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## A Message

FROM YOUR  
Associate Editors-in-Chief

Happy Valentine's Day, SI! For this special edition, we wanted to take the time to celebrate SI perspectives on love, relationships, and the meaning of Valentine's Day. We hope you have a lovely Valentine's Day and a delightful long weekend!

## VALENTINE'S DAY: FROM ANCIENT RITUALS TO MODERN ROMANCE

Annika Watkins '26 Associate Editor-in-Chief

Valentine's Day is widely recognized as a celebration of love and romance, but its origins remain somewhat mysterious. While February has long been associated with love, the traditions of Valentine's Day blend Christian and ancient Roman influences. The name "Valentine" itself comes from multiple Christian saints, all of whom were martyred. However, its exact history remains uncertain.

One popular legend suggests that Valentine was a priest in third-century Rome during the rule of Emperor Claudius II. Believing that single men made better soldiers than those with families, Claudius outlawed marriage for young men. Defying this decree, Valentine continued

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 6**

## SNEAK PEEK: VALENTINE'S DAY POLL

Flip the page to discover SI's favorite rom-coms, celebrity crushes, and much more!



## A LOVE LETTER

Dear my used, pre-annotated copy of *The Awakening*,

Thank you for your boundless insight on the esoteric language of Chopin,

The countless hours of reading free from the looming fear of annotation checks.

Your half-torn cover and yellowed pages peppered with food stains,

The aroma of crusted, week-old leftovers effusing from your tattered spine.

Handwriting far fairer than my own,

My love for you is like an illusory dream.

The purchase label on your back cover, saving both dollars and a bookstore visit:

The mark of an artist, you truly dare and defy!

Love,  
Jordan Liu '26

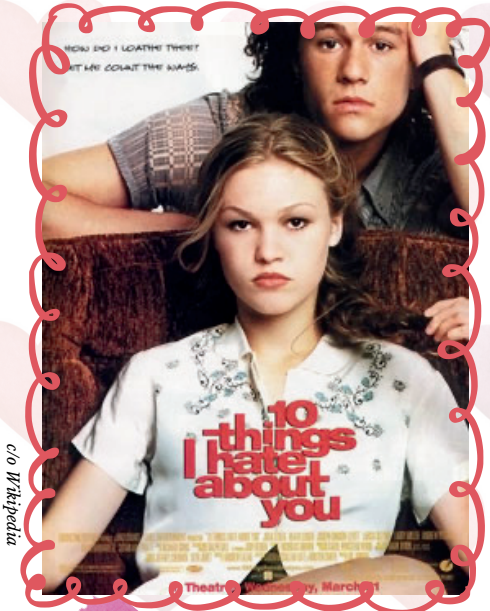
**SEE MORE LOVE LETTERS ON PAGE 8**

# 2 POLL

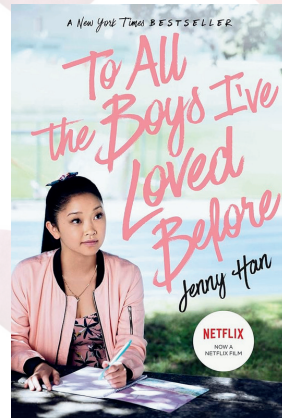
## THE INSIDE SI VALENTINE'S DAY POLL (209 RESPONSES)

### SI'S FAVORITE ROM-COMS

Overwhelmingly, with 44 votes, SI students selected  
**10 Things I Hate About You**  
as their top rom-com.



