

Minority history deserves more, not less

Ethnic studies, as with racial or social minority groups in general, face a plethora of difficulties at the University.

Those difficulties, surfacing with the denial of tenure for a University specialist in Afro-American, urban and Jewish history, should not prevent a renewed commitment to minority studies.

But they remain problems nonetheless.

First among them may be that such studies, as with the whole corpus of liberal arts, do not represent an educational experience that converts readily into employability. The new "pragmatism" of U.S. academic managers seeks to ease public pressures and student fears by emphasizing the job-preparation aspects of educational institutions—sort of putting the books where the bucks are.

This training of students for work seems to require a concomitant back-pedaling on the process of training them to think, to examine values, to

become conscious of the dynamics and consequences not only of the subjects they study, but the way they study them. The problem of showing tangible results in these latter endeavors remains the soft underbelly of contemporary American education.

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Second, minority groups defy much of the traditional methodology of historical research and representation. Often the persons and groups who are making history—peasants, labor rebels, racial or ethnic minorities are not the ones writing history.

Historical documentation devolves from the literate middle and upper classes of ethnic majorities. Historical interpretations come from the winners, the dominant groups. Both of these tendencies frequently force minorities to suffer either omission from much of the historical record or the ascription of

motives, aims and values that were not theirs at all.

Third, by their lesser numbers—implicit in the term applied to them—minorities often lack the power to persuade. If enrollment falters, especially in a non-pragmatic liberal arts area like ethnic history, the institutional scrutiny becomes keen and fierce.

Together, these factors decrease the visibility of minorities and their histories, thus completing the vicious circle of inattention.

But, sooner or later invisible social matters tend to become visible, in such forms as the civil rights movement or the illegal alien-farm labor issue. A university that leaves its client-students unprepared to understand these matters has failed to provide the opportunity for an intelligent response to them.

The University will not meet its responsibility by waiting for circumstances to demand or forge an ethnic studies program; it is obliged to make such a program happen and break the pattern

of low emphasis-low response.

But that won't occur unless the uncertain, temporary status of the ethnic-studies program, its courses and faculty are transformed into a stable, well-appointed operation.

That means the history department should conduct a patient, thorough search for a tenure-track position in labor, ethnic and minority history, not a brief effort like the one now being made. Bringing in a one-year visiting professor or proposing to fall back on a current faculty member to teach the courses seems unlikely to create the stability needed to make the program more attractive.

Library resources on various minority and ethnic histories also need to be augmented and keyed toward an enriched course offering.

Only by institutionalizing the attention to ethnic studies can the University render visible the invisible and so make permanent that which has been woefully transient.

Reject Woods

A deadlock in the Oregon Senate Environment and Energy Committee over appointment of Kelly Woods as director of the state Energy Department needs to be turned into an outright rejection.

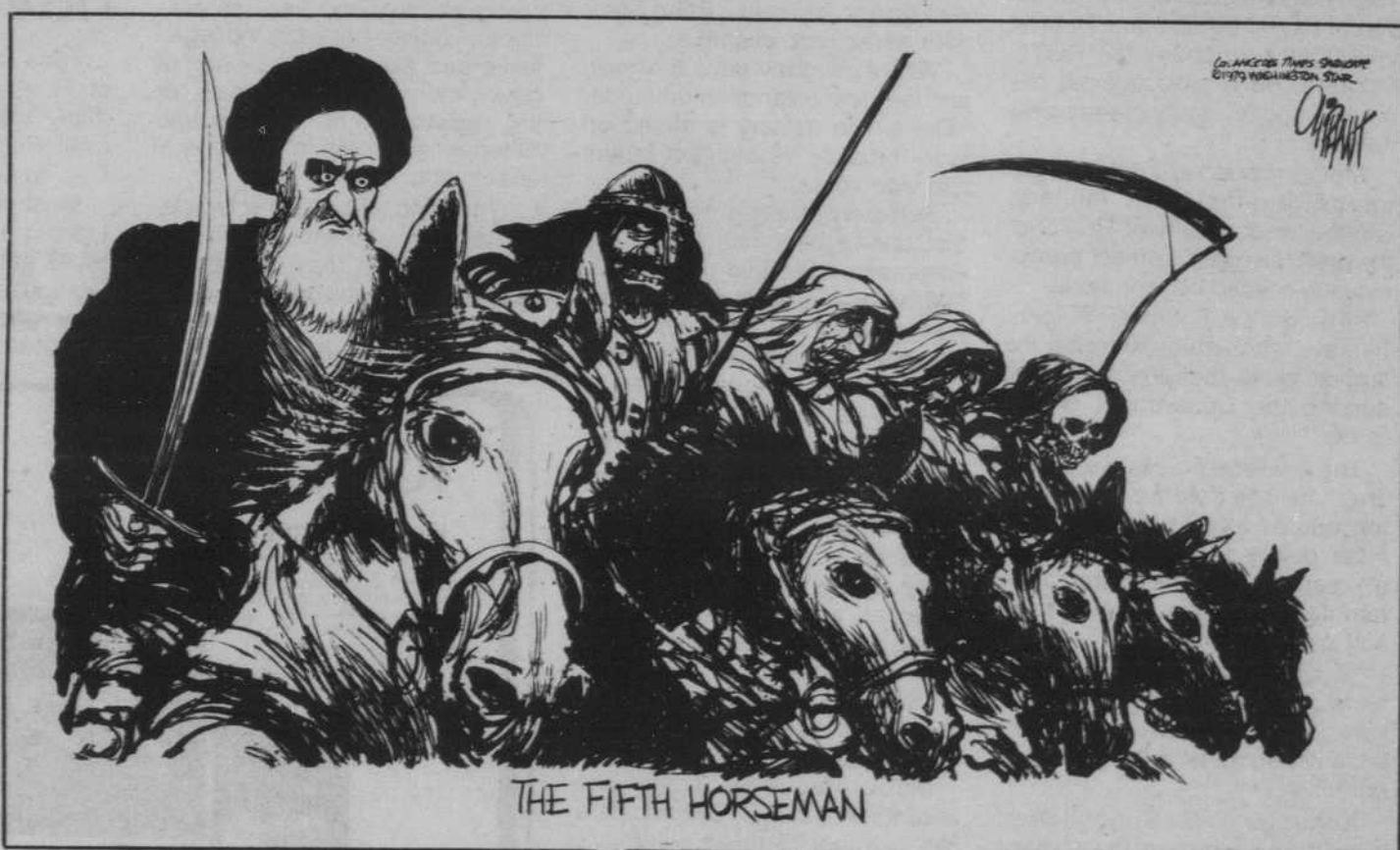
Woods, former staff director of the state Energy Facility Siting Council and long-time General Electric employee, represents a pro-nuclear power attitude that Oregon would best do without.

