

SAFS Newsletter

Society for Academic Freedom and Scholarship

Maintaining freedom in teaching, research and scholarship
Maintaining standards of excellence in academic decisions about students and faculty

Number 72

www.safs.ca

January 2016

IN THIS ISSUE

Stephen Perrott, LET'S NOT THINK THE BATTLE HAS BEEN WON.....	1
Conor Friedersdorf, A FACULTY UNITES TO CHAMPION FREE SPEECH ON CAMPUS	3
SAFS MEMBER WINS INAUGURAL PARMENIDES AWARD	4
Frances Widdowson, "INDIGENIZING THE UNIVERSITY": IMPROVING EDUCATION OR INVEIGLING CONDESCENSION?	5
Jeff Muehlbauer, THE ASSAULT ON ABORIGINAL MEMORY IN THE NATIVE STUDIES CURRICULUM	8
Peter Suedfeld, REVIEW OF FLEMMING ROSE, THE TYRANNY OF SILENCE	11
The National Post, FREE SPEECH MATTERS, IN QUEBEC AND ON CAMPUS.....	13
Heinz Klatt, NEW OTTAWA U HEAD'S TRACK RECORD CAUSE FOR CONCERN	14
Frank Furedi, MICROAGGRESSION THEORY: AN ASSAULT ON EVERYDAY LIFE.....	14
Tom Flanagan, WE CAN'T IGNORE THE WARNING SIGNS ON U.S. CAMPUSES.....	18
Mark Mercer, UBC'S DANGEROUS INTENTION TO CREATE AN ACADEMIC FREEDOM OFFICER	19
SAFS LETTER TO LAURENTIAN UNIVERSITY RE: MICHAEL PERSINGER	21

LET'S NOT THINK THE BATTLE HAS BEEN WON

Stephen Perrott

Those of us dismayed by the loss of free speech and critical thought in the Western university might be heartened by the recent melodramas at Yale and the University of Missouri. Perhaps the micro-aggression and safe space movement will now begin to crumble under the weight of its own absurdity. After all, what fiction writer could come up with an archetypal figure like Melissa Click, the communications professor who called for muscle to evict

a student reporter from her safe, but very public, space?

The situation of the Master and Associate Master of Yale's Silliman College is at least as bizarre. For anyone to see racism, or even insensitivity, in their rather innocuous call for tolerance, civility, and adult judgment would have been considered delusional not so long ago. That a privileged Yale senior could scream and curse at Nicholas Christakis while claiming—and, in some circles, achieving—victim status, makes a mockery of Martin Luther King's call for all people to be judged on the basis of their character. Take a look at the video to see just how fearful she was.

There finally seems to be a growing push back

SUBMISSIONS TO THE SAFS NEWSLETTER

The SAFS Newsletter is published three times a year (September, January, and April) by the Society for Academic Freedom and Scholarship and is edited by the Society's president, Mark Mercer.

The editor welcomes articles, case studies, news items, book reviews, and letters. Send submissions by email to president@safs.ca or by letter mail to SAFS, PO Box 33056 Quinpool Centre, Halifax, NS B3L 4T6.

against this lunacy, in part, perhaps, because wider swaths of the general public are coming to learn what passes for the pursuit of social justice in today's university. There is even hope for change within the academy. Everett Piper, Oklahoma Wesleyan president, was recently quoted by NBC as criticizing students for claiming victim status "every time their feelings are hurt" while reminding them that "This is not a daycare. It is a university." Now, that's pretty heady stuff coming from a university administrator.

Perhaps the most effective force for change will be the growing number of self-identified progressives who are recognizing the error of the current path. Sometimes this realisation comes without prodding and sometimes it is because club members find themselves getting burned.

Consider the situation of Northwestern film professor Laura Kipness who, in an opinion piece published last February in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, dared question the "sexual paranoia" and infantilization of students on her campus and beyond. Her views not only sparked the now predictable outrage, but placed her on the wrong end of a Title IX investigation that dragged on for months before she was eventually cleared. Predictably, the actions of the complainants and their supporters cemented Kipness's thesis and, just as predictably, this irony was lost on the outraged mob.

Still, it's far from a sure bet. It may be that what is perceived here as rumblings of change are really just the death throes of free speech in Western uni-

versities. It was only a decade ago we thought we had seen the end of 1990s political correctness, but the current resurgence in intolerance is making that period look mild by comparison. We would be unwise to underestimate the power of the authoritarians driving this illiberalism, the political cowardice of university administrations, or the apathy of the general public.

Yale's William F. Buckley Program recently sponsored a multi-campus survey of 800 American undergraduates showing that 51% supported speech codes (with only 36% opposed) and that 63% would call for mandatory "trigger warnings" from professors. With every pundit appearing on MSNBC, CNN, and our own CBC decrying what is happening there is usually a well-educated and seemingly intelligent counter-pundit defending it. We would be overly sanguine to think that Nicholas Christakis kept his job because his administration realised how ridiculous the situation was or even because the growing public push-back forced them to see the light. We will never know what might have happened to him had he not engaged in his soul-selling mea culpa.

It's also disconcerting that the professors finally finding some backbone rest heavily on a "those silly kids" style of explanation. Perhaps brave enough to label the students as "cupcakes," they often conveniently forget about who mixed the batter and turned on the oven. Others see the "piling on" phenomenon as it relates to Melissa Click as cheap and sensational; they, of course, do not mean to defend her but "don't you know" that every movement has its eccentrics? They conveniently forget the many Melissa Clicks, male and female, who work around them separated from their own notoriety by a single lapse in judgment.

This may be the last best time to reclaim our institutions so that they can once again be universities. Of course, those who spearhead this anti-intellectual movement remain in the minority, but they are a minority who call the shots and they are growing in number. Those of us who know better too often remain silent for fear of being ostracised and, over time, find our own thinking shifting towards

the normalization of the phenomenon. That is, after all, how thinking works. To recognize that one is a coward is to create uncomfortable cognitive dissonance, reduced readily enough by coming up with mini-justifications. After all, how bad can it be to support the promotion of social justice? Maybe some antics used are excessive but, on balance, I'm in.

For most of my twenty-five years in the academy, the thought-authoritarians defended their positions and offered rationales, however hackneyed, about how they weren't really squashing free speech and vilifying competing perspectives. More recently, though, the agents of correct thinking see less-and-less of a need to try to justify their departure from the bedrock tenets of the academy. Whereas they once criticized the pursuit of truth as being biased and called for fresh perspectives from marginalized groups, they have now arrived at the truth and wish to prevent any further exploration.

Many junior professors left graduate school having already been fully indoctrinated in the prevailing orthodoxy. Sure, some arrive in their new positions with more scholarly views of what the university is supposed to be, but those thoughts, they seem to reason, are best kept to oneself. After so many years of schooling and a lottery win that gives them a shot at tenure, it's hard to judge them too critically. No, it's those of us who have been around for a while, who know what is happening is wrong, and who still acquiesce for comfort's sake who are the cowards. And, once we are gone, just how many will be left who really do know better?

Stephen Perrott, a member of SAFS, is Professor of Psychology at Mount Saint Vincent University, in Halifax

A FACULTY UNITES TO CHAMPION FREE SPEECH ON CAMPUS: American University's faculty senate unanimously passed a resolution asserting that unfettered expression is a non-negotiable value at colleges

Conor Friedersdorf

Were John Stuart Mill alive, he would say that

silencing the expression of an opinion is evil. "It is robbing the human race; posterity as well as the existing generation; those who dissent from the opinion, still more than those who hold it," he wrote. "If the opinion is right, they are deprived of the opportunity of exchanging error for truth: if wrong, they lose, what is almost as great a benefit, the clearer perception and livelier impression of truth, produced by its collision with error."

That tradition still has its defenders.

In the academy, they are worried about ongoing challenges to speech on campus. Many keep quiet. At American University, however, faculty leaders just took a stand. The faculty senate unanimously passed a resolution earlier this month reaffirming their commitment to free expression. Its language is refreshingly direct and unambiguous. "For hundreds of years, the pursuit of knowledge has been at the center of university life," it states. "Unfettered discourse, no matter how controversial, inconvenient, or uncomfortable, is a condition necessary to that pursuit."

The resolution inveighs against recent trends. "As limits, subtle or explicit, are increasingly placed on intellectual freedom in venues of public discourse, the academy is committed to the full expression of ideas," it declares. "As laws and individual sensitivities may seek to restrict, label, warn, or exclude specific content, the academy must stand firm as a place that is open to diverse ideas and free expression."

On those standards and principles, "American University will not compromise," it vows.

