

the concept of radio commentary from minutes to hours, but remained true to Harvey's basic formula of personalizing the news, turning the events of the day into a longform diary of American life." The continued popu-

larity of Harvey and his formula, Fisher suggests, is a reflection of "an American craving for belonging, an insistent desire for community in a nation that has grown . . . scattered and rootless."

## *Media Theory Down Under*

"The Poverty of Media Theory" by Keith Windschuttle, in *Quadrant* (Mar. 1998), P.O. Box 1495, Collingwood, Victoria 3066, Australia.

Australian students aspiring to careers in journalism are flocking to programs granting degrees in communications and media studies. Little do they realize, writes Windschuttle, author of *The Killing of History* (1997), that the large doses of media theory they will have to swallow are directly opposed to journalism's underlying principles.

Those principles, he notes, include a commitment to "reporting the truth about what occurs in the world," and to informing their readers, listeners, and viewers, not just pleasing their employers or advertisers. And, of course, journalists should be committed to good, clear writing. "However, in most of the media theory that is taught within Australian communications and media degrees," Windschuttle says, "none of these principles are upheld. In fact, they are specifically denied, either by argument or example."

Australian institutions of higher learning that began to offer journalism as a subject in the mid-1970s felt it necessary, he says, to offer something besides mere vocational education. Enter British cultural studies, a movement created by English literary critics, most of them Marxists. In their view, objective understanding of any "real world" is impossible; the "real world" is nothing but a "text" to be read by literary analysis. By the late 1970s, Windschuttle writes, media students were being taught "that capitalist ideology was generated in the form of a system of linguis-

tic rules by the agents of the ruling class who worked for the media. Ideology was transmitted by communication signals and lodged not in people's conscious minds but at a level of 'deep structure' in their unconscious." The readers, listeners, and viewers, in short, were "little more than robots."

Over the years, Windschuttle notes, the fashions and gurus in media theory have changed, but assumptions about the influence of language and culture have not. Just as French postmodernist Jean Baudrillard claims there is no way to be sure that the 1991 Persian Gulf War really took place, so media theorist John Hartley, until recently a professor at Edith Cowan University, in Perth, Australia, maintains that audiences are mere fictions serving "the need of the imagining institution."

Once exposed to media theory, most journalism students come to regard it, Windschuttle says, as "a largely incomprehensible and odious gauntlet they must run."

Most of the media theorists in Australia "have never even set foot inside a newspaper office or television studio," Windschuttle observes. He would like to see the veteran journalists who also teach in Australia's universities step up to write general textbooks and develop "their own theory"—in short, compete "head on" with the addled theorists. Most of the students, he suggests, would be very grateful.

## RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

### *Does Knowledge Destroy Faith?*

"Rationality and the 'Religious Mind'" by Laurence Iannaccone, Rodney Stark, and Roger Finke, in *Economic Inquiry* (July 1998), Texas A&M Univ., Dept. of Economics, College Station, Texas 77843-4228.

Social scientists have long been inclined to look upon religion as an irrational vestige of the premodern world, destined any day now for

extinction. *Everyone knows* that as science advances, religion retreats, and that as people become more educated, they grow less reli-

gious. But research in recent decades shows that “everyone” is wrong, report economist Iannaccone, of Santa Clara University, and sociologists Stark and Finke, of the University of Washington and Purdue University, respectively.

Despite the explosive growth of science and the increase in average education levels during the last half-century, the rates of religious belief and participation in the United States have stayed about the same. It is true, Iannaccone and his colleagues say, after examining extensive surveys from the period 1972–90, that professors and scientists are less religious than the general public. Nineteen percent of the learned professionals reject religion entirely, compared with only seven percent of the public. But, the authors add, most academics “*are* religious—81 percent say they have a religion, 65 percent believe in an afterlife, 64 percent feel near to God, and 61 percent (claim to) attend church at least several times a year.”

Moreover, the gap between the professors and the general public is no wider than it is between men and women, or between whites

and blacks. Thus, 37 percent of academics pray daily, compared with 57 percent of the public—but that 20-point difference is less than the 23 points between men (43) and women (66) who pray daily. When sex, race, and other traits are taken into account, the authors note, professors and scientists—overwhelmingly white, largely male—appear only slightly less likely than other people to pray daily. Outright rejection of religion remains more common among academics, however, but that may be because the irreligious are more drawn to the academic life, not because higher education reduces religious belief.

What’s more, observe Iannaccone and his colleagues, a 1969 survey of nearly one-fourth of all the college faculty in America indicates that by church attendance and every other measure, the professors in the “hard” sciences such as physics and mathematics are more religious than their social science counterparts. Those in psychology and anthropology, the two fields most closely associated with the idea that faith is irrational and doomed, “emerge as towers of unbelief.” Just a coincidence?

## SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

### *On the Global Warming Front*

*A Survey of Recent Articles*

Environmentalists and others who hailed the 1997 Kyoto accord as a promising first step toward averting catastrophic global warming, and have been disappointed since by the lack of progress toward implementation, took heart from the results of a two-week conference in Buenos Aires last November. Negotiators from more than 150 countries agreed to set operational rules for enforcing the Kyoto pact by late 2000, and Argentina and Kazakhstan became the first developing countries to announce they would voluntarily adopt restrictions on their emissions of heat-trapping carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases.

Yet while the Clinton administration formally signed the accord in November, the pact still faces intense opposition in Congress. The administration no longer expects even to submit it to the Senate for ratification before a new president is elect-

ed in 2000. Without U.S. approval, the Kyoto treaty will not go into effect.

But how serious a step toward controlling the buildup of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere would the Kyoto agreement really be? And is a first step, big or small, even necessary? Is there, as President Bill Clinton has asserted, “virtually unanimous opinion among scientists that the globe is warming at an unacceptably rapid rate”?

In the accord reached at Kyoto, Japan, in December 1997, the United States and other industrialized nations pledged to slash their greenhouse gas emissions between 2008 and 2012 by certain percentages (seven percent in the U.S. case) below 1990 levels. The agreement permits international trading of emissions “credits”—countries that emit less than their quota of gases can sell to other countries the rights to the balance. No restrictions are placed by the accord on developing nations.