

# Eye on Campus

## Big wheels keep on rollin' on the Rio Delco

In 2004, MGM released "Saved," in which Macauley Culkin played a wheelchair-bound high school student. For Halloween he dressed himself up as a rollerskate. It was a simple costume: a black T-shirt with a long white rope strapped down the front of his chest in the shape of an expertly tied shoelace, his wheelchair playing the role of rollerskate wheels.

His character's self-deprecating humor got a few kicks, but I failed to see the humor.

Until I decided to take part in Disability Awareness Day last week, and spend an entire day in a wheelchair.

I felt embarrassed at first.

As my peers and faculty became bent out of shape to awkwardly hold doors and generally accommodate my presence, I didn't think many of them realized it was Disability Awareness Day.

My first class was especially ludicrous when most of the entire room

abruptly zipped shut the familiar chattering buzz before class. I had difficulty maneuvering myself at the front of the room and in between desks so I wouldn't be in the way.

Finally, the girl next to me gave a sheepish smile and pulled out an adjacent desk, making it possible for me to parallel park as quickly as my motor skills would allow.

I felt the eyes of 30 algebra students burning into me when the professor asked, "Why are you in a wheelchair?"

I casually responded, "I was involved in a major automobile accident."

Apparently she bought this, for her trembling hand shot to close her gaping mouth and I think her glasses lightly fogged over.

Of course, I apologized and explained to her that it was actually Disability Awareness Day and nothing had happened during the inter-

im of Monday to Wednesday. Some people found this funny, but I'm not sure I said it to be funny.

After I attempted, and failed, to move a desk 180 degrees in order to utilize note-taking space, I found the desk was too tall for me so I was forced to use my lap.

I knew that this was honor; this was what they meant when they said I had to walk a mile in another person's wheels.

When my butt fell asleep, I was angry with myself for thinking such self-righteous thoughts.

The handicapped button is very useful for a disabled someone to independently let him/her in or out of buildings.

The main doors of the Commons building lacked this "I-can-open-these-doors-by-magic" button, but this is where I had to go.

Upon exiting the Main building's doors, my jaw dropped, but it wasn't

the distance as so much as it was the seemingly 80 degree slope that I forgot all about. That's when I realized that I had to go.

Like a salmon fighting up river, I made my way through the sea of students to the lavatory.

After forcefully pushing both doors open, so I may have enough time to wheel myself through, I knew the real fun would begin.

I slowly made my way to the stall that looked like it was made for a sumo wrestler but was faced with a much graver challenge: the parallel bars. It takes months or years of physical training and I had no idea how to use them.

I had to go to the bathroom *now*.

Then a student walked in and stopped dead in his tracks. I could feel him staring at the chair and its disembodied user gratefully standing at the urinal.

Feeling ashamed for not being able to hack it, I said: "I just couldn't go sitting down."



