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Faculty Senate Newsletter, January 2015

Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College

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Faculty Senate Newsletter

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

In one of his *Proverbs of Hell*, the late-Enlightenment poet William Blake shows the devil recommending that we “Bring out number weight and measure in a year of dearth.” Blake’s advice, uttered by the Provost of Perdition, throws a bituminous light on our contemporary preoccupation with assessment. Academic people everywhere not only labor under, but amicably collaborate in the production of statistics, measurements, evaluations, “metrics,” and a menagerie of purportedly informative numbers. We have arithmetical estimates of everything—except assessment itself.

The absence of evidence for the efficacy of assessment is, if not overwhelming, at least imposing. Faculty members unwittingly and probably generously collude with national but nevertheless commercial magazines in elevating faculty-student ratios and class-size averages to preeminent measures of the quality of institutions and educations. Large universities, however, were at their most productive, both with regard to the degree conferral tally and with regard to the competence of their graduates, when, after the second world war, class size was at its largest and faculty-student ratio at its lowest. Intimidated faculty join with ambitious mid-level administrators in promoting student evaluation of teachers, yet, to date, no one has explained how student evaluations, which inevitability correlate with the grades students receive and with the difficulty level of the class, yield improvements in the transfer of knowledge. Indeed, the students who receive the most benefit—those in general education courses, who proceed from nullity to preliminary mastery of a discipline—routinely impose the lowest evaluations on teachers and thereby discourage, even punish, pedagogical productivity.

The most extreme current example of metric mania is surely Louisiana’s LAGRAD act, which confers an assortment of privileges on institutions that increase retention and graduation rates. Statewide, institutions of every stripe—two year; four-year; regional; research; land-grant; urban; HBCU—are sanctioned for fulfilling their mission and are measured by incorrect indices. Urban institutions such as the University of New Orleans, for example, receive no credit for improving the skill sets of their largely “non-traditional” clientele owing to the occasional and slow pace of adult education; regional schools such as LSU in Shreveport fall short owing to both producing and accepting transfer students, students whose trajectories fall outside the official government definitions of the four-to-six year continuous enrollment.

Of the many ways in which the superstitious attachment to numbers has adversely effected the academy, among the most devastating is the cult of student recruitment and retention. In addition to encouraging the expenditure of vast sums on the procurement of students who may or may not be ready for a four-year run at a baccalaureate degree, the drive to maintain a specific number of students and to deliver a specific number of diplomas has transferred the emphasis in academe not so much from quality as from content to quantity: from cultivation of the curious and flexible mentality that characterizes an educated person to the delivery of a specified volume of quasi-educational episodes. That drift, in turn, empowers a range of modern perversities, from online education to workforce development, that all revolve around the idea of quantity and its twin, uniformity.

Think that quantity may have something to say for it? Think of the long-term economic and cultural value of that 1970s example of pure added value and mass distribution, the Pet Rock!



Kevin Cope

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Jim Robinson

Higher Education Headliner

Originally from in the Midlands in England, Dr. Jim Robinson was transplanted to the United States after his father was offered a position at LSU. His father took a post-doctorate appointment in chemistry and became an expert on instrumental analysis. Education was important in Robinson's family, and he ended up getting degrees in multiple areas, including applied statistics, sociology, psychology, and criminal justice. As a graduate student, Robinson taught many subjects, and when a full-time position opened up at LSU-Eunice, he had the right expertise to join the LSU-Eunice faculty, where he remains to this day.

LSU-Eunice is a two-year institution that serves a rural community centered on the Cajun parishes of St. Landry and Acadia. Originally, LSU-Eunice was planned to be a four-year university, but that did not occur. This actually became advantageous for LSU-Eunice, as the initial plan drew many faculty members who currently held doctorates. Thus, the faculty is largely comprised of instructors with doctorates, which is a rarity for a two-year institution and a great benefit to the students attending. In addition, new faculty who already hold doctorates are able to hone their teaching skills, unlike graduate students, who contend with both teaching and coursework. Because instructors already have their PhDs, they can concentrate on a student-centric classroom experience. According to Robinson, this dynamic gives LSU-Eunice students a solid foundation for transferring to a four-year university, and in fact, a leg up on their four-year educated peers who have often been taught by graduate students.



Robinson speaks fondly of his students. He is passionate about teaching and helping them gain the skill sets necessary for them to succeed. At LSU-Eunice, full time faculty also serve as advisors, and he asks each student about their plans for the future, including a bachelor's degree and beyond. The students, many first generation college students and/or from rural backgrounds, typically do not know what to say at first, but in fact many do go on to achieve more than they imagined possible. Dr. Robinson gets to see the fruit of his labors, too, as when he visits the flagship LSU campus, he often runs into his former students, discovering that they have indeed succeeded and are on their way to earning bachelor's degrees or pursuing advanced degrees.

One element that, at first, Robinson was not quite sure about, but has largely embrace over the years, is a shift to online classes. One piece the Robinson found especially beneficial for his students was that learners could take exams multiple times. They get instant feedback and learn what is required. If a student must miss a lecture, then this can be retrieved online. Robinson seems to have become a fan of online learning to an extent. He explains the future of education in stark

terms: "A successful society used to be about who could burn the most fossil fuel. In the future, it will be about who can produce the most information. If our society can't keep up in the information age, it will be left behind." He sees online education as a part of that changing world.

His passion for education, though, extends beyond the boundaries of the classroom. Robinson is the president of the faculty senate at LSU-Eunice and the president of the Association of Louisiana Faculty Senates (ALFS). Although many of his colleagues did not want the responsibility of being president of the LSU-Eunice faculty senate due to the time commitment and possibility of getting on the chancellor's bad side, Robinson stepped up and found that he enjoyed the work. In many ways, he still is a teacher in this role as president, as he can educate supervisors and regents about the behind-the-scenes elements that go into teaching (e.g. preparatory work, grading, researching sources and materials, etc.). Also, as president of ALFS, he sends out a newsletter that has all of the information present without any links. He believes that not having links saves time and gets information out quickly and effectively. In addition, Robinson, as ALFS president, is able to observe problems that arise on multiple campuses and make administrators, regents, and supervisors aware of systemic concerns for all of the LSU system.

In spite of all of the time and effort that Robinson puts into these organization, unfortunately, there are limitations. The faculty senate can only make recommendations, but cannot make something an institutional policy. In addition, when administrators sit in on meetings, this makes faculty members uncomfortable about speaking their minds. The preference is that an administrator make his/her presentation and then leave. This allows grievances to be aired without the possibility of retribution. By being allowed to speak freely, a meeting can act a bit like a therapy group session. Much, though, gets done informally, such as a meeting with the vice-chancellor and the department head without needing to come before the faculty senate. In other words, there is a lot that happens behind the scenes.

Robinson's frustrations are like those of many who have decided to teach in a public institution, namely funding and education being valued, which go hand in hand. For example, Louisiana, in terms of fees and taxes is ranked 27th in the country, and yet the salaries do not reflect this, and they should. Robinson laments that education simply is not valued enough in this country, considering this a matter of culture. Such limitations, though, have not put a damper on Robinson's commit to education. He remains an enthusiastic instructor who genuinely cares for his students' well-being.

