

# Southern Illinois News



APRIL 2023



## SIU criminology program using virtual reality to better understand police work

By Pete Rosenbery

CARBONDALE, Ill. — A virtual reality simulator in Southern Illinois University Carbondale's criminology and criminal justice program will provide students greater insight into law enforcement challenges, while also providing a research mechanism to study aspects of police work.

With the help of grants from the College of Health and Human Sciences' DEVELOP (Developing, Elevating, and Leading Educational Opportunities and Programs) and the SIU Foundation Faculty Research programs, the APEX Officer system was installed last fall. Since then, Matthew Giblin, School of Justice and Public Safety director, and two criminology graduate assistants, Jamie Stephens and Samantha Barnhart, began enlisting students to gauge attitudes toward police work both before and after participating in the survey and exercise. By mid-March, 70 students participated in the study in the lab space in Faner Hall or in Mae Smith and Neely Halls.

While most students in the program have an interest in policing careers, Giblin is quick to point out that the system is not used to teach police tactics.

"What we are trying to demonstrate with our system is the challenges that law enforcement officers face in police decision-making," he said. "How difficult split-second decision-making is; how difficult it is to fire a weapon; how difficult it is to fire a weapon accurately. Those are what we are trying to demonstrate. All that can be done without having to teach tactics and strategies."

*Different scenarios, environments and outcomes available*

Unlike screen-based simulators, the VR experience allows the operator to change scenarios — including traffic stops, city neighborhoods, streets, neighborhoods and alleys. And the operator, or trainer, can also change how the VR people with

the scenarios interact with students. Throughout the exercise, students wear about a 15-pound backpack featuring a high-end computer equipped with a realistic rifle, pistol and taser.

The system is completely responsive to whoever is being trained, and scenarios can extend as long as needed to accomplish the purpose of the exercise, Giblin said.

"If we have you in the training module and you are saying to the citizen in the module, 'put your hands up,' we can make them comply or not. It's not based on what has already been filmed," he said. "The idea behind it is that not everything should be a shoot/no shoot decision. The reality is that police use of force is rare so any training system should promote the type of interaction strategies making force unnecessary through say, effective communication, but also prepares officers for situations when force may have to be used."

The experiences can be eye-opening for students, said Giblin, noting the idea is to show students some of the decision-making involved.

Faculty can take a class where they are talking about police decision-making and let students gain firsthand experiences, Giblin said. "We can actually have people comply with those kinds of communications. You can actually get people in our system to respond positively to respectful communication and promote that that kind of behavior so it's not just resorting to force. I think the idea is to take what we talk about in the classroom when we look at research evidence and apply that or give them to opportunity to experience that."

*Used by police nationwide*

Some colleges have simulators connected to campus law enforcement agencies or, less commonly, criminal justice programs, Giblin said. The city of Carbondale Police Department also has an Apex Officer VR simulator that the officers train on regularly. Giblin said



**Jamie Stephens, a master's student in SIU's criminology and criminal justice program, works through a virtual reality scenario last fall of a call for service of a disorderly person at a residence with Kevin Cox, SIU Department of Public Safety, observing. The program is using the VR simulator to give students greater insight into law enforcement challenges and providing a research mechanism on attitudes toward police work.**

(Photo by Yenitza Melgoza)

the program was able to bring back useful training information and scenarios after meeting with Carbondale officials in December.

Benjamin Newman, director, SIU Department of Public Safety, said police officers used the program's system when it was originally acquired last year, and that VR systems "help build repetition and improve decision making."

"These systems allow trainees to experience service calls in a controlled environment," he said. "Trainers are afforded the opportunity to provide coaching in relational and tactical skills."

*Myriad research possibilities*

Giblin sees numerous research possibilities across several educational areas and topics.

"From a research perspective, the system will allow us to study topics like stress, procedural justice, implicit biases," he said.

Another example, he said, could be utilizing the kinesiology program to monitor anticipatory stress levels as students or officers would go through various scenarios.

Stephens and Barnhart each said they believe the VR simulator will be useful for students and provide them with a hands-on approach. Barnhart, who is from Belleville, earned a law degree from the SIU School of Law in May 2022 and has bachelor's degrees

in criminal justice and psychology from Greenville University.

Stephens, who earned her bachelor's degree in the program in May 2022, is from Schaumburg, Illinois, and is looking into going into the investigations area in law enforcement.

"I think this will be a good tool and believe we will see attitudes change when we see the data," she said. "It could be useful to helping people understand the realities of real-world situations."

