



SAFS Newsletter

Society for Academic Freedom and Scholarship

Maintaining freedom in teaching, research and scholarship
Maintaining standards of excellence in academic decisions about students and faculty

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REFLECTIONS ON THE EVENTS AT WILFRID LAURIER UNIVERSITY

Heinz Klatt

Everybody familiar with the contemporary politically correct Canadian university has experienced, or at least read about, travesties similar to the one suffered by Teaching Assistant Lindsay Shepherd at Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo last November. Most readers will be familiar with the details of these odious events so that I can progress without retelling all the particulars. Thus, this article is not meant to be an exhaustive account of the deplorable events at WLU.

Ms. Shepherd, teaching assistant for Dr. Nathan Rambukkana in a first-year Communication Studies course, had the audacity in her tutorial to present two opposing views on the currently hotly debated topic of gendered pronouns. According to the "progressive" leftists, on the one side, "transgendered" individuals should be called "zie" or "zher" in order not to offend or insult them by considering them men or women! According to the other side, traditionalists insist that men and women be called "he" or "she" respectively, without regard for their perceived "gender" of the day.

The accusation was received by the Rainbow Centre, a Waterloo LGBTQ support group. The charge was that

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she had presented the arguments "neutrally," i.e. without condemning the conventional practice and thus without endorsing the faddish, newfangled notions of "gender" and "transgender." By being fair and academically scrupulous, Lindsay Shepherd had revealed herself as a "transphobic" which is *verboten*. Her way of teaching has been censured because it was like presenting a speech by Hitler without explicitly denouncing it. The rhetorical introduction of Hitler, of course, was designed to intimidate her, as every and any student whose academic progress depends upon the approval of her superiors would be frightened by the language. Shepherd, deceptively, was even told that she had violated Canadian law!

An *ad hoc* tribunal was constituted after Dr. Rambukkana discovered what she had done. True to Laurier's peculiar un-

derstanding of fairness and transparency, Shepherd was never told how many complainants were "uncomfortable" or made to feel "unsafe" in the tutorial. The number, it turned out, was zero; in fact, there was no complaint. Nonetheless, her supervisor judged the instructor of having created a "toxic" and "unsafe" learning environment. By using "disallowable speech" she had committed "dehumanizing" "epistemic violence." If this is not gibberish and gobbledygook, what is? You have to be an academic to accept such pretentious drivel as language.

As in every authoritarian institution, the tutor hauled before a tribunal was told that a tutorial (or any academic lecture) in a politically correct university does not allow students to make their own judgments. Rather, they ought to be told what the correct thinking on the subject is.

What is particularly galling is the language spoken in this kerfuffle. Hardly a word is missing from the politically correct lexicon. People who disagree with the "progressive" and pseudo-liberal agenda are "homophobic" or "transphobic," etc. Of course, universities have to give "trigger warnings" and provide "safe spaces" for the infantilized students where they can take refuge from hearing something that hurts their feelings!

How is it possible in 2017 that universities degrade themselves to such a degree as to becoming a national laughing stock? The answer lies in the fact that once a university adopts the mentality and intolerance of religious fanaticism together with merciless rigour in persecuting dissenters, it becomes a Temple of Political Correctness, with the adoration of the Unholy Trinity of Equity, Diversity and Inclusiveness, Amen. George Orwell apparently has taught these academic Lilliputians nothing. What these yahoo Trinitarians do not understand is the fact that universities are not institutions for social change, i.e. political establishments, but academic schools of research and instruction. They are schools, not Agitprops, not even for good causes.

Ms. Shepherd, however, is not completely innocent either in this theatre of the absurd. Anybody doing a Master's in Cultural Analysis and Social Theory or teaching for the Department of Communication Studies should expect nothing but leftist propaganda and infantilization of the students from social justice warriors. Her fault was one of poor judgment and naive confidence in the integrity of the academic program, a critique, however, that should be leveled at every student in these programs.

One particular aspect of the procedures I find especially worrisome has curiously been left out of every account that I have read. Ms. Shepherd secretly recorded the dressing down that she suffered from three officials: Nathan Rambukkana, instructor; Herbert Pimlott, Communication Studies coordinator; and Adria Joel, acting manager of

the Gendered and Sexual Violence Protection and Support office. Quite an array of personnel, all paid by taxpayers and donors! Ms. Shepherd's choice of action to secretly record the abuse violates my notions of respectfulness and courtesy, and yet I am glad that she did record.

Someone familiar with Aristotelian or Catholic moral philosophy most likely would argue that in cases where strict principles of justice would deliver injustice *licet epikia uti*. (*Summum ius, summa iniuria*: rigorous law is often unjust.) *Epikia* (ἐπιείκεια) is the notion that a judge is justified to apply the opposite of what the law prescribes in the pursuit of justice. How does this apply to Shepherd's "disrespectful" recording? We all know, and the authorities at WLU are suffering the pains of exposure, that Shepherd would have been immolated and the harassers confirmed in their roles of guardians of the Trinitarian Temple had Shepherd not recorded the humiliating, anti-intellectual and unethical session. In my judgment, clearly, this fact justified *epikia uti* since the indiscretion is a minor price to pay for the momentous gain.

I have read the insincere and somewhat ludicrous apologies from her academic and administrative superiors and listened to the Star Chamber interview during which the 22-year-old was bullied by three of her superiors. Many details are so appalling and beyond the pale, undignified of a university, that it is difficult to imagine how this institution can preserve the undeserved reputation as an academic institution without sound housecleaning.

Nathan Rambukkana, unconvincingly remorseful, admits that "maybe I have to get out of an 'us versus them' habit of thought." He may be right about that, whatever it may mean. What is certain, however, is that he has to get out of the habit of abusing and bullying his students and of politicizing the classroom.

How has WLU chosen to respond to the self-inflicted calamity? Firstly, the university has opted to hire a lawyer, Robert Centa, to conduct an "independent confidential fact-finding" investigation. *Nota bene*, the findings will be confidential. Here again we see "transparency" at work designed to control the information should it become even more embarrassing. Further, the investigation will be "fact-finding"! What other facts do we need to know in order to judge and reform the system? The piquancy in the choice of Centa is that he appears to be an "ardent supporter of diversity" (cf. Blatchford, *National Post*, Dec. 16).

Secondly, a Task Force on Freedom of Expression has been constituted to examine the more general question of how to reconcile freedom of speech and minority rights on campus. The underlying assumption is that these two principles are mutually exclusive and that the university has to choose. Moreover, the very question of compatibility is premised on the conviction that members of a minority (primarily sexual) are "protected" only if they never hear any criticism, not even a critical examination of their characteristics' origin, status or ethics.

To the contrary, I see a number of different measures to be taken instead. Dr. Rambukkana as the protagonist of the tragedy should be dismissed for incompetence and excessive zealotry in the pursuit of an unacademic ideology. In addition, he is guilty of abusing his power of supervisor for hectoring a student (and likely others as well). What, however, speaks against such drastic action, in my judgment, is the fact that he did what his department expected of him. The Communication Studies program, presumably, does exactly what he did. I would not at all be surprised to find that his colleagues in the department have similar practices. Would the review and "fact-finding" investigation probe these avenues?

Wilfrid Laurier president Deborah MacLatchy, of course, has lost some or all of her lustre. Her contention that "Giving life to (principles of academic freedom and free speech) while respecting fundamentally important human rights and our institutional values of diversity and inclusion, is not a simple matter" should be seen as part of her strategy to defend the indefensible and to retain her position. She should become part of the clean-up.

The resignation or dismissal of every *dramatis persona* implicated in this sordid affair should be the beginning.

It is patently obvious that none of these functionaries has more than a smattering of concern for academic freedom and freedom of expression. Ironically, Ms. Shepherd can teach her superiors many lessons! In any dismissal procedure it should be easy to demonstrate that the officials in question are monumentally incompetent and thus unable to fulfill the functions for which they are paid. If I were a member of their ilk I would consider some sort of Maoist reeducation or sensitivity training (which will certainly follow at WLU), but I am not adhering to Political Correctness and its customs and techniques.

The university should formulate a policy mandating that candidates for academic administrative positions, above all for deanships, as part of their dossiers demonstrate that in the past they have actively and convincingly defended academic freedom. Pieties, like those formulated by MacLatchy, that, of course, the university guarantees academic freedom as one of its fundamental principles, are worthless. Ideally, although difficult to get, candidates should demonstrate that they have paid a price in their own careers for defending scholarship rather than propaganda.

The Temple should be demolished, that is diversity, equity and inclusiveness offices, officers and programs should be defunded unless they can demonstrate their academic propriety.

Correct English language should be the indispensable language of WLU. Above all, conceptual confusions should be avoided.

“Gender” is a grammatical category, not a biological one, *à la rigueur* a psychological characteristic. People who change their sex are “transsexuals” not “transgender.”

“Phobia” is an excessive fear, whether based on reality or imagination. Thus, “homophobia” is a misnomer for disapproval of homosexuality. “Transphobia” (as applied to Lindsay Shepherd) is a nonsensical term because it is hardly imaginable that somebody has excessive fear of transsexuals (how many are they anyway?). Here again, what is meant is disapproval of transsexuality, certainly not fear. “Islamophobia,” to the contrary, makes sense because many contemporaries fear Islam, mostly because of the relentless violence in the Koran, Muhammad’s life and Islam’s history. However, what the promoters of the term “Islamophobia” object to, is not fear, but disapproval. Here once more, a concept is used to conceal the intended target (disapproval) with a term that is unassailable (fear).

“Survivors” are those who escaped death, not those who have been hurt by some inappropriate words or unpleasant behaviors of others, nor those who are simply opportunistic claimants of monies and privilege. Former students of Indian Residential Schools, whether they have mainly benefitted or suffered abuse, are not “survivors” but simply former students of these schools. To call them “survivors” suggests that as a rule pupils died at school.