— By Amy Catania and Nate Friedman

KIRYLO BLASTS FAST-TRACK TEACHER ED

One reason that Louisiana is always out of money for higher education is that higher education must, through "developmental" (formerly "remedial") education, repair the deficits of K-12 education while K-12 education remains unable to repair itself owing to inadequate funding and an assortment of attacks by ambitious politicians. Well-meaning, but under-informed policymakers have responded by creating "fast track" teacher education programs that purportedly help college students make the turn toward a career in education while speeding up the re-supply of qualified teachers. One well-known example is the "[Teach for America](#)" program, which inserts college graduates into troubled communities by way of strengthening their schools' systems. Now hard-hitting columnist and Southeastern Louisiana University Faculty Senate President James Kirylo has issued a thoughtful, [challenging column](#) attacking quick-fixes such as "TFA" and also the currently trendy "test-centric" schools (in which frequent testing is regarded as a panacea). Kirylo's column will come as welcome news to those who would train teachers with sound college curriculum and would give them both the intellectual and managerial tools to lead themselves rather than be led (or commanded or intimidated) by politicians.

TEACHFORAMERICA

Teach for America—Not the Complete Answer

DECORATED WOMEN AND LOUISIANA'S GENDER PROBLEM

One would imagine that, in a state where level executive post, administrators would be in their publicity releases. The progressive reader would deploy only images of eager young female wise conducting research or university business. er a new outbreak of an old disorder, the use of academic agendas. In a video commemorating University President James Henderson, former ed an interview with a young women appareled ining a faux-diamond a set for *Cinderella*.



Beauty Pageant Contestant—
Northwestern video



James and Tonia
Henderson—
Northwestern
University

point, Henderson sub-
ture in which his wife toted a gigantic spray of flowers, apparently having just then skated off the Olympic ice. Looking a bit farther south, the College of Mass Communications (the Manship School) at LSU A&M inserted, into its self-scrolling web page, a view of its own entrant into the Miss America competition, who joined the statewide cadre of crowned heads. Progress, adios!

only one woman occupies a top campus- or system-
careful about the images of women that they allow
would expect that campus chiefs and college deans
colleagues pursuing the life of the mind or other-
Newsletter reader will reel in amazement to discov-
decorated or decorative women to promote assorted
his inauguration, incoming Northwestern Louisiana
head of Bossier Parish Community College, includ-
an evening gown and wear-
tiara, as if Nathcitoches were
As if to drive home the
sequently appeared in a pic-
ture in which his wife toted a gigantic spray of flowers, apparently having just then skated off the Olympic ice. Looking a bit farther south, the College of Mass Communications (the Manship School) at LSU A&M inserted, into its self-scrolling web page, a view of its own entrant into the Miss America competition, who joined the statewide cadre of crowned heads. Progress, adios!



Miss America Candidate LSU
— College of Mass
Communication

TORRES TEAM TO BEAUTIFY LSU DIRECTORY

Owing to its origins in the early days of computing, when seven or eight letters was the maximum entry for any field, the online directory for LSU A&M has degenerated into a kind of crumbling monument to octet computation. A plethora of bewildering abbreviations leaves users without a clue or compass when it comes to finding that special someone (try to unriddle the entry “Asst to Vice-Chanc, SNCSRT,” then grab for the old Rosetta Stone). Now, at the request of faculty governance officials, LSU A&M Accounting Services leader Donna Torres has assembled an A-Team (“A” for “Accounting!”) to address the design of the directory and to ensure the provision of complete, rather than cryptographic, information. Applause to Donna for her redesign initiatives!



Asst to Vice-Chanc, SNCSRT

KING OPENS DOOR TO EMPIRE

Historians recognize that the main difference between a petty kingdom and a flourishing empire is multiplicity: the extension of influence or at least reciprocity over multiple venues. LSU's King Alexander moved the semi-consolidated Ag-Law-A&M campus a notch closer to the expansive frontiers by arranging for the Olinde Career Center to accept passport applications, thereby taking the first step to curing LSU A&M's worst disease: locality. Applause to President Alexander for this first tentative step toward and internationalized university.



NURSING FLAP FIBRILLATES GRAMBLING

How remarkable it is that a state that has more reason than any other to support an “HBCU” (historically black colleges or universities), Grambling, with its imposed interim administration, should experience one crisis after another, all attributable to inadequate state support. The latest maelstrom began swirling on January 23rd, when Louisiana State Board of Nursing (“LSBN”) Karen C. Lyon sent embattled Grambling interim President Cynthia Warrick a no-nonsense epistle reporting that Grambling had violated the rules of the Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing (“ACEN”) and had also trespassed against LSBN regulations. Grambling, the vigorously worded letter charged, had enrolled students who had failed prerequisites in advanced courses in the family nurse practitioner program. Lyon's letter warns that students with unresolved failing grades may not proceed to advanced practice courses and that such students represent a public danger. In a final turn of the scalpel, Lyon reminds the procedurally uninhibited Warrick that the head of the nursing program, not the President of the campus, wields the authority to administer Grambling's nursing education programs. There can be little doubt that misguided demands for productivity and for increased graduation and workforce development rates—all without funding—induced the pressure to pump students through the Grambling nursing program.





A.G.'s Corner

LSU HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGER, CHIEF A. G. MONACO, ADDRESSES QUESTIONS ABOUT HRM AND "EMPLOYEES' LIVES" IN GENERAL. IF YOU HAVE A PRESSING HRM ISSUE FOR A G TO ADDRESS, PLEASE SEND YOUR QUERIES TO ENCOPE@LSU.EDU.

The Letter

Dear A G,

I've got a doozy of a question straight out of the homeland of the Duesenberg designers. It's also a double question: about benefits and about citizenship. I'm a mid-career professional whose elderly and occasionally ailing European father has become unable to deal with some aspects of his life. Now that I'm an American citizen and can obtain for him a family unity visa, I'm thinking of bringing him to America. Trouble is, it's unclear whether his European medical insurance will cover routine, non-emergency costs in America. It's also unclear from state sources whether he might become my dependent on our university medical plan. Knowing that you're an internationally-minded guy, I'm wondering what you think would be the best route to health and related protection for this kindly gent. Should I try to place him on my policy? Would any legal steps be required to declare him my dependent? Should I allow him to obtain an American residence permit and then sign him up for "Obamacare" on one of the exchanges? Are there other options for such a person? A G, you're the coolest guy with the hottest ideas—I know that you can help me!

Sincerely,

GUDRUN



The Response

Let's start with the issue of whether or not your European father can become a dependent and covered on your university health insurance. Regardless of where your parent is from, (s)he will not be covered under the State of Louisiana health insurance offerings. The Office of Group Benefits defines a dependent "as a legal spouse or a child of the employee until age 26." Since the LSU First health insurance plan is obligated to strictly follow the eligibility rules out forth by the state Office of Group Benefits, then LSU employees covered under that plan are also unable to cover a parent.

Regarding whether his European medical insurance would apply... it differs based on the provider of the coverage. Most European government sponsored plans do not generally cover people who move to the United States. There are some exceptions for travel and other conditions, so I would check with the providing nation to determine coverage. Most likely even if it does cover medical care in the United States, it will involve paying all costs up-front and then seeking reimbursement.

