



Math Club Shows Appreciation Through Art and Math

Learn about PVCC Clubs on pages 4-11

Hugh Hubbard, staff writer

Something difficult to miss at PVCC for the past few weeks has been the mosaic portrait of College President Dr. Jean Runyon. The portrait involved assembling 285 Rubik's cubes with specific patterns, and putting them in a plexiglass display. This project came to fruition through a collection of PVCC students and faculty who are passionate about math.

Those with that passion should attend the PVCC Math Club meetings on Wednesdays during college hour. The club is centered around a love for math and sharing it with others. The club is open to everyone, but the more proficient in mathematics, you are the more you will appreciate and be able to help within the club.

When asked about recent activities, Dr. Keith Nabb, associate mathematics professor at PVCC,

said, "...we are going to brainstorm about a new coordinate system — something that goes beyond what we see in Calculus textbooks. We're not so sure it is worthy or practical but that is basically the fun of it!"

"This idea was started by Colin Sommerville, he had some experience in the past with making mosaics, so the Math Club followed his lead. I thought it would be great to design something for Dr. Runyon's Investiture so we set a late October deadline to complete it," Nabb said.

The piece is vibrant and shows enormous effort on behalf of the Math Club. In the future, the Math Club wants to go even further in its activities, such as constructing a working Rube Goldberg Machine or some kind of obstacle course. The mosaic is a beautiful showing the dedication of the Math Club.

"It was truly a team effort," Nabb said.



The Math club poses with the portrait of Dr. Jean Runyon. Photo courtesy of PVCC Marketing and Media Relations

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DATES TO REMEMBER

— **Science Symposium** * —
Dec. 8, 12:30-1:30 p.m., North Mall Meeting Room

— **Let There Be Light** * —
Dec. 8, 6-9 p.m., Main Campus

— **Ugly Sweater Party** * —
Dec. 11, Noon, Bolick Student Center

— **Program Spotlight on Workforce Services
Skilled Trades and Transportation** * —
Dec. 12, 6:30-7:30 p.m., Virtual

— **Fall Semester Exams** —
Dec. 13-19

— **Spring Semester 16-Week Classes Begin** —
Jan. 8

— **Welcome Week Events** * —
Jan. 8-12

— **Martin Luther King Day Holiday** —
Jan. 15, All Day, No classes

— **Salsa Club Debut** * —
Jan. 17, noon, Bolick Student Center

— **Films Talk Back: *Black Fiddlers*** * —
Jan. 19, 7:30 p.m., Dickinson Building Main Stage

— **Club Fair** * —
Jan. 31, noon to 1 p.m., Bolick Student Center

— **Open Mic Stand** * —
Feb. 8, 7 p.m.,
Dickinson Building Black Box Theatre

— **Spring Break** —
March 2-10, No classes

— **Films Talk Back:
*The Twinning Reaction*** * —
March 15, 7:30 p.m., Dickinson Building Main Stage

*Free Event ^Student Vouchers Available

CVILLE is in the Christmas Spirit

Sasha Goins, staff writer

December is here, which marks the start of the holiday season. Dec. 1, Charlottesville held its annual Grand Illumination at the Ting Pavillion. Ting sponsored the event, and Dominion Energy sponsored the illumination. The event also was accompanied by multiple small businesses, presented by the Holiday Market. Activities included music, entertainment, food and drinks, and giveaways.

Even during the rain and cold weather, the people of Charlottesville still showed their Christmas spirit. There were smiles on people's faces, and the laughter of children filled the pavilion. There were many activities, and people could visit and learn about small businesses. There was live music further down into the overhead. Christmas carolers lined up and sang popular Christmas songs, and the group Michael 25 performed as well.

Toward the end of the event, the majority of the attendees gathered around the tree for the grand illumination. Ahead appeared to be a 25-foot-tall tree topped with a star tree-topper. As 7:30 p.m. came around, it was time for the tree to be lit. As the countdown began, the crowd joined in: 10, 9, 8, 7...3, 2, 1. Then, the tree was illuminated and was given a name: Spruce Willis. As the tree came to life, so did the spirit of Christmas.

Joining Spruce was Santa, who took pictures with anyone who wanted one.



Spruce Willis.
Photography by
Sasha Goins



Student Government Association News

THE STUDENT GOVERNMENT SPRING 2024 PLAN:

Student Government Focuses:

1. Events:

- We will be hosting a Spring Fling Carnival to provide a space for students to socialize and clubs to fundraise. Any interested club will be provided with a table to sell their wares or play games. More information will be released at the beginning of the spring semester.
- We will continue to host SGA Sponsored Club Events. We are encouraging clubs to run events for the student body. Clubs that host events are paid \$200 by the SGA, the SGA also pays for event expenses including food and decorations, and would help you with advertising! The events must be in visibly public areas, accessible to all students, and include "SGA Sponsored" in your advertising.
- This is a great opportunity to earn extra money for your club and advertise it! Please email us if your club is interested!

2. Civic Engagement:

- Each week members of the SGA will be tabling in The Bolick Center to inform the student body about a unique and important cause that is being celebrated that day or week. Keep an eye out for our table to see how you can participate in these important causes. Contact us for more information.

3. Mental Health Support:

- We want to find ways to better inform you about mental health options in the community such as Region 10 and On Our Own. We know that mental health care is vital but expensive. We want to show you the resources in our area that can make mental health care more attainable.

4. Student Voice With an Active Focus on Academic Dishonesty:

- A major role of The SGA is to hear student concerns. Please feel free to share those through our Discord, email (SGA@pvcc.edu), and at our events. We want to know what you want to see changed on campus. We are currently working with the administration to schedule a regular meeting to make sure that these concerns go to the right places.
- It has come to our attention that some students have concerns about the academic dishonesty policy of PVCC. Part of our role is to serve as the student voice. We want to hear what kind of policies and honor code you would like to see in place. The SGA is currently doing research on other school honor codes. In January we will be hosting a round table to talk to students about these issues and ask ethical questions such as, "If a student tells you they cheated, is it your responsibility to tell a professor?"
- The student opinions and views will then be taken to the administration and to The College Senate. We hope to be able to create an honor code that all students would be happy to sign and agree to follow.

How You Can Participate:

- On December 20th an email will go out to all students advertising The Event Coordinator executive position, and will explain how to apply.
 - On January 9 we will contact the applicants we would like to interview and scheduling those interviews for the following week.
- If any of the above branches are something that you would like to help participate in, please email SGA@PVCC.edu. We will be forming committees to help make each of these happen!

Contact us SGA@PVCC.edu for more information

New Clubs at PVCC this Spring

Sarah Cate Nordman, staff writer

PVCC has over 50 clubs to choose from that are currently in session, and more are still being added. Dual Enrollment Club will be beginning this upcoming semester, Volunteer Club will be returning, and Dungeons and Dragons Club has kicked off this fall semester.

“Being involved with clubs while in college keeps you connected to the school; you will feel you have a purpose,” says Mary-Evelyn Sellars, coordinator of student life and campus engagement. “Whether it’s creating friendships, learning to network, working together as a team, or enjoying a fun outing for team bonding, I highly recommend joining one of our 53 clubs here at PVCC. We have something for everyone.”

Dual Enrollment Club will be starting this Spring, founded by dual-enrollment student Evie Porter. She got the idea to start the club while looking for other clubs to get involved with. “Making friends isn’t always easy, so I wanted to create a place where high schoolers can unwind and connect with other people in their same walk of life,” she said.

The club meets weekly on Mondays to eat, talk, and play pingpong. Right now, they are planning a Winter Social and other events like bowling. Dual Enrollment Club meets Mondays at noon on the patio. Contact Evie Porter at eviefarfalla@gmail.com for more information.

