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What's Happening on College Campuses?

Political Correctness Is the Rage

The initials P.C. came into our language in the 1980s to mean Personal Computer. But in the 1990s, P.C. stands for Politically Correct, which represents a new wave of intolerance that is sweeping the college campuses. Organizations that usually champion unrestricted free speech are strangely silent.

P.C. means that students and faculty on university campuses must speak only "politically correct" opinions about culture, history, gender, race, nation, and lifestyle. P.C. is shorthand for the demand on many college campuses to censor out knowledge of Western civilization, to prohibit speech that may be considered offensive to certain identifiable groups, and to impose penalties on deviationists as severe as endless hearings, appeals, lawsuits, social harassment, ostracism, and expulsion.

The campus radicals of the 1960s have risen in the academic hierarchy and now are safe in tenured positions. For the last 20 years, they have been inserting courses that advance their ideology into the university curriculum, but they no longer are satisfied with this. They now demand that courses promoting their own narrow world view be mandated for *all* students. Their battle cries are "multiculturalism" and "cultural diversity," but these slogans are lies; they are just code words for attacks on Western civilization and on all the great books written by dead white European males (DWEMs).

The tenured radicals no longer have to take to the streets; they control the university administration, policies, and curriculum, and they are trying to coerce others to conform. These new intolerant P.C. censors attack not only the opinions of those who disagree with them, but the right to disagree.

These "tenured radicals" claim that their goal is to eliminate prejudice, but the "prejudice" they want to eliminate is the notion that Western civilization should occupy a central place in education. It's not sufficient that students learn about other civilizations and are required to refrain from insulting various minorities; students and faculty are required to "affirm" the presence and value of various minorities and activist groups by studying their writings alongside those of Aristotle, Shakespeare and Locke.

The first major victory of this movement was in the late 1980s when Stanford University expunged from its curriculum its traditional course in Western civilization. Homer,

Shakespeare and Dante were cast into outer darkness, and invited to the table instead were obscure Hispanic and black essayists, Navajo sages, Asian poets, and feminist ideologues. More recently, universities from coast to coast have been requiring courses that are colloquially called "Oppression Studies" or "Racism 101."

Newsweek magazine published a cover story on December 24, 1990 called "Thought Police" and subtitled "Watch What You Say: There's a 'Politically Correct' Way to Talk about Race, Sex and Ideas." Labeling P.C. "a totalitarian philosophy," *Newsweek* stated that, "politically, P.C. is Marxist in origin, in the broad sense of attempting to redistribute power from the privileged class (white males) to the oppressed masses."

Even the generally liberal *New York* magazine labeled P.C. "demagogic and fanatical" and said it includes "multiculturalists, feminists, radical homosexuals, Marxists, and New Historicists. What unites them is their conviction that Western culture and American society are thoroughly and hopelessly racist, sexist, oppressive." Called "Are You Politically Correct?", this article in the January 21, 1991 issue, lashed out at the intolerance of P.C.-ness, and even illustrated the article with pictures of Nazis burning books in the 1930s and the Red Chinese parading their political criminals in dunce caps during the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s. *New York* magazine concluded: "Though much of the country subsequently rejected the political vision of the sixties, it has triumphed at the universities."

What unites all these P. C. activists is their assertion that Western culture and American society are thoroughly (not just occasionally) racist, sexist and oppressive. The heart of the P.C. argument is that Western culture is inherently evil, that the doctrine of individual liberty is itself oppressive, and that the entire world is one big conspiracy against women.

Everything is Political under P.C.

Under a Political Correctness regime, political content is the most important thing about everything; indeed, everything must be seen as political. For example, a teacher of a freshman composition course at the University of Michigan wrote that he teaches writing skills "in connection to social and political contexts," and so "all of the readings I have selected focus on

Latin America, with the emphasis on the U.S. Government's usually detrimental role in Latin American politics."

Under P.C., joking is not allowed; everything is not only political but very serious. At the University of Wisconsin in Madison, the student-conduct code bans "discriminatory comments" in the form of "name calling, racial slurs, or 'jokes.'" The University of Connecticut issued a proclamation banning "inappropriately directed laughter" and "conspicuous exclusion of students from conversations."

One of the most destructive aspects of P.C. is called Deconstructionism -- the notion that no one "text" (or book) is superior to another and that there is no such thing as intrinsic merit. Deconstructionism says that, if you make any judgment as to the quality of a work, then you are not being an intellectual egalitarian. P.C. professors of literature do not attempt to teach students what authors or poets were trying to say, but instead teach that the printed word is anything the reader wants it to mean.

Deconstructionism is a rhetorical device to prevent any work of literature from being identified as "great," or a "classic," or one that students ought to read in order to be educated. If a professor refers to a book as a "classic," the P.C. Thought Patrol will immediately charge that the use of this word makes them feel "oppressed."