As to coverage under the Affordable Care Act (Obamacare), anyone legally within the United States can apply for health insurance coverage under the insurance exchanges. Entrance and residency within the United States under a family unity visa would permit you to sign him up for coverage through the exchanges set up to provide various levels of health coverage.

An issue that I have long been concerned about regarding benefits is LSU's ability to compete with other major colleges and universities in employee recruiting. As it presently stands, the state of Louisiana is not providing a competitive level of benefits to faculty and staff. While you have all read my criticisms of the pension system, I believe we can add Louisiana's antiquated definition of insurance dependents to something that needs changing. LSU now competes for personnel with organizations and universities that provide insurance coverage to adult dependents and same-sex domestic partners,

thus putting us at a comparative disadvantage when recruiting people who need such coverage. Additionally, some recruiting studies have found that the majority of applicants for academic jobs who have no direct need for such coverage will view organizations that offer domestic partner benefits far more favorably than those that do not. One need not look too far away to see our recruiting disadvantage. The University of Alabama (UA) offers benefit coverage to "sponsored adult dependents." In order to allow for the coverage of same-sex domestic partners Alabama broadened the definition of dependents to include adults living in your home who "co-mingled" assets. This meant that if Dad was sharing your roof, you could apply for his benefit coverage. Additionally, to get around the legal issues surrounding same-sex couple parenting, UA also included "dependents of sponsored adult dependents" under the coverage rules, therefore providing benefits to the children of domestic partners. The benefits offered to same-sex domestic partners and their dependents included tuition benefits, as well as insurance benefits. Word out of Birmingham is that their medical school almost immediately improved their recruiting performance for faculty and senior staff.

The benefit needs of employees are a moving target. The recent recession has proven to be a challenge on both sides of the pressures associated with growing older. We are seeing an increased need for children to assist their aging parents financially, almost as often as we are seeing parents being required to support their young adult offspring. As the description of America's families change so do the needs that employees have to fulfill to support those families.

As for being "internationally minded".... I recently had sushi for the first time...not bad but it would have been even better if it had been battered with corn meal and deep fried.

LUNCHTIME LAGNIAPPE

Pierre Trepagnier, a Creole Patriot



Ormand Plantation

Wednesday, Feb. 11 Noon
Capitol Park Museum

Cliff Normand will share the history of his ancestor, Pierre Trepagnier, an American Revolutionary War patriot who served as a second lieutenant of the German Coast Militia under Bernardo de Gálvez.

Attendees are encouraged to bring lunch and may come and go as their schedules require.



This lecture is in conjunction with *Revolution! The Atlantic World Reborn* on display through Feb. 28.



CAPITOL PARK MUSEUM

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BUDGET WOES REVEAL FACULTY COMMENTARY TALENT

It might be going too far to declare, along with the devil in John Milton's poem *Paradise Lost*, "evil, be thou my good." Nevertheless, there is no denying that the recent announcement of the possibility of massive budget cuts to higher education has revealed a level of talent in the area of political controversy that few imagined would characterize tender-hearted faculty members. First to enter the beef box was the redoubtable James Kirylo, the charismatic Faculty Senate President at Southeastern Louisiana University, who composed, for Channel 17 Action News in the Hammond region, a devastating analysis of Governor Bobby Jindal's priorities, which, Kirylo quips, amount to "football, guns, and god," presumably in that order. [Kirylo's online-accessible column](#) slams Governor Jindal's excursion to London, where he rhetorically ravaged Islamic communities; spurns the Jindal-advocated regulation allowing the sale of guns on university campuses; and blasts an array of sport expenditures, from the preposterously expensive upgrade of Tiger Stadium to the million-dollar contract handed to LSU's new defensive coordinator.



James Kirylo

Only seconds behind Kirylo was Michael Jeffress of Nicholls State University, who graced *The Daily Comet* of the Thibodaux-Houma area with a plain-language but hard-thinking [editorial letter](#) analyzing the impact of the proposed budget cuts and de-mythologizing overly easy solutions. Jeffress, for example, critiques the disingenuousness of those who would make up for cuts with tuition increases, doing the math and concluding that no set of user fees will ever make up for the damage resulting from the proposed cuts.

Not only troubles, but excellences come in three. So it is that yet another column flowed from the endless intellectual inkhorn of blogger-writer-interpreter-musician Dayne Sherman. Giving Erasmus a run for Louisiana's little bit of money, Dayne borrowed a chapter from *The Praise of Folly* and mounted an argument through inversion, enumerating all the reasons why, indeed, we ought to close his home university, whether its production of regional leaders (who needs them when a Brown University graduate is the governor?) and because its durability is not up to the rigorous standards of Grover Norquist and his no-new-taxes pledge. View Dayne's witty but also alarming [column online](#).

NEWSLETTER READER CALLS FOR EVALUATION

Anyone who doubts that the University environment is one in which community members at least perceive the possibility of reprisal ought to examine the *Newsletter* mailbag, where anonymous communications and requests that arrive in unmarked brown envelopes highlight every month.



Everyone on the *Newsletter* staff delights in the receipt of honest communications, even if staffers know that anonymity indicates a level of anxiety that should not arise in a great university. So it is that two meritorious, answer-deserving queries have passed over the *Newsletter* transom.

The first of these queries wonders whether the university policy on the evaluation of deans seems to lack enforcement. That policy, known as PS-111, specifies that Deans and Chairs will be evaluated, with input from faculty, at least every two years. In some colleges at LSU A&M, this evaluation has indeed occurred on a regular basis, albeit with little impact; in other colleges, it seems never to occur.

One reason for the irregularity in enforcement is the high and irregular turnover in the administration. With regard to the ten or so new Deans on the LSU campus, not enough time has expired for the review cycle to revolve. Thus, one consequence of under-funding and also occasional erratic behavior "upstairs" (think of some of LSU's notorious Provosts), is a frequent coming and going of Deans that interrupts the review cycle. Add to this the fact that Provosts, who manage the reviews, have an average institutional life-span of less than four years and then mix in the fact that it takes a provost a short time to learn the system, and, voila, one has a recipe for evaluations that are always delayed, off-schedule, or non-existent.

Even when an evaluation is done, policy obstacles prevent its effecting change. Because the evaluation is regulated by the Office of Academic Affairs and is considered a confidential personnel as well as executive discretionary matter, faculty members seldom see more than statistical summary of the assessment result. Written comments are almost always redacted. At Faculty Senate insistence, the Provost usually visits with the faculty, but the aforementioned filters remain in place.

The Faculty Senate at LSU A&M is working to upgrade evaluation procedures both at the decanal level and with regard to the top tier of university management. Presently, Chancellors and President answer to no one other than their Boards, an arrangement that drew harsh criticism from SACSCOC during LSU A&M's recent accreditation experience. It is the position of the LSU A&M Faculty Senate—and, very likely, of most other faculty Senates—that the kind of invisible, ultra-confidential, upwardly-oriented evaluation presently in place undermines the credibility of campus and system CEOs.

