

WORD

SPRING 2021 ISLA VISTA ARTS & CULTURE MAGAZINE



ISSUE 43

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THE RESILIENCE ISSUE

Dear WORD Readers,

I've had my fair share of houseplant fails. The stories of their demise all sound something like this: at the beginning of the year, I convince myself I need to fill the small corner of my dwelling with as much greenery as possible. (You know, you've been there.) Then things start slipping through the cracks, life goes awry, and, well, leaves begin to brown and die.

But then came Flo. She's an English ivy that somehow beats the odds of my dysfunctional plant tending. Flo entered my withering collection as a three-inch baby, and now she's doubled in size. If I'm being honest, it's shocking that she remains alive through inconsistent watering amid dry spells. Not long ago, Flo lost her stem rigidity for weeks. Despite frantic attempts at resuscitation, her limp leaves dangled from the edges of the pot.

By some miracle, though, Flo made it out stronger and greener—and she does it again and again. Her roots cling to the last fragments of life knowing that the next bits of sunshine and water will do the trick. Resilience shines through even in the most primal of organisms.

And as the days get longer and the sun comes out to play, remember that your leaves are ready to reach for warm rays too. They're thirsty for drops of liquid gold, no matter how many times you may have been told otherwise. Like improbable Flo, you deserve it all. So take it in.

In these very pages, WORDies have poured their talents into capturing the slow and steady resilience of Isla Vista amidst the uncertainty of the world. Revival isn't on its way, it's already here. Hope springs eternal.

Editor-In-Chief



Janet Wang

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UC SANTA BARBARA



Cover Art Illustration // Dylan Lasher

BANDS THAT
QUARANTINE
TOGETHER.

IV BANDS IN LIMBO



IT'S SUNSET AND A WARM BREEZE

blows down DP from Devereux. You reach to plug in your guitar as the sky shifts from pink to orange over the cliffs. Rich starts up on the drums and Elena lays down a bassline. It's a mellow groove. You pick out a melody as you look up at the stars just beginning to show in the sky. Sunset-goers drift by—a few stop to listen just outside the fence. It's nothing like the shows in IV used to be, but these days people are so starved for live music, they'll happily stop to watch a band jam in their front yard.

That's what it's been like for my band during the pandemic. We meet in our rhythm guitarist David's front yard every week or so to practice. With the help of an extension cord and a handful of masks, we can still safely do what we love most. Although live shows are essentially dead, we've still been able to play together, record a music video, and flesh out ideas for a future EP. So I wondered—what have other IV bands been up to during COVID, and what keeps us playing even when there's no audience to play to?

I talked to Art Official, another IV band who has stayed active during the pandemic. They've played multiple live streams—including a virtual festival—and even dropped a live album recorded at a pre-pandemic house show. Of course, it doesn't hurt that they live together. Jacob Pablan, Scott Marino, Kaio Miatti, and Aran Mazariegos all managed to squeeze into one Zoom screen, cradling cups of tea and sitting shoulder to shoulder on their living room couch, to chat with me about what it's been like staying together as a band during COVID.

"Want to jam today?" is like the most asked question of the house," Jacob explained. Their garage functions as the

band's practice space and most days end in abandoning studying for an impromptu jam sesh. Aran dove into a story that encapsulates the band's dynamic during COVID: Kaio was practicing drums alone in the garage when Aran walked in with a bassline he'd been working on. Jacob heard bass and drums from the house and came running in shouting about a guitar line he wanted to add. Sighing from his room above the garage and realizing he wasn't going to get any more studying done, Scott finally pushed back his desk chair and ran down to the garage, guitar in hand. Before long, the whole band was jamming, happily lost in the music.

Art Official's members all met as freshmen at UCSB, but the band took off during their sophomore year. They started playing shows almost every weekend, fueling the joyous drunken crowds of IV. Last winter, the band had reached its peak. "Live performance-wise, we were really tight, we didn't even have to practice before gigs," Aran explained.

Art Official's last show before the pandemic was at Hot Loads of Jazz—a

“Want to jam today?” is like the most asked question of the house.”

“It’s a whole different thing, going from being a band that can play well to a band that can record well.”



night put on by the Jazz House that brought together IV’s best bands and jazz groups. Despite being hungover from a wild show in SLO the night before, the band opened for the event. I was there that night—the backyard was crowded with dancers, and a few people even watched from a tree or set up folding chairs on the roof. There was a huge stage set up packed with instruments and a mixing tent set to the side.

“The pandemic really hit after that night, so we joke that we’re really just living in Jacob’s hangover nightmare,” Scott laughed. Though COVID has certainly seemed like one extended hangover, Art Official has managed to make the most of it. They played at Virtually Lucid, a digital festival put on by Lucidity Festival, as well as multiple live streams for UCSB’s Associated Students Program Board (ASPB). For Virtually Lucid, the band prerecorded a set of songs in their garage and got to work on creating a video and mixing the audio for their set. However, the live streams for ASPB were performed live, mimicking the spontaneity of in-person shows. “I like those ones because they’re a little bit lower stress, it’s just like—whatever happens, happens!” Jacob mused.

Of course, the pandemic has also been a letdown for Art Official. Last summer, the band tried to record an album, and it just didn’t come together. They thought that because they had the time, the material would come. But after practicing countless hours in the garage and recording demos, they weren’t satisfied. “Like damn, this kind of just isn’t it. If we’re going to release something, we want it to be really killer, we want to be proud of it,” Aran explained.



Jacob framed the unfinished album another way. “It’s a whole different thing, going from being a band that can play well to a band that can record well,” he said. Art Official used to play rock shows to IV partygoers. In that atmosphere, it’s all about the energy you bring to the crowd, and nobody notices if you make up lyrics on the fly or improvise a bass line.

Recording an official album requires gear and knowledge of how to record, mix, and master your songs. It’s crafted—you have to be able to listen back to the songs again and again and still feel satisfied. The band still has its sights set on making an album, but they’re willing to wait for that album. The album they’re proud to share. And for now, they still have their live album—a recording of their set for the Hot Loads of Jazz show—which stands as a memento of their time playing live shows in IV.

But playing music has meant more for Art Official than performing virtual sets or producing an album, especially during the pandemic. It’s a creative release, a welcome respite from the chaos and monotony of the last year. “There’s a lot less going on in life. If you remove the music from the equation, I guess I’d basically just go to work and do school,” Jacob ruminated. “The band’s a nice thing that has remained from pre-crazy world days.”


Aran nodded in agreement. “Music is not something that’s scheduled anymore,” he added. “And that unscheduled moment of musical relief...like damn, that still feels so good!”

When I asked Art Official to envision their first post-pandemic show, I got a few different answers. Scott wants to play a big

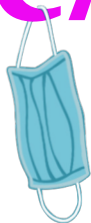
Check out Art Official’s music by scanning this QR code, and follow them on Instagram @officialartofficial!



band set, complete with horn players. Kaio dreams of putting on a festival-type-event, IV bands style. “We just got our own PA system,” Scott said. “Now we’re the ones that’ll be putting on shows.”

I can almost picture it now: a lawn packed with half-lucid college students dancing hard from dusk till dawn, the sounds of heavily distorted guitars and driving bass lines echoing once again through DP. One thing’s for sure—after over a year of quiet anxiety, we are going to need some loud amps and wild mosh pits. So if you haven’t yet picked up a quarantine hobby, maybe it’s time you dust off that guitar, grab your nearest housemate, and start a band. 

CAN'T STOP, WON'T STOP



Exploring Isla Vista's Pandemic Party Culture

WORDS // ASHLEY RUSCH

ILLUSTRATION + DESIGN // ANNA MONZON

KEVIN MCEVOY IS A SOCIAL BUTTERFLY. So naturally, when the pandemic hit, the loss of consistent interaction with others significantly hindered his mental health. For the 26-year-old bartender, parties had long served as an outlet for decompression and socialization—crucial components of his laidback, Isla Vista lifestyle.

So, he decided to keep partying.

The way McEvoy sees it, partying should be a personal choice. He recognizes that everyone has different metrics of what's considered safe and risky during COVID, and thinks each person ought to do what's best for their own mental health and lifestyle.

"Not everyone thrives off isolation and introversion...for people who aren't like that, I feel like people should have the right to go to an event or an outdoor party," McEvoy said. "And if people don't want to because they don't think it's safe, that's completely chill too."

McEvoy noticed a decrease in IV parties in the early days of the pandemic, when a large portion of the population ventured home to quarantine. But he said that over time, more residents have become comfortable with attending

large gatherings—especially as isolation fatigue has settled in. Without the concern of travelling home for the holidays and potentially getting older family members sick, residents are feeling more inclined than ever to socialize.

Now, nearly a year into the pandemic, Isla Vista continues to grapple with the same, seemingly unanswerable question—how do you quell a virus in a college town famous for its party culture?

Concerns surrounding IV parties during COVID captured the attention of residents, administrators, and local law enforcement late last summer, as growing photo evidence of large gatherings began circulating online. On August 30, the *Daily Nexus'* Max Abrams published a photo story that depicted hundreds of unmasked individuals heading to and from gatherings around IV. Swarms of young people spilled into front lawns and hung out over balconies, despite public health orders prohibiting large gatherings and mandating mask-wearing.

Abrams' photos immediately exploded on social media, leaving users appalled at the blatant disregard for COVID protocols. What would otherwise look like a "typical night in IV" would come to symbolize a

turning point in the community's COVID response—exposing a complicated reality that many had underestimated.

"After I took these photos, I started to think that maybe I got really lucky—like this was an off-chance weekend and there were a lot of parties, and a lot of people. But the more I thought about it, the less I began to think that was true—and I probably did just catch a very average weekend," Abrams said.

Abrams was right. Despite rising case numbers and even Isla Vista's first reported death, an eerie sense of normalcy hovered over the beachside town. Large, unmasked gatherings continued through Fall and Winter quarters, rejecting the efforts of local campaigns and national headlines stressing the importance of social distancing.

Since that weekend in late August—amidst heightened pressure from students and local advocates—the community has in fact seen expanded disciplinary measures from local law enforcement. In October, Santa Barbara County passed an urgency ordinance that would issue fines ranging from \$100-\$500 for violations of health officer orders, including hosting large gatherings. As of late February, Isla Vista Foot Patrol (IVFP) reported having issued 13 citations for violations of health orders—seven of which have been sent to the District Attorney's office. IVFP has also begun working with local landlords to evict tenants in flagrant violation of the health order, according to Community Resource Deputy Justin Schroeder.

The University has also cracked down on its response to COVID-19-related misconduct in IV. As of March 10, UCSB reported having sent 187 letters to residences for alleged violations, contacted 120 students identified in reports, and referred over 25 individuals and organizations to the Office of Student Conduct due to egregious

and/or repeat offenses. Additionally, 17 registered campus organizations—including fraternities and sororities—have reportedly received University sanctions.

While cases in IV are finally starting to decline, the fact remains that the town has been home to over 1,200 cases since the pandemic began. And despite the combined (but not perfect) efforts of the university, IVFP, and local landlords—the party problem persists.

A quick glance at the Instagram page @ucsb.party is proof. The account, run by a UCSB student who asked to remain anonymous, was created in September to put pressure on the University to respond to large gatherings in IV. What originally began as a simple research project for their Multimedia Writing class has since blossomed into a fully functional website, Instagram page, and Twitter account.

How it works is simple: the creator receives video and photo submissions of people partying, edits broadcast news audio behind them, and posts them for nearly 4,000 followers to see. For the most part, the Isla Vista community has responded to @ucsb.party with overwhelming praise and gratitude. But the account has also sparked a great deal of controversy—primarily from those who continue to party.

Connor Sparks has been featured on the @ucsb.party page four times. The first-year Economics & Accounting major



originally moved to IV in late October, where he lived in Tropicana Gardens—an off-campus, university-owned residence hall—for approximately a quarter. Sparks was evicted, however, after his building manager caught his significant other (a non-resident of Tropicana) entering the building to pick him up for errands.

Now, Sparks lives in a privately-owned residence in IV. Since the pandemic began, he's continuously partied under the justification that COVID isn't "as big of a deal" for young people as it's often made out to be. Sparks feels that in a college town like Isla Vista, partying is simply inevitable—and should be treated as such.

"Obviously there are people who are immunocompromised or susceptible to this in ways that a young, healthy adult would not be," Sparks acknowledged. "But of everybody I know in Isla Vista, everybody has had COVID. Everybody waited, everybody eventually recovered, and nobody has been sick beyond repair naturally. There's an organic set of 'Go out, get sick, stay sick, and wait' or, 'Go out, and get other people sick.' I mean, it fucking happens."

