

Discovery Series explores possibility of utopia

By Susannah Rosenblatt
Old Gold and Black Reporter

The Discovery Series 2000 lecture program concluded its February slate on Feb. 29 with a discussion titled, "The New Millennium: Can We Create Utopia?" held in the Benson University Center's third floor lounge.

A five-member, multidisciplinary faculty panel offered the audience of faculty and students its insights into the possibilities and ramifications of a utopian state.

Joanna Iwata, the director of the Benson University center, who created the Discovery Series four years ago, moderated the program.

The panel was comprised of Dane Scott, a visiting assistant professor of philosophy; Earl Smith, a professor of sociology and chairman of the sociology department; Julie Wayne, an assistant professor of psychology; Tim Auman, a campus

minister; and Brian Tague, an assistant professor of biology. Each gave a short talk on their interpretation of a utopia.

Scott cited Plato's *Republic* and Adolphus Huxley's *Brave New World* as examples of tightly controlled utopian communities boosted by eugenics and conformity. Scott then said that those were "not perfect places, places you probably wouldn't want to live."

He said that human history's closest incarnation of a utopian state is totalitarian Marxism. Tague, a molecular biologist, examined the technical aspects of utopia, engineering both human beings and food closer to perfection.

Genetic manipulation presents the possibility of a super-race of intelligent and physically powerful human beings dominating as Earth's ruling class.

Tague also went on to examine the ethical implications of such a

scenario. "When do you generate new genetic bigotry, that 'this trait is better than this trait?'" he asked.

Auman and Smith offered sociological and theological interpretations of utopia. Whereas Smith maintained that sociologists "don't get involved in this kind of social forecasting," Auman provided a uniquely spiritual viewpoint.

"The kingdom of Heaven ... is a utopia for most Christians," Auman said. "But we live without hope because theology begins with the doctrine of original sin. ... We need to liberate Christianity from that patriarchal violent self."

Wayne, an industrial/organizational psychologist, countered that achieving utopia is impossible.

"As long as we're human beings and as long as we differ, you can't create utopia. ... No two of us have the same idea of what utopia is," Wayne said. She added that a perfect world would require absolute

equality for and tolerance of all human beings, an attractive but unlikely scenario.

After the 45-minute program, Iwata fielded questions and solicited comments from the audience.

"If people leave the program with one new insight or one new idea, then we've done our job well," she said. Iwata created the Discovery Series lectures four years ago with the vision of a "bridging program to enhance the out-of-classroom experience."

Past Discovery Series talks have spanned a range of topical issues, from cults to civil rights to emotional intelligence. Attendance at the lectures has been 12 to 100 students, depending on the topic.

"It's a fun program for me to run," Iwata said. "It affords me an opportunity to get to know faculty members, and interact with the (primarily student) audiences. Learning needs to be interactive."



Amanda Jones/Old Gold and Black

The Discovery Series on Feb. 29 featured the views of several professors on what life would be like in a utopia.

SG Student Government meets at 7 p.m. Tuesdays. Executive officers may be reached at Ext. 5293 or Box 7292.

Topics of bills discussed include Honor Code, service project, litter

The Academic Committee presented work toward creating a more concise Honor Code statement for the campus. The issue was addressed by the legislature as Bill 40.

Currently there are several different honors statements used on campus and the development of a single statement would work to enhance the visibility of the code and the accountability of students to its ideals, the committee said.

The committee plans to send a letter to the administration requesting input and clarifying SG's goals. SG also discussed and passed Bill 41.

The bill addressed SG participation in a campus service project.

SG will take part in a Volunteer Service Corps effort to get campus organizations to adopt areas on campus to keep free of litter.

The committees will rotate taking responsibility for keeping the area clean.

Academic

The committee presented its efforts to work with the admissions office to improve the quality and quantity of information sent to admitted students. The web site offering insights on various majors and minors available to students is still being refined but should be available soon.

Appropriations and Charter

Committee work focused on selecting the winner of the *Pro Humanitate* award. Campus organizations applied for the award, which is worth \$500.

Campus Life

The committee is focusing on organizing a round table discussion to take place with the trustees later this semester. A bill addressing the hours of athletic facilities was submitted.

Judiciary

Changes to the SG Handbook are almost complete and will soon be presented to the legislature. The committee is continuing to collect information toward creating a single Honor Code for use on campus.

Physical Planning

New furniture is being acquired for the Green Room. Securing a shuttle to run to off-campus locations is also being examined.

Public Relations

The committee has finished the SG bulletin board outside of the Benson University Center Food Court. Projects still under way include coordinating a town hall-style meeting with faculty, students, staff and members of the community and creating a book of activities available to students in Winston-Salem.

Bills

Seven bills were considered by the legislature. Bill

34 addressed the charter for the Prebendal Student Association.

The bill was passed with SG recommending that the Student Life Committee and the faculty grant a charter to the association.

Bill 35, dealing with appropriations for the Equestrian Club, was passed.

The club was allotted \$450 for the 1999-2000 academic year.

Bill 36 awarded \$500 to the Board of Investigators and Advisors, the recipient of the 2000 *Pro Humanitate* award.

Bill 37 supported a commitment by Facilities Management to provide recycling containers for fraternity parties. The bill was passed.

Bill 38 recommended that Wachovia Bank install two additional ATMs on campus. The sites suggested by SG were Worrell Professional Center and Benson.

Bill 39 called for the hours of operation for the fitness level of Benson to be extended by one hour. The facility would remain open until 11 p.m. Sunday through Thursday.

Bill 40 was presented by the Academic Committee and called for a single Honor Code to be written for the entire campus.

Bill 41 secured SG participation in the VSC project to have campus organizations adopt pieces of campus to keep clear of litter.

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