

Don't skip, cancel classes for rally

A bright banner posted outside the EMU encouraged students to boycott classes Wednesday. A teacher canceled class so his students could attend a rally, although most opted for other ways to enjoy the sunshine.

What merits this ban on classes? About 200 student activists attended a rally in the EMU Courtyard to protest the "Contract With America" along with the demolition of the Amazon Housing Complex. Although no direct correlations were made between Newt Gingrich and the University's threatened housing complex, rally speakers showed their concern about America's shift to the right and were worried that the Republican-minded government will endanger critical social and educational programs.

Student activism is vital for a country that's supposed to be based on democracy. Everyone benefits by the introduction of new ideas in a public forum. The only way to provoke change is to stand up for what you believe is right or wrong.

But it doesn't make sense to skip class in order to lobby for education. If students want a better education, they shouldn't neglect what education they already have.

An employee wouldn't lobby for a raise from his or her boss by not showing up for work — unless everyone else was skipping out too. Alone or in small numbers, he or she would be out of a job long before reaping any salary increases.

If students want to show the government they're worthy of more education dollars, they need to show that they value what they have and would value more if given the opportunities. Skipping classes is irresponsible and shows government leaders that students don't care about their classes. Why should they offer students more classes to skip?

Classes are expensive and missing class is like flushing money down the toilet. How can students ask for more money when they're already throwing it away?

There's no question that this country is facing an education crisis and something needs to be done to ensure the futures of millions of bright students. However, there are much better ways to get the government's attention.

Instead of promoting a campus-wide ban on classes, try using the dozens of hours between classes to write or call Congress members. Show them what you've learned and would you could learn if given the opportunity.

Organize campaigns in support of education, or whatever your cause may be. Use the many resources at the University. Go to class — you could learn something that may be the key to solving some of the nation's critical problems.

The nation will continue to spend its money on guns and bombs if students don't prove they're worthy of more educational dollars. Walking out of classes isn't the answer.



OPINION

America needs more than a contract



BRIAN WOMACK

The Republicans in Washington have been working tirelessly in their efforts to get the "Contract With America" passed. Even with a majority in both houses, though, not all has been peaches and cream.

First the balanced-budget amendment was defeated by a single vote in the Senate. Now term limits and welfare reform are under intense attack.

I still hope that as much of the contract as possible passes. I'm always in favor of streamlining government, which is exactly what the contract is attempting to do.

Yet as much as I support the Republicans in their efforts, I realize that many of the problems with this country go far beyond anything Newt, Bob or anyone else can fix with legislation.

The problem is where the soul of the country lies — where we Americans decide what is right and wrong, where we decide to draw the line on what is acceptable and what is not.

It's at those crucial points that Americans determine the direction our society will go. Those lines help to define us as a people.

The problem is that we don't seem to know where that line is anymore. And the ironic part of it is that we're almost proud of it.

We have fully embraced the ideas of the 19th-century philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche who said that no one has the right to say one is more right than someone else. Everything is relative, including morality.

As some of our parents might have said, "If it feels good, do it." In fact, the 1960s were a time in America when these ideas took hold of our culture.

Most Americans don't disagree with moral relativism.

Because society is so entrenched in this way of thinking, many don't even realize how harmful these ideas really are.

A society that doesn't know right from wrong will soon disintegrate because there is no moral foundation — members of a relativistic society can justify pretty much whatever they do.

Take crime for instance. Using the relativistic line of thinking, if a criminal wants to take your car because he doesn't have one, who can really question him? It's his or her morality. The same goes for everything from murder or rape to cheating on a test.

Free societies must have a standard of right and wrong if they are to progress.

After the constitutional convention, Benjamin Franklin was asked what kind of government America would have. He responded, "A republic, if you can keep it."

This founding father rightly saw that because our country is founded upon the idea of self-rule, the people have to possess the morality to allow for society to hold together. Otherwise, government will have to play an increasingly larger role in society.

Bill Bennett points out some of the ways society has disintegrated in an interview in the November issue of *USA Today Magazine*. He said since 1960, while the population grew 41 percent, violent crimes leaped 500 percent, teen-age suicides tripled, illegitimate births increased by more than 400 percent and the divorce rate doubled.

Bennett believes one of the reasons these travesties have taken place is that "during the last quarter-century, the American people increasingly have abandoned time-honored moral codes. The U.S. is now seeing the results being played out on urban streets and in hospitals and emergency rooms, the courts, and the classrooms."

Moral relativism doesn't give us a "moral code." This begs the question. Where do we get it?

It lies quite simply in America's religious heritage. From the

foundation of religion does our moral code arise.

Alexis de Tocqueville, the premier classical liberal of the 19th century, saw how important religion was to America. A native of France, he visited America in the early part of the 19th century to see how America, a free society, worked and how liberty could be preserved. He was greatly impressed with America, calling this country the "most enlightened and free nation of the earth."

John McCole, assistant professor of history at the University, says de Tocqueville believed religion was the most important institution in America for preserving liberty. It provides for the discipline and the ability for people to look outside themselves, which is important in keeping a free society free.

He believed religion is an essential part of America. "There is no country in the whole world in which the Christian religion retains a greater influence over the souls of men than in America; and there can be no greater proof of its utility, and of its conformity of human nature, than that its influence is most powerfully over [America]."

Do we value the "Christian religion" like we did in the previous century? No. We're so worried about making sure that we're open-minded in our approach to religion that our brains have leaked out. As a result, our morals have suffered immensely.

This is not to say that religion will prevent people from ever committing wrong acts, but it will help to discourage them.

So as our society continues to slide, we must not look only to Washington for the answers to fixing the problems.

Society needs to look within and return to our moral foundation.

Only then will our society truly be able to return to some of the order we once had and avert even further horrors in the future.

Brian Womack is a columnist for the Emerald.

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