold in half-hour blocks, but you can wander the exhibit for hours. If you can't make it out of the exhibit before it closes, the MCA website sells copies of the book "David Bowie Is" that was created reflecting most of the items from his archives also shown in the exhibit.



Japanese designer Kansai Yamamoto created the costumes for Bowie's Ziggy Stardust tour.

Photo courtesy of MCA Chicago

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Photo courtesy of Shady Records



"Shady XV" just doesn't cut it.

Andrew Pappas

He started as a bleach blonde punk with a nasally voice in the '90s. In 2011, Rolling Stone magazine named Eminem the "King of Hip-Hop." As he continues to build artists from the ground up on his

label, his own work is on the verge of being just flat out bad. His newest album is yet another piece of evidence.

"Shady XV," appropriately named in celebration of the 15-year anniversary of Shady Records, is a double-disc compilation al-

Eminem Has Lost Himself

bum. The second disc is 16 previously released songs, including some mega-hits like "Lose Yourself" and 50 Cent's "In Da Club," but also some not as popular, such as D12's "Purple Pills" and "Fight Music." It also includes a never before released version of "Lose Yourself" that probably should have remained unreleased.

The first disc, however, is all new music and all executively produced by Eminem. Though he does rap on many of the tracks, I look at "Shady XV" as a platform for the lesser-known artists on his label.

The album's artwork brings back memories of the "Up in Smoke Tour" of the summer of 2000. Back when Eminem's music wasn't infiltrated with pop stars—when Eminem wasn't screaming about heartbreak and rehab, instead, Slim Shady was spitting multi-syllable verses full of dark humor. I can appreciate the evolution of an artist (and a man, for that matter), but Eminem seems to have de-evolved.

"Shady XV" puts that unfavorable rapping on display. The album

hosts five new Eminem headlining tracks, and nine total appearances by him. As hard as it is to say about one of my favorite artists ever, it was too much Eminem, and not enough of his label's other acts.

The guy can still throw down incredible multi-syllable rhymes when he wants to, but despite some literally jaw-dropping verses, Eminem's new schtick has grown tiresome.

His verses mostly seem forced throughout the album. He even admits it on the first single "Guts Over Fear," and said, "Sometimes I feel like all I ever do is/Find different ways to word the same old song." Yeah Em, we've noticed.

His best verse comes on the song "Psychopath Killer," where he collaborates with Slaughterhouse, a group made up of Royce Da 5'9, Joe Budden, Crooked I and Joell Ortiz. Even with some shoddily produced tracks, the group brings the heat throughout the album. "Y'all Ready Know" is the best track on "Shady XV."

Royce Da 5'9 and Em bring back their collaboration as "Bad

Meets Evil" on the song "Vegas." This was the most frustrating track on the album as Eminem shows flashes of his Slim Shady persona, rapping about assaulting Iggy Azalea and setting daughters on fire. Those flashes seem forced and are short lived.

His pop/rap collaborations with Kobe and Skylar Grey sounds like every other pop/rap collaboration we've gotten from Eminem in the past decade. He's become the dad at his kid's party trying to remain relevant. His skill is still apparent, but at 41-years-old, he just does not seem to know where to fit in anymore.

Ultimately, "Shady XV" was nothing but another tedious Eminem album that will make millions, but disappoint the fans that want Slim Shady back. The "King of Hip-Hop" continues to build his court; unfortunately for his empire, he has become entirely too comfortable and complacent on his throne.

Terra Battle: New School Game with Old School Sensibilities

Luis Badillo

Anyone who owns a smartphone is no stranger to free-to-play games. Though the idea of free video games is tempting, most gamers have figured out that many of them are filled with annoying ads, cheap production value and systems designed to have players pay for in-game currency with real money.

That's why there is a well warranted hesitation when downloading "Terra Battle" for the iPhone and other iOS devices. But "Terra Battle" isn't just a run of the mill free-to-play game. The game happens to be designed by Hironobu Sakaguchi, the man who originally conceived the wildly popular Final Fantasy series 27 years ago. And in playing "Terra Battle," it's easy to see that those old school sensibilities aren't just present, but guide the overall design and presentation of the game, making it one of the freshest smartphone games recently released.