## Issues of the present, with an eye on the past

### Cimbala's poli sci class is a valuable tool

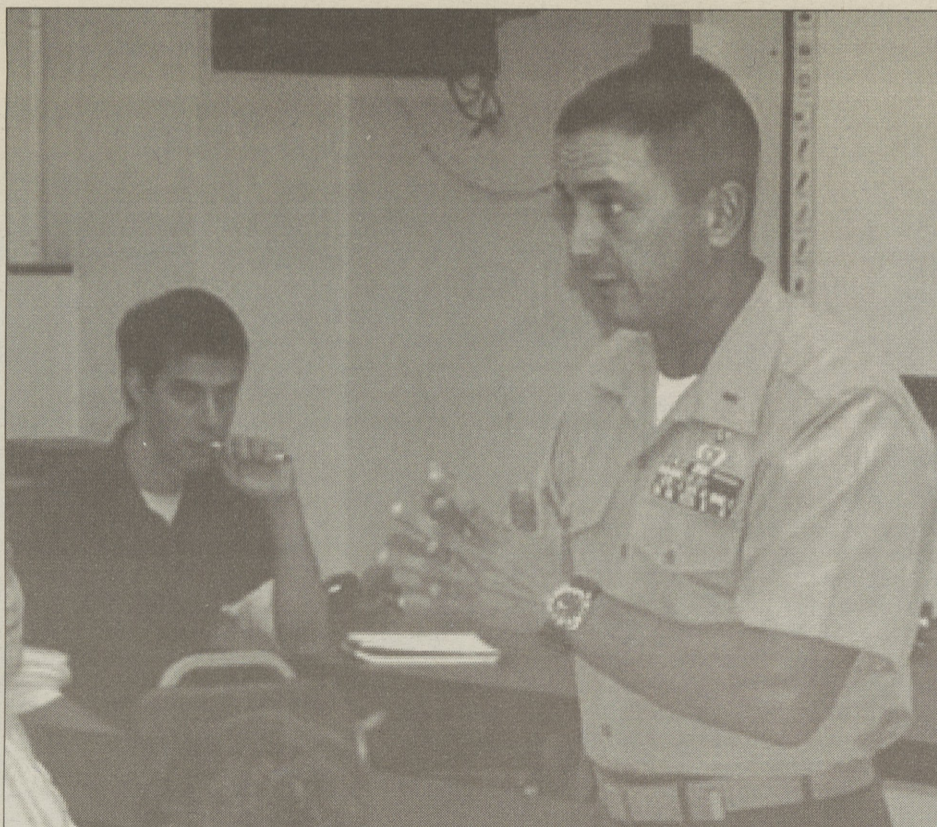
By JULIA HAGAN  
Lion's Eye staff writer  
JAH1003@psu.edu

The intense 2004 presidential election has spurred political interests of American citizens and people worldwide. Fortunately, at Penn State Delco, Dr. Stephen Cimbala's comparative politics course (PLSC003) provides the perfect remedy for students frustrated with the confusing and conflicting political climate.

"I took this class," said sophomore Peter Volk, "because I feel that political science affects all of us. I will be able to use the knowledge gained here to sift through the propaganda that the news media shoves down our throats."

Cimbala, a distinguished professor and Penn State alum, is author of numerous political and military history books with research interests including international politics, foreign and defense policy, and military history. It was his own undergraduate experience in a poli sci class that prompted him to switch his focus from becoming the "best sports writer the world had ever seen," to the study of political science.

Political science cannot use simple equations to solve problems. Politics is full of "ambiguities and paradoxes," said Cimbala, but there



Lt. David Fleming, a Penn State Delco grad recently returned from a tour in Iraq, addressed Dr. Stephen Cimbala's political science 003 class.

are "no formulas. It's hard to study and hard to teach. Government is an art, not a science. It's like driving a car." To get better at it, one needs, "judgment based on experience."

According to Cimbala, political science, "is the most interesting and frustrating thing to study."

He explained that instead of teaching a set of skills, political science provides the foundations for greater critical thinking and is

designed for the "student with an intellectual curiosity about the political world outside the classroom."

The constant circulation of negative ads and media spectacle has made it difficult to form and decipher solid political standpoints. The public is bombarded with relentless, political advertisements. Cimbala explained that he wants all of his students to "become political news junkies."

### CLASS OF THE MONTH

"The genius of American politics is its ability to compromise," he said. "Government is an ongoing conversation and struggle."

Unlike other scientific classes where students can use logic and formulas to find solutions, in political science there is no final answer and "issues are endlessly debated."

Despite the heavy topics, students appreciate how the class material relates directly to what is going on in their neighborhoods, their nation, and the world.

Cimbala's teaching method requires students to take an academic initiative rather than become "passive receivers" of information. Instead an hour's worth of lecturing and notes, students recite summaries of assigned readings and current events. The course is interactive and allows students to not only ask questions but also engage in interesting discussions.

"Cimbala's political science class is a great place to keep up with important political issues," said freshman Devin Regan. "The combination of a knowledgeable professor with an open discussion/debate format makes of an interesting class every time."

Cimbala encourages all of his students to vote and judging from the range of class material (including World Wars I and II, the Cuban missile crisis, military strategy and political propaganda) the best tool that students and government leaders can use is the past.

"If you don't know where you've been," said Cimbala, "how do you know where you're going?"

Lion's Eye photo