

# Universal Answers

When Google Just Isn't Enough



1<sup>ST</sup>  
ISSUE  
EVER

Featuring:

Alien Abductions

Women Priesthood

Miracles

December 2019



# Universal Answers

*For when Google just isn't  
enough*

December 2019: 1<sup>st</sup> issue  
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# Public Schools Need to Enter the 21st-Century

## ~Letter from the Editor~

In this modern-day and age, it's a wonder why more public school systems don't offer students the opportunity to take classes through online high schools which are not provided in their own school. It has become routine that every spring the local high school promulgates the schedule of classes for the following fall, and invariably some classes currently or previously offered are nowhere to be found on the new list. This presents a huge problem for students who were planning on taking specific classes, whether for a particular college track they might be on or for something more attuned to getting a job immediately upon graduating high school.

There are so many variables, such as the number of students enrolled in the school, the school's budget, and their ability to hire enough faculty. Also, let's not forget the ever-present "minimum number of students" required to offer a class.

There has to be a better way to maintain a consistent offering of classes year in and year out. There also must be a better way to accommodate the variety of learning styles among students, yet schools ignore this.

The answer lies online. There are hundreds of online high schools across the country which are accredited by the same organizations which certify both public and private high schools. Also, each of these schools has a different teaching method and pace. Some are paced slower for those students who need extra time, and some are paced faster to accommodate students who can process information quickly. Why aren't our local public high schools supplementing their curriculum with online courses? Just

about every college in the country now offers online courses. Are high school students so different from college students?



OnlineSchool.org reports that over 4.5 million K-12 students take online courses. That is not enough. Public school systems need to look at expanding "blended" curricula whereby students attend some classes as they always have, but have the opportunity to supplement old-fashioned classes with online classes. This will allow students to choose from far more classes than a public high school can offer. And before the school systems or teachers' unions say "no," school boards need to do the research and have the facts ready which show a blended curriculum can work. This issue isn't about money, budgets, unions, or salaries. It's about giving students the education they need in order to become contributing members of society.

As a current college student and graduate of an online high school, I have experienced firsthand the positive attributes of an online high school, as well as online classes in both high school and college. Students' futures don't rest in the past – they lie with the technology of the future, which will educate and train them to 21st-century requirements!

Sincerely,

*Kelly Lewis*

Kelly Lewis  
Stonehill College '22



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# Does Religion Cause More Harm than Good?

STONEHILL COLLEGE – Mary-Joan Leith, has been a Professor of Religious Studies at Stonehill College since 1993. Originally from North Carolina, Leith attended Harvard University where she studied Comparative Religion.

**Q: Why do you teach religion?**

**A:** I love teaching! Religion is an interdisciplinary thing that lets me follow my curiosity in all sorts of different directions. Religion is just another way to do history and art and I love those two. I like ancient history, like ancient Egypt and ancient Greece.

**Q: Have you ever had a student who didn't believe in God? What was your experience with teaching religion to that student?**

**A:** I've had tons of students who don't believe in God - that just sort of goes with the territory. I'm not telling them to believe in God, so it doesn't matter. I don't care whether you believe in God or not. I don't tell students what religion I am because I don't want them to worry that I am trying to

push something. I am coming at it from a historical, theoretical, and arthistorical perspective. What I believe personally is nobody's business, whereas when I am teaching it's how to read, how to think, and maybe to realize how cool the field is.

**Q: What religion do you practice?**

**A:** I am Christian Protestant. I grew up going to church every Sunday until I went to college. Currently, I am not a regular church goer; I have been to church about four times this year. I expect to go regularly when I am retired.

**Q: Why is religion important to you?**

**A:** I am a Christian Humanist, because it's not like I think God is up there like this loving, grandfatherly figure. It's more the shape of my life that it informs. Since I was born in a Christian culture, those are where sort of my moral compass come from, but the same sorts of positive values are in Judaism, Islam, or Buddhism, so it's just sort of the luck of the culture

**Professor Leith's Favorite Classes:**

- God Doesn't Do Religion
- Gods, Kings, and Justice
- The Virgin Mary and the Feminine Divine



**"People do religion. If God did religion there would be no problems, it would be perfect"**

that I happened to be born into.

**Q: Have you ever questioned your faith? If so, please explain.**

**A:** No, I haven't. It's hard to put into words because it's not something I really talk a lot about. It's more something that is personal to me, but I feel that when you die, you die. I also feel that what you do in the world is where your immorality is, for example, how you affected people, your family, your friends, your students, and the world that you have been a part of.

**Q: What is your response to Sam Harris's quote:**

"If I could wave a magic wand and get rid of either rape or religion, I would not hesitate to get rid of religion. I think more people are dying as a result of our religious myths than as a result of any other ideology."

**A:** I haven't heard that quote before. I actually think that sexual harassment probably does just as much damage in the world. My thinking about this is that asking that question about rape versus religion goes on a false premise - that they are not related to each other, but so much of the bad things that people do, including the way they treat women, has all kinds of religio-social stuff

mixed in.

**Q: Do you think religion causes more harm or more good in the world?**

**A:** I actually do think that religion has probably done more harm than good, in a certain context, any institution that becomes powerful is going to become corrupt, no matter what. You can look at the Catholic church today, you can look at other institutions that have any kind of power... once you've got power, people are going to abuse it. If you were doing some kind of cost-benefit analysis, you would find an equal number of people have found religion to be a really important positive element in their lives. You hear about the abusive people in religion but how many Islamic terrorists are there compared to ordinary everyday Muslims who are living their lives out and helping each other out, and doing zakat, the charity you have to give 10% of what you earn. People do religion.

If God did religion there would be no problems, it would be perfect. There are screw ups, there are evil people, and there are good people, and it really comes down to the people.

