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EYE CANDY

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A sincere apology to UNC undergrads

I'd like to apologize on behalf of my profession. We've allowed a few professors to tarnish not only academia but academics. They take academic freedom too far, blurring the lines between research interests — which should be free from influence by bureaucrats — and our obligations to teach.

The recent hullabaloo in the hard sciences is small potatoes compared to the daily behavior of political science professors.

As an undergraduate, two of the three professors I remember most taught similar political theory and sociology courses. One professor passionately extolled

COMMUNITY COLUMNIST

the logical structures of arguments by authors from Plato to Foucault. His speeches were legendary, filled with excitement — each was a story, a complete narrative arc at the end of which left him covered in sweat and the students completely enraptured.

The other professor was boring. He put forth facts because that's what the syllabus demanded. He only became excited when, after rushing through the actual content, he would challenge students to argue against his judgments about the Bush administration. Everyone — from those who agreed to those who didn't — felt embarrassed for him. I remember this professor's political views and polarization of the room. I don't remember a lot about modern political theory.

The funny part of this story is that, outside of the classroom, the former professor's social activism is unrivaled. To this day we engage in political debates about numerous topics. The content of his views during these meetings over dinner differs little from the latter professor, yet the respect he earned in class from brilliantly teaching and informing students creates a comfort level that allows for a true discussion.

Conversely, few students ever attended the latter professor's office hours, and if they did they were of a similarly polarized ideological persuasion. His tactics encourage students to view intellectual discussions as polemical debates during which they must pick a camp, jump into the bunker and send rhetorical grenades into the opposition's camp while deflecting incoming fire.

There are a lot of ways to get students to think; angering might be one of them, but it's certainly not the most successful.

To think that students are so simple-minded and uninterested in your field of study to unnecessarily provoke a debate about their morals — create them to choose a side, right or wrong, good or bad — is a great way to entrench commonly held beliefs, but it isn't teaching.

The ideological beliefs of members of the academy — particularly the humanities and social sciences — are profoundly liberal.

I'm not, and unlike many, I see no problem with such a disparate distribution of ideological beliefs.

If the goal of an undergraduate education is to instill both factual information and a passion for learning in the hearts and minds of students, reinforcing ideological camps simply isn't the way to do it.

This sort of childish, immature and frankly lazy behavior reinforces external stereotypes of the ivory tower as an out-of-touch, liberal haven corrupting youth. Giving firepower to the Jesse Helms crowd uses students as pawns in an ideological chess match.

Challenging preexisting biases can be done through presenting facts and allowing students to engage with those facts and come to their own conclusions.

Instead, these few professors now mistake anger for passion. They peddle in discomfort and don't teach but rather aim to indoctrinate. They don't change beliefs; they cause students to run away from making those decisions either by viewing the professors as kooks or as incendiary polemicists.

EDITORIAL CARTOON By Alex Lee, lobin@email.unc.edu



Double standard

Raleigh's water regulations are grossly inconsistent

Raleigh has just 124 days of water left in Falls Lake.

Because of this, the Stage 2 restrictions that the city put in place Feb. 15, banning pressure washing and irrigation, would be justified were it not for a glaring double standard.

The Raleigh City Council is apparently content to stifle pressure-washing businesses during the drought while levying nothing but useless "restrictions" on car washes.

Restrictions are good, particularly when it's so crucial to conserve water, but only if they're effective. They shouldn't be overly prohibitive, but when the bar is set too low they don't actually achieve their purpose.

Last summer, the council adopted a certification program that allows professional car washes to use up to 55 gallons of water for a basic wash on each vehicle that passes through.

In theory, it's good that the city is restricting the amount of water used to wash cars.

However, 55 gallons is more than enough water to wash a car — and premium washes aren't

even under these restrictions.

A report by the International Carwash Association found that conveyor car washes average about 34 gallons per vehicle, while self-serve washes use considerably less.

Ed Buchan, who certifies Raleigh car washes, said almost all of them use less than 55 gallons per vehicle.

In addition, certification does not require car washes to recycle any water. In Orange County, water restrictions for car washes mandate that 50 percent of the water be recycled.

There are also a number of other measures that car washes can take to cut down on water use, such as pressure settings and nozzle sizes. If 34 gallons per vehicle is the average, that means a number of businesses operate at less than that.

But not only is Raleigh's car wash certification ineffective, it is also unfair.

For reasons unknown, more stringent restrictions have been placed on heavily water-based companies such as pressure washing, which is banned for

everything except for washing soiled areas that would harm public health otherwise.

Pressure washers remove graffiti, dirt and mold from sidewalks, improving the health and safety of citizens much more than a car wash does.

Power washing a 2,000-square-foot house requires about 250 gallons of water. Compared to the 55-gallon limit on car washes, that's actually considerably more efficient.

