DIVERSIONS

THE STYLE INVITATIONAL

The Off-Course Catalogue from Week 1087

BY PAT MYERS

As our back-to-school gift to you, we asked for course catalogue descriptions of classes appropriate for today's world. This seemed to trigger the codgerosity hormone in numerous entrants, who suggested classes in how to read a print newspaper, fold a paper map, etc. The Empress hereby officially retires "Would you like fries with that?" from any further Style Invitational jokes about liberal-arts graduates; that nugget of snark has become progressively less funny since it ruffled the feathers of the Rev. John Harvard in 1637.

The winner of the Inkin' Memorial

PSYC 207: Welcome to Your College Nightmare. Participants will not be notified of their enrollment in this class until the morning of the final exam. Note: Class location is subject to weekly change without notice; each student will attend at least one class session in the nude. (Frank Osen, Pasadena, Calif.)

2nd place and the caterpillar fungus from a Beijing Wal-Mart:

SOC 101: Overcoming Prejudice. In this course, you will learn to identify and overcome the various prejudices — racism, sexism, classism, etc. — that all people like you have. (John Glenn, Tyler, Tex.)

3rd place

PHIL 332: Modern Social Justice and Ethical Inquiry. "A friend posts a cute cat picture on Instagram *and* Facebook; am I obligated to Like it on both platforms?" "If I know someone on LinkedIn but don't think her new job is good, should I congratulate her?" Discuss problems that have engaged philosophers for minutes. This class will be graded Like/Fail. (Dan McMahon, Adelphi, the principal of DeMatha High School)

4th place

PE 124: State-School Polo. Students will each be issued a Hopper Ball and a mallet . . . (Margaret L. Welsh, Oakton)

Hackedemia: honorable mentions

TT 01: Introduction to Time Travel. Covers chronological flow, looped causality and temporal paradoxes. (Prerequisite: TT 02: Advanced Time Travel.) (Jeff Contompasis, Ashburn)

CONG 101R: An emergency remedial course in basic organizational functions, such as budgeting, decision-making and inter-group cooperation. Enrollment limited to 535 (joint session). (Jennifer Gittins-Harfst, Annandale)

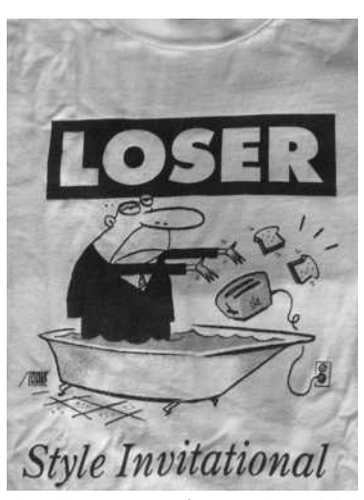
HLTH 101: Alternative Medicine Safety. Do you know a feng shui line of power from a chi line from a chakra? Are you sure? Are you *really* sure? Don't mess with ancient forces till you part with modern cash. $795, to be exact. (Lawrence McGuire, Waldorf)

MATH IXa: Asicbay Yptography-cray. (Jeff Contompasis)

HIST 404: Lost Civilizations. This course will closely examine seven ancient cultures for which no evidence has ever been found. (Warren Tanabe, Annapolis)

Urban Studies 464: Surface Transportation. Learn advanced scheduling, mapping routes, and achieving success in delivering your UberX passengers to different locations. (Jeff Wolfson, Potomac)

HISTORY 000: Contemporary Issues: Students discuss celebrity tweets made in the hour before class. Exams are not cumulative. Prerequisite for Ancient History 349: Tweets From Three Days Ago. (Tom Witte, Montgomery Village)



Bob Staake's design for the 1995 Loser T-shirt (front).

BOB STAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

New contest for Week 1091: Good idea! Or not.

Good idea: Wash hands after using toilet.
Bad idea: Wash hands using toilet. (Jay Snyder)
Good idea: Showing pictures of your kids at a private party.
Bad idea: Showing pictures of your privates at a kids' party. (Ira Moskowitz)

Here's a contest we haven't done since back in Week 102, when the Czar ripped it off from the "Animaniacs" TV cartoons. The results back in 1995, including the above entries, were classic, so the Empress hopes that the Loser Community can give this form a fresh, crisp ripping sound. **This week: Come up with a good idea and, through a small change in wording, a bad idea.**

Winner gets the Inkin' Memorial, the Lincoln statue bobblehead that is the official Style Invitational trophy. Second place receives, in line with our wallow in the 1990s, a genuine 1990s Loser T-shirt from the prize collection of Elden Carnahan (barely if at all Eldened); and a fine example of the Old Bob period of the Bob Staake oeuvre. The front of the ugly yellow tee shows a man in a business suit standing in a full bathtub and tossing a plugged-in toaster into it. The back — the winning entry of Week 132, by George Montgomery — shows Bob's drawing of the same man with the toaster on the floor; his throw has missed. This was the first in a series of Loser T-shirts joking about people failing to kill them-selves, a tack we eventually abandoned in a rare display of taste.

