

DEFENDING THE CAMPUS THOUGHT POLICE

By Don Feder (posted December 15, 2004)

Ellen Goodman is a lot like conservative pundit Ann Coulter – except that she lacks Coulter’s wit, style and discernment.

Okay, the liberal columnist is nothing like Coulter. Still, Goodman is among the best the opposition has to offer. And, if nothing else, her misconceptions usually make an amusing starting point for an exploration of reality.

On December 5, Goodman warned her readers of a dangerous development: Conservatives have turned their fanatical gaze on the college campus.

“While many of us assume that the right is busily targeting the highest court as their last unoccupied power base, a whole subset of conservatives is after higher education,” Goodman cautions. “Every year conservative groups put some \$20 million into campus politics and publications.” On the other hand, liberals simply spend the endowments of colleges and universities to advance their cause.

Conservatives have co-opted our rhetoric, Goodman complains. They’re calling for “diversity” and “playing victim politics.”

Goodman admits that faculties are politically homogenous: “Two new studies point to campuses as oases of blue. The first, a survey of 1,000 academics, shows that there are seven Democrats for every Republican in the humanities and social scientists... The second study of voter registration records shows that Democrats outnumber Republicans 9 to 1 on the faculties of Berkeley and Stanford.”

But, so what, says Goodman – who, based at The Boston Globe, writes from the heart of darkest Kerry country. After all, faculties are still 87% white and 77% male. Good liberal that she is, Goodman thinks everything comes down to race and gender, rather than ideas. Party registration reflects ideology, race and gender do not – witness Kerry and Edwards, Howard Dean, Dennis Kucinich and Ted Kennedy – all melanin-deficient, testosterone-rich, and dogmatically left.

Goodman’s contends: “These surveys don’t actually prove that one-party faculties color classrooms blue. Nor do they prove that students are being *wooded* leftward.” Of course, it’s just a coincidence that those with post-graduate degrees are overwhelmingly left of center. They’re probably the product of random selection.

Goodman’s most preposterous claim is this: Maybe the lack of conservative faculty is a matter of “personal choice,” rather than discrimination. “No one is suggesting that Republican PhDs might rather work in the free market than teach the free market.”

In other words, conservatives are a bunch of crass, money-grubbers. Liberals are willing to sacrifice personal gain to spread knowledge. (Certainly not because they're too incompetent to hold a position in the corporate world and like the security that comes with tenure.)

Professor George P. Lakoff, who teaches linguistics at Berkeley, made a similar argument in his self-congratulatory book "Moral Politics: How Liberals and Conservatives Think."

"Unlike conservatives," Lakoff writes, liberals "believe in working for the public good and social justice, as well as knowledge and art for their own sake, which are what the humanities and social sciences are about."

Rather than an indictment of academic Stalinism, the dearth of conservative faculty becomes another way for liberals to feel superior: We're self-sacrificing and have a higher calling. Conservatives are selfish philistines.

The college campus is a hermetically sealed environment where alien ideas rarely intrude. When they do, the academic immune system attacks them with a ferocity rarely seen outside the Islamic world.

Typical of the worldview of the higher-ed elite is Brandeis Peace Studies Professor Gordie Fellman, who is quoted as saying that "If (*the War on Terror*) is about terrorism, and terrorism is the killing of innocent civilians, then the United States is also a terrorist."

Or consider the carefully nuanced comments of Cornell Professor John Pilger, who calls Guantanamo a "concentration camp," Israel a "terrorist state" with a "policy of state murder" and (three days after 9/11) indicted America as "the greatest source of terrorism on Earth." In 2001, Pilger claimed Israel was capable of using nuclear weapons against Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. (Wonder what he thinks Israelis would do with the fallout.)

Then, of course, there's Columbia anthropology Professor Nicholas De Genova, who told a post-9/11 teach-in, "The only true heroes are those who find ways that help defeat the U.S. military." Thus, De Genova said he wished for "a million Mogadishus," in reference to the Somali city where 18 U.S. soldiers were ambushed and killed in 1993. As cartoonist Al Capp said of Harvard back in the '60s, the inmates are running the asylum.

