

OPINION PACES

Our VIEW

Wake up

Class participation fosters thought

Somewhere between the cover and the end credits of a text book, and among the many lectures dished out over the course of the semester, there must be a little room for a rebellion.

No, not a throwing-your-chair-at-the-overhead rebellion, but a rebellion in thought.

It's extremely easy to sit in any class from 101 to 865 and just absorb information. Information comes in. It's stored in your memory. The test comes. It's regurgitated on paper. End of story.

You've learned something almost as valuable as being able to repeat the alphabet backward. In other words, you haven't learned anything worthwhile.

It's sad that so many students - and professors - are content with this. But what does that A really mean when all it means is that you can remember and repeat? And only for a short time, at that?

What needs to happen in all universities classes is the encouragement of independent thought.

You really cannot nod off when your jaw is moving. So instead of pinching yourself to stay awake during a lecture, try to participate.

And instead of jawing on, professors should encourage open discussion. Obviously, the professor is going to lead that discussion. And some days, students are about as responsive as road kill. But it's the principle of the matter.

There is an exchange to be found.

Allow yourself to voice an opinion or even challenge one.

And be willing to accept a challenge. It's easy to move from chapter to chapter with a nice, tidy outline. It's better to allow students to carry professors off on tangents and explanations. Even tenured professors need to allow their teachings to be challenged.

A good debate is usually a good discussion, and there is much to be learned from watching people defend their positions. And there is much to learn from having to defend your own. Making your point, and having to defend it, forces you at once to re-evaluate what you believe and gain more confidence in what you believe is true.

There is valuable information to be absorbed, but it's not really going to sink in unless students can take ownership in that information. And while research papers and presentations are novel ways to do that, they don't foster the feedback and interaction that independent thinking would during the class with all the students present.

Aside from making class a little more interesting, it should foster the "life of the mind" that university administrators desire.

This is the reason why students are the ones paying to learn.

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Haney's VIEW



Good Journalism, part I

Predictably enough, the Daily Nebraskan decided to forgo any attempt to actually report the faculty senate debate on the King holiday, in favor of a propagandistic juxtaposition of the vote with a report of the Chancellor's Commission on the status of People of Color.

For the benefit of the DN readers thus shortchanged by your reporter, the principal arguments against the King holiday and the fall break were logistical. Shortening the semester by one day creates major problems for laboratories, recitation sections and distance education courses that meet only on Mondays. Some of us spent a considerable amount of time looking at the impact of adding an extra Monday break, and concluded the likely result would be to reduce those components of our curriculum by a full week in both the spring and fall semesters.

It's easy to mouth slogans about a 'motherhood' issue like the King holiday. After all, who among us, these days, would disagree that King was a great man, and should be suitably honored? It takes a little more maturity, and, yes, time and effort to realize that any change we institute has consequences, and to weigh those very real consequences against the more intangible institutional benefits of such a holiday.

Of course, that's a complex issue, not easily reducible to the sloganeering the DN seems to confuse with journalism.

Gerard S. Harbison
professor of chemistry and faculty senator

looked upon as a mere advertisement. It is a dangerous and reprehensible statement that in effect condones its contents.

I have two objections to the DN's policy of running this. It is not only the inclusion of the advertisement in the DN that is outrageous, but also the cowardly way the editors deal with this issue. Attaching an inadequate disclaimer to an offensive and reprehensible advertisement does not make a wrong right. If the DN is so cash-strapped that it is compelled to include quasi-historical advertisements to fund itself, it should probably re-evaluate its existence.

I call on the DN to return any fees it has collected for this advertisement and make an equal contribution to the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum or review its advertisement policies.

Furthermore, the disclaimer states that "advertisements in the Daily Nebraskan do not necessarily reflect the view of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, its student body or the University Board of Regents." This disclaimer implies that these bodies do not necessarily condemn this advertisement, and a revisionist view of history, but they do in fact condone it.