The resolution adds, "American University is committed to protecting and championing the right to freely communicate ideas—without censorship—and to study material as it is written, produced, or stated, even material that some members of our community may find disturbing or that provokes uncomfortable feelings. This freedom is an integral part of learning... and an obligation from which we cannot shrink." So-called "trigger warnings," which have

evolved away from merely seeking to avert triggering episodes of post-traumatic stress disorder, are explicitly addressed:

Faculty may advise students before exposing them to controversial readings and materials that are part of their curricula. However, the Faculty Senate does not endorse offering “trigger warnings” or otherwise labeling controversial material in such a way that students construe it as an option to “opt out” of engaging with texts or concepts, or otherwise not participating in intellectual inquiries. Faculty should direct students who experience personal difficulties from exposure to controversial issues to resources available at American University’s support-services.

That strikes the right balance.

Just as academic freedom should protect faculty members who wish to eschew “trigger warnings,” so too should it protect those who decide to offer some form of them.

On Sunday, Kate Manne, an assistant professor of philosophy at Cornell University, published a piece in the *New York Times* on why she uses some trigger warnings—I leave off the quotes here because she is arguably most interested in staving off actual episodes of PTSD. “Although I see a willingness to use trigger warnings as part of pedagogical best practices, I don’t believe their use should be mandatory,” she declared. “There is already too much threat to academic freedom at the moment because of top-down interference from overreaching administrators.”

As well, she wrote:

“Criticisms of trigger warnings are often based on the idea that college is a time for intellectual growth and emotional development. For this to happen, students must be challenged. And they need to learn to engage rationally with ideas, arguments and views they find difficult, upsetting or even repulsive.”

“On this count,” she continued, “I agree with

the critics, and it is in fact the main reason that I do issue warnings.” Whatever one thinks of her reasoning as it unfolds over the remainder of her op-ed, it suggests that even prominent advocates of trigger warnings can find a lot to like in the American University faculty resolution.

Perhaps similar resolutions could pass elsewhere.

That would send a powerful message to both the student activists pressuring faculty from below and to administrators usurping academic governance from above: Academic freedom and freedom of expression are non-negotiables on campus. Tenured professors who agree but haven’t spoken out are especially derelict in their duty, and should take this opportunity to associate themselves with their AU colleagues, who seem to have been influenced in part by last month’s *Atlantic* cover story, “The Coddling of the American Mind” by Greg Lukianoff and Jonathan Haidt.

Speaking up matters, for there is a bigger coalition behind academic freedom and freedom of expression than countervailing trends on campus would seem to suggest.

Where will these voices make themselves heard next?

Conor Friedersdorf is a staff writer at The Atlantic, where this article appeared on 23 September 2015. <http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/09/a-faculty-unites-to-champion-free-speech-on-campus/406822/> Reprinted by permission.

SAFS MEMBER WINS INAUGURAL PARMENIDES AWARD

Andrew Irvine, Professor of Philosophy at the University of British Columbia Okanagan and a long-serving member of the SAFS Board of Directors, has been presented the 2015 Parmenides Award for contributions to the study of Ancient Greek Philosophy and Science.

Andrew received the award on 19 November at the third annual International Philosophical Forum Anadrasis, a forum held in connection with World Philosophy Day.

“The forum and its associated award ceremony help promote worldwide dialogue among authors, artists and scientists, and help advance Hellenic culture and the Western philosophical tradition. More than 300 scientists, thinkers and researchers from Greece and abroad participated in this year’s conference,” explained May Li, in the UBC Okanagan news. (<https://news.ok.ubc.ca/ikbarberschool/2015/12/04/philosophy-professor-andrew-irvine-awarded-inaugural-parmenides-award/>)

Li quotes Andrew as saying “The promotion of World Philosophy Day by both UNESCO and the International Philosophical Forum is appreciated around the world. At a time when so much of Europe is facing so many challenges, Greece’s continued championing of western philosophical values is of special importance.

“Over the years, UBC has been tremendously supportive of the research that I and others have done. The Okanagan campus in particular gives both students and faculty the freedom to pursue their interests. It’s a very special place.”

**“INDIGENIZING THE UNIVERSITY”:
IMPROVING EDUCATION OR
INVEIGLING CONDESCENSION?**

Frances Widdowson

“Although only a few may originate a policy, we are all able to judge it” – Pericles of Athens

In many universities across the country, a new policy initiative is emerging—“Indigenizing the University”. This initiative has its roots in the Association of Canadian Deans of Education’s Accord on Indigenous Education, which encourages the blanket incorporation of indigenous cultural features, including aboriginal “ways of

knowing” and “knowledge systems”, into “all Canadian learning settings.” My own institution, Mount Royal University (MRU), has embraced this advocacy in its draft Aboriginal Strategic Plan. The draft Plan is intent on “meeting the educational needs of all Indigenous peoples and their allies” with a commitment to “recognize, value and apply Indigenous knowledge, culturally responsive pedagogies and practices”.

While universities are to be commended for trying to address the educational needs of aboriginal students so as to improve the low level of educational achievement that exists in native communities, attempts to “Indigenize the University” have serious problems in their efforts to achieve this objective. This is because a great deal of what is being proposed has the potential to diminish, not improve, educational quality at Canadian universities. A negative educational effect is likely because documents exhorting university indigenization evade defining the terms necessary for understanding the policy implications, and it is implied that respect for aboriginal people entails an acceptance of all of their ideas.

The Lack of Definitions of Important Terms

How can one be in favour of something that is not understood? This is a major problem with documents pertaining to “Indigenizing the University”, including MRU’s draft Aboriginal Strategic Plan. While several words commonly used in a university setting – “knowledge”, “research methodologies”, “scholarship”, “research ethics”, and “pedagogy” – are given an “Indigenous” adjective, there is no attempt to define the meaning of the “Indigenous” addition, or to show how this makes the various terms different from their non-indigenous counterparts.

Providing definitions is especially important because, when one examines the literature on indigenous “knowledge” and “pedagogy”, what is referred to is often inconsistent with academic attempts to understand the world (both natural and social). Many examples of “Indigenous knowledge”, in fact, consist of aboriginal spiri-

tual beliefs that are actually contrary to knowledge. We are told, for example, that “Indigenous knowledge” includes giving thanks to the sun or moon otherwise they “will one day stop fulfilling their duties and not rise in the morning and the evening”, that humans can turn into non-human animals and vice-versa, that throwing beaver fetuses into lakes enables them to be “reborn”, etc., in documents discussing the subject. In the social sciences and humanities there are also problems with various historical claims, whereby the myths of indigenous groups are recounted as accurate representations of the past. In “Indigenous archaeology”, for example, it is maintained that aboriginal people did not migrate from the Old World thousands of years ago, since some aboriginal people believe that they were “created” in North America in the “beginning of time”.

Similar problems exist with respect to the references to “Indigenous pedagogy”. Discussions of this in the literature have little to do with the study of teaching. They concern the use of oral (as opposed to written) communication and teaching by example rather than using abstract instruction. Betty Bastien, in her article “Indigenous Pedagogy: A Way Out of Dependence”, even asserts that “[t]raditional learning is premised on a ‘knowing’ that is generated through a participatory and experiential process involving kinship relationship networks known as alliances”. This includes the use of prayer as a mechanism to maintain a “path for good relations among one’s alliances”. But it would be a serious problem for professors at a secular institution like Mount Royal University to use prayer as part of the teaching process, or to avoid written assignments or abstract instruction. The former is a violation of the right to be free from religion; the latter ignores the fundamental importance of clear writing and the development of abstract thought for increasing our understanding of the universe.

Confusing Respect for People with Respecting Their Ideas

All people are entitled to respect. This is especially important in a university environment, as

the educational experience is enhanced when empathy is shown towards others and fairness is embraced as a principle. Universities should provide a welcoming environment for all students, encouraging them to inquire about the ways of the world and to seek the truth. Respecting a person as a human being with a right to dignity and security, however, does not include respecting their ideas. No idea should be “respected” or “honoured”; there should be continuous questioning of all ideas so that we can improve human understanding.