A second question pertains to evaluation of Human Resource Management services. That is a highly complicated question that, in fact, will become the topic of the "A G Answers" column for next month. Stand by for A G's trademarked full and rich answer!

BIZARRE HOAX SNAGS LSU, ENDS IN DISMISSAL

Those acquainted with the variable fortunes of the humanities at LSU A&M remember a day when the institution aspired to greatness not only in the STEM and workforce-central areas, but in the quest for knowledge in all fields. Ambition, however, includes an assortment of dangers, including those pertaining to gullibility. In the latest bizarre tale of misdirected multicultural ambition, former LSU Professor Mustapha Marrouchi entered the media spotlight as the target of a major plagiarism investigation at his most recent institution, the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. High-rolling Marrouchi, whom Nevada paid a salary well beyond the preliminary six figures, had, it seems, transcribed most of his own compositions from *The London Review of Books*. Investigators noted that plagiarism associated with Marrouchi's sojourn at LSU contributed to the four-to-one vote by the investigating committee to recommend dismissal. The last curious twist occurred when UNLV resorted to understatement, replacing Marrouchi's entry on the UNLV English Department web site with a small box declaring him "no longer a member of the faculty" but nevertheless preserving his photograph. Moral: Before hiring anyone owing to fame, profile, or political relevance, make sure to read the dossier.

Mustapha Marrouchi
Dr. Mustapha Marrouchi is no longer a member of the faculty at UNLV's Department of English.



Mustapha Marrouchi
Contact Information

Neither There nor not There -- Former
LSU Faculty Snagged in Probe

LSU FOUNDATION SPRINGS INTO CHRISTMAS MARKET

Faculty returning to the LSU campus for the spring semester discovered in their boxes

(somewhat late with respect to the annual excursion by Santa's sleigh) an informational postcard announcing that the LSU Foundation, known for an inventive wriggling that would fill an eel with envy, had now upped its presence in the Christmas ornament market. In a remarkable attempt to reconcile floral spring with twiggy winter, the LSU Foundation created an "ornament" (carefully avoided, in an example of preposterous secularism, was the word "Christmas") in which a field of azaleas culminates in a close-up spray of those festive flowers. Of course, the ultra-cliché oak tree made its way into the background, but, overall, the ornament would surely brighten the spring for Père Noel and his elves. The [ornament](#), the sixth in a somewhat under-advertised series, can be purchased online.



LSU ORED TAKES POST POSITION IN CROWDFUNDING DERBY



Spurred by an unexpectedly highly publicized attempt at the crowdfunding of research deep down in the stables of LSU A&M's Veterinary School, the development jockeys over at the Office of Research and Development have taken the post position in the race to develop guidelines for

this new approach to the informal recruitment of support. In an admirable example of quick condensation and nimble minimization, the LSU A&M ORED barn has shoveled out a refreshingly easy four-step process for those who expect the public to wager on their inventiveness. Investigators need only submit identifying, contact, and affiliation information; a one-paragraph project description; an estimated funding goal; and an indication as to whether or not LSU facilities and equipment will be used. ORED expects to issue formal procedures by the end of Spring semester. Let us hope that this quarter-horse sprint of a procedure won't give way to any bureaucratic marathons!

CYBER THREATS TO UNIVERSITY OUTPACE FACULTY EXPECTATIONS



Emmanuel -- Don't Underestimate Cyber Threats to Universities

Newsletter readers frequently demonstrate their altruism by submitting items of general interest to the academic community. An especially urgent submission has arrived from Grambling's Tsegai Emmanuel, a longtime contributor to

faculty governance initiatives. Tsegai's research led him to a newly released report on "malicious cyber actors" who target United States universities, whether to gather information of security-sensitive research or to find routes to other targets. The white paper from the [Department of Homeland Security](#), which can be accessed online, includes an assortment of measures that individuals may take in order to guard their data and also to strengthen security on the systems that support their research.





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AAUP, NLRB EASE UNIONIZATION RULES

As many *Newsletter* readers know, a recent top-level shakeup and a knock-on reorganization has greatly strengthened the AAUP with respect to its new labor representation and union organization division. The first fruits of that reorganization have matured in the form of a decision delivered by the National Labor Relations Board (“NLRB”) regarding faculty union and other organizing activities. First, the NLRB affirmed that private religious colleges and universities do not enjoy an exemption from laws governing organizing activities. Pacific Lutheran University had held that, because it required faculty to support religious values, it should be exempt from labor laws in the same way as other religious organizations enjoy certain exceptions to these rules. The NLRB, however, determined that, in order to qualify for the exemption, the institution must require its employees to perform a specific religious function. Private college or university employees may therefore organize in the same way as any other employees.

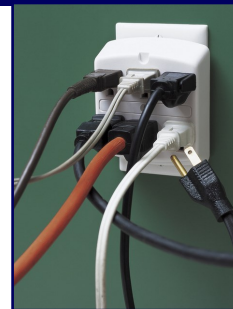
In another decision, the NLRB judged that college and university employees may use their employers’ email systems for organizing activities. According to the ruling, employees who have work-time access to email systems must be allowed to use that same system during non-work hours for a range of “protected activities,” including organizing and even making critical comments.

Thank you, AAUP and NLRD, for these boons to hard-working academic professionals!



LOMBARDO LIFTS THE LOAD, SHORES UP THE SHED

One of the peculiar facts of life for those who work in “historic” buildings of the sort that festoon Louisiana campuses is the inadequacy of electrical power. Although enamored of the electrical revolution that was lighting a path to the modernization of America, the Works Progress Administration, which built many of our academic edifices, never imagined that a given room would require more than one or two electrical sockets. Today, as a result, more than a few university offices run a dozen peripherals out of one very long power strip and more than a few buildings routinely lose power when the breakers flip and the fuses blow. The situation worsens when Mother Nature delivers one of our trademarked Louisiana disasters, unlocking our already tenuous electrical grid. That Titan of Transducing, LSU A&M Facility Services Chief Tony Lombardo, has taken a giant step forward in the solution of electrical anemia by creating a new “Load Shed Committee” that will conduct a double-purpose review of both power needs in departments and at the management of power during emergencies, outages, and other unusual circumstances. It is to be hoped that other campuses follow suit and join the charge to better utility options.



LSU EARNS PROCUREMENT AUTONOMY

Congratulations are due to LSU A&M, which, as a result of meeting assorted LAGRAD Act targets, earned, on January 16th, approval from the Joint Legislative Committee on the Budget of its Pilot Procurement Code. That Pilot Procurement Code will allow LSU A&M to generate formidable savings through purchasing practices normally associated with large firms and with universities governed by reasonable men and women. Anticipated to save a cool \$800,000.00 or more per year, the Pilot Procurement Code will be evaluated through a scorecard and through public observation, all transactions being matters of public record.



