

Debatable topic should be encouraged

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WLU censures grad student for lesson that used TVO clip — Nov. 15

It seems that once a year Wilfrid Laurier University makes the news and for the wrong reasons. The last time it was regarding disallowing statues of Canada's Prime Ministers from campus and this year it is about censuring a graduate student for using a clip from TVO.

These two events have much in common and what is at stake is the reputation of WLU — the institution, its professors and the president.

Congratulations to graduate student Lindsey Shepherd for promoting critical thinking and debate in her Communication Studies tutorial for first-year students at Laurier.

Shame on professors Nathan Rambukkana and Herbert Pimlott for attempting to muzzle Ms. Shepherd and taking her to task by not appreciating the effort she made to engage students while making the topic of gender and language interesting and meaningful. Double shame goes to the professors for citing Hitler, white supremacists, transphobic and a toxic environment in their admonishment of their student.

It matters not what opinion one holds regarding U of T professor Jordan Peterson in the matter of gender pronouns. What matters is that this is a debatable topic which should be permitted and encouraged in a university. Ms Shepherd was not supporting one side over the other. She was merely promoting what her students have been doing since elementary school — the ability to think critically.

I encourage the professors at Laurier to read the words of Mark Mercer, president of the Society for Academic Freedom and Scholarship, as quoted in the story. Finally, I encourage Laurier's president to become involved and show leadership lest this university suffers greater damage to its reputation.

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