

# The Style Invitational

Week 630: Hyphen the Terrible



BY BOB STANK FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

**Dignity x messages = Dig-sages, n. Experts in nose-picking.**

**Yoda x schema = Yo-ma, v. To insult someone's ancestry.**

**Sunsets x long-neck = Sun-neck, n., the currently preferred term for one of rural Southern heritage.**

**This week's contest:** Combine the beginning and end of any two multisyllabic words in this week's Invitational, and then define the compound. Each part should consist of at least one syllable but can't be the entire word. Winner gets the Inker, the official Style Invitational trophy. First runner-up receives, discourtesy of Loser Ezra Deutsch-Feldman of Bethesda, the CD "Here Comes . . . El Son: Songs of the Beatles . . . With a Cuban Twist." Some of the cuts are actually pretty good. Some are not.

Other runners-up win a coveted Style Invitational Loser T-shirt. Honorable mentions get one of the lusted-after Style Invitational Magnets. One prize per entrant per week. Send your entries by e-mail to [losers@washpost.com](mailto:losers@washpost.com) or, if you really have to, by fax to 202-334-4312. Deadline is Monday, Oct. 10. Results will be published Oct. 30. Put "Week 630" in the subject line of your e-mail, or it risks being ignored as spam. Include your name, postal address and phone number with your entry. Entries are judged on the basis of humor and originality. All entries become the property of The Washington Post. Entries may be edited for taste or content. No purchase required for entry. Employees of The Washington Post, and their immediate relatives, are not eligible for prizes. Pseudonymous entries will be disqualified. The revised title for next week's contest is by Brendan Beary of Great Mills.

**Report from Week 626**, in which we asked for catalogue descriptions of comical college courses:

♦ **Third runner-up: Film 007: The James Bond Canon.** Students will view all of the Bond films and write their term paper on which Bond is the best. Those choosing Sean Connery will get an A, Pierce Brosnan a B, Roger Moore a C, George Lazenby a D and Timothy Dalton an F. (Joseph Romm, Washington)

♦ **Second runners-up: Federal Disaster Relief 101.** Students will build a decision support system using faith-based logic and a Ouija Board. Prerequisites include Getting Permission From the Mayor 101, Clearing Everything With the Lawyers 101, and Telling the FEMA Director to Turn on the %#@\* Television 101. (Kevin Dopart, Washington; Steven J. Allen, Manassas)

♦ **First runner-up, the winner of the "prepared dry fish bone" food item: Anatomy 1 and 2, Posterior Survey.** Through two semesters of intense classroom instruction and weekly labs, students will learn to locate their behinds using both hands. Textbook, flashlight and washable headbands required. (Phil Battey, Alexandria)

♦ **And the winner of the Inker: LANG 238: Ancient Voices.** Who were the Ink Spots? Country Joe and the Fish? What does "nanu-nanu" mean? Intense immersion into the language and culture of 15 to 50 years ago will enable the student to understand and converse with older relatives and prospective employers. Prerequisite for all INTN (Internship) classes. (Douglas Frank, Crosby, Tex.)

♦ **Honorable Mentions:**

**Mass Communications 330: The Future of Reality TV.** Students will compete to participate in a reality TV show about competing to be on a reality TV show. (Bill Spencer, Exeter, N.H.)

**Mechanical Engineering 499: Intelligent Design.** Team project will recast the human body more sensibly, addressing ear hair, male nipples, the need to belch, things that flap when you run, lack of cup holders. (Elwood Fitzner, Valley City, N.D.)

**Harvardese I:** Recordings of George Plimpton, William F. Buckley and President Kennedy are used to develop speech and listening skills in an obscure northern dialect. Fulfills foreign-language requirement. (Russell Beland, Springfield)

**Anthropology 570: Genealogy of the Daytime Serial.** Documentation techniques will be utilized to trace the bloodlines in "All My Children" and "One Life to Live." Team-taught by Erica Kane Martin Brent Cudahy Chandler Montgomery Montgomery Chandler Marick Marick Montgomery and Victoria Lord Riley Burke Riley Buchanan Buchanan Carpenter Davidson. (Deborah Guy, Columbus, Ohio)

**Philosophy 000: Elementary Nihilism.** Students learn the philosophy of total self-negation. Those who bother to attend classes will be failed. (Joseph Romm)

**Academic Communications 191:** An information delivery module designed to disseminate linguistic interaction experience to assist Carbon Based Life Forms (CBLFs) in transactionalizing with other CBLFs, without utilizing affirmative/pejorative value judgments. (John Crowley, Annandale)

**CHEM 180: Household Chemical Reactions Lab.** Students spend the semester in the home of the course instructor, testing various cleaning compounds on a variety of surfaces. (Jeff Brechlin, Eagan, Minn.)

