

Opinion: Ferguson and Massachusetts, What can we learn?



To this day we as a nation are still attempting to overcome the burdens placed on us by centuries of racism and prejudice, and one day we may very well be able to achieve the dream of complete equality and tolerance for all. (Loavesofbread)

Firstly, I know this is a controversial topic so believe me when I say I am reporting everything here as objectively as possible. In fact, I would not have even considered doing an article on this topic, not because it doesn't matter, but because until outgoing Governor Deval Patrick spoke on it, there wasn't much of a connection to Massachusetts. Sure I've heard about protests here and there, and yes even on the UMass Dartmouth campus, but I haven't witnessed them well enough to discuss them in any further detail. All I will be doing here is talking about Governor Patrick's interview with Meet the Press and what if anything we can learn from this tragic

incident where one man died and another's life has fallen to pieces.

Governor Patrick believes that Darren Wilson should have been indicted and tried for the killing of Michael Brown making the case that it would bring comfort to the community and the family, and certainly I can see his point. Something that needs to be considered though is that a trial over the course of several months may have caused protests on either or both sides to intensify through its duration, and if Wilson had still not been found guilty it may have angered protesters even more and caused even more chaos.

In this case it may have been best to let this proverbial powder keg blow up sooner rather than later when it may have been more dangerous. On the other hand if true justice were to prevail in the end it could have resulted in a mass calming effect, and an easing of tensions across the nation. And if indeed Darren Wilson had committed a crime then he should have undoubtedly been held accountable.

I don't know what truly happened in Ferguson. In cases like this all we can do is trust that the grand jury, which heard evidence and witnesses on the matter and spent a great deal of time deliberating, made the right decision. I don't know anything about experiencing prejudice, but I do know that power needs to be checked otherwise it grows like a weed, getting more and more out of control and destroying anything beautiful in its path. Thus I would ask policy makers to equip police with cameras, not as an indictment against police for corruption, but as insurance.

One way or the other if Darren Wilson had been wearing a camera on him we would know exactly what happened and maybe could have avoided this strife. On the other hand there was also recently a case in Staten Island, New York where a man illegally selling cigarettes was strangled in a chokehold used by a police officer. The whole incident was caught on tape and

ruled a homicide, but yet the grand jury refused to indict. Was it the white members of the jury and some sort of prejudice, or is there some other reasonable explanation for the reason they ruled as they did?

Again I don't know, I'm no expert on prejudice or race relations, but these questions must be asked and these decisions must be analyzed because of what they could potentially signify. If we can approach the topic with some sort of reasonable, objective discourse than I'm confident we'll find and be able to reach a solution that will benefit everyone in the long run.

Another thing I think police departments should consider is minimizing their reliance on army grade weaponry and vehicles. This isn't some comic book universe where super-villains can strike anywhere at any time and it certainly isn't the Middle East, and so there is little reason the police need to be equipped like soldiers at all times. I can appreciate being prepared, but how many armored vehicles that resemble mini-tanks do we need?

To this day we as a nation are still attempting to overcome the burdens placed on us by centuries of racism and prejudice, and one day we may very well be able to achieve the dream of complete equality and tolerance for all. Through protest great change can be accomplished, but only if it is peaceful, and so if you do choose to protest please follow the example of those who aren't resorting to violence. If this is important to you, don't be disparaged by setbacks, and don't give up, even though this will probably be forgotten by the news media and most of America once the next crisis comes along.

A Look at Chanukah, an Unfortunately Underrepresented Holiday

As a kid I was more fortunate than most around the holidays, due to the fact that I got to celebrate both Christmas and Chanukah. Chanukah, or Hanukkah, or Hanukah or whatever other way you choose to spell it, is commonly known as the Festival of Lights and is one of the most famous of the Jewish holidays alongside Passover. Yet for some reason, it has been grossly underrepresented in the media compared to Passover, which has had several movies that have been made about it, the most recent being Exodus: Gods and Kings.

This is especially puzzling considering the story of Chanukah takes place immediately following one of Hollywood's favorite things to make movies about, i.e. war and revolt, but I digress. Most people I think know the rest, but for those who don't... basically after the revolt against the occupiers of the region succeeded, a menorah was to be lit each night however there was only enough oil to last for one. Miraculously the oil lasted eight days, long enough for new oil to be made, and so the holiday was born.



