

California Association of Scholars

10501 Wilshire Blvd #1801, Los Angeles CA 90095-1547 • (310) 446 0766

November 11, 2023

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Office of the President
University of California
1111 Franklin Street, 12th Floor
Oakland, CA 94607

Dear President Drake,

The California Association of Scholars has been watching with growing concern the controversy over the proposed high school Ethnic Studies course that may become a new requirement for entry into the University of California. The treatment of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict in draft curricula for the course has rightly caused concern about campus anti-Semitism, but we write now to raise some different but equally grave concerns.

The primary aim of education must be to give students a full understanding of any matter under study. Where a conflict between two peoples is involved, this understanding can only be achieved if students are exposed to the case made by *both* sides. They must know, and be able to evaluate the beliefs and claims of each side, which means that they must be acquainted with all the historical facts to which each refers to bolster its case. An instructor who only recites the claims of one side and the evidence relevant to those claims is not just inappropriately partisan: he is an incompetent teacher. He has withheld from his students a full understanding of the matter because it conflicts with his own political commitments. He has left them in a state of ignorance about the subject he is supposedly teaching.

Neither in the high schools nor in the university should this instructional incompetence be tolerated. The university has a duty to correct it. None of the drafts of the proposed ethnic studies requirement seem free of this kind of educational negligence, but the most egregious is the so-called “liberated” version, which brazenly aims to recruit students to a cause by suppressing historical facts and evidence that might stand in its way. What concerns us even more is that the most active proponents of this incompetent curriculum are members of this university’s faculty, mainly, though not exclusively, faculty in Ethnic Studies. That leads us to conclude that the University’s own courses on the Middle East are similarly incompetent. Recent demonstrations by student groups on the campuses suggest as much. We need not remind you of the many provisions of California state law, the Regents’ by-laws, the faculty code of conduct, and generally recognized professional standards, that prohibit activist abuse of the University’s classrooms for indoctrination.

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However, our main concern is with the quality of instruction in the University. We suggest that conspicuous educational incompetence requires determined corrective action by you as the University's President. We call on you now to take such action, and ask that you inform us of the steps you propose to take.

The problem we raise here goes both to the integrity of the university's educational mission, and to its reputation. The public has been alarmed at the level of ignorance shown by UC students in their demonstrations about Israel and Hamas. As the public has a vital interest in this matter, we plan to make this letter and your response to it public. We hope you will take this opportunity to reassure the public that the University understands and is determined to remedy what is demonstrably a bad situation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Ellis', with a large, stylized initial 'J'.

John Ellis,
Chairman of the Board
California Association of Scholars

cc Members of the Board of Regents