

My senior class has all been a little on edge lately. We're finalizing college and scholarship applications, planning graduation parties, and downing 5-Hour Energies between classes as finals week looms nearer. Outside our sphere of high school commitments, the rest of the country seems pretty frazzled as well. Politically, we're in the midst of some of the most divisive times my generation has ever seen. And as discourse surrounding policy devolves, and people realize that they can capitalize on confusion and fear, a completely new challenge has suddenly been added to our high school experience--the proliferation of "fake news" on our social media feeds.

Journalistic integrity is an intemporal ethical issue--it's been with us since the invention of the press. But our current media crisis is especially dire. Wherever you are on the political spectrum, the prospect of a future in which no news can be trusted is worrying. Our democracy can't function without trust between the citizens, our policymakers, and the writers that keep us in touch with one another. Undermining the media is a tactic to silence civilian dissent and cover up gross ethical violations by some of the most powerful people in our nation.

Luckily, the antidote to this silencing is a liberal education--an education that spans disciplines and emphasizes critical thinking. The liberal arts give us a voice, and a framework for understanding and discussing our world. Literature and philosophy allow us to look at the idea of a "post-truth society" and call it what it is--Orwellian, and a violation of our most basic civil liberties. Social studies allow us to look at when this has happened before, and what people did about it. Studying English and language fosters the kind of reasoning and judgment skills that we

need to stay informed citizens. Mathematics and the sciences assist us in critical thinking, and seeing the logical underpinnings beneath hazy rhetoric and false claims.

Even though I am terrified of what could happen in a society in which “truth,” as a concept, is not valued, I am optimistic about what we as a generation can do with a liberal education. Choosing this kind of education shows that my generation won't choose complacency, and won't shy away from discussing the complicated topics that define our humanity.

I believe that a liberal, interdisciplinary education is the only thing that can fully prepare someone to live in today's world and engage with it deeply. It fosters a kind of vital curiosity--a desire to understand life and humanity and to constantly keep learning amongst others. As undergraduates in the liberal arts, I know that my generation will learn the kind of critical thinking, truth-seeking, and commitment to respect and unity that we will need to practice throughout our entire lives.