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Connecticut College

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# THE COLLEGE VOICE

CONNECTICUT COLLEGE'S STUDENT NEWSPAPER, SINCE 1977

## Athletes of Color Coalition

GRACE ROBINSON  
CONTRIBUTOR

This fall marked the launch of Connecticut College's Athletes of Color Coalition, a group of athletes of color from across the campus that come together to share their experiences of being a minority in athletics at Conn. Late last spring, all NESCAC schools came to the consensus that each athletic program should have a similar coalition. In the wake of the George Floyd's murder and the countless protests that followed, Conn created their first Athletes of Color Coalition, where athletes of color have a safe space to talk about their experiences. The leader of the Coalition, Head Women's Basketball Coach, Jackie Smith, explained how she was approached last year about forming this group. "Giving them [athletes of color] a space where they can share those experiences is really really important" as athletes of color "really do have a different experience... than that of their white peers," stated Smith. Though the coalition is new at Conn, there are already 25 new members with more joining daily. For Stephania Lopez '21, a senior on the women's water polo team, this has been a long time coming. After attending a leadership conference for BIPOC (black, indigenous and people of color) athletes hosted by the NESCAC in the spring of 2019, Lopez saw initiatives that other colleges were doing and wanted to be a part of it. "I felt like there wasn't really a space for BIPOC student athletes," Lopez said. She is excited "to be a part of something that would allow [her] to have those conversations and relate to peers at Conn." As stated in their introduction email, the goals of the Coalition "are to serve as a support system for our student athletes of color and provide a safe place to share experiences and thoughts, work with athletic administration to develop a plan to diversify the Connecticut College athletic program and enhance the athletic experience of student-athletes of color, and research local organizations that would benefit from our support - think globally but act locally!" Smith shared her excitement regarding the existing members of the coalition, as "they are super determined, very well organized [and] very supportive of one another." Smith explained that due to the fact that the group is so new, the current goal is to get themselves organized and "create an infrastructure." Additionally, they are looking forward to working with the New London community as Smith continuously stressed the importance of working on a local level. Though this year is mainly focused on building the coalition, Lopez looks forward to potential initiatives, such as a "mentorship program between first years and seniors and upperclassmen."

## We Still Wear Masks in Phase Yellow

AMANDA SANDERS  
MANAGING EDITOR

If you're a student at Connecticut College, then you're no stranger to email blasts from Dean of Students, Victor Arcelus. On Sept. 10, students received an email from the Dean stating that as of that day, Conn had shifted "from Alert Level 3 (Orange) to Alert Level 2 (Yellow)." Cool. What does that actually mean? First of all, this means that no students are in onboarding quarantine. All students have completed their 6-14 days of move-in-related quarantine and our on-campus COVID-19 cases are at a manageable level. The largest change from Alert Level Orange, which Conn started the semester in, and Alert Level Yellow was that Connecticut College was able to shift back to in-person classes for the first time since early March. On Friday, Sept. 11, students were spotted throughout the day wearing backpacks and masks while walking into different academic buildings to meet professors and classmates face-to-face. Starting on Wednesday, Sept. 16, another change included dining areas such as the Crozier-Williams 1962 room, Jane Addams (J.A.), and Harris beginning to offer buffet-style meals again. Previously dining halls were only offering meals that were pre-packaged. While the food items being served have not changed, they are now more customizable. Students are able to tell dining-hall staff, who stand behind Plexiglass walls, what specific items they would like from that day's menu, minimizing food waste. This buffet-style however, is only for hot food. Sandwiches and salads are still



CAMELS CARE

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Connecticut College

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## Question the Numbers

*Hello TCV readers, welcome to this new subsection of News. This year, News Editors will be collaborating on a biweekly "Question the numbers: The Backstory of Statistics" series in which we examine commonly circulated statistics and work to make sense of what they mean, and how they might be limited in representing a given situation. Since numbers are often treated as neutral or objective we hope to use this section to explore this assumption and better understand what purpose it serves. Have any thoughts, questions, or suggestions for what numbers to feature? Reach out to the News Editors at [aacheson@conncoll.edu](mailto:aacheson@conncoll.edu) and [eroy1@conncoll.edu](mailto:eroy1@conncoll.edu).*

In the early months of the ongoing pandemic, the Washington Post, the Associated Press, and even CNN reported that the US unemployment rate had jumped from 4.4% in March to 14.7% in April. Others predicted worsening unemployment and poverty as the budding Covid-19 pandemic continued to unfold. These numbers mark the highest rate of unemployment since the Great Depression, surpassing that of the 2008 economic crash which peaked at roughly 9.5%. But to someone unfamiliar with labor statistics, intimidated by often opaque calculations, or even well-seasoned in using numbers to quantify wealth and the value of financial assets, it can be difficult to understand what the unemployment rate actually represents.

The unemployment rate number represents how many workers out of all workers in the labor force (those currently employed plus workers who have searched for work in the past four weeks) do not have a job to sustain themselves. This calculation is actually only one of six calculations that The Bureau of Labor Statistics regularly uses to understand the scale of employment, unemployment, and underemployment. The two most relevant for our purposes are the official unemployment rate (U-3) and the lesser-known total unemployment rate (U-6). Despite being the number most widely reported and referenced, U-3 does not actually include all workers currently out of work. Only those who are out of work but have looked for a job within the past four weeks are included in its calculations. On the other hand, U-6 provides a much more holistic picture. It includes not only the unemployed who have searched for a job within the past four weeks but also those who have searched within the past year, in addition it includes the underemployed: those who would like a full-time job but are only able to find part-time work.

Percentages claiming to represent unemployment in the US are nearly always presented as indisputable facts. By not sharing the ways in which that number is calculated, they implicitly state that the U-3 rate of 14.7% unemployment in April 2020 is the only way to quantitatively represent the increasingly precarious situations in which most workers find themselves. According to the BLS, the U-6 rate of unemployment in April was 22.8%, and in May it was little better at 21.2%. The portion of people out of work, however, is not the only way to quantify the depravity and hardship people are facing during the pandemic. In May, millions of people in the US were unable to afford their rent, resulting in various schemes to stall evictions. This number alludes to the rising precarity of housing for most people, and is by no means a new phenomenon. Another indication of this rising precarity is the number of people experiencing homelessness which, according to data from 2019, was over 560,000 people on a given night. Due to the difficulties of counting the number of people left unhoused it is likely that this number is an underestimate. Using a model developed in a 2017 study by Dr. Kevin Corinth, a Columbia University economist estimated there could be a "40-45% increase in homelessness by the end of 2020, an increase of around 250,000 people."

In sum, unemployment rates reported in the news are an incomplete picture of unemployment and poverty in this country. Regardless of whether the U-3 rate or another statistic is cited, the number itself is always the result of a series of decisions that are informed by and have consequences for socio-political realities. How we present numbers and the ways in which they are calculated make them not neutral but highly subjective.

## THE COLLEGE VOICE

The views and opinions expressed in *The College Voice* are strictly those of student authors, and not of Connecticut College. All content and editorial decisions remain in the hands of the students; neither the College's administration nor its faculty exercise control over the content.

JOZETTE MOSES '21

*Editor-in-Chief*

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## Scholar Strikes Stem From NBA Strikes

**SAM MAIDENBERG**  
SPORTS EDITOR

On August 26, and for the subsequent two days after, a majority of the American sports world came to a halt. Spearheaded by the Milwaukee Bucks, various games across major American sports were postponed in direct response to the shooting by police of Jacon Blake, a Black man, and to the overarching racial injustice in America.

These actions halted business as usual and gave prominent athletes the opportunity to promote their messages on a national level. The Bucks, whose home stadium is less than an hour away from Kenosha, Wisconsin where Blake was shot 7 times in the back, emerged from the locker room for game 5 of the Eastern Conference quarterfinals against the Orlando Magic and announced their decision to temporarily boycott the game. The team held a press conference, led by 12 year NBA veteran George Hill, who called for the state of Wisconsin to “take meaningful measures to address issues of police accountability, brutality, and criminal justice reform.” He concluded his statement by encouraging “all citizens to educate themselves, take peaceful and responsible action, and remember to vote on November 3.”

Following suit, the remaining NBA games scheduled for that night, as well as various games across the WNBA, MLB and MLS were cancelled on August 26. The effect of the actions taken by Hill and the Bucks lasted days, as American sports remained relatively at a standstill for the next 48 hours. Similar actions proceeded into the month of September, as recent U.S. Open winner Naomi Osaka wore a different mask before each of her seven matches of the tournament branded with the names of various victims of racial injustice. Around the same time, the realm of higher education took similar steps to address institutionalized racism by partaking in their own strike, one inspired by the likes of Hill and Osaka, as well as the countless athletes worldwide who have been speaking out against the everpresent injustice.

Originally conceived on Twitter by professor Anthea Butler of the University of Pennsylvania, the Scholar Strike was planned to take place on Sept. 8 and 9. On the official website of the Scholar Strike, its mission statement claims that the strike was “inspired by the NBA, WNBA, Colin Kaepernick and other athletes” and was “designed to call awareness to the racial climate in America, and the rash of police shootings and racialized violence.” Butler addresses her fellow students, faculty, staff, and administrators of higher education to “refrain from our many duties and participate in actions designed to raise awareness of and prompt action against racism, policing, mass incarceration and other symptoms of racism's toll in America” over the 48 hour period. Butler's influence was also felt in Canada, as institutions of higher education there participated in the Scholar Strike on Sept. 9 and Sept. 10 to address similar issues of racial injustice in their home country.

Butler, in their initial statement, stressed the importance of the intersection of education and racial inequality as they believe that education reforms are paramount to fighting racism in America.

The Scholar Strike was intended to hold many different forms. While some institutions pledged not to hold class at all on the 8 and 9 of September, many performed a teach in, curating the day's work to fit the current racial climate in America. The flexible way in which the Scholar Strike was designed was evident to Moriah Prescia '22. Each of Prescia's classes approached this opportunity differently, examining how racial injustice has found itself in both film studies and sustainability. Prescia's Film 101 did not meet, and her professor “posted notable resources for diversity and inclusion in film and to look at the lack thereof.”

Conversely, her other two classes met and approached them through the lens of the current racial climate. While many of the topics in Prescia's Film 305 class titled ‘Whiteness in Film and Culture’ are centered around race, the class participated in the Scholar Strike by taking time on Wednesday, September 9 to “discuss different tactics in order to be a better activist and advocate for people of color.” Most important among those, according to Prescia, is to fully “give people the mic so they can speak for themselves” rather than raising your voice above that of BIPOC. Her final class, an Anthropology class titled ‘Sustainable Food Systems’ examined how “people of color have systematically had land taken from them” which has greatly contributed to economic inequality.

The Scholar Strike also coincided with President Trump's letter to various Federal Agencies asking them to end racial sensitivity training, calling them both “divisive” and “anti-American propaganda.” Trump furthered this sentiment in a tweet, calling critical race theory “a sickness that cannot be allowed to continue.” This sentiment goes against what many demonstrators have called for during the recent periods of unrest, as a specific emphasis has been put on expanding educational resources for young Americans regarding the history of systematic racism in America. Despite Trump's efforts, Butler and her Scholar Strike captivated the staff and students of higher education nationwide, and started the important conversations that will now carry on regarding the current state of the US. •



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## West Coast Wildfires, an Addition to the Apocalyptic 2020

SARAH HENNIG  
CONTRIBUTOR

As if 2020 could not get any worse, the West Coast of the U.S. was set ablaze in August and early September. The skies turned orange and smoke polluted the air while millions of acres of land were burned, causing devastating consequences for nearby communities. A single spark turned into a flame and smaller fires combined into huge mega-fires that are now uncontrollable. It is no coincidence that these wildfires keep occurring and wreaking massive destruction. There is a clear and undeniable connection to climate change and the increasingly dangerous wildfires across the West Coast.