Another radical P.C. notion is "gender feminism," which means that "male power" is evil and should be repudiated, along with "patriarchal books" like the Bible and sexist subjects like traditional history with its emphasis on great men and great deeds. For example, Professor Alison Jaggar at the University of Cincinnati, head of the American Philosophical Association's Committee on the Status of Women in Philosophy, sees the family as "a cornerstone of women's oppression." She would like to abolish the family altogether and create a society where, with the aid of technology, the entire human reproductive process would be gender neutral.

The radical feminists are fond of quoting the French feminist Simone de Beauvoir, who said, "No woman should be authorized to stay at home and raise children . . . precisely because if there is such a choice, too many women will make that one."

Professors who oppose P.C. have their own organization called the National Association of Scholars, based in Princeton, New Jersey, which is "committed to rational discourse as the foundation of academic life." The president, Stephen Balch, says that Western civilization has earned its place at the center of the university curriculum because it is responsible for the single most compelling idea in human history -- individual liberty.

But P.C. opposes the very idea of individual liberty. At the University of Pennsylvania, a student on the university's "diversity education" planning committee wrote a memo mentioning her "deep regard for the individual and desire to protect the freedoms of all members of society." A university bureaucrat underlined the word "individual," commenting, "This is a 'red flag' phrase today, which is considered by many to be racist. Arguments that champion the individual over the group ultimately privilege the 'individuals' belonging to the largest or dominant group."

P.C. Is Looney and Intolerant

John Leo, who has written extensively about Political Correctness in *U.S. News & World Report*, says that "P.C.-ness now functions on campus as a militant religion, determined to sniff out heresy and ban the speech of potential heretics, liberals and conservatives alike. One primary mission of the new ayatollahs is to see that the issue of affirmative action is not debated on campus. Teachers who bring it up are harassed as racist, and student editors who print doubts on the issue are relieved of duties or suspended."

Leo summarizes the subject content of P.C. like this: "Affirmative action, busing, gay rights, women's studies, the PLO, animal rights, bilingualism, the self-segregation of blacks on campus, and censorship in the pursuit of tolerance are all politically correct. The following are all non-P.C.: The SAT, doubts about abortion, Catholics, wearing fur, any emphasis on standards of excellence, and any suggestion that gender and ethnicity might not be the most overwhelmingly important issues of the modern era."

Here are just a few examples of how the P.C. Thought Police are terrorizing faculty and students on university campuses:

* Linda Chavez, a former Reagan Administration official, was invited to give the 1990 commencement address at the University of Northern Colorado. School officials naively thought that a successful female Hispanic would be welcomed by the "cultural diversity" movement on campus. But the P.C. commissars swung into action against Chavez because she opposes affirmative action and thinks Hispanic immigrants should learn English as quickly as possible. Those views are Politically Incorrect on campus. Her opponents forced the college president to apologize to them and to disinvite her. Linda Chavez said afterwards, "The promoters of cultural diversity tell us that theirs is an ideology of inclusion. But the politics of cultural diversity as they are practiced on campus today have very little to do with inclusion or diversity."

* When I debated Sarah Weddington at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor in March 1991, the students needed the sponsorship of an academic department in order to schedule the debate in a big auditorium, so they asked the Women's Studies Department. That department refused because the faculty did not believe that my anti-feminist views should be spoken on the campus -- even though the format was a debate! The students had to find another department with more tolerant attitudes in order to go forward with the program.

* At the University of Texas at Austin, the English faculty tried to politicize the required freshman English composition course by making mandatory a new text called *Racism and Sexism: An Integrated Study* by Paula S. Rothenberg. Previously, instructors had been free to assign readings on a broad range of topics because the purpose of the course is to train students how to write. Professor Alan Gribben, one of the few faculty members who objected to this indoctrination, said that the course ought to be called "Oppression Studies."

* At Harvard University, Professor Stephan Thernstrom, a liberal and noted scholar of the history of race relations, was attacked by some students for using the word "Indians" instead of "Native Americans," and for using the term "Oriental religion." He was accused of being a racist, hounded

and harassed, until he finally gave up teaching his course altogether because he could not face the continued attacks, many of them anonymous.

* At San Francisco State University, 30 students disrupted the first week of a course in black politics by Professor Robert Smith (who is black) because the course was listed in the catalogue under Political Science rather than Black Studies.

* At New York University Law School, students refused to participate in a moot-court case involving a hypothetical divorced lesbian mother trying to win custody of her child because arguing the con side, they said, would be "hurtful to a group of people and thus hurtful to all of us." Under P.C., cases have only one politically correct side.

