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Spring 2022

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CEDARS

Cedarville University Student Magazine

Spring 2022

'Hacker in Residence'

Professor Benjamin Sprague Inspires the Next Generation of Internet Guardians

Video Games as Art

Video Games' Stake in the Entertainment Industry

Tytist Dean

Basketball Player's Unique Path Leads Him to Cedarville

Russia & Ukraine

Russian Invasion Raises Questions About the Future



THE 'GOD'S NOT DEAD' SYNDROME

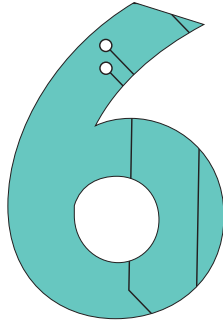
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On Social Media

By Heidi Raine

I recently friended my best friend's mother on Facebook. The interaction went like this:

"Heidie, you have a Facebook? I thought it was for old people."

"Haha yeah, I guess...do you have one?"

"Yes! Friend me!"

Kimber is now one of my 738 friends, a number that feels obscene but also doesn't begin to capture all of my family, high school classmates, coworkers, old teachers, church friends, college friends, camp friends, sister's-church's friends and obscure half-step aunts that I think I'll have to invite to my wedding someday in the name of politeness.

That 738 is far from being a comprehensive list of the people in my life, and still, it feels overwhelming, too many faces to keep track of and report to. It feels both insincere and intimate, like I'm sharing my life's milestones via voicemail or to a room of people not looking at me or on a poster in the cafeteria. It's one of the many issues I have with social media.

At 14, I had accounts on Instagram, Snapchat, Tumblr and Facebook. I killed Tumblr first, then Snapchat, then Instagram. I still have a Facebook, but for how long? Only time will tell.

Things I remember from Snapchat: If you leave somebody on "read," it's rude, but it can also be a means of letting someone know that you're mad with them. If you save messages, people might get suspicious of you, but if you delete messages, you won't have receipts if you need them. Snapchat tells people when you screenshot, so you're only safe if you take pictures of messages on another device. Oh, and the pictures

disappear.

From Tumblr: Bad black-and-white gifs as well as some peak humor and measurable moral degeneracy. Tumblr was the wild west of the internet, and I'll always speak of it slightly fondly — like your old cat that would pee on the carpet and, though cuddly, did everyone a favor by dying.

From Instagram: Something about curating an aesthetic? Your posts needed to match like outfits for family pictures. The danger of "liking" something from years ago while stalking somebody's profile. There's an "explore" page, which houses endless posts curated to your interests. Instagram also has stories, which is where people post things they're not ready to have permanent: new relationships, that day's outfit, the quintessential sunset picture.

These are the "rules" that I wearied to have energy for. I'd go through seasons of deleting and re-downloading apps, going private, accidentally liking posts and scrutinizing filters until one day, I broke.

This came after a FaceTime call with my sister in which I asked, "but how will people know if I get engaged or graduate or get a new job?" Confident and unbothered, she replied: "They won't." And it was liberating.

I deleted my Instagram shortly thereafter (which was unnecessarily difficult and only further convinced me that Zuckerberg is out for souls), and it has been a seamless transition. I've moved social media rules to the trash bin in my mind, and I have so much more space.

Now, over a year later, virtually devoid of a social media presence and halfway there to pulling the plug on my inactive Facebook, I've tried to ask myself — why did I care so much for these platforms? And why do the

majority of my peers love them?

A collection of possible answers: Professional presence; access to cute nephew pictures; a career in marketing; a small business; a love for photography; social mores; social pressures; personal pressures; pride; the surplus of resources; vanity; connectedness; something to kill time; a way to hold onto people far away; a way of stalking an ex; a storehouse for memories; a living, breathing yellow pages; and a means of "checking out" after mentally-taxing days.

I'm sure my reasons were a collection of the above, And yet, as much as I tried to hide behind the answer that social media let me "view uplifting content," that was a lie. At best, social media was a morally neutral force in my life — and we are rarely at our best. At worst, it stirred up jealousy, pride, lust, insecurity, greed, consumerism and other gunk in my heart.

If you've found a way around social media's vices, I want to talk because you've scaled a mountain that I chose not to climb. Feel free to reach out with a call or text — there aren't many other ways to contact me.



Heidi Raine is a junior English major at Cedarville with concentrations in creative and journalistic writing. In addition to working at the writing center, Heidi loves perusing her local Goodwill, drinking iced cortados, watching videos of sea otters, and caring for her small forest of plants.

Social Media's Cyberbullying Problem

By Anna Harman

According to stopbullying.gov, "Cyberbullying is bullying that takes place over digital devices like cell phones, computers and tablets."

Cyberbullying can affect your reputation for things such as college admissions, employment and other social environments. Nearly everyone has a little computer in their pocket, so it is easy to access all social media platforms at any moment.

Children as young as 9 years old have smartphones. Cyberbullying can be a result of a person's boredom, insecurities, desire for revenge, lack of empathy and many other attitudes.

"I think people cyberbully because they feel insecure about themselves and want to bring others down so they can exalt themselves," Cedarville sophomore Seth Hering said.

When people are hidden behind their screens, they don't have to face the person on the other side of it.

"I see people get cyberbullied almost every day," sophomore Summer Gray said. "Society has gotten so used to using sarcasm and jokes as a coping mechanism for literally anything, and they have forgotten that words do hurt."

People often don't view others they see on Instagram, YouTube, Tik Tok and Snapchat as real people. They're just a profile. They don't have feelings, families or friends. They don't have struggles to empathize with, only mistakes to be criticized, judged and mocked.

This is a common misconception that many people, whether consciously or unconsciously, believe.



Graphics by Caroline King

Many major companies such as YouTube, Instagram and Tik Tok have taken steps to help prevent cyberbullying. YouTube has a series of harassment and cyberbullying policies.

The company states, "Content that threatens individuals is not allowed on YouTube. We also don't allow content that targets an individual with prolonged or malicious insults based on intrinsic attributes. These attributes include their protected



group status or physical traits."

Viewers can report any content or channels that they find offensive, dangerous or threatening. Instagram also has taken measures to fight against cyberbullying. Users can block, report or unfollow other users any time if they feel threatened or targeted. Instagram added more features in recent years that went further.

The restrict feature automatically hides potentially offensive comments so only you and the bully can see their comments on your post unless you approve the comments. The bullies can still say unfriendly things, but they won't know that no one can see their comments. This prevents other people from chiming in and piling on with their own insults.

On the other hand, the comment warning feature informs people that their comment might be deemed offensive before they post. Head of Instagram Adam Mosseri said this to users of the platform: "We're focused

"I think people cyberbully because they feel insecure about themselves and want to bring others down so they can exalt themselves."

Seth Hering, Cedarville sophomore

on keeping you safe and building new features that fight bullying, improve equity, address fairness and help you feel supported. I'm excited about how these changes will help you create the next wave of culture, and I can't wait to see how you inspire us next."

Most social media platforms have features similar to these, yet cyberbullying persists. If people really want to say something to hurt or tear someone down, they will find a way. They might make a new account if they're blocked or restricted and continue making comments. They may never be caught or stopped.

What can be done about this? Companies such as YouTube and Instagram can continue to implement policies and restrictions on content that may be considered bullying or harassment. They can make it a higher priority to locate harmful content or speech and take it down immediately, instead of responding to reports five days later when, for example, kids from school have already seen and joined the hurtful comments on a classmate's post.

If social media companies were quicker in addressing instances of cyberbullying, maybe the bullies could be stopped.

Many of these companies have been open about their intolerance for bullying on their platforms. It is likely that in the future, they will improve how quickly and effectively they handle offensive content. What we can do for now is report cyberbullying when we see it or when we are the target so that these people can be exposed and their bullying stopped in its tracks.

Anna Harman is a sophomore Biblical Studies major and also a reporter for Cedars. She appreciates writing, peppermint tea, flowers, and going to concerts.



'Hacker in Residence' Inspires the Next Generation of Internet Guardians

By Kathryn McDonald

In the Spring of 2021, Cedarville University welcomed Benjamin Sprague as an adjunct professor in the School of Engineering and Computer Science.

Sprague is serving in a temporary position as Cyber Visiting Professor and Fellow, a role which allows him to be on staff as a professor for a short period of time before returning to his career in cyber security.

They affectionately call him the "hacker in residence."

Dr. Seth Hamman, a colleague in the School of Engineering and Computer Science, explains that although Sprague has been involved with the school in the past in smaller roles, to have him here as a visiting professor is a huge blessing.

"He brings real world experience, passion for cybersecurity and a lot of technical depth and skills that add to our classes," Hamman said. "Not only that, but he uses his cyber security knowledge to support Christian ministries, which is great for our students to see."

Within the school, Sprague is focused on developing different classes within the Cyber Operations Major, which was added as a program in 2020. Sprague teaches a cyber operations class and is co-teaching a class on software security. In addition to his role in the classroom, he also advises a senior design team where he works with four students who are building a product.

Hamman explained that Sprague's real-world skills are what make him so outstanding. His teaching is informed by experience with different

principles that he used and applied to his own projects.

For example, Sprague can easily explain the concept of cryptocurrency to his students because he has designed his own cryptocurrency. The how and why of cryptocurrency then becomes an explanation of the technical aspects behind it.

"Ben brings a great technical depth and deeper understanding to each class he teaches, which is exactly what our students are looking for," Hamman said.

Sprague hopes to contribute to the development of programs that will be impacting students for a long time to come.

"One of my goals is to create some labs and things that will be reusable in the future by other people," Sprague said.

Sprague was one of six students who graduated from Cedarville in 2006 in the first computer engineering class. He attended graduate school at Northern Illinois University where he studied physics. There he worked with the Particle Accelerator and Astrophysics Group. After beginning a Ph.D., Sprague's academic advisor passed away, propelling him to look for a job outside of physics. Sprague said that even through this unexpected season, God clearly

worked in his life to allow opportunities to serve Him in unique ways.

