

Sex content should be told to students

In the past few months, virtually every student on this campus has had the experience of perusing the Schedule of Classes.

Many undoubtedly noticed the column on the right-hand side of each page that lists "Notes" about each class, designed to help students pick their classes carefully.

Some classes require instructor approval. Some have a prerequisite course. Others may include an extra fee for enrollment. All of these notes are signified by initials or abbreviations.

Now imagine if all those classes contained another descriptive note: PG, R or NC-17.

Such a scenario may just come to pass at the public universities of Iowa, if current trends continue.

Instructors in three of Iowa's state universities have been ordered to provide warnings before showing films or videos that contain "explicit representations of human sexual acts." This comes in the wake of two recent incidents at the University of Iowa, which resulted in a storm of complaints from students, parents, alumni and legislators.

In the first of these incidents, students in a German-language class were shown the movie *Taxi zum Klo*, or *Taxi to the Bathroom*, which was billed as an erotic comedy and a landmark in gay filmmaking.

In the other incident, 160 students enrolled in an art seminar were shown an eight-minute video that contained three scenes, totaling about 15 seconds, of men engaging in oral sex.

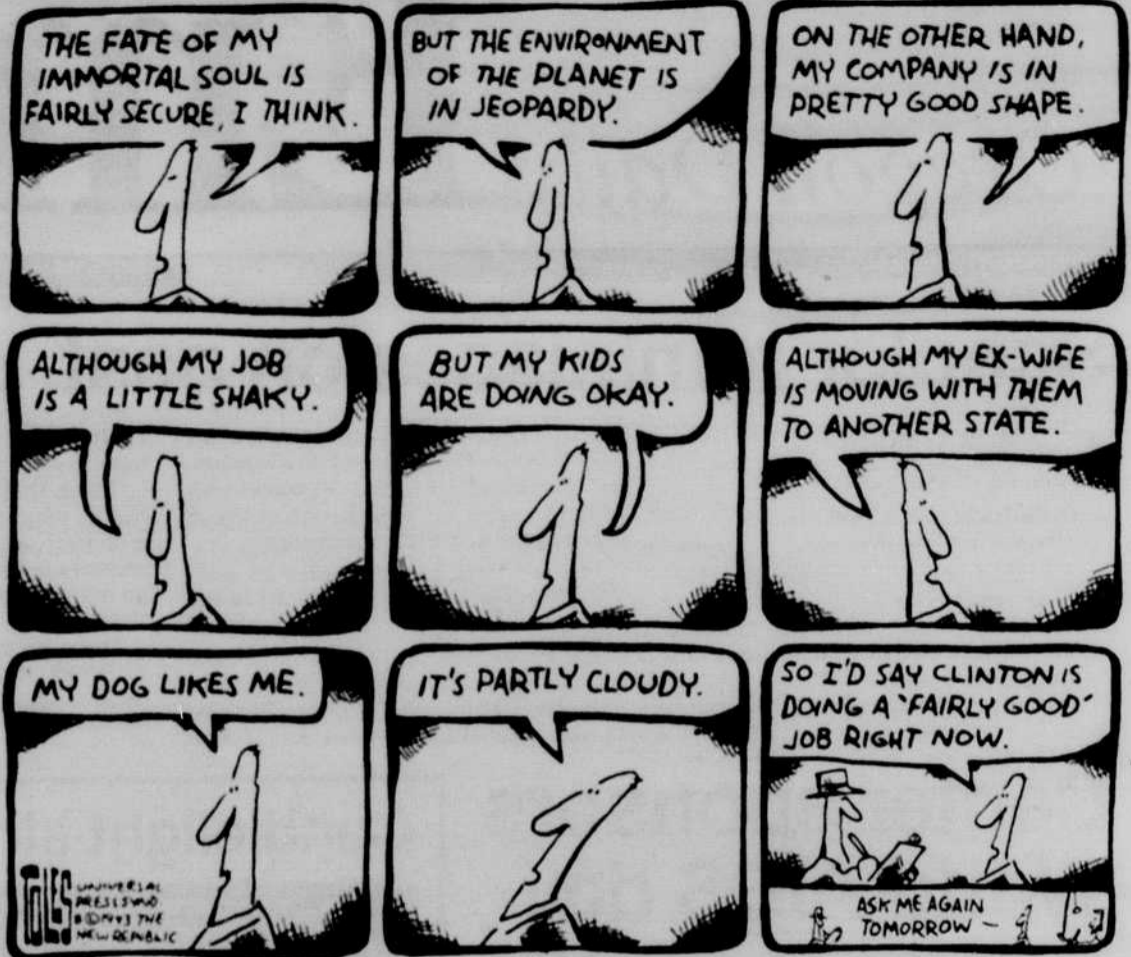
The immediate argument that was raised against the new policy, which so far only includes a verbal warning to be issued just before the display, was that it constituted a form of censorship — a hefty claim that simply isn't supported by the facts.