Sparks' first appearance on @ucsb.party was back in the fall, when a Snapchat of him partying on Del Playa was screen recorded and sent to the account. The post featured Sparks dancing near the DJ set, with the accompanying caption: "Connor

Fucking Sparks." Almost immediately, he was tagged and met with a flurry of direct comments and messages.

"It was ruthless, I mean there were people in the comments calling me racist and things, for partying during COVID. I get it—it's not the smartest fucking idea, but I am clearly willing to take that chance with myself," Sparks said.

Sparks feels that while more short-term punishments for gatherings—like citations from IV Foot Patrol—are generally warranted, more "real-world" repercussions like suspensions, academic probation, and evictions are too extreme of a response. For this reason, he said @ucsb.party "absolutely does more harm than good" by advocating for stricter consequences.

"That's an entire life changed full of possibilities, all gone because of some social justice warrior behind a keyboard," Sparks said.

"[People think] 'You know what, if I get this kid expelled because he partied, I'm going to be saving the world.' It doesn't fucking work like that," Sparks explained. "If I get put on @ucsb.party again, and I get expelled, you think all partying is going to stop? I'm not that popular. There will be another 'Connor Fucking Sparks.' There's going to be thousands of others—because we go to UCSB. It's a party school."

For McEvoy—who also thinks partying



“There’s going to be thousands of others—because we go to UCSB. It’s a party school.”

ought to be a personal choice—an account like @ucsb.party has no authority to “slander people” online because it isn’t officially tied to the University or county government. He also said he knows of plenty more dangerous parties that aren’t highlighted on @ucsb.party whatsoever—including those held in small, enclosed spaces with 20+ people.

“In the end, I feel like it’s those people’s choice to have parties or attend parties,” McEvoy said. “The people I know that have been put on blast for having parties are genuine people that don’t deserve to be put in risk of getting kicked out of housing, or being in trouble with their school, just because someone who runs the @ucsb.party page thinks they have the authority to make an Instagram account and people in trouble.”

But Abrams said that when it comes to accounts like @ucsb.party and journalistic outlets like the *Daily Nexus*, nobody behind them is trying to be a hero. Instead, he believes they’re compelled by a greater obligation to hold members of the community accountable.

“I went out and took pictures because I felt like I needed to. Nobody’s posting these things smiling, laughing. It’s not something that makes me happy—it’s not something I get a kick out of. I think a lot of people do it because they feel like they need to,” Abrams pointed out.

While Abrams doesn’t support the individual harassment or targeting specific students, he said these methods of photo documentation serve as an important reminder that young people often think they’re invincible—both from COVID itself and repercussions for partying.

“At the end of the day, I’m like, ‘Listen man—it’s not about you. This is about a much bigger issue. And if you think it’s about you, you’re in way over your head,’” he explained. “So when kids get angry that they’re getting doxed or cancelled...that sucks dude. If you didn’t go there, then you wouldn’t have been in the picture.”

For Izzy Mitchell, third-year Communication and Economics student and founder of Gauchos 4 Transparency (G4T), the use of social media to promote peer-to-peer accountability is certainly an effective method, but by no means flawless. Since the account’s creation in May 2020, @gauchos4transparency has established a reputation as one of the most prominent advocates for holding students who party accountable.



“It really has become, ‘Are you able to sacrifice some parts of your lifestyle in order to keep other lives you don’t know of safe?’”



Mitchell said that she briefly considered taking the account in a similar direction as @ucsb.party, but was hesitant to engage in a form of community fragmentation that might turn people away from the harm reduction content G4T tries to promote.

According to Mitchell, the loudest voices on social media tend to hold a moral and intellectual high ground when it comes to what the community’s COVID response should look like. She pointed to @ucsb.party as an example of an online echo chamber, reinforcing users’ pre-existing biases and leaving little room for productive dialogue with those who might disagree.

“If you just continuously expose these people, they’re going to be less interested to engage with anything. There has to be a bigger conversation of, ‘What does this mean for us? Where are we going after this?’” she said.

At the same time, Mitchell feels that there’s a certain beauty in @ucsb.party as an anonymously-curated vault of peer-to-peer accountability. A self-proclaimed “big partier” herself prior to the pandemic, Mitchell said she’s still friends with some of the people who continuously go out—which has placed a strain on several relationships. But for her, COVID has unveiled people’s true colors, challenging them to act selflessly during the best four years of their life.

“At the end of the day, if I lose a couple of friends over this, were they worth being around in the first place? Not at all. It really

has become, ‘Are you able to sacrifice some parts of your lifestyle in order to keep other lives you don’t know of safe?’ Mitchell questioned.


Across this range of perspectives, a shared sentiment stands out—Isla Vista party culture isn’t going anywhere anytime soon.

“People are going to keep partying. Nobody is going to take that away from UCSB. You just can’t,” Sparks said.

Abrams agreed that a significant portion of the UCSB population is drawn to IV because of its stereotypical college town reputation.

“If you really look at Isla Vista in the context of this place—people come here to party. They don’t come here to sit on a sofa all day and do their homework. And you can’t really take that out of this town,” he said.

For this reason, the task of regulating something as “normal” as social gathering—especially in a place like IV—requires far more than a reactionary response from law enforcement and administrators. Instead, it demands a deeper, community-wide analysis into the motives and justifications of those who continue to party, the people who post about them, and everyone in between.

And whether a post-COVID social chasm lingers in IV between those who followed protocols during the pandemic and those who didn’t—we can only wait and see. 

INTERNALIZED INSECURITIES

THE IMPACTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS

WORDS // ALLISON KHADOO

ILLUSTRATION + DESIGN // DYLAN LASHER

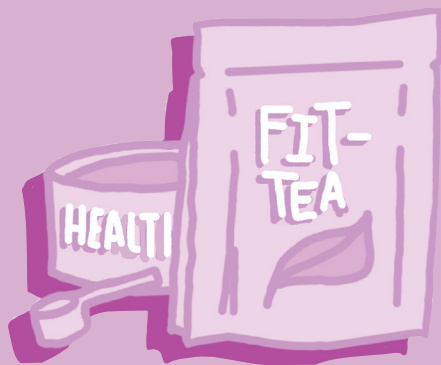
I HAVE A LOVE-HATE relationship with social media and influencers. Social media is an outlet in many ways; you're able to have the world at your fingertips and make connections with a slew of diverse people. However, social media also gives a platform to anyone and everyone—for better or for worse. While a handful of influencers spread positivity and use their platforms for good, others showcase toxic behavior to impressionable audiences.

It's no secret that women deal with body image issues, no matter what stage of life they are in. According to a BBC survey of 227 women, females view their own appearances negatively in comparison to friends and celebrities.

As a young woman myself, I follow influencers on Instagram mainly to keep up with trends. That being said, I tend to stay away from influencers that are workout gurus or influencers who promote diet teas. I know that following someone such as Kylie Jenner is going to put me in a bad mood and impact how I see my body. All the Kardashians promote plastic surgery and the "ideal" body to mostly younger audiences, but Jenner,

only being 23-years-old, has the largest influence over young audiences. Jenner promotes an impossible beauty standard of wide hips and a tiny waist along with a lavish lifestyle her followers most likely cannot afford.

But the Kardashians are so mainstream at this point, I still know everything going on in their lives including any plastic surgery they had or any obvious photoshopping techniques they use on their Instagrams without trying to. The Kardashians are a well known American empire, but they



are not the only people who contribute to unrealistic beauty standards. A lot of influencers make money due to their physical appearance, and as a result, they get brand deals with fashion labels and sometimes diet-promoting products. These promotions often make audiences feel that they need a certain outfit or beauty product to stay trendy, which is harmful in itself.

For Kimmy Villa and Amy Ma, two peer group facilitators from The Body Project, combating unrealistic body standards is a topic they feel strongly about.

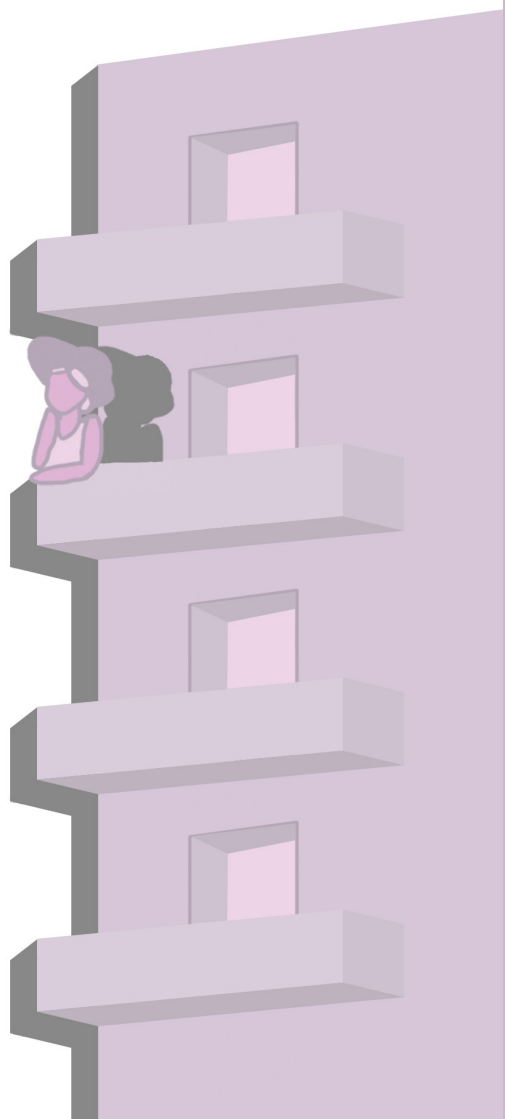
UCSB Body Project works to combat negative body stereotypes that are implemented by social media. The Body Project is a four-week body acceptance program that provides a forum for female-identifying students to confront unrealistic beauty ideals and engage in developing a healthy body image. The program was founded to improve body satisfaction, reduce risk for eating disorders, and improve school and social functioning.

“When I think of an influencer, I think of women,” Villa said. “Specifically, women who try to show off their best aspects and parts of their lives, women who try to make things look perfect. It’s unrealistic.”

Villa is right—people think women when they think of influencers. However, Gen Z has seen that most men who use social media as their main source of income have similar content as women in the same industry. For example, a lot of male influencers are gym gurus and focus their content around working out. Basically, the idea is the same in both male and female influencing: look good. Like many issues, women seem to be getting the shorter end of the stick. Why is it ok for men to promote a certain body ideal and not be criticized for it, while women are scrutinized daily?

There is quite a range in influencer content, but most social media users like to

“INSTAGRAM
FEEDS ARE
PURELY FOR
AESTHETICS.”



“I FEEL BAD FOR YOUNGER GENERATIONS BECAUSE THEY FEEL PRESSURED TO LOOK A CERTAIN WAY.”

show the best versions of themselves and aspects of their lives on their platforms.

“Instagram feeds are purely for aesthetics,” Ma said.

Many influencers feel that a cohesive feed is what will attract a higher following. They’ll edit photos with filtering tools to further extract the best looking version of themselves. “We all angle our bodies and use the best lighting to post photos because we look our best,” Villa said. “But all these influencers also use photoshop to remove their acne and cellulite.”

Both Villa and Ma agreed that influencers and the way they present their lives can be harmful. “An influencer’s whole livelihood is showing one facet of their life. They will not show themselves getting plastic surgery and going to the gym everyday, but they will promote detox teas,” Ma said.

Villa shares similar opinions to Ma when it comes to how influencers portray their lives on the internet. However, Villa mentioned that most of the influencers she follows promote body-positive, healthy lifestyles. One even shows their audiences how angling their camera a certain way changes how their body looks drastically.

But the pressure is still on to maintain a certain body image.

“I feel bad for younger generations because they feel pressured to look a certain way. These young kids see on

Tik Tok these caked on faces and feel that they have to look like that too,” Villa said. She touches on the fact that there has been a shift in social media influence from when it first became a thing on YouTube in the 2010s. In the 2010s, influencing was less about what you look like and more about having fun, Villa described. Ma on the other hand believes that the negative factors of influencing have always been around.

“Before YouTube, there was Paris Hilton and Lindsey Lohan. They were doing the same thing,” Ma said.

I wanted to take into consideration what others and myself thought about influencers, so naturally, I made an Instagram poll for my followers. Majority of people said that influencing is toxic, yet we were all on Instagram engaging in content. With this in mind, there is no right or wrong way to navigate influencer culture.

“Interpretation is important. We have to reassure ourselves. We do not broadcast our lives to the world like influencers. With COVID around, we have to take things day by day and be patient with ourselves,” Villa said.

