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The history of Halloween

ELISE MILS

Staff Writer

Halloween is not just your average night of costumes and candy—it is a wild, centuries-spanning saga filled with occult rites, ancient myths, and global festivals that would make even your most sleep-deprived, caffeine-fueled college roommate sit up and listen. If you think Halloween is just an American pop culture invention, buckle up. This holiday has roots going back over 2,000 years to some pretty dark and mysterious origins—and it has some surprising twists and tales from around the world that will spice up any party conversation.

Let's rewind to ancient Ireland and Scotland, where the Celts ruled the land and life was less about Netflix and more about surviving long, harsh winters. On October 31st, they celebrated Samhain (pronounced "sow-in"), marking the end of the harvest and the start of the dark, bone-chilling winter months. The Celts believed that on this night, the boundaries between the world of the living and the dead blurred, allowing spirits to drift freely among the

living. Imagine a night so spooky even your phone flashlight would not help.

But these were not just ghost stories to scare kids into bed early. The Druids—the Celtic priests and mystical fire-keepers—would build massive bonfires to guide and protect both the living and the dead. People wore masks and costumes made of animal skins to blend in with the spirits and fool any wandering ghosts. So, when you throw on your wild Halloween costume, you are essentially channeling your inner Druid, spooking spirits away since ancient times.

One of the coolest myths from this era centers on a figure called Stingy Jack. Legend has it that Jack was a crafty, greedy man who tricked the Devil not once but twice, only to be denied entry into both heaven and hell when he died. Condemned to roam the Earth forever, he carried a burning coal inside a hollowed-out turnip to light his way—what would later become the Jack-o'-lantern. When Irish immigrants settled in America, they swapped out the turnips for pumpkins, and voila: the glow-

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Internships equip college students with workforce edge

DENISE BOUVIER

Features Editor

While college students prepare themselves for post-graduate employment with relevant coursework in their fields of study, something nightmarish lurks in the shadows. In secret, it latches itself onto a student the moment they begin their secondary education. With each passing semester, it grows larger, and it waits. It has a calculated plan, ready to derail the smartest of students. Like a dramatic close-up of a "Scooby-Doo" episode, this unseen force is inevitably revealed during a student's job search. It's the 10-letter word that sends shivers down the spines of college students embarking on their careers. The word is experience.

In today's competitive job market, many employers require experience to accompany a candidate's college degree. Solid college transcripts can also play a significant role in the selection process. But the good news is that students can position themselves to gain valuable experience in their field of study while still attending school in the form of internships.

The Office of Career and Transfer Services, including Beth Austin-DeFares, CTE Campus-Based Internship Coordinator at County College of Morris in Randolph, New Jersey, recognizes the value of an effective internship that can provide work experience in addition to establishing a student's professional identity. "What we know is that employers are looking for experience," Austin-DeFares said. "An internship will give you that opportunity to build your professional skills, learn hands-on in the field, learn new technologies, learn new business operations and build your professional network."

Internships can take many different forms and are not exclusive to four-year colleges and universities. For example, in April 2024, CCM, a two-year college institution, hired Austin-DeFares as part of the Office of Career and Transfer Services team to help launch a new noncredit internship program. The initiative is tailored to students who are enrolled in academic programs or majors whose curricula do not provide academic credit for intern-

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Coffee, please – and a side of sarcasm!

ASHAYLA RIVERA SOLIS

Staff Writer

It is that time of year again, when the leaves change colors and dance in the wind, the temperature drops and peels your skin off, and Mariah Carey starts defrosting for Christmas 2025. Enter a popular drink amongst college students and overworked individuals, and pretty well known in the show *Gilmore Girls*, and through Sabrina Carpenter, you guessed it. Coffee, Coffee, Coffee! With autumn rolling around, welcoming us with a chilly hug, there's no doubt it'll be coffee season soon!

Origin of Coffee

According to tradition and historical sources, coffee plants, particularly arabica, first grew in the forests of Ethiopia. One legend tells of a goat herder named Kaldi, who noticed that his goats became unusually energetic after eating the red berries from a certain bush. Curious as to why this was, Kaldi tried the berries himself and experienced a similar boost. From Ethiopia, the knowledge of coffee spread to the Arabian Peninsula. By the 15th century, Yemen was cultivating coffee and brewing

it as a drink. Sufi monks are said to have used coffee to help stay awake during nighttime devotions. Coffeehouses began to appear in places like Mecca and later in Constantinople (now, Istanbul), becoming not just places to drink coffee, but important social centers for discussion, culture, and learning. In the 17th and 18th centuries, coffee began expanding into Europe. It took on new importance: cafés became gathering points for intellectuals, political discussion, and the arts. As people from European countries colonized lands in Asia and the Americas, coffee cultivation spread too. Today, coffee remains one of the most traded commodities.

Benefits of Black Coffee

My favorite of all time, black coffee! Not only is it yummy (granted, only to me and a small portion of the population), but there are a number of benefits to black coffee, probably more than you think!

Reduced Risk of Diseases

For your liver: Regular coffee consumption has been associated with reduced risk of cirrhosis (a chronic disease of degeneration and inflammation of tissue), including that from alcohol, and non-alcoholic

liver disease.

Type 2 Diabetes: Drinking coffee has been linked with a lower risk of developing type 2 diabetes.

Neurodegenerative Diseases: There is evidence suggesting that, in particular, regular coffee drinkers have a lower risk of Alzheimer's and Parkinson's disease.

Cancer: Some studies have found that coffee (especially black coffee) is associated with a lower risk of certain types of cancer, such as liver and colorectal cancer.

Antioxidants & Nutrients

Coffee without cream or sugar is rich in antioxidants, for example, polyphenols and chlorogenic acid, which help neutralize harmful free radicals. It also provides small amounts of vitamins and minerals like B-vitamins (riboflavin, niacin) and potassium.

Improved Mood, Mental Alertness, and Physical Performance

Caffeine found in black coffee acts as a stimulant, which can improve alertness, concentration, reaction time, and general cognitive functioning. For this reason, many individuals use coffee to wake up in the early mornings, stay focused, or manage fatigue. It can even enhance physical performance by increasing adrenaline and facilitating fat mobilization as an energy source.

Low in Calories, Good for Weight Management

Since black coffee has no calories (I keep repeating 'black coffee' since the benefits apply to coffee plain, without any additives!), it can fit very well into weight management, low-calorie diets, and even fasts. Additionally, caffeine has been proven to increase our metabolic rate slightly.

What to Know

As much as we'd love to down two more cans of Celsius or hot cups of coffee, everything is healthy in moderation. Too much caffeine can lead to the following side effects:

- Insomnia
- Jitteriness
- Elevated heart rate
- Digestive issues

So, in conclusion to this wonderful drink, coffee has a rich history that spans continents and cultures. Black coffee in particular offers many of the core benefits of coffee – antioxidants, mental stimulation, disease risk reduction – without the extra calories/sugars. For college students, coffee is deeply ingrained in daily life: almost everyone consumes caffeine, and many use coffee as their main source of it. Whether to wake up, stay alert, enjoy a lovely fall morning, or fuel study sessions, coffee plays a large role in the college experience.

THE YOUNGTOWN EDITION

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All students are welcome to contribute articles to The Youngtown Edition either in person or via e-mail. However, students cannot receive a byline if they belong to the organization on which they are reporting. The deadline for articles is the Wednesday prior to a production.

CLUB SPOTLIGHT

BY THE STUDENT ASSOCIATION AT CCM

The Student Film Association at County College of Morris is an active creative community where students collaborate to write, film, and produce original projects. This semester, the club is working on two student-led short films. Help, written and directed by Dante Mecionis, follows a couple on their way to visit family who discover that local legends may be more fact than fiction, blending psychological tension with supernatural horror. Dogmatic, written and directed by Chloe Palmer, is

a psychological thriller about a college study group whose obsession with a mysterious computer game leads to unexpected and unsettling consequences.

To celebrate the Halloween season, SFA will also host a Halloween Movie Night in collaboration with Business Society on Thursday, October 30th, from 5:00–8:00 PM in the Davidson Room, featuring a screening of *Night of the Living Dead* (1968). Popcorn and candy will be available for purchase—a perfect way to enjoy some classic scares and support CCM's student filmmakers!