*How to Lose a  
Guy in 10 Days*  
18 votes



*To All the Boys I've  
Loved Before*  
14 votes



*Anyone But You*  
10 votes

### SI'S FAVORITE VALENTINE'S CANDY



**CHOCALATE STRAWBERRIES**



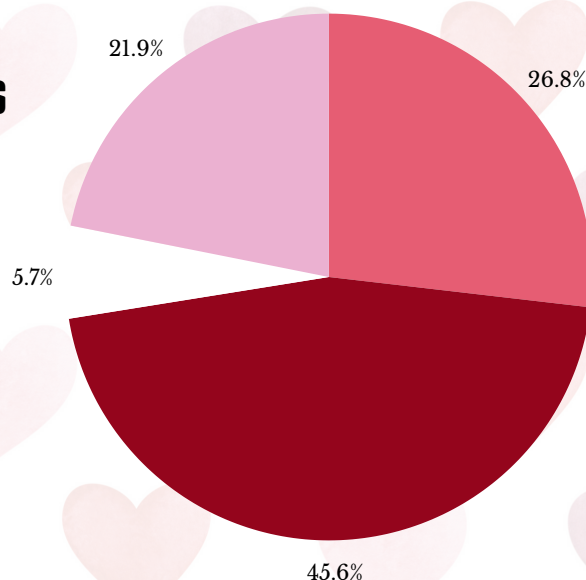
**BOX OF CHOCALATES**



**HERSHEY KISSES**



**CONVERSATION HEARTS**





# POLL 3

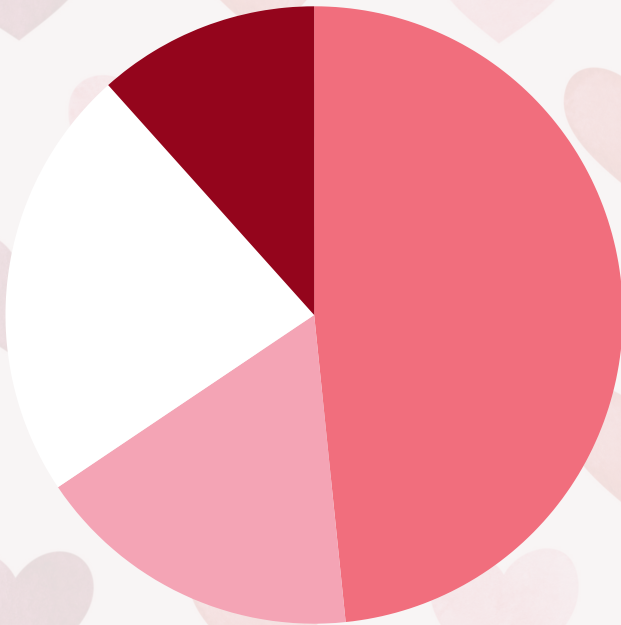
## SI'S RELATIONSHIP STATUS

11.6%

22.8%

48.4%

17.2%



SINGLE

TALKING

TAKEN

CRUSHING ON SOMEONE



## SI'S CELEBRITY CRUSHES



Megan Fox  
6 votes



Sydney Sweeney  
6 votes



Chad Michael Murray  
6 votes



Drew Starkey  
14 votes

# 4 LOVE AND ETHICS

## RELATIONSHIPS AND RS 300: ETHICS

Jordan Liu '26

Associate Editor-in-Chief

As many juniors take the mandatory Ethics class, a recurring theme pops up: how do love and ethics intertwine? In this class, students delve deeper into their understanding of how they perceive love in the context of relationships.

Freshman year, Wellness class taught about consent and safe practices of love. Ethics takes a balanced approach where love is evaluated from both a cerebral *and* a physical perspective. In spite of this, as texts in the junior ethics reader have pointed out, casual relationships seem pervasive in modern times, often focusing solely on the physical. This entails seeking relationships disregarding the sacredness of being close to another person.

Our perception of love has changed drastically over the past decades. According to Mr. Rodriguez, a teacher of Contextual Ethics, "Our perception has shifted to be more transactional or to be expressive in ways that people aren't used to being so expressive. It's a pressure that didn't exist 30 years ago." The prevalence of social media and the pressure to share personal lives and express private relationships as public, leads to a sort of transactional approach to relationships; this has become more ubiquitous. Perhaps relationships are seen as a way to garner something other than love, an ulterior motive such as status - hence the "transaction."

