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What others think Michigan to discuss course on racism

The University of Michigan curriculum committee is going to discuss a much-needed mandatory course on racism. Proposed by Concerned Faculty and Faculty Against Institutional Racism in conjunction with students from the United Coalition Against Racism, the course would provide an analysis of race and racism as well as cultural achievements of people of color.

Racism is a significant phenomena in society and at the university, and the course would increase student understanding of this issue. The course is essential to any liberal arts education.

To its credit, the curriculum committee already had recommended that the proposal be instituted as an optional course. However, unless it approves the course as a requirement for all undergraduates, the class will be nothing but another ineffective token gesture.

The course must be mandatory.

If the course is optional, it is unlikely that students who most need to be educated about racism will choose to take it.

Students should not have the luxury of choosing whether or not to be educated about racism or other cultures. The university does not give students the choice about whether or not to learn a foreign language or to achieve a certain level of writing skill. To enforce these requirements and to make the course on racism optional would reflect the skewed priorities under which the university administration operates.

In order to combat racism at Michigan, structural changes need to be made. The university has consistently made excuses for low minority enrollment and the dismal percentages of minority faculty. In the proposed mandatory class, the faculty and administration have an opportunity to make a meaningful change. UCAR has been demanding that such a course be created since the spring of 1987.

There are no acceptable excuses.

— The Michigan Daily
University of Michigan

opinion READER

York defends Barufkin's caring nature

Lately there has been a lot of discussion and controversy about Peter Barufkin's petition to recall certain Association of Students of the University of Nebraska members, and his efforts to establish a student watchdog organization over the senate.

Although his attempts were unsuccessful, I would like to personally applaud Barufkin's interest in his student government. He, unlike most students, saw things happening that he didn't like and acted upon them. I know for a fact that Barufkin has not only attended many ASUN meetings, but has also gone into the office on several occasions and requested meeting agendas and copies of legislation. In other words, he cares.

Furthermore, his actions, having

stirred controversy, have actually caused a lot of students to sit up and take an interest in what ASUN is doing. Anyone who can create interest from apathy has my support and respect.

I have no problem being held accountable for my senate actions. A letter by Second Vice President Kim Beavers (Daily Nebraskan, Nov. 30) said to students who were upset about ASUN actions: "Where have you been the last five months?" To that, I respond: Who cares? I'm just glad you're around now.

Libby York
senior
broadcasting
ASUN senator

Sennett is right: World can't change

I am writing in response to James Sennett's column (DN, Nov. 30). Thanks for trying to understand, Sennett.

My generation has been labeled cynical, materialistic, apathetic. It's nice to have someone think about why the post-"boom" generation may be this way.

We follow a generation that made an attempt to promote social conscience. They exposed The Establishment and saw it in a modern way. We have learned from the 1960s. We

have earned labels, but we are not solely responsible.

We have been taught by the previous generation that we don't have a morally sound system and we can't change it. We are dealing with our atmosphere as the baby boomers did, and I'm glad that Sennett is thinking about why my generation is different than his.

Eric A. Lemke
junior
English



Finding out about fighter planes

Columnist reflects on November's triumph of secretive science

I had one of those mornings on Thursday. The first day of December is always traumatic because I need six more weeks to write all those papers, not three. This time it was especially painful because while contemplating the academic suicide that I have probably already committed, I couldn't find anything to eat for breakfast.

There was lots of food in the house, but none designed for consumption before 11 a.m. With some arguable fortune, I stumbled across a box of my health-freak roommate's breakfast cereal.

My roommate claimed that it was from a genetically engineered variant of a tropical plant. "A miracle of modern science," he called it. It looked and tasted like something that had been swept up off the floor of a saw mill.

As it was apparently designed to pass through my body without leaving a trace, I decided to save it a step. I flushed it and made lunch.

While stirring mixed and identifiable vegetables into my ramen noodle broth, I began to long for November. That was a month to celebrate the triumph of science.

November 1988 will be long remembered by aerospace and high technology buffs. The Soviets launched their long anticipated space shuttle. The unmanned flight of the Snowstorm was apparently a resounding success. Meanwhile, the Pentagon unveiled not one, but two secret stealth aircraft.