Returning to computer science, Sprague began working for a company in Cincinnati and stayed for 11 years. He worked in a variety of roles doing everything computer-related.

As he works in a new role at a local start-up and teaches at Cedarville, Sprague realized that these years provided valuable learning experiences that he is still benefiting from today.

Patrick Dudenhofer, assistant professor of Computer Science and Cyber Operations at Cedarville, said as he has co-taught with Sprague this semester, one of his greatest joys has

been tag-teaming with Sprague to answer students' questions.

"His perspective comes from his experience in industry whereas mine comes from being in a classroom for several years," he said.

Dudenhofer said as he thinks about the character that Sprague embodies in his personal and professional life, he would point to Proverbs 22:29, which says, "Do you see a man skillful in his work? He will stand before kings; he will not stand before obscure men."

"It is neat working with him because you can see that he is so



Benjamin Sprague

skilled at the things that he does," Dudenhofer said. "That overflows in what he does and when he interacts with students."

With his background in computer science, Sprague developed the skills that make him a good hacker. He explained hacking is about understanding a program better than the person who originally made it so that you can exploit the weaknesses and break through a program's defenses.

For people who want to become a good hacker, the first step is to put things together before you try taking them apart or looking for flaws in the system. Sprague's ability to design and develop programs allows him to sharpen his skills as a hacker, which enables him to work in a defensive role in cyber security.

The program at Cedarville puts an emphasis on examining the ethics that undergird the practical applications of hacking in the real world.

"Ethics plays a big role in it," Sprague said. "We have to start the semester with, 'Don't do this unless you have permission.'"

Professional hackers should get permission from either the target or from a government to make it legal.

Preparing students for work in their fields requires thinking through ethical dilemmas. Integrity in conduct is one of Cedarville's core values. It's a value that Cedarville hopes to encourage in its students, even after they graduate. Thinking through acting with integrity in cybersecurity requires wisdom.

"Some things are legal but unethical. Some things are ethical but not legal," Sprague said.

Sprague said that he hopes his students are looking to see how they can use their knowledge of hacking for good. A lot of the good uses of hacking are related to identifying problems in a website or device so they can be fixed. Hacking is viewed as a "black art," which means hackers make things happen. However, the reality is that hackers use subtle mistakes to subvert the design of the tool.

Sprague explained how he has used his hacking skills in some unique ways for kingdom

work. "Hacking for missions. It's a thing!" Sprague said.

He explained that he helped the Association of Baptists for World Evangelism identify and resolve different potential threats in their websites. Sprague said that work is ultimately about helping ABWE keep its colleagues safe.

"I did it because I cared about protecting their missionaries," he said.

He said that there are strong adversaries who are looking for opportunities to take advantage of the systems that organizations like ABWE use. This can compromise the safety of their partners in ministry. Sprague sees opportunities like this as opportunities to use his talents to the glory of God.

Demonstrating to his students that computer science is an outlet for ministry is something that Sprague said is important to him. As students are given knowledge and develop their skills, he hopes they are also encouraged that their faith can make an impact in the real world.

"I just want to live that out," Sprague said.

Sprague also realizes his position in training young people is an opportunity to multiply gospel impact. He wants to help a missions organization with their security, but there is a greater need for even more skilled workers who will leverage their skills for the gospel. He hopes that his students will "do good with the skills they've learned."

As someone who has been working in this field for a long time, Sprague said he hopes "that the students' faith would be rooted in the reality of who Jesus is even in the dark parts."

Sprague explained, "We don't necessarily hang out in lots of dark alleys, but we have to know

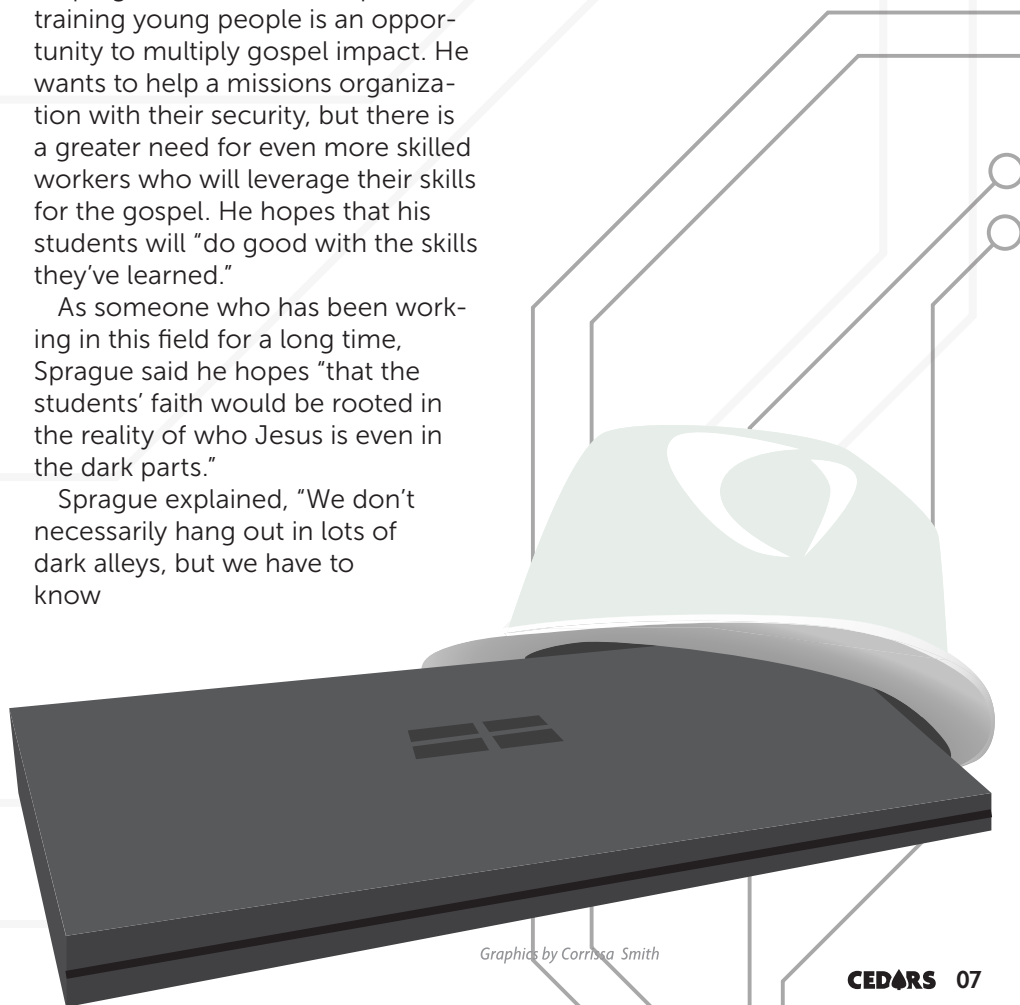
about them." And it is important for them to know what to do when they encounter that darkness. "Christianity isn't just about doing the right thing when you're around the nice crowd," Sprague said. It is rooted in the truth that Christ is our "hope for life."

Sprague also explained that cyber security defense and personal spiritual defense have a lot of parallels.

"They're so obvious they're almost corny," Sprague said. "I would like to see in students the ability to defend themselves against attacks." The Enemy does the same things to us that a hacker does with a vulnerability: He exploits our flaws to his advantage.

"I've seen it happen in Christians that are my friends," he said. "I want that to not happen to my students in their future."

Kathryn McDonald is a junior Psychology major and a Campus News writer for Cedars. When she's not at her desk studying, you can probably catch her in the library writing a letter to a friend, reading her favorite American poetry or drinking coffee from her favorite mug.



Graphics by Corissa Smith

A Vision to Teach and Steward

Cedarville Welcomes Dr. Nathan Harris

By Kathryn McDonald

This semester Cedarville welcomed Dr. Nathan Harris to two jobs. He is an assistant professor in the School of Biblical and Theological Studies and the senior director of Annual Giving in Advancement. It's a unique role that allows him to divide his time between teaching and overseeing the stewardship of annual donations to Cedarville's funds.

"My expectations of joy have been exceeded," Harris said of his first three months.

For the last five-and-a-half years, Harris and his family lived and served in Kansas City, Missouri, where he completed his seminary training at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. While studying, he also served in a similar advancement role.

Harris said that, about two years ago, God began calling him toward a ministry to college students as a professor, in addition to his role in encouraging, giving and stewarding. It seemed like an impossible dream until the door opened at Cedarville for him to serve both as a professor and a member of the Advancement team.

"It's been a wonderful transition and time for me to really serve in both of the things I feel the Lord has called me to do," Harris said. "Though my wife and I were praying about what could be next and where the Lord could be leading us, we never thought an opportunity to do this, to do exactly what I want to do, would be there."

Harris has a unique perspective on the role that he plays on campus. As he interacts with donors, he reminds himself daily of his calling.

"I am constantly reminded of the Lord has called me to uniquely invite donors to participate in the vision and mission that the Lord is doing at Cedarville," Harris said. "I feel very passionate about telling donors the Cedarville story and sharing with them how are we uniquely positioned to aid students in standing upon the Word of God and testimony of Jesus Christ but also integrate their faith in learning."

Harris explained that for Christians, giving is rooted in the gospel. "We give because we have received," he said. "Gospel generosity is the life of

a Christian."

Through the gospel, we see a reorientation of our desires to be generous with our resources for the glory of God. Radical generosity is a gift of the Holy Spirit in the believer's life. Our knowledge as believers of God's sufficiency produces contentment which allows us to be bold in doing many things for the one who meets all our needs.

Though Harris' ministry is engaged in stewarding the financial gifts of donors, the radical generosity that should characterize a believer extends beyond finances to time and talents as well. Good stewardship opens opportunities for God's people to serve the King and his kingdom.

"Everything we have is because the Lord has given it to us," Harris said. "So, we are stewarding the Lord's resources. How can we steward those well and make kingdom impact? How can we take our resources – whether that's time, talent or treasure – and honor the King and impact the kingdom with those things?"

Harris' friend since 2015, Dr. Ronni Kurtz, commented on how he has seen gospel generosity take shape in Harris' life.