**Q: If you could change people's perspective on religion, how would you?**

**A:** It's not that I want people to change their perspective, I

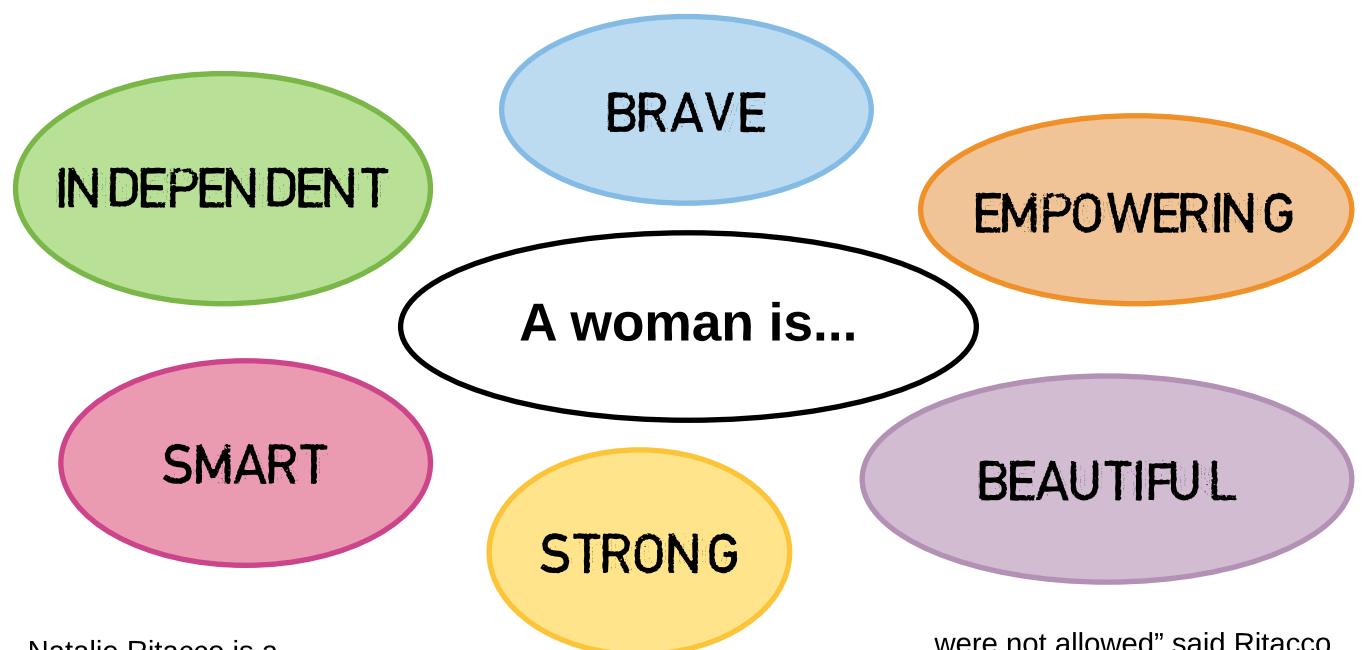


just wish people knew more about religion. I wish every person who said they belonged to a specific religion, had to pass a citizenship test in order to belong in that religion because so many Muslims are clueless about stuff in Islam and so many Jews are clueless and if people knew more about their own traditions they would behave better.

**Q: What would a faithless world look like?**

**A:** That's a false premise, what do you mean by faith? Everybody has faith in something. Not everyone is religious. They might not belong to a religion, but if you have a special place that means something to you that you go to, you're religious. If you are a complete atheistic scientist, actively atheistic, (or) a passionate researcher, you have got total faith in the scientific method. That is a faith. Just because it is scientific doesn't mean it's not a faith. If something informs the way you look at the world and the way you see yourself fitting in the world, that is faith.

# A Perspective On Dress Code



Natalie Ritacco is a sophomore at Stonehill College, majoring in Business. Ritacco recently joined Women's Health and Empowerment Now club (W.H.E.N) to get more involved. Ritacco considers herself a feminist and wants to educate others on equality. W.H.E.N. is a dialogue-based club which talks about, "the struggles women face on a daily basis that no one seems to care about" said Ritacco.

When it comes to expression, Ritacco likes to express herself through fashion. "It makes me feel good when I do my makeup and pick out a cute outfit." At the same time, Ritacco doesn't like how women are expected to always look perfect. "Sometimes I just want to wear a sweatshirt and not have to care what others think" said Ritacco.

Ritacco has always had these strong views on



## "We are living in a man's world"

appearance especially while attending public school and experiencing dress codes implemented by the schools. She attended Westerly Middle School and Westerly High School in Rhode Island. "Girls couldn't wear shorts that were too short and spaghetti straps

were not allowed" said Ritacco. She doesn't agree with her school's dress code policies or the reasons behind it. "I should be able to wear leggings if I want to. How is it my fault if a boy is distracted by that?" Ritacco believes that people show themselves through the way they dress and to take away that form of expression is wrong.

Ritacco recalls, "one time my friend got pulled out of class by a teacher and screamed at for her outfit being inappropriate, her parents had to bring her appropriate clothes" Her friend missed classes, while having to wait for her parents and her parents had to leave work just to bring her a new change of clothes. This is among many of the conversations discussed in W.H.E.N. and one of the issues of society Ritacco hopes we can solve. "It shows that we are living in a man's world" said Ritacco.

# Two Truths and A Myth

MYTHS  
BUSTED

Can you spot the myth?

1

Did you know...  
Approximately 5% of oceans have been discovered?



2

Did you know...  
Water can boil and freeze at the same time?



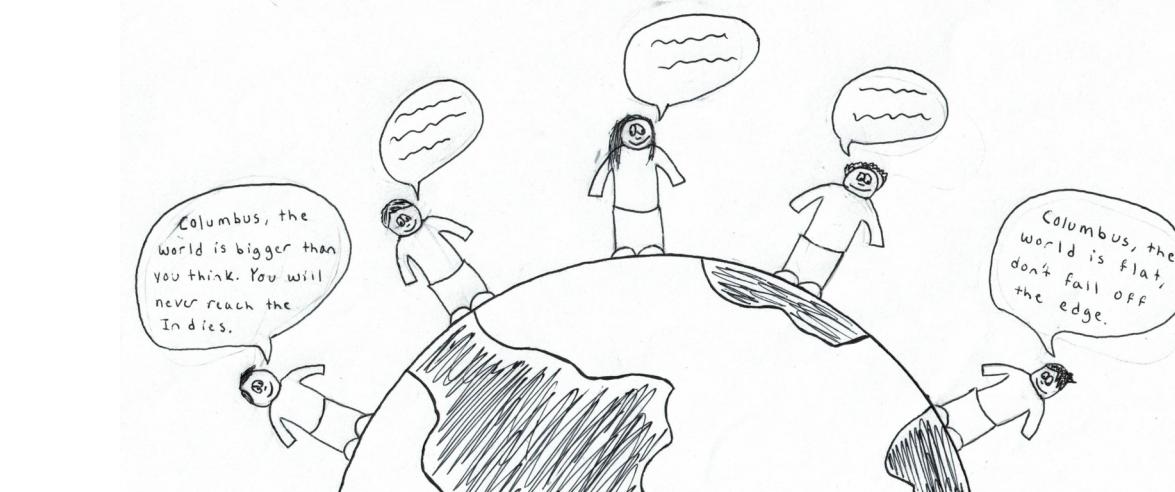
3

Did you know...  
Humans only use 10% of their brains?



## A Game of Telephone

— Spain 1492 —



brain is active almost all the time.

Answer: #3 is a myth. Humans use virtually every part of the brain and most of the

Many believe that Christopher Columbus thought the earth was flat, but that's a myth. Columbus actually thought the earth was small.

# Do you believe in MIRACLES?



**"Miracles happen everyday, change your perception of what a miracle is and you'll see them all around you."**

-Jon Bon Jovi

## *Miracles From Heaven: Movie Review*

\*Warning this movie review contains spoilers

Do you believe that falling 30 feet into a hollowed-out tree could cure a sick little girl? Well if

you don't believe it, I advise you to go watch the movie *Miracles From Heaven* right now! This drama – which is based on a true story – will leave you questioning your purpose in life.

The movie is centered around the Beam family, Kevin and Christy and their three daughters Abbie, Anna, and Adelynn, who live in Texas. The main character, 10-year-old Anna

becomes very sick, but it is unknown what the cause is. Christy fights for her daughter and gets her an appointment with Dr. Nurko, a well-known gastroenterologist in Boston. Dr. Nurko diagnoses Anna with a life-threatening digestive disorder. The Beam family, a very religious family, starts to lose hope and faith.

It gets even worse when



Real-life Christy and Anna Beam



Actresses Jennifer Garner and Kylie Rogers

Christy and Anna return home from Boston. Anna is playing with her sisters in a tall tree when a branch cracks and Anna falls into the hollowed-out trunk of the tree. The parents rush out and ambulances and firetrucks arrive. Viewers are in suspense with the family nervously waiting and watching the rescuers and paramedics do their work. They are able to pull Anna up out of the tree and we are told she is breathing.

Anna suffered a concussion, that's it. But no – that's not it. Anna's parents notice that she has changed, in a good way. They return to see Dr. Nurko in Boston and are caught off guard when all the tests come back normal. It's as if Anna never had a disease. Christy is in disbelief, saying to Dr. Nurko, "So you're telling me that when this baby girl fell 30 feet, she hit her head just right and it didn't kill her and it didn't paralyze

her. It healed her." Upon the doctor responding yes, Christy says, "Well that's impossible."