The most interesting of these three marvels — the stealth fighter — has been overshadowed in the press, not by accident, but by careful manipulation practiced by the Reagan administration.

A few days before the dramatic roll-out of the B-2, the Air Force released a blurred photograph of the F-117A Stealth Fighter and told us that the plane was declared operational several years ago. It also mentioned that we have an existing squadron of 52 stealth fighters, with seven more on order.

The F-117A made its first flight in 1983 after being developed under tight security. Until Nov. 11, the government did not even acknowledge that the project existed, even after a few of the planes crashed — killing at least one pilot. No one can tell you how much the plane cost. People know all right, but if they told you, they would be forced to kill you.

Quite a lot of rumor circulated about the plane. It was incorrectly

assumed to be designated the F-19. A toy company even marketed a plastic model airplane that was supposedly the Stealth Fighter. Judging from the unclear photograph released by the Air Force, the F-117A does indeed resemble the plastic model.

There is a reason why the B-2 bomber was rolled out in front of 2,000 people and some television cameras while only a hazy photograph of the F-117A fighter was released.



Gary Longsine

The F-117A is not a jet fighter, as billed. It is a spy plane.

The first clue came in the surprise designation of the craft as the F-117A. It was not called the F-117A simply to spite the editor of "Aviation Week and Space Technology," which had used F-19 as the plane's predicted designation.

The stealth plane was rumored to be a jet-fighter plane, and F-19 is a number in the sequence of Air Force fighter plane designations that had been skipped when the F-20 was named. The F-20 was a plane developed without government funds and designed to be sold in the export arms market. There were no takers and the project was abandoned.

The F-117A was not given a fighter designation because it is not a fighter.

Once before, the Air Force developed a plane in secret that was described as an "interceptor" whose primary mission would be to shoot down Soviet bombers. The SR-71 is now known to be the world's fastest, highest-flying plane. Exactly how fast and how high is still classified information, even 23 years after the public was told it existed. The best guess is three times the speed of sound and very, very high.

The SR-71 is a spy plane used to penetrate a hostile country's air defenses and take pictures without getting shot down. The only man who claims to have flown the armed interceptor version of the Blackbird also says he was part of a secret Air Force project to chase down and shoot down UFOs.

It is interesting to note that the F-117A is built at the same plant that made the U-2 (the now-well-known

glider used as a spy plane in the 1950s and '60s) and the SR-71. The Lockheed "Skunk Works" factory has a reputation for keeping secrets.

Is it possible that the F-117A is capable of penetrating Soviet air defenses without being detected? A brief look at the ability of the other stealth technology planes will give us some idea of the plane's ability.

According to the Nov. 13 "InfoGraph," the B-52, the 1950s-designed bomber which has been the mainstay of U.S. strategic nuclear air arms, has a Radar Cross Section of 100 square meters. It uses no stealth techniques.

The B-1, shaped to shun radar, has an RCS of 10 square meters and the B-1B, which uses classified stealth techniques that might include radar diffusing paint, has an RCS of one square meter. The B-2 reportedly has an RCS of one square millimeter.

"InfoGraph" says a "modern military radar" might detect the B-1B at a distance of 230 miles. There would be only seconds of warning before the plane flew past the radar. The same radar might not even detect the B-2.

Some recent accounts of the F-117A described the plane as two or three times the size of the F-15. This still makes it considerably smaller than the B-1B or the B-2.

If we assume, as the Air Force claims, that the F-117A is made with slightly older technology than the B-2, then it probably plugs neatly into the above table of Radar Cross Sections at about one square centimeter. This is probably sufficient to guarantee near invisibility to even the most advanced Soviet military radar, which is not as advanced as our own radar, so we are told.

According to the Wall Street Journal, a spokesman for Nellis Air Force base, where the F-117A is currently based, said that the "specific mission of the F-117A still is classified."

Fighter planes have very clear missions that are difficult to conceal: Engage enemy planes and shoot them down, penetrate enemy defenses and destroy key targets. Spy planes have specific missions that are still classified.

Given enough funding, there soon might be a fighter version of the F-117A. However, the 52 stealth planes in Nevada are probably no more ready to engage an enemy bomber fleet than the aging SR-71. They might be ready to count them before they take off.

Longsine is a senior economics and international affairs major and is a Daily Nebraskan editorial columnist.