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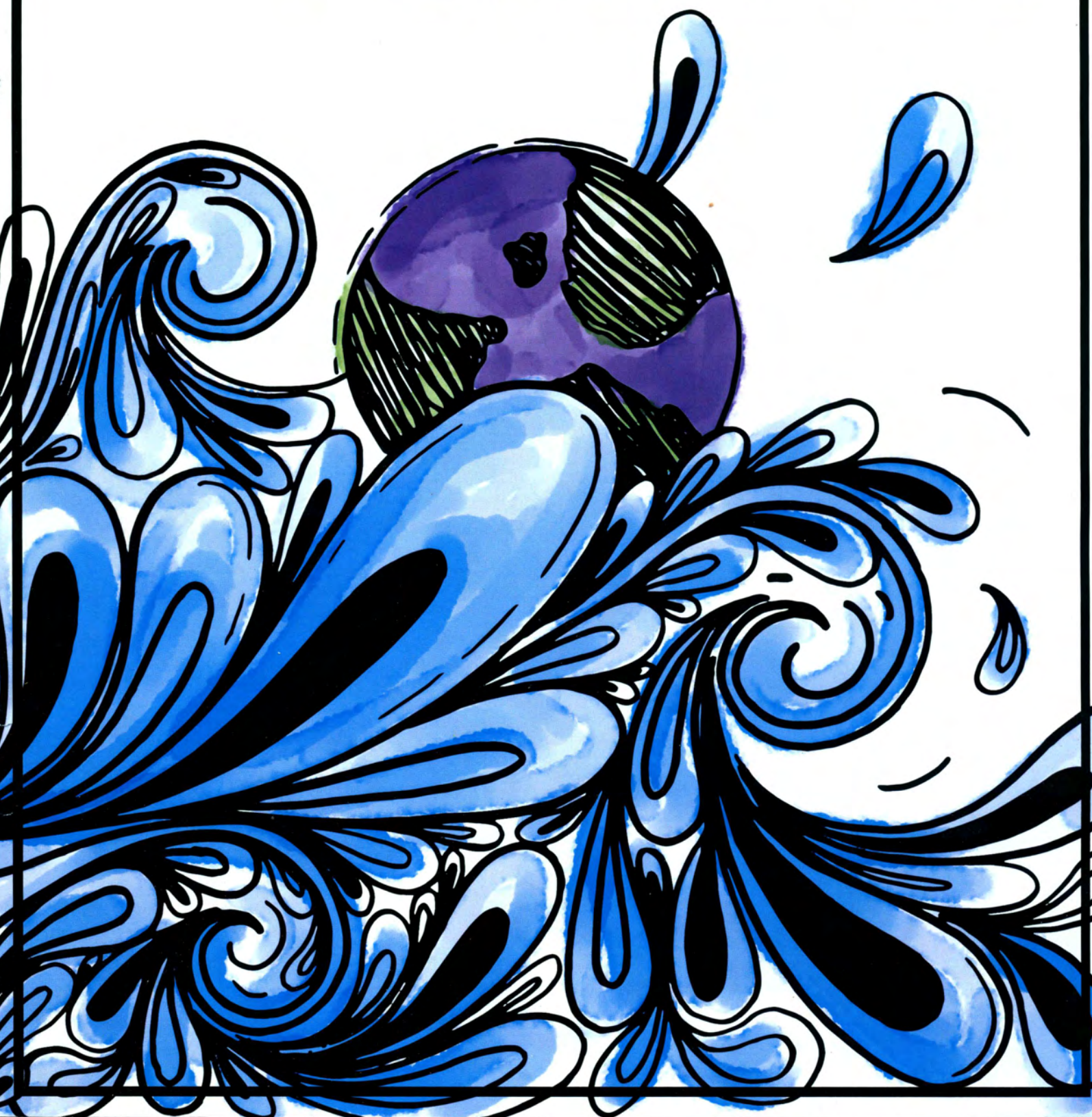
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*the* PACIFIC  
& Sentinel

JANUARY 2016





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ARTS + CULTURE | Kasey Colton

ACADEMICS | Brittany Hanson

## CONTRIBUTORS THIS ISSUE:

Emily Shanaberger

Kayla Townsley

Matt Berger

Sasha Kramer

Tiffany Kraft

## ADVISOR:

Reaz Mahmood

You have in your hands the first ever edition of a new publication, The Pacific Sentinel. We're a combination of two former publications on campus: The Rearguard and the Portland Spectrum. Both publications worked extremely hard to serve the student body, but this year as both encountered grounding problems that had been recurring historically for both, it was decided, after some discussion among the students in both organizations, that our efforts would better serve the student body if combined.

We've carried the ideals of both former publications into The Pacific Sentinel: to bring in-depth, well-researched articles about ongoing news and culture items to you and to advocate on behalf of the marginalized. We've also included two new sections, one that covers technology news and issues and another that includes academic writing.

The Pacific Sentinel also aims to be a unifying voice on campus, not just across individual demographics, but across diverse disciplines throughout campus. We're interested in hearing from anyone who has something interesting to write, in whatever discipline they may be studying. If you have something to write, please reach out.

We look forward to hearing from you, enjoy the first edition!

Sincerely,  
*Alex Skousen*

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The Pacific Sentinel 1

**3 ARE VIDEO GAMES ART** | Emily Shanaberger

*What is considered art?*

**5 PSU TO RENEW ARAMARK CONTRACT** | Kayla Townsley

*Despite the bad rap.*

**8 BANDS IN TOWN** | Kasey Colton

*Dont forget about fun!*

**9 CONFRONTATIONAL FOR JUSTICE** | Madi Hinze

*A conversation with Alyssa Pagan of PSUSU.*

## *In This Issue:*

**11 MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE** | Alex Skousen

*Promising new Amazon series!*

**12 FILM REVIEW: STAR WARS** | Matt Berger

*No spoilers!*

**13 REINVENTION AND RECYCLING** | Jeremy King

*Technology in the Modern Age.*

**15 PARIS: A SPECTACLE OF HOPE** | Sasha Kramer

*What happened at the Climate Talks?*

**19 FALLOUT 4** | Jeremy King

*200 hours later... with screenshots!*

**23 HIGHER EDUCATION UNDER CORPORATIZATION** | Tiffany Kraft

*Students and teachers should come before profits.*



ARE

# Video Games ART?

BY: EMILY SHANABERGER

According to Merriam Webster's Dictionary, art is: "something that is created with imagination and skill and that is beautiful or that expresses important ideas or feelings; works created by artists: paintings, sculptures, etc., that are created to be beautiful or to express important ideas or feelings." (Definition of Art)

One of the most important elements to art is how it makes us feel, what it makes us think of. How does it change your perspective? Does it pull at an old memory and bring tears to your eyes? Music is arguably the most common art form that calls upon emotion (i.e. Adele). Artists use the melodies and lyrics to paint a picture of heartbreak or joy. They want the song to resonate the emotion inside you. Paintings do the same. Each stroke is dedicated to showing a scene of love or pain, letting the viewer pick apart the story through the images. Banksy, a famous graffiti artist, uses his art to depict messages about the world we live in, trying to make onlookers question their surroundings.

If art is about emotions and messages, then video games fit perfectly into the definition. Not only do they require a vast amount of skill and imagination to create, but each game has a story or message behind it that the player will experience. Many believe, however, that including video games into the definition of art is scandalous. To include games into the definition is to put them on the same plane as classic pieces, such as Mona Lisa. The idea of considering games equal to such revered works, therefore, is what causes others to cry sacrilege. Roger Ebert states on his website, "No one in or out of the field has ever been able to cite a game worthy of comparison with the great poets, filmmakers, novelists and poets" (Ebert). In essence, compared to classic artists, video games are nothing, and thus not art – however, comparison is not how we deem art as art.

Do we compare Monet to J.K. Rowling? Shakespeare to Bruno Mars? No, because they are in different veins of art. Each piece was crafted with a different method and should be judged separately. Looking at a painting involves looking for the story in each stroke, figuring out how the piece conveys a tale. Reading a novel submerges a reader in the world, watching it unfold around them. Each art form changes how a story is presented. Even if two works of art had the same meaning behind the words or paint, they could not be compared, as each goes about conveying that message differently.