Maybe the takeaway is to follow people who will add value to your life and look to influencers cautiously. Considering the fact that there will always be pros and cons to social media use, it’s up to us to distinguish what’s good for our own mental health and wellbeing. [w](#)



HOME IS WHERE THE HOUSING IS

Isla Vista's Tiny Shelters
for the Homeless

WORDS // VERONICA VO
PHOTOGRAPHY // LUKAS OLESINSKI
DESIGN // RACHEL DENG

“

The system has already failed you if you're in that situation.

”

IF YOU'VE BEEN in IV recently, you've probably noticed a group of white rectangular structures in the once-empty lot across from Bagel Cafe. You might've wondered what they were.

In the parking lot of the Isla Vista Community Center resides a cluster of 20 pallet homes for the homeless, built this past December. Each home houses up to two people per unit, or a household if they had been camping together. These 8x8 structures provide temporary shelter to the members of the homeless community in IV, with the ultimate goal of moving residents into permanent housing.

Inside each shelter are two beds, a shelving unit, electricity, and a heater. The homes can be assembled within an hour, making them sustainable and reusable after the IV project is done. Shelter availability is based on a waitlist, and once living in the tiny homes, residents are provided with regular meals, case management, veteran services, and connections to other services and programs. The homes serve as a space for transition and will be here until June when they will be moved elsewhere.

The Story Behind the Homes

The development of the homes is being overseen by Good Samaritan Shelter, the largest provider of shelters, drug and alcohol treatment, and supportive services for the homeless in Santa Barbara County.

According to Sylvia Barnard, Executive Director of Good Samaritan, the pallet

shelter project is the first of its kind in the county. “Pop-up shelters are effective during COVID,” she explained. “It creates a non-congregate shelter system rather than congregate, which can spread the disease if there is to be an outbreak.”

The homes are a response to the recent rise in homelessness that Isla Vista and the nation as a whole has been seeing, according to Barnard. “It's hard to pinpoint what really initiated it,” she said. “But it is definitely a trend being seen across the country.” Kirsten Cahoon, Director of Shelter Operations at Good Samaritan, agreed and added that the pandemic was a driving factor in the building of the tiny homes.

In fact, major emergency responses—from both the country and the county—were being directed toward the pandemic itself and reducing the spread of the disease. As a result, communities such as Isla Vista didn't initially address the needs of the expanding homeless population. The number of encampments in town surged—most notably in Anisq'oyo' Park. However, financial resources have been allocated for solutions to the growing issue, such as the CARES Act and rapid rehousing funding from the state and county, according to Barnard and Cahoon. This increase in financing allowed for the development of the pallet shelter project in Isla Vista.

It's clear that the project is already having a positive impact on the homeless community. Living in the tiny homes

“

**It's a weird dichotomy
between the chosen few
and the people who will
be homeless indefinitely.**

”

addresses the residents' basic needs—providing a peace of mind that allows them to focus on other aspects of their lives. “A few of our folks have already gotten employment because they have a safe space to live and don't have to protect their stuff all day, and can feel comfortable,” Cahoon shared.

The residents also receive medical treatment, which Cahoon highlights the necessity of. “Something people don't realize is when folks are homeless, there's a lot of medical needs that go unmet,” she said. “Doctors aren't comfortable doing surgeries for these folks because they don't have a safe space to recover.” The pallet structures therefore allow the homeless population to get medical procedures and give them a safe place to heal afterwards. Cahoon and Barnard both emphasize the great need to prioritize homeless healthcare and replicate this project in the future.

More Than Just Housing

Under CDC guidelines related to COVID-19, shelter systems had to significantly reduce the amount of bedspace they could provide—cutting occupancy in half. When the pandemic crisis began, countless public facilities were shut down and closed. For many, this presented a number of inconveniences as people were forced to stay within

the confines of their own homes. To the members of the homeless community, however, this was far more than an inconvenience. This was a matter of living, of having somewhere to go inside, of having a space to exist in.

Spencer Brandt, President of the Isla Vista Community Services District (IVCSD) board, believes a lack of public space is one reason why it is a priority for IVCSD to assist people experiencing homelessness in Isla Vista. In addition to the lack of open public buildings, Brandt notes that, as more people came to live in IV and its parks, safety deteriorated in these areas.

There was an increase in the number of drug overdoses, cases of domestic and sexual violence, and fire hazards within the homeless community, according to Brandt. “The situation was very unstable,” he said. “The fire marshall came in and said it was so unsafe there needed to be another solution. That was the push we needed to say, ‘What are we gonna do?’ and get our act together. The response was the pallet shelters.”

Brandt says the homes are a way to help add more shelter capacity to an already overwhelmed system. The location of these homes was also designated specifically to help the Isla Vista community, he explained. This includes being next to the IV Community Center, a place that service providers can

operate out of. Having this space allows the facilitation of wraparound services for pallet shelter residents, which aim to give holistic, personal support to residents and their physical and mental well-being.

Brandt believes in the necessity of providing comprehensive services for the homeless beyond the home itself. “What we’ve seen that works best when it comes to handling increases in people experiencing homelessness is providing supportive housing,” he said.

During their stay at the tiny homes, people experiencing homelessness are not just given a place to live but also are able to enter the housing pipeline with the help of outreach and case management workers. This means shelter residents will be provided the opportunity to begin the process of securing permanent housing.

Outreach workers are crucial in establishing relationships with homeless individuals and building rapport to encourage them to start using the services being offered. According to Brandt,

building trust is especially important because many people experiencing homelessness are wary of receiving this kind of help.

“Let’s be honest. The system has already failed you if you’re in that situation,” Brandt explained.

Isla Vista Lends A Hand

An outpouring of community support has also played a major role in helping the tiny home project. Cahoon emphasizes how appreciative she is of the large amount of assistance coming from Isla Vista residents.

“Bagel Cafe across the street brings leftover bagels so our folks can have them for breakfast. Lots of residents come and drop things off,” she recounted. “It’s been awesome to see.” A UCSB faculty member even coordinated a donation drive at the beginning of the project, Barnard added.

Students like Jackie Garcia donated all the extra clothes and blankets she found during a moving clean-out. With the



donation box outside the IV Co-op closed due to COVID, she decided to give her things to a resident of the tiny homes. “I didn’t even know about the homes until I was walking and saw them. I just gave everything to one of the people living there. She was really grateful and happy and wanted to hug me!” Garcia said.

Garcia feels like the project was necessary to provide the IV homeless community with a safe environment.

“A lot of them are living in terrible conditions,” Garcia acknowledged. “It was raining a lot a while back and it was really windy. The tents aren’t gonna keep them warm, and they’re more susceptible to getting sick.” She knows that a lot of her friends are also happy about the development of the tiny homes, and thinks that many college students share these sentiments.

A Strange Dichotomy


Diana Vares-Lum is a UCSB student and an employee at Santa Barbara Public Health Department’s Health Care for the Homeless program. She works to administer medical services for the homeless population in Santa Barbara—including the tiny homes in Isla Vista. Seeing her patients getting housed and their lives turning around brings Vares-Lum great joy, and she respects the work Good Samaritan is doing with the shelters. However, she doesn’t think that the county has done the best job handling the homeless situation in IV.

Adjacent to the cluster of tiny homes, there is a section of land designated as an emergency area where people have put up their tents. “It’s weird,” Vares-Lum said. “So they didn’t give them housing. They just said, ‘If you have a tent, cool, you can stay there,’ which I don’t understand.”

Although the number of people living there continues to increase, Vares-Lum notes that she hasn’t seen anyone regularly checking on the people in the area. While the tiny homes are fenced off, many are still living in tents in the park directly next to the shelters. “It’s really strange,” she commented. “It’s a weird dichotomy between the chosen few and the people who will be homeless indefinitely.”

Vares-Lum believes a lot of people ignore the homeless population in Isla Vista and that it’s easy to forget about them. On the other hand, it’s hard for her to separate the homeless community from her personal life. She expressed how heartbreaking it feels to see so many people at rock bottom every day, yet still having to move on from work.

However, working out in the field and meeting patients, Vares-Lum loves that she is able to have a direct hand in helping people experiencing homelessness. At the end of the day, there’s something Vares-Lum wants the residents of Isla Vista to remember. “They’re people. They just need help. There’s a lot more homeless people in SB than people realize, and it’s not just gonna go away if you turn a blind eye,” she stated.

Due to the pandemic, homelessness in Isla Vista is being viewed as a crisis for the first time, but it may have been one for a while. The needs of the homeless community have long been ignored. The solutions aren’t simple, but they’re necessary, especially at a time when these individuals are more vulnerable than ever. With the homeless population in IV quickly growing, the tiny homes are much needed. These temporary shelters are a sign of change in the right direction, but it’s time we look toward more permanent solutions—and think bigger than 8x8. 

MINDFULNESS BY THE SEA

Finding Inner Peace at the
Center for Mindfulness
and Human Potential

WORDS // CHELSIE ALEXANDER

ILLUSTRATION + DESIGN // ZHITING YANG



THOUGH UCSB IS KNOWN for its groundbreaking research in Marine Science and other related areas, an often overlooked Psychological & Brain Sciences department is making strides in an underrated, yet incredibly important field: mindfulness and neuroplasticity. At the UCSB Center for Mindfulness and Human Potential (CMHP), Dr. Michael Mrazek and his team of researchers are studying the importance of taking time to find calm and focus in the day, as well as the incredible physical and mental health benefits this brings.

Founded in 2016 by Jonathan Schooler, Michael Mrazek, and Dawa Tarchin Phillips, the CMHP has two main initiatives: education and plasticity. The center was created with the intention to utilize rigorous science to benefit and

improve people's lives through studying the mind and the benefits of mindfulness. Because the field of human potential is on the rise, the CMHP's research could change the way we lead our daily lives. The education initiative focuses on studying the best ways to learn and teach meditation and mindfulness, while the plasticity initiative researches how much one person can substantially improve personal development and growth.

Currently, the CMHP team is working on Finding Focus and Empirical Wisdom, two projects dedicated to the education and plasticity initiatives. Finding Focus—an online course designed to train attention—explores the most effective ways to teach meditation and mindfulness to high school teens. Empirical Wisdom—a six-week program designed for college

students—aims to teach students how to make positive changes in their lives by harnessing their potential and changing the way they think. These practices result in lasting changes like improved mood, happiness, working memory, fluid intelligence, and self-esteem. With numerous publications on mindfulness, attention-training, self-development, cognitive and neural plasticity, the CMHP is driving the field in important, life-changing work.

Dr. Michael Mrazek currently serves as the Director of Research at CMHP. Ultimately, Mrazek hopes to use his research to discover the best way to bring meditation practices to schools and eventually reach millions of students. For now, Mrazek shared some of his mindfulness and meditation experiences. Maybe you'll find a tip or two to try out in your own mindfulness practices!

Tips for Meditation Success

Mrazek began meditating in high school when his family moved halfway across the country before his junior year of high school. To combat his feelings of anger and sadness, Mrazek tried meditation for the first time while attending a yoga class on the beach. He relaxed and really let go into the experience, and by the time he opened his eyes, the class had been over for ten minutes.

But even though he had a great first experience, Mrazek has had countless sessions that were supremely distracting and uncomfortable. Mrazek notes that it's important to recognize that meditation is not always going to be enjoyable, and you won't always end a session feeling

“Your level of happiness in life is determined more by appreciation of circumstances than by the circumstance itself.”

amazing. There are very consistent patterns in the obstacles people face in meditation, and most never learn about them, let alone explore strategies for overcoming them.

Without these remedies, meditation can become a bit of a drag, which is why Mrazek emphasizes how important it is that people receive clear evidence-based instruction on how to meditate. “Meditation is a craft, a skill that takes quite a while to really develop,” Mrazek acknowledged.

One can't ever “master” or finish practicing meditation, according to Mrazek. “Life is always changing and throwing challenges at you, so to be able to bring that into your meditation practice and still find presence of mind and peace is an ongoing challenge—because life never stops,” he said.

The most common misconception and an obstacle to the practice is that while meditating, the mind should be quiet and free from distractions. It's natural that people believe this: meditation is presented as a way to calm and clear the mind, and we often hear about advanced meditation states where people reach stillness. But that's not actually what it's about—distraction is inevitable and not necessarily a problem. The fundamental skill when beginning meditation is learning how to release distractions, and distractions should not be viewed as a problem or an indication that one is bad at meditating, but an opportunity to practice this skill.


Reflecting on True Happiness

Something that's been very important to Mrazek is reflecting critically on what he believes will truly bring happiness. Everyone has theories on what will bring greater happiness. For college students, that might be grades, finding a fulfilling job, creating close friendships, and having the "right" college experience. In fact, Mrazek notices that everyone he meets wants to be happier than they are. What Mrazek learned is that most of the external factors that he thought would bring happiness never really brought the reliable happiness that everyone desires. After really examining the beliefs and misconceptions about what should bring happiness, Mrazek has learned to instead cultivate conditions for reliable happiness in his own mind.

