Since *Doonesbury* debuted in 1970, the comic strip’s creator Garry Trudeau has used the strip to grapple with issues ranging from AIDS to homophobia to Watergate, raising the ire of many people along the way. As early as 1973, the Department of Defense-authorized daily newspaper *Stars and Stripes* dropped the comic strip because “its treatment of the Vietnam war was seen by the editors as ‘too political’; but after the paper received nearly 300 letters of protest, mostly from enlisted men and their families, the strip was reinstated.”¹

This exhibition features Trudeau’s own selection of his drawings from the past decade related to the war in Iraq, specifically, the war’s impact on five of the strip’s well known characters, beginning with B.D.’s wounding, subsequent amputation, and post-operative therapy for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Trudeau, who has been called an “investigative cartoonist,” prepared for dealing with this topic by visiting Walter Reed Hospital in Washington, D.C. to talk with injured veterans and interviewing soldiers in Kuwait during the first Gulf War.

In an April 25, 2004 interview on ABC News’ “This Week with George Stephanopoulos,” Trudeau was asked to explain why he chose to shock his readers with B.D.’s wounding:

"The strips are about sacrifice, about the kind of shattering loss that completely changes lives.

"During the battle for Fallujah, I decided to put B.D. in harm’s way, and his charmed life takes a dramatic turn on a road outside the city. In the opening panels, he’s in shock, hallucinating with voices cutting in and out. Medics call this time ‘the golden hour’ — that small window of opportunity when lives are most easily saved. He’s Medivaced out, and in the third strip, the point of view is reversed, revealing just how grievous his wound really is. We also see, for the first time, B.D.’s hair -- its presence almost as startling as the absence of his leg.

"What I meant to convey was that B.D.’s life has been irrevocably changed — that another chapter has begun. He’s now on an arduous journey of recovery and rehabilitation. What I’m hoping to describe are the coping strategies that get people through this. There is no culture of complaint among the wounded. Most feel grateful to be alive and respectful of those who have endured even worse fates. And for many, a kind of black humor is indispensable in fending off bitterness and despair, so that’s what will animate the strips that follow.

"I have to approach this with humility and care. I’m sure I won’t always get it right, and that people will let me know when I don’t. But it seems worth doing. This month alone, we’ve sustained nearly 600 wounded in action. Whether you think we should be in Iraq or not, we can’t tune it out. We have to remain mindful of the terrible losses that individual soldiers are suffering in our name."

Garry Trudeau was born in New York City in 1948, and was raised in Saranac Lake, New York. He attended Yale University, where he received his B.A. and an M.F.A. in graphic design. *Doonesbury* now appears in nearly 1400 daily and Sunday newspaper clients in the U.S. and abroad. In 1975, Trudeau became the first comic strip artist ever to be awarded a Pulitzer Prize for editorial cartooning. He was a Pulitzer Prize finalist in 1989, 2004 and 2005.

In recognition of his work on wounded warriors, Trudeau has been presented with the Commander’s Award for Public Service by the Department of Army, the Commander’s Award from Disabled American Veterans, the President’s Award for Excellence in the Arts from Vietnam Veterans of America, the Distinguished Public Service Award from the American Academy of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, and a special citation from the Vet Centers.²

Garry Trudeau will open this year’s Bryan Series on October 7 at War Memorial Auditorium.³

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1 Garry Trudeau: *Doonesbury and the Aesthetics of Satire*, Kerry D. Soper, University Press of Mississippi
3 Tickets are $35 each and may be purchased online at Ticketmaster.com, by calling 1-800-745-3000 and at the Greensboro Coliseum Advance Box Office.