# art :

noun | \ärt\

*: something that is created with imagination and skill and that is beautiful or that expresses important ideas or feelings*

*: works created by artists : paintings, sculptures, etc., that are created to be beautiful or to express important ideas or feelings*

*: the methods and skills used for painting, sculpting, drawing, etc.*

Similarly, video games cannot be compared to conventional works of art. It is impossible to compare a game to that of DaVinci simply because they are two very different works. One cannot compare games to artists of the past because there hasn't been anything like video games before. Chris Melissinos, a writer for TIME magazine, says:

"As an art form that has only existed in the digital space, video games are truly a collision of art and science. They include many forms of traditional artistic expression—sculpture in the form of 3D modeling, illustration, narrative arcs, and dynamic music—that combine to create something that transcends any one type." (Melissinos)

There has never been art resembling anything like video games. That doesn't mean it's not art, however. Video games are created through the imagination of game developers, and brought to life by the skill of character designs and story writers. They contain beautiful messages or change the player's perspective on the world. They contain characters and stories that make the player feel a whirlwind of emotions. Does that not sound like the definition of art?

If anything, video games are the perfect representation of what art can become. Every game consists of multiple forms of art coming together to tell the player a story. Illustrations of character designs are carefully worked on to make the player connect with them. Concept artists create the landscapes of the games to perfectly submerge the player in the world. With advancement in technology, character models and game environments have become more realistic, allowing these art forms to further envelope the player. Writers spend hours spinning together the lore of the land,

making sure that the story makes sense. Orchestras conduct the soundtracks for the games to set the mood, sending a chill down the player's spine as soon as they step into a new room.

Video games are nothing but art. They become their own form of art as the multiple works come together to create the game. Video games reach to the player through their stories, leaving the player thinking about them for days after they play. They let the player escape from reality by seeing a new world unfold as they wander through forgotten cities or large kingdoms. Relationships are formed between the player and the characters, and the player cares for them as they would a real life friend. Besides the aesthetic beauty, there is also beauty in how the game brings a player into a world beyond their wildest dreams. Art is abundant in video games. One only needs to press start to experience it.

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# PORTLAND STATE

*to Hypocritically Renew*

## ARAMARK CONTRACT

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BY: KAYLA TOWNSLEY

At the end of this year, PSU will renew its contract with Aramark, the international corporation that provides dining to universities, stadiums, and prisons.

Aramark Corporation, commonly known as Aramark, is an American-based facility, clothing, and food service provider to thousands of businesses, sports facilities, educational and health institutions, and federal and state prisons worldwide. Aramark provides Portland State University (PSU) with dining, catering, food service management, and convenience store services. The only place on campus where food is not provided by Aramark is Green Roots Cafe.

PSU is reputed for its sustainable solutions. Despite the university's vision to be "an internationally recognized urban university known for excellence in student learning, innovative research, and community engagement that contributes to the economic vitality, environmental sustainability, and quality of life in the Portland region and beyond," according to their website, the quality of life for students is questionable. Although the university claims to embrace their role as

responsible citizens of "the city, the state, the region, and the global community and [to] foster actions, programs, and scholarship that will lead to a sustainable future," these words hold little meaning when areas such as PSU's dining services are taken into account.

Aramark has a messy ethical history and has become the subject of numerous scandals relating to labor practices, health violations, and business ethics. In 2008, the *Minnesota Daily* led an investigation of University Dining Services and Aramark Corp. that was compiled through employment data and interviews with current and former employees. This investigation uncovered instances of Aramark firing employees for reporting unsanitary food conditions. Demands from the Coalition of Immokalee Workers, UNITE/Here, and other unions have also reported Aramark for paying fringe wages, not paying employees for all hours worked, not paying back-pay, and for discretely

*"Aramark has a messy ethical history and has become the subject of numerous scandals relating to labor practices, health violations, and business ethics."*



ABOVE: Aramark logo.

RIGHT: Smith Memorial Student Union, Portland State University – Wiki Commons.





firing employees who filed Equal Employment Opportunity Commission claims.

A 2013 article in *The Detroit Free Press* revealed that not only does Aramark have a bad track record with its employees, it has also been scrutinized for inadequate portion sizes, food safety issues, and overcharging state prisons in Michigan, Kentucky, and Florida. Corrections officers alleged that a 2009 riot in a Kentucky prison was the result of the poor quality of Aramark's food. In 2013, Chris Hedges, a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist, led an investigation of the food services at Burlington County Jail in New

Jersey and discovered that the food was frequently spoiled, resulting in inmates suffering from diarrhea and vomiting. Additionally, *Michigan Live*, *The Detroit Free Press*, *The Columbus Dispatch*, and numerous other media outlets recently published reports of maggots found in the food preparation areas of various state prisons and correctional institutions across the United States.

*The Cavalier Daily*, a student-run newspaper at the University of Virginia, published an article reporting that Aramark "served garbage" and "underfed inmates and fed them dog food, worms and scraps of food from old meals." The article

argued that the university should reconsider its current contract with Aramark in lieu of these poor ethical and health standards. According to *The West Georgian*, the University of West Georgia will not renew its contract with Aramark for the 2016-2017 academic year in order to establish a "high level of excellence" in their dining services and to uphold the university's vision statement.

We don't need to look nationwide or even statewide, however, to be convinced of Aramark's poor food quality, unsavory employment conditions, and lack of holistic sustainability. Just talk to any PSU student with a meal plan and ask if Victor's has ever made them sick. With Aramark's track record and Portland State University's "dedication" to sustainability and community, why has the administration continually renewed Aramark's contract?

Some may point to the sustainable initiatives tacked onto the new service contract as a way to defend the cyclic renewal, but the 2015 STARS report published by the Sierra Club outlined some of these changes and there was much left to be desired.

As reported by Aramark and PSU dining services in the 2015 STARS report, "PSU Campus Sustainability Office and



Aramark Food Service have worked to create goals for increasing local and organic food purchasing.” However, other than mentioning that the goals will soon be added to the contract, the actual plan to enact these initiatives remains vague if not non-existent.

Aramark’s current seal of sustainability at PSU comes from a vague list of so-called accomplishments outlined in the STARS report, which include the fact that “additional criteria such as Fair Trade, Marine Stewardship, and Food Alliance certifications are favored” when purchasing food.

Additional criteria from the report that attempts to prove PSU’s dedication to sustainable dining is that “most” produce is locally sourced, the enhanced tracking of local vendors is “being implemented,” “most” dairy products come from local Sunshine Dairy, all breads served are processed within 250 miles, and that all seafood procurement abides by the Monterey Bay Aquarium’s “Seafood Watch” guide. All of which is meaningless unless the PSU Campus Sustainability Office and Aramark can specifically outline actual processes for tracking this criteria other than stating that “invoices are reviewed for food’s origin location, organic or other third-party certifications.”

Peter Daegas, a former sustainability intern for Aramark and PSU Dining Services, was responsible for tracking “products that were being sold by Aramark across campus and record necessary data: distributor, production facility (if the information was available), grown or processed, farm location (if available), cost and quantity, certifications, food type/category, and a few other details.” The information was then compiled and “given to the PSU Campus Sustainability Office to confirm they are following contract and for AASHE reporting.”

According to Daegas, “buying local and organic products is a priority; PSU Dining should be increasing the total purchases of this type by 5% per year.” In regards to enforcement, Daegas says “it is a requirement and laid out in their contract with PSU.” But what exactly does that mean? With such a prevalent lack of enforcement plans and an excessive use of passive language and vague wording, how can students trust that these expectations are upheld? Is it more likely that promises of more sustainable food services will fall to the wayside, acting as a buffer intended to give the appearance of sustainability without requiring the administration to invest time, money, and hard work into honest initiatives?

Unfortunately, it seems so. Maybe it is time for the students of PSU to stand up and tell the administration to put their money where their mouths are, to roll up their sleeves and get their hands dirty, the good kind of dirty.

*Maybe it’s time for them  
“to let knowledge serve the city.”*

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# BANDS IN TOWN

## JANUARY 2016

BY: KASEY COLTON

### HAUNTED SUMMER

MISSISSIPPI STUDIOS

11

Ethereal and dreamy synth/guitar duo. The kind of band whose music videos include dual-exposures of the lead singer's face as she expressively sings into the camera, and whatever nature was around. Doors open at 8 PM.

### JANET JACKSON

THE MODA CENTER

12

The only Jackson child to break out of Michael's shadow, the pop sensation hasn't been to Portland in four years, and God knows when she'll be back. Doors open at 8 PM.

### DEVOTCHKA

REVOLUTION HALL

13

If you've ever watched Little Miss Sunshine, you've heard DeVotchKa. Composed of obscure instruments I'm not totally sure actually exist, including the theremin, bouzouki, melodica, and Nick Urata's voice. Doors open at 9.

### GREGORY ALAN ISAKOV

ARLENE SCHNITZER CONCERT HALL

14

Contemporary indie-folk. Enjoy sobbing with 3,000 other strangers at the Schnitzer. Doors open at 7:30.

### LUPE FIASCO

ROSELAND THEATER

14

Lupe's playing all the hits. It's a tour for the fans. Doors open at 7.