As with every holiday people celebrate in their own different ways.

As with every holiday people celebrate in their own different ways. In my family the kids get some gelt or chocolate coins, we light a candle on our menorah each night and occasionally we'll have latkes or fried potato pancakes. Of course, when I was younger I would get dreidels, little spinning tops with Hebrew symbols on them, and I would listen to Adam Sandler's "Chanukah Song" which is one of the only options other than singing "Dreidel, Dreidel, Dreidel".

Doing this every year made me feel special, different from the other kids but in a good way like I had won some kind of lottery and gotten a prize to boast about. It was only later in my teenage years that I began to appreciate more the solemnity and tradition of the holiday when my family visited Temple Beth-El in Fall River. On the outside, it was a dull gray and rather unappealing building, but inside its main ceremonial hall, it was as ornate and wondrous as you'd expect from a place of worship. I didn't spend much time there and eventually, my interest faded away with my visits there, but I still look back on the short time I spent there fondly.

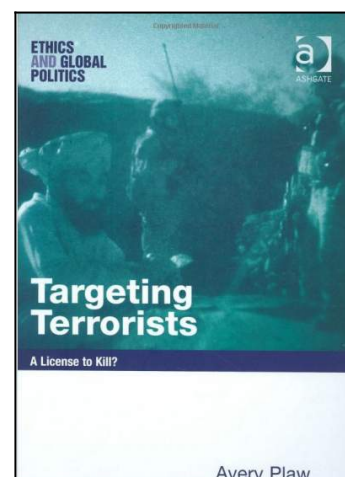
While I've always liked Chanukah well enough, I've never really loved it in the same way I do with other holidays like Thanksgiving or Christmas. Even though nowadays Thanksgiving is my favorite holiday I used to love Christmas and all that entailed. Spending Christmas Eve with my mother's side of the family, the special sugar-frosted fried pancakes I would eat in the morning, and of course the rush of tearing open every present under the tree. Now though, as much as I try to recapture that feeling of excitement and pure unfiltered joy I just can't. Sure there are good moments, and of course, I'm always happy, but it just doesn't feel the same.

Outside of myself though there's also been an argument stirring around this time of year about decorations and specifically if towns and cities should keep Christmas decorations off of public lands. I can certainly relate to people who may feel left out and alienated and would encourage

any local governments setting up displays to try to include and represent every one of all races and religions, but at the same time I know that isn't fully possible. Personally I enjoy seeing the decorations and have never thought much about their religious aspect when looking at them. I just marvel at the shiny lights and admire the dedication and effort it takes to try and make a place look good for the holidays, to try and make people smile. And honestly, how can you hate something that was meant to spread messages of goodwill, hope, and peace?

If you don't like it, ignore it, or ask your local representatives to have something put up to represent your religion, but don't resort to forcing someone to abide by your beliefs through something like a lawsuit. With that said remember to enjoy the holiday season, and don't leave gift buying until the last minute.

Targeting Terrorists and the use of drones



*Click to purchase
"Targeting
Terrorists" by
UMass Dartmouth
Professor Avery
Plaw.*

Last week I had the chance to sit down and talk with another of UMass Dartmouth's distinguished political science professors, Professor Avery Plaw. Professor Plaw, as I mentioned last week in my Drone Database article, is one of the founding members of the database and also the university's coordinator for the Honors Program.

The interview started with him telling me an interesting little anecdote about one of the reasons he chose to come to the area. Apparently Professor Plaw was a huge fan of H.P. Lovecraft, and especially of Herman Melville's book Moby Dick. I couldn't help but chuckle a bit as with enthusiasm he told me of how enthralled he was with the fantastic places that previously had only existed in his imagination. Never in my life would I think that New Bedford would be another man's Middle Earth, truly it made me see things a bit differently. It made me remember back to the first time I came to UMass Dartmouth, or the trips I had taken in the past to marvelous places like Boston or Washington D.C. and how overwhelmed I was visiting those cities for the first time when I was younger. Unlike Professor Plaw, I knew those places truly existed, but seeing them was something else altogether and so in that way I could relate to how he must have felt.