Volunteer Club is returning this spring as well. Club President Taylor Rice said, “I’ve had a passion for volunteer work for many years. It’s such a rewarding thing to do. You meet new people different and alike, strengthen your community, and gain so much useful experience. I had just finished volunteering one day when I decided to take a step and create this club. I

wanted to help students grow, make their transcripts look better, and experience that great feeling after volunteering knowing that you helped so many people.”

They plan to volunteer at a multitude of events including food banks and food drives. While the Volunteer Club does not have a set meeting time, they do have a Canvas page where students can get all updates. Email Taylor Rice at tr8106@email.vccs.edu to learn more.

Dungeons and Dragons Club began this semester and is open for students with all levels of experience, but o-founder and President Morgana Bizier has been playing since middle school. “I’ve seen first-hand the friendships it can form and the communities it creates. It’s a game that brings people of all kinds together,” she said.

Right now, they are only meeting to play D&D, but in the future, she hopes to set up other fun events like movie nights and miniature painting. The club meets every Friday from noon until 3 p.m. in room M154. Those who are interested should contact Morgana Bizier at lb31839@email.vccs.edu.



Dungeons and Dragons Club members.
Photo courtesy of Morgana Bizier

The Future of Student Life at PVCC

Benjamin Marcus, editor

As finals week approaches, PVCC students prepare for the last exams before winter break, and classes begin to wind down. This is not the case for Mary-Evelyn Sellars, PVCC's new coordinator for student life and campus engagement, who is busy ensuring that the last weeks of the fall semester are filled with activities and events, as well as making preparations for the upcoming spring semester.

Since starting at her position right before the beginning of the fall semester, Sellars has been working not only to promote and organize campus events but also to improve PVCC's student clubs. Early in the semester, she organized and ran a training seminar for representatives from each of PVCC's 53 student clubs to make sure that club leadership understands how to advertise their clubs, organize their budgets, plan group trips, and work with the Student Government Association (SGA).

Sellars intends to continue this focus by working to teach proper leadership structure and parliamentary procedure within the clubs. Sellars said, "When you're in college clubs, later, hopefully, when you become an adult, you're going to go out into society and might be a leader or rotary... So, we don't want our students to not know how to run an organization correctly."

In addition to working with the internal structure of clubs, Sellars is also working to promote more external interactions between clubs and other students, encouraging clubs to organize events open to all students rather than just club members. By doing so, clubs will not only be contributing to the list of events at PVCC, but they will also be able to engage more with potential members.

To explain more about her choice of focus, Sellars said, "We want our students to feel they have a purpose... not just coming here and commuting home, we don't want community college to be like that." Sellars has personal experience with the pitfalls of campuses that lack



Mary-Evelyn Sellars.
Photo courtesy of Sellars

engagement, having herself graduated from community college, which she described as hardly having events.

Sellars has been working towards those goals this semester, and she plans to continue pursuing them in the year to come when the Woodrow W. Bolick Advanced Technology and Student Success Center is scheduled to open its doors. With the Bolick Building's new student center and more space for clubs, Sellars intends for it to be a key part of student engagement in the years to come, saying "The new student center is going to really be the pinnacle of the college."

Students are likely to see Sellars in the halls of PVCC, overseeing events and other preparations. Readers of *The Forum* can expect to see her referenced in other articles as well. If you want to reach out to her, you can email her at MSellars@pvcc.edu.

LGBTQ+ Club Creates a Safe Space for All

Ellie Rose Killinger, staff writer

After several semesters of being non-operational, PVCC's LGBTQ+ Club has been taken over by President Kendra Ross, who intends to reinvent the club and leave a lasting impact on the PVCC community. A professor asked if Ross would consider leading the club, opening the door for Ross' first time in a leadership role. Although Ross was unsure of what to expect, she looked forward to meeting other queer people in the community through the LGBTQ+ Club.

The mission of the LGBTQ+ Club, according to the PVCC website, is to "foster a sense community between all PVCC students and to increase awareness of the lives and issues faced by people with diverse sexualities and gender identities." In an interview with Ross, she re-emphasized that the sense of community provided by the club is what makes it special.

Ross said, "I've asked some of the members why they've joined, and for the most part, everyone has the same answer, including me, which is just community – bringing people together, having a safe place for us, and to just hang out and meet other queer people."

Ross, along with the other club members, has been planning something big that will hopefully take place next semester: a drag show. Next

semester is Ross's last semester at PVCC, and she wishes to leave a lasting impression through the production of this event.

"I would like to see a combination of both students and professionals," said Ross when asked who might be allowed to perform. "I have a big vision for it, and I am hoping that when people see it and they come to it, more people will be interested in joining the club."

In addition to planning out a fabulous drag show, Ross has been collaborating with the club Panther Power. The LGBTQ+ club is committed to cultivating a more equitable community at both PVCC and in the Charlottesville area. Homelessness in Charlottesville is one of many pressing issues that the LGBTQ+ club would like to help mitigate. According to Charlottesville's 2023 Stepping Stones Report, "The number [of] people experiencing homelessness increased substantially from about 180 people in 2021 to 266 in 2022." Ross' idea is to put together a proposal for the city government to ask for financial support to create a more permanent shelter for the homeless population living in Charlottesville.

"The homeless situation, I feel like it's gotten a lot worse in the past few years. Since COVID happened, there are just so many homeless people downtown," said Ross.

With exciting new projects on the horizon, now is the time to join the LGBTQ+ Club. To join, you can email Ross directly (kr24545@email.vccs.edu), or you can reach out to the club's faculty advisers, Jessica Kingsley (jkingsley@pvcc.edu) and Renee Eves (reves@pvcc.edu).

By joining the club, you will be put on the club's email list and will receive updates as to when meetings will be held.

Ross asked that it be emphasized that the LGBTQ+ Club is for anyone to join, members of the LGBTQ+ community and allies alike.

"The club is not just for the LGBTQ; we welcome everyone," said Ross.



LGBTQ+ Club president, Kendra Ross, at the club fair.
Photo courtesy of the LGBTQ+ Club

PVCC's Club to Play and Learn Chess

William McAuliffe, staff writer

The Chess Club is one of many clubs at PVCC. In this club, students can play the game of chess. The chess clubs meet every Wednesday from noon to 2 p.m. in the Bolick Center, or in room M155 if other events are happening in the Bolick Center.

At the Chess Club meeting, there were multiple chess boards for anyone to play; the room was quiet and the people there were friendly.

Sometimes faculty members stop by the club and visit. Dr. Abigail James, professor of psychology, said, "Chess is the best way in the world to learn how to think and use your brain."

The faculty adviser of the Chess Club is Dr. Zack Beamer, a professor of mathematics. The club's student president is Nick Bird. Beamer has been the adviser of the Chess Club since the Spring of 2021 when people were still doing virtual learning due to COVID-19.

Bird became the president of the Chess Club this semester. He knew how to play chess before he became the club's president. Bird is willing to help teach other college students how to play chess, even if they have never played before. Bird considers chess to be a historical tradition and feels lucky to live in a world where board game rulesets in the present day have a lot of resources.

Bird said, "I feel happy that the previous president chose me to be the new president of the Chess Club as I am really good friends with the previous club president, Kevin Jelinek."

If you are interested in joining the Chess Club, you can contact Beamer in his office at M164A during his office hours, call him at 434-961-5345, or email him at zbeamer@pvcc.edu.

You can also contact Bird at nab29903@email.vccs.edu.

The Chess Club is for anyone who wants to join, even if you have never played chess in the past.



