A majority of the country is more conservative than the average Yale student, and it would be a terrible thing if a generation of our country's leaders graduated from college without knowing what the average American thinks and why.

STEPHEN SCHWARTZ
Always Right

DANGER OF FRENCH REJECTION MAY DREAD EU CONSTITUTION

About two weeks ago, French officials were forced to destroy 162,000 copies of the draft European Union constitution. The votes against ratification in the French referendum was accidentally added to one page. A reprint of the document is expected to cost French citizens $749,000. Never having seen voting error so aptly epitomize the mood of a nation.

The draft constitution is the latest in a series of institutional innovations that have characterized the EU's history since the '50s. In some nations, it is also among the least popular. In the most recent poll, French citizens disapproved of the new constitutional treaty by 54-44 margin. This is significant, because the treaty is set to be ratified by a series of national referenda held in each EU member state—and France's vote is next. Ratification requires unanimity, without French approval, the treaty will collapse. If you believe former French President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, a French failure to ratify would place EU in a tailspin.

Today, the benefits of EU membership are dwindling. Being a member increasingly means supporting policies that the most recent admitted nations also have the Union's lowest GDPs. In 2004, Slate predicted that "as more countries join, the United States will become fewer as they grow less willing to indefinitely foot the bill for other's development." The EU faces a relatively stagnant economy, a pervasive fear of immigration, and rising immigration from third world countries, and the possible admission of Turkey as a member. Furthermore, it has done considerable damage to relations with average Europeans, who see it as a distant, ill-defined body. The political scientist Thomas E. Cronin Howlett likes to tell students about the United Kingdom government distributed copies of the draft constitution at a cost of four pennies, with the result that everyone got so used to it that if they got used to being addressed as "enemy" in the dining hall were brutal. But on the other hand, I distinctly remember the day a classmate told me that he'd been a conservative, and asked me to treat him as an opinion.

Most Yale students are members of a vast ideological majority that votes for Kerry, and it's hard to imagine that it is possible for a generation of liberal Yale students to graduate without knowing what the average American thinks and why, or if they went into the world with their liberal ideas unchallenged, or if the Yale conservatives destined for greatness avoided philosophical confrontation when they were young. Knowing conservatism to be a legitimate intellectual position, it is the responsibility of conservative students at Yale to espouse it. The public conservatives, so long as they argue respectfully and in good faith, do Yale a great service.

I very much hope that I've done credit to the conservative tradition during my Yale career. I've argued that abortion is wrong, that racial preferences in college admissions are a bad idea, that gay marriage should stay illegal, that immigration should be curtailed, that school vouchers are an excellence, that the euro is a bad idea, that Lawrence Summers makes a great point, that drug use is immoral, that religion is indispensable to morality, and on many others things that I believe. We conserves have few illusions about actually persuading our peers to change their minds, but we must be heard.