

# What Happened to Free Speech at Marquette?

The closest things we have to re-education camps in this country are college campuses. In the old Soviet Union, to use but one example of authoritarianism gone wild, if you said the “wrong” thing you might lose your job, your freedom or your life. Here in America, expressing the “wrong” opinion can cost you dearly, too.

Just ask Professor John McAdams, who used to teach at Marquette University in Milwaukee.

The story begins in 2014 when Cheryl Abbate, a philosophy instructor and PhD candidate at Marquette, suggested in class that for certain topics there pretty much is only one reasonable, decent, acceptable point of view. One of those topics was same-sex marriage.

After class, a student met with the instructor and secretly (if unethically) recorded their conversation. Here’s part of it:

**Student:** Regardless of why I’m against gay marriage, it’s still wrong for the teacher of a class to completely discredit one person’s opinion when they may have different opinions.

**Abbate:** Ok, there are some opinions that are not appropriate that are harmful, such as racist opinions, sexist opinions, and quite honestly, do you know if anyone in the class is homosexual?

**Student:** No, I don’t.

**Abbate:** And don’t you think that that would be offensive to them if you were to raise your hand and challenge this?

This is quite remarkable. A student can’t voice an opinion

because other students – sensitive little snowflakes as they are – might be offended? Is this college or kindergarten?

More of the recorded exchange:

**Student: If I choose to challenge this, it's my right as an American citizen.**

**Abbate: Ok, well, actually you don't have a right in this class, as ... especially as an ethics professor, to make homophobic comments, racist comments, sexist comments ...**

**Student: Homophobic comments? They're not. ...**

**Ok, so because they are homosexual I can't have my opinions? And it's not being offensive towards them because I am just having my opinions on a very broad subject.**

**Abbate: You can have whatever opinions you want but I can tell you right now, in this class homophobic comments, racist comments, and sexist comments will not be tolerated. If you don't like that you are more than free to drop this class.**

He did. But he also told Professor McAdams about it. The professor, who earned his PhD at Harvard, teaches political science and writes a blog. So he wrote about what happened, saying the instructor was “using a tactic typical among liberals now. Opinions with which they disagree are not merely wrong, and are not to be argued against on their merits, but are deemed ‘offensive’ and need to be shut up.”

The blog went viral and the instructor got nasty, ugly emails.

That's when the re-educators stepped in – they have titles at Marquette like dean and university president – and suspended Professor McAdams without pay and said he would not be allowed to teach at Marquette unless he admitted his conduct was “reckless” and he apologized.

If you haven't guessed, McAdams said in effect, don't hold

your breath. He compared the demand to the “Inquisition, in which victims who ‘confessed’ they had been consorting with Satan and spreading heresy would be spared execution.”

Technically, the university is punishing Professor McAdams because he published the instructor’s name, resulting in those hate-filled emails sent to her. But if we follow this reasoning, a professor is not only responsible for what he writes but also for the reaction it produces.

What if university professors signed a petition against student athletes who supposedly raped an exotic dancer – which resulted in the athletes being maligned and put in the crosshairs of the angry mob? It happened at Duke with those lacrosse players who didn’t rape anybody. Should the professors – who already found them guilty absent a shred of evidence – be fired for causing innocent students distress?

The university also said that in his blog McAdams got some information wrong and that, “To endure, a scholar-teacher’s academic freedom must be grounded on competence and integrity, including accuracy “at all times.”

At all times? Really? I bet the liberals who run Marquette can’t name even one scholar anywhere who writes papers or books, who speaks at seminars, or who talks to kids in class, who has been accurate “at all times.”

Unless something dramatic happens soon, Professor McAdams will lose his tenure and his job for expressing opinions the authoritarians – at a Catholic University no less – found objectionable.

There should be an outpouring of support for Professor McAdams – and it should come from professors at universities all across America. But such an uprising is not likely. Too many of these academic liberals have long forgotten what it means to be liberal. They claim to honor diversity but for them that doesn’t include diversity of opinion – the kind of opinion, as

Professor McAdams has said, they would rather “shut up” than even listen to.