These conceptual confusions are of course partly the linguistic tools of lazy thinkers, but more importantly the tools in the mouths of propagandists and zealots.

Particularly ugly is the practice of social justice warriors to use any of the above misnomers as insults meant to silence those who disagree with them. University education should find occasions for teaching that such name calling is unbecoming for discussants of arguments.

It would be wonderful to see a new phoenix arise from the ashes of WLU. This rebirth, however, will not happen unless the members of the WLU Board, alumni and donors take decisive actions. Let us hope that non-academics will have more insight into academic matters and more courage than academics and let us hope, as well, that other universities take notice since probably every university in Canada is afflicted with the same morbidity.

At this juncture it behooves me to comment on the *President’s statement re: independent fact-finder report*, re-

leased on Dec. 18. Ms. Shepherd has been vindicated, of course, we knew this before Mr. Centa's supererogatory investigation. The interrogating trio is being criticized for a "significant overreach"; however, what does that mean? Are they guilty of purposeful wrongdoing or was their misbehavior born of an ill-considered concern in good faith, of innocent incompetence? The president does not tell us, and the fact-finding report, of course, is confidential, for a reason!

Perhaps the most telling new information is the revelation that there was not even a complaining student after all. The abuse of Shepherd most likely was the brainchild of professor Rambukkana! What are the consequences of such ethical lapse? I would rather be guilty of sexual misconduct with a student than being guilty of having invented a complaint of "one student/many students," a malicious fiction that grows into a national scandal. Did this odd claim not make the President immediately suspicious? Why does the President not tell us with whom this odious, dishonest claim has originated? The fact that she controls the information and thus protects somebody shows her lack of sincerity which constitutes unfinished housecleaning.

With the release of the *President's statement re: independent fact-finding report* the investigation has come to a provisory end. The report of the task force is expected for the month of March.

I'd like to finish these reflections with a quote from Christie Blatchford: "Lindsay Shepherd... remains the singular adult in this mess" (*National Post*, Dec. 20).

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FREEDOM TO SPEAK, OBLIGATION TO LISTEN

Robert Grant Price

I like to think I'm mature enough to admit when I'm wrong. I want to be open to changing my mind. Whenever I feel the thrill that comes with taking a partisan position, I cringe. I cringe whenever I feel myself grasping tightly the few certainties I hold.

I never cringe in the moment, of course. Embarrassment arrives later, after the thrill's departed.

I wonder if a guy like James Tracy is cringing for what he's said.

Tracy is the former Florida Atlantic University professor who claims he was fired for saying the mass murder of children at Sandy Hook Elementary School never happened. FAU says it fired Tracy for breaking the school's rules.

I wonder if Anthony Hall is cringing.

Hall is the University of Lethbridge professor who, *The Globe and Mail* reports, said "there was a Zionist connection to the 9/11 attacks and that the events of the Holocaust should be up for debate."

And I wonder if Courtney Brown is cringing.

Brown is the professor at Emory University who believes in remote viewing, a pseudoscience that allows a person to "see" across space and time. Brown claims to have learned about alien civilizations, the lost city of Atlantis, the truth about the JFK assassination and other subjects of conspiracy enthusiasts using remote viewing.

I want to think Tracy, Hall and Brown are cringing, but I don't think they are.

But they make me cringe. I'm embarrassed for them. And I'm bothered by how they have, at various points in time, tried to defend their absurd ideas behind the banner of free speech and academic freedom. The issue with these men wasn't about freedom of speech. The issue was their reluctance to listen.

The terrain of free speech in academia is well-trodden. We understand that in our pursuit of knowledge, academics must prize the freedom to think and to speak, not for abstract reasons, but for practical purposes. We understand that we determine knowledge through conversation. We need the freedom to think out, and speak out, our ideas. Speech is a tool for thought, and so we must be allowed to freely manipulate it.

What is often missed in discussion of free speech is its complement: honest listening. In the pursuit of knowledge, we who speak must also listen. We must listen to what all the evidence says, and we must actively listen to what others tell us about the facts. If we truly care about freedom, if we commit ourselves to the pursuit of knowledge, then we must be willing to admit when we're wrong. If we can't admit to, and know, our errors, then we won't hear the truth, and we'll never encounter knowledge we claim to seek.

The person who demands the freedom to speak must accept the obligation to listen. The academic who can't listen to the evidence and admit when he's wrong is an intellectual partisan, an academic Capulet, and a barnacle on the scholastic ship who slows our course.

In his saddest incarnation, he's a conspiracy theorist, that strange character who knows what everybody else refuses to accept as true. He often plays hero, adopting the posture of the crusading intellectual, the one who will risk reputation to speak truth to power. But it's never more than posturing because there is nothing heroic in taking a stand against what overwhelming evidence tells us is true. There is nothing daring in calling Sandy Hook a fiction, nothing courageous in suggesting a Zionist connection to 9/11, nothing reasonable in saying researchers can use remote viewing to conduct scientific surveys of the past, the future, or Heaven. There is nothing noble in standing up to crimethink that isn't crimethink. Conspiracy theorists play brave for themselves alone. They are teenage boys flexing their puny biceps in the washroom mirror.

That is how I feel about people like Tracy, Hall and Brown. They have their fingers stuffed in their ears while demanding the right to speak. That is the problem. They devour the time and resources of the people who come to their aid. (And who, no doubt, think their views are nonsense but in the spirit of free speech defend these people nonetheless.)

I hope I don't sound uncharitable. When I read about people like Tracy, Hall and Brown, I'm saddened more than I am outraged. They appear to me as people so lost to the facts that they cannot hear how wrong they are or stupid they look.

I favour open conversation. It's the only way to arrest the natural impulse towards orthodoxy that inhibits the discovery and free movement of knowledge.

But conversation can only happen when both sides can speak their minds, when both sides actively listen, and more importantly, when both sides admit when they're wrong and change their minds.

In my intellectual development, the most important lesson I've learned is how good it is to be wrong. I am glad when I cringe after discovering I'm wrong. That cringe is a sign I'm listening and a signal that I can correct myself.

And that's good. It means I'm learning and one step closer to the truth.

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ACADEMIC FREEDOM UNBOUND (with Apologies to P.B. Shelley)

Jack Urowitz and Kathleen Cummins

If you have mutual respect you don't need academic freedom. We can't be sure if it was a series of happy accidents or an inevitable culmination of good post-secondary educational planning, but Sheridan became the one college with collegial governance policies worth replicating across the twenty-four publicly funded institutions within the Ontario College System. These policies include the most expansive Academic Freedom Policy, the most progressive Intellectual Property Policies, and the most formative course evaluation questionnaire in the province.

And to date, Sheridan is the only college with a functional Academic Senate, with a majority Faculty membership. Our collegial governance became the model for the Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology Bargaining Team's fight to enshrine faculty academic leadership in our Collective Agreement (CA) 2017-2021. The newly named Article 13 in our agreement, changed from 'Copyright' to 'Copyright and Academic Freedom,' now enshrines the goals of mutual respect amongst all levels of teaching and administrating when it comes to Academic matters. However, if any college faculty member needs to file a grievance to enforce academic freedom, the battle is already lost.

It would be difficult to separate the growth of our Academic Freedom Policy from the long-standing mutual respect on academic matters that has been maturing at Sheridan College since its inception. When our sixth President set the college on its journey to becoming a university, with faculty members already chairing the Academic Council and Academic Quality Assurance Committee, and its predecessor the Educational Planning and Program Review Committee, the Faculty at Sheridan was well poised to assume the responsibilities of an Academic Senate.

Was it administrative inertia or respect for Faculty leadership that gave the Faculty the chairmanship of the academic governance committees prescribed in our CA? Was it an administrator's political ambition or institutional evolution that set us on the journey to becoming a university? Was it to satisfy University Canada standards or to enact the PhD Thesis of our then Vice-President Academic, now President, that gave Sheridan the most progressive Formative Course Evaluation Policy and tool of any similar academic institution? Each of these three steps towards collegial academic governance embodied both administrative and Faculty aspirations. Thus was forged Sheridan's leadership in collegial governance in Ontario's colleges.

The academic collaborations at Sheridan blossomed into our Academic Freedom and Intellectual Property and Formative Faculty Evaluation Policies. The final policies are still evolving, with each iteration better capturing the spirit of cooperative pedagogical work that preceded the policies. Our new rights and responsibilities are best served by academic co-governance based on mutual respect. Arbitrational enforcement is a last resort to gain collegial governance. Its use might be a sign that an institution lacks the mutual respect co-leadership requires.

Before we take a closer look at our Academic Freedom and Intellectual Property Policies, let us examine the formative nature of our Course Evaluation Tool. This questionnaire captures Sheridan's essence as a reflective institution, invested in curricula excellence as developed from the faculty member from the needs of the students, moving upwards more than downwards from the administrative bottom-line. It might be the result of luck that our Vice President Academic researched summative and formative evaluations in her PhD Thesis and, then, found herself in a college that aspires to become a university. However it came about, this is how our Formative Course Evaluation tool is shaped.

There are three sections of approximately five questions each. The first five are college wide and focus on the college as the setting for the course being evaluated. These five appear on all Course Evaluations and were created by a cross-college committee. The next five questions are determined by each of the six Faculties and so are unique to the courses in that Faculty. The last five questions are chosen by the individual faculty member and they remain confidential to that professor unless the professor decides to share the results. That's what makes the Sheridan Course Evaluation tool formative – professors do not need to fear asking the tough questions about their own courses. This makes our Course Evaluation procedures a reflective exercise, where the individual's self-reflection is valued over administrative enforcement of generalized pedagogy. There is nothing summative in a confidential survey.