The confusion between respect for people and respecting their ideas can be seen in the assertion of Universities Canada (an association of Canadian university presidents) that “[m]utual respect for different ways of knowing and recognizing the intellectual contributions of Indigenous people is essential to building trust, understanding, and sharing”. Here “respect for different ways of knowing” is linked to both “trust”/“sharing” (social considerations) and “understanding” (an aspect of knowledge). While Universities Canada argues that “[t]he cohabitation of Western science and Indigenous knowledge on campuses has the power of opening a dialogue among cultures and enhancing our shared knowledge” (again conflating social considerations such as “opening a dialogue” with “enhancing...knowledge”), this will only be possible if we have methods for separating true claims from those that are false. The insistence that “Indigenous knowledge” be “respected” and “honoured” inhibits the evaluation of evidence that is needed to develop shared knowledge. Effusive pronouncements to “Indigenize the University” are actually asking academics to forego critical thinking processes and to accept, without question, that “Indigenous knowledge” and “Indigenous pedagogy” will contribute to educational processes.

Similar problems exist with respect to the demands to “respect” and “honour” indigenous “traditions and practices”. Once again, respect for a practice or tradition cannot be predetermined; it requires evaluating whether or not a practice is socially beneficial. What happens

when an Indigenous practice or tradition is perceived to be harmful? Does “Indigenizing the University” demand that this practice be “welcomed” anyway? This tension has arisen at a number of universities, where indigenous elders presiding over ceremonies declared that it was in keeping with their traditions that women should wear long skirts, and that menstruating women be prohibited from attending. This led a number of faculty members to argue that this “traditional practice” was discriminatory and undermined equitable relations between men and women.

A particularly disturbing aspect of the “Indigenizing the University” initiative is the constant assumption that being an aboriginal person necessitates an acceptance of spiritual beliefs. It is this assumption that leads to the ubiquitous holding of prayers at any gathering that is linked to aboriginal people, as well as MRU’s concern with “[e]nsur[ing] spiritual...student success” and instituting “culturally appropriate...spiritual resources”. While all members of the MRU community are entitled to believe whatever they want, it is inappropriate for a secular educational institution that promotes critical thinking to encourage students, faculty or staff to hold beliefs that are contrary to reason. In addition, the assumption that a particular group of people inherently holds spiritual beliefs constitutes a racial stereotype.

“Indigenizing the University” implies that “respecting” and “honouring” Indigenous ideas, traditions, and practices will build trust between aboriginal and non-aboriginal people and facilitate reconciliation. But building trust and achieving meaningful reconciliation requires honesty. For universities to demand that professors venerate ideas, traditions and practices with which they oppose is to compromise their academic integrity. It is also extremely condescending towards aboriginal individuals, and deprives them of engaging with the critical analysis needed for intellectual development.

Opposing Condescension Masquerading as Respect

Professors in Canada cannot ethically support

“Indigenizing the University” until it is understood what the “Indigenous” adjective means for concepts such as “knowledge”, “research methodologies”, “scholarship”, “research ethics”, and “pedagogy”. Until this is made clear, professors should refuse to participate in the initiative as it could result in a lowering of educational standards and the quality of scholarship at Canadian universities.

Rather than encouraging professors to critically analyze the “Indigenizing the University” initiative, MRU’s draft Aboriginal Strategic Plan assumes that it is automatically beneficial for the entire university community; supporters of the initiative are perceived as “allies” of aboriginal people, implying that potential critics are their enemies. MRU’s draft Aboriginal Strategic Plan even identifies “[s]trong/active individual opposition by MRU community members” to university indigenization as a “barrier” that must be overcome to achieve the “decolonization of education”.

Demanding that professors unconditionally “respect” and “honour” anything that is deemed to be “Indigenous” cannot result in educational improvement or “reconciliation”. Educational achievement can only be improved if aboriginal people are better able to understand the world around them. This understanding cannot emerge if it is pretended that ideas contrary to knowledge are true. Deceiving others, even if it is rooted in good intentions, also cannot inspire trust. One of the most liberating effects of a real education is that it reveals that we can break free from the chains of tradition. To deny this realization to aboriginal people is a form of educational malpractice, preventing them from becoming actual contributors to knowledge production and human progress.

Frances Widdowson, a member of SAFS, is Associate Professor, Department of Economics, Justice and Policy Studies, at Mount Royal University, in Calgary

THE ASSAULT ON ABORIGINAL MEMORY IN THE NATIVE STUDIES CURRICULUM

Jeff Muehlbauer

For the past ten years, Canada has been in the throes of a national argument about memory and aboriginal experience. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission and other organizations have been set up to document the memories of aboriginal people who came through the Residential School system. There have also been other large-scale initiatives with significant funding to do Cultural Preservation and Language Revitalization. Universities have borne a fair bit of the pressure, with mandatory Native Studies curricula and cultural sensitivity training. Universities have received significantly increased funding for Native Studies programs.

Ironically, the demand for memory has not helped memory as much as we might hope. In a number of situations, memory has been cherry-picked in the service of political agendas, and the chief cherry-picker is the university Native Studies programs. The majority of these programs have shed their scholarly origin, with its venerable tradition encompassing some of the very best scholars in anthropology, history, linguistics, and literature, including many significant aboriginal scholars. While this tradition still continues in some programs in Canada, many Native Studies programs are being filled with faculty who have no knowledge of the differences among aboriginal nations or of the languages they speak. With nothing of substance to teach, these professors exclusively seek the politicization of their students and the accrual of power from that process. This is a death trap for memory; ideologies require simplifications and compressions. They necessarily must excise large chunks of memory, and their main tool is the purge of those who refuse to forget.

As is inevitable with all purges, the knife has turned inward, and now aboriginal people and aboriginal memories are being excised in the same ways that “white” and “settler” perspec-

tives were already cut out. The majority of historical aboriginal voices are being silenced forever, embedded in endangered languages and world views deprecated by the highly-aculturated Native Studies literati who control transmission. Whole swathes of the past are being clear-cut.

I ought to know. I am a linguist who worked with aboriginal groups in Western Canada through graduate school, through my SSHRC post-doctoral research, and finally in my Assistant Professor position in Native Studies at Brandon University - the oldest Native Studies program in Canada. As a linguist, it is my job to work with the people who still speak the language. My primary responsibility is to the language and the contexts it is embedded in; I take no side in political issues. As it turned out, this commitment meant that I was destined to run into serious conflict with the Native Studies establishment. People who cannot understand any aboriginal language can hardly care about the integrity of the linguistic legacy.

Agendas and Memory: Emma Minde

My years in the world of Native Studies have furnished me with many more examples of Native Studies’ censorship of aboriginal voices than a reader could have stamina to read about. However, a particularly egregious example stands out: the case of Emma Minde.

Emma Memnook was a Plains Cree woman born at the Saddle Lake reserve in Alberta in the early 20th Century. In her youth, she attended a Catholic residential school. She married Joe Minde, a member of an important family of the Ermineskin reserve at Hobbema. Her children and grandchildren have become some of the most influential and widely-known aboriginal people in Alberta. Late in her life, she met with Freda Ahenakew and told her a series of *âcimowina*, personal narratives, meant to offer a coda to her life. These were subsequently published as an edited, bi-lingual volume by Ahenakew and H.C. Wolfart.

I worked through Emma’s *âcimowina* with several speakers, including a number of people

on the adjacent reserves and one of her own grand-daughters. Emma's Cree is, by all standards, impeccable. Her discourse structure, her word usage, her intonation, her command of the complex morphology, syntax, and phonology of the language are unassailable. I know her steady, quiet voice well; in graduate school, I used to hear it in my sleep. The hours I spent with her, mediated by the recordings and texts, have given her a space permanently in my head.

This would all appear to be ideal for a Native Studies curriculum - the voice of a true matriarch, speaking to the most respected Cree-speaking scholar of the language, in elegant Cree, about her life and memories. However, Emma was unacceptable - she remembered.

The most striking thing, to me, about Emma's narratives is the fierce way she remembers the past. She did not want to marry her husband - he was a stranger to her and a rough man. She felt alone and shy as a child. There is conflict and misunderstandings with her parents. She struggled to accept her husband's alcoholism, her status in a foreign community, and the kind of demanding work she had to face. Her perspective was staunchly her own, and she made no excuses for it.

Emma was also Roman Catholic. Unapologetically Catholic, outspokenly Catholic. In fine Cree rhetorical style, she recounts her service with the priests and nuns. She offers homilies on the need for a good, religious life. And she remembers events during her time at the Residential School as important building blocks of her character, a basis for her personal development.

She was not a 'good Indian' for the new ideological reserve. People in Native Studies know better now - they know that people like her shouldn't be allowed to be heard. They will save us from her since they could not save her from herself.

