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Willamette community grapples with 2024 election results after Donald Trump's win

Amelia Hare • Staff Writer • Nov. 11

The “What Just Happened?” panel, featuring Willamette faculty and staff members such as Jennifer Martinez-Medina, Melissa Buis, Richard Ellis, Seth Cotlar and Wendy Boring, discussed the political climate leading up to and after the 2024 election and what Willamette students may expect from a Trump presidency.

The panel spoke at Cone Chapel on Nov. 11 in front of a crowd of about 50 people about Donald Trump's pattern of discrimination against people of color, women, immigrants and LGBTQIA+ people. While they noted that his presidency brings divisiveness to the forefront of the United States, these panelists agreed that there are steps people can take to build a healthy community and ways to understand how this presidency will impact students' lives.

Martinez-Medina, a politics, policy, law and ethics (PPLE) assistant professor, focused on the Latinx community and their influence during the election. Latinx voters for Trump increased by 14% from 2020, according to Martinez-Medina, stating the cause was due to “the evolution of strongman politics.” According to the European Center for Populism Studies, a “political strongman” is a type of authoritarian leader of a nation-state who usually has complete control over the military. Martinez-Medina used this concept to claim that this is why “a lot of communities that were consistently blue voted red,” with voters shifting towards the idolization of the ‘political strongman’ and the idea of him holding up traditional values.

Buis, a professor and chair of the PPLE department, discussed the implications of Trump's presidency on society, mostly regarding abortion rights. She stated that “white women did not deliver for Harris like they did for Biden” and emphasized the likelihood of Trump vetoing a national protection of the right to abortion. She also highlighted her concerns about an “unchecked Trump” through his Republican majority of the House and Senate.

Ellis, a Hatfield professor of PPLE, discussed the importance of working-class people, their lived re-



Faculty and staff members Martinez-Medina, Buis, Ellis, Cotlar and Boring speak at the “What Just Happened?” panel on Nov. 11.

Image by MAC CHILDERS

alities during this election, and the disconnect between the wealthy, the middle class and those who are impoverished. He also spoke about the absurdity of policy mandates — a policy that results in total compliance — and their illegitimacy, for example, a national abortion ban or rigid immigration laws. “Don't listen to any politician — or president — who tries to tell you they have a policy mandate. They don't.”

Cotlar, a history professor, asserted that a Trump administration is “text-book authoritarianism.” He believes that there will be “huge consequences” to a Trump presidency, like mass deportation, silencing of critics, destruction of NATO, lack of abortion rights and the abolishment of the Department of Education. Cotlar also expressed annoyance about people who vote Republican simply out of loyalty to the party. “If you ran a ham sandwich as a Republican candidate, it would get 40% of the vote. That is just the way our partisan politics work,” Cotlar claimed.

Boring, a history professor, focused on how these conflicts impact the community at Willamette,

including divisiveness on campus. She shared her own experience about how her body went into “fight or flight” during Cotlar's listing of consequences. She described the 2024 election as “a frenzy of high conflict, on steroids.” But she also highlighted the steps the Conversation Project, which focuses on the discussions between different beliefs, is taking to facilitate growth and communication between students. She stated that “healthy conflict is necessary for democracy,” and just like after the

“ We had a referendum on fascism, and we said yes. ”

—Seth Cotlar

2016 presidential election, it's important for educators to help facilitate productive conversations within the Willamette community. All of these panelists, moderated by Willamette's Gender Resource and Advocacy Center Director Lisa Logan, stressed how crucial organizing is at this time and agreed that tools are available for students, even though “we had a referendum on fascism, and we said yes,” according to Cotlar.

People who attended the panel, like Addison Thompson ('28), thought that “the discussion was well done and put together nicely.” Even if it didn't change her mind on

IN THIS ISSUE

News—pg. 2

- Salem's city budget

Lifestyles—pg. 3

- Cooking
- Wild turkeys
- D&D club
- Bistro open mic night

Opinions—pg. 5

- Exes should be friends
- BookTok

Sports & Rec—pg. 6

- Women's golf
- Ziplining
- NIL

the topics at hand, Thompson said she enjoyed the discussion about the broader politics of the recent election.

Following the election results, some students have felt fear, anger, anxiety and exhaustion. Some students, like Kate McLellan ('28), told the Collegian outside the event that they noticed changes to the atmosphere of campus in the days after the election and described it as “empty and hopeless.”

Many Willamette students shared their reactions to election results either by posting thoughts of their own or reposting works online, along with participating in discourse with friends. Many professors have given grace to students whose mental health has been impacted by the election. There are faculty members who can meet with students individually to discuss issues beyond the election as well.

However, the panelists argued, it is under times of anger and sadness that these feelings can be fueled into productive conversations about change and the ability to foster a supportive community at Willamette. This sentiment was highlighted in a university-wide email from President Stephen Thorsett and Provost Carol Long sent on election day, too, which stated, “Democracy thrives on participation.”

Salem city budget faces nearly \$18M deficit

Karmen Zhao • Staff Writer • Nov. 16

The city of Salem is facing a staggering \$17.7 million deficit in its city budget, prompting urgent calls for budget cuts and a reevaluation of city spending priorities. Funding solutions are being actively discussed as the city scrambles to plan a comeback for the next few years. Among other possibilities, a shutdown of the library is on the line.