He's met billionaires who have everything they could want and are still miserable, and people with simple, gratuitous lives that are some of the

happiest people he's met. "An essential ingredient in reliable happiness is gratitude and appreciation," Mrazek explained. "Your level of happiness in life is determined more by appreciation of circumstances than by the circumstance itself."

Mrazek's hope for the future of mindfulness and meditation research is to find the best ways to bring attention training not only to teens in high school settings, but also explore optimal ways to teach mindfulness to other populations, like the healthcare industry, prisons, business, and office settings, and more. Mrazek truly believes that this work is going to positively impact many people and that the research of CMHP has the potential to meaningfully change the world.

To learn more about Mrazek's education and plasticity initiatives, check out Finding Focus (@findingfocus.app) and Empirical Wisdom (@empiricalwisdom) on social media. 

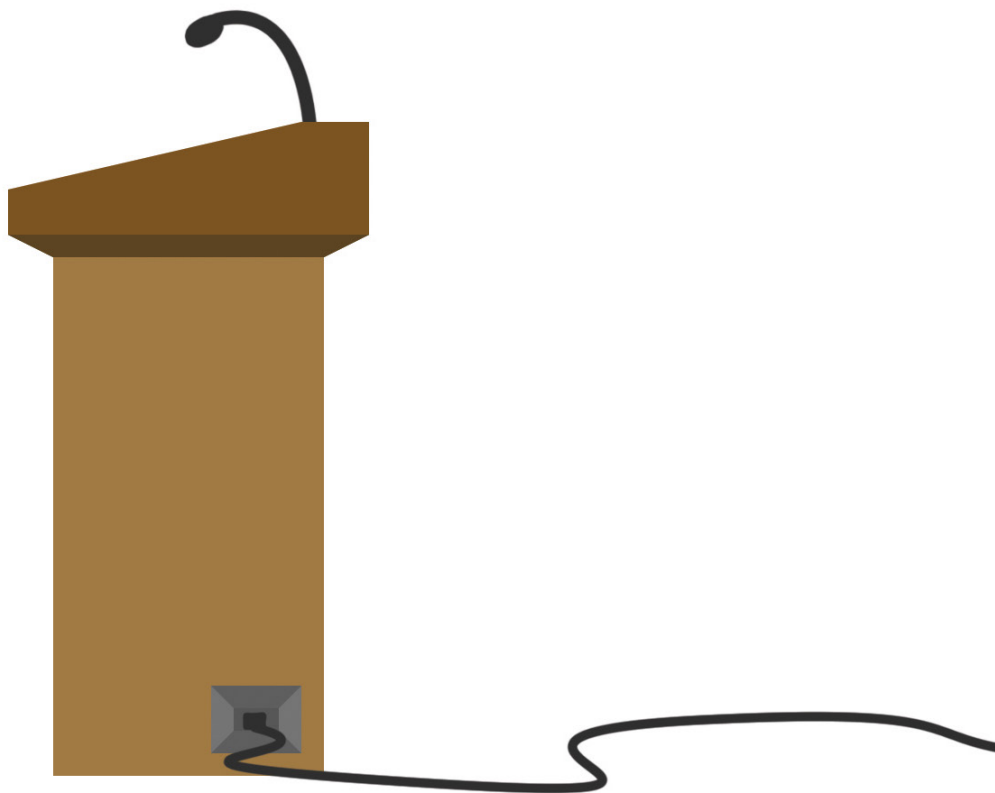


FOUR YEARS UNDER A FIREHOSE

THE WAYS UNIVERSITY TEACHING **FAILS** US

WORDS // CHLOE KIMMEL

ILLUSTRATION + DESIGN // DYLAN LASHER



“WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO LEARN MEANINGFULLY IN THE 21ST CENTURY?”

SICK OF LECTURE CLASSES? Turns out you're not alone. Education scholars and researchers alike have made it clear that university learning might be up for some serious reconsideration.

In spite of these findings, professors continue to go on stage and spout out information like a firehose—hoping students are porous enough to soak up all the knowledge needed to perform well. The pandemic revealed that professors are capable of adapting their instruction, giving us the perfect opportunity to strive towards more meaningful learning. Crises like the pandemic have historically been the exact catalysts needed to spur massive change in society.

But what do the people behind the Zoom screens think? While the university system has them highly favored, professors can't all be painted with the same brush. Many do academic research on education and offer in-depth insight into where it can be problematic, and they often choose to reform their own classroom as well as call for reforms at the university level.

“Our goal is not to provide the same quality of instruction that we've done in the past,” Diana Arya, an associate education professor at UCSB's Gervitz School of Education, said. “The goal during this pandemic should have been viewed as an opportunity goal to rethink, ‘What does it mean to learn meaningfully in the 21st century?’” Arya points out that there are many ways in which we're going to have to address the complicated landscape

that we see in our social and educational contexts. She believes learning spaces need to be provided for students to assert their thinking and apply their experiences.

Currently, students are expected to meet the demands of professors in order to be successful in their classes. A fundamental problem of lectures is that they are based on the information transmission fallacy—the idea that students learn just by being told. If students are unsuccessful or score poorly, the blame is inherently placed on them and a perceived lack of ability or drive rather than recognizing root issues in education.

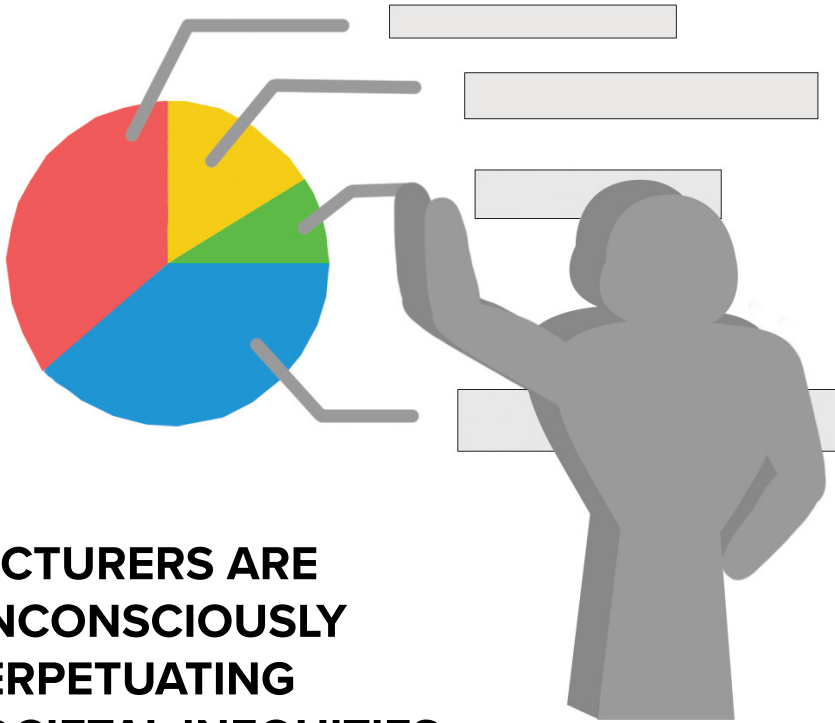
Hardly ever do we examine the methods and demands of professors, and whether they are actually providing a growing learning experience.

This topic begs the question: what is success in learning? What are we trying to gain in paying for this four year learning experience? These questions don't have a simple answer, but in our current system, they need to be properly evaluated.

Scholars and professionals who study education are hyperfocused on measuring success in learning among different groups. Students and their needs are not in complete neglect, but many educators recognized the roots of these issues concerning education and adapted their instruction to be more student-centered.

Lectures have been the dominant form of teaching since the first universities were founded in 1050 in Western Europe, according to Science





LECTURERS ARE UNCONSCIOUSLY PERPETUATING SOCIETAL INEQUITIES.

Magazine in the article “Active learning increases student performance.” But many scholars have challenged the “sage on a stage” or teacher-centered approach where a professor lectures to students through a monotonous one-way communication model.

Even within hard sciences, scholars argue that engaging students with questions or group activities is a better way to learn. Undergraduate students in classes with traditional stand-and-deliver lectures are 1.5 times more likely to fail than students in classes that use more stimulating, so-called active learning methods according to a research study by Scott Freeman, a professor at the University of Washington.

Lectures are designed from the teacher’s point of view and have persisted due to how efficient and straightforward this makes creating class material. By rattling off every piece of the material, teachers have great control of what is taught and understood. This one-sided lecture format often leads students to develop a dependency on their teachers and a superficial knowledge of the material.

But the very purpose of education is teaching students how to learn. The biggest problem with lectures is that they are often used in large classrooms that involve huge swaths of people, making them inherently ineffective. Students bring to class different backgrounds,

experiences, interests, and aptitudes. It is impossible to meet the optimal learning pace of all students this way, because one teacher cannot deliver dozens of customized lessons simultaneously.

"It's no secret that universities operate more on efficiency than effective student learning. But if you are trying to teach 500 people a concept it is very difficult to be innovative," Gervitz Education professor Matthew Quirk revealed.

In fact, teachers inevitably style lectures toward what they perceive as the teaching "middle of the class." Professors are forced to cater to their most "average" scoring students—those who may find some difficulty with the class, but overall perform proficiently. In trying to meet the needs of all students, lectures often meet the needs of few, overlooking extra resources or methods that could benefit all types of students.

When failing to address the backgrounds and life experiences of their students, lecturers are unconsciously perpetuating societal inequities and serving the groups that are convenient for them. Lectures allow for little to no differentiation. They follow a specific format of delivery that does not account for learning disabilities or other needs. Within society, people are not provided an equal opportunity to learn and develop the tools necessary to succeed in specific traditional forms of education.

"Educators need to recognize and openly acknowledge that we continue to perpetuate a system that is racist and maintains and exacerbated inequalities among diverse communities," Quirk admitted.

There is a long way to go in addressing and dismantling these deeply-rooted problems. Lectures are very taxing for students. In order for a student to get as much as possible from a lecture, they

must have the skills of concise listening and notetaking, which must be taught and take a lot of time to master. Most students don't know what they should take away from lectures and may come from families or communities that lack the resources to provide this specific education. These problems are societal and global, and begin long before students step foot into UCSB, according to Quirk.

Tarek Azzam, an associate professor at Gervitz and the Director for the Center of Program Evaluation at UCSB, agrees that the differences in socioeconomic circumstances impede a student's academics. By shifting learning towards the student, individual needs can be better catered to than simply the blanket assumptions of a professor. Azzam hopes that during his time teaching at UCSB, there will always be a concerted effort to address inequality. He is confident that if, moving forward, universities and professors place issues of systemic inequality at the forefront of their priorities, they can accelerate closing these gaps among students.

Azzam's work is centered on education programs that attempt to decrease these various inequities among students. "This pandemic has made the consequences of inequity abundantly clear. It would be very disappointing if there is any denial or isn't major reforms in education associated with it," Azzam said.

In the current world of UC Zoom, many professors have had to subconsciously reevaluate archaic modes of learning in reorganizing classes to fit an online format. Azzam and Quirk both revealed that the pandemic has shifted their thinking away from a traditional model of lecturing. They have both put their focus towards reimagining how courses can be structured to maximize time with students given the resources provided.

However, professors have certainly struggled with online school as well. Building classes and creating curriculum takes time and is often done through a process of trial and error assessment.

"I have been involved in the development of online class, and I can tell you it takes 14 weeks to develop a good online class that is purposefully built to be online," Azzam said.

Quirk expressed that he found himself lecturing far less in classes during the pandemic, and instead started focusing synchronous time on discussing and understanding the material. This maximizes the effectiveness of class time by allowing students to ask questions and work as a group, overall engaging more deeply with the material.

Arya calls on her fellow professors to be bold and brave enough to realize that they cannot come into the classroom thinking they are the holders of knowledge. Instead, Arya enters her educational spaces understanding that she needs to be a learner and co-builder of knowledge with their students.

Arya offers a co-learning approach to their students. They take inspiration from studying scholars like Paulo Freire, who likened traditional education to a colonial mindset where the professors are to fill empty students with their perfect knowledge. In re-evaluating traditional forms of education, Arya recognizes the value of the experience and prior understanding that students bring into the classroom.


"Once I was able to let go of that notion that the teacher has to know and the students have to learn, I enjoyed teaching

so much more," Arya said. "In changing my philosophy in the university context, the students not only do more but they learn more."

Innovation occurs at lightning speed in our modern era, regardless of what field it happens in. It is time the university—as an institution—pays the same amount of respect to education as a social science and as a product students are paying for.

When in-person teaching returns, it's time to readjust the education models that have become obsolete, in pursuit of a better learning experience.

