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Sharpe Announced as Faculty Model Reader

VICTORIA HOCK ('23)

Houghton College has once again held a Faculty Model Reader contest, voted on by the Houghton students. This was the third year for the contest. This year, Professor of English Jesse Sharpe has been selected as the winner, and The STAR recently sat down with him for an interview:

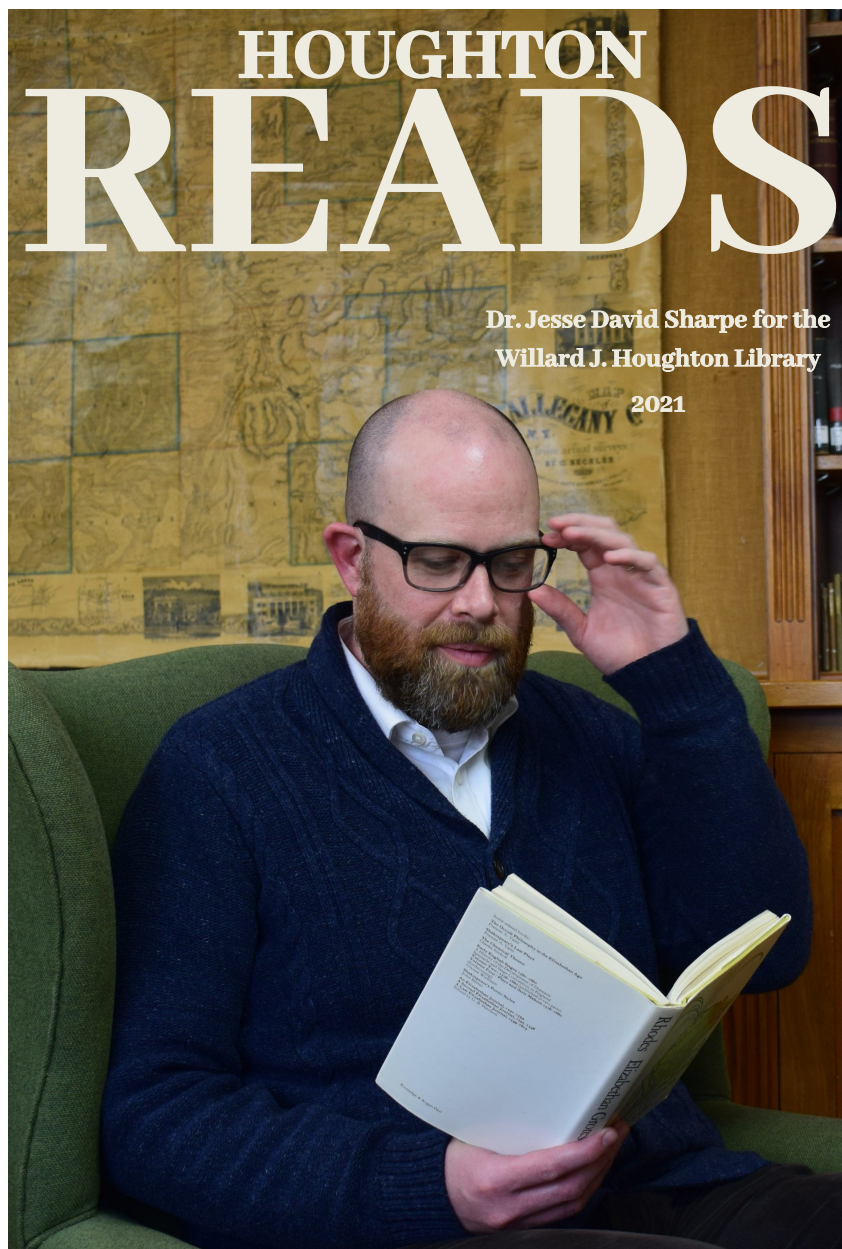
Hock: What have been some of the highlights of your Houghton experience thus far?

Sharpe: The in-class conversations. I've had some situations at other schools where it was like pulling teeth to get students to have a conversation, but here the conversations have been a lot of fun, with good insights.

Hock: What is your favorite thing about teaching?

Sharpe: Learning, which is why I love the conversations so much.

Hock: Why did you choose the English field?