Virginia Stapleton, a Salem city councilor, former council president, and active Democratic candidate running against Republican Kevin Mannix for the Oregon Legislature's House of Representatives District 21 (Salem and Keizer), has seen the deep workings inside the development of Salem's budget and was able to provide an overview explaining Salem's budget deficit. Before the 1990s, tax rates were set and based on what the city's prospective achievements would be for the following year. Yearly property tax rates differed because property taxes fund local government. Previously, the local government could set the property tax rates as needed to meet an ideal revenue. However, this system was not popular among the people

of Salem. Oregon ballot measures 5, 50 and 47 worked together to limit the local government's ability to raise property taxes on residents of Oregon.

The Salem, Oregon Revenue Task Force was established on Dec. 11, 2023 and requested members to bring forth ideas that could increase the city budget's revenue. On the Revenue Task Force is Willamette's own William Smaldone, the E. J. Whipple professor of history and a long-time active participant in Salem's political matters, including his time as city council president and his service on Salem's Budget Committee. Smaldone estimates that the deficit within the budget will grow larger and therefore result in a reduction of city services and layoffs of staff working for the city. Outlining the city's current general fund, he explained that there is about \$188 million paying for "police and fire, park maintenance [and] the library. It pays for services that people expect from civilized life."

Smaldone stated that the general fund services are paid for primarily — but not solely — by property tax revenue, but property tax is no longer a viable method to fill the general fund. Due to this, the city has issued more fees to the people of Salem. Operational fees have increased, but there are only so many charges the city can create before they have exhausted all options.

Looking for a long-term solution to fix the budget deficit, the Revenue Task Force came up with the solution to move towards a progressive income tax in hopes that wealthier people would pay a higher

amount of taxes than lower-income residents of Salem. This progressive income tax would need to be voted for by the people of Salem in May of 2025. Smaldone noted that if this tax were to be implemented, there would be a lengthy process to get it set up and functioning.

Currently, the city council is debating the possible closure of the Salem Public Library. However, there are other possible ways for the city to make this money without the shutdown of the library. "You can go to the public and ask for a three to five year levy. You can raise the property tax beyond 3% if the public votes for it to be in place for three to five years. That would be called a 'Local Option Property Tax Levy,'" said Smaldone. This plan would be taken up with the public next May.

As a part of the levy, the city council would also be asking the public to agree on the progressive income tax after three to five years of the property tax increase to rid all unnecessary regressive taxes (a set amount of taxes that all people within Salem pay regardless of wealth status). This increase is framed as a tax reform. Because this would not be a flat payroll tax, the tax rates would depend on the taxpayer's individual income.

What sets the city of Salem apart from other Oregon cities is its nearly 11,000 acres of city property owned by the state. Because of this ownership, these buildings do not contribute any money to the city



Front view of Salem City Hall on Nov. 14.
Image by PATRICIA KREPEL

budget via property taxes. Recently, Oregon has considered paying the Salem city budget a "Payment in Lieu of Taxes," where these buildings would pay a flat fee. The local delegation within the state assembly is currently working on this plan, which is estimated to bring in \$5 million to \$6 million.

"If the levy fails in May, you're gonna have massive cuts," Stapleton concluded. "I wouldn't be surprised if the library gets shut down. You're going to have to cut a fire station or maybe two. ... There will be longer response times for EMS." This decision will ride on the shoulders of the voters of Salem in May 2025. Until then, this plan will be finalized and polished within the city council before its presentation to the public.

 An advertisement for a radio show. It features an illustration of two people, a man and a woman, wearing headphones and speaking into microphones. The text reads "START YOUR OWN RADIO SHOW!" and "Join KWU for a consistent radio slot or a one-off show!". A QR code is present, along with a URL: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSd6qPuwf-ZznpalvcoEhFMT9V8kniR5_rJVXYGr9_jDIyzevA/viewform

Bearcats' best grocery stores, easy dish ideas and holiday goodies!

Maya Darski • Staff Writer • Nov. 14

'Tis the season for the holidays ... and finals for the Bearcats! Meals are an important part of staying healthy during these hectic weeks, but it can be difficult to figure out where to get which items and what to prepare. Amid busy schedules and breaks, what are students cooking up? For those staying at home over the holidays, those

just starting off living on their own, or those who want some easy recipe ideas, here is some inspiration for you!

Francesca Finch ('26) is a big fan of WinCo because "they are open 24 hours and it's so cheap!" Some essential items on Finch's grocery list are eggs, cream cheese, bagels, vegetarian or vegan sausage and frozen

blueberries. Alternatively, Shouvik Ahmed ('26) goes to El Torito Meat Market for meat and brings some must-have spices such as coriander, cumin, garlic and garam masala from back home in Bangladesh.

A Salem local, Juliana Ha ('25), likes to go to Wing Wa Oriental Market and Fred Myers for her groceries. Ha likes to have Hawaiian

Sweet Rolls and other kinds of ready-made bread when she wants to save time. In Eugene, Oregon, where English professor Janet Cho lives, she goes to Whole Foods for vegetables, Costco for bulk packages to help get through the week, and Sunrise Market for Asian ingredients.
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The Safeway at 1265 Center St. NE on Nov. 14, 2024.
Image by KEENAN YOSHIKAWA

Even when she has nothing to buy, Cho explained she goes to Trader Joe's because she "feels at home there and it gives [her] this peace of mind." However, Ruby Holland ('25) claims that no other store can beat Grocery Outlet because of its cheaper prices and interesting seasonal foods. Holland's weekly routine is to take "2 cups of dry rice, cook that up, then scoop the rice

into 1-cup portions and wrap them up and freeze them." Whenever she needs them in the week, all she needs to do is take one of the frozen portions of rice, microwave it for two minutes, and "it's good as fresh!" She likes to make onigiri or rice balls with the cooked rice.