"Nathan's vision for generosity is helpful because it's more kingdom focused," Kurtz said. "It's not just generosity – it's a generosity that wants to make a significant kingdom impact."

The impact Harris desires to make for the kingdom also extends to the classroom, where he aims to use his platform to teach his students how their faith can impact their vocation. Not all students are at Cedarville to study the Bible, but that shouldn't stop them from seeking to know, love and serve Jesus, both now and later as they pursue careers to the glory of God. Harris hopes that the knowledge students gain in their training here at Cedarville will inform



Photo by Elizabeth Kollmar

Nathan Harris splits his time between teaching Bible classes and raising money for Cedarville.

their love, which will in turn drive their service.

Kurtz commented on how he has seen the study of God's Word generate love and excitement in Harris' life.

"Nathan wrote his dissertation on something most folks would find rather mundane, which is conjunctions in the book of Hebrews," Kurtz said. "However, his study of conjunctions animates him and his love of God's Word is contagious. When he gets to talking about Hebrews, he gets excited."

Harris also hopes that the content of his courses will make its way into the practical moments of everyday living. He wants his students to walk away from his classes with the ability to answer the question, "How does what I am studying impact the way that I am knowing, loving and serving the Lord?"

"While we may be talking about lofty theological themes, Christology, the Trinity, ecclesiology, I want them to be able to say, 'So what? Why does this matter? How does this impact my life? And how can I share these theological truths with people so that they can know, love and serve Jesus?'" Harris said.

Over the years, Harris said one of the biggest lessons that keeps coming back to him is the nature of God's goodness. He explained that God isn't just good but also loving and merciful.

"The more I study the Bible, the more and more I realize just how true that statement is and how good the Lord is for his people," Harris said. "And oftentimes we don't see to its fullest extent in and through suffering how good the Lord is. I am regularly awestruck in that."

The truth of God's goodness works its way into every corner of Harris' life. He said that the lessons he learns about God, people and himself generally cycle. Realizing that God is good propels him to understand his need for grace. As his awareness of his own needs grows, his awareness of the needs of others also grows. For Harris, this drives him toward an understanding of the value of relationships and opportunities to pour into other people – family, friends and strangers. Every interaction is



Photo by Elizabeth Kollmar

Nathan Harris wants the content of his courses to affect practical moments of everyday living in his students. Harris teaches in the School of Biblical and Theological Studies.

an opportunity to encourage others with these truths.

"I would say the thing that has impacted me the most, preparing me to do my current role both in admin and academics, has been living in community of other believers," he said.

At seminary, Harris said that, although classes were a rich opportunity for growth, it wasn't necessarily in the classrooms and seminars where he learned the most.

"It was being at the lunch table every single day and having deep conversations," he said. "It was having coffee in the mornings. It was meeting with professors and talking through life in ministry and discipleship. That community and fellowship has shaped me in ways that I don't think I would have ever realized."

For students who are looking to pursue opportunities to teach one day, Harris shares an exhortation.

"I tell students all the time that regardless of whether you want to pursue higher education, do your best to not make an academic exercise void of spiritual impact," he said. "So, don't pursue biblical and theological studies without the desire for God to work in your life in those studies."

Studying the Bible should shape all of us, not just our minds but also our hearts and souls as well. Harris encourages students to not just "read your Bible because you have to for a class but read your Bible so that you

are refreshed by it."

Harris said that his biggest prayer for his ministry to students is that he could reach beyond the classroom. His hope is for students to believe they are cared for as whole people when they sit under his teaching. He wants his students to know their spiritual, physical and mental health matters to him because it matters to God. As students leave his classes, he hopes that his reflection of Christ's love encourages them to love and cherish the savior more.

When asked what passage of Scripture most characterizes Harris' ministry, Kurtz pointed to the collection of "one anothers" throughout the New Testament.

"Nathan is just so caring," Kurtz said. "He cares for other people. He loves other people."

Whether it is bearing one another's burden, remaining devoted to one another or building up one another, Harris demonstrates what it means to live well with one another.

Harris is quickly earning a reputation as a man who is concerned with loving the Lord and encouraging others to do the same.

Kathryn McDonald is a junior Psychology major and a Campus News writer for Cedars. When she's not at her desk studying, you can probably catch her in the library writing a letter to a friend, reading her favorite American poetry or drinking coffee from her favorite mug.

Dean's Unique Path as Basketball Player and Rapper Leads Him to Cedarville

By Josh Decker



Photo by Ernest Toh



Photo by Scott Huck



Photo by Ernest Toh

For Tylist Dean, the journey to Cedarville has been full of surprising turns. An MBA student and a member of the Cedarville men's basketball team, Dean transferred this year after playing three years for NCAA Division I Liberty University.

But basketball is only part of the story for Dean. Off the court, the St. Paul, Minnesota, native also produces Christian rap music.

"I've been involved with music my whole life," Dean said. "But when I was 17, I started taking it seriously and writing songs a little more often."

Dean began developing tracks and recording his songs in his family's home-owned studio, and he released his first extended play (EP) recording titled, "What Can I Say?" in November 2017.

Since then, Dean has dropped two full albums, with "I Am Liberty" released in 2018 and "Paid It All" debuting in 2020.

Dean described his style of music as "melodic rap."

"Definitely Christian-based," Dean said. "I always want to glorify God in my music. My whole purpose is to lead people to Christ."

If he could describe his life in one word, it would be "unique."

"There's been favor that God has given me that no one would have seen coming," Dean said. "My journey has been very unorthodox and unexpected."

From an early age, Dean was a sports fanatic and had dreams of playing college basketball. He spent countless hours in the gym crafting his basketball skills.

"Working towards my goal of playing Division I took a lot of sacrifice," Dean said.

He trained with his dad Monday through Friday and then got up early on Saturday mornings during the summer to work out.

Despite his commitment to basketball, Dean was not highly recruited in high school. "I played AAU and got some interest from coaches letting me know about their schools, but no offers came," Dean said.

After playing his last high school game, Dean thought his basketball career was over. "The final buzzer sounded and I just froze," Dean said. "I was like, 'Wow, this is it —

it's over.'"

About a month later, however, a family friend who knew the head coach of the Liberty men's basketball team made a call and secured Dean a tryout with the Flames.

After Dean's visit to the Liberty campus and tryout with the basketball team, head coach Ritchie McKay offered Dean a preferred walk-on position, guaranteeing him a spot on the roster.

After redshirting his freshman season, Dean played in 26 games as a point guard during his three years in Lynchburg.

"The experience was great," Dean said. "One of my favorite memories was the first time we won our conference tournament and just knowing we were going to March Madness."

The Flames won the Atlantic Sun Conference tournament the next two years, though Dean only got to participate in the NCAA Tournament two of his three years at Liberty due to COVID-19 canceling the 2020 tournament.

After graduating in only three years, Dean still had eligibility remaining and decided to enter the transfer portal.

"My opportunity to get any significant minutes was looking very slim," Dean said. "I had a passion to play, so I figured it was the best timing to see if I could play somewhere else."

A couple of Dean's friends who were connected to Cedarville talked about how the Yellow Jackets might be a good fit for him. Liberty's head coach also reached out to Yellow Jackets' head coach Pat Estep to see if there might be any interest.

Estep called Dean, offering for him to come visit the campus and practice with the team in a tryout.

After visiting, Dean was not only sold on the basketball program but also the school's campus and biblical foundation for academics.

"Cedarville and Liberty are pretty similar in nature, just being Christian-based universities," Dean said. "Ultimately, being able to practice with the guys at Cedarville and bond with them, I could really see myself being able to contribute."

A week after his visit, Estep offered Dean a full-ride

scholarship to play for the Jackets, and Dean committed to Cedarville.

Dean is pursuing his MBA degree at Cedarville and has continued to make strides in his music career between his busy schedule of academics and athletics.

"I always get as much done as I can in the summers," Dean said. "I just write a lot during the school year and then when I get home, I record a bunch."

His family has a home studio back in Minnesota, a luxury that comes with a family that is involved in the music industry.

Dean has had the opportunity to perform his music in the spotlight on some big stages in the past few years.

"The biggest one I did was a festival called Pulse Twin Cities," Dean said. "It was a one-day revival in front of 60,000 people, which was the biggest crowd I've performed in front of."

"I definitely get more nervous before basketball games though," Dean said with a laugh. "Music is like I won't get nervous until 10 seconds before I have to say my first word, but basketball is a different story."

Dean and his sister Celena Lena, who is also involved with music, got the chance to play on Cedarville's campus this past fall. The sibling duo, who goes by the name "Sis N Lil Bro," performed at this year's annual "Moonlight Madness," which kicked off the Cedarville men's and women's basketball seasons.

Through all of the obstacles and successes in his life, Dean has remained rooted in his walk with God.

"My relationship with Christ is the number one thing above anything else I do," Dean said. "I try to live out my faith every day, and it's extremely important to be able to be grounded in your faith."

For now, Dean isn't sure what the future holds, but he recognizes that the Lord is in control of his life.

"I'm not rushing it because I know whatever God's plan is," he said, "I'm going to accept it and do it to the best of my abilities."

Josh Decker is a senior Sport Business Management major, and a sports reporter for Cedars. He loves playing sports with friends, and spends much of his free time as a student assistant for the Cedarville men's basketball team.

Graphics By Natalie Cherry



The Journey to Becoming a Yellow Jacket

By Grace Mowery

For potential college athletes looking to don a Cedarville jersey and dominate in the name of Jesus, recruiting is a long and often surprising journey.

Recruiting usually begins with a coach's interest in a player. Jason Smith, the women's head basketball coach, moved to Cedarville in 2021 and soon started recruiting players for his new school. When he transitioned from Bryan College to Cedarville, he started searching for athletes with Division I talent willing to play Division II basketball at Cedarville.

"[You look for the] highest level of basketball player that can fit into your coaching style and coaching philosophy and that fits for the university," Smith said.

To find potential recruits, Smith establishes relationships with high school basketball coaches and AAU coaches who coach athletes in summer ball, travel ball and tournaments. Cedarville coaches attend these events and watch the hundreds of players in tournament games to observe a player they already knew about or to discover new players.

