

DUKE-UNC MIDDLE EAST COURSE UNDER FIRE

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on why the Trump administration is on the offensive over a college course:

Duke University and the University of North Carolina receive federal funding for a joint Middle East studies course. The Trump administration has threatened to withdraw the grant because the universities have violated the rules of the agreement. While some of the issues involved are of no interest to the Catholic League—insufficient attention granted to foreign language courses—there are other issues that matter a great deal to us.

In a letter by the Department of Education to an administrator at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, concerns were raised regarding the way the Duke-UNC Consortium for Middle East Studies treats religions that are pervasive in the area.

The letter says this initiative “appears to lack balance as it offers very few, if any, programs focused on the historic discrimination faced by minorities in the Middle East, including Christians, Jews, Baha’is, Yazidis, Kurds, Druze, and others. Also, in your activities for teachers, there is considerable emphasis placed on understanding the positive aspects of Islam, while there is an absolute absence of any similar focus on the positive aspects of Christianity, Judaism, or any other religion or belief system in the Middle East.”

Unfortunately, this kind of religious profiling—singling out Islam for adulation while negating the positive contributions of Christianity and Judaism—is commonplace in education at

every level these days. The difference in this case is that this expression of political correctness is being funded by the public. Moreover, as the letter from the Department of Education details, this kind of gross imbalance violates specific federal strictures on this subject.

It is also an exercise in intellectual dishonesty: Judaism and Christianity, not Islam, are responsible for the achievements of Western civilization. Anyone not bright enough to acknowledge this verity needs to find a job outside of the hallowed halls of academia.

This initiative is also being used to foster multiculturalism and servicing "LGBTIQ youth in the schools, culture and the media." Leaving aside what the "I" is in this ever-expanding Queer alphabet, what in the world does this agenda have to do with Middle East studies? But if they want to go this route, why don't they tell students what happens to these people in Muslim-run nations?

Duke and UNC have a good academic reputation. Such shenanigans as this, however, undermine their standing.

They can scream about academic freedom all they want, but when they violate the specific terms of the agreement, turning a worthwhile program into another political crusade, they have forfeited their right to tap into public coffers. The Trump administration would be wise to pull the plug on this venture.