**Math 420: Numerical Methods & Queuing Theory.** Students learn to quantitatively assess aggregated items, compare their magnitudes to an arbitrary constant, and enter an appropriate queuing schema accordingly. Final exam held in the "12 Items or Less" checkout line. (Brendan Beary, Great Mills)

**American History 300: The Baby Boomers.** Students will learn precisely why it is that their professor is so cool now, was so cool in his youth, and will ALWAYS be cool, and is therefore forever entitled to be self-indulgent and snotty. (Tom Witte, Montgomery Village)

**Comp Sci 404: Magical Standing for Office IT Guys.** Students learn how to stand behind people in such a manner that their computer suddenly works, even though it didn't work the last 10 times they did that exact thing. (Seth Brown, North Adams, Mass.)

**Studio Art 327: Hotel Room Picture Painting.** Curriculum covers techniques in sunsets, crashing waves and various autumn things. Prerequisite to Crying Clowns I. (Chuck Smith, Woodbridge)

**Early Childhood Education 001:** Students will learn all they ever really needed to know. Prof. R. Fulghum. (Kyle Hendrickson, Frederick)

**Campus Activism:** Practicum in which students earn credit through a real-life social project. This semester, the class will attempt to resolve egregiously discriminatory, arbitrary denials of tenure. Asst. Prof. Whistlebottom. (Peter Metrinko, Chantilly)

**Literature 421: "Gilligan's Island" as a Metaphor for the Iraq War.** What starts out as a three-hour tour turns into a trip to uncharted territory with no clear exit strategy. (Chuck Smith)

**Humanities 414: Waiting Through History.** Students will investigate the social and cultural impact on society of waiting, and will actually wait for Godot. Lefty, the Robert E. Lee, Guffman, the Sun, and God. Meeting time TBA. (Andrew Hoenig, Rockville)

**Theatre Arts 243: Contemporary Barroom Dance.** Students learn to stand and wiggle their butts while drinking beer from a long-neck bottle. (Roy Ashley, Washington)

**BIO 101: Comparative Anatomy.** Curriculum includes determining whether eyes or stomachs are bigger and distinguishing rears from elbows. (Kevin Dopart)

**American Literature 411: "For Dummies" Books, 2000-2005.** In this survey course, students will skim brief excerpts from this genre, and submit short reports. (Tom Witte)

**ANTH 100: Distinguishing Old People.** Undergraduate seminar dispels the popular notion that old people all look alike. Identifying characteristics will be underscored (e.g., gender). (Martin Bancroft, Ann Arbor, Mich.)

**ENGL 615: Yoda I.** To Yoda's grammatical structure you will be introduced. (Evan Golub, College Park)

**Phys Ed 349: Disaster Response Gymnastics.** Coaches teach students how to put their heads up their butts in preparation for government service. Prerequisite: Arabian Horse Judging 101. Required text: "My Pet Goat." (Phyllis Reinhard, East Fallowfield, Pa.)

**English Comp 121: Great American Text Messages Under 250 Characters.** ezy cls ne1 cn tak. Several short papers. (Jane Auerbach, Los Angeles)

**SRP 101: Basics of Sub-Aquatic Reed Plaiting.** Introduction to the most maligned of college majors. (Russell Beland)

**WORK 1601: McJob Practicum.** Prerequisite for LIFE. Perform mindless, pointless and degrading tasks all day while taking guff from perfect strangers and feckless idiots. Try to find meaning and maintain your basic human dignity, especially after you get your first paycheck. Imagine doing this the rest of your life and suddenly finals week seems like Club Med. NOW are you ready to pick a major? (Douglas Frank)

## MISS MANNERS

Judith Martin

### Be My Guest

How can someone so amazingly popular feel awkward and unwanted?