Other runners-up win their choice of a yearned-for Loser Mug or the ardently desired "Whole Fools" Grossery Bag. Honorable mentions get a lusted-after Loser magnet, either the Po' Wit Laureate or Puns of Steel. First Offenders receive a smelly tree-shaped air "freshener" (FirStink for their first ink). E-mail entries to losers@washpost.com or, if you were born in the 19th century, fax to 202-334-4312. Deadline is Monday, Oct. 6; results published Oct. 26 (online Oct. 23). No more than 25 entries per entrant per contest. Include "Week 1091" in your e-mail subject line or it might be ignored as spam. Include your real name, postal address and phone number with your entry. See contest rules and guidelines at *wapo.st/InvRules*. This week's honorable-mentions subhead is by Beverley Sharp; "Off-course catalogue" is Tom Witte's. Join the Style Invitational Devotees group on Facebook at *on.fb.me/invdev,* and click "like" on Style Invitational Ink of the Day at *bit.ly/inkofday*.

STYLE CONVERSATIONAL The Empress's weekly online column discusses each new contest and set of results. Especially if you plan to enter, check it out at wapo.st/styleconv.

AMST 326: Checking Out the Checkout Line. Learn why Brad snubbed Jen at the Oscars; how to lose 20 pounds eating just bacon and Fritos; and 30 sex tips that will leave your lover begging for more. Course materials are free, as long as you can complete the reading in the time it takes to scan 12 items or fewer. (Mark Raffman, Reston)

Classics 401: Greek Tragedy. Learn how to cope when your frat house is shut down for health code violations; when you catch your roommate making out with your date to the fall formal; and when you graduate with a 2.0 GPA and a hangover. (Mark Raffman)

JOUR 348: Hdlns & Digests. Learn to boil down the world to the essentials in this too-much-news world. Projects include the EU crisis in two sentences, Scotland in 12 words and, in the final, China in three short paragraphs. (John O'Byrne, Dublin)

BUS 489: Hedge Fund Management. What you need to know — and need to make sure no one else knows. Students in this course should also take POL 400, Our Criminal Justice System, and ART 107, Introduction to Metalworking: The License Plate. Exam answers sold separately. (John Glenn)

Linguistics 1337: 57ud3n75 mu57 m337 c0ur53 pr3r3qu15173 by 1n73rpr371n6 7h15 d35cr1p710n. (Kevin Dopart, Washington)

And on the back, the winning complement from Week 132.

JRNL 407: Applied Print Journalism. Students learn how to make shoes out of old newspapers in case their unpaid internships don't lead to actual paychecks. (Michael Peck, Alexandria)

Journalism 210: Elements of Punditry. Learn how to puff no great matter (driving to work, ordering a pumpkin spice latte) into no great column. (Students must not have previous course work in politics, policy, political economy, philosophy, sociology, statistics, history or anthropology.) (Lawrence McGuire; Phil Frankenfeld, Washington)

Poli Sci 300: Conflict Analysis: Students will be divided into two groups based on political affiliation and associated strategies: "Just start dropping bombs anywhere" and "Can't we all just get along?" The groups will then spend the semester hollering epithets at each other. All grades to be determined by a joint project between the two groups. Most students will repeat this course for several terms. (John Kammer, South Riding)

PE 535: Moral Yoga. Practice the moral flexibility needed to excel in Congress. Poses taught include Downward-No-Upward-Facing Dog, Special Interest Warrior and POTUS Lotus. (Ben Aronin, Washington)

Internet Journalism 201: You won't BELIEVE what a sophomore accomplished in this class last term! 24 quizzes. (Kevin Dopart)

SOC 247: Caveat Empress. Examines the inner workings of an arcane society in which winners are losers, excrement is extolled, decorum is debased, and a homosexual horse-breeding ritual is conducted annually. (Randy Arndt, Clarksville)

Still running — deadline Monday night: Our contest to write a poem featuring a rude-sounding (but wholesome) word. See bit.ly/invite1090.