Other go-to meals include Lydia Hoffner's ('27) tacos, which she likes to prepare because she can make them exactly how she likes them. When Cat Thomas ('26) cooks for herself, she "usually goes for something that has minimal ingredients and that is a comfort food. For [her], that would be mac and cheese." When saving time, professor

Cho likes to make different kinds of soups from a variety of vegetables, such as pumpkin, carrot and asparagus. She explained, "As a Korean, my go-to dishes are Korean, but when I invite someone over, I like to add a bit of flair to my own cooking. I like to use ingredients and spices that are not native to Korean cuisine." This Thanksgiving break, she is making Tom Yum soup — a type of Thai hot and sour soup — for her guests.

Whether from online recipes or family traditions, Bearcats are finding creative and diverse dishes to cook during the holiday season. When baking, Holland's go-to is Sally's Baking Addiction recipe website. Although the steps are more complicated, she likes to make the yule log cake from the website.

Other Bearcats lean into cultural traditions, with Thomas enjoying her family's tradition of making Swedish coffee cake, which is a type of bread eaten with a cup of coffee. It is special for Thomas because "it's a traditional Swedish recipe that my family still passes down. The smell reminds me of the holidays." Marylander Mitch Septoff

('26) likes to eat his grandma's matzo ball soup, a traditional Jewish dish, and traveling out of European tradition and into Southeast Asia, Ahmed enjoys his family's pitha during the holidays, which is a type of food common in Bangladesh and India usually made from steamed, fried or griddled batter or dough.

From the best grocery store to go-to recipes, the students of Willamette have a lot of passion when it comes to food. Cooking and eating connect friends and family together and are an important part of individual identity. This winter, try cooking something new!

- Mitch Septoff**
Grandma's matzo ball soup:
- One pack of matzo, store-bought
 - Two eggs
 - Two tablespoons of neutral oil
 - Several medium-sized potatoes, carrots, and a bag of frozen peas
 - Potatoes
 - 4 cups of chicken
 - Salt, pepper
 - Secret ingredient? (he couldn't remember the last ingredient)

Wild turkey population thrives in Salem urban areas

Robin Linares • News Editor • November 2023

As the leaves begin to fall and the weather starts to change, some may take notice of the flock of turkeys meandering through the neighborhood. While they can often be spotted year-round, it can still be shocking to have such personal interactions with wildlife in one's backyard. One turkey even made it onto Willamette's campus in February 2022, successfully avoiding capture by Campus Safety.

In many suburban areas of Salem, including around Bush's Pasture Park, some members of the community have seen flocks of up to 20 turkeys. Mary, a community member, described her first turkey sighting experience when a similarly sized flock found its way to her driveway. "We had heard about them from other people in the neighborhood and in other parts of Salem, but that was the first time I'd seen them in our neighborhood," Mary explained. "I would be curious as to why they are suddenly showing up in residential areas, and what is causing that."

To answer that question, one must first look back to when turkeys were introduced to Oregon. According to the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW), turkeys were not native to Oregon until two subspecies, Rio Grande and Merriam, were introduced from various states. Since then the turkey population has flourished in Oregon, with estimates of 40,000 to 45,000 turkeys now inhabiting the state.

Mikal Cline, the upland game bird coordinator at the ODFW, explained that these increases in the turkey population had recreational benefits as it allowed for more relaxed regulations regarding hunting licenses for turkeys in rural areas. However, she acknowledged the unintended consequences the increasing population has had on urban areas like Salem. "When you start talking about turkeys in town, hunting is not an option," Cline said. "Turkeys are really good at finding easy meals and easy living, so they have adapted really well to living in town."

Due to their lack of natural predators in these regions, these flocks have been free to wander as they please and are often spotted in local parks by members of the community. According to an email correspondence with Trevor Smith, the public information officer for the city of Salem, the city parks and recreation department doesn't have a turkey management program, but does their best not to disrupt them in their habitat. "Periodically we will delay mowing activities in our natural areas when we notice wild birds nesting," Smith stated.

While many community members seem to enjoy the turkey presence, for some residents these flocks can become more of a nuisance. According to the ODFW document, Considerations for Coexisting with Wild Turkeys, turkeys have sometimes caused dam-

age to gardens, shingles, decks and cars through "pecking, scratching, and defecating." One of the noted short-term solutions includes hazing turkeys, or making them less comfortable by chasing them off the property, spraying them with a garden hose or having bright lights near roosting locations. However, before any action is taken a homeowner needs to get a hazing permit.

While the concept of getting a permit to chase a turkey off of one's property can seem odd, Cline provided a bit more context. "We're not just talking about turkeys. We're talking about all wildlife and getting permission to harass wildlife protects the landowner from getting cited by law enforcement because it is illegal to harass wildlife," Cline said. These permits are free, and many at the ODFW are happy to give them these permits as it's one of the best strategies to mitigate the turkey population within city limits.