REVIEW: Cinematic Impressions: *The VVitch* by Robert Eggers

SARA LIM
Editor-in-Chief

Robert Eggers' 2015 directorial debut *The Witch: A New-England Folktale* constitutes a paradigmatic exemplar of atmospheric horror cinema and ethnographic historical reconstruction, transcending conventional taxonomies to deliver an uncompromising meditation upon faith, patriarchal hegemony, and the psychological architecture undergirding belief systems within proto-American colonial society. Situated within the chronological parameters of 1630s New England, the cinematic narrative chronicles the inexorable dissolution of an isolated Puritan familial unit following their ecclesiastical banishment from a plantation settlement. What crystallizes throughout this harrowing trajectory is not merely a period-inflected horror confection but rather a scrupulously meticulous ethnographic study represented through the aesthetic prism of folk horror, wherein the supernatural and psychological become ontologically indistinguishable, reflecting the anxieties endemic to a civilization constructed upon theological inflexibility and existential terror.

The film's evocative subtitle, "*A New-England Folktale*," telegraphs Eggers' hermeneutic intentions from the inaugural frame. This represents not historical verisimilitude in the conventional epistemological sense, but rather an ambitious attempt to reconstruct the phenomenological experience of inhabiting a Puritan *Weltanschauung* wherein Satan constituted not metaphorical abstraction but material reality, wherein the sylvan wilderness signified not mere geographic remoteness, but the domicile of malevolent forces arrayed in eschatological opposition against godly civilization. In the words of the film's director,

"This is a tale of witchcraft, told as a simple family of seventeenth century New England might have believed it to be. All the folkloric elements and religious beliefs in this film are true. It was inspired by various folktales, fairytales and recorded

accounts {journals, diaries, court records, etc.} of historical witches and possessions from New England and western Europe before the Salem outbreak of 1692. Much of the dialogue, in fact, comes directly from those sources. The characters must appear as real farmers, not actors with dirty faces. Even the supernatural elements must be photographed as realistically as possible. Yet, with all this authenticity and 'realism,' it is still a folktale, a dream. A nightmare from the past."

Thus, the audience is submerged in a very precisely choreographed dance with death, simultaneously terrifying and captivating. In this metatextual framework, *The Witch* functions as what film scholar Adam Scovell designates a "folk horror" text, one that excavates "the dark potentials of the landscape" and the terror inherent in humanity's fraught relationship with the chthonic forces of nature and the epistemological void of the unknown.

Eggers and cinematographer Jarin Blaschke construct an intricate visual syntax that enforces the family's claustrophobic isolation whilst simultaneously evoking the sublime menace and terrible grandeur of the primordial natural world. Photographed predominantly utilizing natural illumination through specially modified cameras designed to capture the qualitative essence of candlelight and the diffused luminescence characteristic of overcast New England meteorological conditions, the film achieves a painterly aesthetic that consciously evokes Dutch Golden Age painting, particularly the chiaroscuro methodologies of Rembrandt van Rijn and the contemplative domestic interiors of Johannes Vermeer. This visual strategy represents no fortuitous accident; Eggers has explicitly cited period paintings as primary referential coordinates, endeavoring to recreate not merely the superficial appearance but the very visual consciousness and perceptual apparatus of seventeenth-century sensibility. The film's palette—dominated by grays, browns, deep blacks, and the occasional shocking red—echoes the



somber tones of Rembrandt's more austere works and the psychological intensity of Pieter Bruegel the Elder's peasant scenes. The influence of Francisco Goya's "Black Paintings" is palpable, particularly in the film's depiction of the witches' sabbath. Like Goya's late work, which emerged from a mind consumed by illness and disillusionment, *The Witch* presents the supernatural as both horrifying and darkly ecstatic. The final scene, with Thomasin levitating among the witches around the fire, could be read as a perverse inverse of religious ascension paintings, a dark apotheosis that simultaneously damns and liberates. The film also draws from the visual language of Hieronymus Bosch, whose triptychs depicted moral allegories populated by hybrid creatures and scenes of fantastic torment. Perhaps, most significantly, the film evokes the stark woodcuts and engravings that illustrated 17th-century Puritan texts. These images—often crude but powerful—depicted Satan as a literal presence, witches as real threats, and damnation as an imminent possibility. By adopting the visual texture of these historical documents, Eggers creates a film that does not just depict Puritan beliefs but inhabits their worldview entirely.

The deliberate selection of a 1.66:1 aspect ratio—narrower than contemporary anamorphic wide-screen configurations yet broader than the Academy standard—en-

genders a palpable sense of vertical compression that accentuates the oppressive gravitational weight of the celestial vault and the inexorably encroaching forest perimeter. It evokes period portraiture and paintings, and cinematographer Jarin Blaschke lit scenes exclusively with natural light sources {candles, firelight, daylight} to achieve that painterly authenticity. The result feels like stepping into a living 17th-century painting where something has gone terribly wrong. This formal decision reinforces the cosmological architecture of Puritanism, wherein humanity exists perpetually compressed between the inscrutable sovereign will of an incomprehensible Deity above and the corrupting influences of the terrestrial and infernal realms below. The family's arduously cleared homestead, replete with half-constructed edifices and struggling agricultural endeavors, appears perpetually diminished and dwarfed by the surrounding wilderness, functioning as a visual metaphor for the precariousness of their simultaneous spiritual and corporeal survival.

Furthermore, Blaschke's camera choreography demonstrates deliberate restraint and measured intentionality, underlining gradual tracking movements and static compositional tableaux that transmute the frame into a proscenium for observation rather than kinetic spectacle. This aesthetic asceticism cultivates a quasi-documentary phenomenology, as if the cinematographic apparatus were functioning as an anthropological instrument recording the ritualistic practices and quotidian routines of an alien civilization. When camera movement does manifest, it carries substantial gravitas and teleological purpose. The incremental zoom upon young Thomasin's countenance during her father's interrogation, or the tracking shot pursuing Black Phillip across the farmyard's perimeter, transform these moments into instances of epistemological revelation and existential dread. This choice serves multiple narrative purposes: it cre-

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ates intimacy within the cramped family homestead while emphasizing the verticality of the towering forest that surrounds and psychologically imprisons the family. The taller frame also provided greater resolution when using vintage lenses and reinforced the film's visual connection to historical painting and illustration. This perspectival consistency creates what Blaschke describes as feeling "right there" with the characters while keeping the oppressive environment ever-present. The lens choice represents a middle ground—classical framing without distortion, allowing audiences to sit physically and emotionally close to the characters while maintaining spatial awareness of their precarious isolation. When backgrounds fall out of focus, these lenses create a globular, swirling effect that, combined with natural vignetting, draws the eye toward the center of the frame. Blaschke described this as having a "transcendent, witchy feel to it—like looking through a porthole or crystal ball." This optical characteristic subtly reinforces the film's supernatural elements while maintaining the naturalistic aesthetic.

The deployment of natural illumination constructs a diegetic world characterized by perpetual crepuscular ambiguity, wherein even diurnal sequences possess a wan, cadaverous quality. Interior compositions are dominated by firelights that cast ambulatory shadows and create pockets of impenetrable tenebrous darkness within the *mise-en-scène*. This lighting paradigm serves multifarious functions: it authenticates the period milieu through historical verisimilitude, eliminates the psychological safety afforded by comprehensive illumination, and creates a visual corollary to the Puritan obsession with concealed sin and the darkness inhabiting the unregenerate heart. The sylvan sequences, by contrast, remain shrouded in atmospheric mist and filtered through skeletal deciduous branches, creating a liminal space simultaneously characterized by emptiness and ominous presence. The film's visual strategy centered on comprehensive desaturation achieved through multiple departments working in concert. Production designer Craig Lathrop constructed sets from period-accurate hand-riven oak clapboards and reed-thatched roofs. Costume designer Linda Muir created garments in muted earth tones.

These physical elements, combined with the decision to shoot only during overcast conditions or at dusk and dawn, created an inherently desaturated image. Director Robert Eggers described the aesthetic goal succinctly: "We wanted it gray and dead. We were trying to have everything feel grim and oppressive." This approach extended to post-production, where colorist Mila Patriki worked to mute colors overall while strategically preserving full color in specific details—lit lanterns, candlelight, and moonlight—creating visual hierarchy and maintaining beauty within bleakness.