And now to our two policies, given our context of being the first progressive college in Ontario which has taken collegial governance into its infrastructure – the Sheridan Academic Senate. On October 26th, 2006, Sheridan made effective the Academic Freedom Policy and Procedure; it was reviewed in 2009 and an ongoing review began in 2016. The Academic Freedom policy is intricately tied to three other policies, the Intellectual Property Policy, the Ethical Research Practices Policy, and the Human Subjects Policy. The opening paragraph of the Policy Statement encapsulates the essential tenets of the policy,

Sheridan recognizes the right of faculty and staff to carry out their teaching and learning activities; to pursue research and disseminate and publish the results thereof; to produce and perform creative works; to engage in service to the institution and the community; and to express one's opinion about the institution, its administration and society at large, within the parameters established by the Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology Act (2002), College policies, ethical guidelines and all applicable legislation. (2009, Para 1.)

The first principle is about independence, empowering faculty and staff (part-time and full-time) to be leaders and experts in the classroom, lab, studio, library, etc. The second and third tenets aim to cultivate a culture of inquiry, investigation, and creation. Sheridan has, in fact, developed a number of research centres and has established the Sheridan Research and Creative Activities Growth Grants program, which now funds special projects outside the scope of the classroom.

The fourth tenet is focused on service, providing faculty and staff the opportunity to participate in governance. This principle is essential because it encourages and empowers faculty to take a leadership role in collegial decision-making; Sheridan is the only college with a Senate, two-thirds of which are faculty. Faculty and staff are to be released from other duties like teaching to serve on Senate. Senate is where the Academic Freedom and Intellectual Property policies are written, approved and reviewed. Many contributing authors are still actively involved in Senate and Local Academic Councils, including the president and other members of the union local.

The final tenet focuses on freedom of expression, albeit with some limits; these limits “protect the reputation of Sheridan College Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning.” Including a clause which allows for faculty and staff to express their opinions and beliefs “without fear of reprisal” establishes a democratic and tolerant culture that celebrates agency and respect.

Sheridan has proven that academic freedom policies work very well at the college level, and that is very relevant in 2018. Though colleges across the province celebrated their 50th anniversary this past year, the college system of 2018 is very different from the one of 1967. The key difference is that colleges now offer Honours Degree programs, with the aims of opening doors to further academic studies or to better prepare students for a workplace that not only demands hands-on practical experience and professional behaviour, but also critical thinking and creative problem-solving skills. These later skills have been traditionally taught in universities. Sheridan identifies as “an institution dedicated to learning, teaching and service,” with aspirations to be an undergraduate teaching university or at least like one. Therefore, it makes sense that the policy statement opens with four tenets that engender independence, a culture of inquiry and investigation, as well as freedom of expression and free speech.

During the Ontario college strike of 2017, one of the key asks by OPSEU’s college faculty bargaining team was for specific language about academic freedom, language that both protected and empowered faculty. Although the demand was not a monetary one, it proved to be the major sticking point in the embittered negotiations between OPSEU and the College Employer Council (CEC). The negotiations reached a deadlock on Nov. 19th, resulting in back-to-work legislation and arbitration. Though the CEC had generally agreed to the idea of academic freedom, they refused to address it directly in the CA, wilfully and suspiciously rendering it a peripheral issue to be sorted out at the local policy level. This was concerning because outside of Sheridan, colleges do not give more than a perfunctory nod to academic freedom. They have no binding language, and no faculty-led Senates whose domain is academic policy. This meant college faculty would have to sit and wait for management to get around to taking academic freedom policies seriously; moreover, management is not obliged to collaborate or consult with faculty.

After arbitrator William Kaplan’s judgement, the CA now ensures that all faculty members working across all twenty-four colleges have “the right to enquire about, investigate, pursue, teach and speak freely about academic issues without fear of impairment to position or other reprisal” (College Faculty Collective Agreement, Article 13.04, 2017). Sheridan, where collaboration and mutual respect have engendered a successful working model of collegial governance, will turn out to be the exception that proved the ‘arbitrator’s’ ruling.

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HOW THE LEFT BECAME RIGHT

Albert Howard

The influence of postmodernism in contemporary thought has run a course from being a beacon of hope, and relief from hard realities, to a diversion from materialism and scientific methodology. The seductive character of postmodernism, for the Left, was its offering of answers to uncomfortable questions by making it permissible to abandon recognition of essential truths in favour of relativism. This process was, and is, deeply in the service of reactionary conservatism while posturing as Leftist thought.

BEQUEST TO SAFS

Please consider remembering the Society in your will. Even small bequests can help us greatly in carrying on SAFS’s work. In most cases, a bequest does not require rewriting your entire will, but can be done simply by adding a codicil.

Thank you,

Mark Mercer, SAFS president

Perhaps the root of postmodernism's reactionary character is its aggressive and simplistic embrace of difference. Expressed and glorified as *diversity*, the objective is to disregard antagonistic opposites by adopting a "live and let live" attitude. This has gone to the extent of nullifying the most fundamental antagonism in the arena of political struggle: class. If the "wonderful, rich, diversity of cultures, religions, ideas, arts, values", et cetera, are to be celebrated, then so must class distinctions be *recognized*. The emphasis, in the cause of recognition, is tolerance – the acceptance of antagonistic opposition. The embrace of difference can only occur when the elements are viewed relatively. So, fundamental antagonisms are interpreted, not in the context of disagreement but as simply and inconsequentially different.

The effect is stasis; fundamental conservatism. While reconciliation is sometimes achieved through compromise, irreconcilable difference requires radical confrontation and revolutionary change. Irreconcilability is the conditional reason for the existence of the state - the established laws and the means to enforce them. The postmodern agenda is retention of the status quo: contentious difference is celebrated rather than reconciled. Radical activity, from ideas to political revolution, is suppressed in favour of tolerance; cultural, religious, and especially class difference, is to be tolerated. Karl Marx theorized that class society is the primary source of conflict in modern society, and that class conflict is irreconcilable except through revolution and radical social change.

The Enlightenment movement of the 17th and 18th centuries initiated a worldview that dragged humanity out of the constraints of medievalism with a progressive focus on reason and, subsequently, the scientific method and revolution. Reactionary forces reacted to this disillusionment, first with denial, and then with attempts to incorporate rationality with their supernatural concepts. The ensuing centuries have seen a continuing, though losing, struggle of conservatism to justify non-evidential belief, generally in the form of spirituality and religion. In service of its populist agenda, the Left became a champion of religious rights in opposition to reason.

The revolutionary threat of the Enlightenment produced a reaction that became the contemporary postmodern movement. Sweeping away the old and establishing the new is always met with resistance, and as the nature of change develops, the resistance must be intensified. The blunt jackboot of resistance to political progress gives way to sophisticated opposition to intellectual change. Enter the device of doublespeak, as exemplified in George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. The direct substitution of terms, such as Ministry of Peace for Ministry of War, and Ministry of Truth for the rewriting of history, have long warned of the nature of totalitarianism. *Nineteen Eighty-Four*'s thought police dangerously reflect conditions of today's universities where the right of free speech is under threat as disrespectful, and demands for control of expression are commonplace.

The inanity of racism was largely exposed in the radical atmosphere of the 1960s. Social equality, the rise of feminism and radical politics flourished in the universities. Left and Right political forces were clearly defined, respectively, by their opposition or support for the Vietnam War. Loosely identified through anti-materialist thinkers like Herbert Marcuse, a formation, sufficiently distinct from the Marxist left to warrant its own name, appeared. The "New Left" was the first direct diversion from the revolutionary character of the Left, to a populist political position. The reformism of the New Left provided an avenue of escape from the uncomfortable rigour of struggle that radical change demands. University students, often through the influence of Leftist professors, embraced the radical attractions of demands for reforms that were often mollified by the acceding of authorities. Civil rights struggles won major victories without challenging the power of the state, and the New Left became the *de facto* representation of the Left.

Postmodernism's influence on the Left was a departure from materialism to relativism, and, in simple form, can be determined as starting with an answer, and examining only the arguments that support it; while the scientific method demands objective evidence to determine the truth. The Left was now defined by the social activism it indulged. Radicalism became "Left" regardless of its objectives; political correctness became the accepted objec-

tive; form superseded content. One aspect of this New Left thought is the obstruction of speakers and writers of ideas that are deemed unacceptable by those who know what is right. People like Charles Murray, Jordan Peterson and Michael Bailey are attacked, uninvited to previously scheduled presentations, and are often the object of demands for formal punishment. These actions are taken in the context of censorship of ideas that some people find offensive. The Thought Police in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* control thinking, but thinking is also controlled when its expression is not allowed.

Marx theorized that the irreconcilable conflicts between the working and capitalist classes will inevitably result in revolutionary change. The postmodern deviation, away from the revolutionary focus while posing as agents of radical change, becomes a reactionary obstruction to progressive thinking and activity. In the process, the challenging of ideas, discussion and open debate face obsolescence. Thus the Left, of science and reason, is neutralized, and the reactionary, bullying and totalitarian opposite is instituted in disguise. By all standards, the three disingenuous tormentors of Lindsay Shepherd at Wilfrid Laurier University were on the Left for their self-determined protection of transgendered students.

Postmodern doublespeak has come full circle. Reactionary conservatism has usurped the role of the Left. For students and younger people, this is the only expression of radical thought: there's no Left left!

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REVIEW OF ALICE DREGER, *GALILEO'S MIDDLE FINGER*

Stephen B. Perrott

Can one be a social activist and a real scholar, true to argument and evidence? Alice Dreger's answer in *Galileo's Middle Finger* is that although possible it is highly unlikely. Furthermore, she says, no one unprepared to be pounded from all sides should even try.