While Oregon and Colorado experience larger fires and subsequent worsening air quality, California is the main state that is at the highest risk of such destructive wildfires. Wildfires are a natural part of the ecosystem for these states, but the wildfires that have recently been occurring are not natural. They are a result of human error and the current climate crisis converging into a massive fiery blaze. Years of fire suppression and poor forest management caused the wildfires to grow in size and intensity. The fuel available for these fires is readily available due to the negligent forest management practices that allowed the build-up of vegetation that, when dry, is pure fuel for the fires.

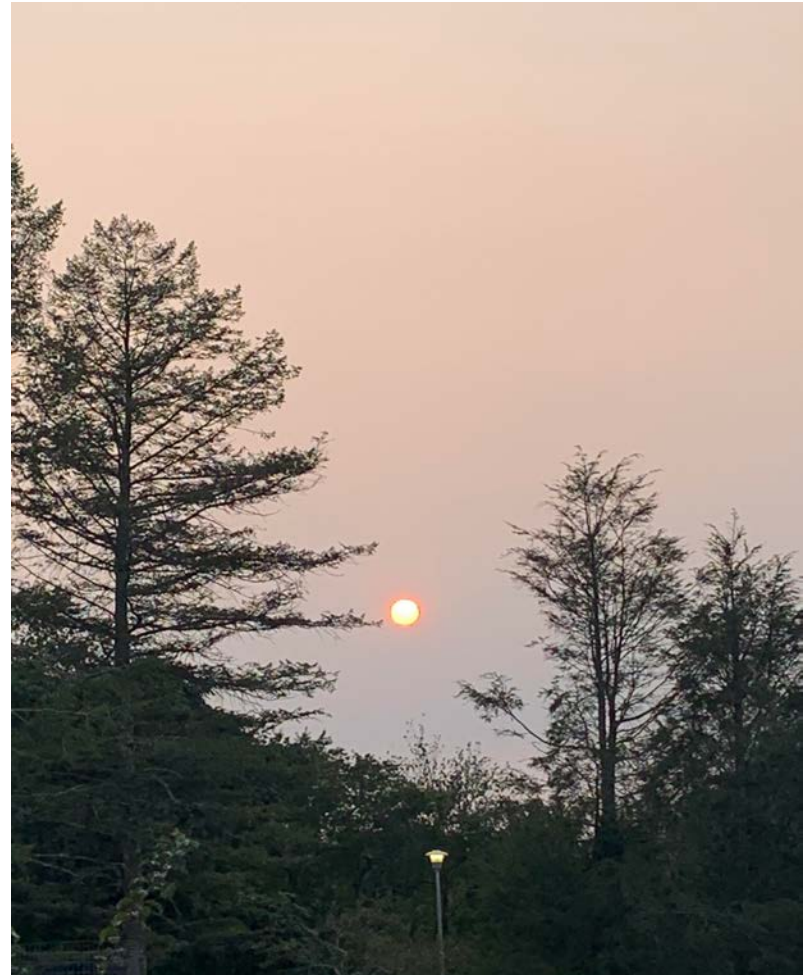
Vegetation quickly turns to catalytic tinder when it is severely dried out by means of a heatwave or drought. Soil, trees, and shrubs all easily spark aflame when a wildfire crosses their path because they have no moisture. Climate change has caused global temperatures to increase since fossil fuels were first burned in the 1800s during the Industrial Revolution. Since then, California's average temperature has increased by three degrees Fahrenheit. These seemingly small temperature increases have consequences that are tenfold. Hot air that is not at 100% humidity acts like a sponge that soaks up everything in its surroundings. As the temperature rises, the amount of water the air can hold exponentially increases, causing more and more moisture to be sucked from the nearby vegetation. This dried out, crisp vegetation is pure kindling and only requires a single spark to burst into flames.

In California, the heatwave in August and early September dried out the trees, shrubs, and soil making them extremely flammable, further contributing to the already dangerous wildfires. Considering five of California's hottest record years occurred in the past decade, it is clear that this issue is becoming increasingly pressing. Normally, wildfires would die down due to the cold temperatures at night. However, California's nights are no longer getting as cold, allowing more time for the wildfires to persist.

All of these different factors are coming together and multiplying the danger and consequences of wildfires. Not only are landscapes at risk of being destroyed, but people's homes are also in jeopardy. In California, more than 64,000 people were forced to evacuate as a result of the threat posed by the wildfires. That number is not going to go down in future wildfire seasons because houses are still being built in wildfire-prone zones. The WUI, wildland-urban interface, is an area deemed more prone to wildfires. In California, where urban housing is absurdly expensive and is only rising, housing developers are building in the WUI. Other states also have housing in this

danger zone, but none at the level that exists in California. Roughly 11.3 million Californians, about 30% of the state population, live in this perilous area. The state has not encouraged people to move out of the WUI and they have not discouraged new construction in the zone. Not to mention the root of the problem: expensive urban housing and a refusal to build more houses in these areas has yet to be addressed let alone solved.

However, the state of California is committing to new climate goals. California has committed to 100% clean energy and total economy-wide carbon neutrality by 2045. These are aggressive objectives, but necessary ones considering the risk the state poses with rising sea levels and dangerous wildfires—problems that are worsened by climate change. It will be interesting to see if the state proposes any new ways to solve the housing crisis or if they choose to address the negligent forest management that exacerbated the megafires. Hopefully, in time, the climate crisis will be handled and California's apocalyptic, orange, smokey skies will be a thing of the past. As of right now, these wildfires are just another thing added onto the list of insane events that occurred in 2020. Not only does 2020 feel like an apocalypse, but the wildfires make it look like one, too. •



Jess Rush

## To Reopen or Not to Reopen

KERIN KRASNOFF  
CONTRIBUTOR

This fall semester has been a big change for all of us, and no I am not talking about the changing of seasons. Since March, colleges and universities have raised the question of what the fall semester would look like during a global pandemic. However, institutions have different ideas about the best way to go about learning due to certain factors and the challenges that they face. Whether the semester is all online, all in person, or mixed, this new normal sparked uncertainty regarding campus life in Fall 2020.

One of the most ambitious reopening plans is taking place at the University of California, San Diego. According to its website, the school introduced a new program, titled 'Return to Learn.' The program began in early May, providing tests to around 5,000 students that were still on campus for the spring semester (with the number of students and tests later expanding into the fall semester). Like Connecticut College, students are required to go to an assigned testing site to swab their noses, and samples will then be collected from a drop box. However, the University of California of San Diego has a significantly larger population of about 65,000 people (students, faculty, staff) they plan to test at least twice a month with no more than 16 days between tests. Strict rules for social distancing are also taking place; for example, all resident halls will be limited to one student per room, no visitors allowed, and out of the 4,750 course offerings, and as stated by their website, only "12 percent of Fall 2020 courses [will be] using an in person or hybrid modality." Remaining courses will be held remotely.

The reopening plan of UC of San Diego is just one of many schools nationwide that is basing their reopening plans around one crucial decision: financial stability. As stated in the Report of the Higher Education Subcommittee to Reopen Connecticut, if higher education institutions wanted to pursue in-person classes, "colleges and universities must be financially able to provide, administer, and process diagnostic tests," with an estimation of "between 200,000 and 300,000 tests" needed in late August and early September, plus an additional quantity of tests and the cost of extra safety precautions.

According to USA Today, The American Council on Education estimates that it would cost at least \$73.8 billion in new costs to reopen campuses nationwide. This creates a huge financial risk for schools and a big commitment, especially for tuition-dependent private colleges and universities. In a New York Times article, the president of Brown University, Christina Paxson, writes that "most colleges and universities are tuition dependent," meaning that "remaining closed in the fall means losing half of our revenue." For some schools, the solution to that problem means letting at least some students live on campus to bring in a fraction of the funds, rather than no funds at all when going totally remote.

On the other hand, bigger and more well-known universities would be able to survive an all-online semester since they have larger funds and more donors. The Chronicle of Higher Education conducted a study with Davidson College's College Crisis Initiative, in which it surveyed schools across the country about what their reopening plans were for the fall semester. Accordingly, private, non-profit, and four-year schools were more likely to be in-person while larger, public, four-year schools are mostly online.

Furthermore, out of the top twenty richest US schools in 2019, only seven are primarily in-person or hybrid, making the majority online.

Additionally on a smaller-school scale, colleges that are part of the North England Small College Athletic Conference (NESCAC), also seem to be split on the decision of how to reopen the fall semester. One factor could be the influence of their respective governors' guidelines to reopening the state and the status of Covid cases and hospitalization rates in the surrounding community. Moreover, using the The Chronicle of Higher Education database, out of the 11 NESCAC schools, 2 schools are primarily online, 4 schools are primarily in person, and 5 schools are hybrid. Dean of the College Jefferson Singer, who was involved in designing the plan to bring students back, answered questions that I had through a Google Form about collaborating with other NESCAC schools on what is the best way to reopen. "Both the Dean of the Faculty and I participate in a weekly Zoom meeting with the other chief NESCAC academic officers," Dean Singer wrote on Sept. 17th, "so we are in very close communication with our peer institutions." When asked whether or not these plans, when compared to other schools, were more similar or different, Singer writes, "Some of these institutions chose to bring back only a portion of their classes (for example, Bowdoin) and others have plans similar to ours (for example, Hamilton, Trinity and Wesleyan)."

However, no matter how thought out a plan for reopening is, there is still a risk that it could fail. SUNY Oneonta already moved to full online learning after having one of the worst Covid-19 outbreaks at a university nationwide, with a total of 687 positive tests as of Sept. 26th. While looking at the reopening plan that SUNY Oneonta posted on their website, there were some aspects that raised concerns for me. One of which was the lack of testing being done on asymptomatic students. The plan stated that "students are not required to get tested" before arriving on campus, and that the campus would solely focus on testing students with symptoms, while those that are asymptomatic would be "pooled tested" once per week. However, according to The New York Times, students, parents, and faculty reported that the school did not test students at all once they arrived on campus. Another concern was the lack of enforced social distancing rules on the campus. In their plan, the school states that "it's a shared responsibility" to not gather in groups, expecting students to take a pledge titled "Statement of Shared Responsibility" without going more into details. However, in that same New York Times article, the school "did not closely prevent gatherings in off-campus gatherings." One college student at SUNY Oneonta stated that the school "relied too heavily on students maintaining social distance on their own" rather than surveilling the campus in order to prevent possible parties.

While the cases at SUNY Oneonta most visibly failed to prevent the spread of Covid-19, time will tell if Connecticut College can avoid the same fate. It is hard to tell which reopening plan will be deemed the most successful and if schools will be able to successfully complete the semester in person. But for now, it is important to collectively follow the health guidelines of social distancing and wearing a mask until all college students can return to campus again. •

## We Still Wear Masks in Phase Yellow

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*Continued from page 1*

pre-packaged as are fruits and snacks. While students cannot yet eat indoors, this new way of receiving meals is a small but meaningful advancement. “It’s just really nice to get another taste of normalcy [in regards to the dining hall’s new buffets]. I feel like it’s been so long since I was able to actually engage in something that felt like I was living somewhat in a time before [coronavirus]. Just walking in and seeing people really lit up my day,” stated Josh Moylan ’23 when he was spotted walking out of Cro with hot food.