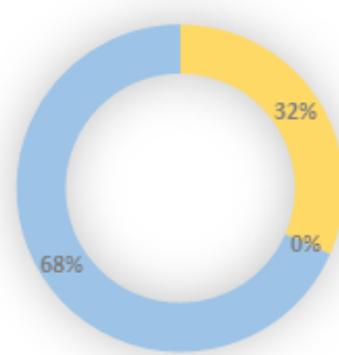
This is my favorite line of the movie because it shows that even a religious person questions abnormality, rather than using God to explain it right away. Anna then explains to her parents what really happened in the tree, and the Beam family begin to regain their faith. Anna explains how when she fell in the tree, she spoke to God and he reassured her everything would be fine. The Beam family shares Anna's story with members of their church, but receive more negative feedback than positive, people questioning whether Anna was ever sick.

This movie will have you on the edge of your seats in suspense, then crying, to laughing, and smiling. By the end of the movie you will be

questioning your faith or your perspective might even change. This movie doesn't tell you what to believe - it presents a true story, including arguments from people who believe and don't believe. Ultimately, the movie leaves it up to you to decide what to believe. Even if you don't believe in miracles, take this away: sometimes you have to hit rock bottom before you can start again.

## Does LC 203 Believe in Miracles?

■ Yes ■ No ■ I'm not sure





# Surely, We Can't Be the Only Ones?

*Summer of 2017, I was abducted by aliens. I remember laying in my bed, and all of a sudden, I was drawn outside to a light and quickly pulled up through a tube into a floating craft. No other humans were in sight, but there were other beings, all very tall and with big eyes, the likes of which I had never seen before. One talked to me. The being spoke fast, the words were not familiar to me. The being told me he wanted to examine my body. A mask came over my head and then I woke up. It was all a dream.*

This is how most abductees describe their alien abduction stories. The stories are absurd, but follow a pattern. So should we believe these stories, or just chalk it up to bullshit? Susan A. Clancy, a cognitive psychologist spent many years interviewing and evaluating abductees. In her novel, *Abducted: How People Come to Believe They Were Kidnapped by Aliens*, she suggests that the reason people only claim to be abducted by

aliens - and not attacked or controlled by aliens - is because no one can prove that the abduction *didn't* happen (Clancy 90).

The universe is huge, and surely, we can't be the only intelligent beings in it. "Polls suggest that about 93 percent of the population believe that extraterrestrials exist, and 27 percent believe that the earth has been visited by aliens" (Clancy 3). But why? Despite a

lack of evidence, stories persist. "According to a poll conducted for Hopkins, Jacobs and Westrum (1992), as many as 3.7 million citizens of the United States claim to have been abducted" (Kelley-Romano 384). How can this be? There is no evidence to support these stories. The self-proclaimed abductees don't care about evidence, as one explained to Clancy, "I don't care that it doesn't make sense to you, or

that scientists say it can't happen. It did. I was taken. It happened to me and nothing has been the same. I was changed, and I know it's true" (Clancy 146). The abductees consider their anecdotes as evidence, even though scientists don't.

Modern civilizations have believed in aliens and UFO sightings for decades. Throughout the years, people have claimed to spot UFO's floating in the sky, but there are always more earthly explanations for these sightings, such as an airplane, a star, a satellite, or a military experiment. In the 1950's and 1960's there was an unusual amount of UFO sightings, and it's since been revealed that

**"As many as 3.7 million citizens of the United States claim to have been abducted."**

these floating objects were military spy planes used during the Cold War. According to a C.I.A study, "U-2's initially had silver bodies 'and reflected the rays from the sun, especially at sunrise and sunset.' The report added that 'they often appeared as fiery objects to observers below'" (Broad). The government and military were trying to hide their technology, but this in turn backfired and got played into something completely else.

Digging themselves into a deeper hole, "the Air Force decided to put out false cover stories, the C.I.A. study says.

For instance, unusual observations that were actually spy flights were attributed to atmospheric phenomena like ice crystals and temperature inversions" (Broad). Some may say this proves that UFO's aren't real, while others say this proves that UFO sightings during that time were false, but extraterrestrials and UFO's still exist. More important, the United States government has lied to its citizens about this. If the government has lied once, what makes you think they can't lie again, and again, and again?

Claims of abduction by aliens are a more recent phenomenon, "Abduction accounts did not exist prior to 1962" (Clancy 83). Clancy learned that alien abduction reports, "began only

abducted by aliens. Clancy refers to them as, "the mom and pop of abductees" (Clancy 41). The couple were seeking explanations for suffering from, "strange physical, emotional, and psychological symptoms following a brief vacation" (Drysdale 103). And then, "Under hypnosis, the Hills reported being abducted by extraterrestrials, taken on board a flying saucer, and subjected to a variety of intrusive medical examinations before being returned to their car" (Drysdale 103). Since then, there have been millions of more alien abduction stories.

Perhaps claims of alien abduction are widespread due to the fact that most people find alien abduction stories enthralling because the memories and emotions feel real to the abductees, there is consistency among the stories, and they are struck by the number of people who believe the same things (Clancy 8). Most enticing and fascinating to listeners and readers of abduction stories are the similar plots: "an unsuspecting ordinary human gets kidnapped by extraterrestrial beings for medical examination or sexual experimentation" (Clancy 83). Stephanie Kelley-Romano, has





studied alien abductions and talked to over a hundred abductees. In her journal, "Mythmaking in Alien Abduction Narratives," an abductee named Amy explains her experience, "I looked down and saw a number of beings working on me... Suddenly they did something that caused a great deal of pain... The pain grew until I lost consciousness" (Kelley-Romano 395). Most of the abductees Clancy talked to, hated the experience because of the pain, but if had the choice, would not go back to change their experience, because it was a life-changing experience.

The most prevalent explanation for these alien abductions are false memories created by abductees through sleep paralysis because sleep paralysis is very common. "Sleep paralysis occurs when a person half-awakens from REM sleep, eyes open and fully conscious but still unable to move and sometimes still experiencing dreamlike hallucinations" (Alien Abduction and Recovered Memory). Clancy claims that, "sleep paralysis is a fact; alien abduction isn't." (Clancy 49). However, abductees don't like to hear this, they don't want to

think of other possible explanations for things they can't explain, like waking up with strange bruises on their legs (Kelley-Romano 400).

Affirmation is another explanation for alien abductions and for many more "big" questions. Humans are easily persuaded and seek confirmation for answers. Take psychics for example, they make a whole career of reassuring people that their deceased ones love them. Lynn and Irving discuss a series of steps that people follow when creating false memories of alien abductions. The most relevant step is number two: "The person seeks out a therapist, whom he or she views as an authority and who is, at the very least, receptive to this explanation and has some prior familiarity with



UFO abduction reports" (Lynn and Irving 152). Simply put, people with weird experiences seek affirmation and then conclude they have been abducted by aliens.

Along with sleep paralysis and affirmation, the process of hypnosis can explain why people believe they have been abducted by aliens. Some therapists employ hypnosis as a method to understand what the patient actually experienced. The problem with hypnosis is that, "the therapist lulls the abductee into a suggestible state, in which normal reality constraints are relaxed, and then asks the abductee to vividly imagine things that might have happened" (Clancy 57). The patient gets the affirmation desired, and the therapist gets a fee. Everyone is happy!

We may never know if these "stories" are just stories or more than that. There are too many unanswered questions, "If aliens are so intelligent, why are they abducting us?" "Why do people choose alien abduction as an explanation?" and maybe the fact that there are no answers, is an answer within itself. Given the millions of reasons people believe in aliens and given the millions of critical reasons to not believe their stories, we are left with no proof that aliens exist, but with people who swear they have been abducted by them. We end with the conundrum that while no one can prove alien abductions haven't happened, they also can't prove they have.