Mark Korven's compositional score eschews conventional horror music topologies in favor of a soundscape constructed from period-appropriate instrumentation, dissonant string arrangements, and processed vocalizations that evoke simultaneously liturgical music and primal utterance. The score functions less as emotional hermeneutic guidance and more as environmental texture, deliberately obfuscating the demarcation between diegetic and non-diegetic sound. When amalgamated with the film's extraordinary sound design—the percussive crack of splitting timber, the disturbing wet sounds accompanying infant Samuel's supernatural disappearance, the guttural bleating of the caprine livestock—the auditory landscape becomes a perpetual source of unease and psychological destabilization.

The film demonstrates strategic deployment of silence as negative sonic space, permitting sequences to unfold accompanied solely by ambient environmental sounds of wind, respiration, and corporeal movement. This restraint amplifies the shocking impact of violent eruptions and uncanny manifestations through stark contrast. The sequence depicting the witch in the forest, grinding Samuel's body in a mortar with pestle, unfolds with minimal musical accompaniment, allowing the horrific actions to communicate through their own terrible literalness and visual brutality. Composer Mark Korven created one of contemporary horror cinema's most distinctive scores through a rigorous set of constraints established by Eggers. The director mandated that all instrumentation be acoustic—"instruments from the earth, made by people"—rejecting any electronic elements. However, the music itself was not to be traditional in melody or harmony;

instead, it should sound archaic and unsettling while avoiding pastiche of actual 1630s music. The score centers on the Swedish Nyckelharpa, a keyed fiddle dating to approximately 1350 AD. Korven describes it as "a cross between a typewriter and your grandpa's old fiddle"—the keys click and clack while producing an organic, scratchy tone. This became the primary melodic voice carrying the score's thematic material. Additional period instruments included the Finnish Jouhikko (three heavy gut strings played with a primitive bow), the Hurdy Gurdy, and the Waterphone. These instruments share an essential characteristic: their sounds feel simultaneously ancient and alien to modern ears, creating an uncanny auditory landscape that matches the film's visual strangeness. The Element Choir of Toronto provided entirely improvised vocal performances. Rather than written notation, Korven and Eggers guided them through verbal direction: "Sing one note for 10 seconds, then three of you come in with a really strange note, then everyone starts whooping for 5 seconds, then build to a great chaotic crescendo...then when I drop my handkerchief, everyone stop." This improvisational approach created unpredictable, directionless harmonies that enhance the film's atmosphere of cosmic dread. The choir was associated specifically with the witch herself, appearing only in scenes where her presence or influence manifested, creating an aural signature for supernatural intrusion into the family's suffering.

Dialogue itself transmutes into a form of linguistic music, with Eggers drawing extensively from primary historical sources, including personal diaries, judicial court records, and polemical pamphlets, to construct a linguistically authentic script. The *dramatis personae* articulate themselves in a form of Early Modern English that registers simultaneously as familiar and profoundly alien, replete with Biblical cadences and Calvinist theological terminology. This linguistic authenticity serves to further attenuate audience identification while cultivating a sense of documentary veracity. We observe not contemporary actors adorned in period costume but rather glimpse something approximating how these historical subjects might have authentically spoken and cogitated.

To comprehend The Witch as

transcending Gothic fantasy, one must situate it within the specific historical, theological, and sociocultural context of New England Puritanism during the 1630s. This chronological period was characterized by intense millennialist expectation and pervasive existential anxiety among the English settlers establishing the Massachusetts Bay Colony. The Puritans conceived their colonial enterprise as an "errand into the wilderness," a divinely ordained mission to establish a "city upon a hill" that would serve as an exemplary beacon of reformed Christianity to a fundamentally corrupt world mired in apostasy. This sense of cosmic significance was counterbalanced by an equally profound sense of ontological vulnerability. The Puritans inhabited their daily existence with perpetual consciousness of their precarious position situated between the physical wilderness populated by indigenous peoples they conceptualized as Satan's minions, and the spiritual wilderness potentially inhabiting their own unregenerate souls. Calvinist soteriology, with its foundational doctrine of double predestination, stipulated that salvation was predetermined *ante mundum* and could not be procured through human works or righteousness. This theological framework engendered a population consumed with detecting signs of election or reprobation in themselves and fellow community members, a psychological condition that manifested in rigorous introspective self-examination, communal surveillance mechanisms, and periodic outbreaks of accusatory fervor—most infamously exemplified in the Salem witch trials of 1692.

The film's inaugural sequence, wherein William's family suffers ecclesiastical banishment for the sin of *superbia* manifested in his interpretation of scripture, establishes the theological stakes immediately. Pride was conceptualized as the most pernicious sin in Puritan theology, the primordial sin of Satan himself, and William's obstinate adherence to his own understanding of doctrine over communal judgment marks him as spiritually dangerous from the Puritan epistemological perspective. His decision to establish an agricultural homestead at the wilderness periphery rather than humble himself before the plantation community represents not laudable

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independence but spiritual recklessness, a deliberate removal from the protective covenant community of the godly into a liminal space wherein Satan's maleficent power operates with minimal constraints.

The family's inexorable disintegration follows a pattern recognizable from Puritan captivity narratives and providential historiography: a concatenation of afflictions tests their faith whilst simultaneously revealing hidden sins and internal divisions. The loss of infant Samuel, the agricultural failure of their crops, the supernatural bewitching of Caleb, and the recursive accusations circulating among family members all conform to the logic of Puritan providentialism, wherein nothing occurs through fortuitous chance, and every event carries profound spiritual significance. The hermeneutic question the film poses is whether these afflictions constitute divine punishment for sin, tests of authentic faith, or irrefutable evidence of predestined damnation—epistemological questions the historical Puritans themselves struggled perpetually to answer.

Eggers draws upon a stratified tradition of witch beliefs that amalgamated folk tradition, learned demonology, and theological anxiety throughout early modern Europe and America. Note the use of a stylized W {replaced by two V's}, inspired by traditional printmaking techniques. The witch, as depicted in the film, represents a deliberate synthesis of various mythological and folkloric elements that coalesced within the period's collective imagination and anxious consciousness. The figure of the witch as infant-killer and corruptor of youth possesses profound roots in classical mythology, echoing the lamiae and striges of Roman folklore—female demons who preyed specifically upon children and infants. Medieval Christian demonology elaborated these primordial figures into a systematic theory of witchcraft as an organized conspiracy against Christendom, formalized comprehensively in texts like the *Malleus Maleficarum* (1486), which provided an integrated theological and juridical framework for identifying and prosecuting witches throughout Europe.

The witch's sabbath, subtly intimated in the film's climactic sequence, derives from learned demonological tradition merged with folk beliefs concerning nocturnal gather-

ings. The prevalent image of witches flying through darkness to remote assemblies to worship the Devil, engage in orgiastic rites, and plot against Christian society became a standardized element of witch trial testimony, though it represented a complex interplay of coercive interrogation techniques, theological presuppositions, and possibly genuine folk practices subsequently reinterpreted through a demonological hermeneutic lens.

The film's most potent mythological resonance, however, resides in its depiction of the forest as a space of transformation and transgression. The witch's cottage, concealed deep within the arboreal darkness, represents a fundamental inversion of domestic space—whereas the Puritan home constitutes a space of patriarchal order, liturgical prayer, and productive labor, the witch's dwelling manifests as a site of cannibalistic consumption, unrestrained sensuality, and malign sorcery. This binary opposition reflects the broader Puritan conception of wilderness as anti-civilization, a space existing outside God's providential order wherein humans revert to bestiality and succumb to demonic influence.

The protean transformations of the witches—from the aesthetically beautiful young woman who seduces Caleb to the ancient crone, and ultimately to the supernatural entities participating in the sabbath—draw upon shape-shifting motifs ubiquitous in European folklore. These metamorphoses literalize the Puritan anxiety concerning deceptive appearances and concealed corruption. Just as the unregenerate soul might appear superficially godly whilst harboring damnation, the witch manifests in whatever form serves her malevolent purposes most efficaciously. Black Phillip, the family's caprine livestock, represents perhaps the film's most overtly mythological element. The association of the Devil with goat imagery possesses roots in pre-Christian pastoral deities such as Pan and the faun, which early Christianity systematically demonized as pagan survivals requiring eradication. Medieval and early modern depictions of Satan frequently attributed to him goat legs, horns, and other caprine physiognomic features. In folk tradition, the Devil was purported to appear as a black animal, particularly manifesting as a goat, dog, or cat. Black Phillip thus functions as

a polyvalent symbol, simultaneously constituting a mundane farm animal, a folk devil from popular tradition, and ultimately a literal manifestation of Satan himself, revealing the film's sophisticated approach to ontological ambiguity.