A policy can only be considered censorship if it restricts in some way a person's access to certain information. There was no attempt made to remove these films from the curriculum, or to edit out any of the so-called "offensive" parts. The only difference is the warning.

The effect of such a warning will be negligible because only a handful of people will pay any attention to it anyway. College students are not exactly the type of people to say, "You better not show me that. I don't think I can handle it."

The policy is aimed only at the relatively few students who are easily offended. It's just a courtesy.

If the warnings did end up scaring more moderately minded students away, however, that would be a shame. People need to be shocked from time to time. Students who are afraid to be shocked are essentially afraid to learn. Despite this, a university must be responsive to the desires of the students, and if some of them want to escape images that they find unsettling, then they should have that right.



COMMENTARY

Campus radio is tuned into students

By James Pierson

As the debate rages about KWVA and its sound, I have to say I've yet to hear anything that isn't some clever, off-the-cuff, "this will impress everyone" stab based solely from the perspective of one or two people who want to hear more of what they like from their campus station.

Phillip Abraham's letters were quite on the ball with regard to what it takes to appeal to his audience of friends; however, to suggest that KWVA start doing what it has been doing all along is a puzzler. There's a great deal more to what defines the sound of a radio station than the space of this column would permit; however, as anyone knows me will confirm, I'm willing to talk at length with anyone who wants to know anything about radio.

In nearly 10 years of broadcast, I've learned (among other things) that if a station wants to appeal to the largest group of listeners possible, that station should plug into a country and western, news-talk, classic rock or classical format, which are pretty much enjoying thorough coverage from commercial stations. Anything else is likely to be block-programmed into obscurity, or pretty specialized in its approach to its sound.

KWVA has undertaken the ambitious task of being a "college radio" station, while providing a resource to the community for music that doesn't receive respectable coverage in this region. Contrary to the opinions of the disgruntled few, there has been a great deal of praise and support from listeners regarding our diverse format. After only five months on the air I know we're far from perfect, yet we're still rocking the pants off other stations.

For legitimate confirmation of how many listeners we have, please spend the thousands of

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dollars KWVA can't to subscribe to the Arbitron rating service. I greatly urge anyone and everyone who has ideas for how to improve KWVA to contact me directly if they feel that our quarterly new music surveys and 500-plus weekly requests don't make us responsive to what students and the community at large want to hear.

One very important oversight on behalf of both Philip Abraham and Kevin Nakamura is that KWVA is here as a resource for students to learn radio, and there's nothing preventing their involvement if they or anyone else feels they know how to spend the roughly 50 cents of their incidental fee. I'm certain that it's a much better solution than impassioned letters that throw around numbers about our listeners and statements about our sound that are plainly false.

KWVA is currently home to almost 100 students who want to do more than write letters about how a station should run, and though we may not be the largest student organization on campus, I'd say it's a respectable use of the resource without the traditional genetic predisposi-

tion clause that can be found in some form or another with other Incidental Fee Committee-funded groups.

I say this not to question the value or importance of any campus group, but to illustrate that there is not one student-funded organization on this or any campus that operates for the purpose of being representative of every student, to the satisfaction and happiness of every student.

The few dozen pennies per student that we receive were in fact voted on and approved by students, unlike the few dozen dollars each term devoted to a ball team that has a better chance of winning the Publisher's Clearing House Sweepstakes than it does a home game that counts.

These are unrelated situations, granted; however, we both share what seems to be an overabundance of armchair quarterbacks who would rather gripe about what they see as wrong instead of actually becoming involved and making it right.

Criticism, dissent and suggestions certainly have their place with any student-funded organization; however, when it takes the form of dishing dirt to impress friends and neighbors with one's literary prowess, it's game over with regard to whether you hope to be taken seriously. Let's remember that this whole debate started with the suggestion that we play more recognizable music that other people claim we play far too much.

James Pierson is general manager of KWVA.

COMMENTARY POLICY

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Commentaries should be between 600 and 800 words, legible, signed and the identification of the writer must be verified when the letter is submitted.

The *Emerald* reserves the right to edit any letter for length or style.

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