2021 Faculty Model Reader poster, featuring professor Jesse Sharpe.

COURTESY OF WILLARD J. HOUGHTON LIBRARY

Sharpe: I love stories, storytelling and language, and this has both, so it's where I'm happiest.

Hock: What would you say to someone who is thinking about pursuing a degree in English?

Sharpe: Do it! You won't regret it. There's not a job out there that doesn't need you to read well, understand well, and write well.

Hock: What is your favorite book genre (or genres)?

Sharpe: I don't actually have one. There's not one I've come across that I didn't like. I really enjoy reading and I really enjoy book recommendations.

Hock: Who are some of your favorite authors?

Sharpe: Christopher Morley, Dashiell Hammett, John Donne, George Herbert, Aemelia Lanter, Mat Johnson, Douglas Dunn, and Kate Atkinson.

Hock: What are some of your all-time favorite books?

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Despite Difficulties, Spring Sports Deemed Success

VANESSA BRAY ('21)

Houghton's athletic department has had to make several adjustments for this unique sports season. From mandating masks for both games and practices, to routine COVID tests for all student athletes, coaches, and staff, Houghton athletics has had to adapt accordingly. Athletics Director, Matthew Webb, discussed some of the differences this season has brought. One of the main differences has been that all sports, including those which would traditionally be in the fall or winter seasons, are being held in the spring. Webb explained, "Basically, we are doing all of our

sports. Where we typically would do them in August through May, now we're doing all of our teams in March, April, and May. So, that's been a little challenging."

According to Webb, one of the biggest difficulties has been the balancing act for dual athletes. "In a normal year..." says Webb, "if you're a fall sport athlete and a spring sport athlete

that's pretty manageable. This year, because we're doing all of our sports in the spring, for those athletes that play for two teams, that has become much harder to balance and manage. There are some cases where a small handful of our student athletes are playing a lot of games in a short period of time...that's a burden that isn't easy to manage."

To help mitigate this challenge, coaches have made an effort to work with and support athletes involved in dual sports. Allowances and accommodations have also been made for those who have needed to prioritize their academics and take brief hiatuses from athletics. "Trying to meet the needs of the students in terms of what they need relative to their academics is something our

coaches have been really good about," says Webb.

All dual student athletes were given the option at the beginning of the season to participate in both of their usual sports or opt out of one. Dual athlete, Nathaniel Zedomi ('21), who has taken part in both men's soccer and track since freshman year, had to make the difficult decision to opt out of soccer this season. "Especially since I'm graduating, I'm bummed that I couldn't do soccer this year..." says Zedomi, "but if I want to be really good at track right now, having played a soccer game the day before I go to run our meet is probably not a good idea. So, I had to pick one...that was super hard."

Other challenges student athletes are consistently facing have been the anxiety of receiving a positive COVID test result, having to undergo quarantine (resulting in a week's worth of missed practice), or accumulating

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14th ANNUAL FILM FEST ON APRIL 16th

VICTORIA HOCK ('21)

On Friday, April 16th, the Houghton College Campus Activities Board will be hosting the 14th annual Film Festival. Guidelines for the festival state that this is “an evening” to “highlight and celebrate the best of student-made films” as well as for students to “show your hard work and to share your talent with your peers”. There are also several different categories that students can submit films to.

Sarah Phillips ('22), this year's coordinator for the Film Festival, said that her first time attending a Film Festival was “a great experience” also discussing that some of the elements that were involved in the festival included “a red carpet and a backdrop to take fun pictures with, and music playing in the background.” Phillips also added that “It was amazing seeing all of the creative videos that people sent in.” For the Film Festival this year, Phillips wants to “bring back some of that feeling”, while still keeping the event COVID-safe.

Makena James ('22), who is learning remotely

this semester, is one of the entrants in this year's Film Festival. She submitted “about three films.” Two of them were about Corgi, her family's Corgi, while the third one was “a compilation of photos set to organ music” that she “played and recorded.”

James chose to submit a film about her family's Corgi because “it has been a blast” to spend “a lot of time” with Corgi, also adding that “everyone just seems to fall in love with her, and I really wanted to show love to my Houghton community by sharing and extending my experiences with Corgi to them too.” In discussing her choice to submit the third film, James said “I love snow and the organ. Back in 2017, it snowed a ton down here in Western NC, and I took a lot of pictures. I found them again last Christmas and decided to put them to organ music.”