**Do you believe?**



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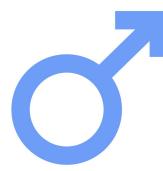
"Good Clothes For A Good Cause"



## Searching for Answers

The first three words you spot are what you are searching for in life

P	L	I	C	F	F	R	E	E	D	O	M	H	S	I
J	O	Y	B	Y	A	E	O	B	R	M	I	T	P	Q
P	V	F	A	Y	C	M	M	H	K	N	C	R	C	H
E	E	R	L	C	G	V	O	A	E	O	O	A	J	N
A	A	I	A	F	Q	I	N	P	X	F	N	V	W	W
C	S	E	N	D	R	O	E	P	G	Q	F	E	S	E
E	P	N	C	S	O	Z	Y	I	S	G	I	L	U	A
V	A	D	E	L	A	P	K	N	L	A	D	J	C	L
N	S	S	U	O	Z	O	S	E	O	V	E	G	C	T
H	S	X	I	Y	M	W	Z	S	A	V	N	R	E	H
C	I	P	E	A	P	E	Z	S	U	T	C	Z	S	E
P	O	P	U	L	A	R	I	T	Y	L	E	Z	S	A
Q	N	G	P	T	X	Q	P	G	C	H	J	Z	C	L
P	L	S	I	Y	A	D	X	A	L	O	V	E	L	T
Z	F	A	I	R	N	E	S	S	Y	I	V	W	U	H



# Priest or Priestess?



Being a kid was exhausting. Especially on Wednesdays. I spent most of the day learning at school, then went home and scrambled to get my homework done, then carooled to soccer practice with friends, and then had to leave early to make it to St. Barnabas Church in time for faith formation class. This was the "dance" which many Catholic families in Portsmouth, RI participated in. We were a community in and outside of the Church and on and off the sport fields.

I would call it a journey, from starting faith formation classes in 1<sup>st</sup> grade with all my peers and receiving our First Communion to finishing faith formation classes in 10<sup>th</sup> grade and being confirmed with those same peers. Despite our devotion to the Church, no one and no family could have completed the ten-year task without Marcia Blackburn, the coordinator and director of faith formation classes. She did anything and everything, but most important, she was the communicator between my peers and our coaches. She was the one who planned and changed our faith formation classes or events so we could still attend our games and most of our practices.

The Priest was always there, as were some of the deacons, however, they rarely interacted with my peers and I. Mrs. Blackburn was in charge, and no one did anything without her say. I eventually came to see how Mrs. Blackburn was the force behind St. Barnabas, and beyond mere faith formation classes. She not only managed the people and events throughout the Church on a daily basis, she ran the entire Church from behind the scenes, even while raising four children of her own.



St. Barnabas Church, located in Portsmouth, RI



Pope Francis

Outside of the Church, what comes to mind when you think of the professions and positions men and women choose as careers? You may picture a man as the CEO of a company, a firefighter, an engineer, or a lawyer, and you may imagine a woman as a teacher, a nurse, or a secretary. Men are often seen in positions of authority, while women are seen as serving underneath them. In a day and age, when physical strength matters less in the professional workplace, why do men still dominate the upper echelons of many fields?

The dominance of men makes complete sense when we look at our past as a species. Science tells us that men are built with more testosterone and are usually stronger than women. Anthropologists have shown that while women were undoubtedly essential to the propagation of the species, the physical strength of men was a considerable advantage in survival. That being said, the scientific and historical facts of homo sapiens who began walking the Earth 300,000 years ago matters less in today's modern world. Professions have become interchangeable

between men and women. Take, for example, a stay-at-home dad and a mom who goes to run her business every day. Strides are happening everywhere... everywhere except the Catholic Church.

A personality psychologist wrote in Psychology Today, "research almost always approaches sex differences as group averages, but most people think about individual men and women." For example, on average a man is taller than a woman, but that doesn't mean that some women are not taller than some men. So, do biological aspects of men and women correlate with being a priest? No, it should be based on an individual, if an individual woman or man is able and wants to preach than they should be allowed to. Other Christian religions allow women to be ministers, but the Catholic Church does not allow women to be priests and further, they do not even allow priests to marry. While mankind has come a long way since first stepping on the Earth, even after two millennia the Catholic Church does not allow for women

priests. Today – in 2019 – a woman can choose to do or be just about anything she dreams of; however, she cannot be a priest in the Catholic Church. We have come a long way as a species, but we still have far to go.

**Strides are happening everywhere... everywhere except the Catholic Church.**

The Church tells us that only men can be priests because that is what Jesus – the son of God – intended because he purposely chose only men as his disciples and apostles. The Book of Luke (9:12) says, "When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick." Well, why is it that only men were chosen? Perhaps, because two thousand years ago, it was predominately boys who received education and thus could read and write and spread the word of Jesus.



Jesus and his 12 Apostles

Going back to Ancient Greece and the origins of Western culture, boys were the intended target of education, and girls were barely an afterthought. Maybe if more women had received an education back then, Jesus would have seen them and realized that they were equally capable of spreading his word.

The Bible itself is full of contradictions. Biblical scholars to this day struggle with those contradictions in attempting to understand the nuances of various Bible verses pertaining to women and their roles in the Church. Some Biblical scholars and everyday readers focus on the role of women as exemplified by the portrayal of Adam's wife, Eve as the "mother of all the living" and whose purpose was to bear children, or the Book of Genesis which states that "Men will rule over women." Other scholars focus on women in the Bible like Rachel, Deborah, and Hannah, who proved strong, wise, and worthy of teaching all of us valuable lessons.

Another possibility as to why the Catholic Church does not allow women to be priests is because they wouldn't be able to fulfill their role in life of being married, procreating, and raising a family. It is rare, but for once Science and Religion agree.



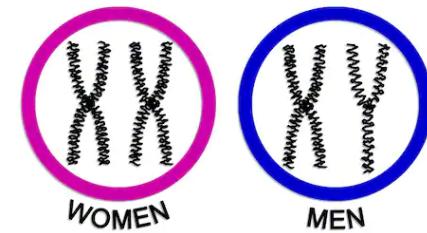
In vitro fertilization (IVF)

They both say that it is only possible for women to have children, however, this can be interpreted in many ways. Science doesn't enforce that women must have children, while the Church believes in the Bible verse, "Be fruitful and multiply." With new

advancements in technology and the scientific world, almost anyone can have a child now. You don't have to have a male and female to create a child anymore. In vitro fertilization (IVF) is the process in which, "mature eggs are collected (retrieved) from ovaries and fertilized by sperm in a lab. Then the fertilized egg (embryo) or eggs (embryos) are transferred to a uterus." The world is changing and evolving.

While one can argue that educated women in the beginning of time were not necessary for the survival of the species, and that bearing children and raising children was, how does that explain why the Catholic Church still refuses in this modern-day and age to allow women to become priests? With all the changes mankind has seen in the past two thousand years, why no change in that respect? Modern

scientists and researchers continue to debate whether or not there is a difference in intelligence between men and women, but all results point to the fact that even if there is, it is statistically insignificant. Generally speaking, women are as intelligent as men, and in individual cases, there are many women who are smarter and more intelligent than men. So why no women priests in the Catholic Church?



Today, even as the Catholic Church finds itself struggling to ordain enough priests to minister to its flock, it still abhors the idea of women in the priesthood.

Take a remote location, like the Amazon for example, "where by some estimates there is one priest for every 10,000 Catholics" said Nicole Winfield, a reporter for the Associated Press. People in the Amazon don't have the luxury let alone the choice to attend mass every week. Yet the only resolution considered is the possibility of allowing priests to marry. The Church is able to explore this option because the vows of priestly celibacy are not part of Church doctrine, but rather a tradition. Isn't it odd and unfair that Church doctrine, which must be obeyed, delineates that women cannot be priests, but it's only a tradition, which can easily be changed, and says that male priests can be married?