NICHOLS GOES BEYOND DIMES, INKS SOFTWARE SAVER DEAL

Like all too many institutions around the state, LSU A&M has been long running on age-old software and hardware. Lacking a true Enterprise System, the big campus adjacent to Mike the Tiger’s enclosure has tacked together a miasma of ad hoc temporary solutions, some of them depending on software older than bouncing Buzz Aldrin’s perma-press lunar footstep. Now LSU A&M IT Services Imperator Brian Nichols has announced the inking of a preliminary agreement with post-PeopleSoft vendor [Workday](#). Workday will now guide the modernization of LSU A&M’s human capital management and also financial management, which may, at long last, lead LSU into the otherwise omnipresent paperless universe. The go-live date for nifty Nichols’s newest niceness: July 1, 2016, 158 years to the day after Charles Darwin read his first paper on species change to the Linnaean society. Holy evolution!



Workaday to Modernize LSU Business Systems

VENDOR EXPO VITALIZES PURCHASING

Users of LSU A&M’s GeauxShop purchasing system waxed rhapsodic over the “vendor expo” that brought together not only Office Depot representatives but the mysterious people who make all those Rubbermaid gadgets and even a few plumbing experts. With the takeover of OfficeMax by Office Depot, an array of new purchasing options will open and, better, a new ordering interface and system will upend the old, incompetent OfficeMax offering. Applause to the arrangers of this event—and let’s hope that the splendid Rubbermaid catalogue, with all its astounding cleaning tools, will upgrade maintenance on our campuses!



Vendor Sweeps Away Past Errors

Family Carnival at Capitol Park



**Saturday, Feb. 7, 11 a.m. – 2 p.m.
Capitol Park Museum**

Families are invited to experience Carnival in the three countries represented in *Revolution!*. Children will create a king cake in America, fashion a Carnival hat in Haiti and design a Mardi Gras mask in France.



This free event is in conjunction with
Revolution! The Atlantic World Reborn
on display through Feb. 28.



CAPITOL PARK MUSEUM

A LOUISIANA STATE MUSEUM



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Pick your Passion®

If you are planning an event, Capitol Park Museum is a great venue. Just click on the [link](#) to see the many options available.

Lifestyle Feature

THE QUICK BITES OF SHREVEPORT

Owing to an unfortunate accident of commercial history, the popular reputation of Louisiana cuisine has long centered on the southern parishes, whether the raucously spicy crawfish concoctions of the Lafayette region or the multitudinousness of the New Orleans cooking scene. In the early 1980s, a variety of self-styled “Cajun” chefs—Paul Prudhomme; John Folse; Alex Patout; Justin Wilson—began not only advertising Louisiana cooking but also identifying it with the water world along and under Interstate 10. The effect has been the sometimes earned neglect of a state that includes such novel venues as Lea’s Lunch Room in Lecompte; an astounding array of meat-pie emporia in Natchitoches; and even the underrated if also occasionally under-implemented Monroe-derived Italian cuisine of Johnny’s pizza. Most neglected of all has been our northern academic, as well as culinary star, Shreveport.

Few restaurant guides open with the recommendation that sophisticated diners bypass Paris, Manhattan, and Rome in favor of Caddo Parish. True, Shreveport has had its attempts at rivaling these cities. In the 1990s, for example, the proprietor of one upper-end restaurant ran herself out of business by refusing to speak English to her clientele, whom she illogically assumed to be fluent in French if they dared to enter her Escoffier-enhanced establishment. Overall, however, Shreveport savors of informality, a trend that has made it more than a little susceptible, especially in the wake of its post-Katrina population and economic expansion, to mid-level chain restaurants. Nevertheless, there are, in Shreveport, more than a few fine independent restaurants that allow for the hour-long bite: for the casual, mid-level dining experience that sticks, and sticks pleasantly, in the memory. Here are five venues where the business visitor to Shreveport can enjoy not only a tasty but memorable meal and can wonder at surprising variety of the rejuvenating city by the Red River.

At the very top of the list for any visitor to Shreveport is surely [Tacomania](#). Shreveport underwent something of an economic boom subsequent to Hurricane Katrina owing to persons who resettled on higher, more northerly ground. With the increase in building came an increase, both temporary and permanent, in the Hispanic population, with the result that Shreveport acquired a surprising number of Latino and Latino-inspired or Latino-serving restaurants. Surely the most successful of these is the endearing Tacomania, which started in and then expanded around an abandoned Pizza Hut franchise. Tacomania offers a full range of Mexican cuisine but specializes in a slate of approximately two dozen specialty tacos, some of them familiar (for example, Tacos al Carbon) and some of them innovative (the Tacos Mexicanos excel; one could scarcely have imagined that a simple array of pork, cilantro,

peppers, and a “secret sauce” could become a legend in the making). Better, Tacomania offers an understated but over-performing selection of appetizers, among which the empanadas with a cheese sauce accompaniment emerge as preeminent. Festive and friendly, Tacomania, with its lunchtime salsa bar (an array of inventive salsas), is very likely the best Mexican restaurant in Louisiana.

Tacomania may be surprising healthy, what with most of its dishes being unexpectedly lean, but [Shane’s Seafood and Bar-becue](#) may take the prize when it comes to all-out hard-driving dining experiences. Located initially in a shack on Youree Drive but now extending to three locations, Shane’s merges American diner-style “eats” with both the Louisiana and Texas menus. Here one will find food piled high, served in abundant as well as colorful baskets; here the astonished diner will find superb BBQ sandwiches, ravishingly rich PoBoys, and an assortment of starters ranging from down-home Natchitoches meat pies to exotic jalapeno poppers. Maintaining so diverse a menu while also maintaining near-perfect execution and a lively atmosphere is no small feat of restaurant wizardry. No one

but a miserable Puritan could leave Shane’s with anything other than a smile on the face, and certainly no one will ever leave this informal temple of comfort food

and way-out indulgence with anything other than a sense of profound satiety. And there are plenty of colorful characters in the clientele to boot!

Also in the comfort vein is the amusingly denominated Strawn’s and its satellites, Strawn’s Too and Strawn’s Also. The proprietor has apparently developed a sense not only of cooking but also grammatical humor as his

third location, Strawn’s Also, plays on the “two/too” pun. Although initially a breakfast-oriented dive, the newer Strawn’s installations have preserved the hearty breakfast tradition while also veering into American-style dinner service. Breakfast is a study in lively discretionary miscellaneousness. Diners may mix and match the assorted breakfast components in an assortment of combo plates, but, whatever they elect, they should miss neither the spectacular biscuits, which rise like happy cumulonimbus clouds on a thunder-free day, nor the robust as well as spicy hash browns, which take a cubic form but which deliver plenty of gustatory punch. All of the Strawn’s locations are emblazoned with fantastic murals that nostalgically, but brightly, conjure up cheerful moments in American cultural history, whether scenes from television’s Mayberry or allusions to the Three Stooges. And don’t miss the plate lunches and dinners, which will carry the lighthearted visitors back to the days when hardworking people never worried about calories!