Furthermore, as stated in a recent email by the College’s Assistant Athletic Director Matt Mancini, the Higdon Fitness Center reopened its doors on Thursday, Sept 17. All students following the College’s testing protocols will be able to reserve 45-minute time slots to use the Athletic Center. If you’d like to work out for longer than 45 minutes, you would need to book a second time slot, leave the facility for cleaning purposes and then re-enter. Faculty and staff members are currently prohibited from using the facilities. Students are able to select from treadmills, bikes, ellipticals, steppers, and various weight machines. The free weights will still not be available. All students must wear a mask while using the equipment. However, that is not the only safety measure being put into place. After entering the building, you will need to show your reservation, your CoVerified “clear” status, and your Camel ID to the staff member working at the Athletic Center. You also must get your temperature taken. Athletic equipment will be wiped down by those using the machines. This will be monitored by Athletic Center staff members. The facilities will be closed twice on weekdays and once per weekend day so that all high-touch areas and equipment can be thoroughly cleaned. Equipment will also be cleaned before the Center opens each day.

Another smaller change to Conn’s coronavirus rules is that now students are allowed to have a passenger in their car with them. Previously while in Alert Level Orange, drivers were only able to have passengers in their cars who were their roommates or housemates (people sharing an apartment or home, not an on-campus “pod”). Now, drivers may have another person in their car as long as they are both wearing masks and keep car windows open for ventilation.

These new options for Conn students are certainly small and exciting victories in the College’s fight against Covid-19. For us to continue getting such privileges and to get back to “normal,” we must continue to be safe while at Conn. Wash your hands, get tested, and wear your mask. Masks only work if everyone wears one. If you’re not eating, keep your mask on, whether you’re outdoors doing a reading for class or indoors talking to a friend who lives on your floor. Only through continuing with these procedures can we eventually reach Alert Level Green. •

## Athletes of Color Coalition

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*Continued from page 1*

While NESCAC sports are currently on hold due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Conn students are using this time as an opportunity to build on the foundational aspects of good sportsmanship and integrity. Overall, Smith believes that the end goal of this coalition is to “increase diversity on campus” as members of the coalition “want to see more of themselves in their teams, in their coaches, [and] in their staff.” Looking forward, Smith believes that “a collaboration with our white peers is going to be the most successful” in making Connecticut College as a whole into a safe space. Lopez also wants “a shift in our culture within athletics and to see those numbers change.” In 2015, the American Psychology Association came out with research stating that “increasing the representation of distinct racial groups improves intellectual and academic performance for both minority and non-minority students.” What this proves is that diversity in teams, coaches, and staff will not only improve Conn for BIPOC students, but all students. The work being done by the Coalition is unequivocally valuable to every member of the Conn community. •



Connecticut College Athletics

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## Protestors' Demands Remain Unanswered by Burlington Police Department

ELIZABETH BERRY  
ARTS EDITOR

In 2018 and 2019, bodycam footage captured multiple violent aggressions against BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and people of color) at the hands of Burlington, VT Police officers. At the end of August in 2020, protestors gathered in downtown Burlington to demand the three officers involved be fired, but the department continues to ignore these demands.

One of the videos from Sept. 9, 2018, shows Sgt. Jason Bellavance approach a man arguing with a bar employee. Jérémie Meli, a 24-year-old Congolese immigrant, is heard saying "You guys started the fight" while a second employee taps a finger into his chest. Bellavance shoves Meli who then falls against the building and appears to hit his head. Meli's brother, Albin, arrives at the scene and begins yelling at Bellavance saying that his brother did not do anything. Bellavance tells Albin to back up and handcuffs Meli whose eyes roll around in their sockets as he is moved away from the wall. Two more officers arrive at the scene: Vincent Ross and Cory Campbell.

The latter of the officers also has a history of violence. In March 2019 Campbell punched 54-year-old Douglas Kilburn multiple times outside the University of Vermont Medical Center. Body camera footage shows Campbell escort Kilburn to visit his wife in the hospital, and then swear at Kilburn after the visit. Kilburn punches Campbell, who in response punches Kilburn. This punch leaves Kilburn bloody and on the pavement struggling to stand, while he is handcuffed and brought to a stretcher. Kilburn's jaw and eye socket were broken; he died two days later. Chief medical examiner Steven Shapiro ruled Kilburn's death a homicide, explaining that he would not have died if Campbell had not punched him. Burlington Mayor Miro Weinberger denied this finding and tried to delay the public release of the autopsy.

The night before Sgt. Bellavance attacked Meli in September 2019, Burlington officer Joseph Corrow's bodycam shows him pull Mabior Jok, 34, to the ground. Jok lost consciousness and the video shows a small pool of blood forming on the ground near his mouth. Corrow claimed he was trying to handcuff Jok—who was facing separate charges related to domestic assault—when he began to show resistance.

Towards the end of August, the group The Black Perspective @theblackperspectivevt organized a protest to demand that Joseph Corrow, Jason Bellavance, and Cory Campbell be fired

due to their use-of-force against individuals. However, Acting Burlington Police Chief Jon Murad explained in an interview with Henry Epp of VPR that since these incidents occurred in 2018 and 2019 and have been determined not to be criminal acts or are currently under litigation, the officers cannot be fired. While, in the case of Campbell, he was disciplined for using foul language, the department ruled his response as self-defense and justified.

Chief Murad went on to say that this does not mean the Burlington police have not taken action in an attempt to respond to the demands of the protestors. He told Epp: "Many of the things that they're asking for,



aside from the firing of the officers, are things that we are doing that we are willing to do, that we want to work with our community to improve." These things include using body cameras, releasing body camera footage, improving due process and communication with the community, and limiting the department's headcount to 74 officers.

But these changes are not enough to address the 401-year-old problem of racism and its influence on how police departments function. Racial justice activist Mark Hughes resigned from the Burlington Police Commission earlier this month, stating his frustration in the department's unwillingness to answer the protestor's demands. Hughes was appointed to his position in 2019 after the lawsuits against Bellavance and Corrow. Many college students have attended these protests, but Hughes urges more people to get involved; the mayor's office and police department must respond to the demands of the protestors in order to bring systemic change.

In a post shared by both @bpdaccountability and @vtracialjusticealliance, the daily marches will continue until Corrow, Bellavance, and Campbell are fired, body camera footage is made accessible to the public and is worn by officers at all times, and the Burlington police is defunded to reallocate funds to health-care and housing. These demands are not dissimilar from those which are at the forefront of Black Lives Matter protests in other cities across the country, but unlike other cities' protests, those in Burlington have not been covered as widely in the media.

The current news cycle is overwhelmed with ever-increasing COVID-19 cases in the U.S., the upcoming 2020 presidential election, and wildfires in California to name just a few headlines. But this is not a reason to report on one lead and not another. In order to continue the momentum which The Black Perspective and protestors have started in August, national news outlets must support local reporting so individuals remain aware that the Black Lives Matter Movement and fight to end police brutality are not over. Awareness is the first step to joining in support of protestors to influence police departments and local officials to implement systemic change. •



Leelah Klauber



# Is a World Without Normalcy a Disaster or an Opportunity?

ALEXIS ROBERTSON  
CONTRIBUTOR

The word normal is defined as “the usual, average, or typical state or condition.” We as human beings strive to establish normalcy in our daily lives. It is how we survive. It is the only way we know how to function in society. We need things around us to stay the same in order to put at us enough ease each day to go about our lives and do what needs to be done...at least we thought we needed it. I am beginning to think differently nowadays.

Why is normalcy such a popular topic right now? Our world today seems to be teetering on the border of abnormal and completely unrecognizable. What do we do with ourselves when there is no “normal?” Since the COVID-19 outbreak in March, I strongly believe that societies have been forced to reinvent the way they operate. Businesses can only open with limited capacity, people of different households can't be less than six feet apart from each other, schools are online for the most part, and we now have to wear a mask wherever we go. There are no more large events like weddings and birthday parties. There are no more concerts, shows, or performances. The world we once knew is gone, and what is left is a world without “a normal.” However, no matter how scary and confusing this may be, I do not see it as a disaster. It is simply an opportunity to embrace the spontaneity.

Perhaps this can be demonstrated best through the lens of a college student, such as myself. My daily schedule consists of waking up, going to class, getting dinner with my friends and then going to sleep. However, all of these seemingly normal events no longer have any sort of normalcy. Three weeks ago I had all remote classes. I wasn't allowed to socialize with friends or go off-campus. I went about my day doing what needed to be done. This was not a normal college experience. Like any change in life, it was weird for me to adjust to this new lifestyle. For me, especially, moving back into college was hard enough without having the added stress of a pandemic. Just when I thought this might become a new normal, life changed again. The school began in person classes and outdoor activities, meaning my current routine needed to be changed. I had to begin yet another

readjustment phase from the beginning. Currently, our schedules are missing the repetitive components that contribute to normalcy. I am a big proponent that something simply cannot be normal if it is constantly subject to change. Nothing about this semester could be considered average -except, perhaps, the amount of homework that is given. Even the campus itself undergoes frequent changes, making it difficult to establish normalcy in that aspect as well. Aside from the fact that the policies and expectations are constantly being revised, the buildings here operate differently than before and are almost nothing like they used to be. In my short time of being at school, the situation is far too dynamic and ever-changing for me to adjust fully. Despite the stress and fear of these crazy times, I have discovered some added benefits quite unexpectedly. On campus, I have felt a sense of relaxation that was not here prior to the pandemic. Everything seems to be low-key and easy going. I do not feel as overwhelmed and agitated as I have in previous semesters. Through embracing the unpredictability of each day, I have become a better version of myself by coming out of my comfort zone and actively seeking out the positives in this new lifestyle. It is amazing what you can do in a day, without having a typical routine.

My belief is that it is possible to survive the lack of normalcy. Like any other change in life, it is something that we must adapt to. It won't be easy for an entire society to undergo this big of a change, but it is possible. As a society, we should embrace this change and choose to accept the world's new spontaneity. Humans are pretty good at doing whatever it takes to survive and this includes living through a global pandemic. Adapting to this new environment means reworking the way we go about our lives. By changing the way we approach each day, we will be able to adapt to the unpredictability of our routines. It is possible to not only live this way, but thrive. All we need to do is take a deep breath and free our minds from the worries and fears of change. In doing so, it is possible to explore new emotions, opportunities, and personal potentials that were not present in our lives before. We will be okay because amongst the chaos, there is a beauty in the unknown. Besides, normal is overrated! •

## A Letter to Fellow First Years

EMMA GOODWIN  
CONTRIBUTOR

Dear Fellow First-Years,

I'm sure I speak for every first-year student when I say that this is not the way that I expected to begin college. I could not foresee that I would spend my last few days at home packing not only dorm essentials and a semester's worth of clothes, but also several of my favorite face masks and a generous supply of hand sanitizer. Never in my wildest dreams did I anticipate that I would need to be tested for a virus upon my arrival to campus, and twice per week after that. I never could have imagined all of the rules and regulations that have characterized my first few weeks at Conn. But, here I am. Or, I should say, here we are.

In this time of immense uncertainty, I find solace in the fact that I am surrounded by people who are going through the exact same things that I am. As first-year student Lucie Bernheim states, “everyone had plans and ideas of what life would be like” at college. “It can be frustrating to have classes online and not get the ‘full’ college experience,” she continues, but “at the same time, I'm not alone in this feeling, and considering the circumstances, it's not too bad.” If I had to identify a silver lining in starting college under these circumstances, I would say that it has fostered a strong sense of community among the class of 2024. Never in my life have I felt so connected to people I have just met.

Additionally, these circumstances have reinforced my college decision. I have felt completely safe and supported at Conn. Our institution's response to the COVID-19 pandemic has been impressive, to say the least. From the rigorous testing program, to the phased safety protocols, to the complete reimagination of the first-year experience, it's hard to believe that administrators, faculty, and staff would have taken on such a daunting project if they didn't care about the students. Whenever I feel unsatisfied, I remember the hard work that so many people have done to get us here.