* At Smith College, the Office of Student Affairs issued a handout listing ten different kinds of "oppression" that must be avoided. In addition to racism and sexism, these included "ableism: oppression of the differently abled, by the temporarily able" (in order to avoid the terms disabled or handicapped which, according to P.C., imply inferiority); "ageism: oppression of the young and old by young adults and the middle-aged"; "classism: oppression of the working-class and non-propertied, by the upper-class and middle-class"; "ethnocentrism: oppression of cultures other than the dominant one"; "heterosexism: oppression of those of sexual orientations other than heterosexual; this can take place by not acknowledging their existence"; and "lookism: construction of a standard for beauty/attractiveness." *Newsweek* explained that, under P.C., "it's not sufficient to avoid discriminating against unattractive people; you must suppress the impulse to notice the difference."

Why University Standards Are So Low

Since the publication and huge sale of *The Closing of the American Mind* by Allan Bloom in 1987, a new genre of books has appeared describing the deplorable situation on university campuses. These books are quite a shock to those who attended college some years ago, or even as recently as ten years ago.

You may have suspected that academic standards of American universities have declined, but you won't know how low unless you've read *ProfScam* by Charles J. Sykes, published in 1989 and fully corroborated since then. This book is a devastating indictment of our universities, which the author calls vast citadels of waste, ruled with an iron hand by an oligarchy of arrogant tenured professors who are overpaid and underworked.

According to *ProfScam*, the collapse of the university system is due to the cutthroat control exercised by the tenured professors, who control everything that matters. University presidents are good only for fundraising, public relations, and dealing with protesters. The tenured professors have set up a caste system in which they are accountable to no one, while they ruthlessly use thought control to silence original thinkers, dissenters, and anyone who is a good teacher.

They have made the academic culture actively hostile to teaching. The author gives example after example of major universities denying tenure to professors who were good teachers. Tenured university professors have almost totally abandoned the teaching of undergraduates, leaving that function largely in the hands of an ill-trained, ill-paid, and

bitter academic underclass of untenured instructors and graduate students called T.A.s (teaching assistants). A large percentage of T.A.s are foreigners who cannot speak intelligible English.

The University of California at Berkeley allegedly offers 8,100 courses, but a majority of all freshmen are crammed into 60 lower division courses (that's less than 1 percent) which are taught mostly by T.A.s. Between 1952 and 1974, the number of professors at Harvard grew seven times faster than the number of undergraduates, but the proportion of courses open to undergraduates declined by 28 percent.

The professors assert that their flight from the task of teaching is justified by their "research" and publication of articles, but the overwhelming majority of that research has no social or academic value except as a line on a resume. It fills libraries with unread material written in what the author calls "profspeak": incomprehensible and pompous verbiage about the obscure and the trivial.

At major universities, the average tenured professor teaches only six hours a week. However, the count is usually taken in the fall semester and professors may teach only three hours a week in the spring. Up to a third of tenured professors don't teach at all. The teaching load of many tenured professors consists of one or two small seminars that require little if any preparation and are mostly just rap sessions with students.

The university course catalogue is often a fraud because up to half of the courses listed are not actually offered. For example, at Harvard in the field of American history, out of 44 courses listed, only 10 were offered in the fall of 1986 and only one of those was taught by a tenured professor.

The university catalogue is loaded with more and more courses of less and less importance, ignoring the needs and wants of the paying students and serving only the narrow, selfish career preferences of the tenured professors.

Universities also offer a plethora of junk courses, contemptuously referred to by students as "guts" (slang for a course that can be passed with no more preparation than gut instinct). Guts at major universities include (and these are titles of courses actually offered): Anthropology of Play, Socio-Psychological Aspects of Clothing, Music Video 454, Sport and Political Ideology, Recreation and Leisure, Pocket Billiards, and Rock 'n Roll Is Here To Stay.

Sykes' second book, *The Hollow Men: Politics and Corruption in Higher Education* (1990), describes the politicization not only of the professors but of the courses themselves. He details how race, gender and class have been enshrined as the "looking glasses" through which all subject matter must be seen if one is to survive in academia. Sykes shows how colleges, in their attempt to welcome minorities and women, have gone overboard with institutionalized affirmative action, sensitivity training, and anti-free speech codes. Not only is it unfashionable to be a white male in the college world, but even to study about famous white males is suspect. Sykes says, "One must subscribe to the sacred if dogmatic trinity of Race, Class, and Gender" in order to prosper on campuses today.

In *Tenured Radicals* (1990), Roger Kimball discusses the radical politics on university campuses, but puts his main focus on the absurdity of what passes for scholarship on today's college campuses. He describes the rise of the "deconstructionist" movement, which, he says, is essentially a

scam perpetrated by academics in order to create more university teaching positions and endless possibilities for papers, symposiums and specialized classes. He shows how so-called scholarly analysis is tied in with radical politics and that many "scholarly" papers, with their erotic titles, resemble the latest Geraldo show.