By allowing car washes to use an abundant amount of water while keeping tight restrictions on other water-based businesses, Raleigh has created a double standard in its water policies.

There isn't enough water available to apply the same lenient "constraints" to power washers and other businesses; instead, Raleigh needs to curb water use across the board.

If car washes actually had to modify their services somewhat to meet tighter city rules, other water-based businesses wouldn't have to be halted entirely and Raleigh might even conserve some water.

Their time's up

Allowing retroactive sentence reduction was right move

The presence of one hydrogen atom and one chlorine atom used to mean the difference between probation and five years in prison.

That is the chemical difference between powder cocaine and crack, the freebase form.

With the extreme disparities in federal sentencing for powder and crack cocaine charges, the U.S. Sentencing Commission made the right decision to retroactively reduce punishment for crack cocaine offenders.

As a result of this change, inmates in the Charlotte area became eligible Monday to apply for reduced sentencing.

The debate stems from drug laws instituted in 1988 that mandated a minimum five-year sentence for possession of five grams of crack. It would take 500 grams of powder cocaine to receive the same sentence, a ratio of 100 to 1.

The laws also made crack

cocaine the only drug that carries a mandatory sentence for a first offense of simple possession. That rock-hard legislation is unheard of in the prosecution of other drug offenses.

Crack and powder forms of cocaine have similar physiological effects on the body, so the main difference between the forms is cost and area of use.

Because it is less expensive to manufacture, and thus to sell, crack cocaine is more prevalent in low-income neighborhoods, which tend to have higher crime rates. This has led to the concern that the crack trade is inherently more violent.

However, there is no legal basis for the disparities in the way the different forms of cocaine are prosecuted.

A 1995 study conducted by the USSC concluded that violence associated with crack sales is correlated more with the drug trade environment, not use of the

drug. That means that any drug being sold in the same areas by the same people would produce similar rates of violence.

A report to the commission also stated that 90 percent of crack cocaine offenses were nonviolent.

Moreover, statistics seem to support the notion that sentencing for crack offenses themselves have racial disparities, which casts further doubt on the justice of past crack sentencing.

Though two-thirds of crack users are white or Latino, 80 percent of those prosecuted for a crack-related crime in federal courts were African American, and 73 percent of those charged were only involved in low level drug activities.

Prosecution and sentencing for drug offenses should be based on the severity of the offense itself, not on whether the drug is taken up the nose or through a pipe.

Ground level

Google Street View is useful, doesn't violate privacy

Google might be walking the line between "Big Brother" and big helper with its newest feature, but it's not crossing it.

The company expanded its Street View program to Chapel Hill, Raleigh and Durham in February, much to the chagrin of some residents.

We admit that seeing your car, your house or, for a very select group of people, yourself, depicted in such detail on the Internet is a little off-putting. But it's not really worth making too much hay over.

The images are not live — judging by the shorts-wearing pedestrians, the Google van rolled through Chapel Hill during one of the warmer months. And because of cost, it

is unlikely that they will be updated regularly, just as the Google satellite images are not updated regularly.

Plus, the images don't show anything that couldn't be seen by someone actually in that location at that time.

Street View is useful for finding an unfamiliar location, as it allows people to see what the street actually looks like at key turns they need to make, so that when driving, they know what they are looking for.

This means less slowing down and straining to see street signs at every intersection — beneficial both to the motorist as well as to the drivers around them.

There are certainly problems with Street View and improvements that could be made. No

new feature is perfect.

Faces and license plates are not obscured in the U.S., which has caused some people to protest. Google should be sympathetic to the concerns of those who don't want to be pictured.

However, anyone can request an image be removed if it somehow violates personal privacy or security concerns or contains inappropriate content.

So far, however, the company hasn't received too many requests, although some images have been removed.

All new technology is bound to experience some kickback when first introduced, which is healthy. But we are confident that Street View will prove to be a valuable resource in navigating around the Triangle.

QUOTE OF THE DAY:

"We've gotta have guys on our football team that are pushing guys for starting jobs."

BUTCH DAVIS, UNC HEAD FOOTBALL COACH

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Feel strongly about something that has been printed? Post your own response to a letter, editorial or story online. VISIT www.dailytarheel.com/feedback

There is only an extreme on the right, not the left

TO THE EDITOR:

I must address a quote found in the article "Devout Democrats discuss faith, politics" (online, March 3), specifically, the feeling of one interviewee that he was "trapped between two extremes: the religious right and the secular left."

This quote mischaracterizes the situation: The secular left, with few exceptions, is not an extreme, especially in comparison to the religious right.

Extremists on the right are active at the level of national politics. Consider the examples of Former Rep. Mark Siljander, R-Mich., and Rev. John Hagee.