Conn is doing everything it can to make this year the best possible for first-year

students. That being said, there is only so much that the College can do. Our first-year experience is going to be what we make of it. I believe that Conn has set a good example of the responsible and positive attitudes that each individual student needs to adopt in order for this year to be safe and successful. I encourage my fellow first-years, and all students and members of the Conn community, to make the best of this situation, safely.

I know that this is easier said than done, so I would like to share some tips. First and foremost, follow the rules. It should go without saying that everyone's adherence to the safety guidelines is essential for our collective health and safety. Remember to take a break from the virtual world. Getting out of your dorm in between online classes and events, even if you're simply walking to the dining hall to pick up lunch, will do you good. First-year student Juliette Chait has been “going on walks around campus and finding cool places in the arbo to hang out.” This can also be a great way to make new friends. Chait suggests “meeting people for dinner on the green (socially-distanced, of course) to have a balanced social life.” Even if you can't meet people in person, take advantage of social media and virtual engagement opportunities. Jenn Bloom '24 says she has “been going to Hillel every week, which has been nice.” It's also extremely important to take time for yourself. Whether that be working out, watching your favorite TV show, or catching up on sleep, do things that keep you sane. Bernheim says she does this by allowing herself “time to read a book or listen to music.” Lastly, don't forget to stay connected with family and friends from home - they miss you, and they want to know how you're doing.

The sentiment that college is what you make of it is always true, but this year, it strikes an even bigger chord. The reality is, none of us know what life at Connecticut College was like before COVID-19, so we have nothing to compare it to. This is just how college is for us. We don't know what we're missing out on; it's just different from our expectations. So, have an open mind, get out of your comfort zone, and embrace the weirdness. •

# The Presidential Election Should Be About the President

PETER GATTUSO  
CONTRIBUTOR

The death of jurisprudence giant, Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg, immediately brought the oncoming sense of political chaos. With less than fifty days until the Presidential Election, the country is fiercely divided on whether the Senate should vote to confirm President Trump's nominee Amy Coney Barrett. With four Republican senators needed to reject a vote, only Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) and Sen. Susan Collins (R-ME) have publicly announced that they were against a confirmation vote until Inauguration Day (Murkowski later announced she wouldn't rule out a vote). While Collins (along with the Senate Democrats) currently support the decision of waiting to confirm the vacancy until after the election to "let the people decide," this would turn the upcoming Presidential election into a referendum of RBG's replacement that would be contrary to the founders' philosophy of a Democratic-Republic, and would continue a damaging precedent created by the Senate's decline of a confirmation vote for Merrick Garland in 2016. Following the death of Justice Antonin Scalia, President Barack Obama stated, "When there is a vacancy on the Supreme Court, the President of the United States is to nominate someone. The Senate is to consider that nomination, and either they disapprove of that nominee or that nominee is elevated to the Supreme Court." These words hold as much relevance in 2020 as they did in 2016.

America's founders created a system of governance to protect its citizens from tyranny, in the form of a tyrant like King George III, as well as what John Adams termed the "tyranny of the majority." James Madison focused on this democratic flaw in Federalist No. 10, "The purpose of the Constitution is to restrict the majority's ability to harm a minority." The Framers' solution was a counter-majoritarian structure of government—the judicial branch—created to confine the majority opinion of the legislature within the boundaries of the Constitution. The four most powerful bodies of federal government were each selected a different way: The President, elected through the Electoral College; the Senate, elected by state legislatures (later overturned by the 17th Amendment); the House of Representatives, the only body intended to be elected directly; and the Supreme Court, nominated by the President and confirmed by the Senate. The Supreme Court was intended to be the only body which is not elected, but rather selected and verified by the other two bodies of two branches, neither of which were elected directly (the reason why the House does not vote to confirm). The purpose was to limit the influence of public opinion to the Supreme Court, because the judiciary is influenced only by the Constitution and precedent cases, not the will of the people. It is widely understood that the majority can be wrong, yet its wrongness can do little alone to prevent the willpower of the majority, which is clearly shown in the historical example of Jim Crow laws, which while reflected in state and federal laws, was heavily influenced by societal sentiments of racism. James Madison notes the power of majorities in Federalist No. 51, "If a majority be united by a common interest, the rights of the minority will be insecure." Therefore, as George Will states in his book *The Conservative Sensibility*, it is necessary to have the will of the majority "policed by a non-majoritarian institution—the judiciary." Because of the counter-majoritarian role the Supreme Court serves, it is counterintuitive to have a Supreme Court position decided by an election.

Senate Democrats are using the same argument that Senate Republicans used four years ago to decline a confirmation vote: that Scalia/RBG's replacement should not be confirmed until "the people" had spoken through the presidential election. The problem with this argument is that the average voter is not as well-versed with the duties and role of a Supreme Court Justice as they are of the President. As George Will writes, "It was risible to assert that more than a negligible portion of the electorate had opinions about, say, constitutional originalism,

or fidelity to stare decisis, or the proper scope of Congress' power to regulate interstate commerce." James Madison said in his analysis of ancient democracies in Federalist No. 58, "the larger the number, the greater will be the proportion of members of limited information and of weak capacities." The theory behind Federalism is that people will be more educated in decisions which directly affect them. George Will wasn't wrong when he said that "the average American expends more time becoming informed about choosing a car or television than choosing a candidate." This is so poetically illustrated in the upcoming presidential election with buzzword insults like "Sleepy Joe" Biden and "Donald Trump is a White Supremacist" drawing more attention to the average voter than their public policy proposals. The Supreme Court clearly should not be influenced by politics, much less this demagogic campaigning.

For some voters there may arise the conundrum that their preferred presidential candidate does not share the same judicial values as them. I find myself as one of these voters—I plan to vote for Joe Biden, yet would undoubtedly prefer a judicial originalist that President Trump is likely to nominate, than a judicial activist from a President Biden. Of course, there is the counter argument that every presidential election is essentially voting for Supreme Court seats, as every president since the Grant presidency has nominated a Supreme Court Justice, with the exception of Jimmy Carter. However, I would argue that there is a difference between voting for future Supreme Court picks, and voting for a current vacancy. As a conser-

vative, I can justify voting for Biden, as none of the current five originalist-leaning Justices are likely to retire or pass within the next four years—the oldest, Clarence Thomas, is only 72. But now with the current vacancy and calls for that vacancy to be decided by "the people," I am persuaded to vote for Donald Trump, if only to represent my support for a judicial originalist (don't worry, I'm still not voting for Trump).

Now, in order to conclude, I need to make a couple statements which seem obvious, yet, as Jonah Goldberg describes in his book *Liberal Fascism*, "are necessary in order to prevent any possibility of being misunderstood or having my argument distorted by hostile critics." First, I am not arguing that the Senate should absolutely vote to confirm President Trump's nominee, but rather that Trump's nominee

should not be disqualified on the basis of it being an election year. Trump's nominee should be assessed by

the Senate, and voted upon their qualifications for the Supreme Court, just as any other president's nominee has been (or, in Merrick Garland's case, should have been). Second, I have heard the argument that this vacancy will determine the fate of *Roe v. Wade* (1973), and that because of Trump's public support for overturning that decision, it is critical that the vacancy be filled after the election. Aside from the argument I have previously mentioned of the dangers of the judiciary becoming modeled from the electorate, there are simply not five votes to overturn it; Justices Breyer, Sotomayor, Kagan, Roberts, and Gorsuch are opposed to overturning the decision, and it is likely that Justices Alito and Kavanaugh wouldn't vote to overturn it either, referring to the case as "warranted respect" and "precedent", respectively. Lastly, there is the argument that the election is less than fifty days away, thus there is little time for the Senate to conduct hearings for the nominee. This is a fair and reasonable argument, that if there is not time for the Senate to conduct a thorough review of the nominee, they should wait until the next term. However, this does not apply to our current scenario. The deadline for the Senate is not election day, but rather the day the 116th Congress ends—January 3rd, 2021. Even given the Senate's usual ineptitude, three months should be more than enough time to properly conduct the hearings. Given this, the Senate has a Constitutional obligation to vote for Trump's nominee on their qualifications for the Supreme Court. •



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## Don't Leave Behind Your Mental Health

HANNAH FOLEY  
CONTRIBUTOR

On March 11, an email from President Bergeron confirmed what so many people were expecting: we would complete the rest of the spring semester online. Despite the frustration for many of not being able to return to campus to see friends and celebrate the year together, we all understood that it was the safest option for the campus community. Many people had family members or were at high risk for the virus themselves, making home a stress-filled place. This summer, when Conn announced that there would be an option for students to return to campus this fall, many breathed a sigh of relief, knowing they would be able to see friends and have a quiet, private space to get work done in the fall. Before returning to campus, we all grappled with the conflict of paying tuition and/or risking our health. Ultimately, about 1100 of roughly 1800 students returned. Some stayed online, while others took the semester off or transferred to other schools.

I decided that I needed to get out of my parents' basement and return to school where I could focus on school and see my friends. Now, about a month into the semester, the campus has a stark feeling of isolation and depression. While it is ok to not feel ok, there should be ways to help those who are seeking support. Social events would have been the main form of support in previous years, but those have been pushed (at least six feet) aside for now. Events such as Orientation and Convocation are either online or socially distanced. There are no soccer games on the

green or acapella concerts in the halls. The sound of laughter is missing from the dining halls and coffee shops. There are noticeably fewer dogs being walked on campus, which was always a highlight of my day last year. While those of us on campus are surely feeling a little suffocated, our classmates at home are struggling as well. A friend of mine said that while she is happy to be able to be home with her family, it makes school work much harder and when your professor is teaching an in-person class, the people on Zoom are often an afterthought. As we enter into cooler weather, researchers out of Johns Hopkins report an expected second wave, meaning without an effective vaccine, we will likely be making the same decision regarding coming back for the spring semester.

There are some ways to help students on campus cope. I, myself, have taken advantage of the counseling services, which is easy to schedule and attend appointments right from your dorm room. However, most counselors are only available once every two weeks for appointments, as many of them only work at the college part-time. Now that we have moved down to Level Yellow, the fitness center has opened back up in the form of appointments, which is a great way to go out and get some endorphins going. The Arboretum has been open since we returned, and even with the mask requirement, it's a great place to go have a picnic or go for a walk with friends (socially distanced, of course). And while all of these options are great ways to help you get out of your dorm room, none of them are new options in helping students cope with our current environment. It's understandable that the administration's main focus when deciding if we could return to campus was making sure we are healthy while on campus, but part of that is our mental health. In making this decision, new options should have been made available to ensure that all students would have the support they needed when on campus. The school is being run as a business this year, while the focus should be on the wellbeing of the students. We pay enough in tuition to ask for that much.

While this is not how any of us imagined our fall semester going, we are here now, and so now we must make the best of it. I recently listened to a podcast called Laughter Permitted, where the hosts spoke with a psychologist on how to "adapt and adjust" in our current environment. There will be no "normal" that we return to from before COVID. Too much has happened. Too many friends and family have been affected. Even if a vaccine is created tomorrow, it will be months before it is widely available. According to the New York Times, the best-case scenario for a vaccine to be created is for it to be available to all by August 2021. In reality, it will most likely take over ten years to complete all the research and trials it takes to make an effective vaccination for all. So now is the time we learn how to continue to make connections with people and do productive work in our new environment. Once it's too cold to be outside, we will all retreat back to our dorm rooms and pray that Thanksgiving gets here quickly. That is when it becomes most important to check on your friends. Without clubs and sports teams, it's easy to get lost in Netflix and Doordash. While it is clear that we won't get the initiative from the administration, we need to create opportunities to make sure everyone is mentally healthy so we can have a safe and enjoyable year. •





# The Ongoing Struggle to Decolonize Museums

MORGAN MACCIONE  
STAFF WRITER

Museums are institutions of culture, art, and history, and one can learn so much from visiting. I grew up going to museums on family trips and weekends with my grandparents. Last summer, I had the privilege of working in a museum and greatly enjoyed the experience. I have always been drawn to vivid colors and intricate patterns, so it is not surprising that I was so attracted to the striking items that museums typically put out on display. It wasn't until I began to take anthropology courses in college that I learned of the truth behind how these artifacts got to be where they are today and about the problematic history of museums.