"The students are the ones who are going to create a more equitable future. The students must have a safe space to explore topics and issues that are critical to sustaining the future that we want to see," Arya pointed out. "And because of that, we have got to start looking at the ways that we inadvertently as faculty support triggers that create inequities."

In these times of turmoil, there is a small hope and a silver lining. In the midst of chaos caused by a pandemic, fresh changes that address long-standing issues can be implemented more easily as the failing of universities are more clear than ever before. There are many ways in which we're going to have to address the complicated landscape that we see in our social and educational contexts. However, addressing the antiquated system of a one-sided lecture is the first step to cultivating higher education that revolves around the students who pay for it. Rather than sagely spewing information through a fire hose in hopes that enough information can be regurgitated, professors might consider simply showing students how to swim. 



GREETINGS from ISLA VISTA





TO: _____



TO: _____



ASTROLOGY:

MY IRONIC RESISTANCE

Breaking Down the Zodiac Faith

WORDS // LINDA CHONG
ILLUSTRATION + DESIGN // RACHEL SMITH

WHEN PEOPLE ASK if you believe in astrology, what are the first fleeting thoughts that zip through your mind? Do you immediately feel distaste for the Gen Z zodiac cult? Or do you automatically think of your sun, moon, and rising signs because astrology is unexplainably real? Maybe you're also in the middle—conflicted by the accuracy of how your friend acts like a Libra and the disorienting thought that astrology is a socially constructed, arbitrary faith with non-scientific origins. This, I argue, is the very basis of my own default answer: “I believe in astrology, ironically.”

I guess the first question would be, how can one believe in something ironically? The very concept is an oxymoron itself: I do believe in astrology, but I also accept that it is not real. In my defense, there are a lot of factors that go into both sides. On one hand, astrology is based on ancient Babylonian-Greek-Indian belief systems of cosmic energies that translate life events, natural phenomena, and human behavior—all of which are outdated and unscientific. How can it be scientific if astrology derives from man-made scriptures, cuneiform material, and religious texts?

Take it from the people who actually study planetary motion and cosmic activity. When asked about the credibility of astrology, UCSB professors and researchers responded with a loud, digital door slam. “It has nothing to do with science—it’s just babble,” said Robert Antonucci, an astronomer and Physics

professor. Philip Lubin, an experimental cosmology researcher and Physics professor, further elaborated this fallacy by pointing out that stellar patterns and planetary positioning cannot possibly determine the outcomes of one’s life. He argues that the very basis of astrology—being the exact time and date of your birth—is unreliable as an explanation for one’s personality or life events. “If you were born 10 minutes later or earlier, you would have a different ‘astrological sign,’” Lubin said.

They’re not wrong, you know. Ancient belief systems were designed to make conclusions about natural, unexplained chaos. It was the safe space that people turned to when they couldn’t explain why earthquakes destroyed homes and dry seasons led to starvation. Through the spread of ideas via trade, we can see various historical forms of categorization, similar to zodiacs, that determine one’s self and future. Take Chinese zodiacs or Korean blood types, for example. What do all these beliefs have in common? They’re old and lack empirical evidence.

So the real question is, why do so many people swear astrology is real? What converted me to believe in astrology, but ironically? It’s a very simple fact that zodiac signs truly act as they are prescribed. Yes, I understand it’s impossible to group billions of people into 12 personality categories. I also get that horoscopes are meant to be broad, applicable to the human conditions of confirmation bias or self-fulfilling prophecy. But how can you deny that astrological signs actually act according to their described nature?

It’s insane how often people report a Pisces to be down-to-earth and an Aquarius to be obsessive, yet thoughtful. What about the Virgos, constantly disturbed by physical or mental clutter? Astrology is not proven to be empirically sound, I know! But why is there public consensus that all Gemini are capable of manipulation?


***Why is there
public consensus
that all Gemini
are capable of
manipulation?***

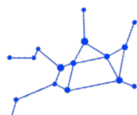
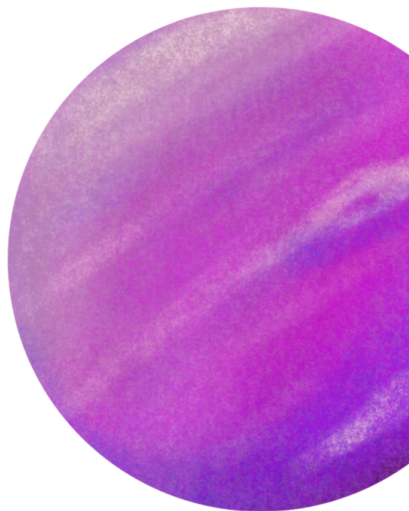
I believe in astrology, *ironically.*



That's not all! Sun, moon, and rising signs explain the different dimensions of one's personalities—public and private—which further elaborates why people aren't exactly aligned to their signs. Sun signs are determined by your birthday and are defined to be the astrological core that you most align with. Moon signs determine your inner, private self that subconsciously handles emotions and events. Rising signs determine one's social self—the first impression that people perceive of you.

This explains why one might argue they're not chaotic, despite being a Scorpio. What if they have a Pisces moon and Capricorn rising? The variations of one's signs explain so much about why each individual is a certain way! Don't even get me started on elements, astrological houses, zodiac seasons, retrograde, and other planetary assignments.

At this point, it doesn't matter whether astrology is real or not. It would be a game of ping pong, eternally discussing the lack of scientific evidence and overwhelming observational evidence. There's no time on Earth to flesh out a conclusion, and in my lifetime, astrology is just a fun way to socialize and categorize my peers. Who cares if there's no experimental data? I'd rather claim I ironically believe in astrology to make STEM cis-het men angry about the ignorance of either women or Gen Z. It's my form of ironic resistance to the imbalance of gender proportions in STEM fields and the patriarchy that perpetuates male ideas as be-all-and-end-all... just kidding. It's not that serious—astrology is just fun. 



Pt. I: ILLUSIONS

Settle In, Watch

Raymond Vasquez

That look
Where attention of the eyes
Compete with those of your lips
Where red and white
Twist across your face like peppermint
And all that is fresh
Is the desire to swallow you whole
Enter my breath my soul awaits you
Enough life to fill a hollow house
Where love becomes a quiet communion
Like passing secrets under thin blankets
If I can't put my finger on
what you are,
I wonder what hands can learn
Like wrists plunged into water
I want to be held down
Bring me out happy with simple
For you are one of a kind perfect
A Snowflake Diamond
There's glitter in your hair
So you thought to bring the stars down?

Untitled

Rosa Trejo

Sitting comfortably in my illusion of reality
teetering toward the space of knowing
on the edge of wisdom.

Voices fight to break down the walls
now I know why parents are so afraid
of seeing their children grow up
why my dad fights
to keep a smile on his face
why my mother hesitates to let me go
My humanity scares me
the fragility of us all scares me most
The brighter side, the greener grass,
the glass half-full, once the bliss of ignorance,
now just moments of forgetting.



Pt. II: ISLA VISTA

Party School

Olivia Rob  rt

We used to walk back in packs,
coyotes with their fur shaven
howling at the cold,
alcohol wearing off or kicking in,
hyenas in our throats as we retold
that party story, wolf jaws open
as we tore into those free birds,
ocean never far, always beckoning.
Dressed in sheep's clothing,
this pact of hormones, hunger
kept us in formation,
fed from the palm of my hand,
loose eyes lapping me up,
teeth glinting back inside
music massaging air full
of body-steam, electricity.
Smoke or visible breath—
January wind blew houses down.
Airborne hunters, naked now
we hide in dens
without packs, lone-dog wine,
where wolves more real than men
hunt in peace,
far from caged lives.
I've seen this coyote for weeks now
around midnight as I drive home,
stop so we stare at each other,
he, on the opposite side of the road,
me—in my car,
my tears—his curious eyes.

Ode to Our Island in the Sun

Zaida Lagunas

Off central California
there is a coastal city that lies
beside lofty purple mountains
and parks with pitched seagull cries
The eternal western sun
mimics the warmth of the people
where hazy afternoons are spent
with friends by marshy lagoons
Early days leaving rooms
with unlocked doors
to go and let their worries
be absorbed by murky shores
When nightfall comes around
and the silver moon begins her dance
this seaside band of dreamers
dream of their island in the sun
and will awake knowing
that their future has only just begun

IN VERSE

POETRY EDITOR // KAT SHEN
ILLUSTRATION + DESIGN // SOL  E MEIDUS

ALBINO RACCOON:

LINKEDIN: THE INSTAGRAM OF THE WORKPLACE

DISGUIISING TOXICITY AS A PROFESSIONAL SPACE

WORDS // ALYSSA MORENO

ILLUSTRATION + DESIGN // ALLISON TRAN

I NEVER EXPECTED entering the workforce meant graduating from Instagram to LinkedIn. It wasn't until my third year that I heard about LinkedIn and was nudged into getting one.

"If you don't have a LinkedIn, you need to make one ASAP," said almost every speaker at the Zoom events I attended. Quickly, I shuffled over to make an account on this so called, "LinkedIn." After getting acquainted with the website, I began feeling a bit embarrassed at how little experience and background I had to display on my profile. Fast forward to today, I have been on LinkedIn for exactly four months, and I can confidently say that it is my most hated social media platform.

If you've never heard of LinkedIn, I got you. LinkedIn is a networking and employment social platform that allows you to connect with professionals and look for a job or internship. About two months in, I noticed I was comparing my success to others. *She's a sophomore*

and already has 500+ connections when I just learned about this site?! How did he get an internship at Google?! Oh my god, I am so behind in life... These were just a few of the thoughts that ran through my head while mindlessly scrolling through the site. It was in this hyper-professional setting that I started to feel pretty bad about myself and where I was in my career journey.

Although comparison is inevitable on many social media platforms, LinkedIn feels different. Dare I say... worse? Instead of comparing things like physical appearance, which happens most often on Instagram, LinkedIn deals with comparison of success, job title, and salary. The list goes on. The platform made it easy for me to get wrapped up in feelings of self-doubt and insecurity when I was scrolling through nothing but humble brags.

LinkedIn is also home to what some people would call toxic positivity—it's the attitude that no matter what is going on,

to ALWAYS be positive. On LinkedIn, this manifests in posts saying things like, “If you lost your job during the pandemic, don’t worry because everything happens for a reason,” and, “In the end, it all will work out.” This perspective dismissed any real feelings that I had and replaced them with forced optimism. The reality is, sometimes things really do suck, and it’s okay to feel that way.

A reason for this attitude may be because many LinkedIn users often prioritize highlighting their successes and showing only the good side of their journey—often rightfully so. However, this creates a false reality that no one is failing (except for me). Behind the curtain of positivity lies many failed interviews,

no callbacks, and unanswered emails. My perspective—that I’m sure resonated with many others—was especially hard to cope with while being a college student, unsure if I’m on the right path.

Possibly one of the most tiresome parts of LinkedIn is the influencers. Yes, influencers. These aren’t the ski-pics-in-Aspen types of influencers. LinkedIn influencers frequently post tips and advice that are meant to go viral. These influencers use the attention to prey on the unemployed and “unsuccessful” by directing them to their website or programs. In my eyes, the help feels insincere. They’re more concerned with how they can make a quick buck off of LinkedIn, rather than genuinely connecting

“Behind the curtain of positivity lies many failed interviews, no callbacks, and unanswered emails.”




“It is important to take a step back from LinkedIn and remember that not everyone is on the same journey—and that’s okay.”

with users. Most recently, LinkedIn added a stories feature to its mobile app (just like Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter). Although this is meant to give job seekers an opportunity to see a day-in-the-life from their favorite company, it’s frustrating to see LinkedIn slowly morph into just another social media app.

In some ways, it feels that LinkedIn has moved from networking and job-finding to a space for showing off—as are all social media platforms. I mean, what did I expect? It’s essentially giving users a stage with their connections as the audience to watch their every move.

Despite this, there are still ways to use the platform effectively. LinkedIn is one of the only places that I can directly

connect with a professional that I look up to. The platform makes it easy to message them, ask questions, and get valuable information that would be difficult to find otherwise. LinkedIn is also great for finding internships and job opportunities. I can follow my favorite companies like Microsoft and Disney, and see when they have positions that I can fill.

LinkedIn gathers all of these opportunities and presents them in one place. Unfortunately, just like any other social media platform, it can be toxic and weigh on me a little more than I would like. This is why it is important to take a step back from LinkedIn and remember that not everyone is on the same journey—and that’s okay. 

ABOUT THE ALBINO RACCOON:

Welcome to The Albino Raccoon, WORD’s free-for-all column where one lucky writer gets to vent whatever grievances they have! Every article is accompanied by WORD’s unofficial-official mascot—the raccoon, but make him albino. He’s lurking in the background somewhere ... can you spot him?