Students playing chess during the Chess Club.
Photography by William McAuliffe

Books, Snacks, and Conversation

Eavan Murphy, staff writer

Fantasy novels, cookies, gentle jazz music, and iced coffee. These are just some of the Book Club's favorite things. Other than offering a comfortable place to read, the club allows PVCC students to connect with fellow book lovers.

Kathleen Jeffers, the president of the Book Club, joined last fall when there were only two members. However, the club has seen immense growth since then as there are now 15 members that consistently attend meetings. "I'm an English major, and I love to read. It's been a really cool opportunity to run the Book Club; it's a very chill club," Jeffers said.

The club is almost completely student-operated, but coordinates with Director of Library Services Crystal Newell, who serves as the staff advisor. Newell ensures that the students are provided with the books for free.

Books are decided on by a group vote and are typically read over the course of a few weeks. On average, the club reads two to three books per semester. Some of the titles they have read include: *Before the Coffee Gets Cold* (2015) by Toshikazu Kawaguchi, *A Winter's Promise* (2013) by Christelle Dabos, *The Inheritance Games* (2020) by Jennifer Lynn Barnes, and *If We Were Villains* (2017) by M.L. Rio. They are currently reading *Stardust* (1999) by Neil Gaiman.

Aside from books, Jeffers and Vice President Lydia Chase provide snacks and organize movie nights to watch adaptations of books the club has read.

During meetings, members not only discuss their thoughts, theories, and predictions, but they also build connections with their peers. Many of the members have even become close friends through

the club.

"It's a great place to find a space for reading if you're interested. It's hard to find time to read during the semester, so it's a good opportunity to connect with others and have fun. Talking about books is a great way to make new friends," Jeffers said.

The Book Club meets on Mondays twice a month in room M160 from noon to 1 p.m.



Vice President Lydia Chase (left) and President Kathleen Jeffers posing with copies of Neil Gaiman's *Stardust*.
Photography by Eavan Murphy

Share and Practice Creative Writing

Nate Estes, staff writer

As the six of us sat around the square of tables, we went around sharing what we had spent the last ten minutes writing. There were two prompts to choose from. The first: “Pick one of your fears. Write about an encounter with it from its perspective.” The second: “gargantuan, wonder, party.” Jennifer Koster, professor of English and Writing Center coordinator, shared first about her experience with her son going to college in Maine. She described the fear of hearing the news about the killer and then the relief of receiving a text from her son, telling her he was safe.

“That’s how I’ve survived,” said Michael Gauss, Creative Writing Club president, on the benefits of writing about his own experiences. However, he has not always liked writing. In elementary school, he would hide a book under the desk and read when he was supposed to be writing. When Gauss started attending PVCC, Koster became a sort of mentor for him. After taking a break from school, he came back and decided to join the club Koster ran, the Creative Writing Club. Since then, he has grown to appreciate writing.

After the prompt writing was done, the club members began organizing an event for the following Friday. They have three major events throughout the year. The first is *The Fall Line*, the annual literary magazine for PVCC. They accept submissions from students, faculty, and staff. “There are guidelines; there are some word limits,” said Gauss, “You can not go overboard on any not-safe-for-school stuff.” There is a 10-page maximum, and the club will reach out to propose edits to the author of a submission. Otherwise, students have total creative liberty. The largest submission in the 2023 issue was three pages long, while the shortest was only 36 words. If you want to submit a piece for *The Fall Line*, submissions open in mid-November and close the first week of February.

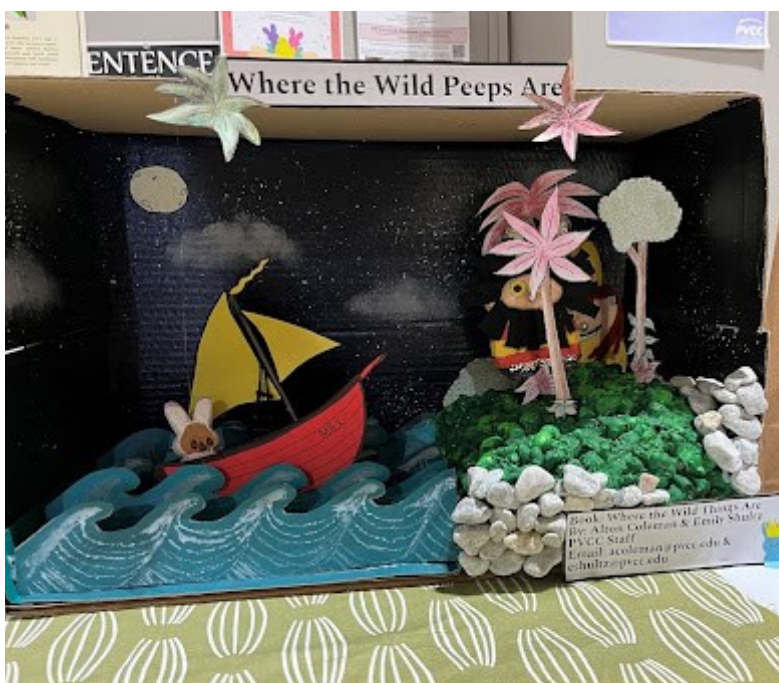
The second event is the 600-word horror story contest. They accept

submissions from Sept. 14 up until Oct. 16. They then chose the winners and runners-up and had a reading of their stories on Nov. 3.

The third event is the Peep-o-Rama, in which students make a diorama of a scene from a favorite book using Peeps, which happens early April.

To find out more about these events, and how to get involved with the club, you can find the club on Instagram @pvcc_creative_writing_club and Facebook. You can also contact Gauss over email (msg24253@email.vccs.edu) or the Vice President/Social Media Manager Sarah Cate Nordman (scn2380@email.vccs.edu). Although Nordman is fully remote, attending PVCC from Belgium, Gauss said that she keeps the club organized. They meet in M627 on Mondays, from noon to 1 p.m.

“My goal for the club is to create a community of people who all love to write and want to help each other become better writers. Whether you’re looking to improve for school, or whether you want to go into writing professionally, or whether you just enjoy it, I want to create a space where everyone is equally passionate about writing,” said Nordman.



Winner of 2023 Peep-o-Rama, based on *Where the Wild Things Are*. Photo courtesy of Michael Gauss

Chi Alpha Fellowship for Life

Kritagya Gurung, staff writer

Chi Alpha is a group of college students who follow Jesus. Students from PVCC and the University of Virginia come together to worship God, read the Bible, learn, be motivated by other students, and pray. Students have fun and make friends that will last forever. Chi Alpha has small Bible study groups that meet at PVCC on Tuesdays and Thursdays. PVCC students join University of Virginia students weekly for a large group meeting called Monday Night Live.

Chi Alpha meets at Wegmans every Monday evening at 6:30 p.m. for dinner and goes to UVA around 7:30 p.m. and on Wednesdays from noon to 1 p.m. The PVCC club members meet to connect and talk about God.

Chi Alpha club member David Johnson said, “The Chi Alpha club at PVCC is one of the most welcoming communities I have ever interacted with! I have only been with them for a short time but I have made a lot of close friends. I have also been able to learn more about the Bible and grow closer to God through Bible studies we’ve done



together as a group.”

There are many Chi Alpha clubs at different colleges and universities. Chi Alpha is organized by staff on multiple campuses and involves about 28,000 students.

Chi Alpha Leader Timothy Smith said, “Chi Alpha has provided the amazing Christian community that I have always been searching for!”

Having Fun Building Homes

Kritagya Gurung, staff writer

Over spring break in 2024, the Chi Alpha Christian Fellowship from PVCC will be going to Asheville, North Carolina, to help Habitat for Humanity build homes. Every spring break, Chi Alpha goes to different cities with Habitat for Humanity. When Chi Alpha members build the homes in Asheville, they will take turns cutting, hammering, and hauling wood.