Over the years Professor Plaw has done a lot of research concerning drones and their use, and questioning the ethical and moral decisions involved in using them. One such book examining this is Targeting Terrorists, which he wrote around the same time that the Drone Database was still in its infancy. The book examines exactly what you would expect,

looking into the political history and the moral and legal justification of these operations. For someone with a great deal of interest in the topic it sounds like a very interesting read, but if you're a casual reader and not a political science nerd like myself then I probably wouldn't recommend it.

"It interests me because there are competing interests and they need to be negotiated," Professor Plaw said speaking on his interest in the Drone Database, he then went on to say, "I've always thought that you can come to practical judgments as to the best policy, even in the light of deeply contested questions."

On his specific opinion of the usage of drones Professor Plaw said, "I think they are a powerful instrument and states should have them, the US should retain them in its arsenal, and maybe that it should be more judicious about how it uses them."

In addition to his already published work, Professor Plaw is currently working on a textbook alongside his fellow researchers on the Drone Database project, namely Professor Matthew Fricker and undergraduate researcher Carlos Colon. The new book, in addition to including much of the information gathered through the Drone Database that wasn't included in the first, he explained to me is, "providing an overview of the debate, whereas the first argued a position."

All in all it sounds very interesting, and if you're in the field of political science, or if you have a particularly great interest in the subject matter than these books may be something to look into. Since they're academic though, and considering the rising costs of textbooks, if you're interested in them then I'd recommend trying to either rent them or buy them on Amazon. Either way I can't wait to see where this research will go, but I'm sure it'll be interesting and cast America's policy decisions on this issue in an

entirely new light.

Imaging Hoover Dam: An Interview with UMass Professor and Writer Anthony Arrigo

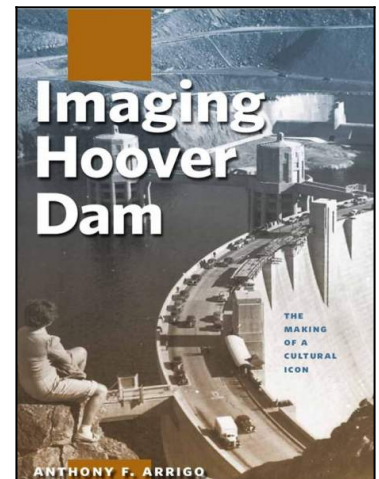


The Hoover Dam was built between 1931 and 1936.

Many know about the Hoover Dam – it's one of our most famous landmarks and public works projects. Right on the border between Nevada and Arizona, on the Colorado River it sits funneling tons of water through itself, turning the rush of the river through its turbines into power for millions. One question you may be asking yourselves at this point though, is what does this huge amalgamation of steel and concrete on the other side of the nation has to do with Southeastern Massachusetts?

Well the short answer is, not much except for the new book

written by one of UMass Dartmouth's professors, Anthony Arrigo. The book called *Imaging Hoover Dam: The Making of a Cultural Icon*, currently available wherever books are sold, explores this iconic project through its images from well before it began through when it had completed and beyond. Including photos of the dam and its workers as the project progressed, as well as drawings of the dam the book in part explores the government's use of these images as propaganda. Professor Arrigo explained to me though that it looks at more uses of these images than just as propaganda, "...from how farmers used it as promotional material through to how the dam was used for advertising everything from whiskey, to cars, to cigarettes."



*Written by UMass
Professor and
Writer Anthony
Arrigo.*

Don't be fooled though, this book is for more than just academics and history buffs. According to Professor Arrigo, "I talk about American history and religion, and religious influences on how Americans have traditionally felt about nature. I also talk a lot about environmental issues and how the environment is represented both in photos and how people talked about and viewed the environment at the time...I talk about representations of women and minorities, I talk about

American labor and how it was being squeezed out by machinery.”

Who knew that in exploring the history of the Hoover Dam one could stumble upon so many different, but important policy areas and arguments that are still being had to this day? And to think that Professor Arrigo stumbled upon this topic through chance, after all he told me that it was after someone remarking about the dam to him while on vacation that he decided to do some research and that the book organically grew out from that.