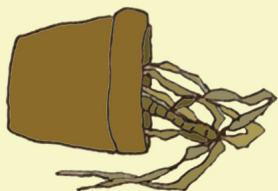
very important

PSA! IF THIS IS YOU

from hfm

YOU WEAR THE SAME
XL IRONIC T-SHIRT
FOR THREE DAYS
STRAIGHT UNIRONICALLY

YOUR "DAILY WALK"
IS TO GET A TALLBOY
AND ROGERS TACOS



YOU THRIFT
YOUR CARHARTTS
PRE-COATED IN
GRIME

YOU CUT YOUR
HAIR WHEN
YOU'RE BORED

IF YOU DON'T
HYDRATE
YOURSELF
- OR -

IF THE LIQUIDS
YOU PRINK ARE
ANYTHING BUT
WATER

PLEASE FOR THE LOVE OF GOD DO NOT BUY A HOUSEPLANT!



YOU AND I BOTH KNOW
YOU WILL NOT BE ABLE
TO KEEP IT ALIVE.





PECULIAR FEELINGS: A SHORT STORY

Dazed and COVID Confused

WORDS // LESLIE REYES

ILLUSTRATION + DESIGN // KAYTLIN TROXLER

***He has the most piercing
indigo green eyes I've ever seen.
Instantly, I'm lost in them,
forgetting everything
in the moment.***

THE PARDALL TUNNEL is always crowded and busy. I don't know why I always choose to go this route even when I know I'm running late to class. I honestly hate taking British literature. Even as an English major, it's a little too much for me. But, anything to secure a degree right?

The sounds of feet shuffling, bikes passing, and people chattering capture my attention. I don't quite know why I get the feeli—

The wind is knocked out of me as I hit the pavement, and I lose my train of thought. My knees and hands ache from the fall. I try to recover by getting up and grabbing my things. As I try to locate my belongings, a hand sticks out into view.

I hesitate—I swear this wasn't a thing before.

"Are you okay? I'm sorry, I wasn't paying attention. Let me help you out," he says, still holding his hand out.

I grab it shakily and look up at this stranger. He has the most piercing indigo green eyes I've ever seen. Instantly, I'm lost in them, forgetting everything in the moment. He has light brown hair, a slight golden tan, and a jawline that creates a perfect 90-degree angle. He's a 21st century James Dean right in the middle of campus.

"Are you okay?" he repeats.

"Yeah I am, I'm so sorry. I got lost in my

thoughts," I say, dazed and breathless... I'm such an idiot.

"I'm sorry once again," he says smiling at me.

"Oh no, it's okay, it's equally my fault too," I reply as I start walking to class.

When I turn, I look to my left and see a group of friends sitting close to each other on the grass. They're sharing drinks and utensils without hesitation. To my right, I notice the closeness of people bunched up together talking as they wait in line for the restroom. It's so peculiar to see crowds together socializing. This isn't normal. I thought we had to be distanced. Where are the masks? I swear we ha—

"Rye! Hey!"

I make a sharp turn around and see my friend Leena running towards me.

"How are you?" Leena asks as she goes in for a hug.

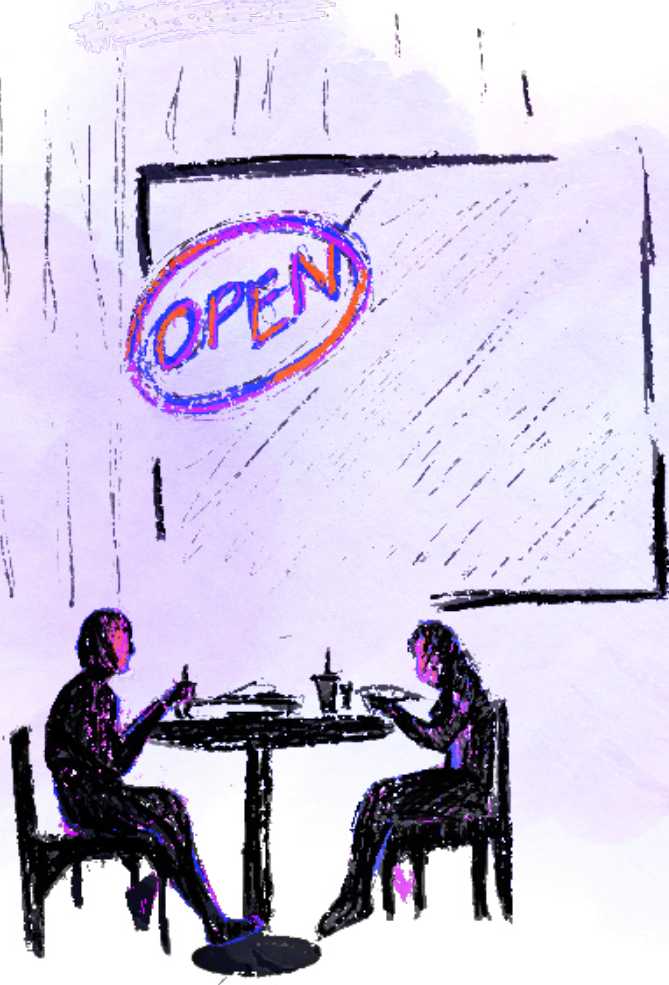
I automatically step back six feet. It just feels wrong to hug someone. I swear this wasn't okay before. It feels morally wrong, but I can't grasp or know why I feel this way.

"Hi," I say.

"Are you okay," she asks as she tries to step closer, but I move further away.

"What's wrong?" she asks, concerned.

"I'm okay, but I just thought we all had to be distanced and everything to avoid getting sick," I confess.



"No? Are you sure you're okay?"

"I guess not," I say, questioning myself.
"Hey, I have to go."

I look at the time and realize I'm five minutes late to class. I start walking a little faster into Givertz Hall.

The whole time I'm in class, I can't stop thinking about how I got this masking and six feet apart thought in my brain. What did I read, see, or dream about? In my heart, it feels wrong to be out without a mask.

As I walk out of the classroom, I still can't quite tell why I still have this feeling. Do I just ignore it and act like everyone else is and go against this feeling inside me? I fumble through my backpack trying

to look for my mask—I don't even know where it is.

My train of thought stops again as I spot the familiar pair of emerald eyes staring at me from across the hallway walking towards me. Out of embarrassment, I duck my head and try to pass by him without an interaction. But unfortunately, I don't succeed when someone grabs my forearm.

"Hey! It's you, the one I bumped into," he says eagerly. "I'm Jack, by the way, I never caught your name."

"My name is Rylie, but people call me Rye," I say smiling back.

"This might be too forward and weird, but do you want to go out and get pizza with me later today?" he asks.

The question catches me off guard. Should I? I mean, it feels wrong to go and gather outside of my immediate circle. But, he's too good looking, how could I pass on that? Do I say no and give up the chance of possibly getting to know him? I guess I'll just agree for now.

"I um—yeah! What time?"

"5 p.m. at Woodstock's sound good?"

"Yeah, uh, it does. I'll see you then!"

I guess we'll see.

As I walk down to my apartment, I can't ignore the feeling of staying home and away from others. It's a little suffocating how I can't figure out why I feel like this.

When I enter my room I start looking for an outfit just in case I actually do go out. Crop top or no crop top? Is lilac my color? What even is my color? White carpenter pants will definitely fit this shirt, actually maybe the white shorts. Wait, where are my favorite Birks, I can't not wear them. I stop getting ready and think about not going at all. But a part of me wants to go. Do I want to do something even though it feels wrong? That is so not like me. An opportunity to go on a date with a gorgeous guy doesn't happen often. You know, I might feel so antsy because I watched "The Handmaid's Tale" before going to bed last night. That has to be it. I'm going to go on this date and have the time of my life.

As I enter Woodstock, I start searching for the pair of eyes that left me in a trance.

"Rye—over here! How are you," he says as he leans in for a hug.

"I'm doing amazing," I reply.

The rest of the night, we word vomited about our future career desires, goals in life, and family and friends. I truly enjoyed my time. It's really rare to find a boy in IV that is family-oriented and cares about my

goals and passions. He's everything a girl could dream about.

"Hey, let's go down by the water for a bit," Jack says.

"Yeah, let's go," I reply with a grin.

I feel so giddy, I feel so lucky. At the beachfront near the lagoon, we sit on the only bench there is. We continue our talk about life, conspiracy theories, and our hobbies.

"Do you want to race on Birds around town and see who wins?" he asks me.

"Yeah let's race!" I say with adrenaline building up in the pit of my stomach.

"OKAY! READY, SET, GO!" Jack yells.

I zoom past down The Loop, taking in the architecture of the modern brown buildings. IV is truly a beautiful college town.

Speeding down the streets is such a refreshing feeling. I feel alive. It feels like I had been so far away for some reason. I try to soak it in like there's no tomorrow. As I try to pass Jack, I take a turn on Pardall passing Buddha Bowls and I hear a loud BEEP. I crash into a parked car and I start to see black with stars.

BEEP. BEEP. BEEP.

"Rylie, can you shut your alarm, please! Some of us are trying to sleep, you know," my little sister Amelia yells. I shut off my alarm and lay back down.

Oh yeah, that's right. I'm not racing around IV with Jack or going to class in person. I'm not grabbing pizza on a Friday night out. I'm in the middle of nowhere in Missouri, miles away from UCSB and my dream boy. Guess I'll only find those in my dreams. **W**



RIDESHARE ROULETTE

AN ANTHOLOGY OF IV RIDESHARES

WORDS // ZAIDA LAGUNAS

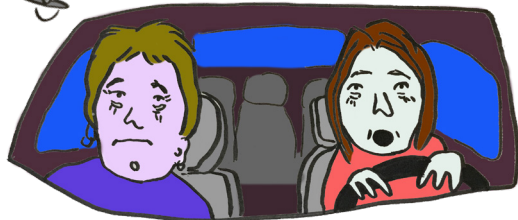
ILLUSTRATION // HANNAH FORD-MONROE

DESIGN // EMILY KOMESSAR

IF YOU'RE LIKE ME living in IV without a driver's license or a car, chances are that you've heard of the UCSB Facebook Rideshare group. This group helps students find rides to and from IV in a more eco-friendly and generally cheaper manner. Usually, drivers offer rides with a fee, typically ranging from \$10-\$25 depending on the estimated length of the drive, cost of gas, or whether or not rent is due soon. After logging onto the group and accepting a driver's offer, a normal ride is what most would expect, but unfortunately that isn't always the case. While scrolling through the rideshare page, I wondered whether other UCSB students have had unexpected rideshare experiences like mine. In hopes of finding some interesting stories, I posted on the Facebook Rideshare group and the UCSB Reddit page asking students to share some of their stories with me. Along with my own, here are a few I found that present the unpredictable nature of rideshares.

EDC - EXTREMELY DRAINING CAR (RIDE) // Zaida Lagunas

The ride was off to a promising start when the driver and two of the riders shared they were headed to Las Vegas for EDC and needed to make a quick stop near my city to pick up a friend. They all seemed like cool people—and they were—except for the guy I had to sit next to, who made it his mission to make this car ride one of the less exciting moments of my life. When we picked him up, he decided to sit in the middle seat between me and another girl, which was okay with the both of us. What wasn't okay was when he started manspreading and shifting all his weight to our sides whenever the car made a slight turn. Still, I didn't get too upset, until I was scrolling through my phone and he decided to grab it out of my hands, open my Snapchat, and start recording himself. I asked if he could give it back and he did, only after taking a few more selfies. Throughout the entire drive, he kept trying to take my phone as well as the other girl's phone, despite both of us saying no several times. Four very long and draining hours later, I was sure I would never let myself take a rideshare again.



CHICKEN SANDWICH WITH A SIDE OF CAR CRASH

// Gerardo Guterrez

"I got picked up by my rideshare person and he had his friend on the passenger side. We were all heading towards LA. In the car, the driver asked me if they could make a quick food stop at Oxnard. We ended up stopping at the drive thru for Popeye's because they both wanted to try the new chicken sandwich. In the drive-thru, the driver started to reverse and the car behind started to beep at us. I guess he didn't hear, and all of sudden, I felt the car crash into the car behind us. My driver stepped out of the car to go apologize and all I could hear was the other driver loudly cursing at him, calling him stupid. I was in shock and couldn't believe my rideshare driver just crashed into a car! As the dispute started getting crazy, the driver's friend in the passenger seat got out of the car and I thought he was about to throw hands. They both ended up coming back inside the car and didn't even say anything to me. All I could think in my head was, 'Are y'all gonna ask if I'm okay? Or at least offer me food as an apology for this?' But nope, they just ended up ordering their own food and then we were once again off to LA!"