Cline's other recommendation for homeowners is to be mindful of what food might be easily accessible to these flocks, as it can incentivize them to stay while also posing a danger to

the turkeys themselves. "Especially when talking about artificial feed or feed that isn't naturally in the environment ... that concentrates these animals into groups where they normally wouldn't be," Cline explained. "It makes them dependent on humans and vulnerable to diseases."

Ultimately, Cline emphasized that while it's important for humans to respect local wildlife in the area, it's best to admire them from afar for the safety of both parties. "We all want to be closer to wildlife and to have those interactions, but it's not in the best interests of the animals," Cline said.

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Art by ELI FUKUJI

Rolling the dice: Inside the Mill Stream Adventurers Guild

Aubrey Tuttle • Staff Writer • Nov. 14



An illustration of a dwarven wizard, an orcish monk, and a tiefling bard.
Art by BASIL ALLEN

When a group of first-years faced the summer before their inaugural year of college, they looked at the club listings and saw a gap in Willamette's reper-

toire: a D&D club. Looking to fill this empty spot, club leaders like Elizabeth Loveland ('28) wrote a constitution over the summer to build a club from the ground up. The group, having met only once during a Bearcat Day, spent all summer communicating online and sorting out the details of the organization now known as the Mill Stream Adventurers Guild. When they finally met in person again at the start of the term, the club leaders were ready to bring the club to the public.

The product of this hard work is a club that functions like no other on campus. There are no regular meetings, only a once-a-term guild meeting that covers updates for the term.

In lieu of traditional gatherings, the club stands in as a resource to its members, helping them with their individual projects. Loveland, now the club's president, says the club is

more of a "catalyst for what the DMs and campaigns want to do," providing them with the resources that they need to successfully launch and continue their adventures.

Dungeon masters, more commonly known as DMs, reach out to the club for supplies and often players, and players can reach out to find a campaign that is to their liking. Campaigns are individually-run groups that are playing the game together for one or multiple sessions. While campaigns don't require the club, they can lean on it as a resource — the guild can help students realize the full potential of their creativity, keeping DMs from stressing too much about finding like-minded people who are excited to join them on their quest.

By acting as the middleman between the DM and the casual player, the Millstream Adventurers hope to bring students together to help foster a community for D&D players at Willamette. The club's mission is to make the game accessible to more people, spreading the joy of D&D to all who seek it. As Love-

land said, "D&D is hard if you do not have the resources, so we are just bringing those resources to campus." To carry out this mission, club leaders do their best to not only provide the platform and resources to connect students with one another, but also facilitate the campaign's gatherings to ensure players have a place to meet and follow through with their well-planned expeditions.

Having only been in session for one term, The Mill Stream Adventurers Guild hopes to continue to grow. The main question that arises from their once-a-term guild meetings is how to improve, so they are working on expanding their reach and doing their best to cater to the wants and needs of their members. The guild's first term in action is quickly coming to a close, and in this short time period, the club has gained over 40 members.

Current club leadership is hopeful for the guild's future as well as its potential as a community on campus; "You can do anything if you roll the dice high enough," said Loveland.

Sparking creativity and performance at the Bistro Open Mic

Violeta Basenko • Staff Writer • Nov. 14

The typical smell of coffee and pastries filled the Bistro during its Open Mic Night the evening of Monday, Nov. 11, but even more noticeable were the palpable emotions each artist expressed through their pieces. The event, hosted by Poetry Club, was a great opportunity for both novice and more advanced writers to share their poems, songs, prose and other forms of creative work. While this wasn't the Poetry Club's first Open Mic, this time the event was organized in collaboration with The Mill, which broadly promotes literary art on campus. Their combined efforts attracted more participants, filling the evening with a diverse array of creative writing.

Anyone wishing to read their work could sign up on the spot — even guests who hadn't originally planned to participate. "I think an informal setting creates a safe space for artists to share their work in a relaxed environment. Everyone is incredibly supportive and kind, which makes it a genuinely wonderful place to be," shared Lilly Thies ('26), head of The Mill Club and one of the event's co-organizers. Those who shared their work first inspired others to step up and share as well, with a large line formed near the regis-

tration table towards the middle of the event. Some participants read several of their works, while others admitted that it was their first time performing on stage. Regardless, everyone had a chance to showcase their talent.

Before presenting, artists experienced a broad range of emotions from fear to uncertainty, yet everyone was confident by the time they took the stage. "My heart always races. I get really nervous because I'm scared of putting myself out there," shared Valentine Wells ('27), the vice president of Poetry Club. "But it turns out fine all the time. I feel good when I'm in front of a crowd. It's frightening, but I feel calmer there than I do in that uncertain in-between stage." After each reading, the audience snapped their fingers in support instead of clapping loudly, creating quiet applause. It helped to maintain an overall atmosphere of understanding and literary calm in the room.

Not only poems were presented at Open Mic, but also excerpts from prose works, monologues from theater performances and even original songs. Zelda Stein ('27), who performed an original song, explained how she comes up with her songs: "I have so many

voice memos where I write poetry and then add a melody to it, or I hear a melody in my head and add words to it. Going up to a stage isn't something I'm usually afraid of, but at the Open [Mic], I decided to challenge myself and sing on the spot." She rose up to that challenge, adding a musical touch and a sense of rhythm to the overall atmosphere of the evening.