The Witch operates as an intricate examination of gender relations and power dynamics within Puritan patriarchal structures, though it scrupulously avoids reducing itself to simplistic feminist allegory. The film's nuanced treatment of femininity and female agency within a rigidly patriarchal theological framework reveals the double bind confronting women in Puritan society: absolute submission to male authority or demonization as threatening Other. Thomasin's trajectory from dutiful daughter to accused witch to autonomous agent choosing damnation represents not merely character development but an allegorical exploration of the impossibility of female selfhood within such constrictive ideological parameters. The film's depiction of witches as exclusively female entities reflects historical reality—the overwhelming majority of witch trial defendants throughout Europe and America were women. This gendered persecution stemmed from multiple intersecting factors: misogynistic medical theories positioning women as physiologically susceptible to demonic influence due to their "cold" and "moist" humoral constitutions, theological constructions of women as spiritually weaker descendants of Eve, and socioeconomic anxieties surrounding women who existed outside patriarchal control as widows, spinsters, or midwives possessing esoteric knowledge. This dichotomy is emphasized throughout literature, most prominently in the aforementioned compendium of demonology and witchcraft *Malleus Maleficarum*, written in 1486 by Heinrich Kramer, in which it states, "All wickedness is but little to the wickedness of a woman [...] What else is woman but a foe to friendship, an unescapable punishment, a necessary evil... a natural temptation, a desirable calamity, domestic danger, a delectable detriment, an evil nature, painted with fair colours." Roughly 40,000 to 10,000 people were executed in England for ties to witchcraft, while only 20 were killed during the Salem Witch Trials... and yet something differentiates colonial witch trials from Euro-

pean ones. The answer lies, in part, in the unique atmosphere of early colonial ventures. Physically and ideologically vulnerable, colonies were forced to face their fears in a new world. By separating the family from the rest of civilization, Eggers presents them as a microcosm of colonial society. Their setting calls for the most primitive fears that lurk within the human soul, the fear of isolation, lack of control, physical vulnerability, the unknown nature of death... all responded to, in part, by religion. Thus, the Puritans default to what they think they know about human nature in a pointless attempt to regain control, eventually losing everything they hold close. Throughout the script, the characters refer to the forest at the edge of their home as "The Wood," a universal concept of the woods throughout fairytales and the natural world. William proclaims, "We must conquer this wood. It will not consume us," positioning the natural world as pagan and the world of civility and man-made law as inherently Christian. These "primeval" woods will inevitably consume us all.

The Witch ultimately functions as an archaeological excavation of American historical trauma, unearthing the psychological foundations upon which settler colonial society was constructed. The film suggests that the violence inherent in Puritan theology—its bifurcation of humanity into elect and reprobate, its cosmic paranoia, its punitive deity—inevitably manifests in interpersonal and communal violence. The witch hunt becomes paradigmatic of American pathology: the projection of internal anxiety onto demonized Others, the dissolution of community bonds through mutual suspicion, the authoritarian impulse masquerading as divine mandate. Through its uncompromising commitment to historical and linguistic authenticity, its sophisticated cinematographic language, and its refusal of contemporary moral frameworks, Eggers creates a film that operates simultaneously as historical document, mythological exploration, and contemporary allegory. The Witch demonstrates that authentic horror resides not in supernatural manifestations but in the terrible human capacity for cruelty justified through ideology, the fragility of social bonds under pressure, and the eternal question of whether damnation is cosmic decree or human construction.

OPINION: NSPM-7, Project 2025, Stephen Miller, and the dark future of America

BY NOAH SANTIAGO

Staff Illustrator / Cartoonist

Editorial clarification: The following article is an opinion piece that reflects solely the views and interpretations of its author.

Current political discussion has been dominated by conversations on the government shutdown, tariff policy, and the deployment of the National Guard in US cities. While all of these are important and worth discussing, I would argue that something bigger than all of these has gone quietly unnoticed. On October 25th, Donald Trump signed NSPM-7 (National Security Presidential Memorandum 7), a type of executive order with a specific focus on national security. It is innocuous in its own right, as several presidents have used it under different titles. For instance, President Biden issued NSMs, and President Obama issued PPDs.

But where NSPM-7 becomes concerning is the extremely vague terms it uses to call for new definitions of terrorism. It begins by citing the recent assassination of Charlie Kirk, the attempted assassination of Donald Trump, and several others. It continues with a discussion of recent protests against ICE and the BLM protests in the past. It then alleges that this wide range of political events is not just the actions of a few deranged individuals, or the political will of the people, but rather “a culmination of sophisticated, organized campaigns of targeted intimidation, radicalization, threats, and violence designed to silence opposing speech, limit political activity, change or direct policy outcomes, and prevent the functioning of a democratic society.” These rather bold accusations are made without any evidence. This echoes the common right-wing allegations that wealthy left-wing figures are secretly funding attacks and protests to

get their agenda passed. However, far-right allegations are the least concerning of the things mentioned in NSPM-7. The document continues, writing, “A new law enforcement strategy that investigates all participants in these criminal and terroristic conspiracies—including the organized structures, networks, entities, organizations, funding sources, and predicate actions behind them—is required.” This vague language sets a precedent for the rest of NSPM-7. This is followed by the following statement: “Common threads animating this violent conduct include anti-Americanism, anti-capitalism, and anti-Christianity; support for the overthrow of the United States Government; extremism on migration, race, and gender; and hostility towards those who hold traditional American views on family, religion, and morality.” These terms are incredibly vague. How would you define so-called “anti-Americanism?” Would it be someone who simply says they don’t like America? What constitutes hostility against those who hold “traditional American values?” What are traditional American Values? Questions such as these rattled through my mind as I read through NSPM-7. Especially as it gloats how The National Joint Terrorism Task Force and its local offices, and the Attorney General “shall direct the Department of Justice to prosecute all Federal crimes, to the maximum extent permissible by law.” With these new, incredibly vague definitions of what a crime might be, we see another step towards fascism in the Trump administration. Now, even your own words can be used as justification for charges against you, as long as the government decides what you’re saying is “radicalizing” or “anti-fascist rhetoric.” This is a clear attempt to muzzle the American people, to stoke fear and uncertainty, to try to quell protest, and to silence those who would speak out against the hor-

rors of modern-day America.

Furthermore, another question arises. Whose judgment will decide what permissible speech is in America, and who will be the arbiter if you are hit with federal charges? In NSPM-7, we see one man wielding authority over what groups to pursue, or persons to detain, to deliver progress reports to, and what actions should be taken against them all. You may assume this person would be the President himself, or maybe the director of the FBI, Kash Patel or the Secretary of DHS, Kristi Noem. But no, strangely enough, the man who will preside over all of this is the Homeland Security Advisor, one Stephen Miller. If the name is unfamiliar to you, he has been Trump’s senior advisor since 2016, but more notably, the architect of Project 2025. For the uninitiated, Project 2025 was a guideline for the potential winner of the 2024 presidential election. It detailed plans for sweeping reforms, centralizing power to the White House, ramping up ICE activity and funding, cutting funding for USAID, and social security. As you may notice, all of these things and more have been implemented in Trump’s presidency already. In total, 48% percent of Project 2025’s policies have been implemented less than a year into Trump’s term.