However, this doesn't necessarily mean that casual relationships are morally erroneous. Mr. Rodriguez pointed out, "Casual relationships can be healthy because it's how we can figure out what we like in a relationship. It sets us up for realistic expectations in a relationship."

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**Our perception has shifted to be more transactional or to be expressive in ways that people aren't used to being so expressive. It's a pressure that didn't exist 30 years ago.**

**- Mr. Christian Rodriguez**

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Relationships and dating are essential components of uncovering our own identities. Ethics class teaches the notion of a "personal sexual ethic," a values-based approach to how you view yourself and others in the context of love. Ethics class' "Interpersonal Encounter" aims to nurture this personal ethic by pushing students out of their comfort zone to, as Mr. Rodriguez put it, figure out what they like in a relationship.

So while relationships have changed substantially over the last decades, one immutable cornerstone has remained: the importance of communication. In a world where we are incessantly bombarded with messages, communication may seem easier to achieve. But this communication must be genuine. Mr. Rodriguez claims that true communication demonstrates "a healthy relationship, and it speaks about the mutuality that exists in a relationship. It shows trust and vulnerability, and it expresses equality." Communication is applicable to all aspects of life and all relationships, not just romantic relationships. The values of trust and vulnerability also apply, whether it's recounting a story at the dinner table or expressing gratitude to a teammate.

Junior Ethics class gives students a practical viewpoint to approach relationships and other ethical or personal challenges in their own lives. Love, being a core anchor of the course's curriculum, shapes how students enact and experience it in their own lives. So this Valentine's Day, try approaching love through an ethics lens.





## LEARNING LOVE: THE JUNIOR ENCOUNTER PROJECT

Lucas Liang '26

Associate Editor-in-Chief

No single assignment at SI is as unique and, for some dreaded, as the junior “Encounter Project.” The project, usually done around winter break in juniors’ Foundations of Ethics class, makes students go on an “encounter” with someone else.

The project takes inspiration from a similar assignment by Boston College Professor Kerry Cronin, who created the project as a response to “hook-up” culture and society’s prioritization of short-term relationships. Cronin sought to help her students develop a deeper relationship with someone else.

At SI, students can choose the level of intimacy they hope to develop—a friendship or a romantic interest. In a standard RS 300 class, the encounter must last at least 45 minutes but may not exceed 90 minutes. Students are also instructed to stay in a public space, to refrain from physical contact besides an “A-frame” hug, and to keep the total cost under \$30.

The assignment has previously been known as the “dating” project; however, the new “Encounter Project” name reflects a broader focus on relational ethics rather than just sexual ethics.

Mr. Christian Rodriguez, who teaches a special contextual ethics section of RS 300 at SI, said he especially valued risk-taking by students on their encounters. In an interview with *Inside SI*, he said, “Having graded these assignments, one of the things that I really appreciated was the vast majority of assignments that I saw, people were willing to take risks, even if those risks didn’t pan out for them.” Mr. Rodriguez then noted, “I think [risk-taking] is part of building a good relationship, even if you’re already comfortable in a good relationship. Otherwise, it becomes stagnant, becomes dull, and becomes boring.”

Mr. Rodriguez also maintained that the discomfort some students experience with the Encounter Project is beneficial. “When else are you going to get pushed to take a risk like this?” he asked. Mr. Rodriguez continued, “Nobody is going to hold your hand to teach you how to have a relationship, whether it’s platonic, romantic, whatever. Nobody is going to teach you that. You have to experience it on your own.” That, he argued, makes the discomfort worth it. Mr. Rodriguez asserted, “We learn from discomfort. It can make us grow into people we never expected we could be.”

Claire Cadiz ’26, fresh off completing her encounter project, echoed Mr. Rodriguez’s belief in the project’s benefits. “It’s good because it forces people to get out there,” she told *Inside SI*. For Jaqueline Hang ’26, the project’s discomfort was a benefit. She said to *Inside SI*, “It was good to get a little out of my comfort zone.”