ROADSIDE INVASION

// Hannah Justesen

"I took a rideshare pretty late on a Friday night because I wanted to visit my family for the weekend. The ride was pretty normal, and I even found myself almost falling asleep until we started driving through this really dark, empty road. I noticed these weird white orbs hovering around the mountains nearby. Before panicking, I thought to myself that they might just be drones. Suddenly the car engine randomly stopped and wouldn't turn back on, and the orbs started to get brighter and closer, I was sure we were under an alien attack. A few cars had driven by, but none stopped to help us—I seriously thought I was never going to make it home. What made it worse was that no one in the car had cell phone service, so there wasn't much we could do except wait for the car to turn on. Eventually, the engine did turn on and I made it home without seeing any aliens, but I still have no idea what those orbs in the sky were."





SILVER LINING

// Kat S.

"I took a rideshare from IV to Irvine with this senior guy when I was a freshman. We got along pretty well and both had a similar sense of humor. He started to let me know whenever he was going back home, so I'd have someone to take me. Then, he started to give me discounts. Then, he started taking me for free and buying me snacks on the drive. Then, at school, he started asking me to actually go out to eat and hang out with friends and offered to pick me up after I went partying. He even bought and drove over food to me one time for no reason. I remember thinking it was a little weird, because he was so lovey dovey—he'd want to hold hands, he'd want to text about how much he missed me, liked me, wanted to cuddle, see me... If you think about it, in another universe this is kinda a cute story if it was some other girl and some other guy

in some other universe. Okay, so here's where the twist comes in.

This probably sounds normal (albeit with a pretty clingy guy) up until this point. Except, every rideshare we went on, he was going to visit his GIRLFRIEND. I ended up cutting things off but the silver lining of all this is that I met one of his housemates from going over to his house a lot and we became super close friends. All of last year we were gym buddies and went grocery shopping together. He also introduced me to one of my current best friends. The two of them went to my gigs every Friday night (I'm a singer/songwriter) and we hung out every weekend, before COVID happened of course. It was honestly all so weird but I got something great out of it. I wouldn't undo it, because then I wouldn't have met two of my closest friends."

ONE DIRECTION INFECTION

// Daphne Waren

"I took a rideshare to LA once in a car filled with four other girls. The driver asked if anyone wanted the aux cord and everyone said she could play her own music so she did. I was ready to put on my earphones since I usually like to listen to my own music during drives until I heard her start to play a band that I've listened to thousands of times: One Direction.

It turns out that all of us in the car went through a One Direction phase at one point in our lives, so we kind of ended up having a sing-along session to One Direction the entire ride to LA, it was such a fun experience. This drive has become one of my favorite memories from my years at UCSB."

SILENT PLEA

// Jordan Rackmil

"This is nothing too crazy but I had an extremely awkward rideshare experience where nobody said a word for four hours. There were five people in the car, including me, and it was completely silent until I finally piped up a whole four hours into the drive asking if we could please stop for a snack. The driver was just blasting her music for the entire drive so nobody could think, let alone talk." w



FURRY FRIENDS FOR THE SOUL

SAVING STREET CATS, STEALING HEARTS

WORDS // VISALA TALLAVARJULA ILLUSTRATION + DESIGN // EMILY KOMESSAR

AT ONE POINT, every single one of the cats at Cat Therapy was at risk of being euthanized. But hidden away from the ever-bustling State Street in downtown Santa Barbara, these cats are safe, healthy, and happy. Instead of enduring the cruel conditions of a shelter, Cat Therapy provides a hospitable, snug, and fresh space for their cats. As soon as visitors walk into Cat Therapy's warm cat cafe, they can observe the sunshine pooling on the ground as cats lie blissed-out on the fluffy rug or playfully interacting with people around the room.

But this was before COVID-19. Now, Cat Therapy has a significantly reduced amount of visitors allowed inside the cafe, and it's severely affecting their business and amount of funds. I remember the day that I came upon an Instagram post from Cat Therapy's founder, Catalina Esteves Dachena. Reading about Cat Therapy's struggles during the past year made me feel down in the dumps and I wanted to help, but I didn't know how to. During this pandemic, many people have found themselves so lacking in social interaction that they decide to fall back on the next best alternative—getting a pet. For UCSB students who find themselves in such a predicament, I have a suggestion for you: if you're looking to spend some time with a furry friend, consider visiting Cat Therapy .

Cat Therapy's main goal is to find permanent homes for cats. The cats that they take in are from a rescue based in Los Angeles called Stray Cat Alliance, not from Santa Barbara shelters. The reason they do this is because Santa Barbara is a no-kill county, while Los Angeles has a high euthanasia rate.






Essentially, Cat Therapy's cats would have all been at risk of being euthanized had they not been brought into Cat Therapy. Learning about Cat Therapy's mission inspired me, and perhaps it can do the same for the greater community to consider assisting Cat Therapy in any way that they can. For example, if you adopts from Cat Therapy, this will open up a space for more cats to be rescued since the cafe can only take in a certain amount of animals at a time.

I wanted to learn more about Cat Therapy's work, goals, and values, so I spoke with two members of the Cat Therapy team: Alaina Hodben, Assistant Manager/Host and Vivian McGowan, a Host/Cat Guardian. From my conversations with both of them, I learned that Cat Therapy is truly an organization created to help socialize and adopt out cats. But first and foremost, it looks out for the cats' best interests. One thing in particular that Vivian mentioned struck a chord with me. "The way it [Cat Therapy] is set up allows for us to take our time with the shy cats," McGowan said. "We have had a few bonded pairs of two shy cats, which are a lot harder to adopt out compared to a kitten who comes and sits in your lap. But keeping these cats together does not have to be sacrificed."

How can our community help Cat Therapy and its goal to save cats from being put down? As it turns out, you don't have to adopt a cat from Cat Therapy to help out. "The easiest way to support us would be to follow our [Cat Therapy's] Instagram. Following our social media,

maybe sharing those posts, and, by doing that, it will increase our audience and more people will be able to come in," Hodben said.

McGowan also mentioned that, although Cat Therapy currently isn't taking any volunteers at this time, she urges cat-lovers to stop by and spend some time with some furry friends. Cat Therapy is currently open, and they only allow a small number of visitors inside due to COVID restrictions. "Make reservations to visit or do walk-ins which have an entrance fee that essentially goes completely to the cats," McGowan recommends. Cat Therapy does not profit off of adoptions, and this is their sole source of income as well as the largest way for someone to help support them.

Cat Therapy's mission to save cats and find their forever homes is so uplifting to me. The fact that such a small business continues to go above and beyond to rescue, socialize, and adopt out cats is absolutely amazing and inspirational. If you ever find yourself nearby, try and stop by Cat Therapy—the lovely, woman-owned cat cafe nestled in the center of Santa Barbara! 

Contact Cat Therapy

@cattherapysb

cattherapysb.com

Rescue partner: straycatalliance.org

805-560-1996

hello@cattherapysb.com



WORDS // KAT SHEN

ILLUSTRATION + DESIGN // ANNA LEWIS

QUARANTUNES

My Top 10 Favorite Albums of Quarantine, Ranked

AS A SAD GIRL sat lazily on her bed for the eighth consecutive hour, listening to “Punisher” for the hundredth time, she wondered if she should get a bowl of ice cream to drown out the dullness of her day (this particular girl may or may not have been me).

Instead, she cued “Punisher” again.

Here, I’ll be breaking down my top ten greatest quarantine albums. Some were made to distract us from isolation, some are specifically made for quarantine, and some weren’t for quarantine but describe this terrible time completely nonetheless.

Scan to listen:





1 “Punisher” Phoebe Bridgers

“I’m not pushing the record until things go back to ‘normal’ because I don’t think they should.” On June 18, 2020, Phoebe Bridgers announced the release of her sophomore solo studio release, “Punisher.”

Her apocalyptic masterpiece examines the exact things the collective conscious was at odds with during the pandemic. But Bridgers wrote “Punisher” before COVID-19 started...meaning she was writing without the pandemic to take away the organic timing of these songs she boiled over. The coincidental kismet-like timing is icing on the cake to how wonderful, personal, and special this album is to me.

Bridgers can make you cry over a lost flame one moment, then laugh about their vapid, big-mouthed mom the next. She unknowingly gifted us all with a record that was as generous as it was unforgiving, and as addicting as it is dangerous—all while soothing us while holding us in a chokehold.

Alexa, play “Punisher” and let’s all cry on the floor together.

Favorite: “ICU”

2 “Evermore” Taylor Swift

Normally a calculated and whip-smart marketing genius famous for her usual drawn out album teasers, Swift went the complete opposite direction. Known for switching moods and eras, “Evermore” introduced Swift fans to few key differences this time a two-album era, and, much to critics’ chagrin, a songwriting focus almost completely outside of herself.

Here are a few memorable examples of how Swift deftly utilized this: “Tis The Damn Season” is an emotional yet somewhat detached song about the thoughts and conversations of two former lovers reconnecting for the holidays despite the repercussions. Then there’s “Closure,” a sharp whip of a song that feels like a stumbling walk through the aftermath of a breakup. The bonus track, and my personal favorite off “Evermore” (and possibly of all of Swift’s discography) “Right Where You Left Me,” is one that you won’t want to miss. Anything I say about it will ruin its first listen.

On “Evermore,” Swift’s writing is polished, and instead of writing folk songs, she’s letting the folk genre spill out of her. Her storytelling hasn’t been this vivid and held such strong since “Red,” and her voice and maturity haven’t shone through with such force ... ever. This time around, she drove the knife in and twisted it, so she’ll be stuck with us forever(more). (Sorry).

Favorite: “Right Where You Left Me”





3 “How I’m Feeling Now” Charli XCX

This album really represents the use of technology as a medium for relationships to help thrive during the pandemic. I know this was a huge thing for me personally during this time. A perfect encapsulation of the pandemic as a piece of musical art.

Favorite: “Forever”

4 “Saint Cloud” Waxahatchee

Tender, dreamy, emotional folk with a backbone. Slap your knee, cry, then wake up in a haze to this one.

Favorite: “Lilacs”

5 “Color Theory” Soccer Mommy

The most mature voice to come out of a Soccer Mommy record, colors wash the songs in every melancholic emotion imaginable.

Favorite: “Circle The Drain”

6 “Super Monster” Claud

The first artist signed to Phoebe Bridgers’ Saddest Factory Record label, Claud somehow finds a way to make the parts that hurt the most in love sound almost...fun?

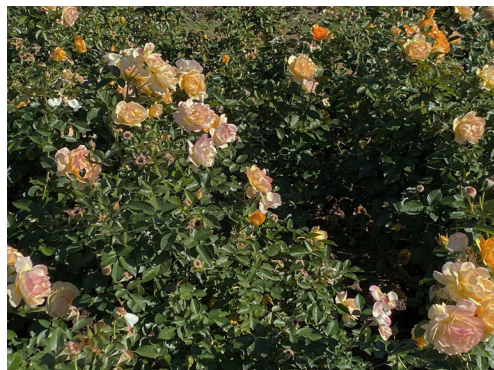
Favorite: “Overnight”

7 “RTJ 4” Run the Jewels

The fact that they literally predicted the future on this album alone earns this record a spot on the list (even though it was a fabulous record in and of itself).

Also, “Oo La La” just slaps. In no universe does it not.

Favorite: “Oo La La”



8 “Notes on a Conditional Form” The 1975

Dancing and jumping uncontrollably on your bed screaming the words to “Me & You Together Song,” then crying facedown on the floor to “Jesus Christ 2005 God Bless America,” then swinging from your ceiling fan to “Roadkill.”*

Every square inch of your room is necessary for the listening of this record.

*WARNING: Please do not try this at home.

Favorite: “Me & You Together Song”

9 “Microphones in 2020” The Microphones

Phil Elverum’s “Microphones in 2020” explodes with the same conceptual ambition and musical innovation that characterized his work from the turn of the century. With hypnotic guitar riffs clashing against dark, omnipresent drone passages, only a poetic masterpiece would do justice to the album’s cinematic backdrop. Elverum certainly delivers.

Favorite: “Microphones in 2020”



10 “Fake It Flowers” Beabadoobee

Named after the flower shop that infiltrated her voice memo titles while formulating the demos for this record, “Fake It Flowers” ties the feeling of natural, organic, and hand-made pop rock sugar explosions. Bea’s music is in large part her DIY nature, but the record almost lives up to it.

Favorite: “Dye It Red”

Honorable Mentions:

“En Garde” - Ethan Gruska

“Dedicated Side B” - Carly Rae Jepsen

“Miss Anthropocene” - Grimes

“Folklore” - Taylor Swift

“1000 Gees and the Tree of Clues” - 100 Gees

“Circles” - Mac Miller

“Future Nostalgia” - Dua Lipa [W](#)



OFF IN THE DISTANCE I heard a distinct sound—the metallic blades cutting through the air. Could this finally be it? Was this really happening? I touched my face to make sure that I wasn't dreaming. I was twenty years old, and I was nearing the end of my first deployment.