But who really is Stephen Miller? How did he get involved in this in the first place? What does he even stand for? Most of Trump’s picks across all parts of the government have been a bunch of woefully inexperienced yes-men, willing to do whatever Trump asks of them. But Miller is different. He got his start working as a press secretary for Republican congressmen, until he landed a big gig working as the communications director for then Senator of Alabama, Jeff Sessions. He used his position there to influence the controversial Far-Right news network, Breitbart News, and to publish articles like those found

on VDARE and American Renaissance, two White Nationalist newspapers. While working with Sessions, he was also instrumental in killing the Border Security, Economic Opportunity, and Immigration Modernization Act, a bill that would have streamlined the visa process for immigrants, providing a more affordable and tangible pathway to citizenship for millions. After that, he joined Trump on the campaign trail, becoming a senior advisor to Trump for his first presidency, and forming his immigration policy for him. He also became his speechwriter, even penning his inaugural address in 2016. Since then, he has been the man in the ear of the President, steering his policy for the past 8 years farther and farther right. Now he is the Deputy Chief of Staff and the Homeland Security Advisor. In interviews, Miller has commented on how every arrest made at a protest will have the “an investigation into the entire domestic terrorist network.” He continued pledging to destroy these so-called “domestic terrorist” networks. This all goes to show the political wit and the far-right extremist rhetoric behind NSPM-7.

So, what does it all mean? Well, sadly, we’ll just have to see. The outlook is not good. With Trump’s “War on Antifa,” we may see many people taken away in an attempt to strike fear into the hearts of everyday people. But we cannot let that silence us. In the face of this insanity, we must not back down. Speak out, tell your family and your friends about what is going on. Get involved, call your local congressperson. But, most importantly, vote! Your opinion matters, and the madness going on here can only be stopped by electing officials who will actually do something about it, not just sit on their hands and collect PAC money. So yes, America’s future may be uncertain, but you can do your part to make it better by getting out there!

OPINION: Performative virtue-signaling: How it's undermining higher education and student freedom

BY AARON RICHMAN

Staff Writer

Editorial clarification: The following article is an opinion piece that reflects solely the views and interpretations of its author.

Virtue-signaling means publicly displaying moral correctness—often more as a way to gain social approval or avoid backlash than from genuine conviction. On campuses nationwide, this performative display has evolved into an enforced orthodoxy that constrains free thought, pressures students toward ideological conformity, and punishes dissent or authentic belief.

Recent confidential research involving over 1,400 college students at Northwestern University and the University of Michigan has revealed a troubling trend: nearly 88 percent admit to pretending to hold more progressive views than they truly believe, simply to fit in academically and socially (Romm & Waldman, 2025). This is not mere peer pressure but a reflection of an institutional environment where deviation from prevailing ideological norms risks academic and social consequences.

Compounding this environment is a stark lack of ideological diversity among faculty. Studies indicate that about 60 to 70 percent of university professors identify as left-leaning politically, leading to a clear imbalance. Conservative and right-leaning professors are a shrinking minority, which in turn influences the range of acceptable viewpoints presented in classrooms and campus discourse (Pew Research Center, 2024). This ideological homogeneity discourages students from expressing conservative or non-progressive views openly, fearing marginalization or worse.

Many students self-censor,

hiding their true beliefs from classmates, instructors, and even close friends. A 2025 survey found 73 percent of students mistrust peers when discussing sensitive values, and nearly half routinely conceal their beliefs in personal relationships to avoid ideological fallout (Romm & Waldman, 2025). This widespread self-silencing corrodes the university's core function as a marketplace of ideas, replacing intellectual diversity with ideological conformity. This enforced conformity fractures student identities and fosters mistrust and anxiety. The same study highlighted how students feel compelled to submit coursework that misrepresents their views—over 80 percent admitted doing so in fear of harming their grades or standing (Romm & Waldman, 2025). Replacing genuine inquiry with performative compliance substitutes intellectual growth with survival tactics, stunting moral development. Students are deprived not only of academic freedom but also of psychological safety.

Universities often justify these restrictions in the name of inclusion and social justice. Yet forcing students into ideological compliance sacrifices authenticity for optics. This “moral theater” rewards social capital rather than intellectual integrity, penalizing those who express sincere dissenting opinions. Instead of nurturing free thought, these environments promote what might be called self-abandonment. Social media exacerbates the pressure to conform. In an era where rapid, emotionally charged posts garner attention over reflective discourse, universities increasingly respond to controversies with swift public condemnations or virtue signals. These responses serve more to protect institutional reputations than to foster meaningful dialogue (Jacobs, 2025).

This climate teaches students that morality is not about grap-

pling with complexity but about visibility and volume. The result is not a robust debate but a culture of instant moral judgment. Typical performative responses to campus controversies include glossy statements and symbolic gestures that fade as new issues arise, leaving structural problems unaddressed. Meaningful reform—such as investing in diverse hiring, curricular revision for intellectual pluralism, or campus climate improvements—requires sustained effort often absent amid the clamor for immediate signage (Romm & Waldman, 2025).

This climate chills intellectual risk-taking and shrinks spaces for genuine dialogue, compromising higher education's mission to foster critical thinking. Students caught in this system often become alienated and cynical. Outwardly compliant yet privately doubtful, many withdraw from campus discourse or lash out with demands for ideological purity, worsening polarization. Rather than building informed, autonomous citizens, universities may be training performance artists in ideological conformity.

This fractured campus culture undermines well-being and deprives students of the opportunity to develop mature perspectives through open debate and disagreement. Universities have historically shifted with cultural tides, but today's accelerated pace and digital amplification create heightened risks. The challenge is reclaiming academic spaces as venues for rigorous debate, discomfort, and growth rather than echo chambers of orthodoxy and compliance (Jacobs, 2025).

For higher education to fulfill its promise, it must reject performative virtue-signaling and promote genuine intellectual freedom; encouraging students to express beliefs openly, promoting ideological diversity, and upholding academic rigor over ideologi-

cal uniformity strengthen any institution. Ignoring these principles risks alienating an entire generation—trained not to think freely but to perform ideological loyalty. Universities must resist becoming theaters of moral posturing, where appearance trumps substance and complexity is oversimplified into slogans. Instead, they should be places where truth, maturity, and intellectual courage guide learning.

As a college student, I have learned that real education begins when people feel free to speak their minds and test their ideas against others. The most electric moments in class aren't the ones where everyone agrees—they're the moments that spark tension, curiosity, or an unexpected perspective that turns the discussion on its head. That's what higher education is supposed to be: a living experiment in thought, a place where truth is pursued through fearless inquiry and open conversation. When professors can challenge us without worrying about censorship and students can question ideas without fear of backlash, the classroom becomes something far more powerful—a space where growth happens in real time.

It is exciting to think that every debate we have, every reading that makes us uncomfortable, and every bold question asked keeps alive a centuries-old tradition of free thought. This isn't just about better grades or smart conversation—it's about keeping the heartbeat of our democracy strong. Universities have always been incubators for social progress, political reform, and cultural renewal. When we protect open inquiry, we protect the engine that drives our whole society forward. The way I see it, every college discussion worth having isn't just about the coursework—it's a rehearsal for citizenship, a way of preparing to think boldly and speak meaningfully in the world beyond campus.

Check out the Youngtown Edition Instagram @ youngtownccm

Short Story: The Phone

**BY ANTHONY “ROCCO”
CANNONE**

Contributor

How much longer can I go on like this? I find myself asking this question at least twice a day. What started as a way to effortlessly exhibit my expertise in both gemstones and hospitality, my position as a Jewelry Consultant at Marie’s Bijouteries quickly became an escape from the emotional prison designated as my home. That is to say, this escape has also become quite insufferable. Having to constantly be on my best behavior towards some entitled and out-of-touch folk is rather draining, and to come home with barely a passing glance from my husband does nothing to rejuvenate me.

Jakob and I have been married for 28 years, and a marriage that long should feel like an achievement. Regrettably, it instead feels like a slow Sisyphus-esque march, with each effort feeling like another push uphill. Our anniversary recently was nothing to fawn over; Jakob once again needed to travel abroad for a business matter with Travelcy, his employer, and left only a standard Tuesday night dinner prepared by our cook. I guarantee he acted as the epitome of charisma towards his colleagues and counterparts as he always does – engaging conversations, crafting interpersonal relationships, radiating a glow of confidence – all characteristics that made me fall in love with him. These traits, once reserved for me, have been spent elsewhere for years now.

Today is only Saturday, I tell myself. I, at least, find comfort in the birds that come by every morning, thanks to my feeders on the front lawn. *Khee-khoo...khee-khoo.* Ah, those simple songs bring me back to my childhood home. The sounds of black-capped chickadees and the sweet aromas of lemon and vanilla from mother’s homemade pancakes have always been my mental safe place.