Professor Arrigo specializes in rhetoric with a focus on cultural themes and visual theory themes, and as such he wrote the book considering its applications for the still evolving field of visual rhetoric. And Professor Arrigo feels very confident about his book's contribution to academia, stating that explores a history of the dam not many are familiar with in a new, unique, and compelling way.

As a political science student one of the aspects that most interested me was the propaganda aspect so when I asked Professor Arrigo to tell me more he told me, “The Bureau of Reclamation had professional photographers who would be sent out to photograph the dam, and then later the government would distribute them to newspapers, but in that process they would pick which items they wanted people to see and which they didn't want people to see.”

Professor Arrigo then went on talking about how women were never photographed near machinery, and how photos documenting the various accidents at the dam were never released as some of the many examples of government censorship and the propagandistic purposes behind images taken of the dam.

All and all it sounded like a very interesting read, and I might consider picking it up myself, although if I do it'll definitely be as a rental. Nonetheless I recommend that you

check it out for yourself and see if it's something you're interested in.

An opinion on Thanksgiving and Black Friday

Here in New England and especially Massachusetts we have a closer relationship to the holiday than most others do.

As a kid I didn't particularly like Thanksgiving. I was a picky eater, so naturally I hated almost everything put in front of me, and the only part of it I remember really enjoying was the time I got to spend with my older cousin. As I got older it just got better, especially after I went off to college for the first time. Absence makes the heart grow fonder and all that, plus after eating nothing but food prepared by the university's dining services it was heavenly to taste something different and better for a change.

Now Thanksgiving is my favorite holiday, due to the excitement of Christmas fading as I became older. Whereas it used to be I couldn't wait to get my presents, now I can't wait to get that delicious grub my dad makes.

Here in New England and especially Massachusetts, we have a closer relationship to the holiday than most others do. When people think of Thanksgiving their minds typically go to Plymouth Rock and the pilgrims who landed there as the prime example of the first Thanksgiving. It's an integral part of both our history and our culture.

That's why I get so puzzled when I hear about stores opening

on Thanksgiving, and people missing out on dinner because they have to work or even worse because they decided to line up for “outrageously good” deals. It seems to me almost akin to something sacrilegious to have missed Thanksgiving with one’s family. As a frugal person I understand and appreciate the need and urge to find better deals on items, but to amass in giant hordes and trample others is confusing and surprising to me.

The deals one might find on Black Friday may not necessarily be that great either, depending on the item and location, so why do it? If it’s saving money, well-ordering on the internet from home will save you gas, time, and the trouble of the crowds plus there are about as many great deals to be found there as in reality. The only good reason I could think to physically go to these stores is perhaps to try clothing items on, or perhaps to be assured that what you’re buying is “as advertised”. As to businesses keeping open I can at least understand that, as repugnant and displeasing as I find it, they want to make money and this event is a way for them to do so.

People often underestimate or forget the importance of Thanksgiving, reducing it to little more than a speed bump between Halloween and Christmas. Although when the media hypes Christmas season sales as a key predictor of how our economy is doing, and with Christmas themed advertising seemingly starting earlier and earlier it’s easy to see why people forget Thanksgiving. Thanksgiving though, in my opinion, is a day to be grateful for what you have and to share a good meal alongside those closest to you.

So try to enjoy it and the long weekend that follows this year. There are a lot of historic sites in this region which could make for a particularly interesting day trip like Plymouth Rock which I mentioned earlier, and at the least, this time of year opens a good opportunity to educate yourselves and your children about the history of the state we

call home.

The Drone Database and UMass Dartmouth



What are your thoughts on the use of drones?

To us citizens of southeastern Massachusetts, drone strikes couldn't be farther from our minds and who could really blame us? It's rare that I see an article on CNN or USAToday or a piece on the nightly news talking about drones. Usually we only see these stories when they involve either a horrible tragedy for our soldiers or the civilians of the foreign nation we're conducting the strikes in, or alternatively when we hit an important target.

However those who work on the UMass Drone Database, or the Center for the Study of Targeted Killing as it's now known,

see these stories every day. I myself worked on the project last year as my Federal Work Study job. Even now I can remember the numerous hours spent scanning news articles, some from sites I knew like CNN, but most were from obscure news sites I'd never heard of based overseas in the very countries these strikes were happening in. And I would do this, recording information, and later editing the entries written by my peers for attack after attack.