—Continued on p.16



Tacomania



Shane's, The Epitome of Extravagant Comfort



Strawn's Murals Depict Americana

REGENTS UPGRADE ENDOWED CHAIR SEARCH RULES

Those who frequent casinos know that the last throw is often the strongest: that the plunger who has plopped the entire inheritance on the crap table evidences the greatest optimism and the dice fly furiously from his or her hands. Similarly, the Regents, sitting on a spate of unfilled honorary professorial chairs, have upgraded the requirements for appointment as an “Eminent Scholar” in an endowed chair. Henceforward, the Regents affirm, every campus must submit assorted documentation and affidavits confirming that a national search preceded the selection of the winning candidate. Although a step in the right direction, the attempt to diminish buddy-driven appointments will only succeed when the numerous vacant chairs are funded and when the overwhelming bias toward the STEM disciplines revealed in the [Endowed Chair documentation](#) gives way to a truly multidisciplinary approach to the support of a *comprehensive* university.



WALL STREET JOURNAL REVEALS NEED FOR HUMANITIES EDUCATION

Certainly no friend to radical or even liberal points of view, *The Wall Street Journal* has given a new talking point to those professors and instructors of humanities topics who have thought themselves left behind in the rush to use universities to develop a workforce. According to a recent *WSJ* [report](#), the Council for Aid to Education (“CAE”) has conducted a large-scale assessment to measure both the critical thinking and written communication skills of both incoming freshmen and graduating seniors. This testing project has revealed that a third of new students lack even basic skills and that another third can barely scramble up to the basic level. Even at graduation, only sixty percent of student score as proficient. In a corollary study, the CAE ascertained that over ninety percent of business professionals regard graduating seniors as adequately educated in liberal arts areas. Could it be time to review and renew core curricula and to put a new emphasis on a truly *comprehensive* college education?



JOIN LSUNITED

WHO WE ARE:

An independent advocacy organization formed to serve LSU faculty and graduate assistants

OUR GOALS:

- Securing regular, periodic raises for faculty
- Improving starting salaries for Instructors
- Protecting and improving health and retirement benefits

CONTACT:

Mike Russo, 6923louis@gmail.com

MUSE OF ARCHITECTURE GOES MISSING FROM LSU CAMPUS



Design for the Kappa Sigma House

Those who inhabit Parnassus howled in horror at the discovery that the Muse of Architecture had once again disappeared during a last-ditch remediation visit to the LSU A&M campus. Those who have seen the latest pair of designs approved by the LSU Board of Supervisors can only assume that they were scribbled out in a state of confusion while scrambling after missing inspiration. First among the astounding gaffes was the design for the new Kappa Sigma Fraternity House, a design which not only celebrates the not-so-good old plantation days but that, in its attempt to enlarge neoclassicism to a colossal scale, looks like a nightmarish attempt by Benjamin Franklin to build a super-hangar for a scaled-up Lightning Kite version 2.0. Add to that a wing that looks rather like a boat shed in the Santa Maria subdivision and, voila, disproportion rules. Less amazing owing to its embrace of the plain vanilla school of architecture is the design for the LSU Tiger Athletic Nutrition Center (AKA “Gladiator Pre-Concussion Feeding Station”), which not only draws on but draws out the Mussolini-inspired, historically nostalgic architecture of the LSU quadrangle, stretching the main campus look into an eating mall with the same proportions as a strand of uncooked bucatini. Further complicating this exercise in unimaginative simplicity is a series of mirrors that, rather than encouraging the dining athletes to reflect, deflects light back on to excluded passers-by.



Design for the Tiger Athletic Nutrition Center

LEGISLATORS PLAN TO PICK RETIREE POCKETS

One of the mainstays of modern physics is that no completely idle state can persist in our quantum-organized universe. Absolute zero is never fully attained in our ever-warming world; vacuum energy bristles through apparent void; particles seem to pop up out of nowhere. Because nature abhors a vacuum, not even the state retirement systems have succeeded in promulgating only bad news. The late good news is that last year’s stock market run-up yielded a circa \$300,000,000.00 cash bonanza for TRSL and LASERS, the two retirement programs governing the future fortunes of most university employees. That money had been destined to provide cost-of-living increases for retirees. Unfortunately, even this good news does, after all, take a bad turn: a gaggle of legislators want that money not to go to the retirees whose investments earned it, but to healing the wounds in the upcoming state budget. Retirees on defined-benefit plans should begin preparing to contact—and lobby—their representatives.



UNREPENTANT LSU SUPERVISORS CLUTCH PUBLIC DOCUMENTS

Perhaps the legal story of the last two years has been the quest by the Baton Rouge, the New Orleans, and the LSU newspapers to extract from the LSU Board of Supervisors the names of those who competed for the position of LSU System President back in 2013. Although, at the end of December, a panel of judges for the First Circuit limited the disclosure to the three finalists—down from the initial 35 applicants—the LSU governing board continues to maintain its vice grip on public documents, further delaying release of information until it completes an analysis of appeal options. Represented by Jimmy Faircloth, a former member of the rival University of Louisiana System Board and the husband of a current University of Louisiana Board Member, declared that he regarded as reasonable a decision that, sad to say, stifles public scrutiny.



NOT SO UNIDENTIFIED FLYING MEAT CASE (“UFMC”) RETURNS TO BASE

Newsletter readers have followed the case of the disappearing simulation meat display case: the behemoth eight-foot exhibition mockup that could not make its way into the new LSU A&M Agriculture Laboratories building and that was whisked away to an undisclosed location once the embarrassment began making administrator cheeks as pink a prosciutto. In an event worthy of Area 51, the on-again off-again meat case returned from the air as a crane pulled up out of nowhere and lowered the airborne bogey into the upper reaches of the Agriculture compound, where burly men-in-black-sausage-style-apparel quickly whisked it into a laboratory. Will Stanton Friedman be called to investigate?



Inscrutable Airborne Phenomenon Over AG

TIP OF THE MONTH: TALENTI TAHITIAN VANILLA BEAN GELATO POPS

One of the curious aspects of ice-cream connoisseurship in Louisiana is that it is largely a winter sport. During the summer, the creaminess and occasional heaviness of ice cream gives pause even to those committed to indulgence and redirects the vision to lighter, fruit-based desserts. Despite our southern aversion to cold, the ideal winter treat is an old-fashioned ice-cream bar: an oval or rectangular slab of ice cream enrobed in a coating of crisp chocolate couverture. Far and away the best boutique ice-cream bar to come along in years is the Talenti Tahitian Vanilla Bean Gelato Pop. From stem to stern and from gown to creamy undergarments, the Talenti “pop” is indeed a nonstop pop of flavor, color, texture, and, in sum, joy. The interior, a rounded symphony in cream and vanilla, carries all the overtones and underlayments that we expect of the finest plantation vanillas. The coating, likewise, excels through understatement and contrast: by adding a crunch and a whiff of dark chocolate and even a teeny-tiny note of salinity, the Talenti pop, which combines Italian know-how with Pacific vanilla and equatorial chocolate, is the quintessential last-course expression of modern American internationalism. Savor a box today!



