



DEBRA SAUNDERS

English Prof Stands Up To Tyranny

Tuesday, July 4, 2000

San Francisco Chronicle
CHRONICLE SECTIONS

[DEBRA J. SAUNDERS](#)

AT MONTEREY Peninsula College, professors who want to teach new courses must submit course outlines that stipulate how ``course topics are treated to develop a knowledge and understanding of race, class and gender issues." The Loyalty Oath lives -- but now it demands one uniform outlook on ``diversity."

- [Printer-friendly version](#)
- [Email this article to a friend](#)

O, strange new oxymoron.

According to Curriculum Advisory Committee (CAC) chair Pat Lilley, even math and physics professors have to address this issue.

English professor David Clemens refused to play along. He submitted an outline for a new course, ``More or Less Human?" -- which through literature, television and film would explore the question: ``What is a human being, and what isn't?" Assigned texts would include, ``A Clockwork Orange," ``Brave New World" and ``Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?" Films would include, ``The Manchurian Candidate," ``Blade Runner" and ``2001: A Space Odyssey."

The English Department approved Clemens' course unanimously, as did the Humanities Division. But the CAC would not approve the course. Clemens had not given an acceptable answer to Item 14, ``race, class and gender issues." He instead wrote that the item was a requirement to denounce ``a hegemonic white male patriarchy." He added, ``The belief that an entire curriculum can and should be infused with a single `correct' viewpoint and doctrinaire intellectual

[That's Entertainment](#)

09/17/2000

[A Lifeline For Poor Kids In Bad Schools](#)

09/15/2000

[Wen Ho Lee Admits Felony, Finds Justice](#)

09/12/2000

Debra J Saunders Archives:

[SF Gate Home](#)

[Today's News](#)

[Sports](#)

[Entertainment](#)

[Technology](#)

[Live Views](#)

[Traffic](#)

[Weather](#)

[Health](#)

[Business](#)

[Bay Area Travel](#)

[Columnists](#)

[Classifieds](#)

[Conferences](#)

[Search](#)

[Index](#)

Jump to :

positioning is anathema to any definition of higher education because it circumscribes academic freedom, impoverishes faculty intellectual diversity and turns students into one-trick ponies."

English Department chair Margaret Koenig explained that Clemens' peers unanimously approved his outline -- with the Item 14 dissent -- in part because addressing diversity is "inherent in literature and humanities classes." She noted that Clemens effectively teaches a diverse student body

--that's his job -- but felt the CAC was "belaboring a point."

For Clemens, there is more at issue here than academic freedom. The so-called diversity crowd believes that literature is inextricably bound to one's gender and ethnicity. Clemens believes that the strong author transcends peg identity.

The CAC's Lilley said Clemens' course has not been rejected, but is pending. "This is a curriculum committee approved process to have a multicultural approach, or global approach, to all courses, but that is not the reason it was not approved," she said. The reason was "the format."

That is: Clemens reversed two items and his Item 14 answer "was not in good form," she said. After a first rejection, Clemens submitted an outline that essentially ignored the item. "This is a Title 5 regulation," Lilley wrote, referring to the state education code.

Except it isn't. Lilley later admitted that Title 5 does not require an answer to the question. She insisted that a University of California committee -- UC determines whether to accept course credits for transfer students -- demands a satisfactory response, although she couldn't name the committee.

If you can't name the committee, how do you know what it wants?

Lilley referred me to Admissions Dean Sharon Coniglio who said that the committee in question ``doesn't say you have to have an ethnic studies, gender requirement." A UC spokesman had no knowledge of any such UC requirement.

See how the CAC used its power to force nonbelievers into ideological submission -- or at least for nonbelievers to pretend they toe the line -- with so little conviction that Lilley tried to fob off her actions on the state code and UC.

Lilley has chaired the CAC for six years, she said, and Clemens is ``the first person to have a serious objection to the question."

Nobody ever complained? This is a good thing? If that is true, academia is no longer a home for independent minds.

[©2000 San Francisco Chronicle](#) Page A19

**DON'T MISS OUT.
SUBSCRIBE TODAY.**

San Francisco Chronicle

[Feedback](#)

 SF Gate