At first I remember being surprised at how many drone strikes were conducted in so many countries, but the more I really thought about it the more the surprise wore off. With this work, even when there were articles about civilians being hit, it was hard to be invested, simply because after a while it all becomes just numbers on a screen. Only now as I look back on my experience can I see how wrong that perception is.

According to their website, which if the subject piques your interest you can access here: <http://www.targetedkilling.org/>, the objective of the project is to, "document all cases of cross-border incidents including targeted killings, capture operations, and other forms of aggression committed by states against non-state actors that occur outside of armed conflicts."



*The MQ-9 Reaper
Unmanned Aerial
Vehicle.*

Since its creation the site has been the subject of several articles as well as books, and it has been cited by countless

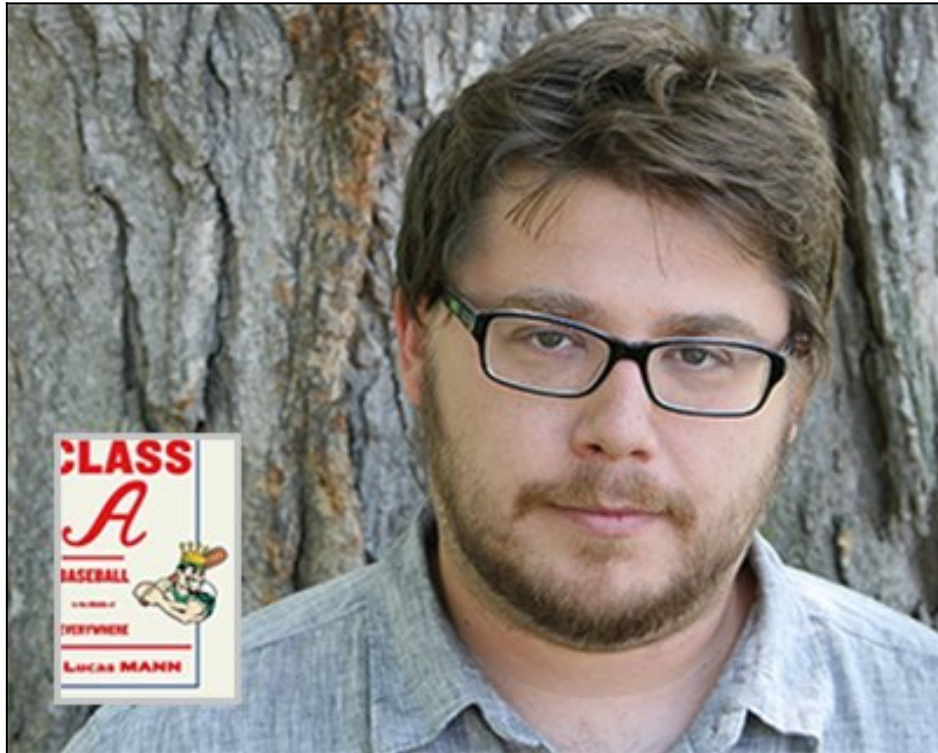
others. According to Avery Plaw, one of the UMass Dartmouth political science professors who founded and remains involved in the project, “I was just at Boston College giving a talk this past week and the hosts were saying that they really think the database is by far the strongest, because it’s the most comprehensive and rigorous than other data sources.”

And of course, if you bother to take a look at the site you’ll see that this is no lie. Not only does it provide a full numerical summary of all the data, but also a written summary of the event pulling information from news sources which are also listed. It’s very precise and I remember being instructed by Carlos Colon, a UMass Dartmouth undergraduate student and one of the key members of the project, about the intricacies of how to record data. Everything had to be just so, listing targets as suspected militants, civilians, or unknown depending on what the news article said.

The use of drones is one of the most important policy issues facing our nation today, and though we are far from where these tools are being used there is interesting work being done at UMass Dartmouth involving them. I know my views today have been formed as a result of my work with the database, and I think that all the founders of the site deserve credit for bringing light to an area most people would like to forget about and leave alone.