Killing the Spirit: Higher Education in America (1990) by Page Smith criticizes disturbing trends in academia such as worthless research, a tenure system which he says is "comparable to ancient rites of human sacrifice," and the tendency of professors to disdain teaching. The book's main focus is on "the spiritual aridity of the American university."

The Book Wars (1990) by James Atlas is a short overview of universities today in simple, non-academic language. The author describes his shock at seeing the current curriculum at Harvard, his alma mater. He shows how works by minority authors are exalted and required, not because of any literary value, but because of their minority status, while "dead white European male" authors are avoided.

The Closing of the American Heart (1990) by Ronald H. Nash argues that the decline of moral and religious standards over the past 25 years has contributed to the collapse of the nation's educational standards. He thinks we can improve education only by a return to traditional values and character as the key to reforming the educational system. Both the mind and the heart need to be nourished, he says, and the current educational system is doing neither.

How College Students Are Cheated

The majority of college students today take five years to get through college, not four. This adds an additional 25 percent to the already horrendous cost of a college degree, and which certainly does not represent 25 percent more value. This added cost is conveniently overlooked in all those newspaper stories about "tuition going up 10 percent this year."

A few students take five years for legitimate reasons, such as working a fulltime job. But the principal reason why the majority are slowed down is, as they tell me, "it takes that long to get the courses we need to graduate." Only a limited number of sections of the really substantive college courses are available at most colleges, so students must participate in a lottery to get into them. When a student "wins" access to only a couple of courses in a year that advance him toward his degree, he is forced to take some of the many courses that are worthless, trivial, or propaganda.

At a well-known northeastern private college (one of the dozens of campuses I've lectured on over the last couple of years), I asked the students to give me details on some worthless courses. I'm not going to name the college because it is not unique; most colleges have the same problem.

The 300-level courses necessary for graduation with a major in English are scarce, and many courses that are available have been changed to permit the professor to turn the course into political propaganda. For example, the course called "Studies in Poetry" was this year devoted to "erotic poetry," with the professor projecting base sexual innuendoes onto the classic works of everybody from Shakespeare to C. S. Lewis.

The Economics department offers courses on Marxism, Third World development, imperialism, health care, and

urban resource allocation, but no course is devoted to the study of Adam Smith, Milton Friedman, or Joseph Schumpeter. A course is offered on "Money in American Culture," but on the first day of class, the professor tells the students that he has never taken a course in economics.

See if you can guess which department offers a course in "Sport and Society." The answer is the Geography department, which also offers "Race Relations in America" and "The Geography of Gender."

History majors can acquire history credits by taking such courses as "Private Life in Pre-Industrial Europe" (which focuses on medieval hetero- and homosexuality) or "Reformation Europe" (which excludes dead white males such as Luther and Calvin, and instead studies 16th century lesbian nuns and transvestites). The college has a course in African studies called "Great Books and Classics of the Non-Western World: Africa and the Black Diaspora," but not a single course on the great books of Western civilization.

In Political Science, many of the introductory courses are dominated by the race-gender-class approach. Courses in this department include "Seminar in Feminist Theory, Political Thought and Policy Issues," "Gender and Development," and "Seminar in Feminist Theories/Education."

Religion courses include "Feminism and Theology," "Mysticism and Techniques of Spiritual Liberation" (which includes study of "symbolism of experiences of ecstasy and automonym such as shamanism, Yoga, and Zen"), and "Ethical Issues" (described as "a study of ethical issues involved in politics, war and violence, economics, ecology, abortion, and advances in medical science").

Sociology course titles include "Sex, Gender, and Society," "Race and Ethnicity," and "Sociology of Sociability" (described as an exploration of "motivations, rituals, dynamics, and functions of non-task oriented groupings, such as dinner parties, dances, fiestas, cocktail parties, and similar gatherings").

The most politicized department is Women's Studies. It offers courses called "Construction of Gender" and "Seminar in Women's Studies" (devoted in the current year to the "history and politics of the Body," which is described as "the site of diverse inscriptions and contestations both historically and cross-culturally").

After spending tens of thousands of education dollars, generously provided by their parents or the taxpayers, or both, students wonder why they find it hard to find a good job after graduation. Students, parents and taxpayers have all been cheated. The solution is certainly *not* to put more taxpayers' dollars into the hands of the college administrators.

Phyllis Schlafly has lectured or debated on hundreds of college and university campuses over the last fifteen years. She appears on campuses more than any other conservative leader, where she draws large audiences of hundreds and even thousands of students. Her subjects include all aspects of feminism, national defense, and education.

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