I do not want to speculate on the reasons why this advertisement was included. One reason to include this advertisement might have been to liven up the tepid debate in the DN. Using a revisionist view of history to spark a debate is immature, imprudent and inappropriate.

Peter Went
graduate student business

Good Journalism, part II

It is with great distress that I saw an advertisement from the Committee for Open Debate on the Holocaust in the Daily Nebraskan. The first amendment rights, the right of people to freely voice themselves and their opinions, however erroneous and fraudulent these may be, are indisputable. However, this constitutional protection of free speech is not extended to advertisements; especially not fallacious quasi-historic advertisements.

An advertisement for the revisionist view of history should not be

Good Journalism, part III

Wednesday, the Daily Nebraskan published an advertisement from the Committee for Open Debate on the Holocaust. This committee has been buying ads in campus newspapers around the country to spread their specious tale of holocaust denial. This is not sloppy scholarship. It is an intentional distortion of history. Its subtext is hate, a virulent strain of anti-Semitism.

This campus should be a place where ideas are debated and the truth sought. As our vision statement reads, "We seek the truth for its own sake."

However, let us not confuse the advocacy of controversial ideas with the pursuit of an agenda that is intended to injure and harm others. I feel compelled to state my abhorrence of this ad and the message behind it.

James Moeser
chancellor

Good Journalism, part IV

The late Mike Royko, in one of his editorials, wrote "What has Mexico done besides given us tequila?" and was censored for this remark. Now a senior news-editorial major and Daily Nebraskan columnist writes, "When I find out who this El Niño fellow is, I am gonna kick his Mexican ass."

It saddens me that there are those on this campus and across the country who continue to choose to write inflammatory, insensitive and ignorant remarks that contribute to the continued negative stereotype and image of certain groups.

There is no doubt that El Niño is a fascinating phenomenon. It doesn't take a genius to know that El Niño has little to do with Mexico or a "Mexican ass." El Niño means "boy child" or "little one" in Spanish and refers to the Christ child. The name was coined by a Peruvian fisherman for the warm current that visits South America periodically around Christmas.

There are those who are now blaming El Niño for last week's storm. Willey takes this blaming even further and proposes to do violence to a certain body part of a certain ethnic individual.

Equally disturbing was the Daily Nebraskan's editorial board's decision to put this paragraph in the quotes of the week. Did they find this quote so "interesting," "funny" or "newsworthy"? When I questioned the DN staff about the criteria for choosing the quotes, they confirmed my initial impression of their insensitivity. I find their decision to be in poor taste.

Reporters write about what they know, what they feel and what they sense. Both Steve Willey and Mike Royko have gone beyond the latitude of good journalism.

Marty Ramirez
UNL Counseling and Psychological Services

Editorial Policy

Unsigned editorials are the opinions of the Fall 1997 Daily Nebraskan. They do not necessarily reflect the views of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, its employees, its student body or the University of Nebraska Board of Regents. A column is solely the opinion of its author. The Board of Regents serves as publisher of the Daily Nebraskan; policy is set by the Daily Nebraskan Editorial Board. The UNL Publications Board, established by the regents, supervises the production of the paper. According to policy set by the regents, responsibility for the editorial content of the newspaper lies solely in the hands of its student employees.

Letter Policy

The Daily Nebraskan welcomes brief letters to the editor and guest columns, but does not guarantee their publication. The Daily Nebraskan retains the right to edit or reject any material submitted. Submitted material becomes property of the Daily Nebraskan and cannot be returned. Anonymous submissions will not be published. Those who submit letters must identify themselves by name, year in school, major and/or group affiliation, if any. Submit material to: Daily Nebraskan, 34 Nebraska Union, 1400 R St. Lincoln, NE. 68588-0448. E-mail: letters@unlinfo.unl.edu.

P.S. Write Back

Send letters to: Daily Nebraskan, 34 Nebraska Union, 1400 "R" St., Lincoln, NE 68588, or fax to (402) 472-1761, or e-mail <letters@unlinfo.unl.edu>. Letters must be signed and include a phone number for verification.