Overall, while the festival may not be as “big” as previous years, Phillips is “looking forward to seeing people's creativity and for there to be a time for others to come together and listen to music, take pictures, and have fun.”★

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Sharpe: *The Man Who Made Friend With Himself* by Christopher Morley, *Red Harvest* by Dashiell Hammet, *The Temple* by George Herbert, *Life After Life* by Kate Atkinson, *Bal-lad of Peckham Rye* by Muriel Spark, *Go Tell It On The Mountain* by James Baldwin, *Pym* by Mat Johnson, and *Affections* by Rodrigo Hasbun.

Hock: Are you currently reading any books?

Sharpe: There is a book that I am saving for when summer begins: *Shuggie Bain* by Douglas Stuart.

Hock: What would you say is the best thing about books?

Sharpe: I only do

physical books, and it's because I love every single part of them—front cover to back, every part of the inside, as a story and as an object.

Hock: What would you say is the best thing about the library?

Sharpe: I used to be a librarian, so I have a very strong love of libraries. I think it's that you can have the world's ideas sit peacefully side by side and you can just go and read and see whatever you want. No violence, no judgement, everything is right there. And I never get tired of it, I love it. I don't think there's such a thing as a bad library (at least I've never found one yet). ★



Houghton's men's soccer team celebrates on the field at a recent game.

COURTESY OF JASON MUCHER

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ing enough COVID violations to result in being kicked off their respective teams.

The anxiety surrounding each week of testing has stirred uncertainty in the athlete's opportunities to compete. Zedomi explains, “...if someone tests positive then we have a handicap on our team...you are always kind of on edge because you just never know. Every week we're not sure if we are going to be able to compete that weekend...we're kind of training and hoping that we can...but there is lots of anxiety around COVID testing...”

Equally challenging has been adjusting to shorter practice slots, fewer games, and the absence of fans. Senior field hockey player Hannah Daniels ('21) comments that, “One of the most difficult things to adjust to is the lack of games we have this season...we usually play around 18 games a season, but this season we're only getting 5. It's disappointing not to play as many games as usual, especially since this is my last season...”

Despite these disappointments, both Zedomi and Daniels expressed their gratitude for being able to compete again. “It's frustrating, but we're just happy that we can...” says Zedomi. “I am very grateful that I have a season,” says Daniels, “and for every chance I

get to step onto the field.” Although both Zedomi and Daniels have had less opportunities to compete their teams have had good results.

Given the unique circumstances, Webb credits this season as a success. “We haven't finished yet for everybody, but for the most part it's been pretty successful. We're still competing and we're getting into playoffs for some of our teams...Some of our teams have done really well, some have struggled a little bit...Overall, it's been a successful spring. As a department, we sort of redefined success a little bit this year because of COVID, and one of our definitions of success was making it through the spring.”

Since most of the DIII conferences in New York state did not have conference seasons, Houghton's ability to take part in a fuller conference season has been a morale booster.

“Our athletes and coaches have been great,” says Webb, “Not that there aren't moments that are frustrating, but our perspective has been all along that we need to do whatever we have to do to compete again. We want to compete. The athletes, coaches, they just wanted to compete. If it means we have to wear masks all the time, we'll wear masks all the time. If it means we have to test, we'll test...our perspective was it was important to get back to competing and having a little of that routine again in terms of what we are used to and for many of the athletes the thing they love the most. They've done great. They've responded really well...We've had some bumps and hurdles along the way. We've had to cancel a game

here and there...but for the most part they're doing great and our vast amount of negative test results I think is a testament to how well we've done.”

Since New York state restrictions on spectating outdoor sports events has loosened, Webb encourages students to look out for the registration sign-up emails sent out each week and come support the teams as this unique season comes to an end!★

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(Please note a Houghton College Google account will be needed to open the form, but no addresses will be collected)

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Interested in Contributing to the STAR?