“Dawn? Honey? Can you run upstairs and fetch my watch charger? It should be on my dresser,” Jakob calls to me, jolting me from the trance I was in from the birds. I sigh quietly before acknowledging. I move up the stairs with the vigor of an elderly patient and make my way to the bedroom. I

look at his dresser, and no charger is found. I check his closet, and nothing.

With subtle frustration in my voice, I ask, “Jake, are you sure it’s up here? I can’t find it!”

“Where else would it be? You know I can’t walk away from this right now to look.” He unmutes his microphone and continues his professional matters with his fellow executives in a virtual meeting.

I feel my eyes roll as involuntarily as my breathing, and I continue to search the bedroom. I turn to his nightstand, and I notice a small cardboard box without a label. I open it to find some business cards and pens, but I notice a tiny compartment hidden underneath. I lift it, and there is a flip phone. I know I should be more trustworthy with his privacy, given our history, but curiosity gets the best of me. This is obviously not his cell phone and was never one he previously owned. There are some call logs, but no text messages. These calls, each logged in between 1:00 and 3:00am, are made with the only saved contact, “T”. The last phone call was made September 29th, the day he left for his last business trip, and 2 days before our anniversary.

*Who is this “T”? What even *is* this phone? How can I bring this up to him without jumping to conclusions? Countless thoughts are wrestling my brain like a pig being hogtied. Is this another woman? He’s proven his faith to me before, but why call right before disappearing on our anniversary? What the hell are you keeping from me, Jakob?!*

“Never mind, honey! It was actually in the living room, I got it!” Jakob yells. Of course.

Instead of giving in to my emotions, I take a second to recollect myself. I can’t just accuse him again of things I don’t understand, but I don’t feel right about this. Instead, I choose to drop some subtle clues in conversation and give him the opportunity to mention the flip phone.

“You know, I’m really sick of my smartphone and how complicated it’s become. I miss the days where you just flip it open, dial a number, and speak to someone,” I sigh to Jakob at our kitchen nook the morning after. It sounds pathetic, but it’s the most I can do.

“Hmm. Yeah, those were the

simpler days,” he replies. That’s it. He gets up and exits the room, leaving me to be alone with my thoughts again.

Day passes to evening, and we are asleep in bed. *BRRRRING! BRRRRING! BRRRRING!* Rapid-fire pings begin to obnoxiously blare from his nightstand. We are both quickly awoken by this, and I am thrown into a tizzy of fear and confusion. I have set a rule for no electronics in the bedroom, for this is our private space. However, the sudden realization of *what* is ringing clicks in my head. I turn to find Jakob overwhelmed with a wave of panic, aggressively shuffling through his drawer while muttering to himself that he “thought the damn thing was on vibrate.” He quickly silences the phone and turns to face me. His face of panic masked as confusion is met with my face of dread masked as frustration.

“Jakob...,” I utter, “...it is 1:34 in the morning...what was that?”

“It’s...it’s nothing...just...” Jakob then sighs and throws his hands up as if he were caught. “I got to come clean, honey. I’m sorry I lied to you, but it’s a side phone I have for work emergencies.”

“If it was an emergency, why didn’t you answer the phone?”

“I panicked. You were woken up by it; I didn’t want to answer all flustered. Besides, if I don’t answer they will just call the next of kin,” Jakob tries to joke. It doesn’t land. He then looks at me and says, “Babe, I know you don’t like having phones in the bedroom. But you know I need to be on call, otherwise I can get fired. I got this phone as a compromise, and I didn’t want to say anything because I didn’t want to upset you. This was wrong of me, though. I am so sorry Dawn, I am sorry for lying to you. You don’t deserve that.”

I do not know what to say. I can smell the nonsense from a mile away, but I can’t think of a rebuttal. He has also never apologized to me like this before.

Jakob is thinking, then lights up before suggesting, “You know, we haven’t had a night out in a long time. Why don’t we take one of the executive cars from the office and stay at The Langham in the city?”

“Oh, The Langham. We haven’t been there in almost 10 years!” I recall

with nostalgic joy. I absolutely adored our last stay there.

“What do you say, huh? I think we deserve a night like this. We’ve been bickering and fighting a lot, and I think this will do us some good.”

I sit with this, as I am not sure what to make of everything. Nonetheless, I do agree a romantic night away would be good for our marriage, and perhaps it is the remedy I need to calm my mind. I tell him I am on board for this, and he sighs with a great sense of relief.

A week passes, and we are immersed in our stay in New York City. *Just an emergency phone?* While it lost a sense of its glamour since the COVID pandemic, I still love being here in the concrete jungle. *What is he hiding?* The smell of sizzling onions and garlic mixed with the subtle aromas of our red wine intoxicates my senses, as we dine rather lavishly at the Strip House Steakhouse off of West 44th Street. *Who is T?* I order the dry-aged rib-eye with a side of grilled asparagus, *...the simpler days?*... while Jakob orders the filet mignon with a side of their Strip House potatoes. *He’s lying. He thinks you’re stupid.* The steaks are lovely. *Wake up, Dawn!* I am so... *What is he HIDING?!* ...happy... *DAWN!*

“Dawn? Are you okay?” Jakob asks, staring straight into my eyes.

I catch myself spiraling and respond, “Yeah, just hungry. Why do you ask?”

“I don’t know. Just seems like the lights aren’t on up there.” He retorts.

I chuckle, blaming the wine for my lapse. We finished up dinner, with not much being said after that brief confrontation. Why am I doing this to myself? Jakob clearly confessed, and he explained the situation. It is like I am rooting for him to be lying to me.

As we are crossing 5th Ave over West 42nd Street, Jakob holds my hand, but suddenly grips it before asking me a question.

“You were very tense at dinner, what’s up with that?”

“I told you; it was the wine. You know I don’t drink much,” I answered.

Jakob’s usual public-friendly face sours into a more neutral expression, and he says, “Dawn, I know what you are thinking. I know you don’t believe

SEE PHONE, PAGE 9

PHONE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

me about the phone."

"No, Jakob, I—"

"No! Let me finish," Jakob quickly interrupts me with a hushed tone. "This isn't the first time you've done this. I'm sure you remember when you accused me of cheating, don't you? And where did that lead us? With a divorce lawyer, and I almost went through with the paperwork if you didn't come to your senses. Did all those sessions of therapy do nothing? Is everything that I am doing with this trip not good enough?"

"Jake, I'm sorry. Let's put this behind us. I don't want to ruin this trip," I relent. It pains me to say this, but he also could be right. I would be frustrated too if I were in his position.

We arrive at our room to find an absolutely gorgeous champagne display. With the two flutes already freshly poured, Jakob smirks and proposes a toast to our marriage. I lift my flute and can feel the bubbles popping lightly against my lips. I go to finish my serving quickly, perhaps to ease my anxieties. *Something is wrong.* I feel gravity letting up on me.

"Jakob...honey...I don't...I..." I collapse to the ground.

"4 0 7...4 0 7...0 3...", I hear Jakob repeating as my sentience abandons me. I am gone.

Lemons...I smell...lemons... I find myself on the floor in the hotel room, alone in the darkness.

"Jake?!" I yell out. The only response is my voice echoing back in my ears. I can barely walk straight, my mouth tastes metallic, and my skin is a winter swamp. What the hell happened to me?

I stumble upon the light switch, to find a small slip of paper with coordinates written in Jakob's scripture on them, beginning with 407. 4 0 7... I quickly grab my phone and enter the coordinates into the GPS, which appears to be coasting off the Financial District. I order an Uber to bring me as close to these coordinates as they can.

I reach my destination, and I continue to use my GPS to find these exact coordinates. After searching endlessly, I find myself at an abandoned dock. Tons of giant storage units are stacked in rows, each large enough to fit an elephant. I hear noises. Yelling, crying,

and laughter. I creep gently towards the sound, to see horrors beyond my imagination. Lines of rather young men and women are being marched onto a rig. They seem young enough to even be my grandchildren. Various henchmen are rough with them, jamming their heads with the butt of assault rifles to move them along like sheep led to a slaughterhouse. I hear a man giving strict instructions, with a voice terrifyingly familiar to me. I turn my focus to find Jakob, harking orders into the "emergency" flip phone. My hearing then shuts down, the floor beneath me disappearing, and tunnel vision haunts my sight before me. *What is this? Who...who did I marry?!* I have had it. I'm done holding back. They can shoot me for all I care; I am going in.