Events like the Open Mic not only provide a venue to share one's talent, but also boost student's confidence in performing their work. Watching young writers grow can provide inspiration and motivation to try writing your own short piece. Additionally, "It's beautiful to see people face their fears," said Stein, encouraging anyone hesitant about participating in a similar open mic event. "Stay open and willing to try — taking that leap builds confidence and earns admiration for your courage."

Wells added

a final piece of advice: "Remember, when you take that step [of performance], you're not just doing it for yourself. You're doing it for the people around you." If you have a desire to develop your creative writing skills or you simply love listening to poetry and reciting poems or monologues, consider joining the Poetry Club or The Mill. Following their news and coming to future events could be a great way to spread your creativity!



Rowan Spangler ('27) reading at the Open Mic at 7 p.m. on Monday, Nov. 11, 2024 in the Bistro.

Image by CARAMIA CHRISTENSEN

Opinion: Exes should be friends

Mrinmayee Kulkarni • Staff Writer • Nov. 1

As the days get colder and the drinks get hotter, long-distance couples all across the country look forward to cozying up with their special someone over the holidays. For many, this is their first time seeing each other since heading off to college, and while most return to school in high spirits, an unfortunate few will sport puffy eyes and distant expressions.

Intentionally distancing yourself from a person you were close to is a hard and difficult task. Biologically, we grieve the loss of a potential life partner. Emotionally, we grieve the loss of our best friend. After a breakup, most people go no-contact for months on end, not wanting to see or hear from the person they used to love. But why? While some disconnect is necessary, completely cutting out a valuable — assuming they were valuable — person from your life feels like a waste. Given some time, most exes can (and should!) become friends again.

Primarily, partners will have gotten to know each other very well. In most cases, no one knows you

better than your significant other. After a breakup, you still share common interests, inside jokes and special activities. Maybe there's a certain show that you and your ex watched together that has a new season coming out. Reach out to them! No one else understands that show like the two of you do, so why not keep connecting over platonic topics like that? In any good relationship, there's usually a foundation of strong friendship. After a breakup, it might be a good idea to look past the romantic pain and nurture that bedrock of friendship.

It is common for a breakup to occur and lots of time to pass — months, maybe even years. Then, if your paths cross again, you see each other as new people with no current attachment to each other. This is often when it feels okay to be friends again, but all of the previous momentum is gone. You no longer know each other's favorite color or hobby. The two of you are unrecognizable to each other. If you know your emotions will be okay in the long run, why not start now? Give yourself a week, a month, to grieve the loss of what you had and look toward what's possible now by continuing to invest in a friendship with your ex. This way, you are able to maintain the strong connection and transform it into something that is viable long term.

A more problematic issue with staying friends is when the two of you begin meeting new people. At first, it can be incredibly hard. It's hard to watch your ex look at others the way they used to look at you. Knowing the brain that unconditionally cared for you now thinks someone else is

cute and funny is a challenge, even for the initiator of the breakup. It can feel isolating, like you are being abandoned. Conversely, it's difficult to stop yourself from comparing other prospects to your ex, especially if the breakup was caused by reasons unrelated to them as a person. This is when it's important to remember that moving on is a part of life. It's bound to happen and it's good that the two of you are able to find people more suited to you.

However, if you're friends with your ex and they start seeing other people, it's okay to take some space from them. Trying to stay in touch while facing these emotions can be a burden. Use that space to push them out of your mind and busy yourself with more important tasks. This way, you can satisfy yourself in your own life and avoid being jealous of theirs. Dating intertwines platonic and romantic aspects. Separating the two and tossing out the romance requires labor, but if you value that person's presence in your life, it is worth the effort.

Additionally, know when to step back. If your ex gets a new partner, you shouldn't necessarily involve yourself in their life in the same capacity that you are now. Their new person might be uncomfortable with your ex staying in touch with you. Let them know that you are happy for them and that in order to respect their new relationship you might have to retreat several paces. If need be, block them. Nothing is worse than pestering your ex when they are dating someone new. Leave one channel of communication open as you are still



An ex couple hugging as friends.
Art by SAMANTHA LANG

friends and they might need or want to contact you for whatever reason. However, be mature and understand that if you care for them as a person, it is hypocritical to disturb their newfound happiness.

Teenage (and young twenties) love is such a strong, passionate emotion. Many people look back and use "I was young" as a reason for so many decisions. Don't let that be you. Don't let the stinging pain of youth cost you a friendship with a genuinely good human. Look past the heart-wrenching feelings and see what could be. Depending on how strong your emotions are, you may need more time. But it's important to see someone as more than just a romantic partner. If you and your ex enjoyed each other's company, even if the relationship didn't work out, give friendship another go.



Opinion: BookTok and the future of media literacy

Maisy Clunies-Ross • Staff Writer • Nov. 15

In the increasingly fast-paced and hyper-commodified digital age, where nuance has been traded for rage bait, where long-form storytelling falls at the feet of slime and Subway Surfers, books become a rare respite. Not so, on BookTok. BookTok is a growing community on TikTok and other social media platforms, which primarily consists of creators holding up stacks of their favorite books, with brief quotes or summaries to recommend them to viewers. There are hauls, reading vlogs, skits and book recaps. In many ways, BookTok is a beautiful

development.

