Imagine a world in which the police are allowed to utilize cell phone tracking technology freely in order to pursue not only wanted criminals, but anybody they deem potentially threatening. Now, imagine that money is the key motivator behind this for many cell phone companies. According to a recent article in The New York Times, this may well be the case.

According to Eric Lichtau, a writer for The New York Times, police municipalities around the country have managed to get away with this behavior for at least the past few years. Courts around the country are having a very difficult time coming to an agreement over the importance of individual privacy rights versus the rights of a police force to pursue evidence.

According to records acquired by the American Civil Liberties Union from 205 municipalities across the country, acquiring information that cell phone customers presume to be private requires little more than a claim of "this is an emergency" or, in some instances, the right offering price. Police municipalities can either claim necessity for the information or offer companies the right sum of money and gain access to information that, judges feel, they may not have the rights to.

According to Lichtau's article, a 2010 case in the Third Circuit Court gave judges a right to require that any evidence from such tracking and pulling of cellular records be prefaced with a warrant. However, this is still not a cut-and-dry case, as there is no legislation on the topic. Student views were mixed on the issue. "I'm not totally against this. I think that police should use every available resource to try and track down criminals, missing persons, etc. Their job is to keep things safe, and this is one more tool they can use," Kris Soltys, freshman, chemistry, said. Of course, the police need to be able to pursue evidence by utilizing resources. This issue, however, still produces a great deal of debate in relation to public image and individual rights.

"I think pulling records is a violation of our rights as citizens. The whole tracking thing, though--our phones have GPS. If we leave it on, we waive privacy rights to that information. If we turn it on, it becomes public information," Charlie McDonald, sophomore, criminal justice, said.

Both sides of this controversy have some appeal, which has caused the aforementioned rift between judges' opinions on the topic.

"In this situation we are reminded of a dichotomy between our convictions of privacy and of comfort. On one hand we want to remain free to go about our lives without the interference of an unbound perennial element, i.e. the government. On the other hand, we want to go about our lives without the interference of the constant fear that results from terrorist actions. Both of these convictions are grounded firmly in some sort of liberty, either liberty from the government or liberty from those who would cause us harm. I find it funny that either way, we will complain," Elliott Risch, junior, philosophy, said.

While there is no absolute legislation on this issue yet, several states across the country are considering legislation to their citizens regarding the issue. Which is more important--liberty or safety?
Spring Break ends - students return to studies - or not

All good things must come to an end. Whether you take stock in that belief or not, spring break has certainly come to an end. Right around this time professors and classmates alike usually see a permanent drop-off from students who are simply too burnt out (or just plain bored) to return to class.

Maybe the parties at Panama Beach were simply too luxurious and the students minds never truly returned. Maybe it is true that the current generation of students are becoming far too apathetic and lazy regarding their education. Of course, there are also claims by students and even some faculty that the UM-System’s spring break comes too late in the semester. But seeing as the fall semester actually has a greater time frame between the semester’s start and fall break, this seems unlikely. Maybe the debate should not be over the cause of spring break burnout, but rather over how to better prepare students to deal with the seemingly inevitable impact spring break can have on a student’s psyche.

Let's face it: most of us do not get positive butterflies in our stomachs at the concept of returning to class. Whether we are students or faculty, whether we went to the beach or sat around our living rooms doing homework, whether we took a week off from work or picked up extra shifts to fill those dead hours, nobody really feels anticipation about coming back. We will do so because we want our education or our paychecks but we certainly preferred that simpler life. We need to be ready to face this challenge.

Most students complain when a professor piles on extra homework over spring break. I happen to love when they do this. No, I did not sit around my living room finishing my homework over spring break. I went backpacking in a national forest. I took long runs a few times and read books for entertainment. I got out and saw some old friends. I visited family. I may not have partied in Panama, but I got out and enjoyed my break. However, when I buckled down and realized that today had come, I was grateful for the extra homework my professors had assigned.

You see, when a professor assigns extra homework over spring break, it is meant to keep students focused, to remind us that we are students first. All the partying in the world is not going to get us a degree. Professors do not want to ruin spring break for us, but they do want us to remember that school resumes after break.

Professors don’t exactly get to just sit around during break, either. Granted, like students, professors do take some personal time during spring break. However, they still have work to do. Lesson plans for the coming month-and-a-half sprint towards the finish line need to be re-evaluated based on each class’ progress thus far. A final or midterm may need to be completely restructured based on this same requisite. Essays or projects turned in prior to break require the professor’s attention so that students can keep up with whether or not they are able to skip the final when the semester concludes.

The best way to deal with spring break burnout is simply to go into spring break knowing that school’s return is inevitable. We are all students and are therefore tied to education until we either graduate or give up. No amount of whining, Oomph Loonah tans or downed bottles of Captain Morgan are going to prevent school from returning. So manage your time a bit better over break. Learn to balance your life without such a heavy emphasis on immediate gratification.

With that said, welcome back to UMSL after our week-long hiatus, my fellow students, faculty and staff! I sincerely hope that each of you had a fantastic spring break and that you are prepared to get back to work.

Matthew B. Poposky is the Editor-in-Chief for The Current.
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Racist ‘Hunger Games’ fans taint an otherwise promising franchise

Internet racists ruin everything. “The Hunger Games” was released in theaters on March 23 to rave reviews from critics and fans of the book alike. The film follows Katniss, a strong female protagonist who is thrust into the cruel world of the Hunger Games, a fight to the death where 24 “tributes” from the 12 districts of the country of Panem must murder each other in a televised event. During her time in the deadly arena Katniss bonds with a young tribute named Rue who reminds her of her little sister back home. Both the character of Rue and her relationship with Katniss is beloved by fans of the books.