Just email us at star@houghton.edu! Contributing to the paper can be a great way to get experience in media and journalism or just with expressing your ideas, and as a way to be involved with the latest goings-on on campus. Even if you want to be involved but don't feel confident in your writing abilities, get in touch! Our editors can work with you to give advice and help get your piece polished up!

Fragile Confidence

BY CASSIE CAVELL

How many ways can the same thing be said? We are all overly aware that the only certainty right now is uncertainty.

While changes—some regression and some progress—and revolutionary steps have been taken to bring this broken world back together, in a way it seems like divisive identities are in a standstill.

Author and high school teacher, Bernard Beckett, once said, “Human spirit is the ability to face the uncertainty of the future with curiosity and optimism. It is the belief that problems can be solved, differences resolved. It is a type of confidence. And it is fragile. It can be blackened by fear and superstition.” I chose to center my writing around this wise quote because by our core humanity we are resilient and through Christ we are overcomers. To be grounded, truly rooted, and firmly planted are common analogies for the steadfast nature that we cannot fully come to understand outside of Christ. With this core and foundation, it is much easier to be open minded to the controversial topics that you are approached with at

our campus and much more broadly outside of the bubble of Houghton.

First, I love the inclusive nature implied by “human spirit.” The truth is we are all in this together, and yet we might be tempted to take out frustrations on each other and blame the other side. The division that came with the uncertainty of the recent political elections, Black Lives Matter movements, LGBTQ+, and anti-Asian violence still has not subsided. We cannot solve the problems of the world, the country, or even the entire Houghton community

“We cannot solve the problems of the world, the country, or even the entire Houghton community without stepping back and making some major self-reflections.”

without stepping back and making some major self-reflections. When having discussions and asking questions regarding the issues at hand, it should be out of a loving curiosity, rather than a hurtful joke, spiteful rumors, or ignorant discourse.

Curiosity is not wrong and I think change is something that specifically draws

“When there are so many influences screaming at us to take an identity and choose a side, one of the biggest superstitions is that identity or belief has to be antagonistic toward others who do not agree.”

attention and even elicits questions. President Mullen has done a beautiful job addressing some specific questions and brought attention to the nature of questions. I might have gen-

that we were able to share what was resting in the depths of our souls. The passionate, personal convictions of these topics is both a blessing and a curse to many, but if we believe problems can be solved we must act in accordance to this. In a tone of humility, we will not win the argument, but achieve a deeper understanding of our brothers and sisters in Christ. These differences can be resolved but we cannot be divisive.

Something else that I hope resonates through this quote is Beckett’s oxymoron found in the description of “fragile confidence.” Seeing the fragile nature of confidence exemplifies how fickle the human state of confidence is and how easily it can be overwhelmed by unjustified fear. Fragile is a synonym for weakness and confidence (in my own words) is strengthened belief often rooted in an ability or identity. When there are so many influences screaming at us to take an identity and choose a side, one of the biggest superstitions is that identity or belief has to be antagonistic toward others who do not agree. Is your confidence fragile because it is not rooted in Christ the only sure foundation? About self confidence, you can absorb the love that Christ has for

you because “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear” (1 John 4:18 NKJV). As for confidence in an identity, I would urge you to ponder how an earthly affiliation or opposition to any movement gives us the right to antagonize, attack, hate, or hurt others. John follows verse 18 and closes the chapter with this powerful statement. “If someone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?” (1 John 4:20 NKJV)

We live in a fragmented and fragile world, but your heart is the only thing you can control. If “human spirit” can propel a sense of hope for resolution in these movements and divisions, how much more can we allow the Holy Spirit to drive our love for those around us from all identities and affiliations? I do hold beliefs that I am confident in and I am aware that these beliefs do not always unify me with people, but my greatest identity and most important belief is in Christ who is not fragile, fickle or failing. Thus, my confidence and optimism relies on His power that He bestows to each of us to stomp out the popular superstition that my disagreements with someone must result in making them an enemy. The only result of this thinking is a justification to mistreat and hate each other.

Cassie is a sophomore majoring in Exercise Science with a minor in Psychology.

Have an opinion you want to share?

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Letters to the editor should be 250 words or less

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Christian Political Engagement

What is Government?