### VANESSA CARLTON

DOUG FIR LOUNGE

16

danananana na na na,  
danananana na na na.  
Doors open at 9.

### THE EASY LEAVES

SECRET SOCIETY BALLROOM

16

If you like pretending like you work on a farm or are permanently stuck in a saloon; if you like men in either cowboy or trucker hats; if you think bolo ties are fancy and a banjo is never complete without harmonica, then these self-proclaimed country music ambassadors are a must-see. Doors open at 9.

### GLACIER VEINS

ANARRES INFOSHOP

18

Listed on their website as emo dream punk. Lead singer Malia Endres was my roommate last year. The real question is, do you say glay-shur or glass-cee-er? Doors open at 6.

### BONE THUGS-N-HARMONY

CRYSTAL BALLROOM

21

Take a trip back to '95 and prepare your #throwbackthursday, then engrave the lyrics to Foe Tha Love of Money on my tombstone. Doors open at 7.

### TRASHCAN JOE

SECRET SOCIETY BALLROOM

21

Trashcan Joe— you know, that's what they called me in high school. Instruments made entirely out of found objects lend their way to a sound reminiscent of the early jazz era. Doors open at 6.

### NEVER SHOUT NEVER

HAWTHORNE THEATRE

25

For all you folks who miss heavy side fringes and still read Alternative Press magazine. Doors open at 6.

### DR. DOG

CRYSTAL BALLROOM

4 FEB

Reminiscent of the music you probably listen to with your friends while driving around during summer break. If a dog can get his PHD, anything is possible. Doors open at 7.

### BRYAN JOHN APPLEBY

ALBERTA STREET PUB

6 FEB

Acoustic guitar. Banjo. Soft vocals. Wailing. Beanies. Beards. Don't show up if you can't clap in sync. Doors open at 8:30.

PORTLAND



# Confrontational for Justice

## A Conversation with Alyssa Pagan

BY: MADI HINZE

Alyssa Pagan is a PSU student, a prominent member of the Portland State University Student Union (PSUSU), and a force to be reckoned with. Within the span of our short conversation, Alyssa talked about her personal background, what's next for Disarm PSU, and what she thinks it will take for PSU's president, Wim Wiewel, to listen to student activists such as herself.

It seems that within everything Alyssa said, there was inspiration to be found somewhere. Even at the end when I asked if she had anything else to add, rather than throwing in a promotional plug for the next PSUSU event or having nothing else to say, she left me with a brilliant statement that ends with a call to action for PSU students, specifically women of color.

Through both her words and actions, Alyssa continually proves to be one of the leaders we need on campus.

**You're originally from New Jersey, right? Why'd you move to Portland?**

Hurricane Sandy [brought me here]. I was living in an apartment building on the Jersey Shore in 2012 that was almost destroyed by the storm, and I was put up in a FEMA hotel that was a converted Holiday Inn. I was in there for days...when the airports opened back up, I was looking at places that I could go where I had friends that

would either put me up or have good leads, and I had been thinking about Portland for a while. I decided to give it a shot, because the idea of staying in New Jersey where so many people's lives had been destroyed made me feel like I couldn't possibly stay there while maintaining my emotional health.

**Were you going to school in New Jersey or did you start at PSU here?**

I started at PSU here, one of my neighbors worked at the university and we got to talking right here in this lobby, and she was asking me where I went to school...and wanted to know about my education and I told her no, I grew up very, very poor, by a single mother, and I didn't have any self esteem as a trans person who was cut down at every turn.

I didn't think about higher education or any sort of professional life in my future, I felt like that was for other kinds of people, not for me. She told me I needed to think about it and that I only lived a few blocks away from the university and that I should give it a shot — and this is me, giving it a shot.

**And what are you majoring in?**

Women, Gender, and Sexuality.

**In terms of activism, when was the first time you realized activism was something you wanted to do? Like for me, it**

**was going to a Don't Shoot PDX rally.**

Me too!

**Yeah! I'd been to LGBTQ rallies in Arizona, but it just wasn't the same thing, or it didn't have the same kind of energy.**

Yeah, for me it was a Don't Shoot rally too, and now I'm one of the main organizers in Don't Shoot.

**How did you get involved with psusu?**

I had been going to study groups with the International Socialist Organization (ISO). Jamie Partridge, one of the organizers who went on to become the godfather for me in my life — I love him and he gives me so much direction and love — told me about a rally to go to the Board of Trustees meeting to protest the then-pending or up-for-argument decision to arm campus security, and that I needed to go. I thought he was right, so I went and quickly realized that the student union was the only group of people on campus who were really moving and pushing back against the power, and I realized that these are the people I needed to work with.

**If you could describe psusu in three words, what would they be?**

Confrontational for justice.



**I know that everyone in psusu is really close, what have you learned from them that you don't think you would have otherwise?**

I learned that the bonds of shared identity and culture that I had only been privy to in my life, based on necessity, are not the only ones that are worth having. That most of the people in psusu are cis or not trans, or white, and I am neither of those things, and most of them are middle-class or come from middle-class families and I don't...I did not think before joining psusu that I would find such closeness with people like that, and I am very pleasantly surprised because they represent to me what actual solidarity looks like and the magical potential of working across difference in the sense of Audre Lorde, who is probably my biggest influence.

**What other organizations are you involved with, besides psusu and Don't Shoot?**

Jobs with Justice and 15 Now.

**Do you try to commit an equal amount of time to all of them, or is there one that you focus on primarily?**

Primarily psusu.

**What's next for #DisarmPSU?**

We are going to be doing a series of informational sessions, we did one recently at the Multicultural Center and we were invited to do more. We also did one at the Students of Color Conference. Our hope for that is to help dispel some of the misconceptions about [psusu] that have been perpetrated largely by the administration, which seeks to paint us as out-of-touch radicals and troublemakers who use tactics that are not helpful. We want to flip that.

**What do you think it will take for Wim to really listen to student activists, if anything?**

It will take students who are upset with him and his decisions to actually get organized and be willing to confront the injustice that he's perpetrating. I

had a professor who told a full classroom of students who were on the fence about whether or not they would actually get active...on the day of the Million Student March...and the professor said that they have been in the room with Wim when he has said that there is no reason to change his policies and his decisions because there's only a small amount of students, relatively, that are actually voicing their concerns.

So that gives me some insight into knowing what it is that he is thinking, and he will probably not change his mind until more students get organized and resist the oppression he is enacting.

**Is there anything else you'd like to say or add?**

I am making a concerted effort to center women of color and have them in positions of leadership in this movement. The Black Lives Matter movement that I draw so much of my perspective from is led by women of color, and particularly intersectional feminists, and that praxis is so important and transformative when paired with confrontational tactics to be able to affect the kind of change that we need.

When women of color move, people pay attention. So let's move.



# MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE

BY: ALEX SKOUSEN



*The Man in the High Castle* stands out even in the current television renaissance we're experiencing in the age of streaming. The character development, concept, and pacing of the *amazon.com* series all combine to make an engaging show that is as binge-worthy as any other straight-to-streaming titles that have been released a season at a time.

Based on the Hugo-award-winning novel of the same title, *The Man in the High Castle* takes place in an alternate history, where the Allied forces lost WWII and the United States is divided by coast between Nazi Germany and the Japanese Empire, with a chaotic, lawless "neutral zone" dividing the continent. This backdrop provides one of the most recognizable elements to the new series, a richly detailed, grimly lit mise-en-scene that creates a 1960s New York City and San Francisco that's structures are dilapidated when not Orwellian and covered in state propaganda such as swastikas or the rising sun. The visually arresting set design feels akin to *Blade Runner* (1982), another Dick adaptation directed by *Man in the High Castle* producer Ridley Scott.

The stunning mise-en-scene is matched by engaging characters that break tired archetypes. *High Castle* presents us with a myriad of uniquely motivated characters, which keeps the first season unpredictable and engaging. Frank Frink (Rupert Evans), for example, narrowly escaped Axis violence in the past. Rather than having a strong sense of resistance, he is motivated to maintain the status quo

to protect both himself and his sister from further atrocities. Nazi leader John Smith (viciously played by Rufus Sewell, whose sadistic portrayal of villainy has only improved since playing opposite of Heath Ledger in *A Knight's Tale*) similarly appears to be motivated solely by duty to the Reich, but begins to betray this surface level characterization for the love of his family. The show most impressively manages to evoke sympathy for characters that are otherwise purely antagonistic. When presented with their own antagonists we see enough of their human element to root for them to overcome characters that are arguably even more sadistic and ruthless.

In typical Philip K. Dick fashion, there is a constant questioning of identity and reality. The show's central conflict is the discovery, and distribution of several 35mm film reels that depict WWII as an Allied victory. An organized American resistance is actively seeking these reels; meanwhile both the Nazi and Japanese governments are aggressively and ruthlessly pursuing the mysterious films, killing anyone who possesses them.