It's a huge community, amassing 107 billion views globally and 40 million posts as of 2024, all bonding over their shared interest and encouraging each other to read more and speak openly about their passion. BookTok has encouraged many young readers to pick up thoughtful and well-crafted books like "Pride and Prejudice," "To Kill a Mockingbird" and "The Secret History" that they may have otherwise disregarded. BookTok is also primarily made up of women, providing many with the opportunity to

talk about literature without fear of being lectured or belittled.

Additionally, BookTok has taken on a role in many women's paths to sexual liberation. Fiction allows people to explore their desires from a safe distance, and BookTok gives readers a space to express interest in social and sexual taboos where they are supported rather than judged. Many of the most popular BookTok books are written by women. In a world where women's sexuality is often depicted and controlled by men, being able to be sexual on their own terms and through

the lens of their pleasure — not their objectification — is a cathartic and subversive act.

Many of BookTok's critics are opposed to it for the very reasons it is revolutionary. There's a lot of puritanism and fearmongering present in many people's initial response to BookTok. People are posturing as if women being horny means the imminent death of media literacy. However, outside of this poor-faith criticism, there are some genuine problems with BookTok.

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Most visibly concerning is BookTok's overconsumption. A lot of the content focuses on owning books as a key component of being a reader, highlighting the aesthetic bliss of literary consumption via shots of color-coordinated bookshelves, messy but tasteful piles of novels, and stacks of books to show what voracious readers the creators are. Like in many fan communities,

loyalty to one's interest is proven by investment in it — in this case, hundreds of dollars worth of investment. The implication is that to be a reader — a real reader, not just a person who reads — one must own lots of books.

Not only does this overconsumption create a wasteful culture, but it perpetuates a financial hurdle for an activity already fraught with socioeconomic barriers. There are still significant racial and economic gaps in reading performance and fewer people of color in higher education, specifically in positions of power in academia. A culture of exclusion in a supposedly welcoming space could further enforce the idea that being a

reader is limited to upper-class people. Many members of BookTok have expressed frustration at the elitism in literary spaces, considering many romance readers are not taken as seriously as their counterparts in other genres; however, creating a monetarily-dependent social stratum is equally discriminatory.

BookTok's other primary fault is the tendency for many creators to promote consumption of literature as an act that can be separated from interpretation. It isn't stupid or immoral to read for pleasure, but refusing to think critically about a work on the basis of a "let people enjoy things!" mentality is a dangerous ideology to promote.

Regardless of the reader's intent, themes and implicit messaging in books can impact both individuals and larger cultural trends. This mindset treats books as if they are fast food, made for easy consumption, to be devoured and moved on from without further thought. Yet, one cannot be sustained on fast food alone. Many insatiable readers would be better off sinking their teeth into a metaphorical brisket, something that requires effort, ne-

cessitates gnawing on gristle, which may provide less instantaneous pleasure but proves to be a more fulfilling experience.

Aside from the harm the anticriticism mentality has on individuals, it also ties into a larger shift towards anti-intellectualism, where encouragement to use logic is viewed as elitist and any critique of popular media is treated as killjoy pessimism. As book bans become more widespread and "anti-critical race theory" legislation prohibits teachers from discussing historical events, all in favor of limiting information and sustaining the conservative propaganda machine, BookTok could be a force for change. Creators could encourage viewers to read banned books, support local libraries, and be thoughtful about all of the media they consume. Women who have learned more about themselves and their own bodies from BookTok could use their platform to advocate for their bodily autonomy. Escapist media is a necessity for many, but it must coexist with action. Now, more than ever, BookTokers must use their platform for collective good.



Reading is so outdated these days ...
Art by ALYSSA DIGGDON

Saida Seelig reflects on being Wgolf's last player

Kat Thornton • Staff Writer • Nov. 15

Entering the 2024-25 school year and golf season, Saida Seelig ('26) went from being a member of a five-person team the previous year to being the only Willamette women's golfer.

Seelig, a Portlander, played for a highly competitive team at Ida B. Wells High School before attending Willamette. Golfing runs in this Bearcat's blood — their grandpa and dad are both passionate players, and have shared a love of the sport with Saida for years. Upon graduating highschool, Saida's dad had one wish for them. "My dad was like, 'I don't care what you do, I don't care what you major in ... I just want you to be on a collegiate golf team.' I said, 'Guess I gotta get grinding then.'" That grind led Saida to Willamette.

Now, the "team" aspect has been diminished. "The whole point of coming to Willamette was to be on a golf team. Now it's like, 'Oh, I don't have a golf team,'" they said. Despite the downsides, Seelig feels they have benefitted from this solo fall season. Without other teammates, they have been able to get more individualized coaching. They also practice with the men's team, which narrowly lost out on a fifth consecutive conference championship last spring. Seelig explained, "It's cool to be around the men's team because their team atmosphere is much more competitive than the women's team atmosphere was."

So what has kept Seelig play-

ing on a team of one? In their words, it all comes back to the passion one has to have in order to play at the college level. "It's hard to be part of a sports team when you just don't feel the passion. That's so much of what athletics is, is passion." In regards to the two of their former teammates who quit this year, Seelig said: "Their passions lay elsewhere and now they have way more time to pursue those things, which I think is the healthiest way to go about it." One of Seelig's other teammates, Anushka Srivastav ('24), graduated in the spring, and another was injured and has been unable to play.

