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Mind Games Survival Course Manual



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Political Correctness and Postmodernism

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III. If truth does not exist, all knowledge is mere opinion; all teaching becomes political in the sense that it tries to win others over to the instructor's viewpoint.

- A. Truth becomes relative--one's perspective determines one's truth on a given topic. There are Marxist, feminist, homosexual, African-American, Hispanic-American, Asian-American truths. Since the university no longer seeks to find universal truth, each professor or department is free to impose its view of truth on its students.
2. Some texts seem to have avoided deconstruction by modern scholars. This gives us some insight into the ideology that is driving the application of the new literary theories. Marx, for instance, never seems to be deconstructed, nor does Foucault. Lacan seems exempt from the treatment, and so do Derrida and Barthes. Malcolm X and Martin Luther King appear to enjoy immunity. There may be an entire gender exception for women. {7}
3. One honest scholar, J. Hillis Miller, revealed that his critical goals were to "demolish beyond hope of repair the engine of Western metaphysics." {8}
4. As a result of this attack on the ethical and spiritual beliefs of Western civilization, a series of attitudes and political positions have become part of the accepted orthodoxy on campuses across the nation.
5. What does it mean to be P.C.? To qualify, one must be pro-feminist, pro-gay rights, pro-minority studies, mistrustful of tradition, scornful of Dead White European Males and deeply skeptical toward the very idea of a "masterpiece," because it implies that one idea, culture or human being can actually be better than another. {9}

4. The effect of these ideological developments has been dramatic on both campus life in general and on the personal lives of many students. {10}

A. *Changes in the Curriculum*

1. On March 31, 1988, the Stanford faculty voted to change the Western Culture course, one of the most popular on campus, to one titled *Cultures, Ideas and Values*. The 15-book requirement was dropped and replaced with the admonition to give substantial attention to issues of race and gender. The reading list now had to include a quota of works by women and minorities. Out went Shakespeare, in came Burgos-Debray.

Shakespeare is deemed to be racist, sexist, and classist--a product of the ultimate evil, Western civilization. French writer Elisabeth Burgos-Debray is, on the other hand, politically correct. One of Burgos-Debray's works, now part of the Stanford curriculum, describes a Guatemalan woman's struggle against capitalist oppression. She rejects marriage and motherhood, becomes a feminist, a socialist, and finally a Marxist, arguing politics with fellow revolutionaries in Paris. According to the author, this simple Guatemalan woman speaks for all the Indians of the American continent.

2. Berkeley, Mt. Holyoke, and the University of Wisconsin are just a few schools where students must take a course in ethnic studies but are not required to take a single course in Western civilization. At Berkeley, the ethnic studies course is the only required course on campus, and Wisconsin students can graduate without taking any American history. Ohio State has gone even further, revamping its entire curriculum to reflect issues of gender, race, and ethnicity.
3. An ironic twist to this revolution is that when writings of third world authors are included in the curriculum they rarely are the classics from that culture. Instead, they tend to be more recent, Marxist and politically correct writings.
4. In the social sciences even more radical demands have been made. One black studies professor charges that the current curriculum in New York's high schools reflects "deep-seated pathologies of racial hatred." He argues that time spent studying the U.S. Constitution--which, in his opinion, is seriously flawed--is grounds for miseducation. He adds that studying the Constitution is egocentric and blatant white nationalism.

2. *Changes in Admissions and Hiring Practices*

1. The personal experience of one applicant to UC Berkeley might be helpful to understand what is happening on many campuses. Yat-pang Au received a rejection letter from Berkeley in 1987 although he had graduated first in his class at San Jose's Gunderson High School with straight A's, scored 1,340 on the SAT, won letters in track and cross country, was a student council member, and won seven scholarships from groups such as the National Society of Professional Engineers.

Yat-pang's qualifications were considerably above the Berkeley average. His only real problems were his race and what chancellor Ira Michael Hayman called "a little social engineering." Under Hayman the university began to devalue the importance of merit and achievement in admissions in order to achieve a racially balanced student body, one that reflected the population at large.

As a result, this family of immigrants from Hong Kong found that their son could not go to Berkeley, although ten other students with lower qualifications had been accepted from his high school. The policy of racial balance that seemed so fair to Hayman was anything but fair to the Au family. If Yat-pang had been Hispanic or black he would have had no problem attending Berkeley. Asians, many of them immigrants, were being excluded from Berkeley because they were too successful. Unfortunately, Berkeley is not the only place one can find this type of discrimination. Harvard, UCLA, Stanford, Brown, and others have been charged with discrimination towards Asians. As Dinesh D'Souza writes, "Quotas which were intended as instruments of inclusion now seemed to function as instruments of exclusion."