Siljander, a self-described disciple of Jerry Falwell, was recently indicted for funneling charity money to the global terrorist Gulbuddin Hekmatyar.

Hagee, whose endorsement Republican frontrunner John McCain actively sought and accepted, advocates a war against the European Union on the grounds that the Antichrist will soon become its leader. Who are their equivalents on the left?

Noah Savage
Sophomore
Linguistics

Conservatives should not silence criticism of Obama

TO THE EDITOR:

I am writing in light of the political cartoon in Friday's Daily Tar Heel (Feb. 29) mocking conservative criticism of Barack Obama's following.

I feel it is important to present the conservative viewpoint you may not be hearing in the mainstream media. Barack Obama has come upon American politics like a freight train, using words like "hope" and "change" to fuel his increasing support while often offering little substance behind his statements.

If this sounds new and refreshing to you, it shouldn't. Obama's chief consultant, David Axelrod, used many of the same phrases when he was working for John Edwards in his 2004 campaign. His campaign caught fire like a wet match, leading me to believe that it doesn't matter what is being said, only who says it.

Obama's growing support scares me because of the lack of tangible ideas he is presenting. He is not publicizing his socialist platform so much as he is presenting his desire for "hope" and "change."

I fear that what Americans are following is a hope that Obama will save America, rather than being enraged at his socialist agenda, ideas that are so against the American ideologies of democracy and capitalism.

As voting Americans in a pivotal election, it is vital that we are guided by our ideas and principles and not by blind faith in a politician.

As a conservative, I will not silence my criticism for Barack Obama. After all, as an elected official, he works for me.

Russell Parmele
Senior
Sociology

Board was inconsistent in its stances on violations

TO THE EDITOR:

(Monday) the edit board argued that even though the safety and security fee referendum was fraught with election rules violations, no re-vote is necessary ("By the book," March 3).

The referendum (a fee hike), sponsored by Student Body Treasurer Jordan Myers, was on the Feb. 12 ballot, but the safety and security committee illegally used its student government list-serve to influence the vote.

However, to quote the edit board, "The referendum passed by an overwhelming 71 percent majority, so it's fairly clear the student body supports the fee increase."

But last November ("We're calling for a recount," Nov. 7) the edit board was singing a different tune. Then the edit board urged the Student Supreme Court to nullify the results of a referendum that I sponsored because of an insignificant formatting error on the ballot.

This referendum giving students the right to vote on fee hikes won 82 percent of the vote. But the edit board called for a re-vote because "the fact is that a mistake was made that could have caused some students to vote differently than they otherwise would have."

To recap: 82 percent is low enough for a re-vote. But 71 percent is an "overwhelming" majority not requiring a re-vote. Surely the edit board isn't being inconsistent, now is it?

Tyler Younts
Speaker
Student Congress

CRSP will help to promote and expand UNC's research

TO THE EDITOR:

The educational policy committee (recently) approved the Carolina Research Scholars Program. The Office for Undergraduate Research and the academic affairs committee of student government designed CRSP to foster and expand undergraduate research at UNC.

Students who successfully meet the threefold CRSP criteria will be recognized for their contributions to UNC's intellectual and cultural climate with the "Carolina Research Scholar" designation on their transcript.

The criteria for CRSP are as follows: enrollment in Modes of Inquiry, a one-hour pass/fail research course; participation in at least two research-intensive courses; and presentation of original research at a campus symposium, such as OUR's Annual Celebration of Undergraduate Research, or at a professional conference.

CRSP participants will also be encouraged to participate in OUR skill-building workshops, the OUR Peer Advising Program and the Speaker's Bureau.

You can find out more information and register for the CRSP program by going to the Office for Undergraduate Research Web site: www.unc.edu/depts/our/students/students_crsp.html.

Diana Gergel
Co-Chairwoman
Academic Affairs Committee

The Daily Tar Heel

Established 1893,
115 years
of editorial freedom

SPEAK OUT

WRITING GUIDELINES:

- ▶ Please type: Handwritten letters will not be accepted.
- ▶ Sign and date: No more than two people should sign letters.
- ▶ Students: Include your year, major and phone number.
- ▶ Faculty/staff: Include your department and phone number.
- ▶ Edit: The DTH edits for space, clarity, accuracy and vulgarity. Limit letters to 250 words.

SUBMISSION:

- ▶ Drop-off: at our office at Suite 2409 in the Student Union.
- ▶ E-mail: to editdesk@unc.edu
- ▶ Send: to P.O. Box 3257, Chapel Hill, N.C., 27515.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Columns, cartoons and letters do not necessarily reflect the opinions of The Daily Tar Heel or its staff. Editorials are the opinions solely of The Daily Tar Heel editorial board. The board consists of eight board members, the associate opinion editor, the opinion editor and the editor. The 2007-08 editor decided not to vote on the board.