"JAKOB!!!" I scream with every ounce of my soul, gutting out my body, running towards him.

"Dawn?! You...you relentless bitch! What are you doing here?!" Jakob hollers back to me, in a tone I have never once heard in the thirty-six years I have known him. This tone, however, is also the first time I can genuinely sense his true nature. My actions quickly served as a distraction for Jakob and his crew, which shockingly presented an opportunity for some of the kids to fight back with everything they had. Chaos ensues, with the imprisoned children ganging up on the henchmen like football players seizing a fumble.

"Protect the cargo, don't damage 'em!" one of the men yells.

I cannot get to Jakob, but I see one of the girls lunge at him and gash his face open with her jagged nails, just missing his left eye. Suddenly, a cloth is shoved in my face from behind me, and I am once again brought back to a sunken place.

I find myself wrapped neatly in what feels like a cloud. Am I dead? As my senses return to me, I smell lemon again. My vision returns to me, and I see a reed diffuser in front of me with a little lemon symbol. How about that? I am not in a cloud, but rather our bed in the hotel room. I see Jakob to my right packing our bags, and his face lit with solace.

"Honey! You're awake, thank God!" he exclaims.

"What...what happened last night?" I ask, unsure of what was true and what wasn't.

"I think you got a bit tuned up

from the champagne, I didn't even see the ABV on the bottle, it was insanely high I am so sorry! You collapsed and I immediately called the front desk for help. What didn't help though was the damn reception on the phones, they couldn't even make out what room I was calling from. After everything was rectified, I cleaned you up in the shower and tucked you into bed. I'm sorry for my harsh words yesterday after dinner, I feel this is my fault."

"No, it's okay...what did you do last night?"

"After I got you into bed I couldn't sleep, so I ordered room service and watched a marathon of Law and Order: SVU, but once it got to this crazy trafficking episode I had to turn it off and was finally able to get some shuteye."

"I see," I responded. *Did...did I have some sort of lucid nightmare?* My mouth tastes fine, I don't feel so clammy, and I actually feel refreshed. Jakob finishes packing up our bags, and we move to check out of room 407. *Our room was 407...?* As we get into the car and head back to Jersey, I do some heavy reflecting on everything. I checked my phone to see my most recent apps, and there was nothing in there regarding Uber or the GPS. He mentions watching SVU, and I guess the 407 I heard was our

room number...I suppose the mind truly is a powerful weapon when troubled.

"Jakob," I exhale from the passenger seat, "I am so sorry for ruining our trip. I just get so caught up with my own thoughts, I—"

"Up-pup-pup, don't you dare apologize. You did not do anything wrong, and I need to be more transparent with you and be more receptive to your needs. Trying to fix things with a vacation shouldn't have been my go-to, I should have listened and acted instead. I love you, Dawn."

"I love you too, Jakob." For the first time in months, I am genuinely smiling. I feel safe and secure with my love. We quickly embrace each other and continue our drive away from the city that never sleeps.

We finally arrive home after sitting through hours of traffic, and my dogs are barking. Jakob insists on getting the front door for me, which seems to be his attempt at acting towards my needs again. I sigh such heavy senses of relief, and I am beyond words on the fact that I feel I can trust my husband again.

As Jakob opened the front door for me, I realized I had not gotten a full view of his face all morning. He turns as he opens the door, and I see a nasty gash just above his left eye.

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The advertisement features a large QR code in the bottom right corner, surrounded by a decorative circular pattern. Above the QR code, there is a screenshot of the New York Times mobile app interface, showing various news headlines and images. The background of the ad is a mix of teal and yellow wavy lines.

From omelettes to oceans: How egg whites may save the planet (and why science majors deserve an extra pancake)

ELISE MILS

Staff Writer

If you have ever looked at your breakfast and thought, “What could this do for humanity?” you are in good company—and possibly halfway to a science PhD. The masterminds at Princeton University, led by Professor Craig Arnold, have turned an ordinary kitchen staple—egg whites—into a powerful solution for global water challenges. That’s right: the foodie’s fluffy friend is now a scientific hero.

It all started when Professor Arnold, apparently hungry and inspired, stared at the bread on his sandwich and thought: “This is exactly the kind of structure we need.” (Wonderful things happen when scientists eat

lunch and let their minds wander!) Through a process involving freeze-drying and heating egg whites (sadly, no toast or jam required), his team created a super-light, super-porous material called an aerogel. This aerogel can filter out a whopping 99% of microplastics and 98% of salt from seawater—leaving oceans cleaner, water safer, and science teachers everywhere absolutely giddy.

The secret? When you zap plain egg whites at scorching temperatures in an oxygen-free environment, the proteins link up into a wild network of carbon fiber and graphene, perfect for trapping the tiny, sneaky pollutants modern life keeps inventing. These “egg-squisite” filters are so nimble that even store-bought eggs (scrambled, whipped, or fried—take

your pick) work for the process. And since similar proteins also do the job, the future supply will not threaten your Sunday brunch.

But the big deal here is not just technical. It is a pep talk for every student who has ever sat through a lecture on climate doom and gloom. Global warming, pollution, “science alarmism”—it can all feel overwhelming. Yet here’s proof that real, hilarious, life-changing innovation still happens when curious, stubborn minds refuse to give up. Someone somewhere may be one napkin sketch away from the next world-saving idea.

If you’re slogging away in Chemistry, Engineering, or “Introduction to Not Catching Labs on Fire,” remember: perseverance

trumps panic, breakfast can be a laboratory, and the world genuinely needs your weird, hopeful, persistent brain. You might just cook up the next big breakthrough—and make the planet a little less scrambled.

As Professor Arnold and his team demonstrate, the future of innovation is rooted in not giving up or giving in to despair. Instead, it’s about rolling up one’s sleeves, cracking open a fresh idea (or a fresh egg), and daring to believe that the next breakthrough is always on the horizon. So, for university students, keep asking weird questions, keep experimenting, and keep trusting that science, not alarmism, will help us turn even our messiest problems into something extraordinary and egg-citing!

HALLOWEEN

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

ing gourd that now graces porch steps worldwide was born. Next time you carve a pumpkin, remember you’re lighting one for Stingy Jack’s eternal walk.

Fast forward to the 7th century, when the Christian Church, in its infinite wisdom, decided to hijack this pagan festival to convert the masses. Pope Gregory I declared November 1st as All Saints’ Day, dedicating the day to honoring saints and martyrs, cleverly overlaying the Christian calendar on the existing Samhain festival. The evening before became All Hallows’ Eve, or what we now call Halloween. The Church’s attempt at sanitizing the holiday ended up creating the perfect mix of sacred and spooky.

Medieval Europe added its own flavors of fun and fear to Halloween. Poor souls would go “souling,” traveling door-to-door with prayers for the dead in exchange for soul cakes—a bit like medieval trick-or-treaters but with way more religious overtones. Mischievous pranks and rowdy behavior also became common, evolving into the raucous mischief many colleges can relate to during late October nights.

But Halloween’s magic isn’t confined to the Western world. Take

Mexico’s Día de los Muertos, or Day of the Dead, celebrated on November 1st and 2nd. Unlike Halloween’s spooky scares, Día de los Muertos is a vibrant, joyous festival featuring colorful altars (called ofrendas), sugar skulls, marigolds, and a lively remembrance of deceased loved ones. It is a blend of indigenous Aztec beliefs and Catholic customs, reminding us that honoring the dead doesn’t have to be scary—sometimes it is a night of music, dance, and hearty food. Around the world, Halloween customs twist and turn into unexpected shapes. In Japan, Halloween has exploded into massive street parties where adults don elaborate costumes, from creepy to cute, showing off cosplay skills that could give Comic-Con a run for its money. Trick-or-treating? Not so much. Instead, it’s a showcase of creativity, chaos, and candy vending machines.

