

The debate topic is: whether in times of national crisis, should professors have either the right or obligation to discuss these issues in class regardless of class syllabus. My position is that a professor teaching a course of soft sciences has the obligation to discuss crisis occurring at the moment. I hold the stance that a professor has the right not the obligation to state his opinion on the affair. The later view concerns all courses even those outside the soft sciences.

The importance of college is that it helps us prepare for the real world. Academic freedom is not only important for faculty members to further their research and teach their courses without outside intervention, but it gives the professor the right to allow an open discussion and debate in the classroom on issues that he considers crucial. Through the articles, books and even some projects that professors assigns he has an agenda and ideas he is imposing in the classroom. So why is it wrong for the professor to directly state his opinion in politics, war or any form of crisis? Only two things can happen: students can agree with the professor and change their formal views because of argument from authority or students can find flaws in the professor's argument and reinforce their preconceived notions. Either way is helping students become independent critical thinkers.

Often students come into college with a black or white perspective. Student come across people, beliefs and ideas that oppose their own beliefs. However, this collision of opposing ideas that professors bring into the classroom is an incentive for students to become relativists and acquire the learning they need to contribute to their society. In a classroom of soft sciences, if any national crisis is happening at the moment, it should be discussed in classroom with or without the syllabus. In these cases the professor has the obligation to bring these topics into perspective and encourage participation. If the subject is incorporated into the syllabus and allowed formal planning then it should be organized in a manner such as a debate or a reading and discussions, ideally presenting competing sides. This will help students to engage differences of opinion and form their own grounded judgments.

I believe it is the professors right not the obligation to state his opinion on political issues or any matters outside the classroom. Aside from academic freedom, he also has the right to freedom of speech. If he mentions his views without promoting students to cause a stir or a riot of any kind, (in other words cry out fire in a movie theater) I think it is appropriate in any course.

My opponent's stance is that a professor has the right not the obligation to discuss matters outside the academic world in the class room. Political issues, she explained,

should stay outside the classroom. The professor should follow the syllabus precisely and avoid any sensitive matters like war outside because some people may get offended. She held the point that political discussion or any matters outside academia may be discussed in college (as a lecture or a group) but discussing it in class room will not be appropriate. She explained that college students paid money to get an education and to learn not speak about matters outside the classroom, which will in other words “waste time and money spent.”

My opponent raised a case by saying that professors should make the effort to follow the syllabus without any deviations or intervention from the outside world. Time in the class room should be spent solely for educational purposes. Therefore if any topic should be discussed then it should be mentioned and planned ahead into the syllabus. I replied by mentioning the incident of September 11 which was highly unexpected. An occurrence that so deeply affected everyone emotionally shouldn't be discussed in the classroom, simply because it is not in the syllabus? I think it would be inappropriate not to have a discussion on it. Therefore, it should be an obligation on the professor to raise the subject.

My opponent mentioned that although she agreed that a professor has the right to discuss (in soft sciences) however, he does not have the right to state his opinion in a

classroom that is not of relevance. Professors should avoid making any political remarks and stay away from subjects that does not relate to math or science. I responded to that by speaking about an article that I read about Professor John Montgomery taught students in class Math 107, about Venn Diagrams using : W = all members of President Bush's administration; Y = all members who are "yes-men" (or women). "All & No statements as conditionals: translate," this Professor used the phrase "No Republican cares for the homeless" as an example. Although he claims that it may or may not be his political views, what was meant "In an attempt to keep the students awake, I try to make the statements provocative or entertaining" (Sara Dogan). Should the professor be penalized for trying to make his classroom interesting with views that may or may not be his?

The best way to make relativist of students is to present to them opposing sides in matters in the academic world and outside. College should prepare students with the confidence to build their judgments and learn to respect those who have different perspectives. It is to learn to agree to disagree. It is professors and faculty's responsibility to not only teaches textbook material but to expand their knowledge.

Cited Works

Dogan, Sara. "Academic Freedom Abuses Unabated on Campus." *Letter from the*

National Campus Director 6 December 2005:

www.google.com