The Purge of Emma Minde

One of the best ways to teach a language is to

give students as much exposure to it in its natural context as possible. Immersion is a popular way, but for a language with few speakers - far-flung and in social distress - immersive contexts are tragically lacking. Additionally, students regularly expressed fear of trying to speak in front of their fluent elders, for fear of harsh judgement. I reasoned that an alternative would be the method I had seen used when I learned German, Icelandic, Greek, and Latin; go to the texts. People from the past will talk to you as often as you want, will say it again, slower, will tell you stories that have meaning, will give you a connection to history, continuity. So I picked out sentences and recordings from the relatively vast Cree literature and used them as part of the core language curriculum. Among these was Emma Minde.

In the course of the readings, a few very vocal students expressed surprise and anger at Emma's positivity towards the Residential School experience, as well as anger at her Catholicism. Having worked with people who suffered horrific abuse in the Residential School system, having heard them describe their experiences personally, I was not surprised that they had a strong reaction. However, I did not expect them to assert that all Residential School experiences were abusive. Not even my friend who had had needles stuck through her tongue for speaking her language claimed that. There was such a diversity of experience, and respecting that diversity of perspectives is actually a core Cree value.

As is often the case for 'triggered' students and politicized departments, it was only an eye-blink from Emma Minde's narratives to accusations that I approved of Residential School abuses, that I was tantamount to such an abuser myself. Other professors in my department were happy to foment student agitation, preferring that students yell and disrupt rather than listen and discuss. In the racialized cloister of Native Studies, identity is always conditional on ideology. I was the Evil White Man and Emma wasn't Real Cree. If the students wanted to prove that they were Real Indians, they would have to toe the ideological line.

I remember the exact moment and place that Emma Minde got purged from the Native Studies curriculum at Brandon University. I was in the Dean's office, being lectured by the head of my department on my transgressions and the ways I needed to repent my heterodoxy. He explained that the Native Studies department explicitly teaches that Residential School abuse was universal - something experienced by all people who attended one. He acknowledged that many people claimed they weren't abused, but that was 'too complicated' for these early students. In their curriculum, Emma Minde would be categorized as being abused, but not knowing it. You couldn't just let her speak for herself, you had to interpret that stuff for them, in a higher-level class. She did not know her own experience - they knew it better. I was in awe. At best, she was a fool and an idiot. At worst, they were calling her a liar, *ki-yâtisk*, *okakiyâskisk*, one of the worst things you could call a Cree person.

Because I was allowing heterodoxy into my classroom, I was responsible for the student behavior. It was my fault that the other professors were telling students I was a Residential School supporter. It was my fault that the students were disruptive, refusing to take their tests, talking over me, shouting. It was my fault that I could not do my job. After all, I was allowing stuff like Emma Minde into the classroom. What did I expect? The department head leaned back in his chair and grinned, saying that Native Studies faculty regularly use students to attack other faculty "until they learn their lesson." Previously, Philosophy had been a favorite target. The Dean sat by while this was discussed and then suggested that I cut the stuff like Emma Minde. That would calm everyone down.

Ideological purges are never satisfied. What about the other Cree speakers I worked with? One was a devout Catholic and a staunch Conservative voter. Another was an Anglican who composed hymns. What about them? Silence. I apparently already knew the answer. I was the White Man in Native Studies, after all. I was on borrowed time myself. Purge or be purged.

My classes were in flames. I could not get students to finish their work. I managed to get class material covered in about 20% of class minutes. They did not respect me, the literature I gave them, or the general language curriculum. In this, they had ample encouragement from my Native Studies colleagues, who were taking time from their own classes to attack me as a "whiteman," telling students that the Cree texts were fabricated and that I had no right to teach. The Dean and my department head made it clear that the harassment and disruption would continue until I fell in line, and part of that improvement in my behavior explicitly required the purge of Emma Minde and other offending material.

And so I had a choice. Do I purge Emma Minde, stop working with people who have heterodox views? Do I get in line as best a Whiteman can, submit to my re-education, produce the necessary self-criticism materials to get me out of internment, accept the findings of the student-led kangaroo court? Do I present the students with a manicured curriculum that suited the political agenda of Native Studies? Or do I refuse?

I refused. That is how me and Emma Minde got purged together.

A purge by any name

The landscape of memory is one that the modern Native Studies scholar appears to be unable to inhabit. Not satisfied to simply leave it behind, they have instead taken the torch to it. We are all standing in the glow of that bonfire.

In the ashes of this era, the past will be a simple place, with a single message. The Native Studies pogrom will pound with its ideological hammer, hard, into the skulls of young people who have little defense, who are already afraid of not being *mitoni-nêhiyawak* 'real Indians,' who already are suffering from a conditional identity. They will never know that being Cree, being anything, is more than adhering to an ideology. They will never hear about Cree people like Emma Minde, or Joseph Dion, or Freda,

Alice, and Andrew Ahenakew. They will never be aware of Coming Day's and Louis Moosomin's *âtayôhkêwina*, their sacred stories, tainted as they are by the Whiteman who transcribed them. *Kâ-pimwêwêhahk*, a name they can neither pronounce nor translate, has also been deprecated by Brandon University's Native Studies faculty, and he will go to the trash heap alongside the Evil Whitemen: Leonard Bloomfield, Charles Hockett, David Mandelbaum, H.C. Wolfart, David Pentland - and me. I am in the boneyard now. I prefer it here. I was never very good with matches.

They will try to say it's not like this, of course. It's all much more complicated than I'm making it out to be. But their story has the ring of what the powerful tell themselves about those they have silenced. Emma Minde is gone. *Kâ-pimwêwêhahk* is gone. All those voices are gone - more voices, in fact, than remain. And they cut them. Call it what you want, put whatever nicer words on it than I have - a clear-cut forest is still clear-cut. And there they are, holding the chainsaw.

Jeff Muehlbauer is a linguist who specializes in Cree. Besides working as an independent scholar, he runs, together with several other linguists, a tech-startup—Verbulous Inc.—that designs algorithmic dialogue systems.

REVIEW OF FLEMMING ROSE, *THE TYRANNY OF SILENCE*

Peter Suedfeld

Flemming Rose, *The Tyranny of Silence: How One Cartoon Ignited a Global Debate on the Future of Free Speech* (Washington, DC: Cato Institute, 2014). ISBN: 978-1-939709-42-4

The author was the culture editor of the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* who, in 2005, in reaction to several episodes of Western self-censorship in apprehension of Islamic anger, invited forty cartoonists to submit to the newspaper

drawings of Mohammed. Some of the twelve cartoons that were eventually published satirized *Jyllands-Posten's* project while others did not show the Muslim prophet at all. Only a few could be characterized by an objective observer as an affront to religion.

But objective observers were irrelevant. A few months after publication, the cartoons were combined with some really offensive ones by Danish Muslim clerics and widely publicized as all being from the newspaper, purportedly to demonstrate anti-Muslim hatred—ironically, in one of the most tolerant of nations. The results included death threats, plots, and actual attempts against the cartoonists and against Rose himself, a bomb plot against the newspaper, attacks against Danish embassies, a boycott of Danish goods, and riots in Africa and the Middle East that killed over 200 people.

It is not clear how much of the outrage can be attributed to the mere fact of printing drawings of Mohammed and how much to perceived insults in the cartoons. Rose analyzes the competing Muslim positions on depictions of Mohammed. These range from acceptance—such depictions appear in Muslim art—to neutrality concerning non-Muslims' activities in this regard, to the fury of the “grievance fundamentalists” (in Rose's apt phrase), whose position is that no one anywhere can be allowed to contravene the strictest interpretation of any Islamic tenet or even custom. It was this segment of Muslims that produces the murderers, would-be murderers, bombers, and rioters who violently assault any critic of any aspect of Islamic practice. The cases of Theo van Gogh, Salman Rushdie, and Ayaan Hirsi Ali are only the best-known instances of people living in Europe whose words have brought them death or a life under constant threat. The number of Muslims who have been murdered or executed for “blasphemy” or “apostasy” is unknown, but clearly large.

Much of this will be familiar to readers of this review. The real impact of the book lies in Rose's examination of the wider effects of these at-

tempts to suppress free speech. Surprisingly, many Western commentators, journalists, writers, and that amorphous group, “public intellectuals,” disgraced themselves by siding with the censors. Muslim intolerance was supported by individuals who otherwise supported freedom: critics who defend the right of publications, museums, and galleries to show anti-Christian and anti-Semitic works indicted *Jyllens-Posten* for its insensitivity to the feelings of Muslims. There is ample evidence that many artists, writers, academics, politicians, and ordinary citizens accord the same privileged status to Islam, acceding to the grievance fundamentalists’ demands that it alone be sacrosanct and immune to criticism while Islamists are free to insult and defame other religions.