Men's head basketball coach Pat Estep often targets Christian high school teams in the hopes that these schools will have Division II level athletes who share Cedarville's values.

"Obviously when it comes to wanting an education like Cedarville offers and wanting to be in a Christian college, that's a priority for us," Estep said. "We want kids who are bought into our mission. It won't make sense to them if we're talking about using basketball as an act of worship and they don't even know what that means."

Lauryn Leslie, a sophomore center



Soccer player Emily Hansen transferred to Cedarville after a different school didn't work out.

fielder and second baseman on the softball team, put her spiritual growth first when she chose Cedarville's athletic program over a Division I school. She recognized that she needed to attend tournaments for Division I and II schools to notice her. However, since tournaments usually fall on the weekend and require travel, she and her family preferred not to miss church every week. Because of this, Leslie searched for potential schools on her own.

As she looked for schools that matched her values, the Cleveland, Ohio, native found a Christian school close to home: Cedarville University.

After a player finds Cedarville or coaches discover an athlete, Cedarville coaches will start building a relationship with the student. They will contact the high school or AAU coach for an evaluation and attend a game. If they like what they see, they will contact the student about a campus visit.

When recruits visit officially, they attend chapel, tour campus, eat lunch with coaches and current players, meet with Career Services and a department advisor and spend the night with the team. Estep also likes to eat breakfast with recruits the next morning before they leave campus.

Leslie emphasized how her official visit acquainted her with the school and Cedarville's coaches.

"I was actually going to play tennis for the school, and Coach Alan Edlund was like, 'Yeah, you're completely qualified to play for my team. You can try out your senior year,'" Leslie said.

However, as Edlund learned more about her abilities, he recommended that she consider trying out for softball first, showing his concern for her as a player and an individual.

After an athlete comes for an official visit, the coaches decide how they would like to proceed. If the athlete impressed the coaches, they may offer him or her a spot and a



scholarship on a Cedarville team.

Not all athletes connect with Cedarville this way, however. Both Smith and Estopp emphasized how transfer students and the transfer portal have affected recruiting in sports. Smith believes the NCAA's evolution of the transfer portal, which has made transferring an easier process than in the past, marks the biggest recent change in recruiting. However, Smith prefers not to rely on the transfer portal.

"We really love to hone in on high school kids and have them here for four years to develop them spiritually, emotionally and academically."

*Jason Smith,
Cedarville's Women
Basketball Coach*

"We really love to hone in on high school kids and have them here for four years to develop them spiritually, emotionally and academically," Smith said.

"We don't live in the transfer portal," Estopp said, but he noted that he will recruit through the portal to deepen his lineup or to stagger the graduating years of players on his team. "Especially in a year like this where we lose five seniors, we don't necessarily want to bring in five freshmen and start over."

Sophomore Emily Hansen, a former center back on Cedarville's soccer team, began her collegiate play at another school. Cedarville recruited Hansen in high school, but she chose another college and played soccer her freshman year there. When she decided she needed a change, she contacted Coach Jonathan Meade and expressed her desire to transfer to Cedarville.

"Cedarville has always been a top choice for me because they are unashamed of the gospel, and they always proclaim that," Hansen said. "And I felt like their beliefs lined up more with what I was looking for in

a school."

Meade knew about Hansen's caliber of play from high school, and he agreed that she could join the team.

While athletes like Hansen and Leslie reached out to a Cedarville coach first, others, like Joelle Petek, chose Cedarville as a school before exploring its athletic programs.

Petek knew about Cedarville because her parents both graduated

from the university, and her dad is a trustee.

"I wasn't looking to play tennis," Petek said, "but Coach Edlund heard that I was coming through the grapevine from my dad."

Petek didn't believe she could play tennis at the Division II level,

but Edlund researched Petek's stats in high school and invited her to attend conditioning with the current team. Although most recruits will practice with the current team, she did not have that opportunity on her visit. Edlund still offered her a scholarship.

As Leslie, Hansen and Petek can attest, the recruitment process looks different for each recruit and might become an unsettling or uncomfortable time. Nevertheless, Leslie kept her focus heavenward as she prepared for her future.

"Because Cedarville is a Christ-centered college, many of the players reach out to [coaches] personally because it's Cedarville first and softball second," Leslie said.

"Growing up, I always wanted to play DI softball. Cedarville literally changed my heart. Now I get to play with people that also love the Lord, and we get to be a light."

Grace Mowery is a junior English major and sports writer for Cedars. She loves reading historical novels, watching football and baseball, and going on spontaneous ice cream runs with her friends.



Contributed by Joelle Petek

Joelle Petek chose Cedarville before even considering to be a part of the tennis team.



Sexual Violence Remains Prevalent on College Campuses

What Victims Go Through and How We Can Help

By Chris Karenbauer

Editor's note: The following story contains material related to sexual violence that may be disturbing to some people.

The Rape, Abuse & Incest Network (RAINN) defines sexual violence as a “non-legal term that refers to crimes like sexual assault, rape and sexual abuse.”

It's On Us is an organization that helps combat campus sexual assault. According to It's On Us's website, between 20–25% of undergraduate women are victims of sexual violence. Ninety percent of victims do not report the crime to law enforcement.

“I don't think we have educated ourselves enough to get the significance,” said Shannon Berkheiser, the Title IX Coordinator at Cedarville University. “We don't fully understand how often sexual violence occurs. So we tend to focus on other issues instead.”

The first step in responding to victims of sexual violence is being edu-

cated on the subject. Sexual violence isn't only sexual harassment, rape and sexual abuse. It also includes stalking or any unconsented sexual act.

Berkheiser works to educate people about sexual violence and teaches them how to respond appropriately to victims.

“I've always been very passionate about how people of faith lack the resources and education to come alongside a victim of sexual violence when we are really the ones who should have all the answers,” Berkheiser said.

What are the best ways to come alongside and support a victim of sexual violence?

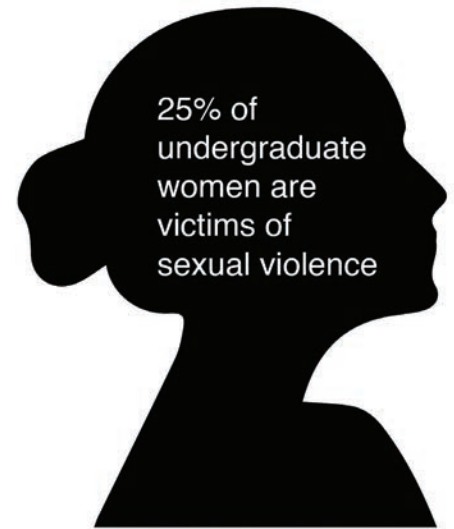
One way is to appropriately encourage them to report it and provide the support they need to do so. But this is easier said than done because the victim may face obstacles to reporting the crime.

As previously stated, less than 10% of rape victims report the crime to law enforcement. Why? One obstacle can be victim blaming.

“I think that in our Christian circles, we too easily fall into victim blaming,” Berkheiser said. “This diminishes the responsibility of the offender and places the burden of the crime on the victim.”

Imagine you're going to the bank to cash a check. Once you receive your money, you put it in your wallet. As you leave the bank, someone mugs you, stealing your wallet.

In this situation, most people would say that the blame is solely on the offender, not the victim. No one would say, “Why did you go to the



Graphics by Caroline King

bank to cash your check? You must have known that someone could rob you at any moment.”

However, a victim isn't always blamed by a third-party person. Many times, an offender will manipulate their victim into thinking that the abuse was their fault.

“They may feel that it is partly their fault because the offender is manipulating them to feel that way,” Berkheiser said.

Sexual violence occurs far more often between two people who already know each other, whether within families or between classmates or dating partners.

With children, they may not want to report to law enforcement because they don't want their family member to get in trouble.

“While they don't want the bad stuff to happen, they often still love that person, especially if they're one of their caregivers,” Berkheiser said.

For example, an offender could be that really popular teacher everyone likes. Because of this, a victim may fear that their friends will not believe them.

Moreover, an act of sexual violence can leave victims feeling ashamed or embarrassed. Consequently, recounting the event is often difficult



“I don’t think we have educated ourselves enough to get the significance. We don’t fully understand how often sexual violence occurs. So, we tend to focus on other issues instead.”

Shannon Berkheiser, the Title IX Coordinator at Cedarville University

or distressing.

“Most of us would not want to sit and share with a stranger details about an intimate experience,” Berkheiser said. “But that is what we expect a victim of sexual violence to do in reporting.”

It can be very challenging for victims to talk about their experiences to complete strangers, and if they do,



they’ll have to repeat their stories to advocates, law enforcement or in a public court.

You may never have to go through this kind of experience. But if you do, know that someone will believe you.

But what do you do if you know someone who has been sexually violated?

The best thing for you to do is be a supportive friend to a victim. It’s not their fault they were violated. And it’s not your job to investigate for the truth.

Before she moved to Cedarville, Berkheiser worked in upstate New York as an advocate for victims.

“In advocacy you walk alongside that person and help them navigate the systems they need to interact with, such as medical care, law enforcement and the criminal justice system,” she said.

The best way to be supportive of a victim of sexual violence is to listen if they want to talk or go with them if they need to go to the hospital. Be the friend that they need. Be someone who will believe them.

According to the National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NRSVC), only between 2% and 10% of any criminal accusations turn out to be false. It’s safer to believe a victim rather than to dismiss them. Support them in any way you can.

Don’t pressure a victim to talk about what happened. Don’t confront the offender. Don’t pressure them to report it to law enforcement. But do encourage them as much as you can, and let them decide what to do.

But the important thing to remember is to educate yourself on

the matter. Understand that victims didn’t ask to be violated and support those who have been.

Berkheiser said, “I just really challenge people to educate themselves about the issues surrounding domestic violence and sexual violence.”

If you or someone you know has been sexually violated, there are several resources you can look into.

