



ACADEMIC SENATE EXECUTIVE OFFICE
LOS ANGELES DIVISION
3125 MURPHY HALL
LOS ANGELES, CA 90095-1408

PHONE: (310) 825-3851
FAX: (310) 206-5273

July 9, 2012

David Delgado Shorter, Ph.D.
UCLA World Arts & Cultures
Box 951608, Kaufman Hall, Suite 150
Los Angeles, CA 90095-1608

Dear Professor Shorter:

On June 13, 2012, The UCLA Senate Committee on Academic Freedom ("Committee") discussed the events arising following receipt by Dr. Andrew Leuchter, Chair, UCLA Academic Senate, of an email correspondence signed by Drs. Tammi Rossman-Benjamin and Leila Beckwith, the subject of which was "a question about academic freedom."

The Committee's discussion followed its examination of the course materials for "2012 Winter - WLARTS33-1 - SHORTER, Tribal Worldviews," kindly provided by you, as well as of other documents, including but not limited to: (a) letters from the California Scholars for Academic Freedom; (b) an "open letter" signed by 19 individuals associated with a number of different American universities; (c) an article published on April 24, 2012 in the The Daily Bruin, entitled "UCLA professor's link on course website to page supporting boycott of Israel sparks controversy;" and (d) the web sites for the "US Campaign for the Academic & Cultural Boycott of Israel" <www.usacbi.org>, "The Electronic Intifada" <electronicintifada.net>, and the "AMCHA Initiative" <amchainitiative.org>.

The Committee focused its attention primarily on two questions: (1) with respect to academic freedom, did you have the right to post the link <www.usacbi.org> ("link") on the course web page? and (2) did the manner in which Academic Senate Chair, Dr. Leuchter, interact with you and others abridge your academic freedom?

The Committee supports the right of every professor to conduct their classes in a manner he or she deems appropriate, with the proviso that such conduct does not violate existing policies of UCLA and the UC system. The Committee affirms the principles articulated in the Academic Personnel Manual, namely that "students and faculty are free within the classroom to express the widest range of viewpoints in accord with the standards of

scholarly inquiry and professional ethics” (APM 10) and that faculty have “the right to present controversial material relevant to a course of instruction.” (APM 15) Although the Committee affirms the University’s principles that such advocacy must be consistent with professional standards and no student should feel pressured to affirm any particular point of view, no evidence was provided that these principles were violated within your course and no complaint by a member of the course was received.

The Committee also is concerned about aspects of the manner in which Academic Senate Chair Leuchter handled the events. First, we are concerned that the leader of the Academic Senate instigated an investigation at the behest of an outside group. We think that faculty members should be free of such scrutiny and should not have to answer to interest groups outside the university. The only parties who should have the standing to complain about whether the content of a course threatens academic freedom are members of the University directly affected by the content of a course (e.g., students or teaching assistants).

Further, if a *student* or a *teaching assistant* had a concern that the link jeopardized academic freedom, that concern would be relevant but the Committee believes that the appropriate forum for consideration of such issues should have been the Committee, as eventually has occurred anyway. It appears to the Committee that expediency was substituted for well informed consideration of the issues, which led, in part, to the public dissemination of inaccurate information.

Second, we are concerned that Dr. Leuchter issued inaccurate statements (including the misrepresentation of an apology by Dr. Shorter for his course material) to the press and to an outside organization about a faculty member without consultation with or the consent of that faculty member. This lent the appearance that an outside organization had standing to complain about course content and, thereby, threatened the academic freedom of all faculty members. Further, it wronged Dr. Shorter and was not consistent with Dr. Leuchter’s role as a representative of the faculty. The Committee understands that Dr. Leuchter has issued an apology, an action that the Committee considers appropriate.

The amount and tenor of the public scrutiny of the link issue are unfortunate. The Committee recognizes the unpleasantness of this for you and for others involved.

The Committee suggests that: (1) all professors at UCLA seek to be exemplars of academic freedom in their classes and in their functions as members of our academic community; and (2) renewed efforts be made by members of the Academic Senate, Academic Senate committees, and the UCLA administration to practice deliberation in the consideration of all issues of faculty/public interest and to insulate faculty from the pressures of outside political groups.

For the Academic Senate Committee on Academic Freedom,



David B. Teplow, Ph.D.
Chair, Academic Senate Committee on Academic Freedom
Professor of Neurology
Interim Director, Mary S. Easton Center for Alzheimer's Disease Research at UCLA
Director, Biopolymer Laboratory
David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA

On behalf of members of the Committee on Academic Freedom:

Micah Akuezue, Graduate Student Representative
Christine Dunkel Schetter, Professor, Psychology
Yogi Hendlin, Graduate Student Representative
Marco Iacoboni, Professor, Psychiatry
Russell Jacoby, Professor, History
Christopher Looby, Professor, English
Seana Shiffrin, Professor, Philosophy/Law
Suzanne Shu, Professor, Management

cc: Angelia Leung, Chair, World Arts and Cultures
Dr. Andrew Leuchter, Chair, Academic Senate
Professor Carole Goldberg, Vice-Chancellor for Academic Personnel
Chancellor Gene D. Block