Where does the “global debate” stand now? The popular outrage at the Charlie Hebdo massacre was a bright spot in the defence of freedom, although even that was not unanimous. Nor has it lasted very long in the face of subsequent assertions of “Islamophobia” whenever anyone publicly discusses jihad terrorism, beheadings, or forced marriage. Grievance fundamentalists habitually characterize the exercise of free speech as the offence and violent responders as the victims, claiming to see Islamophobia not only in criticisms, but even in straightforward reporting of facts. Around Europe, in some jurisdictions in North America, and in the United Nations, Islam enjoys special immunity. Regardless of their phrasing, proposed and actual prohibitions of “blasphemy” and “hate speech” are asymmetrically aimed at protecting Islamic beliefs and customs (see the UN resolutions sponsored by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, and Quebec’s Bill 59). In practice, both verbal and physical attacks against other religions are often ignored or rationalized away.

But although the book understandably concentrates on events involving Islam, the issue extends much further. For the Society for Academic Freedom and Scholarship, Canada and Canadian academia are the core interests. We have had some egregious examples of censorship. The attempts

of human rights commissions to punish critics (frequently critics of some aspects of Islam), at last curbed by the abolition of Section 13; the failure of university administrators to ensure the safe and orderly occurrence of invited lectures by conservative or otherwise controversial speakers; the restrictions on some communications to specified forms or to specified areas of campus; the persecution of Philippe Rushton, Thomas Flanagan, and other academics who voiced controversial opinions; all of these and others show that our campuses are not exempt from the attitude of Canadian Human Rights Commission investigator Dean Steacy, who during a hearing notoriously opined that “Freedom of speech is an American concept, so I don’t give it any value....”

Perhaps even more dangerous is that fear leads to self-censorship, so that controversial opinions are not even voiced. Fear of being targeted by murderers is understandable enough, although Rose gives inspiring examples of journalists who stood up for freedom even during the Nazi occupation of Denmark; we can even empathize with those who shy away from teaching about politically incorrect theories and data for fear of losing their job or of blocking their career progress. But how does that serve the two causes to which academics are supposedly devoted: the truth, and our students?

I, and most likely many of us, have been approached after a faculty or academic senate meeting by colleagues—senior, tenured full professors—who look around to see who may be listening before expressing their agreement and their pleasure that someone had said what they were afraid to say. Social psychologists have documented what most people know: publicly dissenting from what appears to be the common opinion is scary, and dissenters may incur disapproval and dislike. Rose’s book leaves us with an uncomfortable question: where some people have risked their life to exercise their freedom of speech, what are we willing to risk?

Peter Suedfeld, who sits on the SAFS Board of Directors, is Professor of Psychology at the Uni-

versity of British Columbia and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada

FREE SPEECH MATTERS, IN QUEBEC AND ON CAMPUS

The National Post

A presidential selection committee has unanimously approved the appointment of Jacques Frémont as the University of Ottawa's 30th president and vice-chancellor, effective next July. Frémont will succeed Allan Rock, who has served in those roles since 2008.

On paper Frémont, an emeritus professor of the University of Montreal, is an impressive figure and quite a "catch" for any university. Over the past 30 years, he has held many distinguished positions at the U of M, including director of the Public Law Research Centre, dean of the faculty of law, as well as provost and vice-rector, academic affairs. He has a reputation as a leading expert in constitutional law.

But most relevant in any discussion of Frémont's suitability for his new post is his present highly visible position as president of the Quebec Human Rights Commission. Frémont is the driver behind a new Quebec law — Bill 59 — that is not only contentious, both politically and legally, but raises troubling questions about the future of freedom of speech in the province.

Bill 59 assigns new powers to the Quebec Human Rights Commission (QHRC) to combat hate speech, as well as a variety of other provisions meant to protect against extremism by censoring speech that promotes "fear of the other." Ominously, the bill would allow the QHRC to pursue websites that in its estimation describe and denounce Islamism. Article 6 would "give the QHRC the power to initiate legal proceedings before the Quebec Human Rights Tribunal without having to wait for complaints from the public." Frémont explained that he planned to use the requested powers to sue those critical of

certain ideas, "people who would write against ... the Islamic religion ... on a website or on a Facebook page."

On its face, Bill 59 would seem to be an exercise in futility, as the Internet falls under federal jurisdiction. But as noted, Frémont is a constitutional expert and he enjoys a challenge. Last year at a University of Montreal conference, he told his audience that he sees the QHRC's mandate as "provoking a social change" and "making the law." "You will make the law with difficult cases, risky cases," he stated.

When Bill 59 passes (it has been adopted in principle), there will doubtless be a charter challenge arguing that the law violates freedom of expression under Section 2(b). But victory cannot be assumed. The Supreme Court unanimously upheld provisions in the Saskatchewan Human Rights Code in the notorious Whatcott decision as a "reasonable limit" on freedom of expression. On the other hand, in a 1957 Supreme Court decision concerning a Quebec statute prohibiting communist propaganda, the court struck the statute down as beyond the scope of provincial power. So it could go either way.

While Bill 59 is concerning in itself, its inspiration is far more so. Frémont has admitted that he based the provisions of Bill 59 on UN Resolutions 16/18, a brainchild of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), comprised of 56 UN member states plus the Palestinian Authority, which constitutes the single largest voting block in the UN. In 1990, the OIC rejected the UN Declaration of Human Rights, which assumes that all men and women, and all religions, are equal, and in its place adopted the Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam. This document asserts the superiority of Islam over other religions and takes its definition of freedom of speech from the confines of Shariah law, according to which any criticism of the Prophet Mohammad is considered blasphemy and prohibited.

In 2011, the OIC introduced Resolution 16/18, a more nuanced version of the Cairo Declaration.

Usually UN resolutions are just political documents, but in the case of Resolution 16/18, it moved on to “implementation” via the “Istanbul Process,” a series of conferences promoting the OIC agenda. The result has been a continuing push toward the stifling of free expression that is critical of any Islam-related topic. And even though no country is obliged to adopt the OIC’s illiberal definitions of defamation, when the same resolutions are passed again and again in UN bodies, there is a risk that they will eventually be deemed “customary and international law.”

The OIC’s objective is to see Western countries draft legislation that would penalize criticism of Islam. Most European Union countries have done just that. And Jacques Frémont is doing just that in Quebec. Freedom of speech is already in grave peril on university campuses. We should not expect to see that situation improve any time soon at the University of Ottawa.

Editorial, The National Post, 5 December 2015, <http://news.nationalpost.com/full-comment/national-post-view-free-speech-matters-in-quebec-and-on-campus> Reprinted by permission.

NEW OTTAWA U HEAD’S TRACK RECORD CAUSE FOR CONCERN

Heinz Klatt

Re: Free Speech Matters, editorial, *The National Post*, 5 December 2015.

The choice of Jacques Frémont, president of the Quebec Human Rights Commission, to be the University of Ottawa’s president is an Orwellian nightmare. With his legislative initiative to expand the commission’s powers to allow it to sue “people who would write against ... the Islamic religion” and to censor speech that promotes “fear of the other,” he represents the very antithesis of a university dedicated to the unfettered freedom of expression and research.

In 2002, the French author Michel Houellebecq

was sued in Paris by four Muslim associations for insulting and defaming Muslims, but was acquitted. At the centre of the accusation was his assertion Islam is the “most damned stupid religion” and that after reading the Qur’an he “collapsed in disbelief.”

Even more important than professional qualifications is the candidate’s understanding of the purpose and mandate of universities. For far too many university administrators today, freedom of expression and research is merely a public relations slogan that deserves nothing more than lip service. Political correctness, multiculturalism and insincerely bent knees in front of Islam have taken their undeserved place in academia. All candidates should be asked whether they agree with the Paris magistrates’ decision or whether they would rather ruin the writer with legal harassment and monetary penalties for inciting “hatred” and “fear of the other.” What can we do besides weep for the University of Ottawa?

Heinz Klatt, a member of SAFS, is professor emeritus of psychology, King’s University College, London, Ontario. This article originally appeared in the Letters section, National Post, 9 December 2015. <http://news.nationalpost.com/full-comment/letters-new-ottawa-u-heads-track-record-cause-for-concern> Reprinted by permission.

MICROAGGRESSION THEORY: AN ASSAULT ON EVERYDAY LIFE

Frank Furedi

Today, we are forever scrutinising our dialogue and conversation, looking out for offensive and insulting content. Of course, words, especially demeaning or degrading ones, have always had the capacity to hurt people’s feelings. But it’s different today. Words don’t just insult; no, today they inflict verbal violence, they traumatise.