In the Philippines, the fading tradition of Pangangaluluwa involves groups dressed as spirits going door-to-door singing for souls in purgatory and requesting offerings. It is a hauntingly beautiful, if less commercial, echo of ancient Halloween’s spiritual roots, showing that beneath modern glitz, the heart of the holiday still beats with reverence and mystery. Italy’s celebration of All Saints’ Day and All Souls’ Day is more somber but rich with tradition, with regional festi-

vals and evenings lit by candles and “lumère” (pumpkin lights) to honor relatives. Yet, Halloween has also crossed into popular culture with costume parties and pumpkin decorations, symbolizing the fluidity of cultural festivals over time.

Psychologically, Halloween taps into something primal—the universal human fascination with death and the unknown. Dressing up allows a sanctioned break from reality, a playful exploration of identity and fears. For college students juggling the stress of academics, social pressures, and the journey of self-discovery, Halloween’s chance to “be someone else” for a night offers a unique release. It’s part catharsis, part rebellion, part celebration.

So next October 31st, when you slip into your costume, light a Jack-o’-lantern, or gather around a bonfire, remember you are partaking in a festival layered with millennia of meaning. Halloween is a tapestry woven from Celtic fire magic, Christian sanctity, medieval mischief, and global celebrations—a living holiday where life and death, fear and fun, the sacred and the profane dance in rhythm.

Halloween has always held a special place in my heart, even from my childhood days when it was all about the sugar rush, the thrill of trick-or-treating, and the simple joy of dressing up as whatever wildly imaginative (or down-

right ridiculous) character caught my fancy. Back then, Halloween was magic—a night when the ordinary rules dissolved, and the world became a playground of monsters, witches, and ghosts. But now that I’m grown, my appreciation has deepened and matured alongside me. I find wonder not just in the costumes or candy, but in being part of a tradition that stretches back millennia—a complex ritual that connects us to ancient people who shared stories under bonfires, faced their fears with masks, and honored the fragile balance between life and death. Understanding this long, intricate history adds a layer of richness to the holiday, transforming it from a night of playful escapism into a meaningful cultural and spiritual tapestry—one that invites us, every year, to join a timeless dance with mystery, community, and transformation. It is comforting, really, to know that in celebrating Halloween, we keep alive the stories and spirits of countless generations before us.

So, as you carve your pumpkin, hurl on that last-minute costume, or brave the haunted house, remember you’re tapping into an ancient human need to commune with the mysterious, confront fears, and celebrate the bittersweet dance between darkness and light. Halloween is an epic story written over millennia, and you are part of it.

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Gem found in the 7th

BY JACOB LEIBOWITZ

Sports Editor

With the 245th pick, in the 7th round of the 2025 NFL Draft, the Washington Commanders select Jacory Croskey-Meritt, running back out of the University of Arizona.

Croskey-Meritt, whose nickname is Bill, is a diamond in the rough running back out of the University of Arizona. Meritt only started 1 game in 2024, in which he recorded 13 carries for 106 yards and a score in a dominant win against New Mexico State.

Meritt was overlooked through-

out the 2025 NFL draft due to his eligibility issues at the beginning of his college career with the Alabama State Hornets. He only played 4 games for the Hornets; he was then redshirted to gain an extra year of eligibility. The stat keepers for the game accidentally recorded him playing the games, because he gave up his jersey number to his teammate. The redshirt season was then voided. In 2024, due to concerns over his eligibility issues, Arizona cut his season short since they did not want any repercussions.

Meritt entered the preseason as the 4th string running back. In week

1, Meritt then shone against the New York Giants, recording 10 carries for 82 yards and a touchdown. Bill then took over the starting running back position in week 3 against the Las Vegas Raiders after running back Austin Ekeler tore his ACL, ending his season.

Meritt's breakout game came in week 5, against the 4-1 Los Angeles Chargers. Meritt recorded 16 total touches, with 150 scrimmage yards and two scores on the ground, to roll past the Chargers 27-10.

Noah Nicholas is a Journalism major from Jefferson Township, attending County College of Morris.

Nicholas is a big-time football fan, and this is what he had to say, "I may be an Eagles fan, but this kid is electric, and coming out of the 7th round this kid has something to prove to the league. Meritt is going to have the whole league on watch, with the duo of him and Jayden Daniels."

Meritt's most recent game against the Chicago Bears carried the ball 17 times for 61 yards in a tough conference loss against the Bears. In week 7, Meritt looks to help the Commanders bounce back against the Dallas Cowboys on October 19th.

INTERNSHIPS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

ships. "It allows students the opportunity to be recognized for their work-based experiences in the form of transcript notation," Austin-DeFares said. "Whether it's credit bearing or noncredit, work experience is essential. This internship will give that to them."

CCM students are encouraged to explore their current employment for potential internship eligibility by contacting the college's Office of Career and Transfer Services. Once their job is authenticated, students submit their job description to the office to continue the process. Subsequently, a supervisor agreement will be sent to the employer, outlining the expectations and guidelines of the internship program. The employer's permission to serve as an internship host for the student is another important part of the qualification process. "What we'll do is verify," Austin-DeFares said. "That internship must be structured, meaning you have a start, an end, weekly hours, and you have a supervisor. All three parties have a role in making this a success."

Whether a student seeks to qualify for their existing job for internship credit or is interested in searching for prospects, the office team strives to provide supportive resources. Coaching students with interview preparation, resume building, and enhancing job search

skills are some ways the Office of Career and Transfer Services looks to elevate career-readiness for all CCM students, including internship candidates.

"The dedicated staff that we have here is full service," Austin-DeFares said. "We want you to have those professional skills and build that experience here while you're at school. What we want to do is broaden opportunities for all our students to get hands-on work experience in their field of study and to build resumes and their professional development skills while also being recognized for their work-based efforts ... whether they're transferring to a four-year school or going to enter the workforce."

Student participation in experiential learning opportunities acquired through internships is popular and on the rise. A survey of over 20,000 college students conducted by the National Association of Colleges and Employers, sponsored by job-search platform Indeed, reported that almost 70% of graduating seniors had engaged in an internship experience during their college careers. In a separate report published by NACE in August 2025, employers extended offers of full-time employment to 62% of their 2024 interns.

Bill Vavrik, senior manager of sales operations for multinational pharmaceutical company IBSA USA, in Parsippany, New Jersey, credits his successful career to an internship he undertook while attending the New Jersey Institute of

Technology in Newark, New Jersey.

Vavrik vividly recalls his internship interview with the hiring manager for Dendrite International in 2003. "He looks down at my resume, and he goes, 'I see you have no corporate experience. It reminds me of how I got my start,'" Vavrik said. "I got a call 2-3 weeks later asking me to start." The consequential launch of a 22-year career in the pharmaceutical industry had, at that moment, officially begun for him.

The opportunity to immerse himself in the workforce to gain career-relevant experience is what Vavrik values the most about his internship participation. "Learning things hands-on is a lot different than learning the principles or the theories in classrooms," he said. "The whole purpose of having an internship is to get real world experience. Within that three-month internship, I learned more than I did in a year and a half of school."

Vavrik looked at the temporary opportunity his summer internship provided to help figure out his future career goals. "You need to be a good fit for the internship as well as the internship being a good fit for you," Vavrik said. "It's like dating. You're like, OK, I'm going to give this a shot and get some real-world experience."

Rosemary Grant, director of the Office of Career and Transfer Services at CCM, shares a similar view of internships providing opportunities for career sampling. "An internship is a very low risk situation,

in terms of students not accepting full-time jobs, and companies not committing to hiring someone and then having it not work out. It really is a win-win on both sides," Grant said. "I would say students find that internships have equally either confirmed or affirmed the field they were in. Fifty percent of the time, they realize this is not what I want to do." Grant also noted that internships are equally valuable for students who are planning to transfer from a two-year college to a four-year college or university. Some four-year institutions require students to have already completed an internship to qualify for one at their school. "Many schools don't want to be the first. That's the best way I can describe it," Grant said. "They want someone who has been tested in terms of professionalism. Do they know how to show up? Do they know how to be an intern?"

Austin-DeFares emphasized the urgency of connecting with the college's Office of Career and Transfer Services to explore internship possibilities that allow a student to showcase their initiative, professionalism, and self-advocacy. "I can't advocate for our students enough to encourage them to come here," Austin-DeFares said. " Oftentimes, internships create that pathway and that pipeline for you to enter the workforce right from there. It really distinguishes you from the other candidates to go out there and say, 'I've had real world experience in my academic field. Now is the time. Just start.'"