

In This Issue...

The fourteenth issue of the *Agora* contains a sample of the 2004 writings of students in the LCSR program. As in past issues of the *Agora*, these papers cover a wide range of topics and opinions. At Lynchburg College we celebrate the vibrant discussion represented by these students' intellectual endeavors.

The first article, "Catch the Spirit!" by **Dr. Peggy Pittas** (Director of the Lynchburg College Symposium Readings and Senior Symposium Program) provides an overview of the purpose of and recent developments in the program she directs. Dr. Pittas also offers a clear explanation of the role of the *Agora* in this program.

Amy Boyles won the Kendall North Award for the best LCSR-related essay in this issue of the *Agora* with her essay, "Got the Happy Life? Try Justice." In her philosophy course, Amy considered the age-old frustration, expressed in "Why do the wicked prosper?" Amy's explanation for why the wicked are not necessarily prospering on the level of personal satisfaction is convincing as she draws logical connections between moral behavior and true contentment.

Another award winner is **Jennie Moran**, who wrote "Dreams and the Dreamers who Dream Them" in an honors composition course. Dr. Peggy Pittas chose to acknowledge Jennie's paper about the struggles of civil rights writers with the LCSR Program Director's Award for the best essay dealing with a social problem. Jennie uses Langston Hughes' poem, "Dream Deferred," to provide a context for discussing the ways that other African American writers have confronted the problem of racism.

Kevin Watson wrote "The Aspects of Death in the Work of Poe and Melville" in an American literature course. Kevin's discussion of the sensitive topic of death is straightforward and reassuring, based on the claim that the quality of our moral lives and characters determines the extent of our courage and confidence as we face death.

Another student of literature is **Adam Stanley**, who wrote "The Beginning of Archetypes: The End of Chaos." In this essay, Adam applies Northrop Frye's categorization of archetypes to the work of the Latin poet, Ovid, and to Hawaiian mythology. In the process, Adam discovers some remarkable parallels between these two very different cultures and is able to draw conclusions on the value of Frye's typology of archetypes.

The next three writers all address problems faced by women. In "The Re-Writing of Women in Society," **Michaela Knapp** explains some of the progress women writers have made since the Middle Ages in their quest to overcome social constraints and to be taken as seriously as their male counterparts. Similarly, **Matthew Scott Johnson**, a music major, considers female composers of the nineteenth century in his history essay, "The Recognition of Women Composers." When we think of famous composers, why do no women's names spring to mind? In "American Female Converts to Islam and Their Feeling of Liberation," **Elizabeth Giglio** provides a positive explanation for the motivation of American women who choose to convert to a faith that is stereotypically viewed as oppressive for women.

Aaron Lowe, another student of religion, has chosen an obscure but fascinating topic in "Shingon Priests and Self-Mummification." Here Aaron is exploring the fact that some forms of extremism exist in all religions; Aaron's example comes from the Shingon sect of Japanese Buddhism, which for centuries supported the practice of priests' self-mummification, a slow process of suicide intended to produce a corpse that would not decompose.

Another paper dealing with death, but in a much more light-hearted vein, is **Chelsea Garrison's** "Of Course, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead," which Chelsea wrote in an upper-level English course. Her analysis of Tom Stoppard's play in relation to Shakespeare's *Hamlet* throws light on the way both playwrights have developed their philosophical connections between theme and character.

In addition to the above samples of academic writing, this issue of the *Agora* also contains two poems, which were written in response to LCSR readings. In a Spanish class on Latin American Culture, **Amy Best** wrote "Know them as I would have liked to" in response to Siv Cedering's "Letters to the Astronomers." In the Artist and the War course, **Erin Frick** wrote "Bullet wounds, broken bones" as she considered an Emily Dickinson poem about death and a painting of a World War I field hospital scene.

The final section of this issue of the *Agora* is devoted to three papers written in Senior Symposium. In these assignments, students are required to synthesize their own personal opinions together with ideas they have encountered in the LCSR readings and in the Senior Symposium lectures. The first of these papers, "Affirmative Action " by **Jolenn Williams**, offers a justification for today's affirmative action policies in light of the centuries of legalized racism experienced by African Americans. The second, "Technological Invention and the Circumvention of Morals" by **Michael Spellings** deals with the way in which today's morals are being outstripped by advances in science and technology. Michael challenges us not to compromise our ethical stance as we enjoy the material benefits brought on by recent technological developments. The final essay in this volume is **Kimberly Wood's** "Liberal Arts Education." Here Kimberly echoes Dr. Peggy Pittas's claims in the first article as she provides evidence from a student's point of view that a liberal arts education is a wonderful asset for any young person who is facing career and life decisions at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

All these students have produced impressive pieces of writing that reflect their intellectual capability and communicative skills. However, it is also appropriate to thank the professors who supervised the writing of these papers in their classes: Dr. Leslie Friedman and Dr. Tom Brickhouse (Boyles), Professor Max Guggenheimer (Moran), Dr. Terri Hartman (Watson), Dr. Elza Tiner (Stanley and Knapp), Dr. Phil Stump (Johnson), Dr. Jeff Burke (Giglio and Lowe), Dr. Rich Burke (Garrison), Dr. Sharon Robinson (Best), Professor Barbara Rothermel (Frick), and Dr. Robert White (Williams, Spellings, and Wood).

The editor thanks all those who submitted papers to the *Agora* editorial committee, and we are sorry that the space limitations of this slim volume prevent us from including more essays. Nevertheless, this collection of writings in the 2005 *Agora* makes us optimistic about the possibility of reading similar stimulating pieces in future issues of the *Agora*.

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Faculty Editor