Freshmen given book to improve orientation

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MIT was originally a battle between freshmen and sophomores for control over a large case during freshman orientation. Later the term was used for a fiery debate between faculty. Now it has come back as a student/faculty discussion session.

The intent of the program was to provide more intellectual experiences during Residence/Orientation week, according to Associate Provost S. Jay Keyser. "R/O has been traditionally more of a residence orientation than academic, so we decided to provide more intellectual experiences during Residence/Crisis," Manning said.

Manning said that he hopes students disagree with parts of the book and with each other. "The book is designed to make them think about the world around them and how technology fits into it."

Marx explained the basic idea of the book. Europe was seen as a very complex and people left to lead a simple life. They went to America, which was somewhere in the middle of the very complex and the very simple. It was the simple life of farming and making a living. But since technology was needed to get to America and survive there, the simple life soon became more complicated. Thus appeared the struggle between the simple life and technology.

"Even though the book focuses on Europe and America, I think the ideas are universal," commented Mars. "The pastoral form takes on the ideals and facts of all people throughout the ages.

"The book has made me think of how our society evolved," said Edward Munnich '91. "First we wanted nothing to do with technology, then it became ideal, and now we take it for granted. It also made me think of the technology that's for the sake of technology."

When asked what "the machine" is today, Mars replied that he thinks of it more in the metaphysical sense of it being large impersonal systems that reduce people into parts, like a large company, or a factory, or MIT. "The value of this program will be determined this year since it's the first time it's taken place," said Manning. "We hope it will continue and be a growing part in the coming years. I've already had another faculty member tell me of another book for next year."

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