

Michael Davis

Dear Senators,

My name is Michael Davis and I was a Bachelor of Arts (Diploma of Education) student at Macquarie University in Sydney between the years 2000 – 2003 (majoring in English and History) and in that period of 3 and a half years experienced a number of incidents of what I believe were politically-inspired bias and discrimination on the basis of the political views that I chose to sincerely express in public in what I thought would have been a tolerant and intellectually rigorous environment where dialogue, inquiry and a diversity of ideas and beliefs would have been encouraged, fostered and defended vigorously by staff and students alike.

This too often was not the case where academics either seemed to sit idly by while students of a certain political persuasion were allowed to distort and twist the statements that I and other students of a more conservative political persuasion had made in open debate (in good faith) and mock and goad us with immature and unsavoury behaviour or simply made statements themselves of their volition that were entirely fallacious and designed more to shut down debate and seemingly intimidate those students who had the moral courage not simply to “run with the herd” (as it were) and impose a standard ideologically-charged line as the immutable truth of a particular academic discourse.

Examples of this are plentiful throughout my university life and two that come straight to mind includes one from a Politics tutorial where the war in Iraq was being debated. The tutor was a well-known leftist activist on campus and had a long and infamous career as a baiter of more conservative colleagues, including an Associate Professor in the Department of Politics, who was the most common target for her often quite personal and defamatory vitriol. As the debate ensued it seemed to me that this tutor would keep her peace (quite uncharacteristically) and actually allow an open and fair discussion to occur. This illusion was destroyed when the tutor exclaimed that anyone who supported the war (regardless of the many varied reasons for that support or how reasonable or sincerely held were these views) “enjoyed seeing the murder of little Middle Eastern children and thinks that these lives are more expendable because of their brown skin”. This outrageous and defamatory statement went unchallenged by any member of that part of the class

who had been arguing against the War and a disgraceful, unfair and dangerously misleading assessment of the views of those students who had taken great thought and with great difficulty had arrived at a conclusion in favour of the war and against that which they held. The class debate ended at this point (as I believe was intended by the tutor) more out of shock and in my case at least, a general feeling of repulsion and as the tutor re-iterated the point and expanded on her horrific generalisation in an attempt at justification the mood in the class changed starkly against her intervention in the debate as all students realised that frank and honest debate was impossible in this environment and that the ideologically-driven screed that we had witnessed represented the true thoughts of a supposedly learned woman, one who was (and probably still is) in charge of forming impressionable young minds on matters of a political nature.

The second incident relates to a lecturer in English, who in a lecture on the writings of Dickens (in my very first week at University) made the comment that while Dickens was a noted chronicler of the social injustices and deprivations that afflicted much of 19th-century British society, he himself was a “bigot, a misogynist, a wife-beater and a physical abuser of his children, much like your typical conservative”.

As a conservative person of strong principle and someone who thinks and feels deeply about many issues of a political nature, I feel that this kind of defamatory and mindlessly bigoted attack (which is not an isolated incident on Australian university campuses) is the sign of a dangerously corrosive and intimidatory culture against people of certain political persuasions that aren't deemed politically popular, correct or palatable by the predominating clique of professional academic activists who proliferate most prominently in the Arts and Social Sciences faculties of our universities and provides a dangerous situation for our young people, who believe that they have received a world-class education, but have been largely exposed to ideologically-driven rhetoric and indoctrination.

I hope that you can take this evidence into account when you hand down your findings in this matter.

Regards,

Michael Davis.