The Church has no problem entertaining the idea changing centuries of tradition by allowing male priests to be married, yet still will not change the doctrine of only men being ordained as priests. Why does the Church look at changing one but not another? Is the Church being blatantly sexist? Even the sitting Pope has been disingenuous when it comes to opening roles in the Church to women. After announcing in 2014 that he was



appointing a commission to explore the role of women as deacons, he subsequently said to reporters, "When you want something not to be resolved, make a commission," thus implying that he did not want women to serve as deacons.

### "The entirety of the hierarchy of the Church is male dominated."

Change can be scary, but change allows growth, and growth is what the Church needs now as more and more leave the Church due to overly strict and unchanging doctrine. It's not just the LGBTQ Catholics leaving the faith – its "straight" people leaving who see an overly rigid Church not willing to be inclusive and minister to everyone, including their LGBTQ friends. The Church preaches God's forgiveness of human sin, yet refuses to budge when it comes to changing morals and what actually defines a sin. Pope Francis said, "No one can be excluded from the mercy of God; everyone knows the way to

access it and the Church is the house that welcomes all and no one refuses." If the Church thinks God is that unforgiving and that insensitive to people, their ways, and societal changes, then it has far more issues to deal with than just women priests.

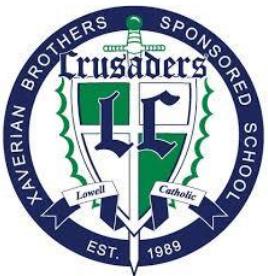
The Catholic Church doesn't ignore women completely: they allow women to attend mass, girls can be altar servers, women can be faith formation directors, and there is a history of women in the Bible, from Eve to the Virgin Mary. This shows that the real issue is one of power and institutionalized sexism. The male leadership of the Church likes power, but they don't want to share that power with women, at least that is what many think. The entirety of the hierarchy of the Church is male dominated. The Pope, Bishops, Cardinals... all are men. Are we back in the schoolyard of elementary school, where girls aren't allowed to play kickball with the boys?

Might there be a revolt within the Church hierarchy of men which causes the Church to relook at the role women can play in the priesthood? Probably

not, as the leadership of the Church is so "stuck" in its two-thousand years of tradition. Why does the Church hold on to some of its traditions so closely? Progress need not be the antithesis of tradition – progress can complement tradition and make the Church stronger and more inclusive. Twenty-five years after Pope John Paul II's Apostolic Letter "Ordinatio Sacerdotalis" (Priestly Ordination), which reaffirmed the Church's stance that only men could serve as priests in the Church, women in the Church and outside of the Church continue to push for reform.

If you're reading this, Pope Francis, I strongly advise you to prepare for the future – one in which women are equal to men. The priesthood is shrinking in numbers, and you need to start thinking of a backup plan which not only empowers your flock equally, but also satisfies your flock's desire for equality before God. And for the members of the flock, I urge you to speak up. We are all equal in God's eye, so don't let anyone – especially a member of the Church hierarchy – tell you otherwise.

# Crusader to Skyhawk



## Q and A with a Classmate



STONEHILL COLLEGE - Shannon Bursey, a sophomore pursuing a major in Communications and a minor in Creative Writing at Stonehill College, describes her experience from high school to college. Bursey is from Chelmsford, Massachusetts and a graduate of Lowell Catholic High School.



**Q: How did you choose Stonehill College?**

**A:** Stonehill was actually the first school I visited. I remember really liking it and having it stick, but I was like no it's the first one, this can't be it. So, then I visited a couple of other schools and I just kept coming back to Stonehill and comparing the others to Stonehill. I knew this had to be it because I continued to think about it.

I just kept coming back to Stonehill.

**Q: Were you aware that Stonehill was a Catholic School and did that affect your decision?**

**A:** I didn't have a certain preference toward a religious college, but it was on my radar. I am Catholic but I'm not the best Catholic, I don't go to church a lot. I believe the big truths, but I'm just not good at practicing it. It helped my decision a little, knowing that some people have faith at Stonehill and there is probably a good community surrounding that.

**Q: Coming from a Catholic High School, what were some of the main ideas you were taught in your religion classes?**

**A:** Every year in high school I had to take one religion class. During freshman year we took an intro to Catholicism class, which included history of the faith and an overview of the core beliefs. Junior year was very interesting because it was a social justice/morality class. In this class we discussed big issues like abortion,

marriage, sex, and learned the Church's view on these topics. Here is where I discovered that I agree with the main parts of the faith, but don't always side with the Church's policies.

**Q: Did you learn anything new when taking Religion 100 and Philosophy 100 during your first year at Stonehill?**

**A:** My Religion 100 class was Abrahamic Faith. In the class I learned a lot about Judaism and Islam and how they were tied to what I already knew about Christianity. My philosophy class didn't really touch on the subject of religion, but we had some interesting discussions about the questions of life. For example, why are we attracted to evil characters and what is the symbolism of marriage.

**Q: So far, what is your most memorable experience at Stonehill?**

**A:** So far, I would probably say sitting in my room in the Holy Cross Center on the floor with all my friends has been my best

experience! I was in a triple, which had two rooms attached together and a bathroom, so it was an unreasonable size for three people. It became the hangout spot, where my friends and I would go to have long talks.

**Q: Have any of your beliefs changed or have you questioned your faith since coming to Stonehill College?**

**A:** In high school, about every month or so, there would be a day when the whole school attended mass. I was constantly surrounded by my faith and opportunities to practice it were handed to me. For example, I had my religion class and I also spent my study periods hanging out with the campus ministry teachers. Since coming to college, I still hold on to the values and lessons I learned at high



school, but I don't actively seek ways to practice it. I don't attend mass here.

**Q: How do you think Stonehill will have an influence on your future? Would it have mattered if you just went to any other college?**

**A:** I definitely think about this a lot, because while I did receive a good amount of scholarship

money at Stonehill, there were cheaper options. So there is always that part of me that wonders if I should have gone the financial route, but I think Stonehill is really the best spot for me because I have all those experiences, even this class making a magazine, I would love to do editing and creative stuff in the future, so that's good to have.

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# Pulling the Trigger... on Doublespeak



**B**reaking news! Students at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida are in lockdown. On February 14th in 2018, 17 innocent students and faculty members were shot and killed. In the United States, mass shootings appear in the headlines of the news almost every day. This crisis of mass shootings is a social issue of heated discussion across the country and permeates our society. It is not a topic restricted solely to politicians. The issue is so "touchy" that everyone is hesitant to talk directly about the topic, and instead talk around it and employ doublespeak so as to not be accused of taking one side or the other on the issue of gun control as well as the Second Amendment, which states, "the right of the people to keep and bear arms, shall not be infringed" (United States Constitution). Mass shootings are a sensitive topic, therefore many employ doublespeak to avoid the unpleasant reality of what guns are doing to our country.

Doublespeak, in the form of euphemisms to avoid an unpleasant reality has become the norm when discussing laws for guns. The simple term "gun control" is widely perceived as an affront to supporters of an open interpretation of the Second Amendment, as it implies gun ownership can or should be controlled. Molly Ball, a writer for *The Atlantic* says, "Gun control"

has obvious liabilities -- as a phrase, it conjures images of confiscation, reinforcing the National Rifle Association's allegation that the government is coming to take away the firearms of law-abiding citizens" (Ball). Framing this as a "gun control" issue as opposed to a Second Amendment issue can be perceived as an attempt to obscure the fact that the hierarchy of gun laws begins with the Second Amendment. Any attempt at "gun control" should begin with what our Founding Fathers said the government could not take away from us.

Many gun-rights supporters argue that the core problem of the vast array of mass shootings has to do with the perpetrators, not the guns. They have come up with the expression, "Guns don't kill people, people kill people." This is another clear example of a euphemism in the Second Amendment and gun control debate because this phrase avoids the harsh reality.