*Preliminary studies show change in attitudes*

Giblin, Stephens and Barnhart presented preliminary findings from their research at the annual meeting of the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences in National Harbor, Maryland, on March 18. The study examines student experiences with the VR simulation and its effects on attitudes toward the police. Students completed several tasks in a simulated shooting range, including hitting moving targets, and separately, quickly reacting to threatening individuals during pedestrian and traffic stop encounters.

The preliminary findings showed 75% or more of the student participants agreed or strongly agreed that the VR simulation was fun, educational, realistic, and a great training tool for police officers. Students also expressed interest in participating in the VR simulation again and

wished that the roughly 15-minute demonstration lasted longer, Giblin said.

The preliminary results also showed students who participated in the VR had, on the whole, slightly more positive attitudes toward the police when compared to a randomly assigned group of students who completed the survey before participating in the VR simulation, according to Giblin. For example, VR participants were slightly more likely to agree or strongly agree with the statement, "When police officers use force, including deadly force, they are typically responding to a threat," and, "In general, most police officers are well-trained to perform their work."

*Can also enhance recruiting*

Giblin points to another benefit for the program — recruiting. In addition to participating in a mock class and student panel discussion, potential students and their parents can be involved.

"We can actually walk somebody to our VR lab and say, 'This is something we have here, and people are going to get to experience firsthand what it is like to be a police officer and encounter a certain situation,'" he said. "These are the different things that you can do, and the families really seem to like to participate in that."

### Eating Well

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**BIG JOHN**

LAWN & GARDEN

# The basics of fertilizing a lawn



Spring marks the return of lawn and garden season. Lawns often bear the brunt of winter's wrath, so spring is a great time to nurse them back to health, and fertilizing can be an essential component of that process.

Fertilizing a lawn can be intimidating. An array of fertilizers, with each seemingly designed to address a different issue, can make homeowners' heads spin when visiting their local lawn and garden center. However, fertilizing is a very simple task that any homeowner can tackle. In fact, fears about fertilizing are

often unfounded and can be overcome with some basic knowledge of the process.

- **Identify which type of grass is in the yard.** The home improvement experts at HGTV note that turfgrass is divided into two categories: cool-season grass and warm-season grass. A local lawn and garden center can help homeowners identify which type of grass is in the yard, and this often depends on location. Fescue, bluegrass and perennial ryegrass are some examples of cool-season grasses, while Bermuda, bahia, St. Augustine, and

zoysia are considered warm-season grasses. Identifying which type of grass is in the lawn is important because that will indicate when to fertilize. Cool-season grasses are typically best fertilized in early spring, while warm-season lawns can benefit from an application just before especially warm temperatures arrive.

- **Survey the lawn to identify which spreader to use.** A small yard or a thriving lawn with only a few bald or unsightly patches may not need a full application of fertilizer. In such instances, a hand spreader can suffice. For larger lawns and areas, a broadcast spreader is the ideal option. Spreaders have multiple settings, and the fertilizer package will indicate which setting to utilize when using the product.

- **Test the soil prior to purchasing fertilizer.** The lawn experts at Pennington note that a simple soil test can reveal soil pH and phosphorous and potassium levels. Soil tests can be purchased at most home improvement stores and lawn and garden centers, and they can help homeowners determine which fertilizer will most benefit their lawns.

- Water the lawn prior to fertilizing. The experts at Scotts recommend a good watering a few days prior to fertilizing a lawn. Such an approach ensures the soil is ready to accept the fertilizer once it's applied.

- **Follow the instructions carefully.** Detailed instructions are typically provided on fertilizer product packaging. Once homeowners have identified and purchased the product they need, they can simply follow the instructions on the packaging, including how and when to water after application, which can make fertilizing less intimidating.

Fertilizing in spring can help a lawn recover from the previous summer and winter, ensuring it's lush and green when summer entertaining season arrives.

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## LAWN &amp; GARDEN

# Bite back against Lyme disease

Among the tall grasses and wildflowers that sprout each spring and summer lies a stealth predator just waiting for its chance at an easy meal. Ticks may be small in stature, but their impact on bite victims is potentially significant. Preventing Lyme disease and other tickborne illnesses comes down to following some key steps.

• **Learn how common Lyme disease is.** Lyme disease affects an estimated 476,000 people each year in the United States alone, according to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's Division of Vector-Borne Diseases. Lyme disease is most common in New England, the mid-Atlantic states and the upper Midwest. Between 2009 and 2022, the Government of Canada reported 17,080 human cases of Lyme disease across Canada. However, instances of Lyme disease are likely underreported

due to undiagnosed cases.