*The Man in the High Castle* is a captivating, gorgeous series that stands out among the already high standards of streaming era film. The gritty and amazingly detailed sets coupled with a solid cast that gives depth to well-written characters come together to create yet another Philip K. Dick adaptation destined to become a classic.

Philip K. Dick is the author of forty-four novels and several short stories. His work has been adapted numerous times for feature-length films and television series. Some of his most popular adaptations include *Blade Runner*, *Minority Report*, and *Total Recall*. The sci-fi author has created a canon of alternate universes, confused identities, and human conflict with machines.

BACKGROUND: *Blade Runner* (1982) by Ridley Scott

ABOVE:



## FILM REVIEW:

# Star Wars: The Force Awakens

BY: MATT BERGER

The force has awakened and so have audiences around the world. Back in 2012 when George Lucas sold his mega-franchise to The Walt Disney Company it was announced that Lucasfilm and Disney would begin production on a new *Star Wars* Trilogy. Now after years of speculation, trailer reactions, and some of the largest hype around a film since 1999's *The Phantom Menace*, I can say that *Star Wars* is back and better than it's been in years.

The seventh installment in the *Star Wars* saga, *The Force Awakens*, not only brings back old favorites, but introduces viewers to some of the most captivating new characters that have been seen in this series since 1983's *Return of the Jedi*. The stand-out performance of the film is newcomer Daisy Ridley, who plays the protagonist, Rey. Ridley plays the part with both ferocity and grace. Ridley is sure to become a household name in a matter of time, as she brings a soon to be iconic role to life. Her life as an unknown actress is over.

The rest of the new cast is phenomenal as well. They encapsulate the characters they play, even if some were not as fleshed out as some might hope. The most obvious are John Boyega, who portrays the Stormtrooper Finn, Oscar Isaac, who plays Poe Dameron, the roguish Resistance Fighter, and the intimidating Adam Driver, who

owns the role of Kylo Ren. Apart from these three, there are many other great performances that sadly do not get enough time to really shine, especially the heavily marketed Captain Phasma, played by *Game of Thrones* alum Gwendoline Christie.

Harrison Ford, Carrie Fisher, and Mark Hamill all return in their respective roles. Ford gives one of his best performances as the smuggler Han Solo. Not since 1980's *The Empire Strikes Back* has Ford portrayed the character with such humor and heart. Carrie Fisher plays, now General, Leia as a strong leading performance, though it can seem a bit rusty at times. As for Hamill's performance as Luke Skywalker, not much can be said without spoiling the film. To say the least, fans will not be disappointed. His transformation from small farm-boy to now leaves a powerful beat in the film.

The film has set a new standard for *Star Wars* films. From the amazing long-awaited return to practical effects, to the thrilling new action scenes, the movie truly feels like a return to form for the franchise, while also advancing the standard for practical effects (just look at BB-8). There are a few scenes though that do feel out of place among this very real feeling world. The performance captured by Andy Serkis for the character of supreme leader Snoke, though intimidating, does feel a tad out of place in this world.

There are a couple more scenes and effects that do use heavy CGI which continue this off-putting trend. The story itself has left many divided. As with all the *Star Wars* films, the story beats are very familiar, but this film at points does feel like a soft reboot of the original *Star Wars*, *Episode IV: A New Hope*. The final battle to destroy the First Order's Starkiller Base is especially similar and might leave audiences a tad bored. This nostalgia is really the weakest aspect of the film, and it feels that the filmmakers had little confidence in their own new story.

It is the new additions to the film that are its strength. As this new film ended, I felt a hunger to know more about this new *Star Wars* universe and the new cast of characters. And I suppose this is a good thing. I am completely satisfied with this awakening for *Star Wars* and am eager to return to it as soon as possible. *Episode VIII* couldn't come sooner.

*Star Wars: The Force Awakens* is now in theaters and is directed by J.J. Abrams who co-wrote the script with Lawrence Kasdan. The film stars Daisy Ridley, Harrison Ford, John Boyega, and Adam Driver. *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* is rated PG-13.

BACKGROUND: Photograph courtesy of NASA, ESA, and the Hubble Heritage Team



# Reinvention & Recycling:

## Tech in the Modern Age

BY: JEREMY KING

Out with the old, in with the new. But how long can we expect “new” to stay... well... “new”?

I was six years old in 1997, when my family brought home the first PC I have memory of laying eyes on. While the exact details of the build elude me, I know that it boasted the Windows 95 Operating System and an Intel Pentium II CPU. While the Nintendo 64 video game console had exposed me to the myriad wonders of imaginative virtual realities less than a year prior, the computer introduced a whole new spectrum of possibilities. Here was some magical box that I could not only play games on, but do other things on, too!

As a child, I didn’t understand what a transistor was, or a CPU, or clock speed, or RAM, or much of anything else, for that matter. All I knew was that I could be playing *Ski Free* one moment and messing around in *Kid Pix* the next. In a time where my idea of entertainment was divided into four distinct divisions – Nintendo 64, Cartoons, outdoors, and toys – the notion that a *single box* could do more than one thing without having to switch inputs or change cartridges was a revelation of epic proportions.

Flash forward to 2016.

Yesterday, I practically groaned in legitimate disgust when my Samsung Galaxy S5 froze for a moment while loading a video on *Snapchat* and had to resist the urge to throw it at the wall. In that moment, the fact that I held in my hand a pocket-sized phone with enough horsepower to easily outperform that magical box from 1997 at least a hundred times over didn’t mean a thing.

In the grand scheme of global progression, the rate of technological advancement is staggering. Moore’s Law – a term that began circulating in the 70s following an observation posited by Intel co-founder Gordon E. Moore in 1965 – suggests, in a nutshell, that “...overall processing power for computers will double every two years”.

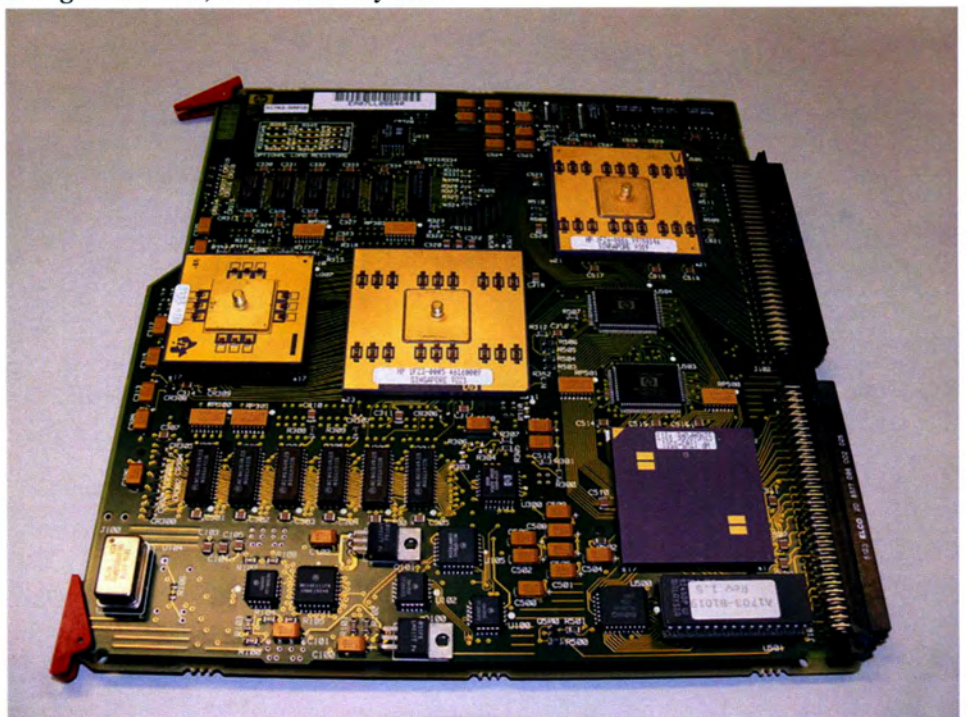
Moore’s Law, in more specific terms, takes into consideration the amount of transistors present in any given CPU in determining power. The Pentium II was a single-core CPU; the 1997 incarnation of the processor, known as “Klamath”, contained 7.5 million transistors. For the sake of comparison, my current CPU contains 1.3 billion—slightly over 94% more transistors than that beloved box from my childhood.

It’s not all about the numbers, though. One must take into account the differences in performance between a single-core CPU, in which every task

run by the computer is relegated to one processor, and modern multi-core CPUs that effectively ‘split’ these tasks across each individual core as needed, improving efficiency and allowing for the execution of more expansive and demanding tasks. Moore’s law has remained relevant (and mostly accurate) into the 21st century and is expected to remain viable for at least another five years, and has been adapted to apply to any and all forms of technology.