DAVID BOWERS

In this column, I've been talking a lot about the government, as you'd expect from a column about Christian political engagement. But I haven't actually talked about what the government is. That's the task of today's article: to determine what the government is in a democratic society, and to flesh out the implications of this for interpreting biblical passages about the government. This discussion, more than others in this series, will be open-ended; this is an area I'm still working on, and I'm not trying to be didactic.

Some of the most obvious places to turn in the Bible when trying to figure out what the government should include: the accounts of the early Christians' engagement with the authorities as recorded in Acts, Peter and Paul's instructions about political engagement in their epistles, and Old Testament law. But in the New Testament, the government was a clearly-defined entity: those Emperor out in Rome and his minions. In the Old Testament, there really wasn't a government as we think of it. As a theocratic tribal society, there were priests who mediated between God and God's people, and judges who arbitrated disputes. How do we apply principles of government for theocracies and autocracies to modern democratic nation-states? To whom do biblical principles of government apply today?

One answer would be something like "they apply to the politicians and the institutions in which they operate," such as America's federal, state, and local governments. But in America (and many other nations) politicians and government institutions answer to the people. In a sense, American government is the people, the people are the government, and the institution we commonly call "the government" is a just tool that the people use to accomplish their goals. So do biblical principles of government apply to the people or to the institution?

I suspect that how we answer this question underlies many of the political disagreements within the Western Church today. I think Christians who are politically progressive operate as though the institutions of government are simply a tool in the hand of the people, who are the real government. Therefore, they think they are justified in using the government to accomplish the aspects of the Christian mission with which they most resonate: the social aspects, ministry to the poor and marginalized.

On the other hand, I think Christians who are politically conservative operate as though the government is the institutions and politicians, separate from the people. They do not see the government as a tool for accomplishing the social aspects of the Christian mission. They tend to see the government as a threat to both the social and the spiritual aspects of the

Christian mission. Since they identify government with the institutions and not with the people, the government cannot legitimately be used to do the things Christians in general are called to do. They read biblical principles of government (like Paul's teaching that authorities are "God's servants for your good" in Rom. 13:4) in a much more restrictive way than do progressive Christians.

This intersection between biblical principles and secular political science is tricky to navigate. There are strengths and weaknesses for both perspectives. For the progressives, it's true that the people are the government in a democracy (or a republic, for the sticklers out there). However, if this is where our exegetical efforts end, that would seem to naturally justify using the institutions of government for the spiritual, evangelistic aspects of the Christian mission as well as the social aspects, and I'm sure none of us want the government going there.

For the conservatives, it's true that the institutions of government are composed of fallen humans, and since those institutions are vested with significant power, there is significant opportunity for abuse. It's wise to restrict those opportunities by keeping the role of the government in daily life limited. However, I don't think it's wise to ignore the fact that political decisions in a democracy are made, finally, by the people, and that the Christians among the people ought to vote according to what will advance the Christian mission most, even if that means embracing a more social vision of the uses of government.

I hope, if nothing else, this piece has opened up for you a vision of the complexity of Christian political engagement, and helped you better understand how a person could reach different conclusions than you have. If you have thoughts about the questions I've raised in this article, please don't hesitate to write me privately at david.bowers21@houghton.edu, or to write a letter to the editor at alexander.dearmore22@houghton.edu.

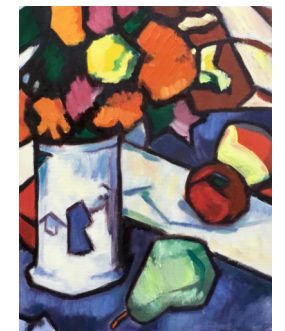
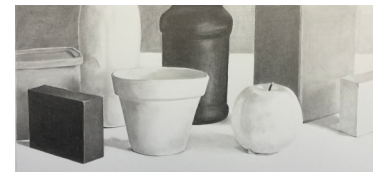
Sudoku Solution from the 4/09 issue!

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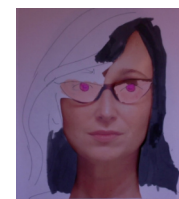
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Artist of the Week

Casey Sharpe



About the Artist



Casey Colombo Sharpe (pictured left in a self-portrait) is a junior completing her BFA in studio art. Her interest is in language, but art is somehow more marketable.