Dreger's semi-autobiographical exposé covers her years as a medical historian taking up the cudgels for discriminated-against minority groups, especially people with intersex conditions. She starts her journey strongly allied with social activists, who she presumes are honest, fair, and moral simply by their cause; establishment scholars, on the other hand, who dissent from the social justice position *du jour*, deserve whatever attacks they sustain, given that their primary motivation is to protect their power and privilege.

Early on in this well-researched and accessible book, Dreger recounts her epiphany. She discovers that activists don't always care about fairness or truth while the scholars they target are often decent people interested in social justice. Dreger reviews a litany of incidents in which ruthless activists, without regard for scholarship or the consequences of their attacks, seek to discredit and harm scholars they consider heretics.

Consider, for example, the scorn heaped upon Randy Thornhill and Craig Palmer for daring to argue that rape is an act of both power *and* sex. Or, contemplate the special vitriol directed at Bruce Rind and his colleagues for suggesting that sexually assaulted children are differentially traumatized depending on individual resilience and the circumstances of the assault. For offering this common-sense hypothesis, backed with a review of the outcome literature, they were tagged as promoters of pedophilia. Perhaps most disturbing was how the American Psychological Association (APA), after initially offering some support for Thornhill and Palmer's academic freedom, ultimately capitulated to the activist mob.

The first establishment scholar for whom Dreger “changed sides” to defend was Northwestern psychologist J. Michael Bailey. Bailey had advanced an etiological framework for male-to-female transgenderism in a mainstream medium known to contradict the activist party line. For this heresy, Bailey and his family were subjected to a sustained torrent of abuse and misrepresentations from three prominent transgender activists. When Dreger wrote in Bailey’s defence, the attacks were redirected towards her with one of the activists going so far as to refer to Dreger’s son as a “womb turd.”

Interestingly, the *verboden* etiology that generated the furor strikes at least some transwomen as accurate. The recognition of this reality contributed to Dreger’s second important epiphany: social justice activists do not always speak for members of the communities whose interests they purport to represent. Rather, minority group members may find themselves silenced by activists for fear of themselves becoming targets.

Chapters 6 and 7 of the book are devoted to Dreger’s defense of another traditional scholar, anthropologist Napoleon Chagnon. Chagnon’s long career had focused on ethnographic fieldwork with the Yanomamö tribespeople living in a tract of remote Amazonian forest. In contradicting the conventional wisdom that indigenous peoples, uncontaminated by Western influences, live in peace, Chagnon was broadly attacked with vindictive and mostly false allegations, most notably in an extensive screed penned by Patrick Tierney. Of all the accusations directed at Chagnon, the most damning was that he had been involved in promoting a measles epidemic that killed many Yanomamö.

Dreger’s efforts on Chagnon’s behalf were fundamental in his eventual exoneration. He certainly had no reason to thank his own fraternal organization, the American Anthropological Association, because it, much as the APA abandoned Bailey, had long before thrown Chagnon “under the bus.”

The most extensive act of advocacy reported in *Galileo’s Middle Finger* finds Dreger back in more familiar topical territory as well as back in the role of “traditional activist,” one who challenges the establishment scholar. Three chapters towards the end of the book are about her attempts to hold endocrinologist Maria New accountable for her recommended treatment for mothers at risk for giving birth to children manifesting congenital adrenal hyperplasia (CAH). CAH is an intersex condition where XY females are likely to develop apparently male genitalia. Dreger describes her efforts to challenge New’s promotion of what is, in her estimation, an unproven and likely harmful drug to these genetically-at-risk pregnant women.

The CAH saga is a cautionary tale for those of us who are preoccupied by the current attack on knowledge by the postmodern social justice activists. In the case of Maria New, the scenario is flipped around to an examination of the intransigence of the establishment scientist seemingly focused on protecting her “turf,” at least as narrated by Dreger. New appears to be the beneficiary of all the privilege and power bestowed by an “Old Boys Network,” exactly the phenomenon that social justice activists so often rail against. It behooves us to remember that the activists had, and still have, a legitimate point in this regard, and this is driven home by the knowledge that of all the battles covered in the book, this was Dreger’s least successful.

Galileo’s Middle Finger is an infuriating read even for one who thought he was inoculated from shock by the lengths to which today’s authoritarian left will go in the name of social justice. It was also a dispiriting read insofar as Dreger’s experiences show that there will be no quick remedy to the current threat to knowledge, generally, and to scientific practice, more specifically. If one is to gain any sense of hope at all from *Galileo’s Middle Finger*, it is to be taken from the example Dreger herself sets. Consistent with her belief that sustainable justice cannot result outside of the pursuit of truth, she continues to carry the torch and, in turn, inspires the rest of us to do the same.

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REVIEW OF ERWIN CHEMERINSKY & HOWARD GILLMAN, *FREE SPEECH ON CAMPUS*

Stuart Chambers

Erwin Chemerinsky and Howard Gillman's *Free Speech on Campus* deals primarily with the tension between freedom of expression and the need to safeguard the learning atmosphere around post-secondary students, especially minority students. Chemerinsky and Gillman admit that an approach is required that "both protects expression and respects the need to make sure that a campus is a conducive learning environment for all students" (p. 19).

The authors are adamant, however, that the only limits placed on freedom of speech be against speech that offends the constitution, not speech that offends people. In their words, "All ideas and views should be able to be expressed on college campuses, no matter how offensive or how uncomfortable they make people feel" (p. 19).

The authors' affinity for muscular liberalism places them at odds with the growing campus preference for multicultural liberalism. For proponents of the latter doctrine, free speech should be limited whenever it demeans the self-esteem and dignity of minorities. Hence, campus speech restrictions are required so that minorities are not vilified, humiliated or dehumanized. That said, the authors believe they have found a resolution that strikes a balance between both liberal camps.

Chemerinsky and Gillman begin by stressing the importance of free speech for personal, political and historical reasons. An individual cannot become a self-governing agent unless he or she is "exposed to different ideas about what is important and what beliefs are most meaningful, and is permitted to converse with others about their experiences or beliefs" (p.24). As well, free speech is essential to democratic self-government. By discussing contentious issues openly, citizens are able "to formulate and communicate their opinions about what decisions or policies will best advance the community's welfare" (p. 25).

Moreover, the authors note that minority voices were previously censored because their messages were deemed "offensive." For instance, statements critical of the federal government could be criminalized under the Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798. Sending "obscene" literature through the mail—specifically, anything related to abortion or contraception—was suppressed under the Comstock Law of 1873. The Espionage Act of 1917 and The Sedition Acts of 1918 made it a crime to speak out against the draft or to cast the government's war efforts in a negative light. Because of restrictions on speech, thousands were arrested and sent to prison for lengthy sentences.

From the 1930s to the 1970s, the Supreme Court shifted its opinions in favour of protecting vulnerable minorities. Within this time frame, states could no longer sanction those who belonged to the Communist Party. Children of Jehovah's Witnesses could not be punished for refusing to pledge allegiance to the American flag. One could now condemn the draft without fear of reprisal. The extension of First Amendment protections even allowed civil rights activists, such as Martin Luther King Jr., to build support for the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Therefore, changes in the legal landscape provided more freedom for political, racial, sexual and religious minorities whose views sat outside the mainstream.

Ironically, multicultural liberals who today advocate for censorship on university campuses believe that denying free speech is the most effective way to protect vulnerable groups. The authors view this position as problematic for two main reasons. First, "social progress has come about not as a result of silencing certain speakers, but by ensuring that previously silenced or marginalized groups are empowered to find their own voice and have their own say" (p. 47). Second, whenever universities have attempted to implement campus speech codes, specifically between 1989 and 1995, every court found them unconstitutional (pp. 100-101).

Chemerinsky and Gillman are not dismissive of the concerns of multicultural liberals, most notably, the corrosive effect of hate speech on society and the fact that unrepresentative groups face barriers to full inclusion (p. 111). But the authors draw a line concerning safe space policies. Universities and colleges “cannot and should not accommodate the language of safe spaces when the focus is protecting members of the campus from the expression of ideas, rather than creating a safe environment for the expression of ideas” (p. 140).

There are still types of expression that campuses should prohibit, such as true threats, harassment, destruction of property and the disruption of classes (pp. 116-126). These behaviours undermine both the day-to-day functioning of a university and pose genuine dangers to the health and welfare of students and professors alike. Hence, they are not protected by the First Amendment.

All things considered, Chemerinsky and Gillman insist, the advantages of free speech on American campuses outweigh the advantages associated with suppression of voices considered too controversial or inappropriate. In other words, a campus community makes its strongest contribution, not by intimidation or censorship, but by engaging competing perspectives, rebutting “harmful” or “dangerous” ideas, and resolving disagreement through rational argumentation (pp. 158-59).

Multicultural liberals may feel it’s their duty to censor speech deemed offensive or hateful, but this requires a trade-off of goods unacceptable to the authors. Free speech, Chemerinsky and Gillman claim, is not just one good among many: it is the most important good upon which all others depend. Without it, autonomous agents cannot think critically about the merit of competing claims because the thinking is done for them.

In a very nuanced fashion, Chemerinsky and Gillman have not only elevated the current debate surrounding free speech, but have also set in motion an agenda for its future.

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REVIEW OF LAURA KIPNIS, *UNWANTED ADVANCES: Sexual Paranoia Comes to Campus*

Christina Behme

It rarely happens that a book becomes as relevant as soon after its publication as did Laura Kipnis’ *Unwanted Advances*. A string of reports of sexual misconduct by high-profile actors and politicians brought national media attention to the topic of sexual harassment in the workplace just months after Kipnis’ book appeared. The rapidly growing #Metoo movement showed how widespread the problem is and demanded far-reaching change. Voices calling for change quickly grew louder and more impatient.

