

Thought police strike again as Wilfrid Laurier grad student is chastised for showing Jordan Peterson video

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[CHRISTIE BLATCHFORD](#)

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A Wilfrid Laurier University teaching assistant has been identified as “transphobic” and sanctioned for last week showing her class an excerpt of a video debate involving the controversial University of Toronto psychology professor Jordan Peterson.

In fact, her supervising professor, Nathan Rambukkana, told her that by showing the video to her “Canadian Communication in Context” class, “it basically was like ... neutrally playing a speech by Hitler ...”

Lindsay Shepherd, a 22-year-old graduate student at the school in Waterloo, Ont., was informed that merely by showing the clip, taken from a televised debate between Peterson and Nicholas Matte, a lecturer at the U of T’s Sexual Diversity Studies program, she was “legitimizing” Peterson’s views about genderless pronouns.

She has been told that she must now submit her lesson plans to her supervisor in advance, that he may sit in on her next few classes and she must “not show any more controversial videos of this kind.”



Jordan Peterson speaks to a group at the Carleton Place Arena on Thursday, June 15, 2017. *Darren Brown / Ottawa Citizen/Ottawa Sun*

The debate was originally aired last fall on the well-regarded TVO news show *The Agenda*, hosted by Steve Paikin, when Peterson's YouTube lectures about the dangers of the then-looming federal Bill C-16 first went viral.

It was in the context of this bill, which added "gender expression" and "gender identity" to both the federal human rights act and the Criminal Code, that Peterson first publicly criticized the use of gender-neutral pronouns such as "zie", "zher" and "they" and found himself in a free speech battle.

The bill received royal assent in June and is now law.

Shepherd was this week hauled into a meeting with Rambukkana, program co-ordinator Herbert Pimlott and Adria Joel, acting manager of the “Gendered Violence Prevention and Support” program.

She was told that after she showed the five-minute video clip, “one student/many students” — the group refused to say how many students were unhappy because that information is deemed confidential — complained that she had created “a toxic climate.”



Jordan Peterson, Canadian clinical psychologist and professor of psychology at the University of Toronto, poses for a portrait at his home in Toronto, Ontario, May 31, 2017

Spunkily, she asked if she was supposed to shelter students from controversial ideas. “Am I supposed to comfort them?” she asked at one point, bewildered, and said it was antithetical to the spirit of a university.

Rambukkana then informed her that since Bill C-16 was passed, even making such “arguments run(s) counter” to the law.

In the 35-minute meeting, where she was outnumbered three to one, Shepherd vigorously defended herself, explaining she had been scrupulously even-handed and not taken a position herself or endorsed Peterson’s remarks before showing the video, and that her students seemed engaged by it, and had expressed a wide range of opinions.

But that was part of the problem, she was told — by presenting the matter neutrally, and not condemning Peterson’s views as “problematic” or worse, she was cultivating “a space where those opinions can be nurtured.”



Wilfrid Laurier university campus in downtown Brantford. *RANDY RICHMOND / THE LONDON FREE PRESS / QMI AGENCY*

The two professors seemed suspicious that perhaps Shepherd was a plant of Peterson’s, and were alert to any hint that she was a closet supporter of the dread “alt-right” movement they both mentioned.

Rambukkana asked her off the top if she wasn't from the University of Toronto, and Shepherd said no.

In fact, she got her B.A. (Honours with Distinction) in Communication, with a minor in political science, from Simon Fraser University and is a native of Burnaby, B.C. She was accepted to Wilfrid Laurier on a \$4,500 graduate scholarship, in addition to her TA funding package.

Ah, said Rambukkana, "so you're not one of Jordan Peterson's students."

He then told her Peterson was "highly involved with the alt-right," that he had bullied his own students and asked, "do you see why this is not something ... that is up for debate?"

When Shepherd protested that it is very much up for debate, Rambukkana chastised her by saying the discussion creates an "unsafe learning environment."

He then told her the university was being "blanketed" by white power posters, and asked if she would show a class a white supremacist in debate. Shepherd replied, "if that was the content of the week (the lesson), yeah, maybe."

At one point, she was asked how she would feel, if she was a trans person, seeing a video of Peterson, and she said she didn't know, but that she believed a university's job was to make its students stronger.

"Is it your position these students are not strong?" one of the professors immediately demanded.

Pimlott seemed obsessed with scholarly qualifications — his own and Peterson's alleged lack of same — and at one point expressed amusement at the way Peterson characterized the left as being in power in academia and "you're going

to be in prison” if you don’t use people’s preferred pronouns or profess loyalty to cultural Marxism.

Everyone is entitled to their opinions, Pimlott said, but the university has a “duty to make sure we’re not furthering ... Jordan Peterson.”

They were oblivious to the fact that they themselves were proving him right by holding the 2017 equivalent of the “struggle sessions” so beloved in Mao’s China.

Shepherd is now sufficiently disillusioned, she told Postmedia Friday, that she is “about 70-per-cent sure I will be leaving Wilfrid Laurier after this semester is over.”

None of Rambukkana, Pimlott or Joel replied to emails from Postmedia.