

Hot Potato



Camila Pardo
| Columnist

High school is only the start

Sometimes I wonder if these are supposed to be the best years of my life, and if they are, what happens after? It's strange to think that a place filled with white fluorescent lights, rushed lunches, and endless homework might be the "peak." But it's a quiet fear so many of us carry: that we'll never be this young, this noticed, or this full of possibility again.

We've been told that high school is where everything happens: the friends, the big moments, the memories we'll carry forever. And because of that, there's this quiet pressure to make every day count. To collect stories, to look like you're thriving, to feel like you're doing something significant. You start to wonder whether or not you've already had your best days before your life has even really begun.

It's in the little moments that this fear shows up. The Friday night SMB Wolfpack games you don't want to miss, the conversations that feel important but slip away before you can hold onto them, the fleeting sense of connection in a hallway between classes. You begin to notice that while everyone seems to be living their highlight reel, most of us are just getting through the day, trying not to mess up too badly or get left behind.

The truth is, for the better I'd like to think, not everyone peaks here. Life doesn't stop after graduating; it gets wider, messier, and more interesting. There's more room to fail, to succeed, and to grow. Maybe these years aren't the peak. Instead, they're the practice. A time to make mistakes, to figure out who you are, and to learn what really matters, beyond the grades, applause, or approval.

I don't want to peak at sixteen. I'd rather keep moving, keep changing, keep finding new things that matter. High school doesn't have to be the best years of our lives; it can be the foundation for the years that are still waiting ahead. And maybe the best part isn't looking back, but realizing that we haven't even started.

Self-Censorship Discourages Discussion



Willow Overcash

Political conversations mimic an echo chamber

Ben Passi | Staff Writer

A hand raises, hesitates, then lowers. Silenced by an invisible weight, the potential to be 'wrong' or 'offensive.' Educational institutions across the country are burdened by a concerning rise in polarization in po-

litical discussion. Northrop is no exception. Promoting a space where all ideas are welcome is more crucial now than ever. Even as a place of learning, the school has formed an echo chamber where self-censorship feels safer than honest discussion.

School is "where you learn most of the stuff in your life, and I think it's important for people to learn about politics unbiased," stated **Elizabeth**

MacNeill '27. However, "I think sometimes students don't share their opinions." With the largely liberal community of the school, sometimes just agreeing or acknowledging certain views that are generally considered more conservative is often met with harsh criticism, especially from students. The same is true in more right-leaning schools with left-leaning perspectives. However, the issue persists when discuss-

ing controversial topics, such as affirmative action and certain political figures.

Yet, our education isn't necessarily to blame. While teachers' general political opinions inadvertently make their way into lessons and discussions, there's another layer of self-censorship on topics. Student culture perpetuates this strange dynamic.

Our culture of delegitimizing opinions that we've predetermined as wrong is a very concerning trend, especially in the educational sphere. One example of this is the recent rise in political violence, in which there has been an unsettling number of students and the general public celebrating when perpetrated against the opposing party. Furthermore, I remember when discussing colonization in 9th grade, feeling uncomfortable asking the question, "Why do we focus so much on colonization by Europeans in discussions when it was such a global issue?" I kept replaying the question in my head, wondering if it would sound insensitive. I wasn't defending colonialism, but what if it sounded that way? That moment

made me realize that self-censorship wasn't always imposed, but self-inflicted. These experiences show how easily open-minded conversations give way to fear and judgment.

The real issue here is how this student culture of believing certain beliefs are flat-out wrong, especially when this culture has become normalized. On an academic level, the problem with this is how we've started to lean towards groupthink. Where everyone generally has the same ideas, and when ideas don't fit the mold of what's acceptable, they're self-regulated out of conversations. This is harmful because perspective is essential to critical thinking and a genuine understanding.

When voices fall silent, and self-censorship becomes normalized, we foster a culture of one-sided ideas, where we don't always build the accepting and open-minded community we claim to. It's only when we change our framing around politics and global issues, from a good or bad binary to a spectrum, that we can truly maximize and engage in our learning.