Representative of many, Christine Emba requested abandoning due process for the accused because it “often allows the guilty to linger in power” (Emba, 2017). Many #Metoo supporters were persuaded by the suggestion that even if a few innocent men are harmed by abandoning due process for the accused, the net effect for society will be positive. When, by default, we believe the accuser, many victims will finally find the courage to come forward and sexual predation can be eradicated. Yet, others, like retired public defender Jeanine Tobin, cautioned that there can be “shaded motivations on both sides of sexual issues” (Tobin, 2017) and insisted on due process. This situation raises the question: should we abandon or maintain due process when it comes to sexual harassment allegations?

SAFS ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2018

The Society for Academic Freedom and Scholarship will meet this year Saturday, May 5, at Western University, in London, Ontario

Keynote Address: Gad Saad

Dr Saad is a Professor of Marketing and holds the Concordia University Research Chair in Evolutionary Behavioral Sciences and Darwinian Consumption.

He's also host of *The Saad Truth*: <https://www.youtube.com/c/GadSaad>

Also:

Lindsay Shepherd and David Haskell

Ms Shepherd is a Master's student in Cultural Analysis and Social Theory, Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo, Ontario.

Dr Haskell is Associate Professor, Digital Media and Journalism, Wilfrid Laurier University Brantford, Brantford, Ontario

In *Unwanted Advances*, Kipnis answers this question. It turns out that what is proposed for society at large has been already attempted at the microcosm of public universities in the US in the form of Title IX investigations. Title IX legislation was initially intended to eliminate sexual discrimination from education programs or activities receiving Federal financial assistance. Since 2011, it has also been employed to conduct investigations of sexual harassment complaints on the preponderance of evidence standard. Kipnis uses extensive research into recent Title IX investigations and personal experience (as respondent in such a case) to argue that abandoning due process is highly problematic (because it results in punishing innocent men and women) and very ineffectual in decreasing sexual harassment. She strongly opposes the way in which the Title IX process has created a "culture of sexual paranoia... [and is] fundamentally altering the intellectual climate in higher education as a whole, to the point where ideas are construed as threats ... and freedoms most of us used to take for granted are being whittled away or disappearing altogether" (p. 5). This development is both dangerous and counterproductive because "policies and codes that bolster traditional femininity - which has always favoured stories about female endangerment over stories of female agency - are the last thing in the world that's going to reduce sexual assault" (p. 8).

Kipnis argues that, instead of turning university campuses into environments where women can competently negotiate sexual relations as equal partners, the constant association of sex and danger turns young women into helpless damsels in distress who have to rely on powerful bureaucrats for protection. Yet, in spite of ever increasing rules and regulations, the number of reported cases of sexual harassment is not going down. According to Title IX advocates this indicates a deeply entrenched rape culture. According to Kipnis, statistics show fewer cases of rape and assault. But what "counts as 'sexual harassment' has changed considerably" (p. 41).

When due process is abandoned "rampant accusation [becomes] the new norm on today's campus" (p. 6) because the "accuser's credibility is assumed [and] the accused is disbelieved at every turn" (p. 67). Instead of identifying and punishing bona fide harassers, investigators are bogged down by a rapidly increasing number of cases that

have less and less to do with actual harassment. Kipnis reports a number of the cases she became aware of, several of which certainly appear frivolous.

In at least two cases the perpetrator wasn't male. A female English professor and one of her students were "emailing about intimate aspects of their lives and histories" (p. 174) and later, when she reported that student for plagiarism, the student filed a sexual harassment complaint. University officials seized the professor's computer and "ruled that the email exchanges had been sexually explicit enough to constitute a 'relationship', despite the fact that they'd never even touched" (p. 175). In another case, Teresa Buchanan, a professor of education, "was fired in 2015 ...for swearing in class and making a joke about sex declining in long-term relationships" (fn, pp. 63-64). So much for protecting women.

And, of course, there is Kipnis' own case. Even though she never committed anything remotely resembling sexual harassment, she found herself subjected to Title IX procedures. In a 30-page chapter ("My Title IX Inquisition," pp. 127 - 157), she describes the Kafkaesque manner in which the investigation unfolded. The Title IX complaints were based on "statements made in [her] recent *Chronicle* article and subsequent statements" (p. 127). Because of writing an essay about sexual harassment (Kipnis, 2015), she had "been plunged into an underground world of secret tribunals and capricious, medieval rules" (p. 133). Kipnis points out that when her writing can be construed as "creating a hostile environment", then "academic freedom doesn't extend to academics discussing matters involving their own work place" (p. 137).

Kipnis was eventually cleared of any wrongdoing. But she remains concerned about the impact Title IX bureaucracy is having on academic freedom: "It's a value fast disappearing in the corporatized university landscape ... and self-censorship now rules the land" (p. 157). This should ring alarm bells for all of us. Ideas that are not expressed for fear of punishment do not disappear. Instead of being challenged in open debate, they "go into hiding" and can grow more dangerous.

Of further concern are skyrocketing costs for universities. On the one hand, an increasing number of those who were denied due process sue for damages. On the other hand, the Office for Civil Rights may impose costly investigations on schools suspected of non-compliance with Title IX procedures. To avoid that, universities spend "hundreds of millions ... yearly on attempted compliance" (p. 38). In addition, settlements with victims often go into the hundreds of thousands. One can only imagine how many scholarships for women or underprivileged minorities could be funded with this money. So anyone in favour of abandoning due process should first read Kipnis' book.

In spite of its many positive aspects *Unwanted Advances* is not flawless. Far too much space (two chapters, 126 pages) is devoted to the already massively publicized case of Peter Ludlow, former philosophy professor at Northwestern University, who had been accused by two students of sexual misconduct. While not defending all of Ludlow's actions, Kipnis is not convinced that they merit his (forced) resignation from a tenured university position.

Ludlow, in his mid-fifties, and described as charismatic, hip, eloquent (p. 46), first got into trouble because he got involved with 20-year old Eunice Cho (not her real name). They visited several art events, restaurants and bars, he bought her alcohol, took her to his apartment and slept in the same bed with her. According to Cho, Ludlow coerced her into drinking and made unwelcome sexual advances. As a result she attempted to commit suicide and suffered PTSD-like symptoms.

Kipnis challenges the coherence of Cho's story. Some of the (alleged) facts seem indeed quite shaky. But, oddly, Kipnis does not seem to notice a similar shakiness in Ludlow's account. For example, defending himself against the allegation that he provided alcohol to an under-aged student, Ludlow "denies knowing that Plaintiff was underage and affirmatively states that in one of her online profiles Plaintiff had listed her birthday as December 1989

... [and] that on her Facebook page Plaintiff represented herself as having attended Seoul National University before coming to Northwestern..." (Ludlow, 2014, reply to # 12). Considering that Ludlow claims he had no romantic interest in Cho it is more than a bit creepy that he would go through several on-line accounts to find out how old she was, instead of simply asking her before buying her alcohol.

Other details of Ludlow's story seem curious as well. He claims that after visiting several art shows and bars he "walked Plaintiff to a taxi stand where a taxi was waiting and offered money to pay for a cab to take her back to Evanston. At that time Plaintiff ... [declined the cab-offer and] suggested they go out somewhere else" (Ludlow, 2014, reply to #18). One has to wonder why a middle aged professor who had no romantic interest in his former student would not part ways at this point, but Ludlow takes her to his apartment. While there, allegedly, she told him she wanted to date him. Instead of telling her he was not interested, Ludlow "raised a question about their age difference" (Ludlow, reply to # 20) and he continued hanging out with her. At one bar, (allegedly) Cho kissed Ludlow and he "initially did not pull away but as Plaintiff's kissing became more involved he pulled away and told her to 'cool it'" (Ludlow, reply to #24). Again, Ludlow could have easily removed himself from the situation but chose not to. And, eventually, he took Cho back to his apartment (allegedly to retrieve her video camera) and when she asked him if she could spend the night, he agreed and they both "fell asleep on his bed fully clothed and on top of the sheets" (Ludlow, 2014, reply to # 28). Even though they slept in the same bed, Ludlow claims he never touched Cho and asserts he "lacks sufficient knowledge ... regarding what time Plaintiff woke" (Ludlow, reply to # 29). But if he indeed did not notice whether Cho woke up during the night, how can he know he did not move in his sleep and put his arm around her? Certainly someone less convinced of Ludlow's innocence than Kipnis will find plenty of room for doubting his account of the events.

The second case involves grad-student Nola Hartley (again, not her real name), who had an intimate relationship with Ludlow two and a half years before Cho's allegations against Ludlow were made public. While the relationship seemed consensual at the time, Hartley later changed her mind about this and claimed that "Ludlow had once had sex with her without her consent when she was drunk" (p. 96). Kipnis finds Hartley's accusations even less trustworthy than Cho's and provides some compelling evidence that much of the Title IX investigation of this case was unduly biased against Ludlow. Of course, noting the flaws in the process does not establish that Ludlow had done nothing wrong. Kipnis notes: "One problem with these retroactive accusations is that memory doesn't exactly sharpen over time. In fact, most memory research demonstrates that subsequent events reshape and distort our memories, and the more we recall a given memory the less accurate it becomes" (p. 95). This applies to everyone's memory - yet Kipnis places a great deal of trust in the accuracy of Ludlow's memories.

Further, she seems unconcerned that there is a lot of drinking going on in Ludlow's wake. Hartley reports being drunk on several occasions and Ludlow was "out drinking" with an under-aged Cho. Kipnis attempts to downplay the situation but her dismissive sarcasm seems out of place: "...buying Cho liquor was regarded as the equivalent of pushing heroin on her" (p. 87). Buying alcohol for minors is violating the law and Ludlow had checked preemptively social media for Cho's age. And, perhaps, alcohol could account for some of the inconsistencies noted earlier.

