

## 'Scholar strike' institutionalized propagandist teaching at Canadian universities

Students who engage in social activism don't need understanding. They are the ones who organize cancel culture mobs. It is the dissenters who need understanding—and protection.

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A number of Ontario universities, including Wilfrid Laurier, have recently encouraged faculty to propagandize in class—it is a corruption that threatens the societal role of universities in Canada.

Did you hear about the "scholars strike" on September 9 and 10? Inspired by Americans, it was organized in Canada by a film-studies professor and a black, queer, feminist, antiracism, anti-capitalist professor who teaches in women and gender studies.

The strike called on faculty to refrain from teaching scheduled coursework and to instead, organize teach-ins on "anti-Black, racist and colonial police brutality." Of course, no one supports police brutality, but no one, outside of the critical social justice cult, has any idea what colonial brutality is. The movement's demands are a laundry list including defunding the police and, bizarrely, disbanding campus police.

There is much rent seeking: transferring police budgets to black, indigenous, queer and trans communities; funding more race-based hiring; and more funds for cultural professionals (like film-studies professors?) at Universities. But the strangest demand is to stop the University of Toronto (UofT) from outsourcing custodial work. The broad scope and incoherence of the demands reflects a lack of seriousness about their purpose.

The main supporters of the strike were faculty unions. We first heard about it in an email from our union. The email contained a significant lie. It called for justice for racialized Canadians who were shot by police, including Regis Korchinski-Paquet. This is fraudulent because her death was an accident. Using her case to support an anti-police initiative is deceptive.

We demanded that the University administration take a position. We expected them to condemn propagandizing in the classroom, since it violates our contract. The university collective agreement requires faculty to "present courses which reflect the course description in the University Calendar." Condemning politicization was the university's position only three years ago. Remember when the graduate TA, Lindsay Shepherd, was subjected to a Maoist

struggle session by her professors (and an equity administrator) for the sin of showing a Jordan Peterson interview? The University exonerated her and the president wrote "...instructional material needs to be grounded in the appropriate academic underpinnings to put it in context for the relevance of the learning outcomes of the course." That was so 2017.

To our surprise, instead of condemning it, the administration encouraged faculty to participate in "digital teach-ins and other events being organized as part of the Scholar Strike." They encouraged faculty to incorporate Scholar Strike content into their classes and to provide "understanding to students who choose to participate in Scholar Strike sessions." This last bit is gaslighting. Students who engage in social activism don't need understanding. They are the ones who organize cancel culture mobs. It is the dissenters who need understanding—and protection.

But the first part is the corruption. The administration encourages faculty to propagandize in class using the scholar strike content which is founded on critical theory. It encourages faculty to teach that content where it has no place—in courses like statistics, accounting and computer science. Let us not even touch on the question of how many faculty have sufficient expertise to teach about racism and law enforcement. The problem is that teaching unrelated issues is fraud. Students who have paid to learn about, say, Shakespeare instead receive an ill-informed screed about why the UofT shouldn't outsource custodial work.

And it's involuntary. Students didn't agree to participate in a teach-in. Why would the administration expect 100 percent of the students to embrace the strike's demands and its critical theory view of the world? If even one dissents, then it is not right to use class time to promote those views.

And what about students who doubt the veracity of a movement that mixes anti-police rhetoric with calls to support a union's fight against outsourcing? How can they feel free to dissent when the University administration has itself come out in favour of the strike? When administrations take positions on contentious issues, they interfere with the University's mission—the search for truth. The legislative object of WLU is "teaching and research within a spirit of free enquiry and expression." When the University supports something like the scholars strike it infringes on that spirit of free enquiry. It tilts the field. It lends a moral authority to one side of the debate, an authority which they can use to silence dissenters. University administrations ought to be agnostic on contentious societal issues. Their job is to run the University.

We are not alone in holding this opinion. The Society for Academic Freedom and Scholarship (SAFS) a national faculty organization dedicated to the defense of academic freedom, has issued a formal complaint to the administration of Wilfrid Laurier University.

What the Laurier administration has done is a reflection of a larger problem: universities have lost their way. They are no longer liberal institutions committed to the pursuit of truth. It is time for tax payers to withdraw their subsidy. Let students who want to learn about colonial

brutality pay the full cost. Reserve subsidies for disciplines that produce graduates who contribute public value. Australia has recently done this. New university funding reforms keep tuition low for programs like nursing but raise tuition on the humanities. It is time for something similar in Canada to stop the toxic ideology of critical social justice which has already infected many of our universities.

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