• **Know which ticks carry Lyme disease.** The black-legged deer tick and the Western black-legged tick carry the Lyme disease spirochete. The black-legged tick is native to the northeastern, mid-Atlantic and north-central U.S., while the western black-legged tick is found on the Pacific coast.

• **Wear light-colored clothing outdoors.** When traveling in areas where ticks reside, it is important to wear light-colored clothing. Long pants and tall socks, long-sleeved shirts, and hats also should be worn. It is easier to spot ticks on light-colored clothing, and covering up prevents ticks from gaining easy access to skin.

• **Know where to expect ticks.** John's Hopkins Medicine says black-legged ticks live in moist and humid environments, particularly in and

near wooded or grassy areas. Walking through leaves and bushes or through tall grasses can disturb ticks and enable them to jump onto people or pets. To avoid ticks, walk in the center of trails and avoid tall vegetation.

• **Be mindful of pets.** Even if you do not venture outdoors into tick-laden environments, your dog may. He or she can carry ticks into the house where they may end up on you or other family members. Prescription tick repellent products are available from veterinarians, and there are topical solutions and collars that can keep ticks away.

• **Remove ticks quickly and correctly.** The CDC says if a tick is removed in less than 24 hours from when it first attached, the chances of getting Lyme disease is very small. Remove a tick with fine-tipped tweezers as soon as



Ticks are small and hard to spot, especially when they're in tall grasses.

it is noticed, being cautious to remove all mouth parts. Try not to squeeze the tick, as it can regurgitate saliva and other fluids when squeezed.

• **Repel ticks when possible.** Create less

favorable conditions for ticks. Use a product containing DEET or permethrin on clothing to repel ticks. Some people use chemical-control agents on their properties to reduce the number of ticks in the yard. Discourage

deer from the property, as they can carry many ticks, by erecting fences and removing vegetation that deer eat.

Various strategies can help people reduce their risk for Lyme disease.

## How to make a backyard safe for dogs

Dogs, particularly puppies, can be full of boundless energy. Channeling that energy into exercise with long walks or play sessions can help stem dogs' propensity to get into trouble

around the house as they burn off extra adrenaline. Pets who don't have an energy outlet may chew off-limits objects or get into other mischief.

According to the American Kennel

Club, the amount of exercise a dog needs depends on the animal's age and breed. For example, border collies or Siberian huskies may require much more exercise than English

bulldogs, simply because the former are working breeds. Pet owners with large backyards often find those outdoor spots are ideal for when their dogs get the "zoomies," something

that tends to be a daily occurrence. Letting their dogs run around yards, whether on their own or chasing tossed tennis balls, is an ideal way to provide exercise and tire out pups. In such

scenarios, it's vital that pups have a dog-friendly yard in which to play.

**Use safe lawn care products**

see DOGS, page 4



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## 3 potentially low-maintenance trees to consider for your property

Few things in nature are as breathtaking as a beautiful landscape. That beauty is perhaps one reason why many homeowners spend so much time and effort on their lawns and gardens.

Though plenty of homeowners love spending time in the yard, others may not be so inclined. For the latter group, low-maintenance trees can be just what the doctor ordered. Low-maintenance trees can provide the beauty nature-loving homeowners desire without all the extra

work of more needy plants. It's always best to consult a local landscaping professional prior to planting to ensure a tree will thrive in a given climate. In preparation for that consultation, homeowners can study this list of three low-maintenance trees while recognizing that all trees may need a little extra TLC in extreme weather.

**1. Jacaranda:** Instantly identifiable by its purple blooms, the jacaranda tree is native to South America, which makes it ideal in warm climates. The

jacaranda tree is considered a shade tree and if or when it sheds its leaves, those leaves can typically be mowed, saving homeowners the work of raking them. However, the online home and garden resource The Spruce notes that jacaranda trees can require substantial maintenance when planted near surfaces where people walk, such as driveways and patios. So when planting jacaranda trees, it's ideal to do so in locations where falling leaves will land exclusively on grass.

**2. American**

**arborvitae:**

The Arbor Day Foundation notes that the American arborvitae requires almost no care when it's used as a hedge or a screen. That's a popular use for this versatile specimen with a narrow, pyramid shape. Though it does not provide the bright blast of color offered by the jacaranda, the American arborvitae creates an elegant look that offers considerable privacy as well.