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**Nobody is going to hold your hand to teach you how to have a relationship, whether it's platonic, romantic, whatever. Nobody is going to teach you that. You have to experience it on your own.**

**- Mr. Christian Rodriguez**

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# VALENTINE'S DAY: FROM ANCIENT RITUALS TO MODERN ROMANCE

Annika Watkins '26

Associate Editor-in-Chief

## CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

to perform secret weddings. When his actions were discovered, he was arrested and sentenced to death.

Another version of the story claims that St. Valentine of Terni, a bishop, was the true inspiration behind the holiday. Like the priest, he was also executed by Claudius II. Some accounts suggest that Valentine was killed for helping Christians escape brutal Roman prisons. According to one legend, while imprisoned, he befriended the jailer's daughter and sent her a letter signed "from your Valentine," an expression still used today. During the Middle Ages, St. Valentine became a well-known figure in England and France, recognized as a heroic and romantic symbol.

Some historians believe that the timing of Valentine's Day was influenced by the Roman festival of Lupercalia, a fertility celebration held on February 15. This festival honored Faunus, the Roman god of agriculture, as well as Romulus and Remus, the legendary founders of Rome.

During Lupercalia, Roman priests gathered in a sacred cave and performed rituals that included sacrificing a goat and a dog. They would cut the goat's hide into strips, dip them in blood, and gently slap women and crop fields, believing this would bring fertility and good fortune. Later in the festival, young women would place their names into an urn, and bachelors would draw names to determine their partner for the year, sometimes leading to marriage.

Lupercalia continued for centuries, even as Christianity spread through the Roman Empire. However, Pope Gelasius I banned the festival by the end of the fifth century, replacing it with St. Valentine's Day. Nevertheless, it wasn't until the Middle Ages that the holiday became strongly associated with romantic love.

In the Middle Ages, people in England and France believed that February 14 marked the beginning of the mating season for birds. This further strengthened the idea that the date should be a celebration of romance. The English poet Geoffrey Chaucer was one of the first to record Valentine's Day as a romantic occasion in his 1375 poem *Parliament of Fowls*, where he wrote, "For this was sent on Seynt Valentyne's day / Whan every foul cometh there to choose his mate."

By the 1400s, written Valentine's messages had started appearing. The oldest known Valentine was written in 1415 by Charles, Duke of Orleans, to his wife while he was imprisoned in the Tower of London after being captured in battle. Later, King Henry V is believed to have hired a writer to compose a valentine for Catherine of Valois.

One of the most famous symbols of Valentine's Day is Cupid, the mischievous cherub often shown shooting arrows of love. Cupid originates from the Roman god of love, who was inspired by the Greek god Eros. Early Greek myths describe Eros as a handsome, immortal being who could influence the emotions of both gods and humans with his arrows. Later, during the Hellenistic period, he was depicted as a playful child—a look that has endured in modern Valentine's Day imagery.

The tradition of exchanging romantic messages became more widespread during the 18th century. By the mid-1800s, the first commercially produced Valentine's Day cards appeared in the United States. Today, the holiday is highly commercialized, with companies like Hallmark profiting from the sale of greeting cards, chocolates, and flowers.

Though its origins are still debated, Valentine's Day has evolved into a global celebration of love. While traditional gifts like chocolates and roses remain popular, the true spirit of the holiday lies in showing appreciation for loved ones in any meaningful way.





## LOOKING BEYOND THE PRICE TAG: VALENTINE'S DAY'S COMMERCIALIZATION

Evelyn Conboy '26

Associate Editor-in-Chief

As soon as Christmas ends, store shelves quickly fill with Valentine's Day paraphernalia. From teddy bears to chocolate-covered strawberries, capitalism's grip on the holiday is all-consuming and inescapable. In 2024, Americans spent a staggering \$26 billion on Valentine's Day, making it one of the most lucrative holidays of the year, following only Christmas and Easter. Additionally, the average individual consumer spent \$185.81 on flowers, jewelry, and gifts, according to the National Retail Federation.