Gun proponents are attempting to point out that the gun itself does not do the killing, but instead, it is the person pulling the trigger of the gun who is killing. Either way, this phrase is a way to mislead the public and almost cover up the current issues of mass shootings and gun control. Gun proponents don't want guns to become

illegal, so they use the phrase to take away blame from the guns and put it on people, thus misleading the public.

Another phrase used by many that contains doublespeak is, "guns make our lives safer and more secure" (Vanderpool). Whether or not this statement is true or not, or if you agree or not, it contains doublespeak because if guns do indeed, "make our lives safer and more secure," then the implication is that *without* guns our lives would be less safe and less secure. This can be confusing to the public when listening to these arguments. Also, the original phrase makes the negative connotation of owning a gun seem positive. Simply attempting to break the words down to make logical sense is turned into a game of semantics.

In addition to the debate surrounding the issue of the Second Amendment and gun control, many politicians are known for their use of gobbledegook, a type of doublespeak in which a person piles on words. Hillary Clinton, the Democratic presidential candidate in the 2016 election, is known for making statements about the issue of guns and then making more statements that conflict with her previous ones and confuse voters. A prime example of this was shown

**"Guns don't kill people, people kill people."**

during a presidential debate on October 19, 2016 when the topic of the Heller Case from 2008, in which the Supreme Court ruled "that the Second Amendment guarantees an individual right to possess firearms independent of service in a state militia and to use firearms for traditionally lawful purposes" (Duignan) was being discussed. Clinton employed gobbledegook to confuse the audience and her opponent. Clinton said, "I disagreed with the way the court applied the Second Amendment in that case because what the District of Columbia was trying to do was to protect toddlers from guns. And so they wanted people with guns to safely store them. And the court didn't accept that reasonable regulation, but they've accepted many others" (Keneally). Hearing her response, and even reading this is confusing; it doesn't make sense. She intermixed separate gun-related issues into one answer, thus confusing all as to what her true stand was. Further, she keyed in a sub-issue of protecting toddlers, when in fact, "the word 'child' was mentioned only six times in the 110 pages of transcript of the court's closed-door session, according to a review of the transcript" (Keneally).

When an expert is speaking on his or her topic of expertise, it is inevitable that some people who are not experts on the same

topic will not understand. This is known as jargon. Jargon can be a very effective method of swaying others and allows for those within a group to communicate quickly and efficiently. The problem with jargon, however, is it creates misunderstandings when people who do not belong to that specific group are left out, and thus don't correctly understand the terminology being used.



Adam Weinstein, a journalist for the *Washington Post*, complained that the National Rifle Association used jargon to bully gun-control supporters because they are less informed (Griswold). Weinstein says, "Perhaps someone tweets about 'assault-style' weapons, only to be told that there's no such thing... Maybe they're reprimanded that an AR-15 is neither an assault rifle nor 'high-powered.' Or they say something about 'machine guns' when they really mean semiautomatic rifles" (Griswold). The world of weapons and guns has its own jargon and its own terminology. Unfortunately, some know the jargon, others think they know it, and some don't know it at all. That comes crashing together in discussion and debate, and because not

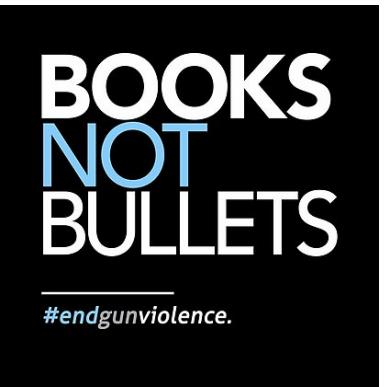
everyone understands what they are talking about, it's just a lot of talk in which people try to "out-word" each other.

A senior editor of a major magazine wrote, "When you claim that the streets are rife with 'high-capacity, rapid-fire magazines' or 'jumbo clips,' you're trying to fool your audience with a veneer of expertise" (Harsanyi). While we all want to be experts on gun control and be informed citizens of the impact mass shootings have on society, the technology of guns is not so simple. When a self-proclaimed "expert" seeks to influence, doublespeak is just another tool to employ to get people to think the way the "expert" wants them to think.

The effectiveness of doublespeak is evidenced by its continued employment as a tool used in all types of discussions, both gun control and others. In fact, it's arguable that we are using doublespeak more than we think, and certainly more than necessary, when discussing and debating controversial and emotional issues like gun laws and mass shootings. The issue is difficult enough to grasp, but there will be no solution or compromise so long as the discussion and debate use language that pretends to communicate. It doesn't matter if gun laws change or not; what matter is that we address the issue at hand. So long as we employ doublespeak, however, we will end up causing more controversy, confusion, and misunderstanding among the masses, taking away from the importance of the reality of the issue of gun laws.

# Dear Mom...

By Kelly Lewis and Thomas Johnson (The Peninsula Poet)



Dear Mom,

I am so excited to start school  
I can't wait to learn and make friends

Bang!

The sound echoes down the long hallway  
I sit in the dark room confused  
I see my classmates huddled in the corner of the room  
Desks are piled up, barricading the door

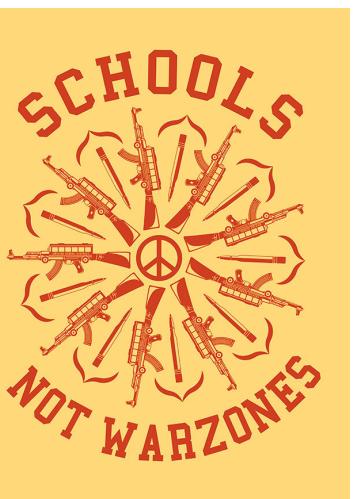
Mom I don't want to die  
I hear another shot  
My ears begin to ring  
Mom I've been shot

I lie on the cold tile floor  
My vision blurs  
I lose feeling in my fingers  
Mom I'm just a student  
Why?

Congress's gun control silence  
Permits school killings like this  
Allowing unconscionable violence  
Student's dying with no goodbye kiss

There needs to now be a new mission  
For students, parents and lawmakers  
To control all guns and ammunition  
And lock up any lawbreakers

Schools are sacred places  
And no place for guns at all  
So let's go through all legal paces  
And force congress to answer our call



# Are we Living in a Simulation?

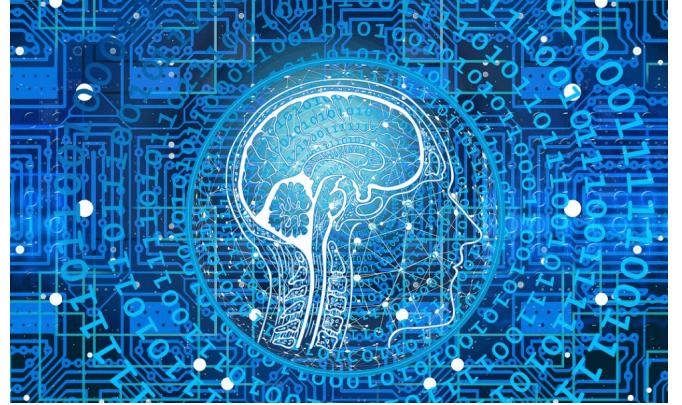
Our entire existence is a lie. Humans weren't created 6,000 years ago like it says in the Bible, nor are humans the result of the Big Bang billions of years ago. We are so obsessed with these two explanations of our origins that we don't even consider other possibilities. What if every thought you ever had and every move you ever made was not controlled by you? What if the world we live in isn't even real? What if I told you that we were all living in a computer simulation controlled by people from the future?