General Electric and its competitors for the profitable contracts available in the domestic nuclear-power field have yet to develop a safe disposal system for the highly radioactive waste produced by the facilities they build, despite 20 years of telling the U.S. government and public that such a disposal system was "just around the corner."

The senate committee, which split 4-4 in a vote on Woods last Thursday after hearing voluminous testimony against his appointment, will take up the issue again when Sen. John Powell, D-Halsey, recovers from an illness that kept him away from the vote. If Woods' nomination gets out of committee, it will undoubtedly—and rightfully—face more opposition on the senate floor.

Oregon needs an energy leadership that places conservation and use of safe, innovative and non-nuclear forms of power generation above risky technology.

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'Lowest marks'

Hats off to the UO Women's Basketball team. What a resounding victory!

Lowest marks to the Daily Emerald's sparse reporting of the event the next morning. This cursory treatment provides a clear example of what is meant when we talk about deep-rooted sexism. The Emerald's coverage reveals the lowest consciousness imaginable.

Certainly, there might have been important world events, justifiably displacing the women's achievement from Thursday morning's front page. Certainly a local tavern's "Best Butt Contest" was not one of them. Editorial Staff: Where is your head at?

This game is a landmark event in the women's program and demonstrates very well the enthusiasm of the Eugene

community. Bev, Suzanne, Julie, Kerry, Debby, Claudia and company, we cheer you and support you, along with thousands more. Maybe someday even the Emerald will get its head out of where it's at now.

Ronne Blanton
junior, biology
Melanie Rice
sophomore, biology
Carol Queen
junior, CSPA

'Did not flatter'

I am writing this in response to the man who "wolf whistled" upon introduction of the Oregon women's basketball team Wednesday night at the Oregon-Korean game.

Your behavior was disrespectful and obnoxious. It did not in any way flatter the competent athletes that I assume you came to support.

If your reason for being there was to leer at the players like they were pieces of meat then I, and I am sure the majority of others, would prefer that you stay at home and drool over your rear ends and legs in your Penthouses and Playboys. I just don't feel that the team needs your kind of support.

Sylvia Worrix
clerk, library

Student loan blues

On Feb. 1, the ODE reported that the overall default rate of National Direct Student Loans is rising.

The Carter Administration has announced that universities may lose NDSL funding unless they tighten up their collection activities.

The Carter Administration, the college business offices and the numerous collection agencies that pressure defaulting loan reci-

ipients must accept that not all graduating students find gainful employment. Sometimes the nine-month grace period allowed between school and repayment just isn't enough.

Increasing the use of vigorous collection tactics will not result in payment from someone who is unemployed or without sufficient resources. The likelihood of receiving repeated phone calls from a collector may only discourage former students from informing the college of their whereabouts.

Many universities already resort to the self-defeating policy of withholding transcripts for a non-payment of student loans, even when the records are needed to help someone get a job.

A workable repayment arrangement that will allow for installments to be determined according to income is desperately needed. The program's current status indicates that changes

must be made. The changes should realistically address the problems of the unemployed—not limited opportunities by making education financially unattainable for others.

Students who intentionally skip out on their loans are in the minority. It should not be implied that all those in default are among them.

Suzanne Bonamici
junior, Journalism

'Ass'inine editing

In reporting the OUTSTANDING Oregon women's basketball team victory over the South Koreans, the Emerald gave the event last page coverage. However, over half the front page consisted of a poorly developed picture of an "ass"inine Butt contest held at a local tavern. It is quite obvious where your head is at.

Ronald Franklin
graduate, education

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