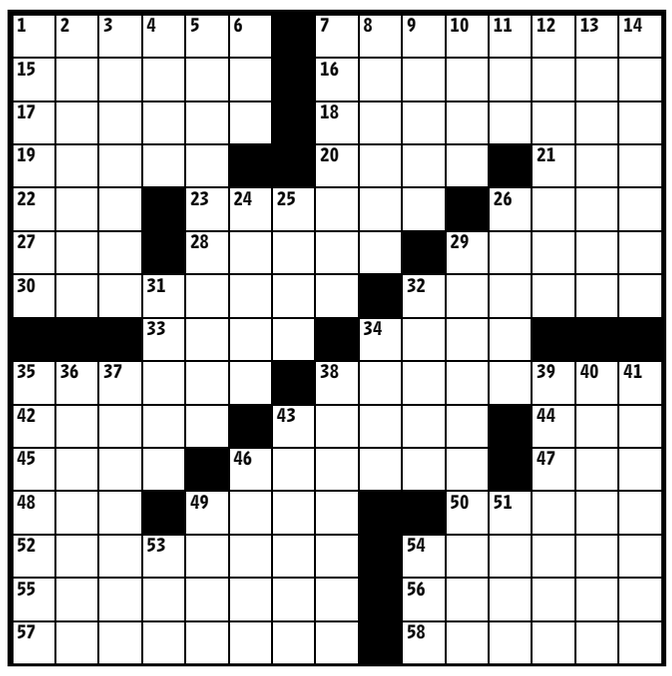
POST PUZZLER

No. 234

BY MIKE NOTHNAGEL EDITED BY PETER GORDON • FIREBALLCROSSWORDS.COM

ACROSS
1 "Pearls Before Swine" creator Stephan
7 Pause
15 "Either way is fine"
16 Break new ground
17 Podiatry topic
18 Sort of
19 Sore throat cause
20 Steal the Old ____ Bundle (children's card game)
21 Fist bump
22 Afternoon social
23 Sentence shortener
26 End of a sort?
27 Last word of "Casey at the Bat"
28 "Awake and Sing!" playwright
29 Talk show that ended in July 2014
30 Phone menu option
32 More than 99% of a googol
33 Half of the shortest Bible verse
34 Player of Hole notes?
35 One who asks for no dressing?
38 "Star Trek: Voyager" actress
42 Vermont ski resort
43 Thirst
44 Pac-12 player
45 Sticks for breaking
46 Gets by
47 Crew leader
48 Weisshorn, for one
49 Power surge?
50 Tipped, to a Brit
52 One might have a solution
54 Sang in Gaelic, maybe
55 Comet, e.g.
56 Cochise portrayer Michael
57 Telemarketers' equipment
58 Wee

DOWN
1 Track break
2 Ham radio operator, e.g.
3 Like pinking shears
4 Subdue, in a way
5 "Sure, why not"
6 Method: Abbr.
7 Device used to play Super Mario Galaxy
8 Record collection?
9 Daft
10 Pitch
11 Michigan, in Chicago: Abbr.
12 "¡Three Amigos!" extra
13 Interrogation room retort
14 Dakota residences
24 Take on a pet project?
25 "Light My Candle" musical
26 Prep cook's tool
29 Douglas Fairbanks portrayer in "Chaplin"
31 Participates in a medley
32 Douglas Fairbanks role
34 Fields
35 Dropped call?
36 Instrument similar to the Portuguese cavaquinho
37 Like some explorations
38 "Yikes!"
39 Gulf state
40 Penitent people
41 Delivery specification
43 "Most definitely!"
46 Drench
49 Egg containers: Abbr.
51 Programming keyword
53 Smidge
54 Bodybuilding target



Answer to last week, No. 233

I	L	U	V	U		P	E	E		F	R	O	Z	E
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HOROSCOPE

BY JACQUELINE BIGAR

HAPPY BIRTHDAY | SEPT. 28: This year you experience renewed vitality. Your immediate circle of friends expands, and you enjoy your new pals a lot. If you are single, you will want a friendship as well as a relationship. It might be difficult to find someone who knows how to mix both successfully, but you will! If you are attached, the two of you often can be found with your friends. You have the ability to manifest a mutual long-term goal.

ARIES *(March 21-April 19)*
You might spend a lot of time with one particular person today. By late afternoon, you will want to spread your wings. You need some time to let your mind wander.