Find an advocate whose job is to walk alongside victims of sexual violence. If you want to talk, they’ll listen. If you need to go to the hospital to report to law enforcement, they’ll go with you.

RAINN is an anti-sexual violence organization. It operates the Department of Defense’s Safe Helpline. You can visit their website at <https://www.rainn.org>, or you can call them at 800-656-4673.

It’s On Us is another organization that combats sexual violence. They focus specifically with college-age women and men who have been sexually violated. They provide resources for victims of sexual violence, such as education tools and contacts to call. Their website is <https://www.itsonus.org>.

More resources:

National Domestic Violence hotline at 800-799-7233.

National Human Trafficking hotline at 888-373-7888 or text at 233-73.

Suicide Prevention hotline at 800-273-8255.

Chris Karenbauer is a junior Journalism major and the Campus News Editor for Cedars. She enjoys reading and writing, hanging out with friends and jamming out.

The 'God's Not Dead' Syndrome

What Christian Movies Are and What They Should be

By Ben Hiatt

I've always been a sucker for Christian motifs in movies. I remember my mind being absolutely blown by Zack Snyder's "Man of Steel" because of the overt parallels between Clark Kent and Jesus, minus the excessive punching. More recently, a friend of mine introduced me to M. Night Shyamalan's "Signs," now one of my all-time favorite films because of its themes of faith lost and faith regained. All that to say, I'm a big fan of stories that speak to my beliefs and values as a Christian.

What I'm not as much a fan of is "Christian movies." You know the ones: the "God's Not Dead" tetralogy (yes, there are four now), the Kendrick brothers' classics like "Fireproof" or "Courageous," the "Left Behind" series and its infamous reboot starring Nicholas Cage, and so on. Despite the diversity within the "Christian movie" genre, all these films share a well-meaning intention to promote Christian beliefs, a goal that I am certainly not opposed to. However, in my experience, the ways they promote these ideas often feels forced, preachy and disingenuous.

Throughout high school, I often wondered why these films didn't resonate with me. Was I not Christian enough? Were my expectations for what a movie should be simply misguided? Over the years, I've pondered these questions, and as I prepare to leave college life behind, I've decided to finally resolve my inner turmoil by putting my thoughts to words.

To start, could we simply acknowledge the utter strangeness of sectioning off an entire group of movies based solely on their underlying worldview? No other group of movies is categorized in this way. The "Star Wars" series is called a "sci-fi space opera," not "a vaguely Buddhist monomyth," and "The Dark Knight" is labeled a "superhero drama" rather than "a utilitarian moral

dilemma with streaks of Kantian ethics." And yet Christians have fenced off an entire genre of cinema in an attempt to create a safe space of entertainment within the supposedly depraved world of Hollywood.

I have a hard time buying the story that the modern blockbuster industry is keen on corrupting the youth. A survey of any of the last decades' highest-grossing films, such as the MCU blockbusters, demonstrates that what actually sells is stories of inspirational heroes risking their lives for the greater good, of star-crossed lovers that overcome all odds just to be together, or, at worst, of empathetic villains warped and twisted by the broken world we live in. Relatability, not depravity, is what grips audiences' attention.

What purpose, then, do Christian movies serve, if not to be bastions of wholesome content? One answer might be cinematic evangelism, the use of movies as a means of sharing the gospel with unbelievers. "God's Not Dead" was marketed as the Christian apologetic against the messaging of mainstream culture and, for better or worse, became a tentpole of the Christian movie industry. Unfortunately, many Christian movies, desiring to be clear presentations of orthodox beliefs, end up being heavy-handed in presenting these ideas.

Sean O'Connor, assistant professor of Broadcasting, Digital Media and Journalism at Cedarville, noted that Christian filmmakers sometimes treat their characters as nothing more than mouthpieces for their own views.

"The tendency is for Christian films to sound more like sermons than stories," he said. "It's very easy to make a movie where your characters are just talking out the plot and not actually conveying the message of the film through their actions and decisions."

A common side effect of this

approach is an overreliance on mic-drop moments, where characters spout off crowd-pleasing one-liners meant to emotionally resonate with the audience. Such moments are a staple of cinema and have resulted in some truly iconic moments (see: "I am Iron Man"). However, such moments can also reek of a "preaching-to-the-choir" mentality to anyone not already on board with the movie's message.

For instance, in "God's Not Dead," Josh Wheton's final confrontation with Professor Radisson is framed as a triumph in apologetics, but his combative, accusatory tone and use of Radisson's tragic past as a rhetorical device make this moment ring hollow to me. I'll let Sam Allberry have the final word on this issue: "People are not saved by mic-drop moments; they only have their beliefs confirmed by mic-drop moments."

What if part of the issue with movies like "God's Not Dead" is that they fundamentally misunderstand the purpose of movies in the first place? I'm not claiming that all movies must serve one purpose. Art can serve a multitude of functions depending on the artist's intentions. But movies are unified in their desire to tell some sort of story. As screenwriter Robert McKee famously said, "Story is a metaphor for life." In every story, there is some sort of vision of what life is like or ought to be like. Some might call this vision "a truth claim," others "a worldview," but regardless, stories are a universal way that we humans communicate our vision for life, be it good or bad, real or hoped-for.

What if, in our urgent race to defend our worldview, we Christians get so caught up in our own specific agenda that we forget what living life is actually like? Sure, having your Christian protagonist rhetorically decimate his atheist antagonist's credibility has the potential to feel



Graphics by Claire Xu

argumentatively satisfying, but is that how we want our conversations with unbelievers to go? To rub the very tragedies that motivated their unbelief in their faces for the sake of “winning” the argument?

Yes, a character’s conversion to Christianity should be presented as a positive development and character growth. However, if we try to convey that by showing their newfound faith magically fixes all their problems, are we selling people a realistic vision of the Christian life or merely an idealized, fictional version just to get them on board?

Dr. Joshua Kira, assistant professor of Philosophy and Theology at Cedarville, pointed out that preachy movies often fail to acknowledge the “existential reality” of our problems. Even though our problems may seem simple, actually wrestling with and living through them is anything but. Stories meant to show the truth and viability of Christianity ring hollow when they neglect the very real difficulties of living in a broken world that remains broken even after we come to faith. Having an authentic “come-to-Jesus-moment” is life-changing, but it’s not life-perfecting.

Also, in this broken world, there’s only one good guy, and He’s the one who died on a cross to save us wretched sinners from ourselves. May we please, then, dispense of

the simplistic “Christians are good, atheists are bad” motif that has marked so much Christian cinematic messaging? In Christ, we are being sanctified, but Jesus also had the least patience for the sanctimonious Pharisees, the self-proclaimed “good guys” of their day.

All of that said, I have no problem with stories about Christians made for Christians, or about Christians made for non-Christians, or about Christianity in general. Shockingly enough, there are movies that do a decent job at being exactly that. “Hacksaw Ridge” is a moving account of a WWII medic’s faith inspiring him to courageously risk his life for the sake of his fellow soldiers. “The Case for Christ,” PureFlix’s adaptation of Lee Strobel’s famous book, gives a believable account of one man’s journey from atheism to faith while also shoehorning in some solid apologetics material along the way.

The strength of both these movies come from their focus on their characters; their stories are ultimately about real people coming to their own conclusions in a way that feels organic and true-to-life. Their strength comes from their specificity. They’re meant to be examples of how Christianity plays out in an actual person’s life, not the “end-all, be-all” case for why Christianity fixes everything all the time. Importantly,

they leave you free to explore Christianity for yourself instead of beating you over the head about what you should or should not believe.

After all, we must remember what movies, apologetics arguments, mic-drop moments, and our own will-power all have in common: none of them save people. The Spirit’s working in the heart of those who hear the gospel is what saves people. So let’s present the gospel. Let’s tell the stories of actual people’s lives who have been changed by Jesus. Let’s create new stories that show how Christianity best explains the world we live in. But let’s do it with the underlying confidence that our job isn’t to force people into a corner and lecture them until they agree with us. We are meant to be witnesses to the God who does save, not the saviors ourselves.

Let’s also remember that we serve the God who created fun, laughter, adventure and the greatest story ever told. Let’s be content with some stories just being that: stories that engage us, inspire us, show us what life is really like or ought to be like, without every single one having to have an altar call moment at the end. Whether we eat or drink or whatever we do, we should do everything to the glory of God, but that doesn’t mean every meal we eat must have some elaborate gospel metaphor encoded within its ingredients or flavors. Sometimes, a good meal is reason enough for us to praise our good, good God.

Ben Hiatt is an Advanced Biblical & Ministry Studies graduate student and Editor-in-Chief of Cedars. When he’s not pretending to study, he loves watching movies, looking them up on Wikipedia afterward and hanging with the boys.

The Economics of Streaming

Is Having Multiple Subscriptions Worth the Increasing Prices?

By Janie Walenda



Graphics by Claire Xu

It's impossible to understate how dramatically television has changed in the last decade. Streaming services have completely overhauled how we watch TV as well as how we pay for it.

While initially services like Netflix seemed like a steal compared to cable, as streaming services have multiplied and continued to raise their prices, opting for stream-

ing over cable seems like less of a bargain. Does the original content on streaming services make them worth it, despite the rise in prices?

Once upon a time, Netflix was simply a DVD rental company. In 2007, however, they launched their streaming service, which grew steadily thanks to deals with various movie studios. While services like Netflix and Amazon Prime were

active during the mid-2000s, the real game-changer came in the 2010s with original streaming content. With the debut of "House of Cards" in 2013, followed by shows like "Orange Is the New Black" and "Stranger Things," Netflix completely reinvented the television-watching model. Dropping all the episodes of a season at once was radically different from the weekly

model in cable television.

Now known as “binging,” this model affects what kinds of shows are made, how the plot is paced, and how we watch television. By the late 2010s, Netflix was completely dominating the new field of streaming, something other movie studios could not allow to happen.

In 2019 and 2020, the number of streaming services exploded, with studios like Disney, Warner Brothers, Paramount and even Apple creating their own streaming services. This transformed streaming into a competitive field and resulted in Netflix losing its stranglehold on the industry. For the consumer, this means that it takes multiple streaming services to watch the same content that was all on Netflix a few years ago.

