



SITE SEARCH

CLASSIFIEDS | ARCHIVES | SUBSCRIBE | CONTACT US | ABOUT TWT

AP BREAKING NEWS

DAILY

- Front Page
- Nation/Politics
- World
- Commentary
- Opinion/Editorial
- Metropolitan
- Sports
- Business
- Technology
- Entertainment
- Culture
- Weather

WEEKLY

- Business Times
- Family Times
- Auto Weekend
- Wash. Weekend
- Books
- Home Guide
- Arts
- Nat'l Weekly Edition

MARKETPLACE

- Classifieds
- Gift Guide
- Tourist Guide
- Int'l Special Reports
- Employment Extra

May 16, 2002

# Women's studies mandates seen as threats to free speech

By Ellen Sorokin  
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

A women's studies program at the University of South Carolina says students must acknowledge that racism, sexism and heterosexism are existing forms of oppression before they can participate in class discussion — a move critics say threatens students' rights to free speech.

The course syllabus, distributed in January, specifically outlines eight prerequisites during class discussion, which counts for 20 percent of the students' overall grade. The course — "Women's Studies 797: Seminar in Women's Studies" — is listed on the program's Web site as "required" for a certificate of graduate study in women's studies.

One of the prerequisites is that students "acknowledge that racism, classism, sexism, heterosexism and other institutionalized forms of oppression exist." Another is that students "acknowledge that one mechanism of institutionalized racism, classism, sexism, heterosexism, etc. is that we are all systematically taught misinformation about our own group and about members of other groups. This is true for members of privileged and oppressed groups."

The prerequisites have been criticized by officials with the Philadelphia-based Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE), who argue that faculty members at a public institution "cross the line from liberty to unlawful coercion" when they force students to give allegiance to particular viewpoints.

"Through these official guidelines, USC demands that students embrace and remain loyal to the professor's own viewpoints and beliefs," said Alan Charles Kors, president of FIRE.

"In a USC classroom, in a required course no less, students must hold a preordained set of opinions, regardless whether they agree or

### Top Stories

- White House slams hijack 'politics'
- CELEBRATING 20 YEARS
- For years, signs suggested 'that something was up'
- Arafat gives in to call for elections
- Obeying 'a holy duty' to kill
- House approves GOP's 2nd round of welfare reform
- Deal near on purchase of Pimlico and Laurel
- County has 'very few' hate crimes

Updated at 11:00 a.m.

- Democrats Want Hijack Brief Papers
- Accused Priest Apparently Kills Self
- Plane Worker Charged in Bomb Threat
- Flooded Midwest Braces for More Rain
- Firefighters Still Battling Blaze

### UPI BREAKING NEWS

Updated at 11:00 a.m.

- White House defends 9-11 briefing
- DA issues warning to LA 's Cardinal Mahony
- Indian, Pakistani troops trade gunfire
- U.S. presses Palestinians on reform
- Inside Mexico: Greenspan in reverse
- Report: Pimlico may get a new owner
- Asylum seekers arrive in S.Korea
- Singapore shows recovery signs

disagree, under the stated explicit and coercive threat of being graded poorly for honest intellectual dissent," he said.

Mr. Kors sent a letter to USC President John Palms and members of the university's board of trustees, asking them to withdraw the prerequisites, which FIRE says violates the school policy that defends the right of any student to dissent and prohibits partisan evaluation. As of yesterday, university officials have not responded.

A university spokesman said he could not comment on the guidelines or the letter because he was not able to reach Mr. Palms, who was out of town, or the women's studies professor, Lynn Weber.

Other groups, such as the Intercollegiate Studies Institute (ISI) in Delaware, aren't surprised by such prerequisites. The general atmosphere on many campuses does not encourage the free and open debate of contentious or officially protected subjects, ISI officials said.

"Some subjects — women's studies, African-American studies, and gay and lesbian studies or groups, for example — are not uncommonly protected from the rigors of academic debate," ISI spokesman Winfield Myers said.

"The result, as we see in South Carolina, is the presence on campuses of professors and students who feel free to censor their opponents' core beliefs rather than debate the merits of their ideas. It's easier to silence a smart challenger than convert him," Mr. Myers said.

The incident at the University of South Carolina comes nearly a week after a graduate teaching instructor at the University of California at Berkeley incited nationwide debate by warning "conservative thinkers" to take another class.

Snegal Shingavi, who will be teaching an undergraduate English course called "The Politics and Poetics of Palestinian Resistance" in the fall, said in his course description that "conservative thinkers are encouraged to seek other sections" and that "the right of Palestinians to fight for their own self-determination is not up for debate."

Berkeley officials almost immediately declared "a failure of oversight" in reviewing course descriptions and said Mr. Shingavi's class would be monitored.

"The message in both of these cases tells students that 'you must agree with my viewpoints or get a bad grade,'" said Thor Halvorssen, FIRE's executive director. "This has no place in a university in a free society."

◀ [Back to Nation/Politics](#)



and other  
property that  
may belong to  
**you**  
dcunclaimedproperty  
.com

**CLICK  
HERE**

**International  
Reports  
.net**

*New Reports...*

**Venezuela**



**Slovenia**



**Aruba**



**Search our  
Archives**  
of over 80 reports  
on  
over 70 countries  
along with other  
important & useful  
international  
information



All site contents copyright © 2002 News World Communications, Inc.  
[Privacy Policy](#)

CLICK FOR YOUR  
**FREE CREDIT REPORT ONLINE**