**3. Japanese red maple:** The Home Depot notes that the Japanese red maple are very

low-maintenance trees that can adapt to various soil types and grow in an assortment of light conditions. During dry periods, however, the ADF notes the importance of keeping soil consistently moist. Various types of soil can accommodate the Japanese red maple, so this is a consideration for any homeowner looking to add some color to their lawns without a lot of extra work.

When consider new trees for a property, homeowners can easily be persuaded by the beauty of the tree. Though

that's worthy of consideration, homeowners who want low-maintenance trees should speak to a gardening professional about the work required to maintain a tree's beauty throughout the year, especially during periods of drought or other adverse conditions. In addition, ask the gardening pro to recommend non-invasive trees. Planting invasive trees can be harmful and cause damage to surrounding plants, which can be costly and time-consuming to address.



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### • DOGS

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An expanse of grass is the perfect place to frolic or enjoy some sunbathing - for people or pets. But contact with chemically treated lawns can cause a number of health issues for dogs, such as allergies or intestinal upset.

Switching to native grasses can reduce the need to use chemicals to get lush lawns. When supplementation is needed, homeowners can switch to organic products or natural compost as safer alternatives than chemical-based products.

#### Fence off the yard

Off-leash running and bounding through the yard will make any dog smile. However, a fence is a must-have to ensure a dog doesn't become an escape artist. Be sure the fence is high enough so that the pup cannot jump over it. Burying chicken wire in the dirt beneath the lower edge of the fence also can help prevent dogs who like to dig from exiting by crawling underneath the fence.

Consider installing a lock on the fence gate so that no one can wander in and surprise the dog, which may startle the animal and prompt it to defend the property. A lock also helps prevent dog theft.

#### Keep the yard tidy

Maintaining a clean yard also is key to safety. Inspect the yard regularly to make sure nothing is around that can prove harmful, whether it's poison ivy, felled branches or broken fence panels. Also, keep shrubs and grass trimmed to reduce flea and tick populations on the property.

#### Avoid poisonous plants

Certain plants can be dangerous if they're consumed by curious pups. Chrysanthemums, peonies, irises, and hydrangeas are some plants that can be poisonous. For a full list of poisonous plants, visit the ASPCA website ([aspc.org](http://aspc.org)).

#### Keep an eye on animals

Dogs can spend some unattended time in the yard, but check in from time to time. Should wildlife get into the yard, dogs may get hurt by tussles or bites. Birds of prey, such as owls, hawks and even vultures, may attack small dogs in a yard. According to Pat Silvosky, director of the Milford Nature Center in Kansas, some birds can be territorial. While they might not view a dog as an easy meal, they could swoop down and attack to defend territory. The same may occur with other wild animals.

A dog-friendly yard may require a little effort to create, but it's worth a little sweat equity to keep pups safe.

## EATING WELL

# We're Nuts About National Pecan Month

According to the National Pecan Shellers Association, April is National Pecan Month – a time to celebrate the “All American Nut” for its delicious taste and numerous health benefits. Pecans are the only tree nut indigenous to North America, and they have quite a history on this continent. On April 6, 2001, the goodness and wholesome of pecans was proclaimed in the U.S. Congressional Record, and National Pecan Month was established, which now takes place every April.



## Butter Pecan Chicken

### Ingredients:

4 boneless skinless chicken breasts  
Kosher salt for seasoning  
pepper for seasoning  
1 tablespoon oil  
1 tablespoon butter  
1/3 cup chopped pecans  
1/3 cup butter  
1/2 cup chicken broth  
1/3 cup brown sugar  
1/4 cup honey  
1/2 teaspoon dried thyme leaves  
1/2 teaspoon dried parsley

### Directions:

Preheat a large skillet over medium-high heat. Season both sides of the chicken with kosher salt and pepper. Add 1 tablespoon oil (I use avocado)

and 1 tablespoon butter to the hot pan.

Place chicken in the pan and cook for about 10 min on each side (depending on thickness).

When the chicken is almost cooked through (about 150 degrees internal temp), remove the chicken from the pan, and add pecans, butter, chicken broth, brown sugar, honey, thyme leaves, and parsley. Whisk together over medium heat, then add the chicken back to pan.

Simmer gently for about 5-8 more minutes, spooning the sauce over the chicken. Serve over rice or mashed potatoes when the sauce is bubbly and thickened, and the chicken is cooked through to 165 degrees.