For example, “Friends” was streaming on Netflix for many years alongside a large collection of Disney movies. Now the iconic sitcom has been relocated to HBO Max, while all the Disney properties are on Disney+.

So just how expensive are all of these streaming services? The most common price starts at \$4.99-\$8.99 a month for basic plans, with HBO Max being a noticeable outlier at \$14.99 a month. Netflix recently bumped up the price of all their plans by two dollars, making the basic plan now \$9.99. While the price hike isn’t all that bad, it is worrying considering the sheer quantity of streaming services that are out there. Streaming used to be a much cheaper alternative to cable, which ranges from \$29.99 to \$74.99 a month near Cedarville. However, thanks to the proliferation of streaming services, the monthly bill can easily run at \$30 or higher.

So, what makes these services worth it? There are two main reasons to subscribe to a streaming service: to access a streaming library or to watch original content. Many people, my family included, now view streaming services as an alternative to a DVD collection.

Even if we still own the DVD of that movie, we’ll often still pull up the streaming option for convenience’s sake.

This idea of the streaming library is part of the reason Disney+ became so successful so quickly, and why the addition of new streaming services has been harmful to Netflix.

Disney+ has one of the most impressive streaming libraries, as it houses not only all of the Disney and Pixar content, but Marvel, Star Wars, and all of the Fox properties they acquired. For a long time, the only original content on Disney+ was “The Mandalorian,” and the service grew almost solely on the power of its library.

Other new streaming services also have strong libraries. Peacock houses “The Office,” “Parks and Recreation” and “Brooklyn 99,” as well as movie franchises like “Scream.” HBO Max has an enormous catalog, containing “Harry Potter,” “Lord of the Rings,” and

all of the DC content, including the DCEU, animated shows and movies as well as many of the CW shows.

But at the end of the day, original content is what makes or breaks a streaming service. After all, if a movie or show isn’t exclusive to a streaming platform, you can likely rent or buy it through iTunes or Amazon Prime, or simply grab a DVD copy.

In the long run, shelling out \$10 a month for things you’ve already seen is not the best financial decision. So, it comes down to original content to determine whether or not a particular service is worth the money.

There’s no shortage of original content, to be sure. I counted 26 original titles coming to Netflix last month alone, including a sci-fi action movie, comedy special, historical drama, and a Korean drama. This flood of original content means that we can get sucked into an endless loop of watching. As soon as we finish the movie or TV show we’ve been meaning to watch, something new takes its place. With so much content, it can be hard to filter through what is worth spending our time and money on.

I think most people would agree that even with the price hike, Netflix is still technically worth the money. If you did the math, then you’d find that you’re paying approximately \$0.002 per movie per month. But of course, you’re not watching every Netflix movie and show every month. How do you determine if the use you’re getting out of a streaming service makes it worth the price?

There is no one-size-fits-all answer, but there are a few guidelines that can be helpful.

How often are you using it?

And what are you watching on it?

If you’re just using it a couple of times a month to re-watch some of your favorite movies or TV shows, then you’d probably be better off buying your favorites permanently.

And if you’re subscribed to a streaming service because you know that one day you’ll finally get to that show or movie you’ve heard is good, but you keep putting it off, you should probably unsubscribe.

My family recently dropped our Apple TV+ subscription simply because we weren’t actively watching anything on there. On the other hand, while I initially subscribed to Peacock just to watch Macy’s Thanksgiving Day Parade, I’ve kept the subscription because my roommate and I have started watching a show together. While one show wouldn’t be worth a more expensive price, like HBO Max’s \$13.99, it is worth \$4.99 a month.

At the end of the day, most streaming services are worth the price. But as prices rise, we have to be aware of the time and money we spend and make sure the content we’re consuming is worthy of the price we’re paying.

Janie Walenda is a freshman Global Business major and an A&E writer for Cedars. She enjoys musicals, movies, and rereading the same books 10 times.



Graphics by Corrissa Smith

Video Games' Stake in the Entertainment Industry

By Sam Acosta

As we venture deeper into 2022, it seems that we may finally be past the final throes of the COVID-19 pandemic. Restaurants and stores are opening back up, people are beginning to gather together again and movies are starting to steadily release again. When it came to the entertainment industry, the pandemic hit hard, as movie studios and theaters struggled to make enough profit to survive.

In 2021, the global box office amounted to an estimated \$21.4 billion in revenue, which is nearly half of the \$41 billion in revenue that was made in 2018 before the pandemic hit. This kind of loss can be seen in almost every facet of the entertainment industry, except for one.

In 2021, the video game industry managed to earn a staggering \$180 billion in revenue, a substantial increase from the \$155 billion earned the previous year. Video games have

silently dominated the entertainment industry for years now, having made just under \$146 billion compared to the \$62.7 billion brought in by both the movie and music industries combined in the first year of the pandemic.

"Minecraft" alone, a popular sandbox video game from Mojang Studios, has made over \$3.1 billion in sales revenue with an additional \$449 million from mobile sales. This greatly outperforms "Avatar," which is the highest-grossing movie of all time with a total revenue of just over \$2.8 billion. Yet, despite this extreme influence, it seems like the video game industry has only just started to receive the credit it deserves.

This might be due to certain stigmas surrounding the medium. One stigma that, until recently, seemed to color popular opinion was that video games were for kids only. The idea of an adult playing any kind of video

game seemed immature. This idea is slowly phasing out, however, as playing video games has become more and more popular. The Entertainment Software Association released a report last year that stated approximately 67% of American adults play video games, the highest percentage of all time.

A large number of factors may carry into this. Video games have been proven to help relieve stress and provide a way to interact socially with other people. There's also a potential connection between parents and video games. Another report by the ESA stated approximately 57% of parents play some form of video game with their children at least once a week.

As generations that grew up with video games are becoming parents, their continued interaction with that kind of entertainment as both a form of engaging with their kids and a

personal outlet for stress relief may be affecting its growing popularity.

So it's no surprise that, as gaming's popularity grows and as the industry continues to make record amounts of revenue even during a financially crippling pandemic, people are starting to take serious notice. Large amounts of money are now being poured into the industry by companies trying to get their foot in the door.

Microsoft has made giant steps into gaining assets in the field, recently paying \$69 billion for Activision Blizzard, the massive video game studio behind the cash-cow "Call of Duty" franchise. With the release of its "League of Legends" tie-in series "Arcane" earlier last year, Netflix recently began a push into gaming, hoping to revolutionize the market. As co-CEO Reed Hastings recently said in regards to their entrance into the gaming world, "Let's nail the thing and not just be in it to be in it." The most recent move of this kind would be Facebook's rebrand to Meta, pushing the company toward the virtual future in which gaming will play a large hand.

There's a great risk with gaming coming more into the public eye, however, and we are already beginning to see the effects of it. One of the most worrisome aspects of the entertainment industry as a whole is the dangers of extreme consolidation.

Within the past few years, we've seen a lot of evidence of this, as Disney has seemingly started to

swallow giants, and other companies are scrambling to acquire assets of their own, all of whom are starting to market their products with stamps of exclusivity. This has led to the creation of countless subscriptions that we are required to buy in order to fully enjoy everything we might want to see: Netflix, Amazon Prime, Disney+, HBOMax, Peacock and so on.

position.

The danger of exclusivity and consolidation in gaming is slightly different than that of streaming services. With streaming, you can cancel and start subscriptions as you please, giving audiences the option to "subscription-hop" from service to service to view the content they desire without having to pay for them



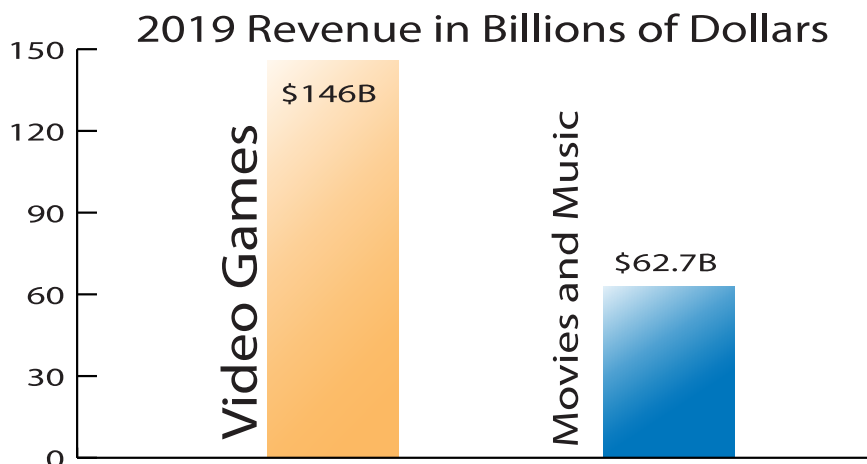
As mentioned earlier, Microsoft began this trend within the gaming industry by acquiring Activision Blizzard. This huge deal prompted Sony, one of Microsoft's biggest competitors, to acquire Bungie, the studio behind the hit "Destiny" series. While nothing has been mentioned yet about whether these acquisitions will be followed by exclusivity claims, the threat is hanging in the air. If those threats become a reality, then gamers will be put in a difficult

all at once.

This is impossible, however, when it comes to gaming. If the exclusivity war begins, gamers will have to choose what side to join, as most can only afford to buy one console every few years. This will divide gamers and hurt the very culture of gaming, which is so heavily focused on community and shared experience that sectioning off those individuals and their experiences could cause irreversible damage.

So while the video game industry is in a position to become the entertainment medium of the future, it is not without risk. It will only take a few greedy eyes looking at the revenue statistics to start a chain reaction that could tarnish the industry. The next few years, and perhaps even months, will shape where gaming will stand in the future. The stakes are almost as high as the possibilities.

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Is Congress Due for a Red Wave?

The Potential Consequences of the Upcoming Midterms

By Esther Fultz

Presidential elections get a lot of attention, both by the media and voters. Midterm elections, while less publicized, play an equally important role, giving Americans the opportunity to rearrange the political makeup of Congress, both in the House and the Senate. With midterm elections approaching this year, Americans are already discussing possibilities and predicting outcomes.

