

Religious discrimination on campus may be subtle

by Regina Brown
For the Oregon Daily Emerald

Rachel Rubin will never forget what happened at the final meeting of her fall term sociology class. When she asked the professor a question about stereotypes of Jews, the professor — along with half the class — responded with criticism that was so hostile that Rubin, a Jew, considered it to be anti-Semitic.

"They yelled at me for 45 minutes," Rubin said. They told her Jews have no right to complain about stereotypes or their treatment by society, and "Jews are 'rich whites who are whining over nothing,'" Rubin said.

Rubin accuses the professor of criticizing her for her involvement with the Office of Multicultural Affairs by saying a Jew should not participate because discrimination against Jews is no longer a concern.

Rubin has a different opinion. She said this is only one of many incidents in which she has experienced religious intolerance at the University of Oregon.

Some students say religious intolerance and prejudice are widespread on campus, ranging from outright discrimination to subtle slights. They believe this is caused by stereotypes, misinformation and general narrow-mindedness. However, in spite of what some students claim, faculty members and student advocacy groups say they see few signs of religious intolerance or religious stereotyping.

Some students say religious discrimination often occurs as subtle intolerance, which results when people hold pre-formed stereotypes about religion, or because some people hold prejudices against belief systems other than their own.

Junior Ingrid Parmeter said she saw this at last year's International Women's Day Fair, where participants boycotted a Catholic women's food booth because of false assumptions some made

about Catholic political associations.

"A lot of the other people who were presenting booths made a mistake in affiliating the Catholic Church with the OCA, which is just incorrect," Parmeter said. "I think they felt all Christians are part of the OCA."

Other religious persons expressed the same sentiment. Matt Tallman of the Chi Alpha Christian group said religious groups are often lumped together as a result of "association by name." He said people sometimes assume all members of a religious organization share a political agenda.

Muslim student Hanan Ramahi said she has experienced hostility from people whom she believes hold stereotypical views of Islam. "We're guilty until proven innocent," Ramahi said.

Ramahi said she frequently receives threatening phone calls when she speaks on campus about Islamic issues and during periods of heavy news coverage of violent events involving Muslims. She said the callers threaten to "get" her or tell her they are watching her. She finds the calls so frightening she sometimes stays with friends.

"(I feel) I have been deprived of some civil rights," Ramahi said. Ramahi said she believes the phone calls come from several people.

Muslim Student Theo Demetropoulos thinks stereotyping of Muslims occurs because people are uneducated about Islam. He said others "assume that (all Muslims) are part of an aggressive movement."

Some religious persons believe professors have displayed religious biases in class. Rev. James Sanders of the Baptist Student Union said, "It seems that professors take a position and assume that it is the right position. In general (I) hear (from students) about people or professors making comments about religious issues, and about belief in God as being a crutch for people."

Rev. Tiare Mathison-Bowie of the Presbyterian Campus Ministry said she has also felt negativity toward religion from professors. She remembers an incident where she was a guest speaker in a class where the professor asked if she thought a belief in God was "immature."

Two years ago Rev. Mathison-Bowie took part in a twice-monthly Women and Spirituality discussion group organized by the Center for the Study of Women in Society. "So many times the same story would come out," Mathison-Bowie said.

Women said they "felt like they had to leave their souls in their cars when they got (to the University) in the morning, then go to class, and then go back to their cars, pick up their souls and put them back on again."

Ingrid Parmeter said, "People tend to react with surprise, and they kind of pull away sometimes if you're religious."

Parmeter said other students have verbally attacked her faith. Once when she was participating in a religious panel for the Women's Studies department, another student referred to Catholic communion as "ritualized cannibalism."

Despite what these students say, University officials said they seldom hear of incidents of religious discrimination. The Office of Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity has reported seeing few signs of religious intolerance.

Director Ken Lehrman says that in the past two years, only two complaints involving religion have been filed, one of which was a non-formal complaint filed by a student against a professor.

Rubin said she filed a non-formal complaint with Affirmative Action against the professor of her sociology class, but said she fears it will result in nothing. According to Lehrman, a non-formal complaint is only investigated when at least two are filed against the same person. Rubin said other Jews in the class were upset by the professor's remarks, but did not file complaints because they feared

personal consequences.

"Religious discrimination is probably one of the least reported forms of discrimination," Lehrman said. He believes this is because it occurs less frequently than other forms of discrimination. But he also said he has no doubts that religious discrimination is under-reported.

"There is certainly more perceived discrimination than is reported," he said.

Not all religious students have experienced religious intolerance. Scott Starr, a student involved with United Methodist Campus Ministry, said he has never encountered religious intolerance on campus. Another Methodist student said that her professors are always careful when discussing religious matters in class.

Religious studies professor Augustine Thompson can recall only one incident where religious intolerance might have occurred, but said it was probably just a misunderstanding between a student and a guest speaker. Professor J.T. Sanders, also of the religious studies department, said he can recall no incidents of religious discrimination involving students in that department.

