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## The Washington Post

### Liberalism in the Classroom; [FINAL Edition]

The Washington Post. Washington, D.C.: Apr 2, 2005. pg. A.19

**Full Text** (525 words)

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Howard Kurtz's article on left-leaning faculty ["College Faculties a Most Liberal Lot, Study Finds," *Style*, March 29] makes it clear: University faculty are even more liberal than those he calls "conspiratorial conservatives" might have imagined. Lest people think this has no impact in the classroom, a recent survey by the American Council of Trustees and Alumni shows that this severe political imbalance has a disturbing effect on students' right to learn.

In late November, the ACTA released a survey conducted by the University of Connecticut's Center for Survey Research and Analysis documenting significant political pressure in the classroom.

The survey revealed that 49 percent of the students at the top 50 colleges and universities said professors "frequently" injected political comments into their courses, even if they had nothing to do with the subject. Almost one-third of the students (29 percent) felt they had to agree with the professor's political views to get a good grade. Almost half (48 percent) reported campus presentations on political issues that seemed "totally one-sided." And 42 percent faulted reading assignments for presenting only one side of a controversial issue.

Nearly half of the students surveyed reported abuses. A majority considered themselves "liberals" or "radicals." And only 10 percent of those surveyed were majoring in political science or government, where you would properly expect discussion of electoral politics and current events.

The lack of intellectual diversity in our college classrooms is a problem. It is time for boards of trustees -- working with college presidents -- to ensure that students are exposed to a free and open exchange of ideas.

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-- Anne D. Neal

Washington

The writer is president of the American Council of Trustees and Alumni.

I was surprised that Howard Kurtz's article did not report all the relevant data for the qualified pool of potential college professors. The study found that 72 percent of those teaching at American universities and colleges were liberal and 15 percent conservative, as compared with a Harris Poll of the general public last year that found that 18 percent of respondents describe themselves as liberal and 33 percent as conservative.

The minimum qualifications of a university professor are a doctorate-level education. That's the relevant pool from which we'd need to find conservatives before we could begin to speculate about discrimination. Most reporting on the underrepresentation of women on college faculties, for example, points out that the percentage of women in the qualified pool may not be the same as their representation in the public at large.

-- Katharine B. Silbaugh

Boston

The writer is a law professor at Boston University.

A range of additional factors should be considered before one cries "possible discrimination" in the fact that college teachers are predominantly liberal.

For instance, people with different values pursue different professions.

A well-established finding of American social science is that liberals are far more open-minded than conservatives and more willing to allow propagation of ideas they dislike. This intellectual orientation makes them better suited to the open intellectual atmosphere of academia.

-- George Klosko

Charlottesville

There is another possibility: Those who can (conservatives), do. Those who can't (liberals), teach.

-- John Austin

Elsinboro, N.J.

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Section: *EDITORIAL*  
ISSN/ISBN: 01908286  
Text Word Count 525  
Document URL:

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