

U of T professor attacks political correctness, says he refuses to use genderless pronouns

SEAN CRAIG | September 28, 2016 | Last Updated: Sep 29 12:55 PM ET

<http://news.nationalpost.com/news/canada/u-of-t-professor-attacks-political-correctness-in-video-refuses-to-use-genderless-pronouns>

[More from Sean Craig](#) | [@sdbcraig](#)



Michael Peake/Postmedia/File Professor Jordan Peterson claims that the University of Toronto is attempting to transform its human resources department into "a politically correct institution."

TORONTO — As part of an hour-long [YouTube lecture](#) on political correctness, University of Toronto professor and clinical psychologist Jordan Peterson is objecting to the Trudeau government's Bill C-16, which proposes to outlaw harassment and

discrimination based on gender identity and gender expression under the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Criminal Code.

Peterson, a white male in his mid 50s, also decries what he claims are attempts by the university to transform its human resources department into “a politically correct institution.”

The news was first reported by the University of Toronto student newspaper, The Varsity.



YouTubeUniversity of Toronto professor Jordan Peterson in a 2010 lecture.

Gender identity is defined by the Ontario Human Rights Commission as “each person’s internal and individual experience of gender. It is their sense of being a woman, a man, both, neither, or anywhere along the gender spectrum.” The commission defines gender expression as “how a person publicly presents their gender,” which can include behaviour and outward appearance such as dress, hair, make-up, body language and voice, as well as a person’s name and the pronouns they use.

Peterson is critical of these terms and their definitions as outlined by the commission, and compares the changes Bill C-16 would bring about to the policing of expression in “totalitarian and authoritarian political states.”

He also argues against the existence of non-binary gender identities, or those that are not exclusively masculine or feminine, saying “I don’t think there’s any evidence for it.”

Peterson said that if a student asked him to be referred to by a non-binary pronoun, he would not recognize their request: “I don’t recognize another person’s right to determine what pronouns I use to address them. I won’t do it.”

Peterson told the National Post that he decided to make the video and go public with his views after receiving a memo from university HR outlining new mandatory anti-racist

and anti-bias training. “That disturbs me because if someone asked me to take anti-bias training, I think I am agreeing that I am sufficiently racist or biased to need training,” he said in an interview.

Peterson also said he doesn’t believe there is sufficient research to show these kind of HR practices, which he said may constitute “psychological intervention,” are effective. He said he is concerned the university is consulting groups like the Black Liberation Collective on campus policy matters, noting he respects their right to exist and protest, but questioning their credentials to offer expert opinion. “I have no problem with them, people can organize themselves however they want, but I have an issue with U of T considering them a legitimate policy advisor,” he said. “I don’t think there is any evidence U of T is a racist university. I think we have done an extraordinary job of building a multi-racial and multi-ethnic university and community, better so than almost all schools.”

“The pronoun issue is straightforward,” added Peterson. “I won’t mouth the words of ideologues, because when you do that you become a puppet for their ideology.” The professor said he believes the writing in the Ontario Human Rights Commission’s terms and definitions is in his view “incoherent, over-inclusive and all encompassing” and has had a disproportionate impact on language used by other government bodies, including the federal Department of Justice. He said he fears Bill C-16 could lead to legal action against legitimate discussion and research on gender and sexuality, including research on the “biological origins of gender.”

However, a legal expert says the proposed legislation will advance human rights from a practical and symbolic standpoint. “Bill C-16 is important and plays a practical role because it will allow trans people a means with which to seek redress under the law,” said Kyle Kirkup, a professor at the University of Ottawa Faculty of Law who specializes in laws regulating contemporary norms of gender identity and sexuality. “It also plays the symbolic function of letting trans people know that the government recognizes them.”