Co-leader of Chi Alpha men’s core group Christopher Cole said, “The purpose is to serve the less fortunate.” Christopher Cole has led many trips in past semesters for Chi Alpha at PVCC. He also said, “I like the opportunity to serve the less fortunate because that is what Jesus did. I enjoy serving others and relish the opportunity to love like God does.”

The trip will last from March 3 to March 9, 2024. The purpose of this spring break event is to help the community in Asheville and make

friendships that last forever. The students make friendships by helping each other and working together to build homes for the community. The cost of the spring break event is \$60 if paid in cash or check or \$62 when paying by Venmo. In Asheville, Chi Alpha members will likely be staying at a church.

PVCC student and Chi Alpha leader Jacob Fitzgerald said, “I want to help out the community, and students are helping to make a better community and also here to make friendships that last forever.”

Some students will be helping out Habitat for Humanity in Asheville, and other students will be going to other cities to help out. Habitat for Humanity staff and students help build homes for people who need them. Students can apply by contacting student leaders or adult leaders. The student leaders are Timothy, Jacob Fitzgerald, Will, Jada, and others. You can also contact the Chi Alpha staff at chialpha.com/contact.

The Fight Against Bullying

Hugh Hubbard, staff writer

Bullying can be a pervasive problem in all aspects of life. Regardless of age, people get browbeaten, tormented, and mocked for often arbitrary reasons. Though bullying tends to end in people's lives as they get older, it can also become more difficult to see in others' lives.

The federally funded organization StopBullying.gov states, "Behaviors that are traditionally considered bullying among school-aged youth often require new attention and strategies in young adults and college students. Many of these behaviors are considered crimes under state and federal law and may trigger serious consequences after the age of 18." This is why it is so essential not only to foster an environment where bullying is heavily discouraged but also to actively prevent it. PVCC student Kritagya Gurung has started the PVCC

Bully Prevention Club.

"I wanted to make this club since I was bullied in middle school by being pushed into lockers," Gurung said when asked what initially made him create the Bully Prevention Club. "I want to teach students to stand up to bullying and how to protect others from bullying" In higher education, bullying typically doesn't include physical violence; it is more associated with exclusion and rudeness. Violence still happens after high school though, and it becomes more and more important to create a campus that prevents bullying in the first place. The club meets on Mondays from noon to 1 p.m.

Gurung's primary point is that it is important not only to stand up for yourself and others, but to become more vigilant in preventing bullying and exclusionary actions. "I want to help others who are weak and help them to be brave and strong," Gurung said.



Kritagya Gurung in the halls of PVCC. Photography by Hugh Hubbard

Accessibility and Accommodations at PVCC

Ellie Rose Killinger, staff writer

PVCC is committed to creating an equitable learning environment for all students. Students in search of additional academic aid should contact the Office of Student Accessibility and Accommodations as soon as possible. “The mission of the Office of Student Accessibility and Accommodations is to ensure equal access to programs, services, supports, and education,” according to the PVCC website.

The office meets with students, writing up and approving services and accommodations that are unique to their needs. To gain access to these services, students must first self-identify and provide adequate documentation of their physical, medical, mental health, or other disability. The documentation should explicitly outline how the student’s disability impacts their major life activities. This allows the office to create a customized plan that ensures that each student’s needs are met.

Once a plan is formulated, the student’s designated counselor will send an email that lists their accommodations as well as all of their professors. To maintain confidentiality, according to the PVCC website, “At no time will a professor receive information on your medical, mental health, learning, or other diagnoses; your assigned staff person will only share information on the accommodations and provide guidance on implementation.” Students with accommodation letters should, however, follow up with their professors to plan for how these changes will play out in class.

Accommodation letters are only valid for one semester. So, if you would like to continue with accommodations and accessibility services, you must contact the Office of Student Accessibility and Accommodations at the start of each semester. According to the PVCC website, “Your assigned staff member generates a unique accommodation letter for you for each semester and sends it only to the professors that you have for that semester.”

The Office of Student Accessibility and Accommodations consists of two counselors. The first of these counselors is Kari Hirst, director of student accessibility and accommodations, who assists students with last names R-Z, as well as

students in the nursing program at PVCC. She can be reached directly at 434-961-5281 or KHirst@pvcc.edu.

The second of the two counselors is Sandra Bullins, assistant director of student accessibility and accommodations, who services students with last names A-Q. Students can reach Sandra Bullins directly at 434-961-5285 or at SBullins@pvcc.edu. Students can also set up appointments with the Office of Student Accessibility and Accommodations via MyPVCC/Navigate.

When asked what the best part of her job is, Sandra Bullins replied, “I feel the most rewarding part of my job is getting to know the students I work with, being a part of their academic journey, and knowing that I played just a small part in that. They often will share their successes and the not-quite successes with me, stopping by at random times, even if it is just to say ‘hi’ and get some candy! They, the students, are the most rewarding part of my job!”



Sandra Bullins. Photo courtesy of Bullins

Get a Read on English Professor Adam Quinn

Eavan Murphy, staff writer

One of the newest additions to the school's staff is Assistant Professor of English Adam Quinn. He began his first year as a full-time PVCC faculty member in the fall of 2022.

Growing up in Alabama, educational opportunities were hard to come by since going to college wasn't exactly the norm. Despite this, Quinn was always interested in reading and writing, which led to him majoring in English at Samford University in Birmingham, Alabama.

He later received a scholarship from the Fulbright Program and completed his master's degree in Ireland at University College Dublin. "Not only was it really cool to live in Ireland, but it was really useful too as an English teacher for thinking about different academic conventions around writing," Quinn said about his time abroad.

Quinn was always an avid reader, so when he found out that one can read books, teach, and write for a job, he automatically knew he wanted to become a professor. After adjuncting at Troy University in Alabama, the University of Kentucky, Blue Ridge Community College, and PVCC, he started teaching full-time.

As a professor, Quinn's mission is to make college as accessible as possible to everyone no matter their background. His teaching style focuses on breaking down the "hidden curriculum" which he defines as the "idea that there's a lot that you need to know about being a college student that no one actually ever tells you." This is why he explains to students the basics of college such as what office hours are, how they can ask for extensions, and how to format emails to professors.

Last year, Quinn also started teaching on prison campuses as part of PVCC's Higher



PVCC Assistant Professor of English Adam Quinn.
Photo courtesy of Quinn

Education in Prison Program. While he was apprehensive at first, Quinn said, "I've loved it. It's been one of the coolest things I've done. My incarcerated students are amazing, and it's been just a really cool personal experience."

While he only started teaching full time last year, Quinn only has good things to say about his experience at PVCC.

"It is the best job I have ever had; I really really love it. The students are amazing. The colleagues are amazing," Quinn said with a wide grin on his face.

Quinn currently teaches ENG 111: College Composition I, ENG 112: College Composition II, and ENG 246: American Literature.



Anne Allison with her family.



Clothes hang from Florence apartments.



The Duomo di Firenze. Photos courtesy of Anne Allison

Piedmont Professor Spends a Year in Florence

Josh Black, staff writer

The Museo Galileo in Florence — dedicated to the famous astronomer, Galileo, and home to one of the world’s major collections of scientific instruments — hosted our very own Professor of Biology Dr. Anne Allison during her year-long research sabbatical on scientific literacy and philosophy. On Oct. 4, she gave a presentation about what living in Florence for so long was like.

Allison’s first time traveling independently was a spring break trip to Florence in 1996. She went to Italy again in 2005 and 2012. With the pandemic winding down and Allison overdue for a sabbatical, she decided on Florence because of her long history with the country and lifelong dream of living abroad.