An Interview with UMass

Dartmouth Professor and Author Lucas Mann



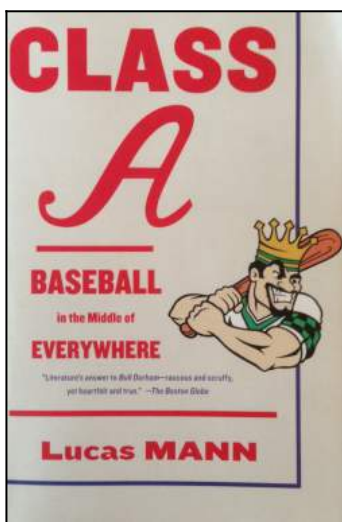
Professor Lucas Mann, author of Class A: Baseball in the Middle of Everywhere and an upcoming book called Lord Fear: A Memoir (Lucas Mann Facebook)

This past week I sat down with Professor Lucas Mann, author of Class A: Baseball in the Middle of Everywhere and an upcoming book that should be out around May 12th of next year called Lord Fear: A Memoir. Professor Mann went to Dasser College in New York, where he played baseball for a brief period before becoming an English major, eventually going on to earn his MFA at the University of Iowa which is where the work on Class A began.

“The research process was really exhausting,” Mann said upon being asked about writing Class A, “I would go to this little town just an hour away from the university and I would just sort of drive and keep returning to this little town and keep

showing up to these games, sitting in the bleachers and bugging people for interviews. And by the time I would be done, it would be so late at night that I had to ask people if I could crash on their couch, and it just felt like I was flying by the seat of my pants.”

When asked to summarize the book Mann said that, “I hope that it’s about people struggling to find meaning in their lives, which I think all books should be about, but also using baseball as a vehicle to talk about difficult economic conditions, difficult personal decisions, and how people can buy into an idea and try to find meaning through that.”



*Lucas Mann's
first book
available online
and in book
stores. (Lucas
Mann Facebook)*

And this theme of people finding meaning through something as inconsequential as baseball is so important to the central point of his book that he reiterated it when talking about why this book would be appealing to an audience outside of baseball fans. It was surprising when he told me that ESPN and several sports writers had panned his book giving responses that it failed to capture the joy of baseball, but as he

explained, "It wasn't written purely for baseball people...the way people relate to baseball, and the way the characters in this book relate to baseball, you can substitute just about anything."

This book as with all good media is meant to present identifiable characters and through their struggles allow the audience to relate with their own struggles. It creates a sense of comradery and even hope, for example that if these people could get through this difficult thing then so can I.

"What I hope that people care about is that they like the writing," he said, "That they're moved by it, and that there's something resonant about finding your own humanity and emotions in someone else's life rather than your own."

Lord Fear however, is a much different book then Class A. In it Professor Mann explores the brief life of his troubled brother through the eyes and experiences of those who knew him.

"Originally the book looked really journalistic as more of a collection of interviews," Mann said speaking about Lord Fear, "With this book I let it get weird and more novelistic. I rewrote interviews as third person scenes, all the while weaving my own story into these scenes."

To aspiring writers he gives the following advice, "Embrace how difficult it is...whatever is, whether its nonfiction or fiction, you're throwing yourself out into the unknown with everything you write and there isn't a shortcut... the moment you are just like I want to know what happens and see where this will go. That is difficult, but it gives you the freedom that I think you need."

As a writer I can't agree more with these words. I know that whenever I write something for an article or a class, it is hard and I do sometimes have to push myself in order to get it done, although this lesson I learned the hard way. After

reading the free chapter on the Barnes and Noble site though, I'm intrigued and next time I'm down at my local library I'll probably be checking Class A out and I sincerely recommend you do the same both with Class A and Lord Fear.

UMass Dartmouth's Pet Project: My Opinion on Transform 2020



What ideas do you have for improvements at UMass Dartmouth? (Nick Roppolo/UMass Facebook)

Earlier this year I wrote about how I believe that the campus up here at UMass Dartmouth is better looking than most people give it credit for, but my opinion on that didn't mean that there was no room for improvement. After all the food isn't

the best, and security has always been somewhat laughable even though I myself have never felt particularly unsafe here. I mention this because seemingly all semester long I've been seeing the results of many recent improvements by the university as well as hearing about their big Transform 2020 initiative.