PEDESTRIAN ZONE GOES QUANTUM



Tower Drive During the Metamorphosis

Fans of popular science are familiar with the now aging observation that, in the world of quantum mechanics, particles may fluctuate in and out of existence. In its perpetual quest for quality, LSU has upped the ante

on Nils Bohr and his followers by creating an entire pedestrian zone that flips in and out of our space. Last fall, LSU A&M experts sealed off a section of Tower Drive that passes by an assortment of science-purposed buildings. For a time, this newly created pedestrian zone, buttressed as it was by formidable bollards and even a few planter boxes, became a shrunk version of Austin's South Congress Street, what with a pair of food trucks serving the needs of the nearby STEM community. Then, in January, while everyone was busy perusing the cool sable night sky, an assortment of mechanical juggernauts arrived, ripped out the barriers, re-paved the street, added brilliant orange lane striping, and lined the result with broad planter boxes filled with mulch and nothing else. Yes, despite looking like a new superhighway, no car has dared ply this boulevard. To top it all off, a radio tower has suddenly appeared atop the nearby science buildings. Could this strange vacillating street, with its long

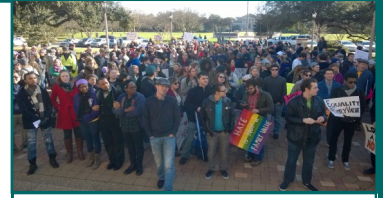


Tower Drive After the Metamorphosis

strips of agricultural media, its uncanny sterility, and its convenient location alongside laboratories be the intended site of some collaborative experiment with ETs?

PRAYER RALLY PROTEST DRAWS DROVES

Surely the first highlight in the unscrolling history of 2015 was the gigantic rally, protest, march, and demonstration that arose in response to the prayer rally, interrogatively called "The Response," that Governor



Crowds Assemble to Protest the AFA

Jindal and assorted compatriots on the LSU Board of Supervisors patronized, presumably in an attempt to get God to fix the problems that they have created, and that many regarded as the work of a hate group, the American Family Association. To the surprise of everyone acquainted with the easy-going ways of folks in our parts, at least 500 people—students, faculty, community members—of every age, size, and description turned out for a vividly colorful and philosophically raucous procession from the clock tower to the PMAC, site of the aforementioned exercise in false prophecy. At the culmination of the march, no less than twelve speakers addressed the lively audience on topics ranging from the nature of Christian inclusiveness to the follies of current higher education policy. Although credit for organizing the event goes to a coalition of student groups, faculty governance also scored a huge gain owing to the massive national publicity focused on the event and on the leaders of the resistance movement. Faculty governance officials appeared on a host of national and local radio and television programs while acquainting the public with the sad neglect of faculty expertise and opinion. Congratulations are due to dozens of groups that set a new standard in social commentary in Louisiana.



LSU United Leaders Mike Russo and Stephanie Braunstein Call for an End to Superstition

SPANISH TOWN MARDI GRAS PARADE

Saturday, February 14, 2015

10:00 am-3 pm

660 N 4th St

Baton Rouge, LA 70802

Friends of the Capital Museum



MONTHLY MOVIE REVIEW

BLACK MIRROR (Channel 4, 2011-present)

BLACK WIKKOK

Reviewed by Carl Freedman (2015)

Time for another television review—because TV, as I have already maintained in this space more than once, is at least as interesting and creative these days as traditional cinema—and there is perhaps no recent series about which I am more enthusiastic than Charlie Brooker's *Black Mirror*. It has been on Britain's Channel 4 since 2011, but the first two seasons (with three episodes each) have just recently become widely available in America via Netflix (a third season has already begun in the UK). I will go out on a pretty long limb, and say that this is probably the best science fiction ever to appear on television. It is certainly, in my view, the best since Rod Serling's original *Twilight Zone* (CBS, 1959-1964): which Brooker has, indeed, acknowledged as his own model. Like Serling's great show—which brought irony, edginess, and the humanely serious consideration of political and social issues into the bland wasteland of US television during the Eisenhower/Kennedy era—*Black Mirror* is an anthology series; each episode has its own, self-contained plot, and there are no continuing characters or situations. Brooker's series is more consistently science-fictional than Serling's (which featured at least as much fantasy as science fiction), and it is also blessed with a much more leisurely production schedule and evidently bigger budgets: and every single episode of *Black Mirror* is the equal (at least) of *The Twilight Zone* at its very best.

Black Mirror is science fiction at the furthest remove from far-future space opera, the most prominent variety of the genre in television and cinema. Each episode is set in the future, but it is always a fairly near future. Sometimes the social or technological changes that have taken place since our own time are quite conspicuous, and sometimes they are less so; but never do we encounter anything that should seem surprising or radically new to anyone aware of how Britain, America, and the industrialized world in general work in the early 21st century. I do not know, but I am willing to bet that Brooker is thoroughly familiar with the work of the late, great British science-fiction novelist J. G. Ballard. In any case, Brooker's series is faithful to the spirit of Ballard's motto that the future in his fiction is never really more than five minutes away.

One of the best and most deeply typical episodes of *Black Mirror* is the first one, "The National Anthem." The Prime Minister is awakened early one morning to be informed that one of the most popular members of the Royal Family—a young and beautiful princess, someone apparently rather like the real-life Duchess of Cambridge—has been kidnapped. He is then shown a video in which the kidnapper, speaking through the sobbing and clearly terrified princess herself, makes known his only ransom demand: that, at 4:00 p.m. that afternoon, the PM must have genuine, unsimulated sexual intercourse with a pig, the coupling to be broadcast live on every British television channel. Understandably shaken, the technologically naïve PM commands that the video be kept absolutely secret: only to be told that the kidnapper posted it to YouTube, where it has already been viewed by more than 50,000 people around the world. Word of the demand spreads faster than wildfire, first on Facebook, Twitter, and other social media, then on the American cable news channels, and finally on Britain's most august television network (evidently the BBC, though it's called something else).

With the police and other security forces unable to rescue or even locate the princess, the Prime Minister has little option but to comply with the demand—or at least to appear to do so. His staff concocts a

plan that might save their boss's person, though not his public image, from indignity. A professional porn actor is hired to do the deed with the pig, and the idea is to digitally substitute the PM's head for that of the actor. But the kidnapper learns of the scheme, announces that he will not stand for trickery, and punctuates his point by delivering what appears to be one of the princess's fingers. Now the Prime Minister really has no choice. His political operatives have been furiously polling the electorate all day, and it is clear that refusing the kidnapper's demand will mean the PM's political death as well as, presumably, the princess's actual death. The overwhelming feeling in the country is that a brief period of unpleasantness and humiliation for the elected leader should count as nothing compared to the princess's life. The Prime Minister's press secretary even suggests to him that, should he allow the princess to be murdered (with the near-certainty that the killing would be recorded and uploaded to the internet), he would become so widely and bitterly despised that his bodyguards could not guarantee his or his family's safety. So the PM goes ahead with his porcine rendezvous, and the strangest episode in the history of reality television airs on schedule, to the fascination, disgust, and hilarity of Britain and the world.

I will not spell out all of what follows. The princess is released, sedated but otherwise unharmed (the finger was not actually hers). The kidnapper turns out to be one of the UK's most famous artists, a Turner Prize winner; and an art critic creates some controversy by describing the entire event as the first great artwork of the 21st century. Entirely plausible consequences ensue for the Prime Minister, his political career, and his marriage. We never do learn, though, exactly how the pig felt about the whole thing.