In many ways, not having a full team doesn't change the sport. Seelig explained: "I'm still focusing on my swing, I'm still focusing on how I manage myself around the course. So things for me haven't really changed when it comes to competition." But without a team score, Seelig misses out on the competitive vibe they crave. "It does make it less pressure when you don't have a team score. ... I'm very competitive; I seek out that pressure, so it can be a little disappointing."

Seelig is aware of the unique challenges to recruiting people for a women's team in a sport that is historically male-dominated. "There's not as much fierce competition on the women's side just because historically [golf has] been a male-dominated sport. So by the time you get to

college you've got people who aren't very competitive, or maybe they are competitive in spirit but they don't have the scores to back it up. Or you have people who are really good and those people are gonna go to George Fox, which is the No. 1 team."

One idea Seelig has for Willamette is the creation of a golf club. They think that it could be a great way to open accessibility to the sport and maybe even get undiscovered talent on the Bearcat radar.

Meanwhile, Seelig will be at the golf course, where they spend

much of their free time when not hosting shows on KWU radio or playing the tuba for the Willamette Orchestra.

Whether or not the golf team will be able to recruit more people in the coming years remains unclear. For Seelig, "It's hard to be uncertain about the future of the program because once I go, there's a chance the program just dies. ... That would suck — especially at a time when golf should be more accessible to women than ever."



Saida Seelig golfing at the Tall Timbers invitational on Oct. 28, 2024.
Photo courtesy of the Willamette Athletics Site

Bearcats brave zip course, find a friendly community

Maya Darski • Staff Writer • Nov. 24

Willamette's Outdoor Program hosted a day trip Nov. 3 to Pumpkin Ridge for a zip lining tour. Student attendees spent the day bonding while zipping from one course to another.

The Pumpkin Ridge Tour, a zip course south of Portland, is typically \$85 to \$95 per person. However, behind-the-scenes efforts by ASWU and the ODP brought the price down to just \$60.

ODP Logistics Manager and trip leader Blue Kalmbach ('27) stated that for the zip tour, along with all other trips, research was done on zip lining companies around the area and their costs. Then, a budget proposal was sent to ASWU.

ASWU provides the funding for trips and covers up to a certain cost, allowing excursions to become a little more affordable. "We get to take students on experiences that they would not normally get," Kalmbach remarked. "Providing that experience is one of the core reasons for ODP."

At Pumpkin Ridge, the zip lines are connected from tree to tree.

As students zipped one after the other, the ground got lower and the trees taller, each at a higher altitude than the one before. Sometimes, students had to cross wobbly suspension bridges to get from one tree to another, with the "Twilight-esque" forest expanding out before their very eyes as they reached the platforms.

Anya Olsson ('28) found "the different levels of ziplining and the suspension bridges to be really fun," while Chloe Maki ('28) enjoyed being able to see the beautiful view of Pumpkin Ridge from the trees. "You don't normally get to be on top of such a tall tree and see the valley from that perspective," she said.

ODP Media Manager and trip leader Rya Hirsch ('27) pointed out the significance of the tour. "It shows that ODP is not just hiking and camping but we do a variety of outdoor recreational activities as well."

This point, "zip lining, not camping," is the exact reason why Becca Bryan ('28) decided to go on the trip. She is not much of a hiker

or camper but still wanted to enjoy the outdoors. She found that because "you don't have to walk in between each course," the trip was more convenient.

After the zip lining course, the students gathered to drink hot chocolate and chat. Kalmbach's goal for this trip was to provide a "community atmosphere," which participants confirmed was successful.

Morgan Watenpaugh ('27) reflected, "I get nervous with who I'm going to interact with, but every time I go [on a trip], those worries are quelled because everyone in ODP trips have been really nice. It's nice to just have pleasant interactions with people."



Students enjoyed the opportunity to go zip lining through Pumpkin Ridge with Willamette's Outdoor Program on Nov. 3. Image by MAYA DARSKI

As for doing another trip to the Pumpkin Ridge Zip Tour in the future, Hirsch said that it "depends on the feedback we get but ... it seems we will do it again."

Can Bearcats make bucks off NIL?

Arlo Craft • Staff Writer • Nov. 13



Bearcat merch on display at the bookstore, November 2024. Image by IRIS MCCLURE

Willamette's Department of Athletics announced in August that every Bearcat athlete with a name now has the chance to make a buck off university merchandise that features their Name, Image, and Likeness (NIL). A full sporting season has passed since the beginning of Willamette's NIL program, and athletes now have a feel for the process.

A number of companies of-

fer NIL merchandise. Willamette's comes from a partnership with Influxer, a vendor whose website boasts merch for student-athletes from over 400 universities.

Ryan Doyle ('27), a goalkeeper for the men's soccer team, said agreeing to capitalize off his name was a quick and easy process. "In DIII it's a bit different than DI. ... I signed up through a link and I put in my name, graduation year

and sport, and they just created it for me."

Doyle was quick to emphasize the differences between divisions — some students in DI are making millions of dollars off their names, while he says the market for DIII merch consists almost entirely of athletes' families.

"You can make a bit of pocket money. \$75-100 here or there, if some of your family buys some. But it's not gonna be a job in Division III," Doyle said.

Like other students, DIII players turn to jobs both on and off campus. But the "work-practice" balance, as Doyle put it, is hard for many student-athletes. Busy practice schedules mean that those with jobs might not be able to work as many hours as they'd like, and those without jobs might be hard-pressed to find them.