But, more to the point, what does any of this really *mean* for us as a society?

It’s incredibly easy to take for granted the myriad luxuries technology has afforded us over the years in our day to day lives. For better or worse, the sheer speed at which technology innovates, adapts, evolves, and expands has cultivated a consumer culture that *expects* rapid growth.





Smartphones serve as a prime example of technology that feed into this mindset. Kevin Werbach, a professor of legal studies and business ethics for The Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, stated that “Smartphones and tablets have grown more quickly than any consumer electronics device we’ve ever seen” in a 2013 interview with the University’s online business analysis journal. “The torrid rate of growth means those devices are reaching the maturation stage more quickly than personal computers or other prior devices did.”

A later excerpt from the same article states that “The angst over whether consumers will continue to buy the latest, greatest device has Apple’s board of directors pushing for a faster innovation cycle, according to Fox Business News, which reported that there is pressure on CEO Tim Cook to bring new products to market faster.”

In the (approximate) span of time following the publication of the 2013 article, Apple has released four additional models of the iPhone; the iPhone 5c, 5s, 6, and 6 Plus. Following the release of the iPhone 3G in 2008, there have been ten models of the iPhone released across the last seven years.

It’s worth noting that while Apple serves as one of the most stark examples of a company that fully endorses rapid product reiteration and their release cycles do not necessarily coincide with the average lifespan of their products, it’s not uncommon for any consumer of electronic goods to ask themselves how long their newest hunk of tech is going to last before either failing or going ‘obsolete’.

Which begs the question—given the pace of technological evolution and innovation, how long, on average, are the lifecycles of our most prominently utilized electronic goodies, and what becomes of them when they’ve breathed their last?

A 2014 survey conducted by the Consumer Technology Association revealed that “Flat panel TVs have the longest expected life cycle of any CE

product surveyed in the study at 7.4 years”, while desktop computers and laptops had an average expectancy of 5.9 years and 5.5 years, respectively. Smartphones featured the lowest life expectancy at 4.6 years on average. The CTA goes on to note that “the industry’s efforts to promote recycling are clearly working, as most consumers anticipate recycling or finding a second home for the CE devices they stop using.”

Growing up, my awareness of this cycle was dim. Certainly, I was aware of technological evolution. When that magic box of ours with the Pentium II processor was replaced with a shiny new one with the Windows 98 Operating System, I was amazed; just as I was amazed when we made the subsequent leap from Windows 98 to Windows 2000, the Game Boy Color to the Game Boy Advance, the Nintendo 64 to the Nintendo Gamecube and the Playstation 2, from SD to HD and CRT to Flat Screen, from my basic Motorola flip-phone in middle school all the way up to the Galaxy S5 I almost threw at the wall yesterday and all the iterations and evolutions of everything in between.

All of these iterations have brought with them the spark of new possibility. Each went on to shape those moments of my life, my knowledge of the present, and my expectations for the future with every step forward.

A blog entry from the official website of the Computer History Museum, quoting an excerpt from *Moore’s Law: The Life of Gordon Moore, Silicon Valley’s Quiet Revolutionary*, asks the following. “As the average adult today spends around half of waking time immersed in electronic interactions, does this alter us fundamentally? With the silicon transistor impinging upon every facet of our material existence, how are we being shaped in expectation and action?”

Looking back at my own life – from that day in 1997 when I first experienced the magic box I know now as a computer right up to this very moment – I would say that the answer is a resounding yes.

Technology moves,  
and we move with it.



BACKGROUND: Photograph courtesy of NASA, ESA, and the Hubble Heritage Team  
LEFT: Photograph of CPU board by Thomas Schanz – Public Domain.  
ABOVE: Mobile phone evolution by Jojhnjoy – Wiki Commons.



# PARIS: A SPECTACLE OF HOPE?

BY: SASHA KRAMER

"FOR THE FIRST TIME IN THE HISTORY OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS, THERE IS A CHALLENGE FACING ALL CONTINENTS AND ALL CULTURE, WHICH REQUIRES US TO JOIN FORCES, NOT ON SHARED GROUND BUT A SHARED CONCERN, AND TO POOL OUR BEST RESOURCES."

— Nicolas Hulot (Special Envoy of the French President for the Environment)

The challenge referenced is climate change and through the week of November 30 to December 11, 2015, 196 nation-states came together at the 21<sup>st</sup> Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP21) in Paris, France. Widely recognized as the Paris Climate Talks, the goal of the Talks was to reach a universal international agreement on climate.

According to the United Nations (UN), the main tenet of the protocol is that it should apply to all countries, meaning that it considers the varying needs and capabilities of each country.

The work of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has established that a rise in the global temperature of more than two degrees would have irreversible climate consequences. The Climate Talks hold the international community accountable and responsible to limit global warming to less than 1.5 degrees Celsius (according to climate scientists, we're already at 1 degree) compared to pre-industrial levels.

An article from CNN quotes physicist, founder and CEO of Climate Analytics, Bill Hare, that 1.5 degrees is attainable: "From the point of view of science, technology and economics, the liter-

ature and modeling on energy and climate systems shows that it's feasible to limit warming to below 1.5 degree by 2100," Hare advised.

According to scientists, the agreement calls for zero net anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions to be reached during the second half of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

However, Mark Jacobson, Stanford University professor of civil and environmental engineering, is wary about whether this goal will be accomplished: "We know how to get to 100% renewable energy by 2050 using even just the technologies we have right in front of us... [But] will anyone do it is another question," he said.

*How will the Climate Talks hold the international community responsible?*

First and foremost it is important to understand that the Climate Talks are not a treaty, meaning that only parts of the agreement are legally binding. The UNFCCC established that each signing country must set their own emission target. For example, in a U.S. News article, Karl Ritter reports that during the international talks the Obama administration committed to reduce U.S. emissions by 28% by 2025.

President Obama was a strong proponent of making sure certain parts of the agreement were legally binding: "Although the targets themselves may not have the force of treaties, the process, the procedures that ensure transparency and periodic reviews, that needs to be legally binding," President Obama said in Paris, "and that's going to be critical."

Obama's emission targets would have to be submitted to the GOP-dominated

Congress, where it would not be ratified. Since President Obama is aware of the U.S. political environment, he could not be in favor of legally binding emissions targets for the U.S. to sign.

John Vidal, The Guardian's Environment Editor, delineates the accomplishments and disappointments of the Climate Talks. Vidal states that the climate talks have furnished a glimmer of hope for developing countries. Since countries are now held accountable by law to derail the intensive use of fossil

of deforestation activity stems from massive logging operations, which provide the globalized world with wood and paper products. As a result of the climate summit, tropical regions will now benefit financially from protecting their forests. The Climate Talks established that these regions could receive payments for reducing emissions from deforestation and degradation along with incentives to replant.

Greater investment in renewable technology is promised by elements



fuels and individualized commitments to do so have been detailed, mass migration and catastrophe may be avoided for hundreds of millions of people.

Vidal reports that the Climate Talks successfully initiated a movement to protect tropical forested regions and that an aspect of the agreement disincentivizes deforestation. National Geographic defines deforestation as the "modern day plague." The majority

of the agreement. Far more money and research should now go into solar, wind, and other renewable technologies, thereby initiating a trend away from fossil fuel development.

As for the agreement's limitations, Vidal argues that it privileges big business over small landholders. Therefore the most vulnerable people are not being helped. The money that will be generated from carbon markets



is unlikely to reach the poorest people, because it will be in the hands of governments and governments tend to have different priorities for distributing capital.

In regards to developing countries, the agreement has some shortcomings. Since 2009, rich countries have been jointly raising \$100 billion per year to help developing countries “cope” with climate change. The Green Climate Fund finances projects that set out to combat climate change, which are undertaken by accredited national, regional and international entities (public or private sectors are considered for funding). Finally, there is no legal responsibility for rich countries to aid developing countries through their crumbling realities.

Vidal notes that low-lying islands, delta regions and coastal cities still remain vulnerable to rising sea levels. The people who inhabit these regions are called climate refugees. They include Bangladeshi’s coping with floods; Sahel villagers in Africa struggling to produce crops in the face of drought; Pacific Islanders who flee their homes peering over their shoulders to see their villages become swallowed by the waves of the ocean.

The biggest shortcoming of the agreement with regard to climate refugees is that the Climate Talks did not grant rights to these people. The Atlantic’s reporter Julian Spector writes that the legislation that exists to aid migrating people was determined in 1951 at a UN Convention but it does not include environmental factors as a reason for migration. Therefore, “climate migrants” do not have access to beneficial aid from the UN.