With so many technological advancements in the 21st century, the "Simulation Hypothesis" has become a popularized conspiracy theory. It states that humans are living in a computer game controlled by people from the future. Nick Bostrom, a philosopher at the University of Oxford, put this hypothesis to paper in 2003 when he published, *Are You Living in a Computer Simulation?* It caused an uproar because it proposed that humans aren't real, but are merely simulations in a sophisticated computer game run by a future generation of humans. Bostrom further supposes that "simulated people are conscious," and that's why we can think and why we are self-aware (Bostrom 1). It's the simulated consciousness and presumed self-awareness that

fools us into thinking we are living in a real world, when in fact we are merely pawns in a computer simulation.

Although Bostrom provides many reasons as to why this theory is our reality, his failure to mention counterarguments has not stopped it from spreading to mainstream media. Many well-known scientists and experts support his theory. Elon Musk, a technology entrepreneur known for founding SpaceX and Tesla, claimed to believe the simulation hypothesis on comedian Joe Rogan's podcast. Musk said, "If you assume any rate of improvement at all, then games will be indistinguishable from reality, or civilization will end. One of those two things will occur... Therefore, we are most likely in a simulation, because we exist" (Wall). Video games have already come a long way, with each system and game improving by quality and sound, and Musk believes this is strong evidence toward the simulation theory.

Those who don't support the simulation hypothesis say Musk's own words can be used to counter that we all live in a



simulated computer game. At a conference in 2016 Musk said the odds we are living in this simulation are one in billions, but he believes in this one in a billion longshot (McCormick).

Non-believers are not so quick to believe the one in billions chance. At the same conference, Musk made a reference to the simple game of Pong played 40 years ago and compared the game to our current video games, "We have photo realistic 3-d simulations with millions of people playing simultaneously and it's getting better every year" (McCormick). Musk believes these advancements support the simulation hypothesis because future generations will

**"the odds we are living in this simulation are one in billions"**

have the technology to create more complex simulations. Virtual reality is the most recent and most realistic video game experience today. In these virtual realities and simulation computer games, participants are aware of the simulated environment in which they are playing, but can willingly take the goggles off. Those who believe in the simulation hypothesis ask: what if we are in a simulation and we aren't aware and can't take off the goggles?

Rizwan Virk, a graduate of

MIT and Stanford, published a book titled, *The Simulation Hypothesis*, in which he explores the entirety of the theory. He is a believer in the theory, saying, "I think there's a very good chance we are, in fact, living in a simulation, though we can't say that with 100 percent confidence. But there is plenty of evidence that points in that direction" (Illing). Here we have yet another well-educated figure who believes in the hypothesis and brings more evidence to the table. Virk builds on Musk's claims about the advancements in video games, saying, "The history of video game development is all about optimizing limited resources" (Illing). In this case, history is the only evidence that can support the simulation theory because there is no evidence to show that we are in a simulation because it takes place in the future. In the past, our resources were limited by pixilation, computer storage, and computer speed. Today we are still limited, but every day we expand and extend beyond those limitations, and our technology can do more than it did yesterday. Virk says, "If you asked somebody in the 1980s if you could you render a game like World of Warcraft, which is a full three-dimensional or a virtual reality game, they would say, 'No, it would take all the computing power in the world. We couldn't render all those pixels in real time'" (Illing). Now we have high quality realistic video games that people in the past couldn't even have imagined, because the technology was limited.

On the other hand, a team of theoretical physicists at Oxford

University has weighed in on the simulation theory. They discount it in total, claiming, "life and reality cannot be merely simulations" (Masterson). They contend that even in the future it would be impossible to construct a computer powerful enough to simulate the infinite number of possibilities which conscious individuals in a computer simulation make.

Another argument against this theory is that it is incomprehensible for many. There are so many questions, like, "whose simulation is it?" If we are living in a simulation controlled by a more advanced species, like aliens, many wouldn't believe that. If we are living in a simulation controlled by future generations, many can't imagine that future humans would have such advanced technology. Fifty years ago we were amazed at the onboard computing power of the Apollo spaceships which took humans to the moon. Today's iPhone has over 100,000 times the processing power of those computers. (Kendall). The simple fact is our minds don't allow us to project advances in technologies in the far future, thus we are prone to disbelieve the simulation hypothesis because we can't comprehend it.

Have you ever walked into a room and then forgot the reason why you were going to the room? We do it all the time, but why? Simulation theorists say it is a glitch in the system, or that we were controlled to do that. Bostrom would say that the creators of the simulation erased



Pong released in 1972

ver sus



Virtual Reality released in early-mid 1990s

the memory from our brains: "Should any error occur, the director could easily edit the states of any brains that have become aware of an anomaly before it spoils the simulation. Alternatively, the director could skip back a few seconds and rerun the simulation in a way that avoids the problem." (Bostrom 5). Could this also explain *déjà vu*, when we feel like we have already experienced something? Others, however, say we simply get distracted easily and that our brains have a lot going on.

**"Alternatively, the director could skip back a few seconds and rerun the simulation in a way that avoids the**

Our world and the way things work, like our eyes and our brains can't be a coincidence. Simulation theorists argue that everything seems set up for us. Creationists and evolutionists say that their own theories can explain these coincidences, and that the simulation hypothesis is not the only possible answer. So, whereas simulation hypothesis theorists seek to explain infinite possibilities and chance as the

result of future computer simulations, creationists and evolutionists have equal and sometimes more evidence to support their own theories of our existence.

Free will is another argument that many use to refute the simulation hypothesis. Free will is the individual's ability to choose between different possible courses of action at one's discretion. Opponents of the simulation hypothesis point out that our choices are

houses, and create a town. The player running the video game can tell their sim to do certain things, like get food, or watch television, however, when they are not telling the sim what to do, it will walk around and do its own thing. Proponents of the simulation hypothesis argue that free will is merely an illusion and that sims can still have free will on some things.

If the simulation theory is indeed a fact, we may never know. Just like we may never

know if there is a God or if we will go to Heaven. Until such time comes, we must carry on with our lives as we know them. While it is important to question, to have religious and philosophical discussions, and create theories of our existence and purpose, we can't get hung up on them.

**Question: Whether you believe this is our reality or that this is just a theory, would you even want to know? Like in the movie, The Matrix, would you take the red pill so you could wake up to see what the matrix is, or would you take the blue pill and keep living your life in ignorant bliss?**



**Introducing the iPhone 11**

# Why Do Students Choose

EASTON – College can be difficult for anyone, but even more so for students with a disability. According to a new study, however, an increasing number of students are hesitant to reveal their disabilities to obtain accommodations, that would give them a better chance at success and ultimately graduation.

Negative experiences in the past and a lack of self-advocacy skills were key factors influencing students' decisions to not reveal their disabilities to faculty when they entered college, reported a 2015 study published in Rehabilitation Counselors and Educators Journal, titled, "Students with Disabilities' Self-Report on Perceptions toward Disclosing Disability and Faculty's Willingness to Provide Accommodations."

Also, one-third of students who participated in the study said they feared faculty would view them differently if they disclosed their disabilities.

The Americans with Disabilities Act defines a person with a disability as someone who has a documented physical or mental impairment that limits one or more of their major life activities, such as walking, hearing or maintaining sustained concentration.

Accommodations, such as auxiliary aids, a note taker, or

extra time on a test, gives students with disabilities an equal opportunity.

Eileen Bellemore is the director of the Office of Accessibility Resources at Stonehill College. Bellemore's office has 278 students registered, which is 10.8% of the Stonehill College student population.

Bellemore has not noticed a decrease among the number of students disclosing their disabilities at Stonehill but has noticed a different trend.

"Five years ago, we would have more students disclosing learning differences than mental health conditions, and now that trend is sort of reversing, we are seeing less learning differences and more mental health



conditions," said Bellemore.

Bellemore conducted a survey in 2017 in which she found that most Stonehill students who receive services from Office of Accessibility Resources were satisfied. Those who were not indicated struggling with the issue of stigma from family,



faculty, and other students.