"Historically, it is more common that the party represented in the White House will lose seats in Congress in the midterms," said Dr. Robert Clark, assistant professor of History at Cedarville University.

According to Clark, several factors point toward such an outcome in 2022, including the pandemic, which has impacted both congressional and presidential approval ratings.

"Biden came in as president with a strong agenda to help Congress work together between the parties and create bipartisan legislation," Clark said.

While some success has been

achieved in this area, much more has been promised. Whether the Democratic Party and the American public at large will be satisfied with these results remains to be seen.

"I think it will be a Republican year," said Dr. Kevin Sims, senior professor of Political Science at Cedarville University. "A number of long-time serving Democrats in the House of Representatives have announced their retirement because they think they're going to lose. I'm predicting a huge Republican turnover, and by that I mean anywhere from 60 to 80 seats."

According to Sims, it's not unusual for 20 to 30 seats in the House of Representatives to change in a normal year, and these trends are likely to be exaggerated due to the challenges associated with the first year of the Biden administration.

Sims and Clark agreed that outcomes in the Senate are difficult to predict. Clark mentioned divisions within the Republican Party as a determining factor in the election,

describing what he considers three groups of Republicans: Trump-supporting populists, moderate business Republicans and traditional right-leaning conservatives.

"Currently, we have a 50/50 split in the Senate," Sims said. "I think there is a strong possibility the Republicans will take control of the Senate just because everything else has gone so poorly for the Democrats, but I don't think there will be anything like a 20-seat pickup."

In respect to midterm preparation efforts, both Republicans and Democrats are urging voters to consider the past. Democrats are emphasizing the positive changes that have taken place within the last year while Republicans emphasize shortcomings of the Democratic Party and stress areas for improvement.

According to Clark, the Democratic party is trying to show that it's the party of good governance and making progress. Highlighted achievements include leadership through the pandemic and passing legislation.

"The Democratic Party wants to show that its leadership has been handling current circumstances as effectively as possible, that it's dangerous to switch jockeys in the middle of this horse race," Clark said.

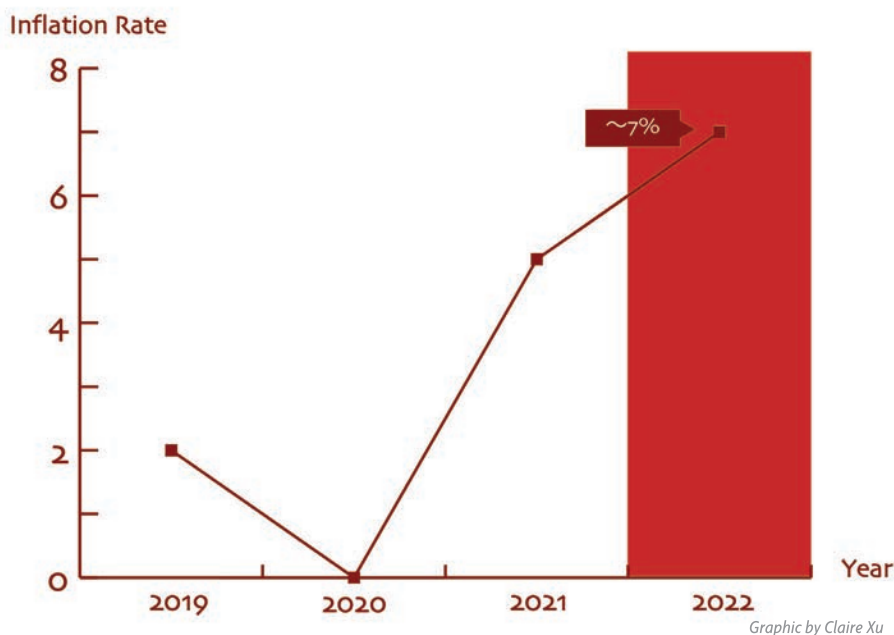
Meanwhile, Republicans seek to draw attention to disunities that exist within the Democratic Party.

"The Democrats failed to pass their biggest legislative benefit package not because of the Republicans but because two Democrats refused to vote for it," Clark said.

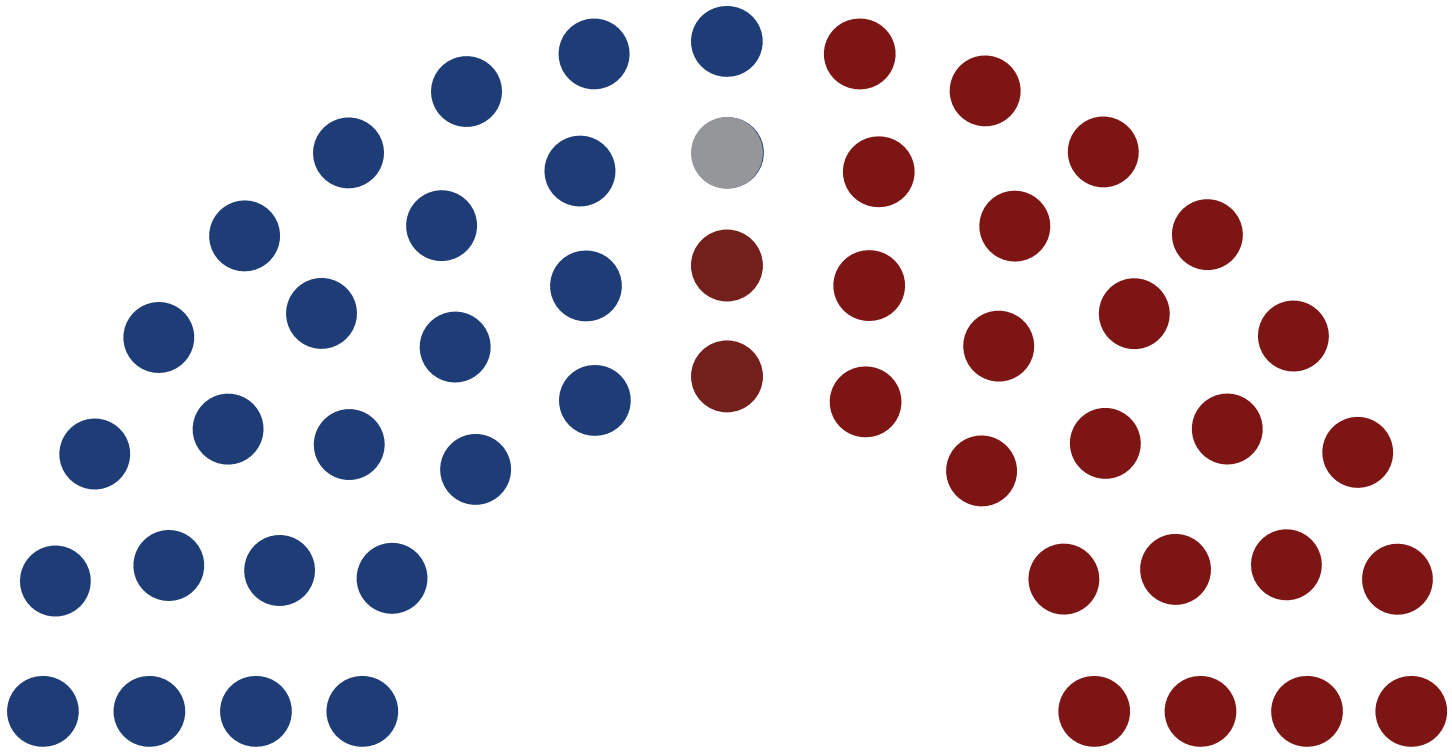
This is an easy opportunity for Republicans to criticize Democrats and remind the American public of what they will achieve as a result of working together as a party when they are in power.

Other common areas of Republican criticism include inflation rates and supply chain issues.

"Inflation is somewhere around



The rising inflation rates could be a major factor in the upcoming midterm elections.



A breakdown of the Senate currently: 48 Democrats, 50 Republicans, and 2 Independents.

6-7% right now," Sims said. "Prices are still rising, and the supply chain further complicates that. Currently, we have anywhere from 50 to 70 ships sitting off the coast of California just waiting to unload, and some of them have been there for over two months."

These are pressing issues Sims believes Republicans want to work to address.

State elections are also a major focus in the 2022 midterms, with several governorships open, including Ohio's. Just as American voters are evaluating President Biden and the Democratic Party to determine their loyalties in the midterm elections, voters from Ohio and elsewhere are analyzing their governors' past decisions. Incumbent Ohio governor Mike DeWine is eligible to run for reelection, and there are also several new faces on the scene, including U.S. representative Jim Renacci and political unknown Joe Blystone.

According to Sims, the results of this race will be difficult to predict. However, it's no secret Gov. DeWine has struggled to find support from many within his own party, similar to

President Biden.

"Ohio is pretty much a Republican state, so on the face of it, Gov. DeWine should have an easy time getting reelected," Sims said. "But he hasn't been very popular. He's been pretty hard-nosed on the vaccine, the mask mandates, closing down schools and lockdowns. It hasn't played out well for a lot of people. A lot of Republicans are pretty mad at him."

While Ohio's state elections remain up in the air at this point, it's worth noting that other recent state election results align with predictions for a national Republican takeover.

"Last year, a Republican governor was elected in Virginia for the first time in 10 years," Sims said. "In New Jersey, the incumbent Democrat governor ran against a relatively unknown Republican and only barely won. This tells me the voters are looking for change."

Both on a state and national level, the 2022 elections have strong implications for America's future. As previously mentioned, if this Republican turnover plays out the way many Americans predict, newly elected representatives are likely to address

issues such as inflation and supply chain concerns. Given differences of opinion between the parties regarding issues such as vaccine mandates and welfare spending, it will be interesting to potentially see more Republicans working with the president. While this may be helpful in achieving the president's goals for bipartisan legislation and cooperation, it's also possible these differences in opinion will hinder progress toward any constructive goals.