While words are considered to be incredibly powerful today, it’s also true that people are deemed

massively vulnerable, and unable to deal with hostile words. Even everyday verbal exchanges, no matter how casual, can be indicted for causing offence. This inquisitorial attitude towards everyday speech is perfectly captured by 'Everyday Racism', a video produced by BBC3.

'Everyday Racism' offers numerous examples of so-called microaggressions. Its message is that racism is so banal that just about anything a white person says is likely to contain traces of prejudice. A typical example of an everyday, racist microaggression is the question, 'where are you from?'. According to microaggression experts, this question is a covert way of saying 'you don't belong here'.

Watching this inane video, which the Daily Mirror described as a 'shocking' expose of the 'unbelievable racial stereotypes ethnic minorities face', I was reminded of the first time I encountered the conceit of microaggression. Ever since I've been able to afford taxis, I have always asked cabbies with unusual surnames, 'where are you from?'. I'm fascinated by people's names and origins, and enjoy discussing cabbies' personal stories with them. But it wasn't until last November that I discovered my curiosity regarding people's origins can now be condemned as an act of microaggression. I was in New York and, after a five-minute exchange with an Ethiopian taxi about our mutual origins, a Boston-based academic told me my questions could be perceived as microaggressions.

Until then, I had always dismissed microaggressions as too silly to take seriously. But these are strange times. Microaggression refers to the allegedly subconscious offence that your words cause to individuals and cultural groups. According to 'Tool: Recognising Microaggressions and the Messages They Send', the Orwellian-sounding guidelines circulated by the University of California in Los Angeles (UCLA), I was indeed guilty as charged. Apparently, asking 'Where are you from or where were you born?' conveys the message that 'you are not a true American'. Presumably, if I repeat this question in London I am

saying, 'you are not a true Brit'.

What's fascinating about the UCLA guidelines is that anything that is said to someone from a different cultural group may constitute a microaggression. So, declaring that 'America is the land of opportunity' could be construed as a microaggression because it implies that 'race or gender does not play a role in life successes'. There seems to be a veritable industry producing guidelines, running sensitivity seminars and creating microaggression-awareness websites. At the same time, the number and variety of words and expressions castigated as aggressive and threatening are constantly expanding. The Inclusive Excellence Center at the University of Wisconsin declared that the latest addition to its list of censored terms is 'politically correct'. Without a hint of irony, it said that PC has become a 'dismissive term', used to suggest that 'people are being too "sensitive", and police language'. By attempting to censor the phrase 'politically correct', microaggression-watchers proved they were indeed in the business of policing language.

Campaigns designed to tackle microaggressions have spread far beyond American campuses. In the UK, the denunciation of microaggressions has seamlessly meshed with the obsessive search for harmful gestures and words associated with everyday sexism and everyday racism. It is only a matter of time before the 'everyday outrage' movement is launched to cover the entirety of everyday life.

BEQUEST TO SAFS

Please consider remembering the Society in your will. Even small bequests can help us greatly in carrying on SAFS's work. In most cases, a bequest does not require rewriting your entire will, but can be done simply by adding a codicil.

Thank you,

Mark Mercer, SAFS president

The performance of outrage is a central feature of the moral crusade against microaggression. There is a mushrooming of microaggression websites where likeminded victims are encouraged to air their grievances and broadcast their concerns in order to raise the awareness of those who are blind to the pandemic of microaggression enveloping the world. Typically these websites feature individuals holding signs with a message of studied defiance directed against the microaggressor. So, students from Oxford have copied the I, Too, Am Harvard campaign, which highlights the unintended slights and insults suffered by black students. On the I, Too, Am Oxford website, individuals post pictures of themselves holding signs advertising perceived insults addressed to them. One sign reads, “Wow your English is great.” “Thanks, I was born in London.”

Some of these scenarios are likely to have been made up for effect. One young woman holds a placard stating, “I’m really happy I’m going out with you and you’re brown... it proves I’m not racist.” Ummm.’ Did her partner really say that? What the pictures on the I, Too, Am Oxford website offer is not so much outrage but the performance of outrage.

Yet, despite its incoherence, the publicity campaign against microaggressions has had remarkable success. Val Rust, a professor of education at UCLA, was humiliated and disciplined by his administrators for his alleged ‘racial microaggression’. His crime? Changing a student’s capitalisation of the word ‘indigenous’ to lowercase. Rust was found guilty by UCLA of disrespecting his student’s ideological point of view. Given this climate, it was unsurprising to hear from numerous academics that they now practise self-censorship for fear of being accused of uttering a microaggression.

Such accusations are no longer confined to university campuses. Recently an American television interviewer, Melissa Harris-Perry, scolded one of her guests for describing Paul Ryan, the recently elected speaker of the House of Representatives, as a ‘hard worker’. She claimed that

calling Ryan a ‘hard worker’ demeaned slaves and working mothers ‘in the context of relative privilege’. Typically, those individuals accused of uttering a microaggression backtrack, and implicitly accept the moral authority of their accusers.

What’s significant about the concept of microaggression is that it targets not just words, but the imputed meaning behind words. The question ‘where are you from?’ is denounced not because the words are offensive in themselves, but because the words’ implication is offensive. Microaggressors are being denounced for what they allegedly think, not necessarily for what they say. This is an open invitation to police our thoughts.

In the end, what matters is not the significance of the words exchanged but whether the individual claims to be offended by them. Neither the content of the words nor the intention behind them is important. All that matters is whether the alleged victim feels that the words disrespected his or her identity. Here, the meaning and status of a statement is defined by the victim. To ignore or question someone’s claim that they have been offended is to indulge in the unforgivable crime of ‘victim-blaming’.

Underpinning the microaggression-hunters’ crusade is the conviction that the victim is always right. The American comedian Louis CK has clearly internalised this ‘watch your language’ etiquette. ‘When a person tells you that you hurt them’, he said recently, ‘you don’t get to decide that you didn’t’. The arrogant intolerance of Louis CK’s position is striking. He is saying that individuals do not get to decide the meaning of their words or actions.

So what are microaggressions?

The term microaggression was defined by Derald Wing Sue, professor of counseling psychology at Columbia University, as ‘the brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioural and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory

tory, or negative racial, gender, and sexual orientation, and religious slights and insults to the target person or group'. What's important about Sue's definition is that these indignities need not be the outcome of intentional behaviour. He argues that 'perpetrators of microaggressions are often unaware' of the indignities that they inflict on others.

The focus on the unconscious or unwitting dimension of microaggressions is crucial. People accused of committing microaggressions are not indicted for what they have done or said, or even for what they consciously think; they are indicted for their unconscious thoughts.

According to Sue, 'microaggressions are often unconsciously delivered in the form of subtle snubs or dismissive looks, gestures, and tones'. But how does one prove an act of microaggression? After all, if these are sentiments buried deep in the psyche of the microaggressor, how can their existence be verified? As far as Sue and his collaborators are concerned, there is no need for a complex psychoanalysis of the perpetrator. Why? Because, according to Sue, 'nearly all interracial encounters are prone to the manifestation of racial microaggression'. In other words, there is little to prove. The same holds for encounters involving women, gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender individuals, and disability groups. In every case, microaggressions are all but inevitable.

In all these cases, the presumption of guilt precedes the words or gestures of the unconscious aggressor. This is a secular theory of original sin from which no white, heterosexual man can possibly escape. According to Sue, even 'well-intentioned whites' suffer from 'unconscious racial biases'.

The crusade against microaggressions plays a central role in the elaboration of Western identity politics. The performance of outrage featured on microaggression websites, complete with numerous photos of placard-holding individuals, transforms the 'micro', banal insults and misunderstandings of everyday life into examples of

major social injustice. The sign-holders' outrage is inversely proportional to the scale of the slight suffered. Hence a poorly phrased compliment can incite the angriest of reactions, followed by a complaint to the relevant authorities.

The concept of microaggressions resonates with a wider mood of distrust among and between adults. Over recent decades, society has increasingly felt uncomfortable with leaving people to manage their own personal interactions. As a result, rules and codes of conduct covering bullying, harassment and conflict have proliferated, and interpersonal tensions and misunderstandings are now often managed by professionals.

Now, a whole new dimension – unconscious behaviour and its unintended consequences – has been brought to the attention of rulemakers and lawyers. Human communication has always been a complicated business. The reading of body language and the interpretation of words and gestures have always involved misunderstandings. In an enlightened environment, it has been recognised that it is difficult, if not impossible, to hold people responsible for the unintended consequences of their actions and words. If people are held to account not for what they do or say, but for what they unconsciously think, then the idea of moral responsibility becomes incoherent. What is truly tragic about the myth of microaggressions is that it makes genuine dialogue impossible. The micro-policing of human relations is the inexorable consequence of the project of criminalising unconscious thought and behaviour.