There are differing opinions on whether particular artifacts should be on display, and if so, where they should be on display. Some argue that it is important for artifacts to be displayed in places other than where they originated so that the knowledge and history surrounding the artifact and the culture from which it came can be shared with all. On the other hand, oftentimes an artifact has cultural significance to a group and it is argued that the artifact should be kept within the community/country from which it originated. Cultural heritage matters to contemporary communities and is a part of their identity and ancestry. To deprive communities of keeping their objects of cultural heritage is to deprive them of the right to learn about their history and connect to their ancestors.

There has been a recent movement to decolonize museums, particularly in the United States, Europe and Australia. Many museums in these areas have objects that were stolen from another cultural group during times of colonization. In recent years, there have also been more and more cases of a country or community, such as an indigenous group, requesting that artifacts be returned to them. While some artifacts have been returned, or "loaned" to their home countries, many continue to be on display or in collections at museums outside of the country of origin. International jurisdiction (or

lack thereof) plays a role in if and when an artifact is returned to its home country.

So... how can museums become more ethical?

Well, this may seem obvious, but... ask! Museums should communicate with the communities from which artifacts, art, and remains were taken if they would like these objects to be returned. Museums must acknowledge the problematic ways in which their artifacts were obtained and work to correct those historical errors.

Museums should consult and collaborate with representatives of an object's community of origin. And the museums should be transparent about the means by which those particular artifacts or cultural objects came to be in that museum. In order to address colonialism's involvement in museums, it is important that the whole story be told about the journeys of artifacts and the individuals or countries that were involved in the removal of the artifact or art from the country of origin. Museums acknowledge that objects come from other countries and/or other cultures, yet they seldom acknowledge the mistreatment, theft, and exploitation that was involved in obtaining those objects. In an effort to decolonize and allow a platform for Indigenous people, museums could also (and should) have Indigenous artists and academics visit museums to present their artwork and studies.

While repatriation may seem like a relatively easy option for righting museums' wrongs, there are a few reasons why this may not be quite so simple. Repatriation is often a long and complicated legal process. For example, NAGPRA, the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, was established in 1990 to facilitate repatriation efforts of Native American "human remains, funerary objects, sacred objects, and objects of cultural patrimony." This law only applies to situations in which cultural items are kept by institutions in the United States and does not necessarily apply to other countries, though there are Native American objects of cultural heritage that are kept in museums outside of the United States.

There is an added level of complexity to the possible return of objects that is associated with the physical transportation of the object. Historic and prehistoric artifacts, in many cases, are delicate and require specific conditions for their preservation. Transporting the artifacts from the museum where they are held to their home country or region would require a plane, boat, and/or automobile. Even with careful packaging, the artifacts may not withstand the journey.

Museums have to address their own histories and decolonize in order to remain relevant. Museums were created to share artifacts, history, art, and culture, however, in doing so, they have proliferated the idea that these objects belong to everyone. This is problematic because, in most cases, the objects are being kept from the people that have a spiritual, cultural and/or ancestral connection to them. Recent discussions in the museum world have centered on the question of whether museums can be reworked to become a new, more ethical model. There are many museums that have not changed all that much over the last 50 or so years, however, there have also been many museums that have been created and many that have adapted the way in which they engage with visitors and the community. For this reason, there is a debate over what a museum is and which institutions should be called a "museum." Museums can address current hot-topics, such as environmental issues and racial inequality, in order to stay relevant.

Working with Indigenous people to return items can create relationships between the museum and Indigenous groups that may not have existed before. This can also allow for better and more accurate representations of the objects and the culture to which they belong. Museums need to be transparent about the role they played in proliferation of colonial attitudes and the marginalization of Indigenous people and speak about the efforts that they are making in order to correct these misdeeds. •



# folklore as the Reprieve from Reality We All

MEREDITH HARPER  
CONTRIBUTOR

Following the theme of unexpectancy in 2020, Taylor Swift surprised Swifties with something even more unprecedented than the pandemic: an indie folk album. *folklore*, released in August, was the push we needed to get to the finish line of summer 2020.

A lyrical genius, Swift has managed to produce music of all genres: country, pop rock, alternative rock, blue grass, and now folk music. We have seen Taylor embrace her country roots (*Fearless*), become a pop sensation (1989), rock audiences on her Reputation tour, soothe us with her Lover aesthetic, and join Bon Iver in the indie genre through folklore. With every album, she breaks down genre barriers and builds her own platform that reaches all audiences.

Taylor Swift was not immune to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. As the country shut down and people flocked into isolation, Swift decided to follow suit. Alone with her thoughts and cats, Taylor found inspiration in her isolation. Although she was unsure it would amount to anything, *folklore* was the plot twist 2020 needed.

*folklore* was released as a surprise to the music industry, with no press or media coverage. However, it quickly rose to the top of the charts where Swift's albums usually find themselves after release. The album is laced with a dramatic love triangle told from three different perspectives. Betty, August, and Cardigan, my personal favorites, are told by three people who find themselves in a complicated relationship. Swift conveniently traces a narrative throughout the album, taking the art of storytelling to a whole new level. Say what you will about Taylor Swift and her talent or lack thereof, but this album showcases her lyrical ingenuity. Swift is not alone when she sings "August slipped away into a moment in time, cause it was never mine." In a year that has felt like the last lap in Mario Kart, it is easy to relate to this detachment from reality.

My initial impression of the album was absolute awe. It was a familiar artist with an unfamiliar sound. Time and time again, this artist has bended her sound to fit with the changing climate. I was surprised to hear that Swift implored more colorful language in this album, further adjusting her music persona. The album's aesthetic is "off the beaten path"—literally. The album cover features Swift "lost" in the woods, mesmerized by the intimacy of nature and the towering trees above. Swift also chooses not to capitalize folklore as to contribute to the vague aesthetic.

If you're looking to listen to the album but don't know where to start, I suggest Exile (feat. Bon Iver). Justin Vernon's vocals combined with lyrical regret, will place you in a headspace of tranquility. My personal favorite, August, will take you back to the love you may or may not have had this past summer. Whether it was a real person or a figment of your imagination, your heart will time travel to lovers' past. If you're a hopeless romantic, Taylor will urge you "to live for the hope of it all." Moving on, Betty is similar to 2010 Taylor Swift. Sang like her old classics, this lyrical beauty places you in the sneakers of a teenage boy reflecting on losing the love of his life: he regrets cheating on her and letting her get away. Cardigan, and the 1, are two solid songs that offer more consolation to a mending heart. If you're looking for a more upbeat song, The Last Great American Dynasty is the one for you. While it might elevate your heart rate, it will most definitely elevate your mood. Seven, illicit affairs, and invisible string are written for the dreary days filled with melancholy. Most of these songs will extract pensitivity from you. Laced with soothing melodies and lyrical help from Aaron Dessner (of The National), Swift weaves a new tapestry of music excluding the popistic

sound she has always performed.

This isn't an extensive list of each song on the album. *folklore* is unexpected—similar to the series of unfortunate events of 2020. Fortunately for us, this album bridges the gap between the somber feeling of this year and the up-beat, meaningless tracks that are consistently on the top charts. *Folklore* is not only an album for us, it is an album for Swift. She made an album to tell a narrative, not to beat a record or "be the best." This album is to be applauded for its lyrics, its narrative, and its artist. •



Meredith Harper



# New Oscar Diversity Rules: What is an "Oscar" Movie?

ELI CHRISTOPHER  
ARTS EDITOR

The Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences announced a new initiative they're developing in order to increase diversity in the movies that are eligible for Best Picture, and it's not going to do a damn thing.

Starting in 2024 with the 96th Academy Awards, there are going to be new standards that films must meet in order to qualify for the Oscars' top prize. These new rules have undoubtedly been instituted as a response to protests over the years of struggle women, artists and stories of color, as well as artists and stories of the LGBT+ community have had when it comes to getting recognition in the Academy's favor. To be brief, the rules are basically quotas that movies must meet, both in front of and behind the camera, in order for them to be eligible for a Best Picture nomination. These can include roles, or themes explored in the film given to people of color or the LGBT+ community, as well as technical position on the crew. While this may sound jarring, or like some sort of restriction on art, let me assure you that these rules are more or less a completely empty gesture. They are as soft and safe as a \_\_\_\_\_. I'm not going to go into too much detail about the specifics of the rules, so let me recommend you use the free New York Times subscription the school gives us to check out the article by Kyle Buchanan on the same topic.

The sad truth is that for many years now, the Oscars have been, and almost prided themselves upon being exclusive. This perhaps most infamously and disproportionately affects women, people of color and LGBT+ people, but they are even more sweeping than that. Oscar movies are at this point basically a genre in and of themselves, and to even be considered, there is a super narrow margin that you have to squeeze through.

So let's answer the question: What is an Oscar movie?

My operating thesis, and the common theme amongst virtually every Best Picture nominee and eventual winner, is that the Oscars and their movies must feel important. But what does this mean for which films get picked? And what problems do the Oscars have that need fixing?

## 1. The Oscars are no longer for the people

In a world of fine art in other mediums, those in the position to critique film at this most prestigious level must differentiate themselves from the dregs of popcorn flicks that the common folk drive their minivans to go see. Looking in decades past, it would have been seriously uncommon for the nominees for Best Picture to not include a bare minimum of one top five box office hits that year. But seemingly, after mega hits like *Titanic* and *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King* won the top prize, the Oscars have turned away from this. This would ultimately culminate in the infamous snub of *The Dark Knight* in 2008, leading to massive protest. In response, the Academy expanded Best Picture to up to 10 nominees in hopes to regain favor with the people, and although the first few years after seemed to be a positive return to form with nominations like *Up*, *Inception*, and *Toy Story 3*, the Academy has had a streaky record of choosing great movies that audiences have actually seen since then. In fact, over the past decade, 88 films were nominated for Best Picture. Only 33 of them grossed 100 million domestically. In a world where the most popular movies each year aim to gross over 300 or 400 million domestically, the Academy's efforts to stray away from blockbuster cinema is clear (Let's not even talk about that proposed "Popular Film" category, Jesus).

### Other Stats:

Less than 11% of the Best Picture nominees of the 2010s made 200 million domestic.

Less than 17% made 300 million international

Less than 13% made 500 million international

## 2. The Oscars don't even pay attention most of the year

It doesn't really seem like "Oscar season" should even be a thing. After all, the Oscars claim to select the best out of every year, not just every autumn. Over the course of the 2010s, of every single Best Picture nominee, 70 out of the 88 nominees were released in October, November, or December. If your job is to judge the best of an entire year, maybe consider doing that. Here's the breakdown of the how many nominees this decade were released each month:

January: 0	February: 2	March: 1
April: 0	May: 3	June: 3
July: 5	August: 3	September: 1
October: 13	November: 31	December: 26

## 3. The Oscars like movies that feel important, or make them feel important

One of my bigger feats as a movie nerd is coming up with this short list right here. Through years of both casual and obsessive research I think I have narrowed it down to five key qualifications that Best Picture nominees must have at least one of. These following rules apply to probably more than 95% of Best Picture nominees, all 9 of last year's nominees, and they all make movies, or the Academy who watches them, feel important.