"One student said his or her parents told him not to apply for accommodations because they would be labeled as different. Another student mentioned that in general there are many biased students on Stonehill's campus," said Bellemore.

"The word 'disability' still has such a negative connotation and students are still thinking about people with visible disabilities or people who might be physically impaired," she said.

While completing interviews with incoming freshman this year, Bellemore noticed that more students had trouble advocating for themselves, preferring instead to rely upon their parents to speak on their behalf.

She said this could backfire in their first year because students do not know how to reach out to Office of Accessibility Resources or how to converse with their professors and explain their disability.

"Sometimes students will wait, maybe till after they fail a test or until they are really struggling to come and see me, and it's because of a negative

# Not to Disclose Disabilities?



experience," said Bellemore.

Once a student registers with Bellemore's office, she writes a letter of accommodation for the student, outlining their needs. However, it is up to the individual student on what he or she does with the letter of accommodation.

James Pentikis, a sophomore finance major at Stonehill College, is registered with Office of Accessibility Resources. He has attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, anxiety and pervasive developmental disorder-not otherwise specified, which is a form of autism.

He finds that revealing his disabilities and utilizing accommodations has helped him to navigate his academics successfully and is an exception to the study's findings.

One of Pentikis' strategies is to address his disabilities head-on and hand his letter of accommodation to his professors during the first class. His letter recommends 50% extended time on tests, a distraction-reduced testing room and permission to type written responses.

"I find my handwriting is very illegible, especially with notes and open responses and I don't want to get points deducted or not be able to read my notes in

preparation for a quiz," said Pentikis.

In college, and even in the past, Pentikis has not encountered any major issues when seeking additional help. His prior positive experience follows a trend found in the study.

The study found that students with more positive experiences of requesting accommodations in the past were more willing to disclose their disability.

Pentikis has learned to advocate for himself and his disabilities. When it comes to difficult situations with professors, he says it is usually a result of miscommunication.

"If I had a problem, I would go find someone. I would use my resources very well and that's how I still do it," said Pentikis.

Unfortunately, not every student is a forthcoming as Pentikis. And those other students tend to fall below the line when it comes to academics, said Bellemore.

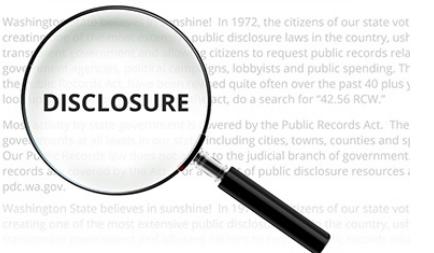
Bellemore encourages students to disclose their disabilities to professors and works to show students that their conditions entitle them to help and that they need to take advantage of that.

She is also in charge of educating the Stonehill College faculty. Every year she presents at the faculty development day, and finds that professors are willing to learn and work with students who have disabilities and need accommodations.

"One third of students who participated in the study said they feared faculty would view them differently if they disclosed their disabilities. "

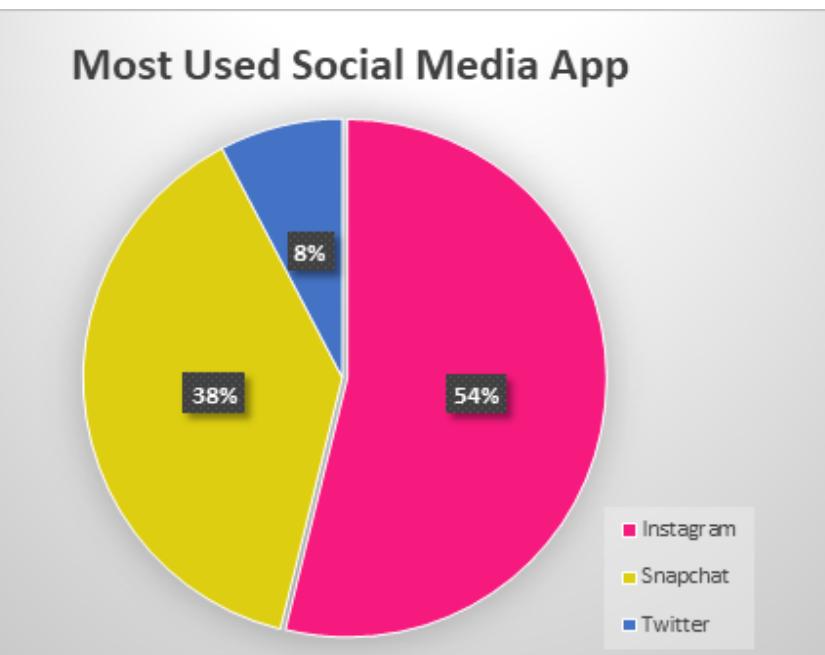
"A lot of faculty will call me because they don't know how to necessarily implement an accommodation or they feel like an accommodation will lower standards, so we will talk about ways around that, how to be mindful of the law, but also making some adaptations to their course," said Bellemore.

She preaches a concept known as the "universal design of learning" and says this would help reduce the stigma around disabilities. She explains how colleges could design learning environments that would anticipate some basic accommodations so students wouldn't have to ask to do something "different."



"For example, if faculty designed their exams to be 30 minutes long and they gave everybody an hour to take them, well then you have extended time already built-in and nobody would have to ask for an accommodation for exams," said Bellemore.

# Is LC 203 Obsessed with Social Media?



Why use social media?

- To share photos with friends and family
- Friends have social media
- To find funny and entertaining content
- To occupy spare time
- To stay up to date with news and current events
- To meet new people
- To share my opinion

On average, the class spends 2 to 3 hours a day on social media



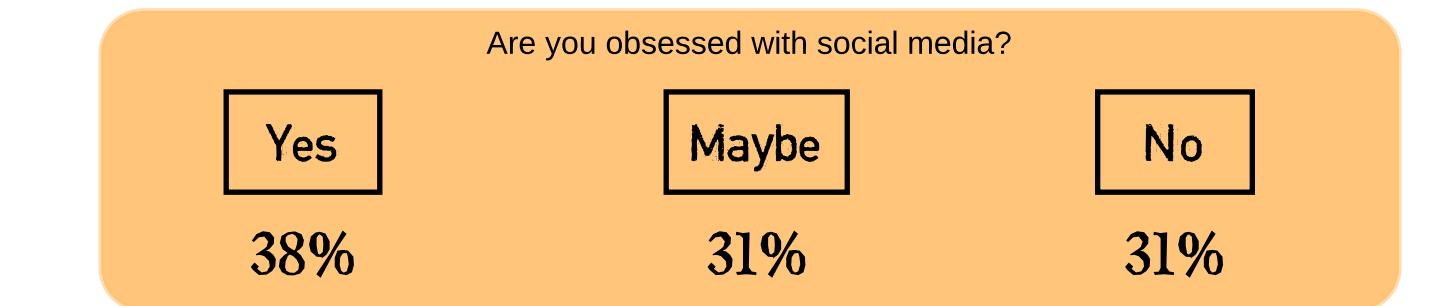
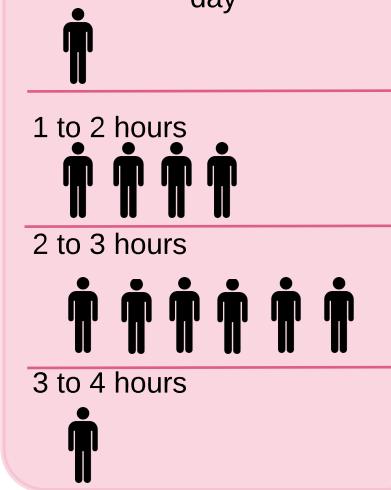
On average, the class checks social media 15 to 20 times a day



Yet the majority of them only post on this app every few weeks



1 person spends < 1 hour on social media during a typical day



AROUND DISABILITIES.