One of the achievements of modern, open societies is that people are free to make choices about how they express themselves, the language they use and the attitudes they exhibit in public. Unlike in pre-modern communities, people do not have to watch their language or conform to the prescribed language of traditional culture. But anti-microaggression crusaders want to turn back the clock. They loathe tolerance and seek to impose a new regime of conformity on contemporary public life.

The policing of statements and words is deeply intolerant. The statement ‘watch your words’, which is so casually used in the crusade against microaggression, is a call to close down discussion. So ignore the likes of Louis CK – we all should be free to decide the meanings of our words.

Frank Furedi is emeritus professor of sociology at the University of Kent, United Kingdom. This article originally appeared in Spiked, 23 November 2015. <http://www.frankfuredi.com/article/microaggression-theory-an-assault-on-every-day-life> Reprinted by permission.

WE CAN'T IGNORE THE WARNING SIGNS ON U.S. CAMPUSES

Tom Flanagan

In 2014, University of Tennessee law professor Glenn Harlan Reynolds published a provocative book about U.S. universities, *The Education Apocalypse: How It Happened and How to Survive It*. In view of recent events at Yale, Princeton, Missouri and other campuses, maybe he should have called it *Apocalypse Now*.

Enrolments have been climbing since the end of the Second World War. Student bodies now consist largely of amiable young people with little interest in the traditional disciplines of mathematics, natural and social sciences, literature, philosophy and foreign languages. Rampant grade inflation covers up the gap between students and the curriculum. The “gentleman’s C” has been replaced by commonplace Bs and As.

Most students just want to get a degree and find a job, but those with a desire to change the world are attracted to a proliferating menu of non-disciplines, most of which focus on race and sex – exciting diversions for young people who can’t or won’t master calculus, logic, history and a foreign language. Political correctness has become the new orthodoxy for those

who crave dogmatic certainty rather than Socratic questioning.

Legislatively mandated programs of affirmative action have aggravated the situation. There is now a pervasive mismatch of students and institutions, as described by several U.S. researchers. Students who would have done fine at community colleges or regional universities struggle at flagship campuses of state schools such as the University of Missouri.

Students who would have succeeded at Missouri are pressed to compete at institutions such as Yale and Princeton. “Systemic racism” is conjured to explain the difficulties experienced by these mismatched students.

Growth in numbers has been accompanied by construction of palatial facilities – residences, conference centres, museums, campus hotels, athletic venues – that have little to do with undergraduate education. Highly paid full-time professors are directed away from students and into lucrative fields of research and consulting. Not surprisingly, costs have soared, fed by easy money from government loan programs, such that it now costs more than \$60,000 (U.S.) a year to attend prestigious private universities.

The growth of university administration has been hypertrophic, as chronicled by Benjamin Ginsberg in *The Fall of the Faculty: The Rise of the All-Administrative University and Why It Matters*. University presidents, vice-presidents and deans still rise from the academic ranks, but they are now surrounded by a penumbra of administrators who are not scientists or scholars and do not share academic values – fundraisers, equity officers, legal advisers, communications specialists and lobbyists to deal with various levels of government. Academic issues of teaching and research are refracted through pragmatic prisms of fundraising potential, public image and government relations.

And then there is the U.S. phenomenon of big-time athletics. Football and basketball coaches now often earn several times as much as uni-

versity presidents. Their power was recently illustrated by the football coach at the University of Missouri; he sided with his disgruntled players about sacking the school's president, who went down like a lead-footed quarterback blitzed by the D-line.

Professor Reynolds likens all of this to a speculative bubble about to burst. The hallmarks of a bubble are there – spiralling growth, recruitment of naive investors (students and their parents) and rising prices detached from underlying values.

Warning signs are already present, as enrolments start to decline and weaker institutions are faced with bankruptcy. He believes, and I tend to agree, that there will be no internal salvation from this morass when the bubble finally bursts. New modes of instruction based on the Internet and private enterprise foreshadow a future beyond universities.

Canadians should not be complacent. All the ingredients of the U.S. bubble are present on this side of the border, except for big-time athletics and astronomical tuition fees. As Karl Marx said about rustic Germany when comparing it with industrialized Britain, *De te fabula narratur* (the story applies to you).

Tom Flanagan, who sits on the Board of Directors of SAFS, is professor emeritus of political science at the University of Calgary. This article originally appeared in The Globe and Mail, 21 December 2015. <http://www.the-globeandmail.com/globe-debate/we-cant-ignore-the-warning-signs-on-us-campuses/article27864497/> Reprinted by permission.

UBC'S DANGEROUS INTENTION TO CREATE AN ACADEMIC FREEDOM OFFICER

Mark Mercer

The major question left unanswered by Lynn

Smith's report is how the academic freedom of Jennifer Berdahl was violated or compromised when, as Smith found, no one's actions violated or compromised her academic freedom.

Lynn Smith, QC, recall, is the former University of British Columbia (UBC) dean of law and retired Justice of the Supreme Court of British Columbia who was invited by UBC interim president Martha Piper to report on whether the academic freedom of Jennifer Berdahl, a professor at UBC, had been interfered with after Berdahl, on 8 August 2015, posted a comment on her blog.

Berdahl had written, speculating on the recent departure of UBC's president after just a year in office, "I believe that part of this outcome is that Arvind Gupta lost the masculinity contest among the leadership at UBC, as most women and minorities do at institutions dominated by white men." <http://jberdahl.blogspot.ca/2015/08/did-president-arvind-gupta-lose.html>

A few days later, John Montalbano, the Chair of the UBC Board of Governors, and a friend of Berdahl, phoned Berdahl to say that the blog post was "incredibly hurtful, inaccurate, and greatly unfair to the Board" (quotation from Berdahl's blog post of 17 August <http://jberdahl.blogspot.ca/2015/08/academic-freedom-and-ubc.html>), that it would cause people to question Berdahl's academic credibility, and that people at the Royal Bank of Canada, which funds outreach activities with which Berdahl is associated, were on "damage control." In that 17 August blog post, as well as reporting that Montalbano phoned her, Berdahl writes that her Division Chair and the UBC Associate Dean of Equity and Diversity spoke to her to scold her and to discourage her from speaking further.

"I have never felt more gagged or threatened after expressing scholarly viewpoints and analysis of current events," she wrote.

DISCLAIMER AND COPYRIGHT

Apart from notices issued by the SAFS Board of Directors, views expressed in the Newsletter are not necessarily those of the Society.

All or portions of original articles in the Newsletter may be copied for further circulation. We request acknowledgement of the source and would appreciate receiving a copy of the publication in which the Newsletter material appears. The copyright for reprinted articles remains with the original publication.

“When I imagine being an assistant professor at this university, or anyone without the protection of tenure, this experience becomes unspeakable. I would be terrified, not angry. I would have retracted my post, or not have written it at all. I would avoid studying and speaking on controversial topics.”

“Even if the university’s leadership doesn’t recognize it, I have a right to academic freedom and expression, free of intimidation and harassment.”

In a media release of 15 October (<http://news.ubc.ca/2015/10/15/ubc-accepts-the-findings-in-honourable-lynn-smiths-report/>), UBC accepted Smith’s finding that “UBC failed in its obligation to protect and support Dr. Berdahl’s academic freedom” (Smith Report, C. Summary of Conclusions, (1) <http://president.ubc.ca/files/2015/10/Summary-of-Process-and-Conclusions-Final.pdf>) and expressed its intention to hire an academic freedom specialist to “work with faculty, staff, and governors to ensure that academic freedom is safeguarded and preserved at UBC.” The specialist “will provide advice, education, and counsel regarding all issues involving academic freedom.”

Smith locates UBC’s failure to support and protect Berdahl’s academic freedom in an error of judgement by John Montalbano and an omission by Berdahl’s Division Chair and the Equity and Diversity Dean. Montalbano erred in phoning Berdahl and the two university of-

ficers omitted to assure Berdahl that she may write and publish what she likes about university matters. None of the three actually violated Berdahl’s academic freedom, but they should have done more to support it.

But what were the three individuals actually doing? They were criticising Berdahl’s blog post, both the opinions expressed in it and the fact that Berdahl expressed those opinions publicly. Offering criticism, of course, is central to university life, as is receiving criticism. Montalbano and the others were exercising the prerogative of members of a university community to speak one’s mind.

