

Teacher to Student: If You Don't Support Gay Marriage, Drop My Class

Students who oppose gay marriage are homophobic, according to an audio recording of a Marquette University instructor who went on to say that gay rights issues cannot be discussed in class because it might offend homosexuals.

I reached out to the 20-year-old student at the center of this outrageous episode and the story he tells should serve as a warning to anyone who thinks religious schools are safe havens for open discourse.

The story was first reported on a blog run by a Marquette University professor and was picked up by the good folks over at *The College Fix*.

The young man, who asked not to be identified, explained what happened when his ethics instructor, Cheryl Abbate, led a conversation in "Theory of Ethics" class about applying philosophical theories to modern political controversies. There were a list of issues on the board—gay rights, gun rights and the death penalty.

"We had a discussion on all of them—except gay rights," the student told me. "She erased that line from the board and said, 'We all agree on this.'"

Well, as it so happened—the student did not agree with instructor Abbate.

So after class he approached the instructor and told her he thought they should have discussed the issue of gay rights. He also recorded their conversation—without her permission.

"Are you saying if I don't agree with gays not being allowed

to get married that I'm homophobic?" the student asked.

"I'm saying it would come off as a homophobic comment in this class," the teacher replied.

"Regardless of why I'm against gay marriage, it's still wrong for the teacher of a class to completely discredit one person's opinion when they may have different opinions," the student said.

Abbate disagreed.

"There are some opinions that are not appropriate—that are harmful—such as racist opinions, sexist opinions," she said. "And quite honestly, do you know if anyone in the class is homosexual?"

The student said he did not know the answer to her question.

"Do you not think that would be offensive to them if you were to raise your hand and challenge this," she asked.

At that point, the student told the instructor he had a right to challenge that—"that's my right as an American citizen."

"Actually," the teacher replied, "You don't have a right in this class, especially [in an ethics class], to make homophobic comments."

The student retorted that the comments were not homophobic.

"This is about restricting rights and liberties of individuals," he said. "Because they're homosexual, I can't have my opinions?"

And that's when the teacher dropped the bombshell.

"You can have whatever opinions you want but I will tell you right now—in this class homophobic comments, racist comments, sexist comments will not be tolerated," she said. "If you don't like it, you are more than free to drop this class."

So the student dropped the class.

"I understand that other people have very different views than I do and that's understandable," the student told me. "But when a student is not allowed to have an open discussion in a discussion-type class on a specific issue because it's regarded as homophobic—that really irks me."

Marquette Professor John McAdams, who runs the Marquette Warrior blog, accused Abbate of using a tactic "typical among liberals now."

"Opinions with which they disagree are not merely wrong, and are not to be argued against on their merits, but are deemed 'offensive' and need to be shut up," he wrote.

The student told me he filed a complaint—but he said university officials dismissed his concerns.

McAdams wrote that he was not surprised because the university officials held the same intolerant views as the instructor.

"Like the rest of academia, Marquette is less and less a real university," he wrote. "And when gay marriage cannot be discussed, certainly not a Catholic university."

A university spokesman told me they were viewing "both a concern raised by a student and a concern raised by a faculty member."

"We are taking appropriate steps to make sure that everyone involved is heard and treated fairly," the spokesman told me. "In compliance with state and federal privacy laws, we will not publicly share the results of the reviews."

Abbate told the website Inside Higher Ed that the "class discussion was not meant to be an opportunity for students to express their personal beliefs about political issues."

She said she hoped Marquette would “use this event as an opportunity to create and actively enforce a policy on cyberbullying and harassment.”

“It is astounding to me that the university has not created some sort of policy that would prohibit this behavior which undoubtedly leads to a toxic environment for both students and faculty,” she told Inside Higher Ed.

The only thing toxic at Marquette are teachers who oppose Catholic doctrine and try to silence dissenting opinions.

I would be remiss if I did not address the student’s behavior. A full review of the audio tape reveals the student was in fact disrespectful to the instructor. And when the instructor asked if she was being recorded, the student did not tell the truth.

I asked the young man about his behavior and he admitted to me that it was wrong. He told me that he “regretted” his actions.

Nevertheless, the student’s behavior does not excuse Marquette University’s successful attempt to silence the free exchange of ideas.

So let’s review—an instructor at a Catholic university taught material that is contrary to the teachings of the Catholic Church and when a Catholic student brought this information to the attention of Catholic administrators, the student was the one who got rebuked.

I’m not a Catholic, but it seems to me Marquette University is one of those CINO schools—Catholic in Name Only.

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