The game is driven by a simplistic story taking place in a dying fantasy world. The player takes the role of an adventurer gathering a party to find a mysterious entity known only as the "The Maker." Though the narrative bits are doled out slowly and in small bits (three or four sentences at a time) the world in "Terra Battle" is fleshed out quite nicely.

At the core of "Terra Battle" is a turn-based battle system. Players are placed on a 6 x 8 grid with up to six members in a party. These allies must then be moved around a grid to attack enemies by placing them on either sides of an enemy. Allies not directly attacking an enemy can augment damage done as

long as they are in the same row or column as the attackers. Things get even more complex when factoring in weapon weaknesses, elemental attributions and characters' special abilities. It's a tricky system undoubtedly, but those willing to learn and master it will find the complex battles extremely gratifying.

"Terra Battle" is also a beautiful game. The game is filled with stunning artwork detailing the environments in the story to the huge variety of characters you can recruit in your party. This is where the game is its most "old-school." Each character is given light backstory with a detailed portrait, making those little tiles in battles more than just pixels attacking and dying on your behalf.

Adding to the presentation is the frankly amazing soundtrack of "Terra Battle." Sakaguchi recruited some of the best Japanese musical talent in making the game. Sweeping symphonies and rocking guitar ballads fill Terra Battle with an emotion that matches and even beats many big budget titles. If not for anything else, "Terra Battle" should be downloaded on that alone.

There are systems in place in "Terra Battle" that allow you to spend real life money for in-game currencies like "stamina" and "energy." However, there are next to



Photo by Luis Badillo

"Terra Battle" is a new free-to-play game created by Hironobu Sakaguchi, the original developer of "Final Fantasy."

zero moments in the game where that is required. The exception may be for players that wish to play for long periods of time, but if you're like most people on smartphones, the game is best experienced in small chunks of time.

"Terra Battle" certainly isn't going to change the landscape of gaming on mobile devices. Rather, it shows that even on the free-to-play model of making money, a good game can still emerge and deliver a deep and immersive experience. For anyone that owns an iPhone and has fond memories of role playing Japanese games, "Terra Battle" is a no-brainer.

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"Gotham" Mid-Season Review

Daniel Fiddler

11 episodes deep, Fox's television series "Gotham" is halfway through its first season. The show depicts detective James Gordon's rise through the corrupt ranks of the Gotham City Police Department, as well as a young Bruce Wayne, long before becoming the dark knight. So is a Batman show without Batman in it worthwhile? The answer is a resounding yes.

I watched the first episode of "Gotham" with a lot of trepidation as my fears would soon be realized. The pilot episode was bad. With heavy-handed editing, clichéd dialogue and generic heavy metal music, it was what you might expect from a prime-time drama on Fox. As a die-hard Batman fan, I asked myself, how long can I honestly put up with this?

All I can say is "thank goodness!" Since that first episode, the show has made leaps and bounds. The show's uber-gritty production quality has simmered into a well stylized show reminiscent of Tim Burton's "Batman" movies from the early '90s.

Coming off the heels of Christopher Nolan's hyper-realistic "Dark Knight Trilogy," "Gotham" brings back a bit of that comic book flavor to the DC Universe's iconic second city. With episodes like "The Balloon Man" where a vigilante kills his victims by stringing them to weather balloons and sending them off into the atmosphere, or "The Goat," where a sa-

tanic serial killer performs his rituals in an outfit that has a silhouette uncannily similar to Batman. The show creates an entertaining balance of comic book story-telling and hard-boiled detective fiction.

The show is cram-packed with many nods and winks to Batman's rich 75-year history. With subtle references to certain villains and some not-so-subtle foreshadowing, seasoned fans will have a ball finding all the Easter eggs. Newcomers to the show will acquaint themselves with beloved characters as none of us have seen them before.

Fans will hardly recognize the James Gordon we know and love in fresh-faced Ben McKenzie's portrayal of the future commissioner of Gotham. Despite being the show's protagonist, he is the least interesting part of the show. His character is cold, melodramatic and one-dimensional without any majorly redeeming qualities. Former star of *The O.C.*, McKenzie's acting reminds us that we're watching the Fox Network.

Fortunately, the cast around him makes the show worth all the while. David Mazouz's portrayal of a young Bruce Wayne nicely combines the brooding wrath, hyper-intelligence and charming naivety it will require for him to eventually don the cape and cowl and become the World's Greatest Detective. In one scene, we see the angsty teen listening to death metal scribbling dark images, and in another, we see him piecing together the mys-



Robin Lord Taylor as Penguin makes "Gotham" worthwhile.

tery behind his parents death.