One such improvement is a recent massive renovation of the university's steam pipes, which had created a mountain of dirt in the middle of campus. In recent years the pipes, which are used to control the temperature inside the buildings, had been leaking and thus reducing their efficiency. Other projects include installing Wi-Fi and new security cameras in the dorm buildings as well as resurfacing the Elmwood dorm's road and installing a nice fountain I now pass every day. The sight of the few flowers and the water bubbling over the rocks added a little extra something to my walk to and from classes.

In addition to these improvements UMass Dartmouth plans to initialize several other future renovations and goals as a part of the Transform 2020 project. Ultimately the university's goal is to become recognized as a premier research university. Theoretically this could have both a lot of benefits, for example such prestige would attract more students to the area and both the college and the immediate area would certainly benefit economically. This sort of prestige may also attract higher quality professors and benefit the student body as a whole. Now in order to achieve this goal the university has a specific requirement to fulfill, namely awarding over 20 doctoral degrees (excluding professional practice degrees like an MD or a JD).

Of course the Transform 2020 project includes much more than just a more increased focus on research, although that is the primary focus of the plan. In addition to more research UMass Dartmouth plans to continue building, renovating, and in general improving the buildings and facilities on campus. Some of these improvements I've already mentioned, others include

the renovation of classrooms and research labs as well as other various maintenance projects.

The university has planned this project meticulously through a Strategic Planning Committee, along with several work groups and task forces comprised of a mix of students, alumni, professors, and of course administration members. Additionally, UMass Dartmouth has already invested hundreds of thousands of dollars funded by donations, certain fees, and of course money from the state into this project and according to the university's strategic plan that number is only going to increase as the project continues.

If everything continues as planned then Transform 2020 should be completed in about 6 years from now, however I remain hopefully skeptical about this due in part to its size and scope. I hope that everything will be completed in the exact amount of time that the administration has promised, but past experiences lead me to think that a few years down the line the project name will be changed to Transform 2024. Either way once it's completed I'm sure that Dartmouth, the university, and many of the surrounding communities will benefit from this.

The Votes are in, so what happens now?



The third question concerned gambling or rather prohibiting gambling.

On November 4th, residents from all over Massachusetts turned out and voted in many statewide and local races. One especially notable result of this election has made Charlie Baker, a Republican, the new state governor. Baker had surprised many in recent days when polls showed the race between him and Coakley tightening, and even him pulling a bit ahead of his Democratic opponent. As to what is next none can say for sure, although we can surely expect that Baker will attempt to make good on his past promise of making the government more efficient.

Additionally residents voted on four statewide ballot initiatives. The first was the repeal of indexing on the gas tax, which adjusted the tax to inflation perpetually. Of course it passed surprising no one, although what was surprising was how close the race was at about 53 for repeal and 47 opposed. What this result means is that the gas tax no longer increases automatically, and the gas tax remains in effect at its current value. Charlie Baker, our new governor-elect, had previously stood out against indexing on the gas tax so it is possible that future action to raise this tax may

be hindered by his administration.

Another of the measures that was voted upon was the expansion of the Bottle Bill, which failed. This initiative sought to expand the 5 cent deposit already paid on most soda bottles and cans to other bottled and canned drinks such as water and Gatorade. Additionally the 5 cent deposit on drinks would be indexed, meaning that it would increase to match changes in the consumer price index. Even with the failure of this expansion though, the current 5 cent deposit on soda bottles and cans remains in effect. If my time with the MassPIRG activists on campus is any inkling however, I don't expect that supporters will give up anytime soon and are sure to try again.

The third question concerned gambling or rather prohibiting gambling. The actual measure if passed would have kept our state's gaming commission from issuing licenses to casinos and other gaming establishments. Additionally it would have canceled out any such licenses issued before the law's passage, however ultimately this measure failed as well. Massachusetts gaming laws are unchanged, which clears the way for the casinos that had sought to be built in our state.