Smith’s finding that these people failed to support Berdahl’s academic freedom by criticising her opinions and her publishing them might well have the effect of closing lines of communication among members of the university community. Administrators and others might be fearful that by speaking critically to professors, they are failing to support academic freedom. This would be unfortunate, given that part of the role of academic freedom is to keep lines of communication open.

Advising someone not to speak, reprehensible as that might be, is not at all the same as preventing that person from speaking or threatening her with harm should she speak. The concerns the administrators had about the reputation of UBC were certainly misplaced, as what would bring a university into disrepute is to advise a professor not to voice her opinions. But merely voicing concerns violates no one’s academic freedom.

Most worrisome about UBC’s response to Smith’s report is UBC’s intention to hire an academic specialist. The threat to academic freedom posed by having such a university officer is great.

UBC failed to support Jennifer Berdahl’s academic freedom, according to the Smith report, because certain powerful members of the UBC

community chose to express their criticism of Berdahl's blog post directly to Berdahl herself. Expressing criticism, then, will be something of concern to the university officer charged with supporting and protecting academic freedom. Just as offices of respect and diversity can have a baleful effect on critical discussion at a university, so, as well, can an office of academic freedom, for it, too, will think of criticism as potentially isolating and silencing.

Better that academic freedom is thought of as protecting and supporting unpopular opinions and critical discussion rather than as shielding us from them.

Mark Mercer is president of SAFS and Chair of the Department of Philosophy at Saint Mary's University, in Halifax

SAFS LETTER TO LAURENTIAN UNIVERSITY RE: MICHAEL PERSINGER

Robert Kerr, PhD
Vice-President and Provost
Laurentian University
935 Ramsey Lake Road, Sudbury ON P3E 2C6

Dear Dr Kerr,

I am writing as the president of the Society for Academic Freedom and Scholarship (SAFS), a national organization of university faculty members and others dedicated to the defense of academic freedom and reasoned and respectful debate. (For further information, please see our website at www.safs.ca.)

According to a report in the newspaper BayToday.ca (<https://www.baytoday.ca/local-news/academic-censorship-prof-removed-from-course-85106>), Laurentian University recently removed psychology professor Michael Persinger from a year-long introductory course he was teaching because in September, when the course began, Dr Persinger had asked students to sign a statement of understanding. The university removed Dr Pers-

inger, the report states, on the grounds that a professor may not ask students to sign a memorandum as a condition of taking his or her course.

Should these reports be accurate, the removal of Dr Persinger raises concerns regarding 1) proper procedure in investigating and responding to student complaints, and 2) the university's responsibility to both students and faculty not to violate the academic integrity of their courses.

1) The *BayToday* article quotes Dr Persinger denying that signing the document was a prerequisite to remaining in the course. Surely Dr Persinger himself did not believe that he could stop qualified students from taking a seat. Perhaps, of course, a student or two came to believe mistakenly that signing the document was indeed a requirement. Or, perhaps a student or two came to believe mistakenly that by signing the document he or she was waiving a right to complain to an administrator about something objectionable in the course. The first step in discovering just what role signing the document played, or was believed to play, would be to speak with the professor and the students. Laurentian, it seems, did not conduct an investigation to ascertain the facts. Dr Persinger might well have been removed from his course, then, simply because a student misunderstood what he or she was doing in signing, or declining to sign, the statement of understanding.

2) Professors construct and teach their courses so as to realize their particular educational goals. Their academic freedom to construct and teach their courses as they will ensures that they are sincere about the value to their students of their courses. Removing a professor from a course in such circumstances and substituting another thus violates the integrity of the course.

Dr Persinger, however, was removed from his class because of a pedagogical choice he had

made months ago, one that had had no lasting deleterious effects on his students. The decision to remove him has been detrimental to Laurentian students.

It is for these two reasons, then—that no good evidence so far shows Dr Persinger to have violated any rule and that his removal harms his students—that the Society for Academic Freedom and Scholarship urges that you immediately restore Dr Persinger to his class.

Of course, if it is unknown whether Dr Persinger represented signing the statement of understanding to his students either as a course requirement or as agreeing to a contract of some sort, you will quite properly want to investigate to find out. If, at the end of that investigation, you judge that Dr Persinger wasn't as clear as he needed to be, then you should take action. That action, though, should not be to remove Dr Persinger from his course, for the reasons given above. It should simply be to instruct Dr Persinger to be more careful next time to ensure that

all his students understand the nature of their signing the statement.

Thank you for your consideration of these remarks. We look forward to hearing from you. With your permission, we will be pleased to post your reply on our website together with this letter to you.

Yours sincerely,
Mark Mercer
President, SAFS
president@safs.ca
Professor and Chair, Philosophy, Saint Mary's
University
mark.mercer@smu.ca

Cc. Dominic Giroux, President and
Vice-Chancellor, Laurentian University
Jim Ketchen, Laurentian University
Faculty Association
Michael Persinger, Psychology, Lau-
rentian University

NOMINATIONS FOR SAFS BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2016-2017

The Nominations Committee this year consists of the SAFS president, Mark Mercer (Saint Mary's), the SAFS past president, Clive Seligman (Western), and two SAFS members not on the Board of Directors, John MacKinnon (Saint Mary's) and Stephen Perrott (Mount Saint Vincent).

The current members of the Board being re-nominated are: Andrew Irvine; Tom Flanagan; Steve Lupker; Mark Mercer; John Mueller; Clive Seligman; and Peter Suedfeld.

Rodney Clifton has decided to step down from the Board and enjoy his retirement. SAFS thanks Rodney for his good work as a Director over the years.

The Committee has received the nomination of Janice Fiamengo. Janice is Professor of English at the University of Ottawa and a member of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies there. Her BA, MA, and PhD are from the University of British Columbia. She is the author of *The Woman's Page: Journalism and Rhetoric in Early Canada* (University of Toronto Press, 2008) and of numerous book chapters and journal papers. She has edited or co-edited three books.

Janice writes: "I have three areas of research interest. The first is reflected in my monograph *The Woman's Page* (2008), a study of six early Canadian women writers; I continue to publish on female journalists of the late nineteenth century, with a special interest in Sara Jeannette Duncan. My second project, which is currently underway, surveys a century of literary representations of animals – from Ernest Thompson Seton and Charles G.D. Roberts to Yann Martel and Barbara Gowdy – in the context of present-day concerns with environmental ethics and care. My third interest involves re-reading central texts in the Canadian canon by such writers as Morley

Callaghan, Sinclair Ross, and Alice Munro to explore their treatment of Christian faith. My goal is to be a life-long student of literature."

Any member of SAFS may nominate individuals for election as Director. These nominations must be received at the SAFS office by 15 April 2016. Each nomination shall contain the following information: (i) the signature of the person nominating and the signatures of two (2) seconders; (ii) the full name and address of the person nominated; (iii) a statement of the status and attributes of the person nominated, showing each person's qualifications to be a director; (iv) a written consent signed by the person nominated agreeing to be nominated for election and serve, if elected.

Elections will be held during the business session at this year's Annual General Meeting.

SAFS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

2015-2016

Mark Mercer, PhD, Saint Mary's University
president@safs.ca

Rodney Clifton, PhD, University of Manitoba
clifton@ms.umanitoba.ca

Tom Flanagan, PhD, FRSC, University of Calgary
tflanaga@ucalgary.ca

Andrew Irvine, PhD, University of British
Columbia
andrew.irvine@ubc.ca

Steve Lupker, PhD, Western University
lupker@uwo.ca

John Mueller, PhD, University of Calgary
mueller@ucalgary.ca

Clive Seligman, PhD, Western University
seligman@uwo.ca

Peter Suedfeld, PhD, FRSC, University of British
Columbia
psuedfeld@psych.ubc.ca

Past Presidents

Clive Seligman, PhD, Western University
John Furedy, PhD, University of Toronto
Doreen Kimura, PhD, FRSC, Simon Fraser
University

SAFS MEMBERSHIP FORM

To join SAFS or to renew your SAFS member-
ship, please complete this form, sign it, and mail
it to:

SAFS
PO BOX 33056 QUINPOOL CENTRE
HALIFAX, NS B3L 4T6 CANADA

Please make your cheque payable to SAFS.

Check one:

Annual regular: \$25
Annual retirees or students: \$15
Lifetime (available to those 60 years or older or
retired): \$150
Sustaining: \$100 to \$299
Benefactor: \$300

"I support the Society's goals."

Signature:

Address:

Email address:

SAFS OFFICE

PO Box 33056 Quinpool Centre, Halifax, Canada NS B3L 4T6. Email: president@safs.ca.