She and her family lived outside of the tourist areas of Florence, which immediately made this experience different from her previous trips. Three-story buildings box in one lane roads with sidewalks a foot wide. They had no car, opting to avoid the hassle of insurance and gas. Florence is a very walkable city; it was only a 30 minute walk to the museum from their apartment. Allison learned the area well enough to feel more like a resident than visitor. “This was a point of pride for me. After living there a few months, the Italian tourists — from Italy but not Florence — would start asking me for directions,” she said.

Their apartment was lovely, but antiquated. It had a tiny kitchen, dubbed the “one-butt kitchen” for its single stool that was all its seating. The oven was christened the “easy-bake,” in reference to its small size. Turn on too many appliances and the power to the whole apartment would shut off. The family hung all their laundry on clotheslines to dry, which is common in Florence. Immigration paperwork made it a grueling bureaucratic process to get to this point, Allison said, “But then you wake up one day, and you’ve been there a few weeks, and your jet lag has gone, and you realize: Oh my God, this is where I live. And it’s all worth it.”

The museum is housed in Palazzo Castellani, a building constructed in the 11th century. It sits “in the shadow of” the Duomo di Firenze, the most famous building in the city. If you’ve lived in the U.S. your entire life, it can be easy to forget the sheer depth of human history. In Italy, that

history is inescapable. “There are so many ancient artifacts that they are literally just there, on the ground,” Allison said about Rome, which she took her family to see for American Thanksgiving.

She showed pictures of laundry lines hanging between centuries-old apartment buildings. “There are just these layers and layers and layers of history. And you think something is old, and then there is something older, and something older, and something older again,” she reflected. “You just have these buildings that are not necessarily from the same time period. And then folks are clearly living here, doing their laundry, and just going about life.”

The food is one of the main highlights of any stay in Italy. Italians have a table culture foreign to many Americans. “Family. Food. Long meals together. This is something we did a lot of,” Allison said. The longest was a five-hour lunch to celebrate the end of the fall soccer season. Grocery stores had entire aisles overflowing with olive oil and pasta. With inflation affecting people the world over, Allison would sometimes turn on the news to hear about citizens outraged that pasta had gone from 80 cents to a euro per kilogram.

Allison and her family arrived back at the same train station that they left a year prior. “We might have arrived with a certain amount of trepidation and fatigue,” she said. “We all felt excited — sad to leave Florence, but excited to go home. It wasn’t always smooth, but on the whole it was a great experience. I would recommend it to anybody.”



Museo Galileo. Photo courtesy of Anne Allison

New Geology Class This Spring

Sara Cate Nordman, staff writer

In Spring 2024, PVCC will be offering a new course for students interested in geology, Earth Systems: An Environmental Geology Perspective (GOL 110). It is a Uniform Certificate of General Studies (UCGS) approved transfer course and fulfills a transfer course requirement. The class will meet weekly via Zoom on Wednesdays and will include an eight-day Spring Break trip to Costa Rica. There are no prerequisites, but Associate Professor of Geology Callan Bentley says it is ideal for students to have taken GOL 105 or 106 before or while taking this class.

GOL 110 will cover environmental geology, and the connections between geology and people. The Costa Rica trip will offer students the opportunity to experience the topics discussed in the course like volcanoes, landslides, erosion, and pollution. All students are welcome and should anticipate a field course experience, such as less-than-ideal weather conditions, lots of driving, and lots of work with other students.

“The application of geological principles to serve the needs of human well-being is one of the most straightforward rationales for studying Earth science,” said Bentley. “Visiting a country like



Sights seen on previous Costa Rica trips.
Photo courtesy of Callan Bentley

Costa Rica forces students to move beyond simplistic dismissals like ‘Why would anyone live next to a volcano?’ and towards understanding of the many different social and environmental factors worth considering. I’m particularly excited to take students to coastal outcrops near our ecovilla in Esterillos Oeste, so they can see ancient Pacific seafloor rocks that have been plastered onto the Central American mainland during the course of subduction. Another highlight will be visiting a sea turtle protection program, hiking in several national parks, and crossing a tombolo at low tide. We will also study coastal wave dynamics from the perspective of a surfboard!”

If you have any questions about the class, contact Bentley at CBentley@pvcc.edu or your academic adviser.



Photo courtesy of Callan Bentley

HIS 127: History That Inspires

Eavan Murphy, staff writer

“It’s all American history, but told through the eyes of women,” said Assistant Professor of History Dr. Jennifer Tomás when describing HIS 127: Women in American History. As the sole professor for HIS 127, Tomás is dedicated to teaching history from a perspective that has long been underrepresented in academia.

Despite women being essential to many of the most important political and social movements, it took decades for women’s studies to be recognized and widely taught. This is why Tomás, an expert in the field, pushed for HIS 127 to be offered at PVCC. While it was originally an elective, HIS 127 became a Civic Engagement course as part of PVCC’s Quality Engagement Plan in 2019.

The 16-week course focuses on the civic activism of women from the colonial era to the late 20th century. Through the selected readings and in-depth lectures, students can learn about key historical events and the generations of female figures who continuously fought for change. “I think it can be inspiring for people just to see that in times where women had far fewer rights and more limited access to things like equal pay, education, or political and legal rights, that they found a way to actively work for change,” Tomás said.

Now, more than ever, this course has become especially applicable to the country’s current political climate. However, through her teachings, Tomás hopes to motivate students to become civically active in their communities in any way they can.

“I think that the erosion of reproductive health rights, voting rights, and a whole host of rights and the progress that was made by women and other social justice activists over the course of the 19th and 20th centuries makes this course really relevant. I think it provides students with not just a timeline of how Americans in the past had made



Assistant Professor of History Dr. Jennifer Tomás.
Photo courtesy of Tomás

political and social changes, but it gives us lots of role models and examples,” Tomás said.

Aspen Eichelberger, a current HIS 127 student, had this to say about the course: “It has been an incredibly eye-opening class. There are so many monumental women throughout American history that most of us in the class had never even heard of. I have a better understanding of American history as a whole now. Tomás also gives great feedback on projects and I feel better prepared going forward in my academic career because of this class.”

HIS 127: Women in American History is available for the 2024 spring semester. The course number is 54490. Classes are held on Mondays and Wednesdays from 2 to 3:15 p.m.

Zack Beamer Teaches PVCC Students

William McAuliffe, staff writer

Dr. Zack Beamer is a professor of mathematics who teaches Technical Mathematics. Beamer has been a professor at PVCC for 11 years, and his first position was an adjunct professor. What inspired Beamer to teach math was the fact that he loved math since kindergarten. He formed peer groups to study math and found the steps and processes to solving problems satisfying.

Beamer said, “At the beginning of your studies, try to explore lots of different topics and disciplines because you may find a connection to topics you never knew even existed.”

Beamer’s office hours are 8:30-10 a.m. and 2-2:30 p.m. on Mondays and Wednesdays, while his hours on Fridays are 8:30-10 a.m. and noon to 1:00 p.m. Beamer’s office has a lot of math books, mostly books about precalculus and calculus math courses, along with pictures of his fiancé and his 2-year-old daughter, and various math papers. His various diplomas hang on the wall showing he attended three universities to become a professor.

Beamer first attended college at Michigan State where he majored in math and philosophy and he earned a bachelor’s degree. During his freshman year, he took Calculus I & II. He then took Calculus III and Linear Math in his sophomore year. During his junior year, he took Abstract Algebra, Common Combinatorics and Probability classes. Finally, during his senior year, he took math classes in Differential Equations, Real Analysis, and Final Seminar classes.