Question 4, the last of the statewide ballot initiatives, sought to give earned sick time to workers. Depending of course on the size of the business, workers earn and can use up to 40 hours of paid or unpaid sick time. Since it has passed, starting July 1st of next year people who are employed will begin earning 1 hour of sick time per 30 hours of work, and yes those hours do carry over from year to year, however they cannot exceed 40 total hours. Again this is notable because Charlie Baker had made it well known over the course of his campaign that he was for earned sick time, but under much stricter conditions. Namely the conditions of the law make it so that only employees working for businesses with ten or fewer employees qualify for unpaid, rather than paid leave. Baker is on record for wanting businesses with up to a maximum

of 49 employees to have their workers sick time be unpaid time. So whether or not he can or will use his new powers as governor to change or nullify this legislation is in question.

So now hopefully you have some idea of the effects of these ballot initiatives and what they will or will not do in the near future. As to what effects these decisions will have on statewide issues like the economy, infrastructure, and recycling, well we'll have to wait and see. Whatever the case though, if your unsatisfied with the results there's always the next election cycle just around the corner.

UMass Dartmouth Students Discuss Importance of Voting



Do you feel your vote genuinely makes a difference?

When it comes to voting, I've found over the course of my life so far, that people tend to have a special relationship with voting. They think it's important enough to encourage people to do it and yet when it comes to voting themselves most people don't want to be bothered with it. One UMass Dartmouth student and business major Harrison DoAmaral best summed this feeling up when he said, "I don't care about voting because the decisions are going to be made by other people regardless of what I do."

Now I'll freely admit that Harrison has every right to feel disenfranchised, with national elections the electorate is much bigger and therefore individuals are more likely to feel their views are unimportant compared to the masses. This is especially true if you're a Republican or share conservative views and you live in a state like Massachusetts, which is a staunchly Democrat state. Though when it comes to midterms and local elections, it's puzzling to me why people seem less likely to participate.



Sums up how many Americans feel today.

In a statewide or local election, the electorate is smaller and so the individual should have more of a say or at least they should think that they do. You don't have to be a political scientist to come to that sort of conclusion anyway, but the logic of it is just one part of a bigger whole.

"I'm going to do it because I feel it's my civic duty," another UMass Dartmouth student, Kevin Palmer said upon being asked why he plans to vote in the upcoming election. And

indeed the more people I asked this week about voting, the more I found who after saying that they'd vote claimed it was due to a civil duty.

When I voted for the first time I also did so both because I felt that it was my civic obligation to do so, but also because I was curious about the process itself. As I entered my elementary school's cafeteria/auditorium I felt very nervous, a sense of anxiousness that continued as I filled out the slip. Everything had to be perfect, or so I felt. And afterwards when I handed the sheet into the people responsible for collection, I felt so exhilarated. I don't know if it was because my anxiety over the ballot being filled out perfectly had disappeared, or whether it was the sense of accomplishment that comes with any "first", but I had truly enjoyed voting.

Another reason that people don't vote, which I hadn't really considered involves knowledge. UMass Dartmouth student Andrew McCarthy pointed out in a brief interview that, "I don't know anything about the people who are running or the issues...I just don't have time to look into it either."

I have to admit that's a good reason not to vote. If you aren't well informed and don't have the opportunity to learn about the issues, it's somewhat admirable that someone like Andrew would rather not vote than make a misinformed vote. Although, I would still recommend people do whatever they can to inform themselves about the issues and candidates so that they can vote "correctly."



*There are many reasons
to vote in this*

election.

One thing that uninformed voters should consider is voting by party. Candidates of the same party typically hold similar stances on political issues, so looking at the stances that the various political parties have on the issues is potentially a better and quicker way of helping to decide who to vote for. You simply pick the party that aligns closest to your views and select all members of that party on the ballot. Information on the Massachusetts Democratic Party can be found [here](#) and information on the state Republican Party can be found [here](#).

And the reasons to vote in this election cycle are many. Firstly there are various local races, and a gubernatorial election that in recent weeks has become much more competitive with Republican candidate Charlie Baker edging out a small lead in the polls. Then there are the various ballot initiatives, one of which would repeal automatic indexing on the gas tax and another that would expand the Bottle Bill. Whether or not you vote in this election, we will all have to live with its effects for the foreseeable future, and for me at least having some say in that is enough reason to go to the polls on November 4th.
