

Alberta university lodges rights complaint over professor accused of sharing anti-Semitic views

Lauren Krugel, The Canadian Press | January 16, 2017 | Last Updated: Jan 17 12:12 AM ET
<http://news.nationalpost.com/news/canada/university-of-lethbridge-complaining-to-human-rights-commission-over-prof>

LETHBRIDGE, Alta. — The University of Lethbridge says it is lodging a complaint with the Alberta Human Rights Commission about a longtime professor accused of espousing anti-Semitic views.

Anthony Hall was suspended without pay in October following comments he made in online articles and videos suggesting there was a Zionist connection to the 9/11 attacks and that the events of the Holocaust should be up for debate.

The university says its board of governors reviewed whether a complaint was warranted and justifiable.

“From the findings of that assessment, the board has decided to proceed with a complaint to the Alberta Human Rights Commission against Dr. Hall for publishing statements, alone and in collaboration with others, that could be considered hateful, contemptuous and discriminatory,” it said in a statement Monday.

Separately, the administration is reviewing complaints made against Hall by members of the university community.

The university said Hall’s pay has been reinstated because of how long the Alberta Human Rights Commission might take.

A commission spokeswoman said it could take years for a complaint to be heard by a tribunal.

Susan Coombes said details of complaints are kept confidential unless they proceed to a tribunal. There are a number of ways complaints can be resolved up to that point, she added.

Hall — a tenured professor who has taught Native American studies, liberal education and globalization over his 26 years at the university — said he last week received a letter dated Dec. 19 from university president Michael Mahon informing him of the complaint.

In the letter, which Hall provided to The Canadian Press, Mahon said that aside from pay, all other terms of the suspension remain unchanged. Hall is banned from teaching or supervising students, nor can he conduct research in the name of the university, use his affiliation with the university or set foot on campus.

Hall said the complaint is a way for the administration to manoeuvre around its collective agreement with faculty.

“It represents an enormous effort to change the landscape of higher education in Canada,” he said.

“I was ripped from the classroom mid-term in October and my students were deprived of the course they chose and the professor they chose.”

Both the University of Lethbridge Faculty Association and the Canadian Association of University Teachers criticized Hall’s suspension before any official finding of wrongdoing.

Amanda Hohmann with B’nai Brith Canada said she’s pleased with how the university has handled the situation and says the reinstatement of Hall’s pay isn’t a vindication.

“Certainly, we would support anything that means that the complaint would be handled properly and is going to succeed,” she said.

“We would hate to see something like this thrown out on a technicality.”

Hohmann said Hall’s appearance earlier this month on a radio show posted on Stormfront — a white nationalist website that describes itself as a “community of racial realists and idealists” — shows the complaint is not an assault on the institution of tenure, as Hall argues, but a defence of human rights.

“Instead of being repentant or apologizing for his behaviour, he’s doubled down and he’s gone even further down the rabbit hole of anti-Semitism,” she said.

Hall said his participation in the segment — which touched on his suspension, 9/11 theories and the plight of indigenous people, among other things — was not an endorsement of Stormfront beliefs.

“It must be understood that my position is very different than that of those who would segregate territory based on race,” he said.

“I condemn that and I think it’s important that we talk across different points of view.”