TAURUS *(April 20-May 20)*
Your charisma might make you feel overwhelmed, as so many people seek you out. You would prefer to be dealing one-on-one with a special person.

GEMINI *(May 21-June 20)*
Pace yourself. You will get as much done as you want, but expect to be distracted later by a loved one or dear friend.

CANCER *(June 21-July 22)*
Know what you expect from a new friend. This person might not meet the standard you have set, as it is very high. Relax a little, and give him or her some space.

LEO *(July 23-Aug. 22)*
You might need some time at home to finish up a project or to get some R and R. An effort you make toward a family member will be crucial to preserving your relationship.

VIRGO *(Aug. 23-Sept. 22)*
You are likely to say what you mean, and people might be disconcerted by what they hear. Let it go. They probably need to hear what you say.

LIBRA *(Sept. 23-Oct. 22)*
What is important to you at this very moment might not be important to someone else. Accept that fact and relax. You will have a better time together as a result.

SCORPIO *(Oct. 23-Nov. 21)*
Indulge yourself. You're so much more relaxed than usual, and you will draw a loved one into some fun. Don't forget to join friends, as they have planned a get-together.

SAGITTARIUS *(Nov. 22-Dec. 21)*
You will need all the rest you can get today. Be a couch potato. Enjoy reading the paper. Take a nap or two. Later on, you'll be ready to take the world by storm.

CAPRICORN *(Dec. 22-Jan. 19)*
Accept an invitation; you'll enjoy the change of pace. Someone you meet today may be more important to you than you realize. Tonight, get some much-needed sleep.

AQUARIUS *(Jan. 20-Feb. 18)*
You may be overwhelmed by a responsibility, but you will fulfill it. There is no question in your mind about what do do afterward: You always know where your friends are, and that is where you will be. Let the party begin!

PISCES *(Feb. 19-March 20)*
You suddenly may realize that you missed someone's expression of caring. You might want to backtrack and find this individual. Read between the lines.

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Mom's new partner is a bad influence

Ask Amy

AMY DICKINSON

Dear Amy: I'm 18, and I am *going away to university. Last month my mom kicked me out of my house. It was a turbulent summer. Last year my parents divorced and my mom started dating. The divorce was really hard on my little brother and me, but it got bad when my mom started dating her current partner. He is mean and selfish.*

He is influencing my mom in negative ways and persuaded her to kick me out of my home. I get good grades, have two jobs, drive and pay for most everything on my own. I don't know what I did to provoke this. I know I'm 18 now, but this is so sudden.

The woman I knew a year ago would have never even considered abandoning me like this! I am handling it maturely, and I don't tell people about it. She won't return my phone calls and when I try to go to her work to say hello, she just tells me to leave.

I want my mom back. What can I do to get my mom back in my life?

Lonely

I am so sorry you are going through this. What a tough way to end your childhood. It sounds like your mother is being controlled by this other person, and that is a frightening prospect.

Unfortunately, there is not much you can actively do to get your mother back (although her attitude toward you will probably change in time). What you need to do is cope with this loss and deal with your concerns about her and your sibling.

Even though you are handling this maturely, I hope you won't bury your feelings. Please talk to friends or other family members about what you are going through. Your college has a counseling center. Visit with a counselor for advice and support.

Dear Amy: I went to an upscale *wedding more than a year ago and spent quite a bit of money on the present. Along with some other guests, I never received a thank-you note. What is the protocol in asking the couple if they ever received my present? Are handwritten notes obsolete?*

Karen

Handwritten notes are not obsolete. Furthermore, I predict that handwritten communication is going to experience a serious resurgence — riding the wave of the DIY movement.

Regardless of what is currently in style, receipt of your gift should be acknowledged and you should be thanked, sincerely and graciously. Would you care if this was delivered to you by way of a phone call instead of a note at this point? I assume you'd be relieved to be acknowledged at all.

You should not feel burdened to figure out an appropriate or polite way to inquire about your gift.

Many couples set up fancy wedding Web sites, which they use to hector their guests with frequent updates before their wedding and post photos afterward.

Perhaps you could e-mail the couple through their Web site: "I had a wonderful time at your wedding. The vision of Uncle Joe dancing is one I won't soon forget. I'm a little concerned that you didn't receive my gift because I never heard from you. Can you let me know?"

Write to Amy Dickinson at *askamy@tribune.com* or Ask Amy, Chicago Tribune, TT500, 435 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill. 60611.