There is scarcely a party to which And Guest is not invited, even — in fact, especially — to wedding festivities and family holiday celebrations. Leaving A.G. off the list inspires indignant protests from those who made the cut. Nothing could possibly be any fun if A.G. isn't going to be there, they do not hesitate to state. Hosts are afraid to slight such an esteemed person.

So why is this life of the party not gleeful with anticipation? Why does the polite A.G. fret about being genuinely welcome, and worry about how to perform the most basic duties of a guest, such as answering the invitation and, when customary, sending a present?

Could it be, Miss Manners wonders, because going to a party without a direct invitation from the host feels remarkably like party-crashing?

The intermediary host — the person who declares such an invitation unnecessary, but has actually received one — is quick to deny this. "Oh, no, don't be ridiculous. I know they're dying to have you."

Sometimes the authority for this statement comes from general permission, such as a written invitation that bears the designation of "and guest" or allows the recipient to fill in the number of people who will attend. Sometimes the hosts have been asked about bringing someone in particular or have volunteered that it would be fine to bring anyone. Sometimes the hosts have not been asked, under the assumption that of course they want their chosen guests to bring guests of their own choosing.

And there is poor old And Guest, with only a secondhand assurance of being welcome and little notion of what is expected of a second-class guest.

That is because no such category should exist. And it is up to the hosts to see that it does not.

They can begin by issuing direct invitations to those whom they know, rather than falling into the habit of saying "Bring Tabitha" or "Tell your brother to come, too." It makes a huge difference to be invited by name.

If there are requests to bring extra people, they, too, need to be invited by name, if indeed

they are invited at all. We have generously included the previous category of people who must be included at social events, from spouses and spouses-to-be to both halves of couples who have merged their social lives. A host who has only just been informed of such an attachment should ask for that person's name and send an invitation.

Less serious requests, especially ones to serious events, may be declined with regret. Anyone who needs to bring entertainment to get through your dinner party is going to be a terrible guest anyway.

But where does this leave And Guest? At home, if there is not convincing evidence that the hosts are aware and willing. Out front if there is, making up for the hosts' deficiencies by seeking them out and performing a self-introduction, participating in any present that the person directly invited gives and writing a separate letter of thanks.

With any luck, the hosts will notice for next time that the name in the introduction, on the card with the present and on the letter of thanks is not And Guest.

Dear Miss Manners:

**I have just started life in a dorm and I find it hard to meet people or strike up conversations. Do you happen to have any pointers?**

Do your laundry. Miss Manners does not intend this as a comment on your hygiene, which she has not the least desire to examine. Laundry rooms are the respectable place for accidental meetings in dormitories and apartment buildings. They provide a legitimate excuse for clean people to hang out with nothing much to do, and such sure-fire conversation starters as "Oops, I forgot my soap."

*Feeling incorrect? E-mail your etiquette questions to Miss Manners (who is distraught that she cannot reply personally) at [MissManners@unitedmedia.com](mailto:MissManners@unitedmedia.com) or mail to United Media, 200 Madison Ave., New York, N.Y. 10016.*

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## ASK AMY

Dear Amy:

**I am becoming increasingly frustrated with adults who refuse to admit that, yes, they are grown-ups!**

**We recently met my sister's boyfriend, who is 45. I have two small children, and I don't want them calling adults by their first names, so we introduced him as "Mr. Doe." He complained about being called Mr. Doe because "that's my father." Eventually, we agreed to let the kids call him "Mr. John." I know that is common in the South, but I'm not Southern (neither is he) and I live in Chicago, not Atlanta, and don't want my kids calling everyone Mr. First Name.**

**Later, the conversation swirled around whether calling someone Mr. or Mrs. is a term of respect or a moniker reserved for someone in authority, not someone known only socially. Apparently, "Mr. Doe" has run into this situation before, and finds being called "Mr. Doe" objectionable.**

**This is not the first time I have run into this problem. I don't understand why someone is opposed to being called Mr., Mrs., Miss or Ms. Last Name. It's not like I'm creating a new name for them — it's their name already!**

**Any suggestions on how to handle this issue? Okay With Being Mrs. Smith**

I have a confession to make. I have created the same sorts of problems that "Mr. John" has and I've learned some things as a result.