"In more recent decades, since the Clinton era, there's been increasing animosity that leads to government gridlock when you have a president of a different party than Congress or when the houses of Congress are controlled by opposite parties," Clark said. "If that happens, it's not going to bode well for the next election cycle. It's going to be a rancorous election cycle again."

Esther Fultz is a sophomore Social Work major and an Off-Campus and On-Campus writer for Cedars. She enjoys writing songs, spending time outdoors, drinking coffee and hanging with friends.

Russia's Invasion of Ukraine Raises Questions about the Future

By Michael Cleverly

On February 24, Russia invaded Ukraine from multiple directions, with the goal of taking Kyiv, the capital city, and toppling the Ukrainian government. As the war unfolds, questions arise of whether this brutal conflict could've been prevented and what it means for the future of the world.

For months, Russian troops gathered on the border and various news companies and world leaders warned of an impending invasion. The Ukrainian and French presidents both claimed that the threat of invasion was being blown out of proportion.

Multiple leaders held talks with Putin to deescalate the situation, all of which failed. The U.S. held talks with Putin and other Russian diplomats but, due to the declining relationship between Russia and the U.S., proved unsuccessful. Emmanuel Macron, the president of France, visited Putin to talk with him, which proved more fruitful than the U.S. talks but ultimately failed to reach a resolution.

The U.S. and many EU countries threatened Putin with sanctions if he invaded. Post-invasion, these countries have been implementing those sanctions. Some sanctions, like the

proposed exclusion of Russia from the SWIFT global banking system, require a consensus among involved countries, which might take time.

Seven Russian banks have been excluded from SWIFT as part of sanctions. Banks were chosen based on their connection to the Russian government. This is only a partial removal and among the banks not excluded are those that handle transactions related to energy companies. These weren't blocked because some European countries have purchased oil from Russia because they lack the amount they need.

"Sanctions by the U.S. alone are not going to be effective," said Dr. Christine Kim, assistant professor of International Studies at Cedarville University. "Other countries also have stakes in their relationship with Russia, so it's very hard to have a consensus among all these American allies."

Threats of sanctions have failed to deter Putin from invading Ukraine, and they might not be as effective at hurting Russia as hoped. Russia has built up an economic cushion that will reduce the impact of sanctions, and much of its stockpile comes from the energy sector.

"I think we in the United States

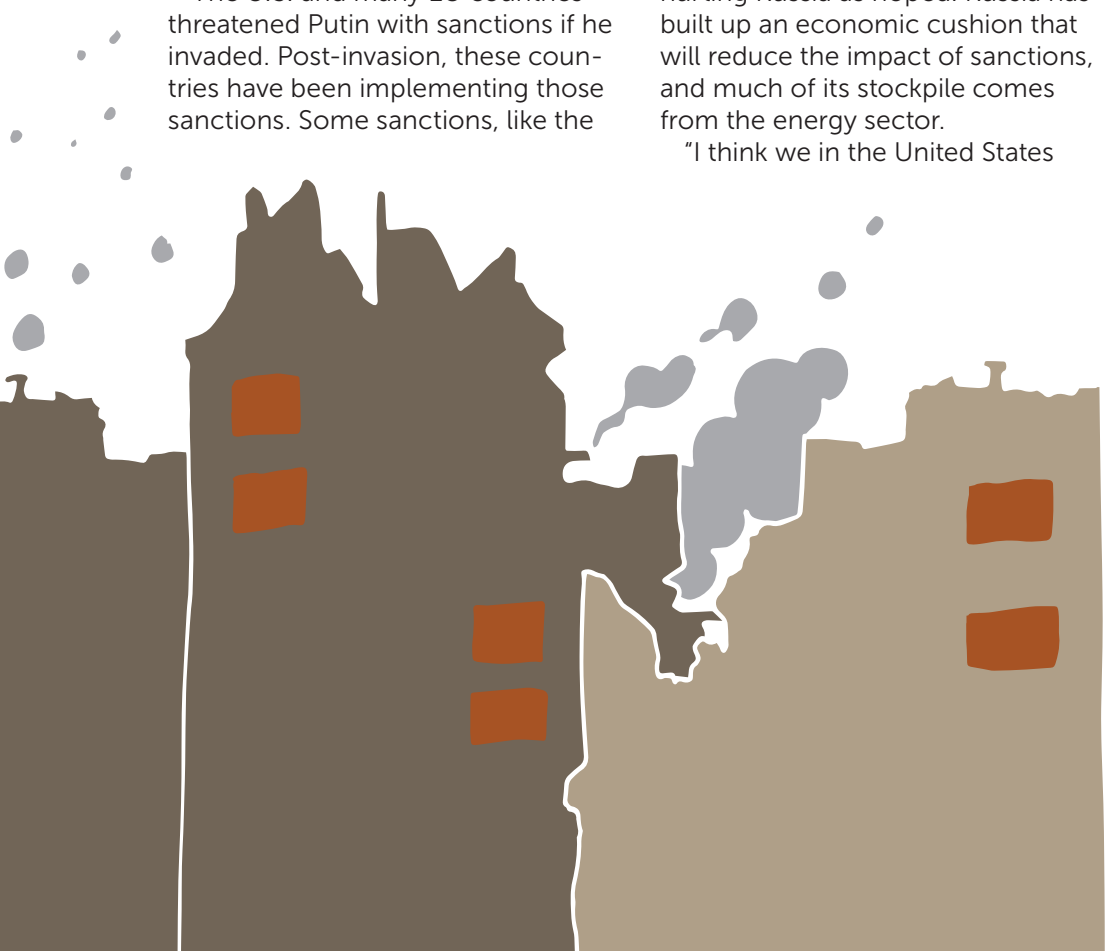
made a major error in terms of our energy policy," said Dr. Glen Duerr, associate professor of International Studies. "When Biden shut off access to oil and liquefied natural gas through fracking, it empowered the Russian energy companies and gave them a lot more money. I get what President Biden was trying to do. It came from a good heart of trying to improve the climate, but it was a major strategic error."

But even with the economic cushion, the Russian economy took a significant hit from sanctions causing the ruble's value to drop below one cent. The Moscow Stock Exchange has been closed since the day after the invasion began. Russian company stocks have also stopped trading in the U.S. This economic damage is substantial, but it might not be enough to get Putin to end the war.

With most of the world hostile toward Russia, it's not likely Putin will end the war until he gets something from it. If some of the sanctions had been implemented before the invasion, the effects would've given Putin something to consider. Since Russia has already invaded, the only effect they can have is to shorten the war through economic damage.

The conclusion of this war remains to be seen, but it's guaranteed to be a bloody one. Although Russia has better military technology and more manpower, the Ukrainians are determined to fight. Millions of people have been fleeing Ukraine, but there are many people who have decided to stay and fight for their country. The Ukrainian government announced that anyone who wanted to get a weapon to fight for Ukraine could get one. In the months before the war began the Ukrainian military trained civilians how to fight.

We've seen heavy resistance to Russian forces at Kyiv and various other locations. Surprisingly, some resistance has even occurred in ethnically Russian parts of Ukraine.



Morale on both sides will be a large factor in the war. Russia has a history of its people's morale dropping low when wars drag on longer than expected in previous wars, and this war seems to be going in a similar direction.

The Russians have attacked cities in Ukraine but have been repelled multiple times. Russian paratroopers took an airfield near Kyiv at the beginning of the war and then the Ukrainians took it back. So, Russia may be able to take cities, but they don't seem able to hold onto them.

"Russia has a long history of taking but not holding all that well," Duerr said.

Another surprising thing about this war is the approach Putin has taken. In the past, he's focused on taking areas with Russian ethnic minorities where he might be able to argue his actions before the world. What we're seeing now is that Putin is focusing on taking out Kyiv early on, which seems to suggest he's either going for full annexation of Ukraine or creating a puppet state.

So far none of the countries supporting Ukraine are willing to get involved militarily. This raises questions about what the future will look like. If Ukraine is left on its own and Russia is allowed to take it over without any military reaction from the world, other countries may take it as an opportunity to act on their own ambitions for expansion.

"If Russia gets away with this, the whole order of world affairs since 1945 threatens to unravel a bit if it's not met with something more than sanctions," Duerr said. "It emboldens China, Iran, Turkey and Venezuela."

China is the country that the world is most worried about acting next. However, Duerr pointed out that China has been patient with their ambitions of taking Taiwan, and there are other countries we should watch that might act sooner. He pointed out that Turkey has ambitions to reform the Ottoman Empire under president Erdoğan. They've already taken parts of northern Syria and had influence in the Libyan Civil War from



2014 to 2020.

But North Korea and other countries working on building up nuclear arsenals learn a different lesson. Ukraine signed the Budapest Memorandum in 1994, in which it gave up Russian Soviet Union era nuclear missiles in exchange for recognition of the sovereignty of their borders. Russia, the United States and the United Kingdom all signed this document.

Now each of these nations is involved either directly or indirectly in the war, which undermines this agreement. Russia has discarded the agreement while the U.S. and UK are trying to find a way to back Ukraine while not entering the war.

The Budapest Memorandum doesn't require the countries that signed it to come to Ukraine's aid militarily, but Ukraine's government does have reason to expect strong support from the U.S. and UK. Meanwhile, countries like North Korea watch Ukraine's current plight and find yet another excuse to continue building up their nuclear arsenal instead of denuclearizing.

From their perspective, Ukraine gave up their nuclear weapons, and now Russia is taking them over. They

see that the U.S. isn't getting involved militarily. To North Korea and similar countries, this is proof that if they denuclearize, any support or protection the U.S. might promise could prove to be worthless.

If the war ends soon with Russia failing to take over Ukraine, it will be considered a victory for democracy. If the war ends with Russia taking over Ukraine, it will change the world order we've known since 1945, with non-democratic countries being emboldened.

"If democracy is something that we value highly," Kim said. "Then we should've done more to protect democracy."

Michael Cleverley is a junior Journalism major with an Asian Studies minor and the Off-Campus Editor for Cedars. When not studying or doing work for Cedars he likes to write, knit and hang out with friends.

Graphics by Natalie Cherry



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