2. D'Souza notes that blacks and Hispanics that have been admitted because of reduced academic requirements do not fare well at Berkeley. In one study, only 18 percent of black and 22 percent of the Hispanic affirmative action students graduated within five years. Almost 30 percent of black and Hispanic students drop out at the end of their freshman year. Because academic preparation has been set aside as the criteria for admission to our top schools, many are being admitted who cannot compete. They then simply drop out, more frustrated and angry than before.
3. Another issue that goes hand-in-hand with admissions is the issue of testing. Many argue that, since some groups do better than others on the SAT test, it is race-or gender-biased. A New York federal judge has ruled that, since women do not do as well as men on the SAT test, it is a violation of state law to use the test as a criterion for rewarding Regents and Empire State scholarships.
4. What's remarkable about this trend is that testing was installed in the 1920s to fight arbitrary bias in admissions. Without testing, which even critics must agree is the best way to predict academic success, all other criteria become subjective, except race and gender.

3. *Speech and Conduct Codes on Campus*

1. The University of Michigan has been a leader in restricting First Amendment rights. Responding to a student radio disk jockey who invited other students to call in their favorite racial jokes, the University began a long crusade to stamp out racism, sexism, and a multitude of other "isms." Instead of just punishing the offender, all students were now under suspicion, and all speech would be monitored carefully.

A new policy was approved on discrimination and discriminatory harassment. It defined as punishable "any behavior, verbal or physical, that stigmatizes or victimizes an individual on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, sex, sexual orientation, creed, national origin, ancestry, age, marital status, handicap, or Vietnam-era veteran status." Debate on these topics was to be restricted for fear someone might be stigmatized by the discussion. The so-called marketplace of ideas that colleges are supposed to represent had been shrunk down to convenience-store size.

Since one cannot be certain that even the most balanced discussion of a topic like gay rights or the cults might not stigmatize a fellow student, one must refrain from entering into that territory. The result of this type of policy is to guarantee a monopoly to the radical Marxist and feminist ideas now being promoted by the faculty and administration on many of our campuses. Fortunately, this policy was successfully challenged by an unnamed psychology professor who realized that most of the subject matter he dealt with in class might stigmatize someone. In a strange twist, the ACLU was on the right side of this issue and represented the professor. Eventually a U.S. District Court struck down even a modified version of the code. But there are still codes in effect at Emory, Middlebury, Brown, Penn State, Tufts, the Universities of California, Connecticut, North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and others. Many more schools are considering implementing codes.

2. Some groups on campus have used more blatant tactics to keep conservatives from speaking. Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, former U.N. ambassador Jeanne Kirkpatrick, and former cabinet member Louis Sullivan have all been victims of censorship in the form of gay and pro-abortion groups shouting them down. In one case, black students with clubs disrupted a meeting for the National Association of Scholars, a conservative group of professors, charging that they were actually supported by the KKK.
3. Another form of censorship is the silencing of faculty. Alan Gribben, a professor at the University of Texas, made the mistake of voting against the politicization of a writing course in the English Department. As a result he was ostracized by the department and decided to leave after 17 years on staff.

4. *Hate Crimes and Race Relations*

1. The goal of those conducting this revolution on campus is to remove any remnant of racism, sexism, class elitism, and even lookism. Some of you may have been left behind on that last "ism." "Lookism" is the malady of treating people differently because of their looks. There are also specific positions on ecology, foreign and domestic policy, homosexuality, and animal rights that are politically correct.
2. The hope behind all this is to create a society where each culture and social group is appreciated for its contributions. But the fallout has

been to encourage people to find some reason to declare oppression, for it seems that only those who are oppressed are in a position to determine what is politically correct. White, middle-class males are the great Satan incarnate--even the most repentant among them must be watched closely.

3. Politically correct people argue that they are calling for a philosophy of inclusion. They are not thought police, they say; they are merely trying to correct centuries of unfairness. In real life, however, the effect of this movement has been to silence or remove from campus those who differ with the PC crowd. If a person is against racially based admissions policies, he is racist. If he holds to religious convictions concerning homosexuality, he is homophobic. The issue really goes beyond mere tolerance--the goal of this movement is to remove opposition to the plans of the radical left.
4. Since those who are politically correct agree that Western civilization is the cause of all evil in the world, one might ask what we should replace it with. Not surprisingly, the writers and heroes of this movement tend to be Marxist, feminist, and gay. (It's interesting that Marx, a white male European is still considered politically correct, although he held quite incorrect views on racial issues--in fact, he spoke positively concerning slavery in America.)
5. If true multiculturalism were really the issue these folks would be calling for the study and implementation of traditional cultures from around the world. But other cultures are just as racist and far more male-dominated than our own, and they are proud of it. Whether one looks at Islam or the teachings of oriental traditions, one finds that they take a dim view of both modern feminist thought and homosexuality.
6. The tradition of Western thought has been to deal with ideas that transcend race, and it has been anything but homogeneous in its conclusions. The irony of the accusations leveled at Western thought by the politically correct is that the ideas they favor have been most fully developed in America and Europe. Even with all of its faults, Western civilization has been the most open and tolerant of all cultures. It has been eager to find and incorporate ideas from other cultures that are beneficial.

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