Spector explains that the Global South believes they should be compensated by developed nations for the damages that they have accumulated from the effects of climate change. On the other hand, the Global North believes that the Global South must adapt to the environment that they are living in and the Global North is willing to subsidize the costs for adaptation, however are not willing to compensate for their losses.

India is a major player in this game to combat climate change. India is rapidly industrializing and is the world’s third biggest emitter of greenhouse gasses. Justin Rowlett, South Asia correspondent for BBC News, asserts that India has an important point, that they are not responsible for the emissions that are causing the present warming. Eco-

nomie growth is important to India as hundreds of millions of its inhabitants still live in poverty.

Is it fair to ask India to halt their polluting activities when the U.S. and the European Union didn’t have to while they were in the midst of their own stages of industrialization?

Currently, India is heavily dependent on the coal industry, the dirtiest energy source. But, positively, according to Rowlett, the Climate Talks have influenced India to propose an ambitious plan that invests in renewable energy technologies. Although it’s admittedly unfair to ask India to halt economic growth in the name of climate change, it’s simultaneously imperative that India does adopt some strategy. The Climate Talks are valuable because they enlist the need for countries like India to consider the environment in their endeavors.

China is a key player if a proper balance is to be found between continuing development in the Global South and the need to curtail runaway emissions. China, unlike India, has more of the technology and economic support to make this balance possible, however the uncertainty lies in whether China will commit to those changes.





An article from The Wall Street Journal by Andrew Browne characterizes Xi Jinping, China's leader, as committed to combatting climate change. At the summit, China committed to reaching peak carbon emissions by no later than 2030. China is more focused on decreasing air quality pollutants like sulfur and nitrogen rather than carbon dioxide, which is a known main contributor to global warming.

Valerie J. Karplus, Director of the China Energy and Climate Project at MIT, says: "Air pollution-controls while essential, will only take China part of the way toward its stated carbon-reduction goals." Further Chinese emission cuts will require an investment in cleaner energy sources.

The Chinese government has committed to insuring better air-quality only because of the pressure its people have placed on the government through protests. An article by a Guardian reporter, Martin Lukas, highlights the role of the people. Lukas begins with a cynical overview of the Climate Talks but revels in the agency of the people who are bringing about a climate justice movement that is bounding with potential. "It was the movement being built by activists around the globe that shaped the best of the Paris agreement," Lukas said.

Climate activists around the world have been chanting slogans creatively adapted for the Climate Talks:

*"One-point-five to stay alive!"*

Lukas explains that climate activists are now not solely bent out of shape about the massive pesticide infiltrated monocultures, the increasing occurrence of devastating natural disasters, rising sea levels, deforestation and drought, but they are fighting against the political and economic systems that have perpetuated this reality.

Lukas does not find hope in the Climate Talks, as he proclaims that they were a failure. Instead, he shines some light on the individual actions of climate activists and finds a beacon of hope in the climate justice movement.

If you are concerned about climate change, as a student you can join Divest Portland State, PSU's campaign to divest Portland State from fossil fuels. In addition, 350PDX is building a grassroots movement to solve the climate crisis.



LEFT: Global Climate March. Photography by Stephen Melkisetian - via Flickr.





# FALLOUT 4 | 200 Hours Later

BY: JEREMY KING

For those unfamiliar with the franchise, the underlying premise for *Fallout*'s post-apocalyptic world is one of historical divergence. Here, the cold war never ended. America's cultural identity came to a screeching halt in the mid-twentieth century while technology progressed well into the realm of science fiction. In the year 2052, in the wake of global resource shortages, the world plunged headfirst into war, culminating two decades later in total atomic annihilation.

Set in The Commonwealth, the series' post-apocalyptic vision of Boston, Massachusetts and its surrounding area, the game begins on October 23rd, 2077 in the peaceful suburbs of Sanctuary Hills mere moments before nuclear devastation lays waste to the world in one fell swoop. Players are given the option to play as one of two spouses, either male or female, and may customize both characters extensively prior to being thrust into imminent

chaos. As the alarms begin to sound, you, your spouse, and your infant son rush to the safety of nearby Vault 111 – one of the fictional Vault-Tec corporation's glorified fallout shelters – and are placed into cryogenic stasis, where you and your fellow Vault Dwellers are to remain until the Vault's Overseer receives an "all clear" signal.

To put it mildly...things don't go as planned.

You are brought roaring back to reality on October 23rd, 2287, a full two decades after the opening act, and sent spiraling into a brutal, twisted landscape filled with tattered reminders of the world you once knew.

For fans of the series, the idea of an individual sent head first into the unknown horrors of post-apocalyptic is nothing new. It's the execution of that premise this time around that's proven to be an issue of contention.



More so than perhaps any of Bethesda Game Studios' prior undertakings, *Fallout 4* has had an undeniably polarizing effect on fans of the franchise.

For the first time in the series' (and Bethesda's) history, both male and female player characters are fully voiced and given a predetermined backstory. In a franchise known largely for the depth of its roleplaying, this decision represents a huge shift in the series' long-established formula, and has been met with both criticism and praise from the more vocal members of the fanbase.

Fortunately, the voice acting for both the male and female player characters, provided by Brian T. Delaney and Courtenay Taylor, is fantastic.

While it simply wasn't possible to replicate the more overt style of roleplaying that existed in the franchise's previous games wherein the player character's backstory and motivation was (by and large) left a deliberately blank slate, I came to wholeheartedly embrace this decision despite my own initial trepidation. Player agency *does* feel strained at times due to the more personal and predetermined nature of the narrative, but by the same token, the big decisions the game tasks the player with making feel all the more impactful because of it. This is an area where *Fallout 4* trumps its predecessors.

Both actors bring a unique quality to the role that makes the choice of



gender feel much more impactful than prior games in the series, in which playing as a male or female was an almost entirely aesthetic choice that differed very little outside of one or two gender-specific perks and a handful of unique dialogue options.

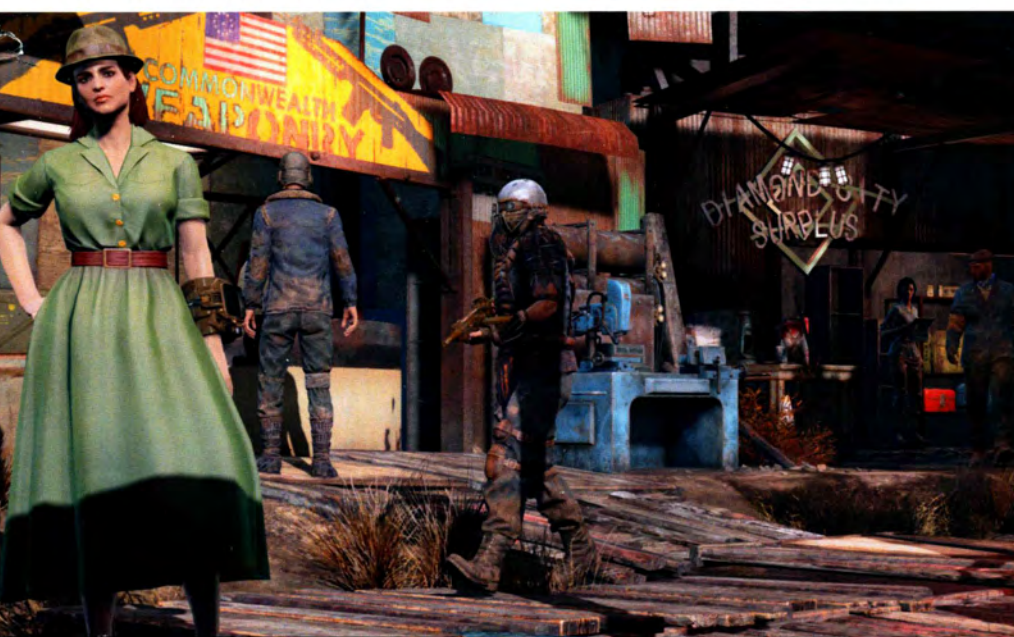
Between the stellar performances of both leads and the rest of the game's cast, *Fallout 4* is easily Bethesda's most polished and varied production in terms of acting chops. Not *every* single line is a winner, though, and the decision to voice absolutely everything does yield downright wonky results on occasion.

The most egregious offender lies in the woefully underdeveloped dialogue choices you are presented with when interacting with the unique companion characters you encounter throughout the game. By their own merit, the companions you may choose to travel

with are leagues above and beyond what Bethesda has accomplished in their previous titles. There are 13 companions scattered across the Commonwealth, seven of whom are 'romanceable' in an underdeveloped, video game-y sort of way. As you adventure alongside them, your actions form the foundation of your relationship based on that character's specific principles. As they come to like you more, they open up to you in increasingly personal, meaningful ways, while they will eventually abandon you altogether or turn hostile if you give them a reason to hate you.