- A. Based on a true story
- B. Social/Political commentary or relevance
- C. Set in the past/depicts history
- D. Showcases or heavily discusses Hollywood, filmmaking or the artistic process
- E. Based on famous or well respected source material

If you don't have *at least* one of these present in your movie you have almost no shot of getting a nomination. I'm actually writing a second article on these five rules specifically at some point, so I won't expand too much here. But I'll leave you with one trivia question: When do you think the last time was that none of the following: Best Picture, Best Actress or Best Actor went to a film based on a true story?

Answer: 1992. 27 years ago. (*Unforgiven*, *Howard's End* and *Scent of a Woman*)

## 4. The Voting Base is Grotesquely Skewed

For a group of voters who are supposedly picking a movie that represents the best in an art form of a whole country, or even the world, they really don't look like the country. They sure as s\*\*t don't look like the world. They look like the dudes running for president (Ooh, a politics zing! How brave, how clever!). As of 2019, 69% of the Academy's voting base were men, and 84% were white. From a 2014 survey, the average age of an academy voter was 63-years-old. That's the average. Maybe you wouldn't have the problem of non-diverse nominees if your voting body was actually diverse? Sincerely, I'm not here to pick on anyone or any group. No member should or should not receive membership based on race, gender or age as a factor. But, for a committee that's composed of thousands of people, the demographics should not be this skewed. They should really diversify and expand the group of people that can vote. If this group voted on food instead of movies, Best Picture would mean oatmeal at dawn.

Look, I love the Oscars. Oscar night is more important and far more fun for me to gamble on than even the Superbowl. However, if they don't make greater efforts to change what they're about, eventually I, and everyone else will move on and not care what they think. Most people already have. I'd really like to see change, but to be honest, I'm not sure that the Academy wants to change. The new rules certainly don't mean change.

Your problems are too deep to be solved by quotas that don't do anything.

Next issue I'll be further breaking down the logistics of what makes an Oscar movie, and analyzing the five subcategories laid out in point 3.

See you all in part 2. •



# Who Knew *Normal People* Could Be so Underwhelming?

ALEXA BECKSTEIN  
CONTRIBUTOR

Sally Rooney's *Normal People* infiltrated my friend group during the pandemic and one by one each of my friends fell prey to the charms of the novel. It was a masterpiece, it was engaging, they finished it in three days, it was the best book they'd read in ages, it was unlike anything they'd read in years. So when I sat down to read the book I was eager to immerse myself within a story that I seemed bound to enjoy. Page after page flipped by and I found myself held in suspense, waiting for the part where the story would finally click, where I would understand why it was so beloved. Around halfway through I had to face the truth: I was indifferent to *Normal People* and did not think it was a book worth half the adoration my friends gave it.

Rooney's sophomore novel was met with critical acclaim, named one of the best books of the year, longlisted for the prestigious Man Booker Prize, not to mention garnering a large fan base in the process. Yet, something was missing for me. I understood why some may appreciate the book; its writing and storyline are easily accessible, its deeper themes fairly surface level, and Rooney's clever dialogue makes for a fast read, but for all the acclaim it received I found it short of substance. There was nothing I could sink my teeth into, never mind deeply connect with. The novel evoked no emotion in me as it did my peers, save for disappointment.

A large part of my frustration with the novel came from the two main characters' internal monologues and inability to communicate, which drives the plot. Connell and Marianne go to school together, where shy, kind Connell is a beloved soccer star and intelligent and reserved Marianne is a social pariah. Connell's mother works for Marianne's family and the two begin a secret sexual relationship after school one day when they are left in the house alone. This begins a years long saga of Connell and Marianne coming in and out of each other's romantic lives, clearly tethered by their inability to find anything real except with the other, but unable to share the way they feel, consequently losing each other repeatedly in this process.

The entire narrative of their relationship is summed up in these five sentences from Rooney: "It's not like this with other people, she says. Yeah, he says. I know. She senses there are things he isn't saying to her. She can't tell whether he's holding back a desire to pull away from her, or a desire to make himself more vulnerable somehow."

The pair are simply incapable of communicating with each other and living inside their heads feels less like a delve into the psyches of interesting people, but rather people who's problems would be solved if they shared one real feeling. Rooney implements this tool throughout the novel; 200 plus pages hinge on their lack of vulnerability with each other. She wouldn't have a book without Connell and Marianne's game of cat and mouse where they both end up lonely and depressed because they can't simply say that they care deeply for each other. While Rooney has been praised for her complex characters and introspective novel, I believe she often mistakes extended internal dialogue and poor communication skills for intriguing, relatable characters and plotlines.

I hesitantly began watching the television adaptation to the novel a few weeks ago, conscious that there was a possibility that I was digging myself into a deeper hole of dislike for *Normal People*. I was met, however, with an incredibly compelling series, packed with nuance and impressive craftsmanship, from the actor's performances to the direction and camera work, even down to the musical selections. The adaptation worked for me in the way that the novel did not. I cared about the characters on screen—in part due to outstanding performances from Daisy Edgar-Jones and Paul Mescal (the latter of which deservedly received an Emmy nomination for his take on Connell). Marianne and Connell felt lifeless within the text, two unrealistic characters rather than two believable people, yet in the show I found myself emotionally invested in their lives and their relationships in ways which the novel

couldn't bring me to. In the novel, the characters' internal monologues were fleshed out extensively leaving little room for personal perception, their every thought, emotion, or inaction written down for the reader to take in and accept as truth. The show, conversely, allowed for interpretation and left much of the talking to Edgar-Jones and Mescal's faces, the long pauses and deep stares inviting the viewer in, showing them rather than telling them how the characters feel about themselves and each other. None of the decisions and actions made by Connell and Marianne in the novel felt relatable or realistic to me, but by allowing for ambiguity the show's viewers can cast their own thoughts and judgements on what the pair are thinking. Rather than the characters' frustratingly lackluster justifications for not communicating in the novel, the show gives nuance to their decisions based on the viewers' willingness to engage and attempt to understand what is going on in their heads. The show made me feel like I was watching something fresh and original, and Rooney's story became one I enjoyed rather than begrudged.

Ultimately, I do recognize that most of my dissatisfaction with Rooney's novel doesn't stem from the novel's perceived mediocrity, instead that I feel alone in recognizing its shortcomings. Perhaps if my friends had not obsessed over it my expectations would have been lower and I would have appreciated the text for what it was rather than what I hoped it would be. I have contemplated the notion that my indifference to the novel is brought on by some sort of lack of imagination or deeper engagement on my part, yet even this is an attempt to obscure my own truth: I cannot handle that I find *Normal People* to be .... utterly normal. In recognizing this, I am forced to remain an outsider, ironically not feeling like a normal person because of my apathy for the novel. Perhaps it is this lack of understanding between me and the people whose opinions I value which confuses and upsets me the most, but this inability to comprehend each other fits right in line with the overall themes of the novel. It's downright Rooneyesque that I'm baffled by the inner workings of my friends' minds and unable to come to terms with their thoughts and opinions. I will have to remain in the dark, content to have had "the pleasure of being touched by great art" thanks to the show and content to know that above all else Rooney's novel makes clear that there are no such thing as normal people—with this, at least, I agree. •



# TikTok Brings Oracle

OWEN TACY  
CONTRIBUTOR

After six weeks of deliberation and consultation with both Washington and Beijing, TikTok's parent company ByteDance brought on Oracle on Sept. 13 as their partner in US operations. This deal follows a slew of declarations and intervention from both governments beginning with President Trump's executive order on Aug. 6 to ban any transaction involving either TikTok or WeChat, citing national security concerns. This executive order set a deadline for the race between giants Oracle, Microsoft, and Walmart to acquire TikTok's US Market. The deal has experienced numerous twists and turns, the culmination of which seems to be just over the horizon.

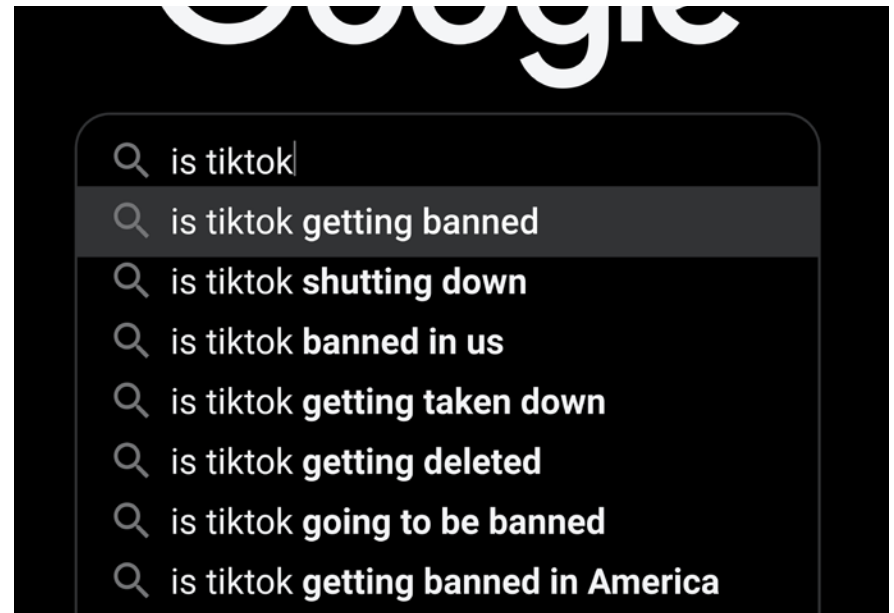
TikTok is a social media platform where users can create and share short videos from short comedy skits to political commentary. The app is the fastest growing media platform in the world, with over 45 million active users in the US projected to grow to over 60 million by 2024. Combined with their 214 million first-time installs in the last quarter of 2019 alone, TikTok is projected to soon overtake social media giant Instagram in user count. The app is hugely popular among young people, with more than a quarter of its user base under 24.

However, TikTok's success has not come without controversy. According to Samantha Vinograd, a national security advisor under the Obama administration, there are "bipartisan concerns over TikTok, really focused on two issues: counterintelligence and censorship." She went on to say that "TikTok collects user location and metadata"—two key figures that are often sent to companies looking to optimize their advertisements. Some Senate members argue that the collection of this data has a sinister intent; Arkansas Sen. Tom Cotton said in an interview on Fox News that TikTok was a "trojan horse on your phone."

TikTok's parent company, ByteDance, is a Chinese software development company focused on data collection and interpretation. These aspects of TikTok, as well as the clout behind its hefty base, drew the White House's attention. On July 31, President Trump told reporters outside Air Force One that, "as far as TikTok is concerned, we're banning them from the United States." When asked about the legality of such an executive action, Trump said "Well, I have that authority. I can do it with an executive order on that." At the time, Microsoft was already in talks with ByteDance and TikTok pertaining to the possible acquisition of their U.S. market. The next week on Aug. 6 Trump partly followed through on his promise, signing an executive order mandating that after 45 days of its enactment, any and all transactions between entities under US jurisdiction and ByteDance Ltd. be made unlawful. The order set a time limit for the tightening race between Walmart, Microsoft, and newcomer Oracle to gain stake in TikTok's US market. This competition set off a chain of reaction in TikTok's user base, some criticizing the President for his focus on a seemingly overt political brouhaha to exert power over the international data market.

China did not sit idly by during this period, and slowly but surely increased their voice in the matter. Beijing commented periodically on Mr. Trump's actions, calling his treatment of ByteDance "bullying." Idle insults soon turned into official policy as the Chinese Commerce ministry, in conjunction with the Science and Technology ministries, soon restricted the export of "technology based on data analysis for personalized information recommendation services." This move was made in order to stonewall any U.S. entity from getting a hold of TikTok's recommendation algorithm, a key figure in its global success. This data collection and recommendation system are the Trump administration's focal points in their argument for "banning" the app.