Sean Pertwee as Bruce's butler Alfred gives us an Alfred we haven't quite seen before. In one endearing scene, after Bruce beats the crap out of a bully, Alfred looks the bully in the face and says, "That's right. He tried to kill you. And you remember that the next time you see him. That I let him try." The show has many moments like that, that just have you saying "hell yeah!"

Batman's legacy would be nothing without his infamous rogue's gallery. Every week it seems we're meeting another character

that would eventually become one of Batman's greatest villains—the Riddler, Two-Face, Victor Zsaz and Catwoman to name a few.

But by far, the best part of the show—what kept me watching after that horrid pilot episode—is Robin Lord Taylor as the Penguin. The sniveling long-beaked umbrella wielding criminal genius is compellingly charming while all the while ruthless. It was in one particular episode titled "Penguin's Umbrella" where I said to myself, "Alright, I'm in. This show is good." Caught in a war between mob bosses Sal Maroni and Carmine

Falcone, he's a penguin in a sea of sharks. His ruthless ambition coupled with his cunning makes him a formidable foe for all who stand in his path to power.

Those anxious to see Batman back on the rooftops will have to wait until this summer for "Batman v. Superman: Dawn of Justice" where Ben Affleck will portray a well-weathered Batman. But for those curious to see how he ended up as Batman in the first place, "Gotham" airs on Monday nights at 7 P.M. on Fox.



Photo courtesy of Shady Records

"Big Hero 6" proves that Disney's merger with Marvel was a good idea.

How to Train Your Robot

Hailey G. Boyle

There's an expectation we all have when going into a Disney or Marvel movie. "Big Hero 6" fulfills

those expectations and more.

Directed by Don Hall and Chris Williams and the team that brought us "Wreck-It-Ralph" and "Frozen," "Big Hero 6," an adap-

tation of the comic of the same name, follows fourteen-year-old robotics prodigy Hiro Hamada, who spends his days hustling in back-alley robot fights in the fu-

turistic San Fransokyo. His older brother Tadashi worries that he is wasting his talent and takes him to his university's robotics lab, where he meets Tadashi's friends and sees all the innovations they are making with their projects, including Tadashi's own invention, Baymax, a loveable and curious healthcare robot who looks like the Stay Puff Marshmallow Man's younger and nicer brother.

Inspired, Hiro begins working on his own invention microbots, tiny robots that can swarm and respond to neuro-sensors and create amazing things. But when a fire breaks out, Tadashi dies and Hiro's microbots are stolen.

Hiro sets out with Baymax and Tadashi's friends to find who stole his bots becoming super heroes along the way.

Disney has outdone themselves. "Big Hero 6" is the perfect movie that has something for everyone: action, amazing animation, superheroes, awesome robots, heart-pounding music, hilarious dialogue and at its heart, a touching story. Think "My Dog Skip," only, Skip is an endearing robot who can fly and kick butt.

And just like "My Dog Skip," it turns out you can teach the old dog Disney a few new tricks. The gorgeous animation is like pixie-stix for your eyes. John Lassater, the Pixar kingpin and his team of sages

came in and helped revitalize Disney Animation studios. The bright colors and dazzling animations come to life on the screen bringing a high paced energy that does not stop even hours after the credits have rolled. The flight sequences are absolutely breathtaking and awe inspiring. The only complaint, (WARNING) and this is nitpicking, was that some sequences were too similar to another animated film, "How to Train Your Dragon." (I warned you about the nitpicking.)

Behind all the explosions, the robot fights, the funny one-liners and futuristic gadgets, "Big Hero 6" is about a boy going through the most common, yet complex emotion—grief. Hiro, (wait, the protagonist is named "hero?") is completely lost after the death of his brother and Baymax will do whatever it takes to heal, his primary function. Baymax's charming attempts lead to the funniest scenes, like when Baymax's low battery causes him to talk like he's drunk, trip down the stairs and speak in a high pitched voice, all while set to an awesome new Fall Out Boy song that fits perfectly with the movie's futuristic setting with electronic rock.

Oh, before I forget, this is Marvel, so don't forget to stay for the end credit scene. It is worth the ticket price alone.