It's a considerably more developed and nuanced approach than the companion system in *Skyrim*, Bethesda's previous big outing. While the characters themselves are a big step in the right direction, the manner in which interaction between the player and their companion is handled often feels archaic, stilted, and sometimes downright humorous in its awkward implementation.

The most prominent example of this was in my first playthrough, after I had advanced my relationship with one of the female companions, Cait, close to the highest achievable point. Each companion has different things they 'like' or 'dislike,' and one of the things Cait 'liked' was whenever I successfully pickpocketed someone. I was curious to see if the same applied to pickpocketing *her*, so I dismissed her as a companion, crouched down and followed her as she walked away, sticking to the shadows to remain hidden,





and pickpocketed a couple of items from her. She 'liked' it and promptly turned around and engaged me in a meaningful conversation in which she professed her love for me. I had a high pickpocket skill, so I reloaded the save to right before this point and kept trying until I failed, at which point she became immediately hostile and started punching me into a bloody pulp. This confirmed my long-held suspicion that the key to a woman's heart is to steal something from right under their noses in such a way that they only figure out they've been robbed a few seconds *after* the act of theft. Because it's totally charming at that point, obviously, but utterly unforgivable and grounds for being beaten to death if they catch you one or two seconds too soon.

While the companion system and fully voiced dialogue serve as two of *Fallout 4*'s biggest gameplay renovations, the most immediate area of improvement lies in the game's combat. Both *Fallout 3* and *Fallout: New Vegas*, while great games, suffered from janky, unresponsive gunplay. *Fallout 4* blows its predecessors out of the water and into the stratosphere in this regard. The game feels much more like a fast and fluid first person shooter this time around while retaining many of the endearing RPG elements of the previous games. The V.A.T.S. system, which previously allowed players to freeze time mid-combat and tactically target different areas of an opponent's body to shoot at, no longer feels like a crutch that the player is forced into utilizing simply because the basic shooting mechanics are garbage. Furthermore, V.A.T.S. no longer *stops* time, but slows it down considerably. On paper, it might not sound like much of a difference, but in-game, it removes the awkward and clumsy "stop and go" routine present in the previous games and introduces a much more dynamic and visceral element to combat.

Outside of the refined gunplay, though, almost every element of gameplay feels more or less like a small upgrade to similar systems that existed in *Skyrim*. Depending on who you ask, this is either a good thing, a bad thing, or a bit of both. I fall into the last category.



Speaking of *Skyrim*, it's worth noting that *Fallout 4* runs on an upgraded version of the Creation Engine, which was the same engine used to build *Skyrim*. Which was itself an upgraded version of the engine used to build *Oblivion*, which was an upgraded version of the Gamebryo engine that was used to build *Morrowind* nearly 15 years ago.

Bethesda has milked this engine for everything its worth and then some. Surprisingly, *Fallout 4* really *is* Bethesda's most stable release ever... which is frankly awe-inspiring, given their track record. I only encountered 5 or 6 random crash-to-desktops over my entire play time. That's practically unheard of. While the expected glitches associated with Bethesda releases are all present and accounted for – including my old favorite, “randomly clipping through a solid surface into a never-ending abyss of nothingness” and even some fancy new ones I hadn't seen before, such as “companion suddenly swimming in mid-air indoors” – they seem (mostly) harmless. Being a Bethesda game, however, performance will vary tremendously from person to person for no obvious reason, so caution and skepticism is warranted.

Despite the game's surprising overall stability, uneven optimization and lengthy load times remain almost universal issues across the game on every major platform. But what about everything *else*? Despite all the hubbub over the game's graphical fidelity, the game is **beautiful**, and I don't care what anyone else has to say. A bit washed out here and there, and the light fog that seems to

mysteriously inhabit every interior and exterior across the Commonwealth does get a bit tiresome to look at, but the game world itself is gorgeously realized with an immaculate attention to detail. It's wonderfully cluttered, varied, interesting to look at, and provides a sense of verticality – particularly in the tightly packed streets of what's left of Boston – that's simply nonexistent in previous Bethesda games.

As far as the plot is concerned, I enjoyed my first playthrough tremendously and thought the narrative stood as Bethesda's strongest in terms of writing, characterization, and moral ambiguity. It felt surprisingly open and non-linear, and at several points in the game's latter half, I grappled with what were, at the time, very difficult decisions. Upon completing the story, I was left with the lingering question of whether or not I had actually made the right choice, in the end. I'd never really felt that in any of Bethesda's games before.

Starting up my second character, however, I experienced something entirely different. In going out of the way to play through and experience the game from an entirely different perspective, I realized just how linear the path laid out for me really was. I hadn't noticed it in my initial playthrough because I wasn't *trying* to do everything the way I wanted to; things just seemed to naturally fall into place and I followed through up until the endgame. The second time around, though, when I deliberately altered my playstyle and challenged myself to complete the game in a different order than the one established by the



story, I found myself running into one figurative wall after another. Certain areas were artificially locked off, reaching points that would have triggered certain events a little earlier than I was supposed to didn't trigger those events, and I was ultimately forced to follow the same path I had followed before.

Granted, this isn't true of the entire game. At a certain point after becoming embroiled within the machinations of each of the game's three primary factions – the Railroad, the Brotherhood of Steel, and the Institute – the story opens up and you are given more freedom in how you choose to resolve different plot points. Even then, however, linearity seeps into the framework of the plot in other, similarly unavoidable ways that, while sensible in the context of the overarching narrative, can prove aggravating nonetheless.

This is especially pronounced after spending time completing just about every side quest I came across during my initial playthrough. In starting up my second playthrough and coming across the same exact quests, I realized that there really wasn't all that much in the manner of questing content outside of the small handful of side quests and the storyline. There are plenty

of repeatable “radiant” quests and objectives, much like in *Skyrim*, but they lack any semblance of substance; they're there simply to repeat again and again for experience. It's an artificial way of supplementing content that feels hollow and, frankly, meaningless.

Aside from quests, the game *does* feature the (mostly) optional and impressively expansive ability to create and maintain a wide variety of settlements, which is pretty fun, though the implementation of this system is rather bizarre and a little out of place. The system is multi-faceted enough to warrant its own review, but in short, it's like a small game unto itself, and if it's the sort of content that appeals to you, you'll most likely spend a lot of time with it.

So what, then, do I ultimately feel about *Fallout 4*?

This is a massive, entertaining, and meaningful game that walks a very thin line between being completely awesome and completely frustrating. There's ample replay value for completionists who want to unlock every achievement, explore every location, and experience the full storylines for each of the game's factions. The release

of the Creation Kit in early 2016 will allow the already-bustling modding community to take their creations to the next level, and the release of as-of-yet-unknown downloadable content in the future stands to further lengthen the lifespan of what is already a massive game in its own rights.

As it stands, it obliterates just about every one of its contemporaries. Based on its *legacy*, it struggles to capture certain elements responsible for the series' initial success and lasting appeal while simultaneously introducing new, creative, and experimental ideas—some of which work, while others don't.

And at the end of the day, I still find myself itching to come back to it and play some more.





# THE SOUL OF HIGHER EDUCATION UNDER CORPORATIZATION

BY: TIFFANY KRAFT

Just last month, David L. Cohen, chair of the Board of Trustees at the University of Pennsylvania, said of President Gutmann's \$3.06 million in compensation:

We believe she is the best university president in the country, and being No. 2 in the *Chronicle* rankings is consistent with that positioning ... If you're going to recruit and retain the type of talent that you need to run a university of this complexity and to continue to advance this university's reputation and the quality of its product, you have to fairly compensate individuals for doing that job. ("32 Leaders of Private Colleges Earned More Than \$1 Million in 2013." *The Chronicle of Higher Education*)

My argument is not with Ms. Gutmann's salary or the complexity of U Penn; in fact, I agree with Cohen that a university's reputation and the quality of its product depend on just compensation. My argument is this: as colleges and universities move toward a big-business model where boards and their administrators define and defend the quality of their product based on corporate not classroom transactions, it's time to reset the priorities. It's time to prioritize students before profits, just compensation for faculty, analyze the negative net worth of certain programs and services, make crucial decisions to reduce spending or defund when/where necessary, and demand sustainable operations with the students' best interests in mind. I'm arguing for a mission-over-profit business model.

It's good to remember that students' shoulder the burden of debt for the majority of profit, and all tuition revenue should be spent wisely on the instruction, facilities, technology, and services that lead to a quality education and student success. Increasingly, students are the benefactors of debt, not a quality education, and this is directly related to poor faculty working conditions.