ByteDance is incorporated in China, and is therefore subject to strict Chinese data collection laws, the most important being the 2017 National



Unsplash.com

Security law. This law requires any Chinese based entity to "support, assist and cooperate with the state intelligence work." Theo Bertam, TikTok's head of public policy for Europe, denies any danger regarding this policy, saying "we would definitely say no to any request for data", and that "the suggestion that we are in any way under the thumb of the Chinese government is completely and utterly false." Despite these claims, White House officials continue to insist upon its malignance. In a statement on Aug. 24, White House trade advisor Peter Navaro referred to TikTok through the lens of a late twentieth century PSA: "It's ten AM, the Chinese Communist Party knows where your children are."

The deal has also come under national scrutiny in regards to the President's connections to Larry Ellison, founder and CEO of Oracle and the fifth richest person in the U.S. Oracle has maintained a unique position in Silicon Valley, being one of very few tech companies in open support of the current administration. Trump has described Ellison multiple times as a friend, including at the White House on Tuesday: "I have a high respect for Larry Ellison. He's somebody I know." Ellison's connections with the president run deep, mostly in the capital category, and he hosted a fundraising event for Mr. Trump's reelection campaign over the summer where donation options went as high as \$450,000.

Despite controversy, deliberation, outrage, and near intervention, a deal has finally been struck between ByteDance and Oracle. The agreement, as of Sept. 25, involves a joint effort combining ByteDance, Walmart, and Oracle to create a U.S. based company: TikTok Global. In this new company, U.S. stockholders would have a majority share, and the company would eventually go public on the U.S. stock market. While this appeases U.S. concerns about data security, it is unclear whether or not the TikTok algorithm is included in part or in whole. It is also unclear who in fact would actually control the functions of the app. All in all, the future of TikTok remains as uncertain; a slew of international complications have strayed the growing giant from its initial course, but it still maintains its rapid growth and massive revenue generation potential. •



# The Goodfellas Experience

JIMMY CORK  
STAFF WRITER

Martin Scorsese's mob epic *Goodfellas* is turning 30. It is truly an incredible film that has rightfully been praised by some of the top film critics and film institutions alike. Needless to say, nobody needs a college student to write a review that pretends to carefully pontificate on whether the film still holds up only to predictably conclude with calling it a timeless classic. I decided to do something a little different. In celebration of the iconic film, I decided to try to experience some of the memorable moments from the film for myself.

## 1. The Prison Dinner

Roughly halfway through *Goodfellas*, the lead Henry Hill is sentenced to ten years in prison. Though most would see this as a damning fate, Hill's time in prison as a well-connected member of the mob is unconventionally relaxed. He, along with his colleagues, have luxuries the average prisoner could only dream of and whip up a fine Italian dinner using supplies smuggled in from paid-off prison guards in a sequence set to Bobby Darin's "Beyond the Sea." I decided to give this a go using a recipe I found on Entertainment Weekly's website. I found two gentlemen on Craigslist who claimed to "know everything there is to know about the mob" who sold me what they called "proper Italian ingredients" for a reasonable price. I was able to get permission to use the Lazarus Kitchen but had to bring my own cooking supplies. I do not cook often but I found this process quite rewarding. The sauce was quite simply delicious and I could see how this meal could make anyone's day better even if they were behind bars.

Rate: 5/5

## 2. Entering the Club from the Backdoor

After finishing my meal, I messaged the two gentlemen, who gave me permission to mention them but wished to go unnamed, thanking them for the ingredients and explaining the article I was working on. They replied enthusiastically and asked me if I wanted to go to a club that night where I could "enter from the back just like Ray Liotta." I was enthusiastic about this idea but replied saying that I would only go if we all wore masks. The gentlemen agreed and we went to a location which I agreed not to name. Bypassing a long line and entering the club through the kitchen wasn't quite as exciting as it appears to be in the film, especially when you don't have someone like Lorraine Bracco by your side. Even though I was only a guest, I couldn't help but feel like I owned the place.

Rate: 4/5

## 3. Being an Accessory to Murder

While we were at the club, the two gentlemen got into a disagreement with an old acquaintance. I did everything I could to stay out of it. As the club cleared out at the end of the night, I was instructed to wait by the door while the two gentlemen would resolve the conflict. Much to my chagrin, that conflict was resolved with a first degree felony. By the time the two gentlemen asked me to drive out of town and help them dispose of the body, I felt I was in too deep to say no, but insisted that masks would remain on at all times. With a new perspective gained, I do feel that *Goodfellas* downplays the horrors of murder but does aptly display the unpleasant nature of having to bury a dead body in the middle of the night.

Rate 0/5

## 4. Getting Arrested

Due to several social media posts I made the previous night, I was promptly found out and arrested the following day. I can't say that I didn't feel a bit of a

rush as it was happening, but similarly to how it was portrayed in the film, I found getting arrested to be a deeply unpleasant experience overall.

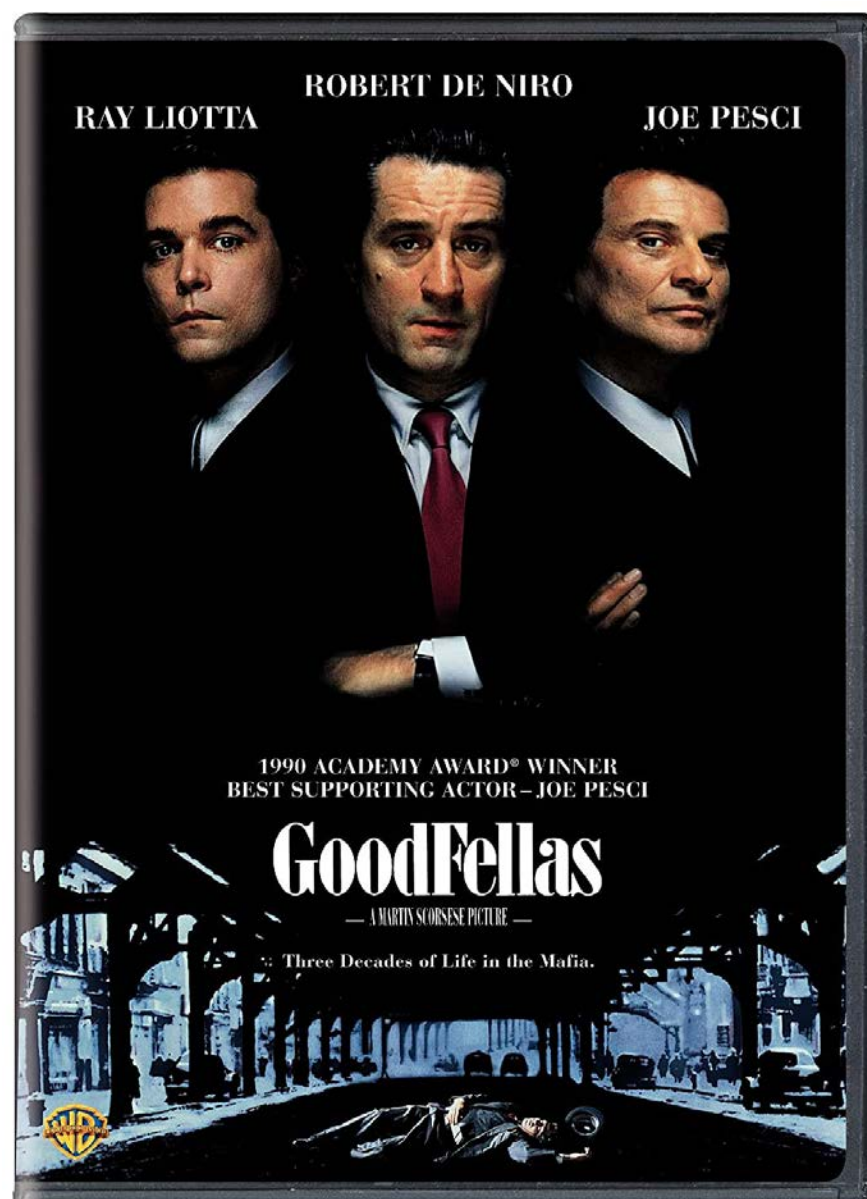
Rate 1/5

## 5. Entering the Witness Protection Program

I made the tough decision of giving up my two new friends in exchange for my freedom and safety. I write this article with packed bags and boxes ready to soon depart to a location which I am legally prohibited from disclosing. Though I am excited to begin this new chapter, I will miss the friends I made along the way so this is bittersweet for me.

Final Rate: 2/5

*Goodfellas* is available on most digital VOD platforms including iTunes and Amazon. •



Amazon



## The Deshon-Allyn House: A Study in Loss and Change

**BROOKE SPONZO**  
CONTRIBUTOR

Nice weather and a decreased risk of viral transmission through open air has led to this fall semester being characterized by a significant push to spend more time outdoors. Students have been participating in this exo-dorm trend by going for hikes in the Arboretum, hanging out with friends on Temple Green, and even holding classes and clubs outside of academic buildings.

But there comes a point when even that quaint Arbo pond loop starts to feel quite small, and for students without cars the campus itself can begin to shrink, its grounds turned to little more than meager patches of green space in an island of academia. So where to go when all Conn's outdoor spaces have been over-explored? When students feel too packed in by other camels seeking that same late-summer breeze?

One intriguing destination to try is the Deshon-Allyn House, just a short walk down from Cummings, across the South Lot. The Lyman Allyn Art Museum is still closed from the pandemic and the interior of the adjoining homestead is mainly offices, but the grounds of both are always open for sightseeing and photo-ops, and hold their fair share of intriguing treasures.

Having ties to the Connecticut whaling industry, the Deshon-Allyn House was built in 1829, served as a place of residence for two separate wealthy New London families, and was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1970. It takes inspiration from both the Federal and Greek Revival architectural periods and features delicate exterior lattice work as well as four brick chimneys that would have provided exhaust channels for the home's eight interior fireplaces.

Harriet Allyn, the last member of the Allyn family to live in the house, provided funding for the construction of the Lyman Allyn Art Museum, which was erected in 1932, about twenty years after Conn itself was founded.

Modern times, however, have seen the building take on a bit of a spookier edge, for the institution now owning the home uses some of its rooms as overflow storage for their expansive art collection. This collection includes their permanent exhibition "Playthings of the Past," featuring vintage European and Victorian dolls—dolls that, on days when the shades are left open, can be seen still in their glass cases through the house's back porch window.

Though that seems like enough of a peculiar secret for a single house to

hold, Deshon-Allyn is full of plenty more mysteries. Walking through the grounds, visitors can find a clustering of tables and chairs carved to resemble a patch of toadstools, an unlabelled ring of mossy boulders, a Grecian figure with a severed hand, and an additional host of incredibly varied objects that somehow all perfectly capture the strange and unplaceable mood of the area.

And there's actually a reason behind why this space puts out such a strong, almost-tangible kind of presence. In fact, by the people who landscaped the area, its grounds are actually referred to as sacred.

Guests of Deshon-Allyn are likely to notice that the house's fungi-inspired picnic area is shepherded by a gigantic, squatting frog—he has perhaps the biggest story to tell of all the landscape's eclectic pieces. This particular area of the home is known as the McCourt Memorial Garden. Take a closer look at the stone amphibian's chest to see his dedication label to Ruth and Juliana McCourt. Ruth and her four year-old-daughter Juliana were among the victims of the United Airlines flight that struck the World Trade center on

9/11/01; Juliana took dance lessons at the art museum. The garden here is a living memorial to the pair, and where Ruth's mother has been quoted as saying, after first entering the space, that it was the first time since the terrorist attack she'd felt truly at peace (U.S. Forest Service, Living Memorials Project). Even though the garden has become overgrown and withered in patches, that uncanny, almost spiritual feeling, hasn't faded one bit.

