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Professor Ron Wixman receives Johnson Award

By Jim Davis
Oregon Daily Emerald

A radical lesbian is the only thing Ron Wixman said he hasn't been called in his past two decades of teaching and lecturing.

"Though I am sure if they could get away with pinning that label on me they would," said Wixman, the 1994 Charles E. Johnson Award recipient.

Wixman, a university geography professor, said he has been called a fascist pig by the radical left and a pinko commie by the radical right.

And he believes these critiques might be some indication as to why he won the Johnson Award, an annual award given to a faculty member who upholds the principles of freedom of speech and freedom of assembly.

"I am very dedicated to teaching the freedom of ideas and the concept of ideals," Wixman said, "and this leads to attacks on my person from radicals on both sides of the spectrum."

Officially, his certificate of award notes that Wixman has consistently stood for the free expression of ideas in the United States and abroad and has made him one of the University's most frequently called upon speakers and analysts.

"Professor Wixman's firm commitment to truthful inquiry, free expression and peaceful change, as well as his valuable service to the University of Oregon, its students and the community make this a particularly fitting choice for this award," University President Myles Brand said.

But Wixman said his call-them-as-he-sees-them attitude probably helped in his selection.

"I'm very opinionated," Wixman said. "I don't believe in any ideology. When you are too far on the left or too far on the right, you're not looking at any of the real problems."

Wixman cited the time when a speaker on campus said that homophobia is linked to capitalism and the solution to homophobia is communism.

"When I pointed out that Eugene had more places for open gays than the Soviet Union, China and all the Eastern Bloc coun-

tries combined, I was shouted down as a homophobe," Wixman said.

He said this perception still holds, although he said he believes he has done more against the Oregon Citizen's Alliance, the conservative anti-gay group, than the majority of people on campus.

"I fully believe the OCA is as subversive and un-American as the Communist Party," Wixman said.

Wixman said he feels this way because the OCA believes The Bible is more important than the Constitution, and the OCA is trying to gain political power in the state.

"The OCA is not as anti-gay as people think," Wixman said. He said they are using homosexuality as a ruse to split the moderate vote so they can promote



Ron Wixman

their conservative ideology. "The OCA needs a gay issue to be a unified force," he said. "You don't see them attack other issues that are condemned in The Bible like committing adultery or the abortion issue."

And he said by stating this opinion, he will be attacked.

Wixman, a faculty member since 1975, specializes in the study of ethnic, religious, cultural and ethno-political geography and of the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

He is the author of three books, more than 30 articles and book reviews and is internationally recognized for his scholarship analysis relating to ethnic politics and minority cultures.


He will officially be presented with the Johnson Award at a pre-commencement brunch on Sunday, June 12.

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