Higher ed reformers Michael Bérubé and Jennifer Ruth

... believe that the real crisis is that the profession of college teaching has been drastically de-professionalized over the past 40 years, and that college teachers need to find ways of making this case to the general public—without suggesting that the legions of teachers off the tenure track are not doing professional-quality teaching. (*The Humanities, Higher Education, & Academic Freedom* 11)

In offering "Three Necessary Arguments," Bérubé and Ruth don't sidestep the issues that led to the labor crisis or ignore the difficult steps of reorganizing faculty for more equitable conditions, including ending the patronage system of hiring. They "propose that many full-time faculty lines off the tenure track be converted to *teaching-intensive tenured positions*" (Ibid., 19). Their plan offers reasonable solutions, and implementing the plan will require an organized academic body that acts strategically to pressure change. The time for sitting idly by is over "and the plight of the adjunct is the collective plight of the professoriate" (Bérubé and Ruth 82).

Furthermore, it's no secret that the student debt crisis, which is at 1.3 trillion<sub>1</sub> USD in federal and private loan debt and growing, is a national issue. Students, and by default, taxpayers, fund corporate greed in higher ed, and 1 in 5 students<sub>2</sub> from for-profit colleges, or 22.7%, default on their loans within three years of entering repayment. All too often, students pay the price when institutions put profits first, and to say they're struggling is an understatement. Some are suicidal, buried in debt that cannot be discharged through bankruptcy with impossible payments that will never touch the principal balance. Who is going to bail out the defrauded students if executives of failed for-profits don't share the risk?

These are just a few reasons why intervention is critical and why Jesse Stommel frames "Leaving Wisconsin<sub>3</sub>" with another necessary argument: "Increasingly, I think the work of education is activism, not teaching." Let that sink in. "What's become of education in the state of Wisconsin is not fate, accident, or misfortune, but has been carefully coordinated and calculated." This should have the higher ed community on high alert; this is not a "broken system," it is an intentionally divisive one.

So how may activism play a role in our liberation? The title of my article takes its cue from Oscar Wilde's 1891 essay "The Soul of Man Under Socialism," in which he says:

Agitators are a set of interfering, meddling people, who come down to some perfectly contented class of the community, and sow the seeds of discontent among them. This is the reason why agitators are so absolutely necessary. Without them, in our incomplete state, there would be no advance toward civilization. ("The Soul of Man." *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde*, Volume IV. Gen. Ed., Ian Small. Ed. Josephine M. Guy 235)



Of course, we cannot always rely on those in charge of institutions to implement change for the public good. We've seen how, without regulation, administrators continue to hike the tuition sticker price to the maximum threshold of federal student loan dollars, often forcing students to take on the additional burden of private loans with higher interest rates to cover the expenses of books, fees, and parking. And when administrators accept the use of adjunct labor as a necessary argument for balancing the budget in their favor they place a burden of guilt on faculty who fight for fair wages commensurate with the profession. In fact, the Delta Cost Project<sup>4</sup> reports that faculty pay is not the culprit:

Full-time faculty salaries have grown little in recent years, making them an unlikely culprit behind rising higher education costs. Other personnel costs, including employee benefits and compensation for staff providing non-instructional services, have grown faster. Although reliance on adjunct faculty has held down instructional costs, it has not been enough to offset these other costs.

This model has been working for admin because not enough agitators are rocking the boat and calling on the administration and board to prioritize students before profits.

Agitators should do more to call out and seek to balance the composition of their institution's board and administration, too. The recent protest<sup>5</sup> at the Board of Governors meeting at UNC Chapel Hill on 12/11/15 shows that faculty and students do have a voice:

***"It's good to remember that students' shoulder the burden of debt for the majority of profit"***



**"a Karl Rove protégé who calls students "customers"**

Op-Ed in *The Nation*, Nov. 16

"According to Margaret Spellings, universities do not exist to cultivate the life of the mind. Intellectual exploration does not count if it cannot be commercialized or be proven to generate "intellectual capital."

Op-Ed in the *Raleigh News-Observer*, Nov. 1

"Naming of Margaret Spellings as UNC system president called "a disturbing new low"

*Washington Post*, Nov. 14

"...most direct involvement at a major institution was her time spent on the University of Phoenix's board."

*The Chronicle of Higher Education*, Oct. 16

**Learn More**

(Graphic by [facultyforwardnetwork.org](http://facultyforwardnetwork.org)). The next UNC Board of Governors meeting is at North Carolina A&T State University on 1/22/16, and protesters will be out again demanding transparent, democratic hiring processes of candidates, not former political appointees that don't represent the needs of students and faculty.

Let's come back to Wilde. Again and again, we see Wilde as agitator, planting the seeds of activism and social consciousness throughout his *oeuvre*, and this is why his voice still matters. For example, in "The Importance of Being Earnest," Lady Bracknell toys with the system because she, having married into wealth and class, understands the politics of privilege:



I do not approve of anything that tampers with natural ignorance. Ignorance is like a delicate exotic fruit; touch it and the bloom is gone. The whole theory of modern education is radically unsound. Fortunately in England, at any rate, education produces no effect whatsoever. If it did, it would prove a serious danger to the upper classes and lead to acts of violence in Grosvenor Square. ("The Importance of Being Earnest." *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde*. Act 1, 332)

Lady Bracknell's commentary on ignorance is funny, yet subversive in that it alludes to the function of knowledge as a liberator on one hand, and a corruptor on the other, and then she pokes a stick in the eye of English education by showing that even the most educated (privileged) are ignorant when they don't protest corrupt social norms. It's increasingly difficult for anyone in higher ed to ignore the plight of the professoriate or deny that student debt has hamstrung a generation of students.

Now, most faculty who accept that higher ed is de-professionalized aren't content, and the few who are in denial or privileged through tenure may want to look more closely at Governor Walker's assault<sub>6</sub> on the University of Wisconsin System and unions. "The right-to-work scam<sub>7</sub> is now the law in Wisconsin," and it's powered by political interests and allies in government. If we're not yet agitated to the point of activism, what will it take?

Point 2 in Joe Berry's "Guide for a National Strategy" is particularly relevant here: "A National strategy must consider the fear and fatalism resulting from lack of job security and lesser economic power compared with FRTTs as a factor in contingent faculty consciousness and behavior" (*Reclaiming the Ivory Tower*<sub>8</sub> 48). Perhaps when all faculty feel the heat and need to come together collectively to defend our profession and higher education for future generations activism will supplant fear, denial, and privilege. The nation needs more activists and agitators in the battle for higher ed.

Higher-ed activists also have a lot to learn from the Fight For \$15 movement and leaders. First off, they don't just make noise, they create chaos in a strategic fight that's gone global<sub>9</sub>. They're not fist pumping and reading scripted chants off slips of paper around executive headquarters hoping to be heard, they're in the streets, rallying public support, giving testimony at hearings, agitating workers, building an army, and shutting it down. You feel Fight for \$15's presence when they enter a room or take to the streets to march, rap, and fight for social equality and a living wage. It's a real Tsunami. Without doubt, we'll see unprecedented action from the Fight For \$15 again in 2016.

Faculty Forward Network<sub>10</sub> has joined the multi-sector labor movement and is "bringing together faculty, students, parents and allies who feel higher education needs should be about classrooms over profit and degrees over debt." But we need more boots on the ground to light those strategic fires and bring about authentic change in higher ed.

So how do activists cultivate conscience in the age of cannibal capitalism? Let's look at one of Wilde's fables, "The Selfish Giant":

'My own garden is my own garden,' said the Giant; 'any one can understand that, and I will allow nobody to play in it but myself.' So he built a high wall all around it, and put up a notice board: Trespassers will be Prosecuted. ... Then the spring came, and all over the country there were little blossoms and little birds. Only in the garden of the Selfish Giant it was still winter.

The Giant's change of heart comes about when he realizes how empty his garden is without the music and sunlight of children laughing and singing with the birds. He grows tired of being selfish and decides:

'I will knock down the wall, and my garden shall be the children's playground for ever and ever.' (*Complete Works*. 297 - 298)

I'm tired of selfish Giants, walls, and students being burdened by insurmountable debt. Many of my colleagues are burnt out and face yet another wall: job insecurity and a life of precarity without provisions for retirement. The seeds of discontent are sown, and higher-ed's garden is barren without students' laughter and faculty security. We cannot wait for higher ed Giants (CEOs) to change heart and course. It's time to knock down the wall and confront corporatization and the privileged mentality that ignore the very mission of education<sub>11</sub>: "to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access." How, given the current state of higher ed in our nation, is this possible without a massive, militant movement? When instruction is fairly funded and students before profits are prioritized, we can all sing in our playground, again.



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