In his deposition, Ludlow "denies that [Cho] was intoxicated at any point in the evening" (Ludlow 2014, reply to # 14). But it is notoriously difficult to evaluate one's own intoxication (or no one would ever get charged with DUI), let alone someone else's (whom one barely knows). Cho's account is consistent with that of a person who has memory gaps because of intoxication. On the other hand (assuming he is telling the truth), Ludlow's account is not consistent with that of a person who was sober and acting rationally. However, alcohol could have clouded his judgment enough for him to make a string of poor decisions. Kipnis argued, quite convincingly, that Title IX investigators tend to be convinced of the guilt of the accused and frequently dismiss evidence that challenges their conviction. It appears that her conviction of Ludlow's innocence could be having a similar effect on her judgment.

Returning from the university microcosm to the “outside world”, it might be instructive to note some striking parallels between Ludlow’s case and that of Roy Moore (McCrummen, Reinhard & Crites, 2017). Both men were involved with much younger women, both men were accused of criminal offences, in both cases charges were brought forward (long) after the fact, and both cases caused much public outrage. Both men resolutely denied any wrongdoing. Kipnis introduced “reasonable doubt” in Ludlow’s conviction. And there are at least some people who would use Kipnis’ memory distortion argument to defend Moore. But, possibly, in this case Kipnis might trust Moore’s accusers’ memories of events that took place nearly 40 years ago. None of us is immune to confirmation bias - we tend to believe what we want to believe because we favour evidence supporting those beliefs. But for the victims of sexual assault it does not matter whether the accused is someone we want to be innocent or someone we despise. Their suffering is real in both cases. It is precisely for that reason that we need due process when evaluating sexual harassment charges. Reminding us of that is perhaps the greatest contribution of *Unwanted Advances*.

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“ISLAMOPHOBIA” AND MOUNT ROYAL UNIVERSITY: Disrespectful Criticism of Islam Will Not be Tolerated

Frances Widdowson

“...the only ideas I’m afraid of letting people say are the ones that I think may be true and that I don’t like. But I accept that censorship is not going to make the world be the way I wish it were.” – Sam Altman

In the Spring of 2016, *Summit* – the magazine created by Mount Royal University (MRU) to “showcase the aspirations, achievements and contributions of Mount Royal students, faculty, staff, alumni and supporters and, in

so doing, clarify Mount Royal's profile as a Canadian leader in undergraduate education" – put out an article rationalizing the Islamic religion. Entitled "Semblance of faith: A campus community defies dinner-party etiquette and dares to talk religion" (<http://mtroyal.ca/summit/faith.htm>), the article featured a number of students, faculty and staff who were intent on showing that the Islamic religion was not oppressive to women and was not linked to violence. It was implied that those who thought the contrary were guilty of "Islamophobia", which the article defined "as dislike of or prejudice against Islam or Muslims, especially as a political force". What was needed, according to the article, was for Muslims to embark upon a "public awareness campaign" to "address misconceptions", so that critics would overcome their "fear and ignorance" and accept Islamic beliefs and practices as being "normal".

While the article assumed that there was widespread agreement with its buoyant portrayal of Islam, "Islamophobia" was soon to rear its ugly head. This occurred in October 2016, when David Docherty, the president of MRU, sent out a cryptic email asserting the following:

Post-secondaries by design encourage and challenge ideas; however, expressions of hate in any form and directed at any group or individual have no place on our campuses.

Mount Royal University will not tolerate Islamophobia.

I know all of you stand with me in solidarity with our Muslim students and employees, as well as members of all faiths and identities, to protect and celebrate inclusive communities.

At the time, it was irritating to receive such a presumptuous dispatch about "solidarity" and the need to "celebrate inclusive communities". But, as no other details were forthcoming, the communication was soon forgotten. One year later, however, disturbing information was conveyed about the reasons for this email from the Diversity and Human Rights Office. According to the Director of this office, President Docherty's email was in response to some public written statements of a student, which included the following: "Fuck Islam", "Islam is Cancer" and "Love Muslims, Hate Islam". It was also revealed that, at the time, the student making the statements had been identified and went through a process with the Office of Student Conduct.

While President Docherty's email may have been prompted in part by the medium of communication chosen (evidently, the student had put up some posters, had written on a whiteboard in a classroom, and had marked a wall), it was likely that some of the president's response was due to the *content* of the public utterances. The president's email, after all, was about how MRU would "not tolerate Islamophobia". This assertion required clarification about what was considered permissible discourse on campus.

In order to determine what the president was intending with his email, a written question was submitted to General Faculties Council. After providing the background noted above, inquiries were made about the following:

Is President Docherty asserting that arguments maintaining that a religious ideology is "cancer" will not be tolerated at this university? One of the statements – "Love Muslims, Hate Islam" – clearly distinguishes between religious *ideas* and the *people* that have chosen to believe in them. Is President Docherty asserting that to express intense dislike for a *belief system* constitutes an "[expression] of hate" that has "no place on our campuses"? Does "[standing] in solidarity...with all members of all faiths and identities...to protect and celebrate inclusive communities" include prohibiting the expression of a strong aversion to their ideas?

It should be noted that two famous public intellectuals have made similar comments about religion in general, and Islam in particular. The evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins, for example, called faith a "virus", while the neuroscientist and philosopher Sam Harris made the following statement about Islam: "It is time

we admitted that we are not at war with ‘terrorism’. We are at war with Islam. This is not to say that we are at war with all Muslims, but we are absolutely at war with the vision of life that is prescribed to all Muslims in the Koran. The only reason Muslim fundamentalism is a threat to us is because the fundamentals of Islam are a threat to us” (Sam Harris, “Mired in a religious war”, *The Washington Times*, December 1, 2004, <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2004/dec/1/20041201-090801-2582r/> [accessed November 2017]). While many would disagree with these statements, it is unlikely that they would be prohibited on the grounds that they are “hateful” or “Islamophobic”. It is essential, in fact, that assertions like these be debated at a university.

Is it appropriate for Mount Royal University to muzzle critical statements or opinions that vehemently oppose the chosen beliefs of certain members of our community?

In his response on December 14, 2017, Docherty expressed his appreciation for the written question and said that the university’s reaction was largely provoked by how the student had chosen to express their opinions. The president, however, also stated that MRU expected views to be expressed “respectfully”. The fact that the student had used an “f-bomb”, according to the president, gave a good indication that the student was not interested in having a respectful discussion about the subject.

The president’s response raised more questions than it answered. Sure, we might agree that the use of profanity in the exchange of ideas should be avoided, but what if the student had said “fuck fascism” instead of “fuck Islam”? Would this have elicited the same response? And what about the two other statements? Were they, as well, considered to be “disrespectful” and therefore forbidden?

While the president’s response was somewhat unsatisfactory, the faculty and student reactions to the question at General Faculties Council were alarming. These responses were overwhelmingly supportive of restricting freedom of expression in certain “contexts”, resulting in two main arguments opposing the “disrespectful” criticism of Islam. The first “context” was specific to the religion itself and pertained to the assumption that, unlike other belief systems or ideologies, Islam was “not an idea”. It was argued that Islam consisted of “many ideas” that were intricately connected to the identities of various ethnic groups. Therefore, criticism of Islam amounted to “hate speech” and disguised the tremendous benefits that the religion had brought to the world. The statement “fuck Islam” was very different from using the words “fuck fascism”, it was maintained, as fascism was not connected to identifiable groups of people. Saying that the Islamic *religion* was contemptible, according to this view, would be equivalent to regarding Muslim *people* with contempt.

The second argument was broader and concerned the minority “context” of those members of the MRU community who believed in the Islamic religion. It was asserted that everyone at MRU had to be very cognizant of the power differentials that existed on campus, and that not all people would feel equally comfortable in airing their opinions. The public rejection of Islam had the potential to create a “chill” on campus, and this could result in a climate where it would be difficult for some to participate. It was noted that many members of minority groups were now feeling “unsafe” at MRU, and prohibitions against vitriolic criticisms of their identities were needed to create an inclusive environment on campus.

These arguments are highly destructive to the university as an intellectual institution and the human interactions it makes possible. The first argument is very dangerous to those who believe in the Islamic religion, as it implies that their religious beliefs are innate and therefore unchangeable. Rather than facilitating “inclusion”, it will likely lead to an increase in resentment towards Muslim people, because there will be no ability to distinguish between the terrible things that the belief system commands and the unfortunate people who happen to have been indoctrinated into accepting these religious dictates. This failure to distinguish between believers and their ideas

is obviously untenable because many people convert to Islam and many decide to leave the faith. The organization Ex-Muslims of North America, with thousands of members, shows how ridiculous it is to confuse ethnicity with this belief system.

The second argument – about being careful in expressing ideas that could result in the further marginalization of minorities – is even more problematic for universities because it encourages us to view people, not as individuals, who can self-actualize and find their own way in the world, but as members of groups that must be protected from feeling “unsafe” (i.e. uncomfortable). To be a real university there can be no “safe spaces” for ideas. To say that criticizing a particular belief system is off limits because it is “disrespectful” is to create a climate where people will self-censor for fear of causing offense. This will then limit the capacity of atheists to express themselves and will prevent critical thinkers from analyzing the potential irrationality of various ideas. It also will act to prevent all of us from engaging honestly with one another and learning how to create a better world that will include us all.

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WHY I QUIT TEACHING

David Solway

Some years back, I decided I had to quit the teaching profession to which I had dedicated half my life. The modern academy, I felt, was so far gone that restoration was no longer possible. Indeed, I now believe that complete collapse is the only hope for the future, but as Woody Allen said about death, I'd rather not be there when it happens.