## Sugar Coated Pecans



### Ingredients:

1 egg  
1 tablespoon water  
1 pound pecans – halved  
1 cup white sugar  
1 teaspoon salt  
1 teaspoon cinnamon

### Directions:

Preheat oven to 250 degrees.

In a bowl whip the egg (white only) with the water until nice and frothy.

In a separate large bowl mix together the sugar, salt, and cinnamon.

Next pour the pecans into the egg white mixture and coat each piece thoroughly.

Dip the pecan pieces into the sugar mixture and coat.

Place on baking sheet and bake at 250 degrees for 1 hour.

You will want to stir and mix the pecans every 10-20 minutes to ensure all sides are evenly baked.

Remove from oven and enjoy!

## Deep Fried Pecan Pies

### Ingredients:

1 cup firmly packed light brown sugar  
½ cup light corn syrup  
2 large eggs  
5 tablespoons butter  
¼ teaspoon salt  
2 cups chopped pecans  
1 teaspoon vanilla extract  
2 (14.1-ounce) packages Pillsbury refrigerated pie crusts  
Vegetable oil for frying  
Powdered sugar

### Directions:

In a medium-sized saucepan, combine the sugar, corn syrup, eggs, butter and salt.

Bring to a boil over medium heat, reduce the heat to a simmer and stir in the pecans. Simmer for about 8 minutes. Remove from the heat and stir in the vanilla. Bring the crusts to room temperature. Unroll one on a lightly floured surface and cut circles using a 4-inch circle cutter. Re-roll the dough and repeat until all of the dough has been used. You should end up with about 24 circles. Place a heaping tablespoon of the pecan filling mixture in the center of a pie crust circle. Lightly moisten the edges of the crust with water, then fold the crust over, crimping the edges with a dinner fork. Repeat the

process until all of the pie crusts have been used. In a large dutch oven, heat about 1 inch oil in the bottom to 350 degrees Fahrenheit. Fry the pies in batches for about 1 to

2 minutes on each side – or until golden brown. Drain on paper towels then lightly dust with powdered sugar. Serve warm.



## Southern Pecan Pie

### Ingredients:

1 cup Karo® Light OR Dark Corn Syrup  
3 eggs  
1 cup granulated sugar  
2 tablespoons butter, melted  
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract  
1-1/2 cups (6 ounces) coarsely chopped pecans  
1 (9-inch) unbaked OR frozen deep-dish pie crust

### Directions:

Preheat oven to 350°F. Mix Karo® Light Corn Syrup, eggs, sugar, butter and vanilla using a spoon or a rubber spatula.

Stir in pecans. Pour the mixture into pie crust.

Bake on center rack of oven for 60 to 70 minutes.

Cool for at least 2 hours on wire rack before serving.



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## INSPIRATION

# “Is it wrong to be angry with God?”

Answer: Being angry at God is something that many people, both believers and unbelievers, have wrestled with throughout time. When something tragic happens in our lives, we ask God the question, “Why?” because it is our natural response. What we are really asking Him, though, is not so much “Why, God?” as “Why me, God?” This response indicates two flaws in our thinking. First, as believers we operate under the impression that life should be easy, and that God should prevent tragedy from happening to us. When He does not, we get angry with Him. Second, when we do not understand the extent of God’s sovereignty, we lose confidence in His ability to control circumstances, other people, and the way they affect us. Then we get angry with God because He seems to have lost control of the universe and especially control of our lives. When we lose faith in God’s sovereignty, it is because our frail human flesh is grappling with our own frustration and our lack of control over events. When good things happen, we all too often attribute it to our own achievements and success. When bad things happen, however, we are quick to blame God, and we get angry with Him for not preventing it, which indicates the first flaw in our thinking—that we deserve to be immune to unpleasant circumstances.

Tragedies bring home the awful truth that we are not in charge. All of us think at one time or another that we can control the outcomes of situations, but in reality it is God who is in charge of all of His creation. Everything that happens is either caused by or allowed by God. Not a sparrow falls to the ground nor a hair from our head without God knowing about it (Matthew 10:29-31). We can complain, get angry, and blame God for what is happening. Yet if we will trust Him and yield our

bitterness and pain to Him, acknowledging the prideful sin of trying to force our own will over His, He can and will grant us His peace and strength to get us through any difficult situation (1 Corinthians 10:13). Many believers in Jesus Christ can testify to that very fact. We can be angry with God for many reasons, so we all have to accept at some point that there are things we cannot control or even understand with our finite minds.