His second college was at Indiana University where he earned a master’s degree in mathematics. His third and last college degree was a doctorate in education at the University of Virginia. After graduating from UVA, what inspired him to become a professor at PVCC was the fact that he wanted a job where he could teach math students full-time. However, PVCC isn’t the only place where Beamer has taught. Other educational institutions he taught at were Michigan State University where he taught undergraduates, as well Indiana University where he assisted graduate students. He also taught upward bound for two summers in East Lansing,



Michigan, and Bloomington, Indiana.

This semester at PVCC, Beamer is teaching in-person classes in Quantitative Reasoning (MTH 154) with co-requisite support classes and Discrete Mathematics (MTH 288) for students majoring in computer science. Beamer also teaches two online classes in Technical Mathematics (MTH 131). In the spring semester of 2024, Beamer will be teaching an online course for Technical Mathematics and several in-person courses in Quantitative Reasoning (MTH 154), Pre-Calculus (MTH 161), and Calculus III (MTH 265).

In Beamer’s free time, he likes to spend time with his fiancée, Allison, and his 2-year-old daughter, Iliza, exploring nature and hiking. He also likes to perform in bands during musical events.

Beamer gives the following advice to students who are graduating from PVCC and moving on to a four-year university: “If you are going to university, definitely find a place that aligns well with your interests and personality. There’s a lot about finding an institution that feels like your additional home.”

Improve Your Writing and Get Published

Nate Estes, staff writer

One of the ways the authors of the Constitution ensure freedom for their citizens is through a free press. United States citizens have had the right to a free press almost as long as the U.S. has been a country. This makes honest journalism a privilege for any U.S. citizen.

“I do believe that journalism is the watchdog of the government,” said Dr. Tamara Whyte, the professor of English who teaches ENG 121: Intro to Journalism. Students should not expect to be exposing corrupt government just yet. Rather, Whyte aims at teaching students “how to more effectively communicate.” Her class is not only focused on journalism writing methods, but also on writing principles that can help when writing emails, writing reports, and general communication.

“And, of course, it is fun to get published,” said Whyte. Any ENG 121 student who wants their work published in PVCC’s student newspaper, *The Forum*, can do so as long as it is appropriate and peer edited.

A large portion of the class is dedicated to writing short weekly articles for the newspaper. Whyte says writing frequently, even small things on a deadline, can help improve your writing. “The only way you become better is by doing,” she said. She also encourages students to eliminate the “fluff,” or the words that do not help get a point across from writing. Breaking this habit not only helps with journalistic writing, but also with day-to-day communication.

Another part of journalism is conducting interviews. “You learn to talk to someone you have not talked to before,” said Whyte. “It gives you opportunities to explore things you care about but also to get outside of your comfort zone.” Students can choose to interview someone with whom they are acquainted, but they are encouraged to interview new people.

The first interview required is well into the semester, though. While introducing students to journalism, Whyte also teaches basic writing skills. “I am very transparent with grading...so everything has a rubric,” she said. “I am not looking for a perfect article.”

“But you should not take it because you think it is easy,” she said. “You should take it because you want to write or explore or edit.” When you leave the class, you will have a portfolio showcasing how you have grown as a writer. You may also grow as an interviewer, an editor, and someone who can highlight stories that otherwise might not be seen. To Whyte, good journalism “shows you the world. And it shows you the people in your community that you might miss otherwise.”

“And the textbooks are cheap,” said Whyte. One of the two books is free online through the Betty Sue Jessup Library. The other is only \$20-30, or free with a Kindle Unlimited subscription.

ENG 121, course number 54205, is offered as a 16-week, 3-credit course in the spring semester. It also qualifies as a Civic Engagement class, which is a requirement for graduation. The only prerequisite is ENG 111: College Composition I. It meets Tuesdays and Thursdays from 2-3:15 p.m. in the writing center classroom, M627.



Dr. Tamara Whyte. Photo courtesy of Whyte

Melody Day: Music for Lovers

Kritagya Gurung, staff writer

Melody Day is an adjunct instructor of music at PVCC. She teaches piano and voice. Day also has her own studio at her home. Day didn't originally choose music as a major when she enrolled in college. She wanted to major in art, but the college didn't have an art program.

Day's dad said, "Remember what you have been doing all your life." She had been singing all her life, so she decided to major in music in college. Day took piano lessons from third grade to 12th grade. Day went to Liberty Baptist College, now called Liberty University. Day was in the choir for the first time while attending Liberty Baptist College.

Day had a fabulous director. Due to Day's director, Day started to love music. Day started teaching at PVCC in January 2012. There were

usually two voice instructors and one had retired. Day's teacher thought she would be a good fit and recommended that she apply for the position.

Day majored in music education with a concentration in voice and minored in piano, education, and the Bible. She earned a seminary degree in church music. Day was laid off from her last public school position. Since she had so much experience in music, she decided to open a private studio called DaySong Studio LLC. in 2010. Day was determined to set herself up differently from other instructors.

She said, "It has been a hit with my parents and students, so I am still setting myself apart this way."

"It is extra work, but it helps my memory the older I get!" she said. What Day loves about the studio and PVCC is meeting so many wonderful people. Day doesn't like not getting to work with PVCC students for more than one to two semesters.

Being in Day's classroom, one feels healthy, safe, and comfortable. Day teaches each of her students very differently in her classroom, depending on their needs. Day teaches her students with disabilities slowly and little by little. Day listens to her students, so she can teach her students.

She was hired to be a voice teacher and piano instructor. She has a full-time position at home, though she does enjoy working and teaching at PVCC.

Day says, "You need to fall in love with music and be willing to work hard to develop your skills to performance level, but then the love will help you to teach well and help others to fall in love with music too!"



Melody Z Day. Photo courtesy of Day

Blue Ridge Cafe Hosts a Karaoke Christmas Event



William McAuliffe, staff writer

On Dec. 14, Blue Ridge Cafe will be hosting a karaoke Christmas event on the patio from 7-10 p.m. This event will take place on 8315 Seminole Trail in Ruckersville. During the event, hosts give guests a QR code to scan, which gives access to add songs to the karaoke list. Guests can also have duets, where you and another friend can sing together.

At 9 p.m., visitors under 18 years old are prohibited from being on the patio since there will be alcohol being served.

During this event in honor of Christmas, there will be people singing Christmas songs. When singing the songs there will be a screen that displays the lyrics as the song plays. The library of music has a variety of genres such as country, rock, and classic songs from past decades.

There will even be Christmas decorations around the patio like Christmas trees, lights, and

wreaths. There are also going to be Christmas games in celebration of Christmas. The event is free, but food and drinks will have to be paid for.

Looking at the food costs, appetizers consist of a variety of fried food with dips such as ranches and barbeque which range from \$7-\$15. Salads and soups are a maximum of \$10 each. They also serve steak and burgers with a variety of prices that range between \$10 and \$40. They also serve entrees and sides such as vegetables like green beans, potatoes, and broccoli along with french fries and chicken tenders.

At 8:30 p.m., there will be an ugly sweater contest. The people who have the best sweaters during the contest will win a gift card from various stores and restaurants.

One of the waitresses, Cheyenne Smithson, says, "Come join us for the Christmas spirit."

Chad, the host of the Blue Ridge Cafe karaoke events, says, "Lots of fun at karaoke! Fun for the whole family if you're over 18!"

New Management, Same Delicious Ice Cream

Nate Estes, staff writer

Papa Jim's Ice Cream opened up a new location on Oct. 20. The owner, Duncan Goodwin, said they had three weeks to get it ready for opening day. Renovations are still taking place to make the space their own. Outside the store, sunlight bounced from tree to tree, filling the air with light. Even so, it was dark inside of Papa Jim's. The few fluorescent lights dotted along the ceiling did not keep the interior lit, even with the sunlight streaming through the windows. Many people opted for the outdoor seating.