The Department of Athletics wrote in August that as part of their agreement "Influxer will also provide education and training on marketing, entrepreneurship, and personal branding" to student-athletes. For Bearcats, this really just looks like doing the advertising alone. "Basi-

cally ... you just send the link out to your friends and family who want to buy it," according to Doyle.

"I sent [the Influxer link] to my mom," he recalled. "She went, 'That shit's overpriced.'" A t-shirt bearing a Bearcat's name runs the buyer \$40 plus shipping.

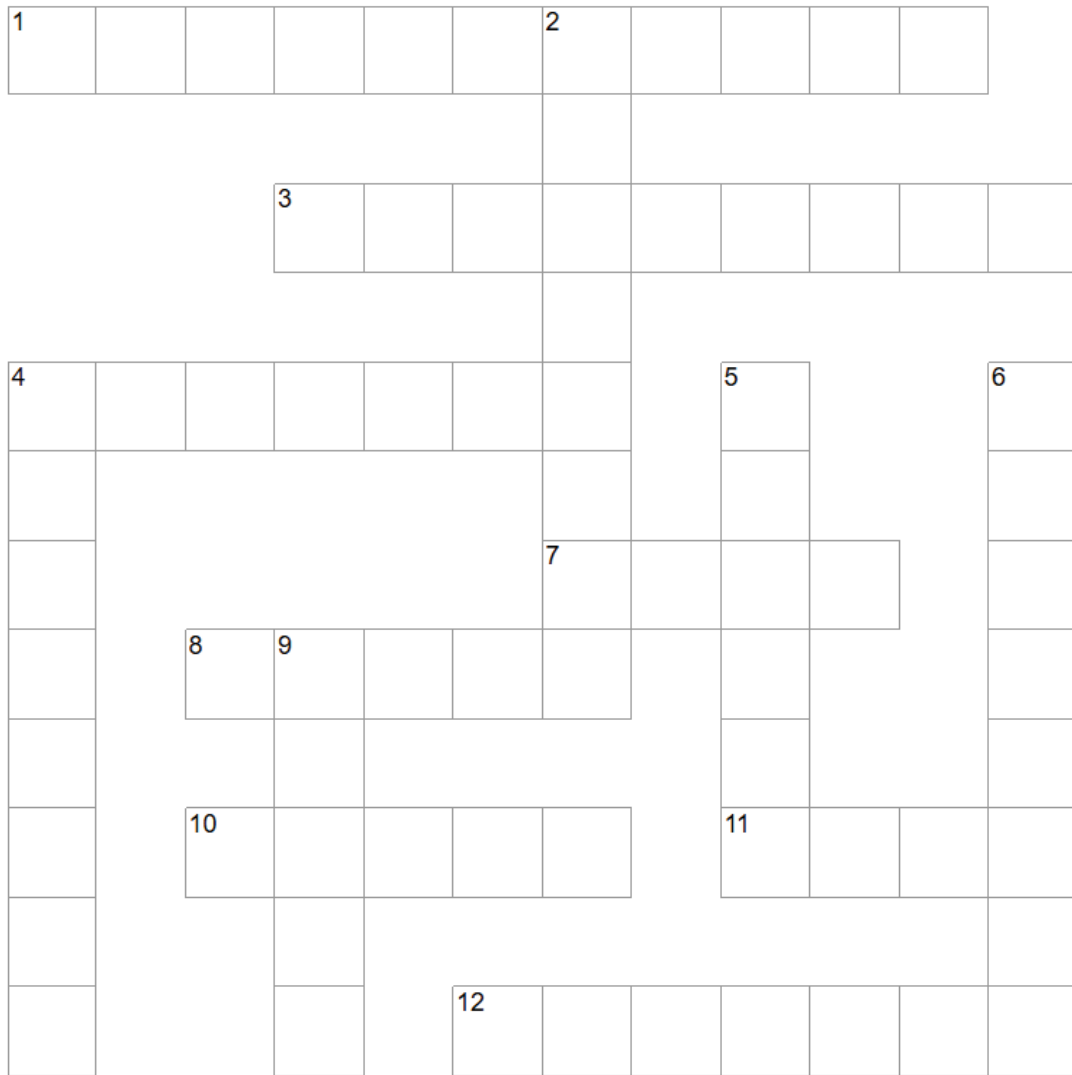
Regardless, Doyle was excited by the opportunity. "Every kid wants to see their last name on the back of a shirt or a jersey or something."

Read the "Fast Break," Willamette's premier university athletics column ... or else. New issues Tuesday mornings.

SCAN ME

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Crossword: Finals (and Winter) Edition



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Across

- Salem residents may vote on this form of taxation in 2025.
- A snow slide down a mountain.
- It's real. It ain't going away. Take care of your mental health, Bearcats.
- Last-minute learning.
- How might a student athlete start raking in the big bucks? (2)
- Prepare for exams.
- How might a student athlete start raking in the big bucks? (1)
- Warm hand coverings. Blitz wouldn't need them.

Down

- Shortest day of year.
- Severe snowstorm, unlikely in the Willamette Valley.
- A dungeon's best friend.
- How might a student athlete start raking in the big bucks? (3)
- A traditional Jewish (ball) soup with more than one spelling.



Final Bearcat identity reveal!
Comic by SAMANTHA LANG