As the helicopter neared, my excitement grew. My heart raced, and my legs and hands were jittery. I couldn't stand still; I had to pace in circles. I could feel the gusts of wind getting more violent, pushing me back. The sound grew louder. Over the hill I saw a black shadow illuminated by the moonlight. Within seconds, I felt like I was being thrashed around inside a wind tunnel. Sand, dust, and particles filled the air. I didn't care. I embraced the feeling. I ran to board the helicopter.

I had just spent eight months in a remote small outpost in Afghanistan called Baraki Barak. I was with my platoon, and this was my final day. Ever since my arrival at the base, I had felt nothing but misery. We had been assigned to the outpost in order to create a "safe space" to protect the US forces in the province as they slowly withdrew from the area. This meant that my job was to protect our base and make our presence known in the area. We performed daily patrols to signal to the Taliban that we were in town. During the winter, we had no equipment to keep us warm, so every night it felt like we were inside a freezer. The cold would creep in, forcing me to wiggle my toes so they wouldn't freeze together. In a desperate attempt to keep my hands warm, I urinated on them, only to realize that the freezing liquid made them even colder. Small red sores were appearing on my hands, the beginning stings of frostbite. In the spring,

SIERRA HOTEL


LAST DAY AT BARAKI BARAK

WORDS // ROBERT HICKMAN
ILLUSTRATION + DESIGN // RACHEL SMITH

our only oven broke, and for a month we couldn't replace it. We rationed our food. One biscuit for breakfast, one biscuit for dinner. Every night I could feel my stomach screaming for food.

I placed all of my hope in leaving, so that I could escape the torment, but the date of departure kept getting pushed further and further back. With each delay, I lost a part of myself and became resigned to the fact that this place was my "home." I had to accept this reality; I had to live in the moment. There was no alternative. I couldn't spare the mental power that was needed to imagine being elsewhere. There was no more day dreaming about getting some R&R (rest and recuperation) on the main base, or starting the day by enjoying a warm hot shower, or treating myself to an ice cream sundae to cool off in the heat. I tucked those happy thoughts into a box and locked them away. The delays made me feel stupid for hoping this existence could be over. "How stupid could I be?" I would ask myself. I need to stop foolishly thinking that life would get better here.

I grew sour and bitter. I hated everything and everyone. The air, the people, the missions; I hated myself for ever wanting to join the Army.

As the helicopter began to take off, the pleasing thoughts that I had locked up slowly returned. I thought about how great it would feel taking a long, hot shower. I wanted to sleep in a nice proper bed. I felt the bitterness leaving, and optimism beginning to seduce me. I took one last look back at the small outpost as we flew over the hill, and I said goodbye to the old me. 

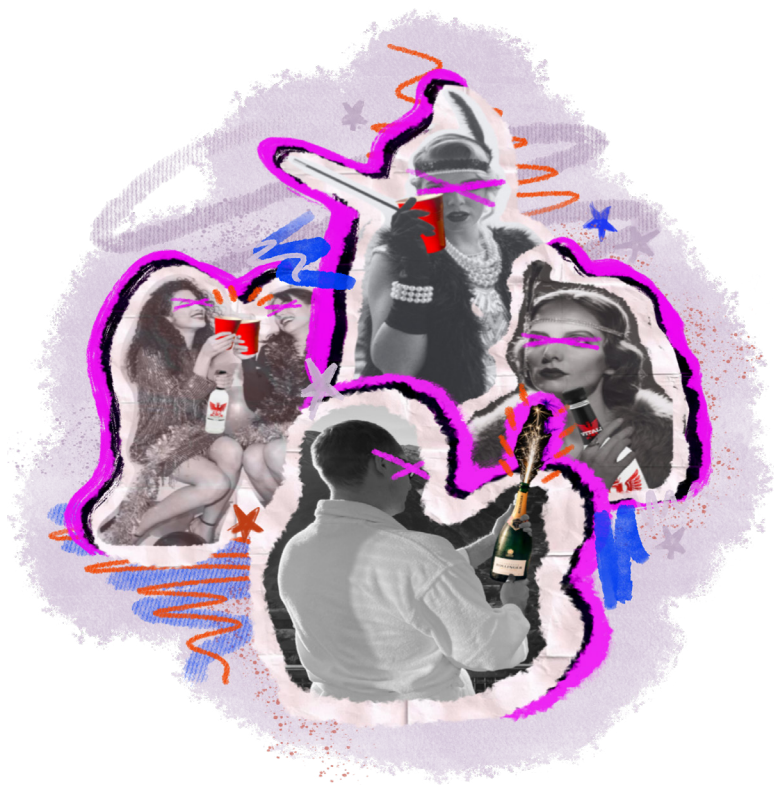
ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Robert Hickman served as an Infantryman in the U.S. Army for three years. He earned his AA in biology at Reedley College and is currently studying biology at UC Santa Barbara where he will be graduating in the spring. He plans to become a physician. He enjoys long walks at the beach and exercising.

ABOUT THE SIERRA HOTEL:

"Sierra Hotel" represents writing from participants in UCSB's creative writing workshop for veterans and military dependents. The workshop, which began in 2012, provides the opportunity for this unique group of UCSB students to write about their military experiences as they study the craft of creative non-fiction. To read more work by UCSB student veterans and military dependents, visit Instant Separation, a Digital Journal of Military Experience from the University of California: www.instantseparation.org





GOLDEN AGE REVIVAL

A Post-COVID Daydream

WORDS // RAINA MENDONCA

ILLUSTRATION + DESIGN // ANNA MONZON

ISLA VISTANS FLOOD THE STREETS of DP, shouting and rejoicing as house music fills the air. A never-ending stream of colorful banners and streamers hang from one balcony to another. Girls rollerblade in and out of the crowds, wearing their favorite hot pink flared pants coupled with chunky white hoops and feather boas. Boys enthusiastically balance 30 racks on their heads, rocking animal print button-ups and dangling earrings. People move synchronously to the unceasing music, throwing their hands in the air as their hips sway side to side. Isla Vista pulsates with

an innate energy and spirit that is familiar but hasn't been seen or felt in a very long time.

Remember the eruption of life that would ensue on Friday evenings before the pandemic? You could literally feel the tangible excitement and relief of getting through another week of school. Every weekend's festivities held endless possibilities of people to meet and memories to be made. Then COVID struck—sucking all the life and youthful vigor out of Isla Vista. Empty restaurants and desolate streets became the new

normal, turning IV into a ghost town and leaving locals in a constant state of confusion and uncertainty.

Fast forward one year later, and things are finally starting to look up. The vaccine has brought on a new wave of hope and optimism for the future that just feels right. The air feels a little lighter, and we can finally breathe knowing that we are heading one step forward.

I often catch myself daydreaming about what IV will look like in a COVID-free world. It's natural that once vaccinated and given the green light, the streets of Isla Vista will surge with euphoria and celebration. Champagne bottles will be popped along with handles of our very cherished Vitali. Will we experience another Golden Age much like the Roaring Twenties? Perhaps instead of jazz and flapper dresses, a new era of art and culture will strike Isla Vista in a way that's unique to its youth and effervescence.

The Roaring Twenties followed a time of tragedy and upheaval brought on by the aftermath of World War I, a global flu pandemic, and an economic depression. The time period represented the formation of a popular culture that defied Prohibition and promoted exuberant, carefree lifestyles. The dawning of the Jazz Age—coupled with the new “flapper” style and the opening of underground speakeasies—fostered a contagious, freeing energy.

There was an undeniable craving for late nights filled with dance, drinking, and debauchery. Women embraced their inherent promiscuity by sporting their favorite mini dresses and cigarette packs, aiding in their quest for sexual liberation. Jazz music filled dance halls, encouraging everyone to set their worries free and groove away the past years of fear and chaos.

It's very likely that IV will experience a similar social and cultural revolution

that mimics the attitude of the '20s. But what will this look like exactly? I envision walking down DP, sun shining while rainbow confetti pours down from the heavens. Reunited friends and lost strangers embrace one another lovingly as bottles are popped and face masks are tossed.

Rather than the jazz music of the '20s, it's possible that IV will experience a resurgence of house music. House music is first and foremost dance music. People travel across the world to experience the best live house music, as its deep, rhythmic baselines and repetitive beats give them the freedom to dance and express themselves. It's not surprising that it has become such a big part of youth culture, especially during a time where you discover your own independence and identity. What better way to welcome the approaching Golden Age than with music that gets you grooving through the night and into the early morning.

As for the fashion that is to come post-COVID, I think we can expect lots of bright, vibrant colors to replace the neutral tones of our overworn loungewear. Hot pink might be a popular choice of color as it represents love, sensuality, and playfulness—all themes that reflect the attitude of the '20s. Fun accessories, like bucket hats and chunky jewelry, will serve as perfect complements to the vivacious style that is to come in the Golden Age. Start shopping now and prep for the fun fashion trends that are coming post-pandemic.

At the end of the day, there is so much mystery and unknown for what Isla Vista and the rest of the world will look like post-COVID. But I can assure you that it will be revolutionary and truly something for the books. So sit tight, and hang in there. Whatever it is will definitely be worth the wait. [w](#)

A large crowd of people is gathered outdoors at sunset. In the background, several massive, ancient-looking trees with thick trunks and dense green foliage dominate the scene. The sky is a mix of soft pinks, oranges, and blues. In the foreground, a diverse group of people, mostly young adults, are seen. Some are standing, some are sitting on the ground or on low stone walls. They are dressed in casual attire like jackets, sweaters, and jeans. To the left, a portion of a modern house with large windows and a balcony is visible. The overall atmosphere is one of a communal outdoor event.

THE SUNSET CLUB

PHOTOGRAPHY // LUKAS OLESINSKI
DESIGN // RACHEL SMITH







WRITERS



Leslie Reyes



Zaida Lagunas



Visala Tallavarjula



Kat Shen



Haley Walker



Chloe Kimmel



Jane Nguyen



Janet Wang
Editor-In-Chief



Allison Khadoo



Veronica Vo



Linda Chong



Raina Mendonca



Chelsie Alexander



Alyssa Moreno



Ashley Rusch

MEET THE STAFF

Advisors:
Anna Jensen
DJ Palladino
Brittany Ragan



Angel Schneider-Reuter



Anna Monzon



Solée Meidus



Hannah Ford-Monroe



Rachel Smith
Art Director



Anna Lewis



Allison Tran



Rachel Deng
Art Director



Dylan Lasher



Kaytlin Troxler



Zhiting Yang



Lukas Olesinski



Emily Komessar

ARTISTS

ISLA VISTA GIVES YOU CREDIT

ILLUSTRATION + DESIGN // RACHEL DENG

MAGIC LANTERN FILMS

FILM/MEDIA 119ML

ISLA VISTA FILM EVENTS

Contact DJ Palladino at:

djpalladino@ihc.ucsb.edu

Magic Lantern Films teaches the ins and outs of film programming using the IV Theater as a lab. Students gain experience in budgeting, publicizing, researching theater management, series-pitching, and curating. These efforts culminate in the execution of screenings that come out of students' own pitches.

IV LIVE!

THEATER 42/142

PUBLIC RELATIONS & ON-SITE EVENT
MANAGEMENT

Contact Anna Jensen at

akjensen@ihc.ucsb.edu

Promote and produce weekly Improvability comedy shows along with additional live performances in Isla Vista. Learn backstage and front-of-the-house skills. Explore the fields of public relations, advertising, and production management in a real-world setting.

SHAKESPEARE IN THE PARK

THEATER 194A

GROUP STUDIES IN ACTING &
DIRECTING

Contact Anna Jensen at

akjensen@ihc.ucsb.edu

Every year in spring Shakespeare in the Park comes to Isla Vista. Experience stagecraft with SHAKESPEARE IN THE PARK. Students are cast in assigned roles, execute specific production duties, attend rehearsals, and, finally, perform their work during the final week of the term. All majors welcome.

WORD MAGAZINE

INT 185ST

WRITE OR DESIGN FOR WORD

Contact Anna Jensen at

akjensen@ihc.ucsb.edu

Student journalists, writers, and visual artists produce this magazine by taking WORD as a course (INT185ST). Veterans of WORD are able to apply to the magazine as a club member through WORD's campus organization through SEAL. We welcome new journalists, designers, photographers, and illustrators from all majors. Offered fall, winter, and spring quarters.

Submission Information:

WORD takes open submissions from all people who call Isla Vista home for its poetry section only. Submissions of poetry in English or in Spanish are welcome. If you would like to submit poetry in consideration for publication, please send your submission to wordmagazinefamily@gmail.com and put "poetry" in the subject line.