

Student complaint against Epstein raises questions on academic freedom vs. prejudiced opinion

Instructor's comment

Radical techniques challenge students to think

In response to Salena De La Cruz' invitation to bring distasteful material to the surface, I am writing this letter.

You offend me, as well as some of your better-versed colleagues. *The Print* seems to have a knack for taking decent human beings and demeaning them to the point of ridiculousness. Your personal political views interfere with your articles, which either are very intelligent or extremely biased. If someone else's views or opinions differ from your own it doesn't mean that I am right or you are right. It means we have other beliefs that are influenced by cultural, religious, or ethnicity. This is called diversity. Instructors seem to be a favored topic these days and I have found your choice of victims disturbing.

Both Dean Darris and Donald Epstein are known for radical techniques that challenge the students to think for themselves. Darris, despite his reputation as an intelligent instructor, was singled out for blame during the

Jennifer Rankin debate. The only plausible explanation for this outright insult to a man, who was merely consoling a friend, is a

personal agenda against his views. In the issue of Nov. 17, 1999 *Business Manager* Karl Katzke remarked in reference to the removal of Jennifer Rankin, "Unfortu-

nately, everything she hears is through a sieve of her ideas and morals, which have been twisted and bent through the ideas she has learned from her mentors and advisors." In the issue of Nov. 19, 1999 President John Keyser was interviewed and stated, "When Jennifer wasn't happy with some of the answers that she received from the student services side, I think she got different answers from Dean Darris, and I think that's where the prob-

lem started." ASG President James Gould took on the topic as well by stating, "I had a feeling, when I saw Dean Darris there

[at the hearing], that he was pushing Jennifer." Then *the Print* went on to assume that Darris was in control on the Rankin defense, stating, "Several times, after Darris communicated with her, Johnston

passed a note to Rankin and her attorney." This is a useless waste of journalistic effort that could be used to cover topics that have valor and some semblance of truth. Spreading rumors and insults will not encourage respect from your intellectual patrons or college instructors. I see repetition in these actions against Donald Epstein.

Epstein is an admitted Right Wing Republican; I am as well. I believe in capital punishment, the

right to bear arms, defense spending, equal rights, and I can't stand feminists. In some circles that makes me a bigot, and a chauvinist pig. However, most intelligent people would not be inhibited from learning because of differences of personal views. Most students who are serious about education find mediocrity boring. Epstein spends the extra effort to bring his students the truth and the realism of whatever time period or part of the world they are studying. Judaic studies included, especially taking in consideration that he is an expert of the field and is a member of that respected and ancient religion. The context in which he stated "better of dead than homosexual" was used appropriately in the study of Greeks vs. Jews, and the Holocaust in which homosexuals were also tortured, maimed and killed. Historical research will back up both accounts. If you are infuriated by Jewish history and beliefs, then read the Old Testament, or the Torah, and argue with writers who

have been dead for thousands of years. I urge you however, to not make the mistake of mixing personal feelings into an objective study. Like the young scholar who aspires to be a teacher, and appears asinine in public view.

To Joshua Alexander: If the real world is ugly and scares you, then go home and watch a TV program in which everyone agrees and lives happily ever after holding hands. The time has come to put childish fancies away and let the sun shine into your eyes instead of through rose colored glasses. And a piece of advice to the *Print*... a responsible advisor should set an example and not let the *Print* stoop so low in their journalistic standards, by picking on two of the finest instructors on this campus.

"If you don't have anything intelligent to say...don't say anything at all."

Colleen BW Baird
Student

Are instructors teaching personal bias in class?

Dear Editor:

I'm writing in response to the article regarding Dr. Donald Epstein, instructor for the Judaic Studies/Holocaust class, and the letter titled "Words will never hurt me" that appeared in the same issue of *The Clackamas Print*.

I personally believe there is a difference between a child's rhyme about sticks and stones and giving students the permission to hate a group of people. Additionally, the laws in this country relating to libel evidently are based on the premise that words can badly hurt you. It's my feeling that encouraging hate and prejudice should not be taught in public schools because of the serious damage it can cause. To me it seems evident that it causes senseless and brutal murders, such as that of Mathew Shepard. Intolerance can put a terrifying end to a life. I also think of the Columbine School massacre. Does anyone know what inflamed the hatred in the adolescent murderers? Were 'sticks and stones' in the form of racism and name-call-

ing part of it?

I am not objecting to Dr. Epstein's right to teach the Judaic Bible. If that Bible states, "People are better off being dead than being a homosexual," he has a right and obligation to tell students that.

Just out of curiosity, where in the Judaic Bible does it say this? The course is also titled "Holocaust". Please understand, in no way do I mean to minimize the atrocities that were committed against the Jewish people. I cannot and do not want to imagine the amount of hatred it took for the Nazis to reach this level of human cruelty. Yet, the Jews were not the only people tortured, imprisoned and exterminated during the Holocaust. It also happened to the gypsies, political prisoners, regular prisoners, Jehovah's witnesses, and homosexuals.

From the interview Dr. Epstein provided to *The Print*, I gathered he feels that we, as students, have been brainwashed by those preaching political correctness. He also appears to feel that by being outrageous, his words not mine, he will teach students to think. I fail to see how teaching students that all homosexuals would be better off dead because the Judaic Bible says so inspires much thought, even on his part.

For critical and creative thinking

to take place, it takes some knowledge and exploration of all the issues. Of course, students can debate his opinions and religious convictions with him in front of the class. However, it appears from Dr. Epstein's comments that they simply drop the class. Could the reason for this be that a debate between a teacher and a student *can be* unfairly biased in the direction

of the teacher because of the difference in power held by each of them? Could it be that someone who has taught in front of a classroom and has information available to someone with a Ph.D. could make a fool out of that student? Could it be that it is difficult to stand up in front of a classroom and defend homosexuals because someone might think that you are one (...and you are not, or you are and don't want anyone to know it because you're afraid?) These are questions that need to be answered.

I would also like to take issue with Dr. Epstein's statement that homosexuals think the Bible is invalid. What proof does the man have of this? Is it not conceivable that a *homosexual group* is comprised of individuals that have different thoughts just like any other group? Is he aware that there are many homosexuals that have religious convictions? Additionally, which Bible is he talking about?

His statement "That which is morally wrong should not be legally right" somehow reminded me of

the reason we separate church and state. Can you imagine our legal system if it were built on all the religious convictions that are held in this country? If we decided to base law on just one religion, would we at least have a vote on which one? Would this stir up hate and dissension? The reason that the Nazis gave for imprisoning, torturing and killing homosexuals during the Holocaust was that homosexuality was illegal. Homosexuality was illegal because it was deemed to be immoral.

I admit that I am not a student of Dr. Epstein's and that this letter is written in reaction to his statements quoted in *The Clackamas Print*. However, it appears to me that he could be using his position as a teacher to teach his personal biases and prejudices. I can only hope that proves not to be true, as I assume that someone who is getting ready for retirement has taught more than a few classes.

Sincerely,
Tam Oliver
Student

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Colleen
BW. Baird
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Tam Oliver
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