Parents should dictate how their children address adults, and the rest of us need to shut up already and let it go. I have seen very proper 8-year-olds squirm when I ask to be called "Amy." They just can't do it. So they find all sorts of clever ways not to call me anything. I have also tried the "Miss Amy" thing, but that makes me feel like a character fleeing from the Yankees in "Gone With the Wind."

Now when I meet up with kids — my daughter's friends, for instance — I will say, "You can call me Amy or Ms. Dickinson, whichever you'd like." Then they get to choose, based on what they and their parents decide. When I first introduce people to my daughter, I always try to use a title and surname and she does, too, even though it's not what I personally prefer. I know that it's logical to think that we first-name people are just immature Peter Pan-types who don't want to grow up, but it's probably a little more complicated than that. We are people who want

to decide how others should address us, and these titles just don't seem to fit.

In the case of your sister's boyfriend, he might feel (or wish to be) closer to a family member than a "Mr." Perhaps he's hoping that someday your children will call him "Uncle John."

I'm curious to know what other readers think.

Dear Amy:

**A recent letter from "Walking on Eggshells" caught my eye. Her twenty-something girlfriend was dating a middle-aged man who had all of the rules and no time for their relationship.**

**I dated a man for a while who was very secretive and never made plans. He would call or show up when he was available. I could never call him and was not allowed to go to his home.**

**This guy was hot and I was interested enough at the time to put up with the situation. Soon I became curious and started doing some detective work.**

**It turns out he was living with his longtime girlfriend, who traveled a lot for business.**

**"Walking on Eggshells" needs to help her friend open her eyes to the situation. This guy is trying to have his cake and eat it, too, without giving her the benefit of knowing what's going on.**

**Time is short, girlfriend! It's time to move on and find an available man.**

Bonnie

As my mother always used to say, "Handsome is as handsome does." Translation: "Mr. Hot . . . is not."

Dear Amy:

**I recently received an invitation to a reception for a promotion of the daughter of a friend of mine, and I am wondering if it is necessary to bring a gift or if a card would suffice.**

Wondering

I'd stick with a card, along with a sincere note of congratulations.

*Write to Amy Dickinson at [askamy@tribune.com](mailto:askamy@tribune.com) or Ask Amy, Chicago Tribune, TT500, 435 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill. 60611.*

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## BRIDGE | Frank Stewart

Both sides vulnerable

**NORTH**  
♠ A J 9 2  
♥ A 2  
♦ J 10 4  
♣ A 9 8 2

**EAST**  
♠ K Q 10 7 6  
♥ 6  
♦ Q 5 3 2  
♣ J 5 3

**SOUTH (D)**  
♠ 3  
♥ Q J 10  
9 8 7 3  
♦ A K 6  
♣ Q 7

The bidding:

**South** West North East  
4♥(1) Pass 6♥(1) All Pass

Opening lead: ♦ 9

It was the first of the month, and I found Unlucky Louie in the club lounge, morosely surveying a pile of credit-card statements.

"If I didn't veto half of my wife's bills," Louie sighed, "we'd be in the outhouse. Before we got married, I yearned for her; ever since, the 'y' has been silent."

Later I watched Louie try to make a profit in the penny Chicago game, but after today's deal, he was silent. Louie's bid of four hearts was born of desperation; he was losing, as usual, and was trying to recover.

North's leap to six hearts was even stranger.

Dummy's jack of diamonds held the first trick, and Louie led a diamond to his king and let the queen of hearts ride.

On the next heart, though, East threw a spade. Louie led a diamond

to his ace and conceded a trump, and West then led a spade. Louie took the ace, ruffed a spade and ran his trumps, but he lost a club at the end and went farther into the hole.

How would you play the slam? Louie is safe if he can avoid a trump loser; otherwise he needs a lucky spade position, a squeeze or an end play.

Louie should take the ace of spades at Trick Two, ruff a spade and finesse in trumps. When East discards on the second trump, Louie ruffs another spade.

The K-Q of spades haven't fallen, but Louie next takes the A-K of diamonds and exits with a trump.

West has only clubs left and must lead from his king.

"Your wife seems like a nice person to me," I told Louie.

"I asked for her hand and wound up under her thumb," was his reply.

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Next Week: Per-Verse, or Rhymes Against Humanity