

Vadas Brings Radical Outlook on Feminism

Justin Cohen
Assistant News Editor

Melinda Vadas, a new addition to the Guilford faculty, describes herself as a radical feminist philosopher. If anyone is inclined to challenge that description, they may want to take note of how she closes her correspondences: "Any nation can be Nazi Germany; any human being can be a man."

Vadas came to Greensboro following a two-year tenure at Winston-Salem State University. She only teaches one course at Guilford because she suffers from a viral immune disorder which significantly depletes her energy.

"It makes me very fatigued. I simply have fewer working hours," Vadas said. "I actually have little contact with the world. . . I have a friend who is a news junkie. She promised to let me know if World War III breaks out."

The dynamics of the course she teaches, "Three Feminisms and the Good," are unconventional.

"We all sit around a table and go through the reading in a seminar way. Everyone contributes to the discussion, discussing major points or problems—since I have more experience, that burden usually falls on me," explained Vadas. "But the students learn themselves. There is no such thing as teaching someone. If somebody wants to learn something—they learn it."

Vadas stresses that the absence of hierarchy within her instructional method is paramount to conveying her message effectively and stimulating fruitful classroom interaction.

"I teach feminism, and in a feminist way. Hierarchy is a necessary condition

for political sadism, and I don't encourage that, so I don't do that. It's morally pernicious. And I have a good memory of being a student. Hierarchy impeded by learning, not advanced it," said Vadas.

Another unusual characteristic of her class is that it is segregated by gender; she conducts class at a different time for her male students than she does for her female students.

"It's been my experience from women's studies classes that women learn and do better if you have women-only space. This is a common belief among philosophers who teach feminist philosophy classes," said Vadas. "I think women-only space is a necessity in order for women to have the atmosphere and grounding for learning. That's a contingent fact. They have gender-specific needs, and women have an epistemological advantage to understanding feminist theory. The perspective of male students is naturally different."

Vadas also assumes a non-traditional approach to evaluating student performance. Her class collectively determines how it wishes to be graded.

"I'm opposed to grading systems at all. They're pernicious and counter-productive to learning procedure. It's the worst thing you can do. It gets in the way of intellectual honesty. And that's no secret. I'm hardly the first to notice it," commented Vadas.

Thus far, Vadas said that compared to students she has met on other campuses, she has been very impressed with Guilford College students.

"The students here are generally very verbal and interested. They're socially aware - socially conscious. This is in deep contrast to students at the University of

Miami [where she earned her doctoral degree and spent time teaching]. At Miami, many of the students' main concerns were being able to buy a Mercedes and gold jewelry. I don't get that sense from Guilford College students, and certainly better than from what I've heard from UNC - Chapel Hill, where I haven't heard anything complimentary. The last time I was there it seemed as though the students were all clones."

In fact, Vadas has plenty of highly critical words for both the administration and some of the students at the University of North Carolina.

"They're obnoxious, misogynist, racist and every other 'ist,'" said Vadas.

Tom Powell, chairman of the Guilford College philosophy department, said he recognizes that Vadas' powerful convic-

tions and unusual teaching practices may have raised some eyebrows on campus, but believes the Guilford community can benefit from them.

"If Melinda has brought controversy with her class stage props or the structure of the class, it's a controversy that I welcome. The one thing we take seriously is our commitment to diversity. . . It's interesting to get a variety of perspectives, but diversity does make some people uncomfortable," noted Powell.

Powell added he was impressed with Vadas' credentials and believes she is an effective teacher.

"I'm delighted to have Melinda here for many reasons. Aside from our personal friendship, it is extremely valuable to have

see VADAS on page 7 >

Forum

> continued from page 4

both can serve as an education, but I don't know which one is best."

Other topics of discussion at the forum centered around the need for more evidence in convicting students of drug violations, the importance of the Guilford community in communicating standards and rules to new and current students, involvement of faculty in the judicial policies on campus, and the question of how judicial policies can be changed or amended. The question of how to define the judicial term "possession" was also discussed.

"I was glad to see the forum was conducted in a relatively civil tone," said Ricks. "People were willing to hear different opinions on the issues and I thought there was a genuine concern in finding solutions."

Ricks expressed concern however, over the importance of students getting involved now in the process of re-evaluating the drug policy and certain components of the judicial reform. Ricks said he will not be supportive of students who choose not to participate in the deliberation process, yet later choose to complain about the final proposal.

"It is vital that students get involved in the process right now," said Ricks. "These discussions are open to everyone, so no one should complain later on that they didn't know what was happening or that they weren't included in the process."

Ricks also expressed the same concern about the Guilford faculty.

Said Ricks, "I am really concerned about faculty involvement in this issue. They are often the ones screaming the most loudly about these new policies, but rarely are they involved in the process. I have to question the legitimacy of their concerns when they do not choose to participate in our discussions."

Only one faculty member was present at the Drug Policy forum.

The Drug Policy forum was held after several students expressed concern over a recent judicial case in which three members of the freshman class were suspended for the possession of marijuana and drug paraphernalia.

The sentencing of the students under the new policy spurred a student rally and petition drive in early September on the steps of the new Hege Library. Representatives of the student protest group later presented Senate with a petition signed by some 400 people calling for a review of the policy.



WHY BUY A CD YOU'VE NEVER HEARD?

Preview any new or used CD at our
Listening Bar!

WE PAY BIG FOR USED DISCS!

294-8498

Monday - Saturday 11am - 10pm Sun 1 - 6pm