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Eugene Police overzealously administer zero tolerance

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As an attorney for ASUO Legal Services, I am aware that the majority of arrests and citations of students are for alcohol-related offenses. These offenses include minor in possession, allowing or furnishing alcohol, driving under the influence of intoxicants and Oregon Liquor Control Commission violations for mishandling a keg. Many students have expressed frustration over receiving citations for conduct which did not seem, at the time, to violate a law. They are also frustrated with the aggressive and sometimes condescending attitude of the Eugene Police.

GUEST COMMENTARY

The definition of what actions constitute these crimes and violations is increasingly widened by the overzealous Eugene Police Department "Party Patrol," which has stated a policy of "zero tolerance on underage drinking." It is not an exaggeration to state that you act at your peril if you are present where alcohol is served outside of a commercial establishment.

For example:

- A sober designated driver arrived at a party to retrieve his friends and was cited for minor in possession when he was seen removing beer bottles from his friends' hands so he could get them into his car.
- A person who was 21 threw a party with signs posted stating that those under 21 were not allowed. The "Party Patrol" stormed the gates and found a minor who snuck into the party and grabbed a beer. The host was cited with a Class A misdemeanor of furnishing alcohol to a minor, which can result in a \$5,000 fine and a year in jail.
- A minor was asleep in bed while her roommates watched a movie. Police appeared at the door looking for someone who did not live there. Once the front door was open, the police insinuate themselves into the house where the minor was forcibly awakened by the police and cited for minor in possession when she admitted to having had a beer earlier.
- A 25-year-old bought a keg and signed an affidavit stating the keg would be at his house. The next weekend, he took the keg with its remaining contents to another party to finish the beer. The "Party Patrol" raided the party and he was cited for the Class A misdemeanor of false swearing because the keg was not at the original address.

While these examples of citations may not hold up in court (remembering the USA Patriot Act has not yet eroded the presumption of innocence), the cited parties now bear the burden of numerous court appearances, possible trials and the threat of jail and/or fines of hundreds of dollars if they lose.

In addition to the cost and inconvenience associated with these experiences, students are reporting increasing amounts of physical contact from police, including being made to stand in the cold for hours in handcuffs and being subject to choke holds, take-downs and other uses of force. Students come to see me with bruises, chipped teeth and head injuries. Students are reporting that the OLCC has begun confiscating personal property associated with the consumption of alcohol, including music equipment and stereos.

The moral of this story is for students to exhibit extreme caution around underage drinkers. If you are underage, do not drink or allow yourself to be around places where alcohol is served. If you are over 21, do not allow any minors on the premises and adhere closely to OLCC requirements for the use of kegs.

Be careful out there.

Laura Fine is an attorney with ASUO Legal Services. Her opinions do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald.



Eric Layton Illustration

LEAPING OVER LOGIC

I've been told that after the University hands me a diploma next June, I'll look back with fondness, even longing, at my undergraduate years. Staying up until 4 a.m. on weekends playing video games with greats and learning big ideas from solid professors.

But there are things I'll be happy to leave on campus. The 8 a.m. finals, homework until 4 a.m. on school nights and everyone who has problems distinguishing between the realities of a real world and the sometimes incestuous, self-serving or just plain loopy rhetoric passed off as academic or otherwise intellectually meaningful discourse.

To be fair, the university setting is the Fertile Crescent of mindless rhetoric. Campus culture is to pseudointellectual flotsam as dorm shower floors are to bacteria (again, something I don't and won't miss).

For one, given that most students are just beginning their tenures in the arena of public dialogue, unjustifiable zealotry can usually be chalked up to the impetuosity of youth and novelty. Moreover, I naively suggest that students calling for an end to nanotechnology research because it has potential military applications, or for a stop to animal research because they believe it has no material value, do so largely out of concern for the quality of the world around them. (Professors promulgating irresponsible rhetoric don't have this excuse.) But the road to the hell that is philosophical incoherence is paved with good intentions.

To wit: In January 2001, the University hosted a conference on social issues called: "Against Patriarchy: a step toward the abolition of male privilege." Designed as part of "a movement towards the elimination

of male privilege, domination and sexism" — which I politely read as ending gender discrimination — the conference's central questions included: "How does male domination connect to other oppressions, such as racism, heterosexism, ableism, classism, capitalism, government and speciesism?"



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Nevermind that advances leading to the extended lifespans, greater personal freedom and wider educational opportunities that we enjoy today are all consequences of the capitalist economic system (admittedly, among less fortunate effects associated with the free market that have more to do with individual ethical flaws than the system itself). Nevermind still that "speciesism," however the word might be defined, probably carries the illegitimate oratorical baggage of devaluing human life.

In 2002, a letter to the editor of Eugene Weekly insisted that "In order to end (violence against women and minorities), we need to deconstruct patriarchy and all its forms of violence." While the author clearly didn't understand what deconstruction is, ending violence against all people is important, and there are many things that people can do to curtail that problem. However, misusing words and passing off

empty rhetoric isn't one of them.

In 2003, in a letter to the editor of the Emerald, a concerned citizen wrote that developing a "multiscale materials and devices center" in the East University area was tantamount to "ethnic cleansing" because it would displace families living there now. The ethics of the University forcing low-income families to move aside, a comparison to the worst sort of human rights violations is unwarranted and unjustifiable — it's the same brand of despicable, offensive rhetoric that PETA used when comparing treatment of animals to the despicable treatment of Jews during the Holocaust. (In the interest of fending off concerns about disclosure, this letter was submitted to the Emerald before my tenure as editorial editor.)

Illegitimate debate does worse than pollute the realm of public argument: Laymen who recognize the fallacies in bad argument might associate the bunk logic or uncivil conduct with a wider movement. While this in itself is often a logically tenuous leap, the damage can be very real: Violent religious extremists detract from religious messages of peace and compassion. Likewise, ecoterrorists self-righteously destroying private property divert attention from the noble aims of responsible environmentalism.

What's an intellectually responsible student to do? Take suspect rhetoric with a grain of salt. If you hear a bad argument at the lunch table or in the classroom, stand up and speak for yourself.

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 His opinions do not necessarily
 represent those of the Emerald.