Goodwin recently bought the company from Jim Toms, the original Papa Jim, who opened the store in 2011. He said, "I bought it because I have three kids." He wants it to be a place they can work in when they grow up.

He also bought it to be more involved with the community. Although he owns two businesses with offices in New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania, he and his family have ties to the Fluvanna area. His wife works as a special education teacher at Fluvanna County High School, and his 13-year-old daughter, the oldest of his kids, had her Make-A-Wish announcement at Papa Jim's when she was younger.

Their old building, located in Troy, has no indoor seating, which makes it hard to stay open in the winter. They have usually had to close their doors from November to February. Also,

Goodwin said that there isn't enough room in their old place to be a social center, which is his goal for the store. He wants to help create memories for children and parents.

He described a childhood memory of his from England, where he was born. Every Friday night, he and his family would go down to the local pub, which had a field. The kids would play with each other in the field while the parents would sit and talk with each other. That is the kind of memory he wants to create with families in Fluvanna County. Since he bought Papa Jim's in 2021, Goodwin has been planning on opening a new location, preferably with an open area like the one he remembers from his youth.

After looking for around a year and not finding a suitable place, an opportunity arose. Amo Gelato was shutting its doors, with a location near Lake Monticello. Since Goodwin knew most of their customers were from Lake Monticello, he decided to take the opportunity and establish the business closer to Fluvanna County.

Renovations still have a ways to go, but Goodwin has a vision. A display case that used to be full of homemade pastries has been repurposed to hold posters and menus. Goodwin said the display case will hopefully also be used to sell pastries from local students. The goal is to teach them about selling their own products. That way, students who are interested in the culinary arts can experience running a mini bakery, without having to commit to culinary school or a 4-year university first.

Since buying the shop, he and his wife wanted to make sure it was "a really safe environment for kids to get their first jobs." He hopes this shop is more appealing than a job at a fast food restaurant, where "you're just a number." With his store, he hopes to help kids get a job that will connect them to the community and help them be more comfortable with working.

"Our kids are great, great kids," Goodwin said, "They all really work hard, and we try to make sure they are heard and they feel appreciated."

To try some Papa Jim's Ice Cream, visit their new location at 265 Turkeysag Trail or the place it all started, which is closed until March, at 19289 James Madison Highway.



Interior of new Papa Jim's location.
Photo courtesy of Duncan Goodwin

Napoleon, Bon in Part

Josh Black, staff writer

“Warrior, Emperor, General, Genius, Rebel, Tyrant.” These epithets quickly flash across the screen in the trailer for director Ridley Scott’s latest epic historical film, *Napoleon*. While they may describe the historical Napoleon Bonaparte, you would be forgiven for thinking they are overblown if your only exposure to the man’s exploits came from Joaquin Phoenix’s performance.

Phoenix’s *Napoleon* is odd. For a man who commanded the adoration of an empire, citizens and soldiers of the grand army alike, he is remarkably uncharismatic. He’s petulant and morose. I don’t think this depiction is wrong by itself; a movie critical of the violent tyranny and megalomaniacal ambition of the French emperor could have been excellent. But *Napoleon* is so unappealing that it stretches believability. He was known for his bravado and gambler’s spirit, neither of which come through in the movie.

When returning from exile to reclaim his throne, Napoleon was met with a line of muskets pointed directly at him; the men of the 5th regiment holding them had orders to stop him from marching on Paris. Napoleon is supposed to have thrown open his coat and declared, “If any of you will shoot his Emperor, here I am!” The men immediately switched sides and began to cry, “Vive l’Empereur!”

In the movie, we are never shown how Napoleon could have earned that sort of loyalty, and when that scene comes around, Phoenix merely whines that he misses his troops and wishes they would follow him again. Truly a bizarre characterization of a fascinating figure.

Napoleon frequently twists and bends the verifiable historical facts of its narrative. Normally, this is where I would say something about “artistic license” or “a change for dramatic effect,” and there are a few of those. But some of the changes just seem sloppy for no reason, and a few actually make the story more boring (the scene I described above is

an example).

“We took Italy without a fight,” says Napoleon. Multiple battles and tens of thousands of dead on both sides would argue otherwise. Napoleon shoots his cannons at the pyramids (no, he did not actually), causing the Ottoman general to faint and fall from his horse. Another victory without drama or display of genius. Why are two of Napoleon’s most famous campaigns relegated to a single line in the first case and a single joke scene in the second?

The script simply has no idea what to do with itself. There is no drama, no intrigue, no progression. A sequence of scenes plays one after another like bullet points in a history textbook. It seems like the script wanted to analyze Napoleon’s psyche and his motivations, especially through the lens of his relationship with his first wife, Josephine. The interactions between the two take up a lot of screen time that could have been spent crafting a proper narrative, but by the end, I felt nothing about either of them.

When the cannons begin to fire, however, is when this movie finally begins to shine. I saw the film in IMAX, and while I wouldn’t say it was worth the price, I was glad when it came time for the sprawling, epic battle scenes. We are given extensive showcases of the Siege of Toulon, the Battle of Austerlitz, and, of course, Waterloo. Like other aspects of the film, these battles have only a surface-level relationship with the history, but they provide enough visual spectacle and breathtaking action to remain enjoyable.

Napoleon is in theaters now and will eventually come to AppleTV+, with Jan. 6, 2024, as the earliest likely date. The theatrical cut is 2 hours and 38 minutes, but the version available to stream will be an hour longer, according to Scott.



Joaquin Phoenix as Napoleon Bonaparte. Photo courtesy of AppleTV+

Getting Lost in *Saltburn*

Eavan Murphy, staff writer

With its Gatsby-esque visuals, stellar ensemble cast, and many disturbing moments that will make audiences squirm, Emerald Fennell's *Saltburn* is far from boring. However, with the lackluster writing, the film ultimately feels superficial and predictable.

Saltburn takes place in 2006 and follows Oliver Quick (Barry Keoghan), a new student at Oxford University who struggles to fit in amongst his affluent peers. However, after a chance encounter, Oliver becomes friends with Felix Catton (Jacob Elordi), a popular student who takes him under his wing. After the sudden death of Oliver's father, Felix invites him to his family's estate of Saltburn for the summer. At Saltburn, we receive a glimpse into the debauched private lives of the ultra wealthy and discover that our protagonist is not as innocent as he may seem.

Linus Sandgren's cinematography alongside the backdrop of a Baroque English manor provide quite the spectacle. The 1.33:1 aspect ratio makes the film feel as though we're watching old home videos or peeping through one of Saltburn's windows. Regardless, there's this sense that we're watching something we're not supposed to see.

There is a brilliant juxtaposition between the opulent setting of Saltburn and the early-2000s soundtrack and clothing. The contemporary blends with the traditional as the characters wear

oversized rugby shirts, sing "Low" by Flo Rida at karaoke, and read *Harry Potter* within the confines of the extravagant estate.

Aside from the aesthetics, the star-studded cast delivers some superb performances. Keoghan proves that he's a worthy leading man while Elordi makes it difficult to not fall in love with Felix. Rosamund Pike, who plays matriarch Lizbeth Catton, is particularly notable with her brilliant comedic timing and one-liners that are guaranteed to get a laugh.

Unfortunately, Fennell is not as concise with this narrative as she was with her debut film *Promising Young Woman* (2020). Is it commentary on class? Is it a tale of obsessive love? Is it a revenge story? Fennell is trying to say several things at once, but by the end, she says nothing at all. The characters are so underwritten that it's difficult to determine what their motivations are. As a result, the ending feels rather disjointed when considering how little we actually know.