Three reasons determined my course of action. For one thing, administration had come to deal less with academic issues and more with rules of conduct and punitive codes of behavior, as if it were a policing body rather than an arm of the teaching profession. Woe betide the (male) student accused of sexual assault or misconduct; the administration will convene an extra-judicial tribunal to punish or expel the accused, often with a low burden of proof. It will find ways to shut down conservative speakers. It will browbeat faculty and students to attend sensitivity training sessions on matters of race and gender. It will strike task forces to deal with imaginary issues like campus rape culture and propose draconian measures to contain a raging fantasy. The administration is now beset by two basic compulsions: to expand its reach at the expense of the academic community and to ensure compliance with the puritanical norms of the day. I thought it prudent to take early retirement rather than wait for the guillotine to descend.

For another, colleagues were increasingly buying into the politically correct mantras circulating in the cultural climate. The dubious axioms of “social justice” and equality of outcome, the postmodern campaign against the Western tradition of learning, and the Marxist critique of capitalism now superseded the original purpose of the university – to seek out truth, to pursue the impartial study of historical events and movements, and to remain faithful to the rigors of disciplined scholarship. Most of my colleagues were rote members of the left-liberal orthodoxy: pro-Islam, pro-unfettered immigration, pro-abortion, pro-feminist, anti-conservative, anti-Zionist, and anti-white. Departmental committees were now basing their hiring protocols not on demonstrated merit, but on minority and gender identities, leading to marked pedagogical decline. Professional hypocrisy could be glaring. Case in point: The most recent hire speaking at a department meeting was a white woman advocating for more

brown and black faces on staff – though, as a recent hire, she had never thought of stepping aside in favor of minority candidates vying for her position. In any event, faculties were and are progressively defined by firebrands on the one hand and soy boys on the other – partisans rather than pedagogues, plaster saints all. I found I could no longer respect the majority of people I had to work with.

But the primary incentive for flight had to do with the caliber of students I was required to instruct. The quality of what we called the student “clientele” had deteriorated so dramatically over the years that the classroom struck me as a barn full of ruminants and the curriculum as a stack of winter ensilage. I knew I could not teach James Joyce’s *Ulysses* or Thomas Mann’s *The Magic Mountain* since they were plainly beyond the capacity of our catechumens – mind you, all old enough to vote and be drafted. The level of interest in and attention to the subjects was about as flat as a fallen arch. The ability to write a coherent English sentence was practically nonexistent; ordinary grammar was a traumatic ordeal. In fact, many native English-speakers could not produce a lucid verbal analysis of a text, let alone carry on an intelligible conversation, and some were even unable to properly pronounce common English words. I could not help thinking of Arthur C. Clarke’s *Childhood’s End*, in which the children of the planet are all translated into some otherworldly dimension. I titled one of my books about our educational debacle *The Turtle Hypodermic of Sickenpods*, based on an initially mysterious phrase in a student’s essay by which, as I discovered after long consultation, he meant to say “the total epidemic of psychopaths.” (This is a true story.)

Of course, many of my former colleagues insisted that their students were “just great,” that they constituted a “savvy generation,” that they were “a privilege to teach.” The degree of self-delusion is off the charts, though I suspect that one motive for such professional vagrancy is the half-conscious awareness of a guilty complicity in the advancement of decadence. The desire to vindicate their roles as teachers and to justify obscenely fat salaries takes precedence over simple honesty.

The problem is chiefly in the humanities and social sciences – English literature, cultural studies, gender programs, sociology, communications – where it must be frankly admitted that very few of the students enrolled have the intellectual equipment to meet traditional standards of achievement and performance. These faculties have become a holding pen for incompetents, now known as “snowflakes.” For a variety of reasons – defective early schooling, poor parenting, widespread permissiveness – these students are in desperate need of “safe spaces,” where they can hide from the real world and shirk the demands of mental maturity. They are taught not to think independently, evaluate competing doctrines, or master the tools of cognitive proficiency, but to feel good about themselves. Self-esteem subs for self-improvement. Moreover, they are *materia prima* for anti-Western indoctrination by their politicized professors, mentors, and departments.

To put it bluntly, the administration is venal and unscrupulous. Faculty is compromised and reprobate. The student body is a haven for ineptitude. Regrettably, the exceptions – for they do exist – cannot redress the balance. What is perhaps most troubling is that the more reputable faculties and disciplines – math, physics, engineering, astronomy, medicine, law – are gradually but inexorably being eroded by the “social justice” meme and subject to extraneous cultural forces that are political in nature. Even here, gender and race rather than scholarly accomplishment and talent are starting to predominate in hiring protocols. These departments are slowly coming to be governed not by the principles of classical propriety, but by agendas alien to their mandates – agendas whose function is to promote the collectivity over the individual; so-called “human rights” over human excellence; and equality, however unearned, over freedom, however precious. As a result, even among the purer disciplines, meritocracy will surrender to mediocrity.

For myself, those days are over. I’m committed to writing in the study rather than teaching in the classroom. The pressures that impinge are my own, and I don’t have to deal with the incompetent and corrupt, at the cost of my

integrity, such as it is, and of my well-being. True, writing may turn out to be as ineffective as teaching. But one thing is for sure. I can no longer be part of the decrepit circus that now passes for established education.

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WHO CAN SAVE FREE SPEECH?

Philip Carl Salzman

The first amendment of the Constitution of the United States of American states that “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.”[1] The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms “guarantees the rights and freedoms set out in it subject only to such reasonable limits prescribed by law as can be demonstrably justified in a free and democratic society. ... Everyone has the following fundamental freedoms: (a) freedom of conscience and religion; (b) freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, including freedom of the press and other media of communication; (c) freedom of peaceful assembly; and (d) freedom of association.[2]

In both the United States and Canada, “freedom of speech...[and] of the press,” and “freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression” including the press and media,” are protected from government interference, restriction, and suppression. In these formulations, it is the government and its laws that are seen as the main threat to freedom of speech. Citizens are to be protected from governments by constitutional constraints on government actions. This is explicit in both the U.S. First Amendment—“Congress shall make no law...”—and the Canadian Charter—“subject only to such reasonable limits prescribed by law as can be demonstrably justified in a free and democratic society.”

What happens if the suppression of free speech is not the result of government action, but of the action of others? During the second decade of the 21st century, governments were not the main opponents of free speech, notwithstanding the so-called Human Rights Commission and Tribunals of Canada that believe that offensive speech must be suppressed. No, attacks on free speech have come from extremists on both the right and the left of the political spectrum. These extremists form mobs, and those mobs act to intimidate others whose views the mobs do not like, the mobs engaging in disruption and even violence to silence contrary views. In fact, there has been a strange alliance between the extreme left and the extreme right, and alliance that would have previously been difficult to imagine.

On the extreme right, North American Islamists, Muslims who do not view Islam as private faith, as most Christians and Jews in North America view their faiths, but as a total way of life and a way of organizing public life, economics, and politics, reject free speech, and demand that speech and opinion be restricted and censored. Above all, Islamists demand that all criticism of Islam be suppressed, as it is in sharia law, which specifies severe penalties, including execution, for criticism of Mohammed, the Quran, Allah, or Islam. To bolster this restriction of free speech, Islamists have invented the imaginary phobia, or irrational fear, that they call “Islamophobia.” Any criticism of Islam, such as Islam’s division of the world into Muslims and infidels, the obligation of Muslims to insure that Islam dominates all societies, the use of violence and slavery against non-Muslims, the placing of men in authority over women, all such legitimate criticisms are deemed to indicate Islamophobia. Islamists wish

to construe such criticisms as illegitimate, as hate crimes against Muslims, and to suppress them, or preferably convince the public and the government to suppress them.

Western Islamists rely on Western concepts of cultural relativity, cultural equivalence, multiculturalism, diversity, and tolerance for acceptance of the idea of Islamophobia. Islamists thus strive to impose certain features of sharia law on public life and governance in the United States and Canada. This effort is consistent with Islamists' view of Islam as a total way of life, to be established as government principle and law as much as possible. The First Amendment in the United States and the Fundamental Rights in Canada expressly forbid the government from imposing or establishing a religion. This basic understanding of North American political culture is known as the separation of church and state. This principle is rejected by Islamists, for whom only an Islamic state is legitimate. The concept of Islamophobia is an example of stealth imposition of sharia law on North American society. And the concept has gone a long way toward making criticism of Islamic practices appear illegitimate. The Parliament of Canada has just passed a motion condemning Islamophobia.[3] How long will be it until criticism of Islam becomes illegal?

However, criticism of Islam is not the only speech that Islamists want outlawed and suppressed. Islamists cannot abide any positive reference to Israel, any pro-Zionism sentiment, any defence of the existence of Israel. The reason for this is well known: under sharia law, any territory once governed by Muslims becomes Islamic waqf, or religious endowment, in perpetuity, forever, and this cannot ever be changed. Thus the existence of Israel is regarded as illegitimate by Islamists. But it is not just Israel; in the eyes of Islamists, Jews do not "know their place," which in sharia law is fourth class dhimma citizenship, below women and slaves, as long as Jews pay the heavy tax so as not to be murdered. Islamists have therefore launched major programs in the West to attack Israel, and strive to block any pro-Israel response. Silencing the Jewish national liberation movement, Zionism, is a primary goal of Islamists in colleges and universities.

On the extreme left, social justice warriors (SJWs), some college students and some professors, have nominated themselves as champions of the oppressed, the subaltern, and all victims of our society and culture. They stand vigilant against racism toward people of colour, against sexism toward females, against homophobia, against bigotry toward non-dual sexuality, against the poverty of the poor, against Islamophobia, and, uniquely, against oppression of the Palestinians by Israel. This could all be admirable, if it were not taken to the opposite extreme, with "social justice" used to justify anti-white racism, anti-male sexism, anti-straight bias, anti-traditional sexuality, classism against the well-off, and anti-Semitism. But it is not just the bigotry against the so-called oppressors that is the problem; it is the means of pressing that bigotry home: mob rule to silence opinion that SJWs deem to contradict their own views. To rationalize their tactics of disruption and physical attack, they claim that expressing ideas that they disagree with is a violent act, similar to physical attack. SJWs see no virtue in diversity of opinion, for they think that only their opinion could possibly be correct, and views different from theirs are by necessity incorrect, violent, and destructive: racist, sexist, and phobic. Brutalist disruption and attack become treasured weapons in enforcing SJW morality.

