

# Protest class

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protest speak to the course's subject more than a classroom setting ever could.

But Farjah and other students described the change of venue as an uncomfortable situation that forced a single set of beliefs on them.

Normally, students in the social inequalities discussion sections arrive for class and take a five-point quiz and receive another five points for attendance. On Monday, students from two discussion groups arrived and took their quiz like normal. The graduate teaching fellows in charge of the class then announced they were moving to Johnson Hall and roll would be taken there for the other five points.

Freshman sociology major Jamie Morris said the new venue was both distracting and off the subjects of the class. She said that with protesters and administrators walking around, people weren't paying attention or asking many questions.

"People looked really uncomfortable and were just asking random questions. There wasn't much discussion," she said.

The GTFs from the two sections, Ann Strahm and Jey Strangfeld, said they believe the protest relates to and enhances the class themes.

"The purpose of a large lecture hall is passive learning, and the smaller discussion is for more active learning," Strahm said. "We're talking about issues dealing with social inequalities, and it's happening right here on our own campus."

The lecture for the class holds 252 students and each discussion group has 28 students. Strahm said students were free to leave the discussion on Monday and Strangfeld added that some students did leave.

"I wanted to give them a chance to see that real life events connect to our own reading," Strahm said.

Farjah said she could see a connection between the themes of the protest and themes in the class,

but they were too close to the event to have a real discussion.

"If we were in the street or on the sidewalk across the street, that would have been fine."

Undeclared freshman Molly Lohkamp said she believes her discussion should have remained completely in a more neutral classroom. Many courses ranging from history to math have taken time to discuss the protest and worker rights since the protest began on April 4, and some professors have suggested students talk with the protesters after class.

But Julia Fox, the professor for the class, said she thinks a classroom situation is not a neutral place and can be just as distracting as the protest.

"Professors who decide to discuss inside the classroom aren't neutral ... they take a position too," Fox said. "Ask how distracting class is because [students] are laughing, giggling and answering cell phones."

Not all students disagreed with their GTFs. Freshman education major Hope Siler said Johnson Hall was an appropriate place to discuss social issues.

"The protest is a real issue people are putting their lives into," she said.

Overall, Strahm said she thinks the discussion at the protest was more animated, and students approached her afterward to say it fostered unpopular ideas even more than the classroom setting would.

"I don't get paid to ideologically manipulate a student," she said.

Both Strahm and Strangfeld said the students may have been uncomfortable at Johnson Hall because they have become too accustomed to a classroom setting.

"Students are taught to be passive and not to question — they are not taught to sit and debate issues," Strahm said. "Perhaps they were uncomfortable because they haven't been taught to debate."

"If students felt uncomfortable, imagine the people at the point of production," Fox said, referring to workers in overseas factories. "Understand how [the workers] feel when they raise their hands to ask questions and the factories are armed garrisons."

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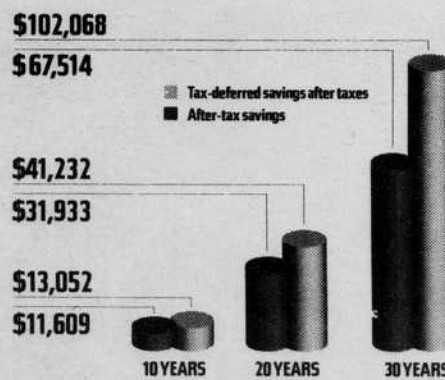
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