

Religion still has place in class for many

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said. The program is designed to give students knowledge of religion as a part of human life, according to the UNL undergraduate bulletin.

About 30 students are pursuing a religious studies minor, Turner said. Forty-five classes from nine departments are part of the program.

But aside from those classes focusing on religious topics, matters involving religion inevitably find their way into other classes.

Some students said that because religion deals with everything, religion inevitably comes into discussions and class work in varied and unexpected ways.

Sometimes the beliefs of professors and students differ. The responses to these differences are as varied as the individuals themselves, some students and professors said.

Senior elementary education major Sarah Skiles described herself as a born-again Christian.

She came into conflict with the lecturer of a sociology class once because of her beliefs.

In a discussion on homosexuality, the lecturer said that born-again Christians and homophobia were intertwined, Skiles said.

"I raised my hand, I remember, and I said, 'Well, isn't that kind of a stereotype of born-again Christians, to say that they are all homophobic,'" Skiles said.

According to Skiles, the lecturer responded, "You'd call a lesbian a lesbian, wouldn't you? It's just like saying if you're Christian you're homophobic."

Skiles said she was "very offended" by the exchange.

"I'm Christian and I'm not afraid of gay people," she said.

But the event did not turn her off from discussing religion in the classroom. She said that more often than not her faith is discussed in a positive or at least a neutral light.

She said she appreciated professors who put forth arguments in classes and remained neutral despite their own prejudices or beliefs.

English Professor Robert Brooke said he attempted to understand the perspective of students writing about religious experience in the writing courses he instructs.

"I can talk to these students and relate to them in what they perceive as a sympathetic way," he said.

Brooke came from a heavily religious background, which provided him with a sense of what his students are writing about, he said.

His father is a retired priest of the Polish National Catholic Church.

Understanding what it is like to come from a religious background is important to a well-rounded education, he said.

"Moving toward the ability to manage perspectives other than your own in some sympathetic understanding in order to have tolerance amongst plurality is one of the goals of liberal education," he said.

He said religion is a good starting point in understanding diversity.

"I find that sometimes issues of great cultural diversity seem foreign to Nebraska students, but issues of religious diversity are things they learn about in their hometowns already."

Junior international business major Che-Yong Ting's hometown is far from Lincoln.

Ting's religious background comes from his parents' practice of a mixture of Taoism and Buddhism in Jementah, Malaysia.

"When I got here, I looked at things not the same as the Americans,

"Moving toward the ability to manage perspectives other than your own in some sympathetic understanding in order to have tolerance amongst plurality is one of the goals of liberal education."

ROBERT BROOKE
English professor

I suppose," Ting said.

He said he looks at religion as historical fact when it comes up in classes.

"When I look at things, and I never really try to relate them to religion, I rely on personal experience," he said.

Ting said his beliefs do not conflict with the influences of Western religion he finds on campus.

"When I hear someone talk about religion, it has never really challenged my beliefs," he said. "It has opened up my mind to be more acceptable about other people's religions."

Martin Gaskell, associate professor of physics, introduces himself as a born-again Christian in his astronomy class.

"One thing (born-again Christians) have to do is confess our sins," he tells his classes at the beginning of the semester. "One sin I have is that I used to teach at Oklahoma."

The joke, he said, may have been more apt in a period of Sooner football excellence, but it still gets a laugh.

Gaskell said he introduces himself as a born-again Christian to familiarize his students with his background, not to encourage conversion to his beliefs.

He said it's important for students to know where their instructors are coming from.

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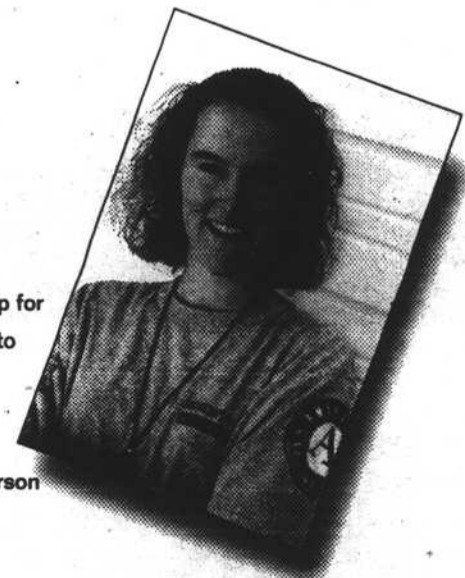
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