Barbara Pope, director of the Honors College, said people who feel they have been victims of religious intolerance might be mistaken. "There may be some people who perceive (religious intolerance) because of the absence of religion on campus," Pope said.

But this does not comfort those who say they have been victims of religious intolerance or discrimination.

"There's this feeling that you should really be quiet if you're a religious person," Parmeter said.

Parmeter is not the only one who feels religious intolerance is prevalent enough to raise concern.

"The world is abounding with stereotypes of all people," said Rubin. "Anti-Semitism is so subtle, it's not even recognized."

Are You Afraid to Say the 'F' Word — Feminist



PLEASE JOIN US FOR AN AFTERNOON OF
TEA & COOKIES AS WE PRESENT AN
INFORMAL AND RELAXED DISCUSSION
ON THE 'BAD' REPUTATION OF FEMINISM

*Today, April 14
3:00 — 4:00 p.m.
Ben Linder, EMU*

Sponsored by ASUO Women's Diversity

ENGLISH MAJORS

Come hear Professor James Boren,
Director of Undergraduate Studies,
describe the new 1994 English Major
requirements and changes in the English
Curriculum effective in the Fall of 1994.

If you are a student in progress, planning
to graduate after this summer term, learn
how new requirements and courses will
affect you. Have your questions answered
before duck call registration for the fall term.

April 18 3:30-5:00, Cha 204
April 27 3:30-5:00, Fr 214
May 5 3:30-5:00, Gil 107
May 10 3:30-5:00, Con 360
May 13 3:30-5:00, Cha 204

POLICE BEAT

By Susanne Steffens
Oregon Daily Emerald

• A male student reported his car alarm stolen from his vehicle on 15th Avenue and Agate Street April 5. The loss amounted to \$80.

• A phone harassment, which occurred March 28, was reported April 6. According to police reports, a mentally ill person was calling Myles Brand's office and also some University professors talking about conspiracies. In addition to calling them by phone, the suspect was also sending messages by fax. The suspect is not connected to the University, and has been warned by the police.

• Two 20-year-old male students were cited for minor in possession on the 800 block of East 15th Avenue April 6.

• A banner was reported stolen from the EMU April 7. According to police reports, the banner belonged to Crusade for Christ Jesus Week 1994, and was worth \$200.

• A 19-year-old male student was cited for minor in possession on 14th Avenue and Alder Street April 8. According to police reports, the sus-

pect was carrying two mugs of beer in his hands when police officer contacted him. He then threw the contents of the mugs behind a tree, denying that the mugs contained alcohol.

• An 18-year-old male student was cited for minor in possession on 17th Avenue and Hilyard Street April 8.

• A 19-year-old male student was cited for open container on 18th Avenue and Hilyard Street April 9. According to police reports, the suspect was walking on the sidewalk, carrying a Milwaukee Lite.

• An information report of disorderly conduct was written April 9. According to police reports, groups from Phi Delta Theta and Lambda Chi Alpha were quarreling on the street, continuously screaming to each other. The police achieved order after a while.

• Reckless endangering was reported on 14th Avenue and Columbia Street April 10. According to police reports, a burned cartoon taped to a door in a dorm was found by an employee from the housing department.

ET ALS

MISCELLANEOUS

Office of the Dean of Students will sponsor a lesbian, gay, bisexual coffee hour today from 4:30 to 5:30 p.m. in Koinonia Center at 1414 Kincaid St. For more information, call 346-1142.

ASUO will sponsor a candidate fair today from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the EMU Courtyard. (If it rains, go to the EMU Walnut Room.) For more information, call 346-0629.

ASUO will sponsor a senatorial debate/informational forum tonight from 6:30 to 8:30 in Room 150 Columbia. For more information, call 346-0629.

Graduate School will conduct a workshop titled "Introduction to the Graduate Funding

Library" today from 2 to 3 p.m. in Room 125 Chapman. For more information, call 346-2804.

Center for Asian & Pacific Studies will present a 1992 film from India titled *Boatman of the River Padma* today at 1:30 p.m. at the Bijou Theatre, 492 E. 13th Ave. The film is shown as part of the 1994 Asia-Pacific Film Tour. For more information, call 346-1521.

Multicultural Center will sponsor an informal discussion with Native American spokesman John Echobawk for students today from 3 to 4:30 p.m. at the Multicultural Center in EMU Room 33. For more information, call 346-4207.

Incidental Fee Committee will hear the

International Students Association budget tonight at 6 in Room 155 Straub. For more information, call 346-3749.

Institute for a Sustainable Environment will sponsor a national teleconference titled "People and the Planet" today from 4:45 to 7:45 p.m. in Room 180 PLC. The telecast will be followed by a local panel addressing local and national population issues, women and reproductive rights. For more information, call 344-8296 or 343-5831.

Educational Opportunities Program will conduct a workshop titled "Life After UO, Part I: Careers — Finding out about Jobs and Local Resources," today from 2 to 3 p.m. in Room 243 Gilbert. For more information, call 346-3232.