The list of joint Islamist and SJW attacks on free speech is too long and well known to review in detail here. From student rioting at Concordia University blocking the speech of former (and current) Prime Minister of Israel Benjamin Netanyahu[4], to the shouting down of Israeli Ambassador to the U.S. Michael Oren at the University of California, Irvine[5], to the disruption of the speech of Israeli Ambassador to the UN Danny Danon at Columbia University[6], to the shout down of Jerusalem mayor Nir Barkat at San Francisco State University[7], to the student disruption of law professor & Jewish studies specialist Moshe Halbertal at the University of Minnesota[8], throughout the Western world, Israeli speakers or speakers supporting Israel have been disrupted, shouted down, forced to cancel talks, or been directly attacked. But Israel is only one topic that offends Islamists and SJWs.

The proposed appearance at University of California, Berkeley, of Milos Yiannopoulos, a critic of feminism, Black lives matter, and other social justice sacred cows, led to large riots in the streets, and substantial property damage. His appearance was cancelled by university authorities.[9] Heather Mac Donald, author of *The War on Cops*, a critique of Black Lives Matter, was shouted down and attacked at Claremont McKenna College, and later at U.C.L.A. for being a “white supremacist” and “anti-black fascist,” as some self-appointed “we, students of color” claimed.[10] Charles Murray’s invited speech at Middlebury College was shouted down, and he and his faculty sponsor, Allison Stanger, were attacked by a SJ student mob and injured. In these and many other such mob actions, college and university administrations have been complicit, by cancelling talks, ordering security to stand down during riots, and/or refusing to punish disrupters, rioters, and attackers.[11] Many members of college and university administrations, along with many members of faculty, themselves believe in social justice ideology, and are enthusiastic to enforce that ideology on their institutions, as we have seen in the recent case of Lindsay Shepherd’s castigation.[12] Others would rather defer to powerful political movements than risk opposition and disruption. What is clear is that college and university administrations are not the solution to the destruction of free speech.[13] Will no one defend free speech?

Colleges and universities do not defend free speech because they do not believe in diversity of opinion. The majority of university professors and administrators self-identify as leftists.[14] The terminology of this discussion can be misleading. For example, “liberal” and “progressive” are often used interchangeably, but progressive views in favor of large scale government intervention, of equality at the expense of liberty, and of collectivities and categories as opposed to individuals are the opposite of classic liberalism. Most professors and administrators today would probably accept the designation “progressive.” The percentage of progressives would be higher in East and West Coast elite universities, and much higher in the social sciences and humanities. Today’s progressive professors favor championing victims by supporting reverse sexism, reverse racism, and anti-Semitic anti-Zionism. These positions are seen by progressives as righteous, and contrary views are seen as evil: racist, sexist, colonialist, hate crimes. Such evil views are to be avoided and suppressed, not to be encouraged and discussed. Progressives believe that free speech applies to only their righteous speech; sexist, racist, colonialist speech is fascism to which free speech should not apply.

Unfortunately, the Canadian Government has followed the lead of those who wish to silence opinion not sufficiently “progressive.” Parliament has passed motion M-103 condemning “Islamophobia,” a non-existent mental condition[15], the result of which is a likely chilling of legitimate criticism of Islam. As well, Parliament is considering Bill C-16, which would encode in law rights of gender identity and expression, restricting the expression of others on these matters.[16] “The enactment also amends the Criminal Code to extend the protection against hate propaganda set out in that Act to any section of the public that is distinguished by gender identity or expression and to clearly set out that evidence that an offence was motivated by bias, prejudice or hate based on gender identity or expression.”[17] Under this kind of legislation, any dissenting opinion becomes “hate propaganda.” Parliament has thus fallen into line with Canada’s so-called Human Rights Commissions and Tribunals in silencing unpopular opinions.[18]

In contrast, many American state legislatures, the latest count being twenty, have either proposed, are considering, or have passed bills to protect free speech on college and university campuses.[19] The measures vary from bill to bill, but many include rules such as banning university speech codes which

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restrict free speech, or have regulations which limit free speech to certain zones on campus. Another element in some bills is banning the cancellation of speeches, and prescribing serious punishment—suspension, expulsion, and legal action—for those who interfere with the free speech of others. How ironic, that free speech, imagined as a defence against government oppression, is being attacked by the educational institutions meant to protect and advance it, and it is only the governments who are acting to defend free speech.

- [1] https://www.law.cornell.edu/constitution/first_amendment
- [2] <http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/Const/page-15.html>
- [3] <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/m-103-islamophobia-motion-vote-1.4038016>
- [4] <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal-protesters-force-cancellation-of-netanyahu-speech-1.312529>
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- [14] <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2017/02/27/research-confirms-professors-lean-left-questions-assumptions-about-what-means>
- [15] <https://globalnews.ca/news/3330776/anti-islamophobia-motion-m-103-approved/>
- [16] <https://openparliament.ca/bills/42-1/C-16/>
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- [18] <http://www.chrc-ccdp.gc.ca/en>
<http://www.lawnow.org/whatecott-case-balancing-free-speech-social-harmony/>
- [19] <http://www.chronicle.com/article/The-States-Where-Campus/240073>

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FREE SPEECH: A CRUCIAL PART OF A UNIVERSITY'S PURPOSE

Joanne Boucher

On Sept. 8, Annette Trimbee, president and vice-chancellor of the University of Winnipeg, released a statement posted on the U of W's website under the heading "Statement on Diversity." This aims to be an affirmation of the university's "deep commitment to valuing and protecting the diversity of people who form our campus community."

The impetus for this letter is said to be “recent events in Charlottesville and elsewhere, including disturbing graffiti in Winnipeg neighbourhoods,” that “illustrate that collectively, we must remain vigilant when confronted with racism, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, xenophobia and discrimination of any kind.”

This seems uncontroversial as a simple articulation of the university’s commitment to inclusivity and fairness. However, in my view, Trimbee stumbles into problematic territory as she continues her remarks: “We must guard against groups that seek to use freedom of speech on campuses as a defence to target people and communities because of race, religion, disability, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, nationality, gender, sexual orientation and immigrant status.”

How are we to understand this extremely general claim? Is there a specific problem at the U of W the president is addressing? Can Trimbee point to one example of “groups seeking to use freedom of speech on campus” to target the broadly named groups? Are there any reports of groups who have attempted to use the cover of free speech to target the long list of people who may potentially be targeted (which seems to include virtually all of the population)? Further, what does the broad term “target” mean? Does “target” mean to question the beliefs, traditions, and norms of particular “races,” “religions” or “nationalities”?

On a university campus, there is and should be ongoing critique and debate about all types of ideas, social movements, cultural, artistic and scientific issues. Who is to determine the legitimate parameters of discussion and criticism? Is any or all criticism, for example, of established religions or Canada’s immigration policy to be off-limits? Is the presentation of scientific research on the origins of and character of differences between the sexes, or homosexuality and transgenderism, to be allowed? Does criticism of the policies of the government of the Buddhist-majority country of Myanmar as regards its Muslim population constitute targeting a nationality? Indeed, as is commonplace in the study of politics, is the critique of nationalism itself acceptable? Is Darwin’s theory of evolution, which deeply offends many religions, to be taboo?

Short of any specifics and direct examples, Trimbee’s statement, in my view, is simply an instance of moral grandstanding. It conflates events in the United States and the appearance of some hateful graffiti in Winnipeg as some sort of imminent danger to the university community.

As a member of the faculty at the U of W, what I find most unsettling about the remarks is the blithe treatment of the notion of freedom of speech. The one mention of freedom of speech is that it may operate as a potential cover for bad speech. Academic freedom is the prime principle of any university, as it is the basis on which we conduct our work. It allows for free, open and unimpeded intellectual inquiry. It should be stressed that it is diversity of thought as well as a diversity of identities to which we should aspire.

As a professor who studies and teaches political theory, I am constantly reminded of how precious the principle of freedom of thought and a diversity of views is. Human history is littered with examples of those who have fallen afoul of myriad self-appointed arbiters of good, true and correct ideas: popes, priests, imams, rabbis, mobs, star chambers, town councils and, yes, university administrators who take it upon themselves to dictate the terms and conditions of good speech and to punish those who dare disagree.

It must also be said that anyone who has thought about this issue seriously recognizes that freedom of speech cannot be an absolute and unquestioned principle. There will always be limits to it. Our right to pursue ideas freely must certainly be accompanied by a sense of responsibility and seriousness as to the potential consequences of speech. But those limits must be carefully considered and drawn.

The statement fails to acknowledge the complexity of the issue under discussion. In its rush to assert the principle of diversity, it fails to mention that open inquiry that depends upon free speech is, and must continue to be, the bedrock of university life.

It also sidesteps the problem that the principle of diversity is sometimes problematic. The aspirations of different groups are not always in harmony. National groups, ethnic groups and religious groups, to name but a few, are often in conflict. A cursory glance at the daily news can tell us this. Whose aspirations and rights are to take precedence in discussions over those of others?

Unimpeded and open debate is the best way to sort out these issues. General directives from on high should not be a substitute for the real work of disputation and discussion of these complicated questions. It is commendable that the university is committed to diversity, but such a commitment is incomplete without an equally powerful commitment to the principle of free speech.

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