



Written by [Isabel Lyman](#) on November 16, 2011

Missouri Professors Scoff at Twilight's Traditionalist Message

This weekend, *The Twilight Saga: Breaking Dawn: Part 1*, will premiere at a theater near you. The quirky fictional romance about an ordinary teenager named Bella Swan, who moves to Forks, Washington and falls for a vampire named Edward Cullen (who looks seventeen but was born in 1901), also features Jacob Black, a shape-shifting teen who can transform himself into a wolf and who loves Bella.



In *Breaking Dawn*, based on the fourth and last novel in the series, Bella marries Edward, gives birth to their daughter and nearly dies, and morphs into a vampire.

The books, created by Stephenie Meyer (a graduate of Brigham Young University) when she was a stay-at-home mom, boast a massive, global following. As of this writing, the official Facebook page for the latest *Twilight* flick had 25,925,820 likes, while ardent followers have been nicknamed Twi-hards. The principal stars of the movies, Kristin Stewart (Bella), Robert Pattinson (Edward), and Taylor Lautner (Jacob) also have a ridiculous number of people, from relentless paparazzi to infatuated adolescents, who monitor their every move.

But some of the attention lavished on this saga is beyond ridiculous. It's an affront to taxpayers.

Take a team of University of Missouri communication professors, who study gender dynamics and who co-authored *Bitten by Twilight: Youth Culture, Media & the Vampire Franchise*. Mizzou issued [a press release](#) on their behalf, in which the youthful trio complained that the latest *Twilight* movie offers the "most controversial cultural" message of the series.

Associate professor Jennifer Stevens Aubrey states, "Of the four books and movies, *Breaking Dawn* is perhaps the most troubling in terms of gender messages. Feminists, especially, have criticized the book for its socially conservative portrayal of teen sexuality, marriage, and pregnancy."

It's all about choice, except when it deviates from the liberal script, eh, Ms. Aubrey?

Melissa Click, Aubrey's colleague and co-author, adds, "Many of the teenage *Twilight* fans we interviewed recognized the storylines in *Breaking Dawn* as socially conservative. In fact, while they were excited to see Bella and Edward get married shortly after high school graduation, they did not want to make the same choices that Bella makes in *Breaking Dawn*. These teenagers want to go to college, and they didn't want to rush into marriage and motherhood."

The answer to oppressed femalekind: college. My answer to their earthshattering revelation: big deal — big debt.

Finally, the third co-author, Elizabeth Behm-Morawitz, states, "It's not surprising that teen girls don't



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desire Bella's life choices, but the romance of *Breaking Dawn* is highly appealing to them. *Breaking Dawn*, and the series as a whole, does more than entertain — it communicates and potentially reinforces cultural messages about sex before marriage ... ”

And this is a bad thing because ... no, wait.

In a culture saturated with inappropriate sexual messages, in fiction and nonfiction, how refreshing it is that an author, who has made a huge mark on the popular culture and on impressionable girls, is seen as a moral lifeguard of sorts. Ms. Meyer's books, very readable but hardly intellectually challenging literature, promote romance and courting instead of hook ups, chastity instead of instant gratification; marriage instead of cohabitation and serial dating; motherhood over careerism, and life over abortion.

Of course, the feminist professors at Mizzou (and their enablers) can't stomach the idea that Meyer's many readers might actually be influenced by these countercultural stances, so the dissenting press releases must be disseminated.

Suffice it to say, that while some of this is revealing, it's also quite silly. The idea of three grown women with doctorates micromanaging a fictional character's life choices — well, this is “expert comment” we can all do without.

Isabel Lyman blogs at <http://www.thecastillochronicles.blogspot.com>



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