However, personal testimonials from SI students suggest that their Valentine's Day spending habits fall far below the national average. Many students, like Nathan Rose '26, shared that they don't participate in holiday spending at all, stating, "I typically don't spend anything on Valentine's Day." This sentiment was echoed by numerous students, with several reporting that their Valentine's Day budget is "\$0."

For those who do spend, the amount is modest compared to the national standard. Most students reported keeping their Valentine's purchases under \$50. Ava Humphreys '26, for example, shared that she typically spends "about \$30" on the holiday.

SI's Valentine's Day spending, or a lack thereof, may be attributed to the broader culture surrounding Valentine's Day on campus. According to an *Inside SI* Valentine's Day poll of over 200 students (see pg. 2), 77.2% of respondents are not in a romantic relationship, which may explain the lack of enthusiasm for the holiday and its gift-giving traditions. Beyond relationship status, some SI students reject the holiday on principle, viewing it as overly commercialized, disingenuous, and manufactured. Alva Fahlgren '26 expressed concern about the holiday's growing consumerism, stating that "it sometimes takes away from the actual spirit of the holiday when everything is commercialized" and that certain businesses can take the holiday "a step too far."

However, not all students share this perspective. Other students, like Ava Humphreys, see the commercialization of Valentine's Day in a different light, arguing that the holiday's themed decorations, gifts, and traditions can be "festive and cute."

While opinions on Valentine's Day spending vary, the holiday ultimately serves as an opportunity to recognize and appreciate the people who matter most. These connections are not limited to romantic relationships but also include friends, family, and other influential figures in our lives. With many SI students opting out of traditional Valentine's spending, how else can students celebrate the spirit of the holiday?

Gift-giving has long been a way to express love and gratitude, but it is far from the only method. Many students may not have financial independence or the means to spend on expensive, and often overpriced, gifts. Instead, smaller gestures, such as handwritten notes, acts of kindness, or simply expressing appreciation, can be just as, if not more meaningful.

Ultimately, Valentine's Day serves as a reminder to cherish the relationships that bring meaning to our lives. While consumerism often dominates the holiday, its true essence lies in the connections we nurture, not in the price tags attached to materialistic gifts. Whether through a heartfelt message, a thoughtful act of service, or a simple expression of gratitude, taking the time to acknowledge the people who matter most helps foster a collective culture of love and appreciation.



# 8 LOVE LETTERS

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## To my long lost pair (A letter I found in my drawer)

O, how often I search for you, to no avail. Where you hide, I still am unaware. I miss you more than words can say. And so I lie here, with other singles, forever longing for my pair.

I rest in a sea of fabric, yet I remain alone. You, my twin, are gone. Our threads were once woven together in perfect harmony, our hearts beating in unison. Now, I am left to wonder—does yours still beat? Are you still out there? I cling to hope that you live on.

Or perhaps you have found another—someone softer, less worn, without the holes that time has left in me. If so, I can only wish you happiness, though my fibers fray at the thought.

Yet deep down, I know we were made for each other. So I search, believing you search for me, too. This month, with love in the air, I—a lonely sock—will find my long-lost pair.

Autumn Ragone '27



## To the comfortable chairs in the library,

Thank you for being my quiet retreat in the middle of busy school days. Whether I'm finishing homework, taking a much-needed break, or enjoying my lunch, you are always there, offering comfort and peace. Your soft cushions and perfect support make long study sessions more bearable and quick naps more all the more refreshing.

I appreciate the small but important role you play in my daily routine. You may just be chairs to some, but to me, you are a little piece of calm in what is sometimes chaotic world.

Love,  
Annika Watkins '26



## Oh, 1:45 on Fridays before long weekends,

you are the shining moment that turns the mundane grind, the constant march of high school into a brief, exhilarating escape. Take me away from reality, become my solace from the chaos.

You are the wind behind my sails that keeps me afloat.

Oh, 1:45 Fridays

I love you before long weekends.  
1:45 Fridays, my first true love.

Love,  
Nathan Rose '26



LOOK OUT FOR INSIDE SI'S NEXT FULL EDITION COMING OUT FEB 21ST!

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