

NORTHWESTERN OFFERS ANTI-CHRISTIAN COURSE

The following letter explains why there is a problem at Northwestern.

March 27, 2025

Dean Adrian Randolph
Northwestern University
Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences
1918 Sheridan Road
Evanston, Illinois 60208

Dear Dean Randolph:

It has been brought to my attention that a faculty member in the Department of Religious Studies at the Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences, Dr. Lily Stewart, is using her class, "Introduction to Christianity," to engage in a frontal assault on the Catholic Church. How do I know this? The syllabus is a screed designed to distort and denigrate Christianity, thus feeding the appetite of anti-Christian bigots.

Having spent many years in higher education, and having served on the board of directors of the National Association of Scholars, I am well aware that academic freedom must be given great latitude. I am also aware that there is a difference between academic freedom and academic malpractice. What Stewart is doing is representative of the latter.

To illustrate my objections, simply compare the course outline of "Introduction to Christianity" to that of "Introduction to Islam."

Would not Muslim scholars object if the outline for the introductory class were to ask, "How many ways are there to be

a Muslim? What counts as Islam, what doesn't, and who ultimately gets to decide?" Just substitute Christian for Muslim, and Christianity for Islam, and that is what the introductory class outline says about Christianity.

It should be noted that the introductory course outline on Islam is exemplary.

When we consider the syllabus, this issue gets much worse.

The syllabus for "Introduction to Christianity" says the class "will explore histories of Christian colonialism, bigotry, liberation, and dissent." Indeed, it says, Jesus "has been at the forefront of projects of colonialism, violence, and subjugation, but also peace, liberation, and revolution."

If this were the way Islam and Muhammad were treated in the introductory course, would not Muslims find this objectionable?

Students are also put on notice. "Much of the material and topics that we are working with in this class include racist, ableist, Islamophobic, anti-semitic, transphobic, misogynist, homophobic, self-harm, murder, and sexual assault."

In other words, brace yourself in class when I discuss the historical contributions of the Catholic Church.

Imagine again, if the course on Islam were to portray the religion and its adherents as an evil force. What would Northwestern do when students and Muslim scholars complained?

I have written many books, one of which is *Why Catholicism Matters*. It details the role the Catholic Church has played in maintaining the manuscripts from Antiquity, the founding of the first universities, the pivotal role it played in the Scientific Revolution, and the seminal role it played in virtually every technological breakthrough in history.

The Church's contributions to art, architecture, and music are

legendary. Moreover, its promotion of natural law and natural rights made possible the eventual abolition of slavery; St. Patrick was the first person in history to publicly condemn slavery. The work of nuns founding schools, foster care homes, asylums, hospitals, hospices, and the like, is historic.

It is to be expected that professors will develop an approach to their discipline that differs from that of others in their field. That is how it should be. But we are not talking about legitimate avenues of discourse or research. We are talking about a frontal assault on a world religion.

Those who engage in vitriolic caricatures of demographic groups, be they religious, ethnic, racial, or sexual, may find expression in social media, but they have no business in academia.

If there are some who read this letter who are not convinced that Professor Stewart has crossed the line, consider that there is a depiction of Jesus in the syllabus, with the following inscription:

Hey girl.

*How about I turn that water into wine,
we put on some slow jams and just cuddle?*

#Hot.Jesus

This is not scholarship. It is hate speech with a scholarly veneer.

I look forward to hearing from you about this matter.

Sincerely,

William A. Donohue, Ph.D.

President

cc: Michael H. Schill, President

Peter M. Barris, Chair, Board of Trustees

Elizabeth Shakman Hurd, Chair, Department of Religious Studies

Lily Stewart, Professor Religious Studies

Barbara Gellman-Danley, President, Higher Education Commission