The actress chosen to portray Rue performed flawlessly, effectively capturing the character’s innocence and sweet demeanor in the short screen time she was given. Some fans, however, are less than happy with the casting choice, and it has nothing to do with the acting chops of Amandla Stenberg. These nay-sayers are unhappy that a black girl was cast to portray their beloved Rue, and they took to the Internet (mostly Twitter) to voice their displeasure.

Some of the despicable comments include (with all excessive capitalization omitted and proper punctuation and sentence formatting added for clarity): “Why does Rue have to be black? Not gonna watch.” “Why did the producer make all the good characters white?” “Faww, Rue is black? I’m not watching.” “Call me a racist, but when I found out Rue was black her death wasn’t as sad.” “I was pumped about the Hunger Games. Until I learned that a black girl was playing Rue.”

There is also more disturbing commentary, including such complaints as the following: “How in the world are they going to make Rue a freakin’ black bitch in the movie? Lol, not to be racist but...I’m angry now.” “Since when has Rue been a nigger?”

To offer a little background information, Rue is described in the book: “She has dark brown skin and eyes, but other than that’s she’s very like Prim in size and demeanor…” So basically, this 12-year-old brown-skinned girl is getting heat for portraying a 12-year-old brown-skinned character in a film because a few slower fans of the books opted to picture a dark-skinned character as white while reading. While one can bemoan the poor reading comprehension skills of Internet racists, there are infinitely more troubling things at play here. For instance, consider the fact that, for some readers, it was so difficult and/or unnatural to picture a brown-skinned character as sympathetic that their mind recast them as white in order to be more relatable.

Even more troubling are the claims that since Rue was portrayed by a black girl (rather than the blond-haired, blue-eyed white girl that some fans chose to imagine), her death was less moving. During a time when activists are struggling to bring media and societal attention to the unjust murder of people of color that has taken place outside of films and is finding it difficult to make society care, this issue brings to light a depressing reality.

The Internet is full of idioms, no doubt, but this recent rash of blatant, unashamed racism points to the bigger societal problem that is brewing in our country right now. People of color are routinely stripped of their humanity when they are viewed as nothing but stereotypes by those who are unable to see them as human beings whose lives were taken unjustly—whose lives mattered and were meaningful in the first place. It’s no secret that crimes committed against people of color are disproportionately reported by major news outlets in relation to stories about blond-haired, blue-eyed white women who go missing on their vacations. It’s also no secret that this shortage of reporting isn’t a coincidence, even if many people are unwilling to honestly assess the reasoning for this ubiquitous discrepancy. When Internet racists represent a very real sentiment among a disturbing number of American citizens, mispronounced Twitter rants become more frightening than amusing.

Sharon Pruitt is the opinions editor and a columnist for The Current.
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### ARIES (March 21 - April 19)

Spring break was a time for fun, and we all know you had some. But now it's time to settle down and get back to work. Try not to burn yourself out taking on too many tasks as you return to your daily grind.

### TAURUS (April 20 - May 20)

As finals approach, be sure not to bog yourself down in too many commitments. Instead of trying to help everyone a little, try to help a couple of people a lot.

### GEMINI (May 21 - June 21)

Sometimes it’s hard to view your life from a distance, but it may be time to really take a good look at who’s around you. Now may be the time to clear out Facebook friend lists and do some social spring cleaning.

### CANCER (June 22 - July 22)

Sadly you can’t save everyone. Pick your battles wisely this month, because as hard as it is watching someone you love struggle, sometimes you just can’t fix things for them.

### LEO (July 23 - Aug. 21)

Step back. It’s easy to see all the problems surrounding you that you could solve, and to just take charge and fix them. But remember to consider the people you step on while fixing those problems.

### VIRGO (Aug. 22 - Sept. 23)

Honestly, you need to quit trying to find meaning in every little life event that happens. The bird that took a dump on your car the other day is not a sign of the Apocalypse. Neither is the tear in your jeans a sign of pregnancy.

### LIBRA (Sept. 24 - Oct. 23)

You have a strong nurturing instinct in your family and love life, but sometimes the broken toys can’t be fixed.

### SCORPIO (Oct. 24 - Nov. 22)

If you’ve been harboring secret desires for a friend, you can’t be mad when they look for love on their own. If you want to be the one they turn to, you have to let them know that’s an option.

### SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 23 - Dec. 21)

College is a great place to learn the thoughts of great men and women who came before you, but as you finish your time in these hallowed halls, it’s time to stop parroting and to start thinking.

### CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 - Jan. 19)

You always demand the best, and there’s no shame in that. But remember that everything can’t be perfect, and just because things don’t go the way you planned, that doesn’t mean that they’ve gone wrong.

### AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 - Feb. 18)

Your free spirit and originality have carried you far in life, but occasionally it pays to plan ahead.

### PISCES (Feb. 19 - March 20)

Though some may think you airheaded or flighty, take heart in the fact that you are a compassionate, romantic and imaginative individual. Anyone should be happy to know you!

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**Feeling some relief but still having Depression symptoms?**

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**Mid-America Clinical Research at:**

314-647-1743
Simply Beagle by Karlee Sellars

Now where is that beagle...

Pidgiots by Stefano Ragonesi

So... how was your Spring break?

Well...

I met a lot of friendly birds down at Panama City.

The Current is now accepting applications for Editor-in-Chief

All are welcome to apply - stop by 388 MSC.