Our understanding of the sovereignty of God in all circumstances must be accompanied by our understanding of His other attributes: love, mercy, kindness, goodness, righteousness, justice, and holiness. When we see our difficulties through the truth of God’s Word—which tells us that our loving and holy God works all things together for our good (Romans 8:28), and that He has a perfect plan and purpose for us which cannot be thwarted (Isaiah 14:24, 46:9-10)—we begin to see our problems in a different light. We also know from Scripture that this life will never be one of continual joy and happiness. Rather,



Job reminds us that “man is born to trouble as surely as sparks fly upward” (Job 5:7), and that life is short and “full of trouble” (Job 14:1). Just because we come to Christ for salvation from sin does not mean we are guaranteed a life free from problems. In fact, Jesus said, “In this world you will have trouble,” but that He has “overcome the world” (John 16:33), enabling us to have peace within, in spite of the storms that rage around us (John 14:27).

One thing is certain: inappropriate anger is sin (Galatians 5:20; Ephesians 4:26-27,

31; Colossians 3:8). Ungodly anger is self-defeating, gives the devil a foothold in our lives, and can destroy our joy and peace if we hang on to it. Holding on to our anger will allow bitterness and resentment to spring up in our hearts. We must confess it to the Lord, and then in His forgiveness, we can release those feelings to Him. We must go before the Lord in prayer often in our grief, anger, and pain. The Bible tells us in 2 Samuel 12:15-23 that David went before the throne of grace on behalf of his sick baby, fasting, weeping,

and praying for him to survive. When the baby passed away, David got up and worshiped the Lord and then told his servants that he knew where his baby was and that he would someday be with him in God’s presence. David cried out to God during the baby’s illness, and afterward he bowed before Him in worship. That is a wonderful testimony. God knows our hearts, and it is pointless to try to hide how we really feel, so talking to Him about it is one of the best ways to handle our grief. If we do so humbly, pouring out our hearts to Him, He will work through us, and in the process, will make us more like Him.

The bottom line is can we trust God with everything, our very lives and the lives of our loved ones? Of course we can! Our God is compassionate, full of grace and love, and as disciples of Christ we can trust Him with all things. When tragedies happen to us, we know God can use them to bring us closer to Him and to strengthen our faith, bringing us to maturity and completeness (Psalm 34:18; James 1:2-4). Then, we can be a comforting testimony to others

(2 Corinthians 1:3-5). That is easier said than done, however. It requires a daily surrendering of our own will to His, a faithful study of His attributes as seen in God’s Word, much prayer, and then applying what we learn to our own situation. By doing so, our faith will progressively grow and mature, making it easier to trust Him to get us through the next tragedy that most certainly will take place.

So, to answer the question directly, yes, it is wrong to be angry at God. Anger at God is a result of an inability or unwillingness to trust God even when we do not understand what He is doing. Anger at God is essentially telling God that He has done something wrong, which He never does. Does God understand when we are angry, frustrated, or disappointed with Him? Yes, He knows our hearts, and He knows how difficult and painful life in this world can be. Does that make it right to be angry with God? Absolutely not. Instead of being angry with God, we should pour out our hearts to Him in prayer, and trust that He is in control of His perfect plan.

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# Dr. Bob Odenkirk walks the graduation stage at SIU after 40 years

CARBONDALE, Ill. (WSIL) -- Hollywood star, Emmy winner, College graduate.

Actor, writer and comedian Bob Odenkirk finally received his bachelor's degree at SIU after 40 years of waiting.

After commencement exercises earlier this month, you can call him Dr. Odenkirk.

The university held a special commencement ceremony at the Banterra Center to honor Odenkirk's accomplishments. It drew more than 2,000

people, double the capacity of Shryock Auditorium where it was originally scheduled.

Fans showed off their shirts, signs and blankets showing the face of the actor's fictional character Saul Goodman from the hit AMC series Breaking Bad and its spin-off Better Call Saul.

Chancellor Austin Lane presented Odenkirk with a bachelor's degree from his graduating class of 1984 and an honorary doctorate. Odenkirk was awarded

in 2020. After the commencement ceremony Odenkirk took part in a live Q&A session with fans.

Odenkirk was in Carbondale Monday as the city proclaimed April 3 'Bob Odenkirk Day'. Odenkirk was honored with a key to the city to which he jokingly asked if it opened every door in town.

Afterwards Odenkirk spoke to students at the SIU Mass Communications Building and worked with theater students in a class.



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