

A Cultural Revolution for Dartmouth?

Every fall at Brown University, newly-admitted minority students arrive on campus four days before their peers. They spend that time in Brown's "Third World Training Program," an intense seminar focusing on issues of race, class, gender, assimilation, and identity. When the rest of the student body arrives on campus, they are forced to watch a film depicting a conversation between a black man and a white man. At the conclusion of the film, the white man breaks down crying from guilt.



By
**Steven
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Next, the insidious part: the entire freshman class is divided into small groups and assigned a "facilitator" to discuss race, class, and the rest. Naturally, those who participated in the Third World Training program are the most outspoken; they have just completed four days of instruction in PC orthodoxy. One Brown student reports that when he voiced disagreement with the film, he was subjected to a barrage of rhetorical attacks from Third World Training Program graduates. The student kept his mouth shut for the remainder of freshman orientation — and much of the first semester.

In their recent book, *The Shadow University: The Betrayal of Liberty on America's Campuses*, Professor Alan Charles Kors of the University of Pennsylvania and civil liberties attorney Harvey A. Silvergate trace the recent phenomenon of campus speech codes to 1960s Marxist philosopher Herbert Marcuse. In "Repressive Tolerance," a 1965 essay, Marcuse wrote that free expression is actually "repressive." By his logic, the powerful and wealthy elite keeps the great bulk of the population "manipulated and indoctrinated" so that they "parrot, as their own, the opinion of their masters." In this environment, tolerance of all views serves to entrench the status quo power structure.

"Liberating tolerance," Marcuse wrote, would consist of "intolerance against movements from the Right, and toleration of movements from the Left." Assailing the "sacred liberalistic principle of equality for the other side," Marcuse advocated "the withdrawal of toleration of speech and assembly from groups and movements which promote aggressive policies, armament, chauvinism, discrimination on the grounds of race and religion, or which oppose the extension of public services, social security, medical care, etc." After all, Marcuse opined, "there are issues where... there is no 'other side' in any more than a formalistic sense."

Kors and Silvergate observe that while Marcusean logic has been rejected by the "real world," it has enveloped the academy. They point to the rise of speech codes on campus. But Marcuse's ideas are even more pervasive in universities: Marcusean logic has invaded the curricula and educational programs of American universities.

Certainly, Brown University administrators designed the Third World Training Program so that its graduates

direction," Marcuse wrote, "he will be inclined to place the facts into the predominant framework of values." Thus, "new and rigid restrictions on teaching and practices in the educational institutions" are necessary. In short, Marcuse argued that re-education in a progressive university was essential for the achievement of real freedom.

On Saturday, November 14, Marcusean logic surfaced at Chi Gamma Epsilon fraternity's discussion on tolerance at Dartmouth. The main speaker was Binh Douglas, student president of the University of Vermont. His comments, and those of student participants, focused on "the need to educate people," as one student put it.

Responding to a request for balance in ongoing campus discussions, one audience member said, "I've already been to your forum. It's called history class. . . . This college has a history of hundreds of years of oppressing. Now it's our turn. This is the turn-around. And then it will be equal." Ominous language — and Marcusean to a T.

Douglas reported that in 1988 and 1991, in response to incidents of racial intolerance more extreme than we have seen at Dartmouth, Vermont students occupied the campus administration building for two days and two weeks, respectively. Students' demands, Douglas explained, culminated in a university-wide course requirement in "race and culture," as well as the requirement that professors complete "diversity training" before receiving tenure. A visitor from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst reported that his institution requires "two courses in minority ethnicity" of all students.

Between 1964 and 1993, many universities, including Dartmouth, abolished required courses in favor of distributive requirements; the purpose was, ostensibly, to increase intellectual freedom on campus. Aside from the virtual elimination of course requirements (aside from foreign languages), the National Association of Scholars reports that whereas the average number of courses without prerequisites was 23 per institution in 1914, it was 582 in 1993. What's more, between 1964 and 1993, the number of institutions with a specific history requirement fell from 38% to 12%, while those with a literature requirement dropped from 38% to 14%.

Many see this change as the death of general education and argue that students, on their own, do not, or even cannot, construct a well-rounded curriculum that gives all the basics of civilization. But those arguments failed to quell the libertarian zeal that put students in control of their own education.

It seems, however, that intellectual

freedom is no longer in vogue at American universities. While universities no longer require that students learn the classics of Western thought and literature they do require that students be subjected to the ideology of the modern left. The theoretical basis for such requirements is that of Herbert Marcuse: since students are already indoctrinated into Western thought, they must be similarly indoctrinated into an opposing viewpoint.

But this view establishes an artificial dichotomy that

unnecessarily alienates some students (most noticeably students who follow Western religions). Moreover, the Marcusean view presupposes that the leftist view is "true" or "progressive" while Western thought is "regressive." Too often, students are encouraged to be critical of the Western tradition, but not to think critically about their professors' ideologies. "Re-education," after all, is the whole point: for students to be properly educated they can't start defending the regressive position. Some students are indoctrinated; others feel alienated from class discussions.

Ironically enough, the goals of the modern left are now

being best accomplished within the very structure they tore down in 1964. At Columbia University, which still maintains a core curriculum grounded in the Western Canon, Gabriel García-Márquez's *A Hundred Years of Solitude*, Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, and Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Are Watching God* are taught alongside *The Iliad*, *Oedipus at Colonus*, *King Lear*, and *Crime and Punishment*.

They are all powerful texts that resonate, in some way, with other texts taught in the curriculum. By examining the classics of the Western tradition alongside works that are critical of tradition, students are encouraged to think critically not only about

Western ideas, but competing ideas as well.

The Committee on Instruction is reviewing Dartmouth's academic requirements this year. They will consider a proposal by the Student Assembly for a distributive requirement in "Identity, Race, and Ethnicity." The proposal is eminently more reasonable than similar requirements at other schools. Rather than requiring a specific course in multiculturalism, the SA proposes to allow students to

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choose among several courses that examine the minority experience in America in a comparative context.

According to Jorge Miranda '01, SA Vice-President for Academic Affairs, a course that would fulfill the requirement might examine the African-American experience in Harlem and compare it to the Latino experience in Los Angeles. One course currently at Dartmouth that would fulfill the requirement examines the Irish in America. The Identity, Race and Ethnicity proposal grew out of an SA forum held last spring, which resulted in the SA's advocacy for an Ethnic Studies program (see TDR, 4/8/98).

IRE courses might seem compelling to some students, but creating a new distributive requirement establishes the same dichotomy that such requirements have at other schools: the SA proposal is to combine the North American (NA) distributive requirement with the European (EU) requirement to form a single distributive category. IRE would then be the third distributive.

Perhaps, when the Committee on Instruction convenes to discuss promoting diversity in the curriculum, they should look to literature rather than ethnic studies.

The whole point, after all, is to prepare students to function in society and they can't do that without knowing the basics of their civilization. Surely, students should think critically about society, but "diversity" should mean diversity of thought, too.

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would be prepared to rebuke dissenters — and so that the dissenters would be left unprepared in the same way. Like Marcuse, Brown fancies itself party to some objective truth and feels compelled, in order to "liberate" its students, to fully indoctrinate them in leftist multiculturalism.

"Unless the student learns to think in the opposite

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