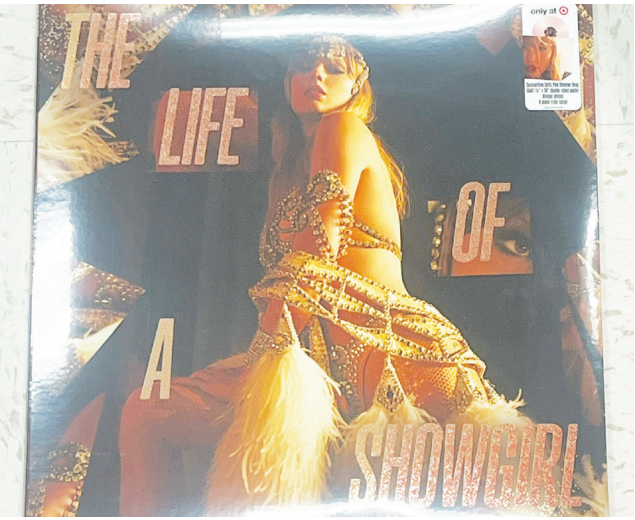
'The Life of a Showgirl' Is Just What We Need

New Taylor Swift album appeals

Lilah Johnson | Managing Editor

Being one of the most popular artists comes with being one of the most hated, and that has always been the case for Taylor Swift. Her albums were too country, then not country enough. Her lyrics weren't deep enough, then they were too deep. For twelve albums, it's been the same story over and over, which brings us back to the same conclusion every time: it's impossible to make an album that satisfies everyone.

Her 12th album, "The Life of a Showgirl," is her return to pure pop, or "glitter gel pen writing," as she calls it. This is a big switch from the



Charlie Dean

A limited edition vinyl of the new album is available at Target. Despite some public disapproval, the album is doing very well: its four million first-week sales surpassed Adele's 10-year record for her album "25."

"quill" writing of her last album, "The Tortured Poets Department," which was 31 songs of deeply poetic writing. "The

Life of a Showgirl" is much more focused on the production of each song and having fun with the writing.

Contrary to what appears to be popular opinion, I loved this album from my first listen. The first track and lead single, "The Fate of Ophelia," is just a generally fun and catchy song that goes along with a great music video. I appreciated the video and song even more after going to the AMC movie premiere and got to see the behind-the-scenes of the music video. Listening to this song alone is like a breath of fresh air from the sad and deep writing of her last four albums. The vibe of the album reminds me a lot of her early pop albums like "1989" and "reputation," which remain some of my favorite albums.

My favorite song from the album is "Elizabeth Taylor," which is an edgy love song filled with references to the life of Elizabeth Taylor. I loved this song from the very first listen and have only

grown more appreciation as I learn more about the references within the lyrics. As an eldest daughter, "Eldest Daughter" is another one of my favorite tracks on the album. While the lyrics for this song are getting a lot of hate, I really resonate with it and can really relate to the feelings depicted in the song. "Father Figure" also stands out to me, especially as I listen to the album more and more. The story and imagery that the song depicts are so strong, and the sound is different from a lot of the rest of the album.

I think that sometimes, a fun pop album is just what you need. Listening to "The Life of a Showgirl" instead of "The Tortured Poets Department" on my way to school puts me in a better mood every day. Overall, I would rate the album an 8/10.

'Weapons' Delivers Added Depth to Horror Movies

Mixed-genre film excites

Leo Mithun | Staff Writer

The movie "Weapons," directed by Zach Cregger, blends horror, dark comedy, and very unsettling imagery into a very unique film.

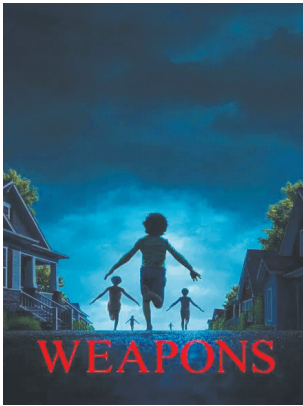
The story begins with the disappearance of 17 children at exactly 2:17 A.M. "Weapons" has six separate chapters about six significant characters

shown throughout the film. This unique perspective gives the viewer a better sense of the story and how the disappearance of children was caused and can be solved. The drastic difference in characters gives an interesting feel of eeriness and uncertainty. The movie is titled "Weapons" because each character is destroyed emotionally, like weapons do to people. The people are controlled through these inhumane actions by Gladys, the film's

villain, who forcibly takes advantage of them.

The movie pushes beyond the genre of horror into an intricate story of the human reaction to disaster and how different people face fear and uncertainty to save the general community. The characters, who were originally framed as enemies, discover that Lady Gladys is the real enemy, change their perspective and help each other to find success. The decisions char-

acters make to save each other make "Weapons" so inspiring, giving the viewer a feeling of gratification for the genre of film as a whole. The film relates to real-world problems and stretches the viewer beyond what a typical horror movie would. I rate this mixed-genre movie a 10/10 because of its great complexity. I recommend it to anyone who is looking for a film with an inspiring message and an edge-of-your-seat horror.



Courtesy of Warner Bros. Pictures

The simplified version of the movie's cover. It released into theaters in the United States on Aug. 8, 2025.