Then there is "The Entire History of You," in which most people—at least among the class that can afford the latest in consumer electronics—have a "grain" implanted in their necks: that is, a computerized device that records everything one sees, hears, and does. You can play back—or, in the jargon of the time, "re-do"—your experiences whenever you wish, either in your own head or by displaying the material on a computer monitor, a television set, or just about any other kind of electronic screen. Casually, as if *en passant*, the episode suggests various uses to which such technology could be put. If you're concerned that a meeting at work where you were being evaluated by your superiors didn't go as well as you hoped, why not re-do the experience with a whole party of friends to see where there might be room for improvement? If you left your baby with a sitter for the evening, then afterwards you can check the baby's grain to make sure that everything was done properly. If sex with your wife is becoming a bit routine and boring, you can get in the mood by replaying in your mind every detail of earlier, more exciting sexual experiences. Not quite everyone has a grain. At a dinner party we meet a woman who insists that she is happier going without one, relying on her natural memory; and, though the other guests are polite and interested, they clearly consider her an oddball. One points out that many of our natural memories are actually false. This is of course quite true: which is why, for instance, eyewitnesses can (as lawyers and judges know) give wildly different accounts of the same event even if everyone is sincerely trying to tell the truth. So why *wouldn't* you want an infallible record of your perceptions and experiences?



—Continued on page 16

—Continued from page 15

Well, one reason that you might not is suggested by the episode's central narrative, an essentially old-fashioned tale of adultery and sexual jealousy. Liam and Ffion are an attractive young couple. Though Liam's jealous tendencies have already caused some trouble in their marriage, they seem, when we meet them, to be nonetheless basically happy with each other—until Liam begins to suspect that there is more than he knows to his wife's friendship with her old pal Jonas. As Liam peels back layer after layer of truth, Ffion confesses to a long-ago fling with Jonas; but she is inconsistent about exactly how long it lasted, finally admitting to a six-month relationship. It ultimately transpires that the affair actually continued (at least on one occasion) into Liam and Ffion's marriage, and that the adulterous pair went to bed around the time that Liam and Ffion's daughter was conceived. This is, of course, not so different from the sort of thing that happens all the time in our own world. But Liam does not need to rely on secondary evidence like hotel bills, credit-card receipts, and mobile-phone records. He can go into Ffion's grain to see *exactly* what she did, when, and with whom. Re-doing her or his own experiences, he can freeze frames for close inspection, rewind and repeat certain scenes, watch in slow motion or in fast forward, zoom in on particular details, and even (when reviewing his own grain) use a computerized lip-reading application to find out what his wife was saying on occasions when he was too far away to hear. He can also go over to Jonas's house in a drunken rage and demand that Jonas delete from his own grain all records of his lovemaking with Ffion. The predictable result is the destruction of Liam and Ffion's marriage. Yet the couple really did love each other, despite Liam's jealousy and Ffion's lies and infidelity. The marriage might have survived had Liam remained a bit more ignorant, if he had not been able to lay bare so clearly and ruthlessly every aspect of his wife's complete sexual history. As things are, Liam winds up alone, lonely, thoroughly miserable, apparently unemployed, and tormented beyond endurance by perfect, crystal-clear memories of happier times.

Though *The Twilight Zone* featured certain recurring themes that reflected Serling's liberal political views—the horror of war, the insanity of mob hysteria, the vileness of racial bigotry—it was a largely miscellaneous series. The much smaller number of episodes of *Black Mirror* are, by contrast, unified by a fairly specific thematic concern: spectatorship. Indeed, it seems to me that Brooker may well have created the most remarkable cinematic or televisual meditation on spectatorship since the films of Alfred Hitchcock. Projecting a Ballardian five minutes into the future, Brooker shows how our society is, as Guy Debord famously theorized in 1967, the society of the spectacle. More and more, we spend our lives viewing things—whether it be our Prime Minister engaging in an act of bestiality, or our own wife doing things she has tried to hide from us. In “Fifteen Million Merits,” the only escape from a life of physical drudgery and the endless viewing of boring, annoying TV commercials is to be viewed oneself by millions of others as a star of reality television. In “The Waldo Moment,” a blue television cartoon bear on a late-night comedy show becomes a serious (and sinister) political force of global importance. In “White Bear”—the darkest and most shattering episode in the series so far—spectatorship is thematized in a way far too complex and disturbing to be summarized here. Suffice it to say that the episode is the most remarkable artistic comment I have ever encountered on the Moors Murders: a series of horrific crimes committed between 1963 and 1965 that haunt the British imagination to this day, in which a young sociopathic couple not only kidnapped, tortured, and killed a series of children chosen essentially at random, but also made photographs and audio tape recordings of their hideous doings. If one were to choose a motto to encapsulate Brooker's brilliant series succinctly, I don't think one could do better than to pick the signature line of the gardener Chance, the hero of Jerzy Kosiński's prescient 1970 novel *Being There* and of the 1979 film version by Hal Ashby, in which Chance is played by Peter Sellers: “I like to watch.” So do you, and so, increasingly, do we all.

—Continued from p. 11 (Lifestyle Feature)

Over the last ten years, the aforementioned resurgence, in Shreveport, of classic American comfort food has been aided and abetted by an improvement in the ethnic offerings. Stirred by an influx of new Americans, the pots and dishes served up by America's latest arrivals have thrown into contrast the indigenous American offerings and have encouraged experimentation. Surprisingly, Shreveport presents a set of top-notch international bistros in the oriental tradition. An extraordinary find along Youree Drive, not too far from the LSUS campus, is the [Imperial Cathay Chinese Cuisine](#). For visitors from Baton Rouge or Lafayette or even Lake Charles, where top-quality Chinese cooking remains in short supply, the Imperial Cathay is an eye-opener and a mouth-tingler. A genuine restaurant and not a glorified takeout, the Imperial Cathay delivers visually beautiful as well as nearly authentic selections from the full range of Chinese classics.

Wondrously fresh and reasonably apportioned, both the small bites—the hot and sour soup; the eggrolls—and the main courses merit applause. Especially laudable is the Kung Pau Chicken, which, bursting with flavor and crunchy with nutty as well as vege-

tal goodness, is probably the best rendering in our humble state.

The south Asian community has also chimed in with the unveiling of [Indigo Indian Bistro](#), conveniently located along the Bert Kouns Industrial Loop, between LSUS and Shreveport's mega-auto-mall development. Suggestively ornamented in high-contrast black, white, and bright secondary colors, Indigo Bistro gives the visitor the impression of sudden immersion in an upper-end London Indian restaurant while it also highlights the ethnic traditions of the friendly proprietors. During the day, Indigo emphasizes the full buffet, which, amazingly, maintains the separation of flavors and textures through carefully compartmentalized offerings. At night, Indigo attains its full azure brilliance through an à la carte menu rich in both vegetarian and traditional favorites, whether peppery bhajis or tandoori-ized chickens. Indigo is the perfect way to top off a trip to Shreveport with a rounded meals full of scintillating flavors that will stay with you all the way down Interstate 49!

So, head up to Shreveport and enjoy a bite or two!

INDIGO
INDIAN BISTRO

Indigo Bistro Makes
your Mouth a
Memory Device

Imperial Cathay
CHINESE CUISINE

Imperial Cathay Celebrates Exotic Freshness