Even if it's not as complex as it wants you to believe, *Saltburn* remains fascinating and fearless. This film is not for the faint of heart, but if you're a fan of *The Talented Mr. Ripley* (1999), *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999), or *Midsommar* (2019), then it's definitely worth a watch.

Saltburn is R-rated with a runtime of 127 minutes. It's currently playing at Violet Crown and Regal in Stonefield.



Barry Keoghan and Archie Madekwe in *Saltburn*. Photo courtesy of MGM/Amazon Studios

Great Book, Not-So-Good Movie



Sarah Cate Nordman, staff writer

It's been eight years since the last *Hunger Games* film was released. As a huge fan of the franchise, I was so excited to see the prequel to the series, *The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes*.

The book is amazing because of the lovely pacing, great characterization, and captivating plot. It meets the same standards as the original trilogy, but sets itself apart just enough, through a different setting and characters. However, I feel that all of the praise the film is receiving is misguided. Many people are rightfully captivated by the plot and characters, not the film itself. As a book adaptation, the plot and characters are provided for them. And while the film is well written, including most important plot points from the book, the cinematic elements of this new film pale in comparison to the original movies.

My favorite thing about the original films is that they walk the line between realism and the distinctiveness normally employed in dystopian films. Audiences can usually recognize a futuristic aesthetic, including extreme technology and outlandish fashion. Yes, the original films are obviously in a different time and space than right now, but there is something about the atmosphere created that seems more current and familiar than other dystopian story worlds. These events seem to be happening in our world, just a few years down the road. However, *The Ballad of Songbirds*

and Snakes falls more into formalism, a cinematic style that relies on more fanciful props, set dressings, and costumes to create a more extraordinary reality.

If I did not know, I would think it was done by a different director. It has a completely different energy than the original films. I understand that they were trying to establish that this new film is happening in a time before Katniss, but it still happens after 2023. So then why is the look in the capital so mid-century modern?

Although *The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes* is not perfect, there are certainly elements of the film that are still great. The acting was good all across the board of main characters, with exceptional performances by the legendary Viola Davis and Rachel Zegler, the latter of whom is bound to have an amazing career ahead of her.

Like I said, the adapting was well done. The film made sense, but it was not unbearably long. I was concerned that such a long book would need two movies to be logical, but they did well. Nonetheless, it is not as good as the originals.

The main theme of the books and films is how far people will go to be entertained. They include a call to action for people to think critically about the world around them, not somewhere they are removed from. The *mise-en-scène* of this film moves away from this, watering down the intended message. *The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes* is still in theaters and is rated PG-13.

Scott Pilgrim Ticks Off His Fans

Josh Traynor, staff writer

The newest addition to the *Scott Pilgrim* franchise, an anime titled *Scott Pilgrim Takes Off*, was released on Nov. 17, to a contentious debate amongst fans in regards to the direction in which the story writers decided to take the series.

Normally, the *Scott Pilgrim* franchise centers around its titular protagonist, an egocentric 22-year-old Canadian man named Scott Pilgrim (Michael Cera), on his quest to defeat the seven evil exes of his new girlfriend, Ramona Flowers (Mary Elizabeth Winstead). However, *Scott Pilgrim Takes Off* follows an alternate timeline in which Scott himself disappears for most of the series, and Ramona becomes the main focus of the narrative as she tries to figure out what happened to him.

“I didn’t want to do a straight retelling, because that just feels like death to me,” Bryan Lee O’Malley, the author of the *Scott Pilgrim* comic series and co-writer of *Scott Pilgrim Takes Off*, said in an interview with *Variety*. Both fans of the series and executives at Universal Studios wanted more *Scott Pilgrim* content, and though O’Malley was open to the idea of a *Scott Pilgrim* anime when it was pitched to him in 2019, he had been experiencing a creative block with the series and didn’t know how to continue the story. That is, until BenDavid Grabinski, an indie filmmaker and a friend of O’Malley’s, suggested starting with the same story, before branching off and becoming its own version of the original.

“I pitched [the idea] kind of as a joke, but it sparked something in Bryan’s brain where he immediately was like ‘Oh, that’s interesting,’” said Grabinski.

The initial response to this change, while mostly positive, caused some fans to feel that they’d been misled due to how the show was advertised. The trailer for *Scott Pilgrim Takes Off* purposefully doesn’t show any of the changes made to the plot, rather showing scenes that are already familiar to those who watched the movie adaptation, *Scott Pilgrim Vs. The World*. While Grabinski says that he chose scenes that won’t spoil the twist to keep it a surprise, some viewers



Scott Pilgrim fighting Matthew Patel.
Photo courtesy of Netflix

expressed that the trailer felt like a “bait and switch” or a marketing tactic to make it seem like they’re watching an adaptation of the movie, when in reality, they’re getting something entirely different.

“I really enjoyed the show once I accepted what they were trying to do,” Reddit user grgriffin3 commented. “But I really wish they’d been upfront with their advertising about what this show actually was.”

Despite this, *Scott Pilgrim Takes Off* was a blast to watch. In a year when most of the movies we’re getting from large companies like Disney are sequels and sub-par remakes, this series was a breath of fresh air. I watched *Scott Pilgrim Takes Off* hoping for something new and exciting, and it went above and beyond my expectations. Each episode contained an action-packed fight sequence with beautiful animation and a cast of perfectly flawed, yet lovable characters.

One of the most common complaints about the *Scott Pilgrim* series is that all of the characters are one-note and unlikeable, but I think taking Scott himself out of the equation helped solve this, since now the other characters have more of a focus, as well as more room for growth. If you’re new to the series, it’s possible to start with *Scott Pilgrim Takes Off* like I did, as it does a decent job at introducing the characters and their individual conflicts, but you may have a hard time understanding some parts of the story since it often references the movie *Scott Pilgrim Vs. The World*.

You can find both *Scott Pilgrim Takes Off* and *Scott Pilgrim Vs. The World* on Netflix, and the comic series is available at most bookstores, as well as on Bryan Lee O’Malley’s Amazon page.

Dune, A Cinematic Masterpiece



Zendaya and Timothee Chalamet in *Dune*. Photo courtesy of Legendary Pictures

Eduardo Ortiz, staff writer

The adaptation of Frank Herbert's iconic novel *Dune* has recently become available to stream on Netflix and has been captivating viewers. Directed by Denis Villeneuve starring Timothee Chalamet as protagonist Paul Atreides alongside Zendaya, Rebecca Ferguson, and Oscar Isaac, *Dune* is a gripping and visually breathtaking sci-fi epic that honors its source material while redefining the genre to a modern take. With its mesmerizing scenery, excellent use of music, and intricate storytelling, this movie is bound to leave viewers wanting more.

From beginning to end, the film provides suspense, thrill, and a variety of different emotions. The plot is filled with never-ending action and underlying mysteries that unravel at a perfect pace while following Atreides through his story.

The cinematography, by Greig Fraser, is nothing short of breathtaking, effectively transporting the audience into the otherworldly universe of *Dune*. The use of practical effects and CGI allows the viewer to feel as though they are taking part in the film themselves and adds another layer to the story, as different colors and shades are used to portray different stories between the characters. The music throughout the film adds a layer of emotional depth that elevates the most dramatic scenes. The traditional instruments combined with electronic elements creates a soundscape that is modern but timeless.

Dune is a perfect adaptation of the novel that manages to encapsulate the epic scope of Frank Herbert's book. *Dune* is not only a visual spectacle but a thought-provoking cinematic experience that leaves its viewers anticipating more. The sequel to the movie is set to come out on March 1, 2024.

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