Brainwashing, intimidation, exclusion and retaliation for unorthodox ideas are standard collegiate fare. In the novel "1984," Big Brother cautions, "Right thinking will be rewarded, wrong thinking punished." He would have made the perfect instructor at PCU.

- The aforementioned Fellman reportedly told one of his classes that a third of their grade would be based on “personal evolution” during the semester – in other words, their ability to assimilate and parrot his ideas.
- In a Cal State Long Beach freshman English class, the assignment was to write an essay about some aspect of Michael Moore’s “Fahrenheit 911.” In her paper, student Marissa Freimanis argued against Moore’s thesis that Bush rushed to war with Saddam Hussein. Her essay was marked with the comment “You miss the point of the film.” Needless to say, Freimanis received the lowest grade in the class (after getting nothing but A’s on previous papers). What she missed was the point of the exercise – to reach Moore’s and the professor’s conclusions.
- At the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, a sophomore English class was assigned an essay on the subject “Why do heterosexual men feel threatened by homosexuals?” In his paper, a student, named Tim said that while he wasn’t intimidated by gays, “Being a Christian, I would feel uncomfortable having to explain to my son at a baseball game why two homosexual men are kissing.” Poor Tim. Someone forgot to tell him that he was expected to reflect his professor’s views. In a mass e-mail, his instructor, Dr. Elyse Crystall, said Tim’s observations constituted “hate speech that created a hostile environment in class,” while Tim himself was “an example of privilege: a white, heterosexual, Christian male who feels entitled to make violent, heterosexist comments and not feel marked or threatened or vulnerable.” Rest assured, after Dr. Crystall’s public pronouncement, Tim felt marked, threatened and vulnerable.
- Most academics treat dissent as a social disease. When asked why he didn’t assign the works of conservative thinkers, Ithaca College Government Professor Charles Santiago replied, “I am teaching Hitler.” If conservative equals Holocaust, how do you suppose Prof. Santiago treats students who express right-of-center views in his class? Like the Nuremberg war criminals?

Stephen H. Balch, president of the National Association of Scholars (an alliance of iconoclastic academics) observes: “Our colleges have become less marketplaces of ideas than churches in which you have to be a true believer to get a seat in the pews. We’ve drifted to a secular version of the 19th-century denominational colleges, in which the university’s mission is to crusade against sin and make the country a morally better place.”

Daniel Klein, an associate professor of economics at Santa Clara University, explains how heretics (conservatives) are excluded from the priesthood (professorate): “Screened out, expelled or self-sorted, they tend to land outside of academia because the crucial decisions – awarding tenure and

promotions, choosing which papers get published – are made by colleagues hostile to their political views.”

Dr. Mike Adams (author of “The Ivory Tower of Babel: Confessions of a Conservative Professor”), who teaches criminology at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington, discloses: “I served on several hiring committees in my time at UNCW. I saw an applicant’s file denied because his writing a piece for a conservative publication made him ‘too conservative’.... In 2001, an applicant was asked whom he voted for in 2000.” But the reason college faculties are blue through and through (a la Goodman) is because conservative PhDs – with no love of teaching or dedication to truth and beauty – would rather get rich in the private sector.

Perhaps the classic illustration of how the churches are kept heresy-free is my friend Gene, who asked me not to use his last name for fear of retribution.

One of the gentlest and most unassuming men I know, Gene (who has a PhD. in English) taught that subject at a Massachusetts state college for five years. Evaluations by his students were uniformly excellent. Unlike his liberal colleagues, he was never accused of using his classes as a showcase for his politics.

Gene’s problems began when he started writing an opinion column for a local newspaper. One of his colleagues (doubtless a champion of the First Amendment) ordered him to stop writing articles critical of feminism.

He heard from a faculty friend that every time he wrote something un-PC, colleagues would go to the chairman of his department demanding: “Look at what he’s writing now! Can you believe it? You’ve got to get rid of him.” This they eventually did.

Gene, who didn’t have tenure, was replaced by a die-hard feminist who used her classes to cram her views down students’ throats. Gene struggles to get by teaching adult education courses.

Since we all live in the same area, I could introduce Goodman to Gene. But, like academic leftists, Ellen Goodman is anxious to keep the real world from disturbing on her carefully constructed universe.