The yard also includes a beautiful, full-grown willow tree and a few short marsh walks, so even though Deshon-Allyn isn't



lymanallen.org

technically a part of the Arboretum, it does have some really neat natural aspects to explore as well. Be sure to check out the swamp mallows at the end of the bridge, they're in bloom and very pretty: their flowers are about the size of dinner plates!

So if students are growing bored of their on-campus confines and looking for new places to explore, the Deshon-Allyn House is the perfect destination to feel far away without really having to travel much distance at all. It's almost always empty, and quiet, and makes for a wonderful spot to check out of our crazy 2020 reality for even just a few minutes. •

## Dance Reimagined: Performing in a Pandemic

CATJA CHRISTENSEN  
CONTRIBUTOR

After an abrupt end to the Spring semester, resulting in the cancellation of the Dance Department and major capstone performances, Connecticut College dancers are more eager than ever to be moving again. However, with COVID-19 restrictions and a constantly changing world, how do artists reimagine what it means to perform? As Dance Club Co-President, I am realizing first hand what it takes to break the traditional rules of dancing to follow the new rules of health and safety. Beloved Professors Ellie Goudie-Averill, Shawn Hove, and Lisa Race all shared their experiences tackling the unprecedented challenge of innovating dance performance in a modern, pandemic world. Additionally, in response to the global racial justice movement, the Department is committed to creating anti-racist works and focusing academics on exposing and dismantling systemic racism in our dance community.

Professor Hove innovatively used technology to facilitate rehearsals and classes while preparing to choreograph his own piece. To ensure hybrid classes work for in-person and remote students, he acted as both professor and student, teaching and taking dance classes through Zoom to see what worked best. Wide-angle lenses, multiple camera angles, microphones, and other equipment loaned from the Media Service Department were just some of the many tools used to make movement classes seamless for everyone. Nonetheless, “There’s always something more,” he said. “I’m never satisfied.” This has been his philosophy for years, and his perfectionism and persistence lend themselves well to the constant innovation COVID demands. “I love to break rules and we have to break rules in art-making now,” he said, and it is true. COVID rules and regulations render the rules of traditional choreographing and performance irrelevant.

In addition to regular classes, the annual faculty repertory works have had to reexamine typical performance practices. In lieu of standard auditions typically held in the spacious, sun-filled Myers Studio, the Department decided to use a sign-up sheet online for upperclassmen interested in performing faculty Repertory work while providing a separate performance opportunity for first-year students. This format not only allowed rehearsals to begin during onboarding quarantine on campus, but also took into account remote students around the country and world, allowing them to still be included in the Department’s close-knit community. Rehearsals began over Zoom in dorm rooms, backyards, and basements, and when the college transitioned to Phase 2, Tempel Green and the Arboretum became the new go-to rehearsal spaces as the studios were strictly regulated with cleaning supplies, taped floors, and occupancy limitations.

Professor Goudie-Averill, whose choreography is inspired by *Life in a Box* is a *Pretty Life* by activist-poet Dawn Lundy Martin, looks forward to outdoor events that will make the campus feel alive. She is guided by the ideas of “movement as protest” and “the power of bodies in protest” as so much of the Civil Rights movement involves bodies refusing to move or moving together, such as bus boycotts and protest marches. She explores violence and sensuality, the collective and the individual, and the literal and the abstract with her work. Her 17 dancers gather twice a week in the evenings on Tempel Green, and the rehearsal process becomes a performance for those enjoying their dinner at dusk. The vast outdoor space provides both benefits and drawbacks. Although the dancers have ample room to move, Professor Goudie-Averill feels challenged by the scale and works to frame the choreography so that the audience will not feel overwhelmed by the sheer expanse of the stage. Nonetheless, she said, “Outside, it feels much more free and it’s much more clear that it’s ok, it’s safe to be together.” Her own experience performing in site-specific work proves invaluable during the rehearsal process, and she believes in giving homage to the location rather than treating it as just an available space. Though the karaoke machine and microphone invoke a music festival feeling during rehearsals, she recently began incorporating live music from alum Asa Peters ’19 as well as poetry recitations from some of the dancers.

Professor Race has found inspiration in the Arboretum with her rehearsals

running alongside the water. The wooden structures and sloping hills serve as a natural set for her work. Originally imagining a large cast spread across Tempel, she is now working with just six dancers due to COVID measures and the new modular schedule that made finding common rehearsal time difficult. Her choreographic style often involves contact and physical connection in duets or small groups which is also no longer possible. However, this allows the dancers to work more collaboratively in the creative process. Professor Race gives movement assignments in-between their three weekly meetings to allow for more efficient rehearsal time. In keeping with the Department’s commitment to anti-racism, she also assigns various readings and articles that the dancers infuse into their choreographic assignments. Unlike past years, she meets with the dancers more than once weekly which she said is a “good system” that allows students to be more deeply focused. Rehearsals first began on Zoom with Professor Race dancing in Myers studio using Professor Hove’s new teaching set-up, then the dancers later gathered outside. The karaoke machine proved too unwieldy to carry through the hilly Arbo, so the dancers contributed their own bluetooth speakers and phones to help facilitate the unconventional process.

Though Professor Hove does not begin his rehearsals until the second module, he is already taking note of what has been working best in classes and rehearsals. His cast includes both remote and on-campus dancers, so he is imagining ways to ship lighting materials and other technology to remote students to recreate a theater lighting experience on a much smaller scale. He is considering including spoken word elements, live music, and more technology than the other repertory pieces. Though he does not typically create political work, themes of anger and discomfort as well as recognizing the historical silencing of BIPOC artists in the world are on the forefront of his mind. Like Professor Race, his small cast size excites him, and the constant challenges that come each week breed creativity.

Looking forward, the Department recognizes that traditional performances will not return for a while, but in the digital age, unconventional theater and virtual showings are growing in popularity. For site-specific work, they want to question why those locations are chosen, and for filming, how can the camera be choreographed to complement and transform the dancing? Despite setbacks and less than ideal circumstances, optimism and enthusiasm prevail among the professors. In reflecting upon the trials and unexpected shifts everyone has experienced, Professor Race expresses her hope: “I just have to believe that it’s going to make you stronger in ways that you don’t know yet.” •



Morgan Maccione



# The Best Fictional Worlds in Which to Get Lost

KELLY WALLACE  
OPINIONS EDITOR

Let's face it: this semester is completely different from any other semester at Conn. It's frustrating not being able to spend time with your friends in the same capacity as before and to often have more free time on your hands. But free time is good, right?

College is a time where, compared to the rest of your life, you have relatively few responsibilities. So, we should enjoy this time while we can. If reading and/or watching films is a pastime that you enjoy or perhaps want to explore further, I've compiled a list of fictional worlds that will make you forget about the pandemic and enter a new world. If you like to read and have the time, I would highly suggest reading the books before watching the films, but to each their own. This list is very comprehensive (read: long), so I sorted the fictional worlds by categories so you can skip directly to the type of world you're looking for at this particular moment.

## Fantasy Worlds

**Harry Potter** (7 books and 8 movies)

Of course, this is the first on the list. Whether you're a Potterhead or someone who's never read the books or only seen the movies, Harry Potter is a great series to get into. It follows a young wizard, Harry, as he attends a boarding school for other young wizards and witches. The earlier years are filled with excitement and lightheartedness while the later years become darker but are so interesting and thought-provoking that you'll be turning the pages for hours, even if you've already read them. The world of Harry Potter also includes additional books focused on the Wizarding World beyond Harry, such as *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* and *The Cursed Child*. So if you finish the seven books and want to read more, there's plenty of material to be reading into the new year.

**The Witcher Series** (8 books, 1 film, 1 TV show, 3 video games)

The Witcher world is huge so if you're looking for a world to sink into and learn all



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the details of a fascinating fantasy/supernatural world, this is it. Most of the media forms would be fine to peruse alone if you are intimidated by the number of books, video games, and TV options. If you have Xbox Game Pass, *The Witcher 3* is one of the games you can download (with the subscription). It is set in the 1200s and follows Geralt of Rivia, a witcher. Witchers were chosen to undergo a set of Trials and be genetically altered so they can hunt supernatural beings such as wraiths, drowners, and more. The world does not only compose itself of witchers and monsters, however. There are sorceresses, government officials, and regular townspeople who all add in adventure and a sense of character to the world. It also follows an interesting story with a large number of characters that each bring something new to the table. I highly suggest diving into the world in any of its forms if this

sounds interesting to you and/or you're a fan of fantasy and supernatural worlds.

**The Hobbit** (1 book and 3 films)

The Hobbit is the same world as the Lord of the Rings, but it is said to precede the LOTR story—so if you're a chronological person, start with *The Hobbit*. The main character is a "hobbit" named Bilbo (a quite unusual name but who am I to judge), as well as many creatures that Bilbo encounters on a quest to reclaim the Kingdom of Erebor. Again, this is a very popular series so if you're interested, read or watch! I've also been told fans of Harry Potter will most likely enjoy *The Hobbit* and *Lord of the Rings* series, so keep that in mind if you're wondering whether the series is for you.

**Lord of the Rings** (6 books and 3 films)

The Lord of the Rings is a very popular series that I actually have never read or seen. The world is counting on a ring that Frodo, a hobbit, has inherited. Despite inheriting the ring Frodo is told he must destroy it. Who knows what's going on here but it is a very popular series and has produced many different memes so if you want to know more about this "ring" and why there are six books devoted to it, dive in!

**Game of Thrones** (7 books and 8 seasons of a TV show)

This is another very popular world that is more adult than any of the others. The TV show I'm told is especially mature, so if that's not your thing, I suggest choosing a different fantasy world to explore. The book series is called "A Song of Ice and Fire". It is about a medieval world depicting powerful families who are competing for the Seven Kingdoms. So, read or watch if you are interested in a mature medieval world that has captivated many people since its release.

## Dystopian Worlds

**The Divergent Trilogy** (3 books and 3 movies)

The world in the *Divergent* series used to be chaotic, but after a set of factions were created, peace was brought to the world. Everyone has their place. Intelligent people are in the Erudite faction, brave and daring people are in the Dauntless faction, and so on. But what happens when someone has an aptitude for more than one faction? If that's a question you're interested in, break open the first book or watch the first film. I almost guarantee that you'll be fascinated by the way the world is designed in the *Divergent* world. The factions are not what they seem and the same goes for the so-called peaceful society.

**The Hunger Games Series** (4 books and 4 movies)

A darker world than in *Divergent*, everyone still has their place in the government's eyes. To remind people that the government is still in charge, every year two names from each of the twelve districts are drawn from a large bowl containing all the names of adolescents aged 12-17. One boy and one girl are chosen to fight to the death in the Hunger Games, where only one winner will remain. That winner will be blessed with riches and honor for the rest of their life. But even beyond the darkness of this world, inequality is a major theme. Some names are entered more than once in a given year, giving them a higher chance of being selected to compete.

## Supernatural Worlds

**Twilight** (4 main books and 5 films)

*Twilight* gets a bad rap. Mainly because the films can be very cringey if you haven't read the books (and even if you have). The books are great, however, once you get past the stigma it's given. It follows Bella as she meets Edward, a vampire, and later on, a werewolf named Jacob. What I find interesting about the *Twilight* series is that, out of all the popular vampire worlds, it seems the most realistic. I would say more, but I don't want to give anything away. If you're interested in a sometimes-comical relationship between a human girl and an angst vampire who's been celibate for centuries, read on.

So that's that. I hope all of you have fun reading or watching whatever you choose, on this list or not, and continue to stay safe! •