

COMMENTARY

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While three universities in North Dakota may be the first to offer a complete degree program made up of televised courses, both live television and videotaped lectures are widely available at colleges across the country. One company has a whole catalogue of college lectures — with endorsements from both conservative Sen. Orrin Hatch and liberal Sen. Ted Kennedy.

Video diversity by degrees

How many courses in the Ivy League or other elite institutions around the country could get endorsements from people on opposite ends of the political spectrum? In the humanities and most of the so-called "social sciences," probably not many.

Do many courses in these fields are propaganda for "politically correct" fashions, rather than attempts to inform or to develop the student's ability to reach his own conclusions. The political lopsidedness of academia would have to be seen to be believed.

At Stanford University, for example, each of the last three Democratic candidates for president of the United States has received more than 70 percent of the vote. According to a survey by the "Stanford Review," an independent student newspaper, Mr. Clinton received 76 percent of the votes cast at Stanford in 1992.

Even Democratic presidential candidates who got clobbered in the general elections won big at Stanford. Michael Dukakis received 78 percent of the Stanford vote in 1988 and Mondale 71 percent in 1984. Back in 1980, Jimmy Carter came in first in the voting at Stanford, John Anderson second and Ronald Reagan third.

Today registered Democrats outnumber Republicans, independents and unregistered individuals put together in Stanford's sociology, economics, psychology and political science departments. Democrats outnumber Republicans 23 to 4 in the law school, 11 to 1 in sociology and 20 to nothing in psychology.

Even at the Hoover Institution — often described in the liberal media as a "right-wing think tank" — the Republicans still do not have a majority. They outnumber Democrats 21 to 11 but there are 15 unregistered and 3 "other." Few academic departments anywhere are this balanced politically.

Against this background, which is not at all atypical of elite colleges and universities across the country, you can see why a set of televised lectures that can gain the endorsement of conservative Republican Sen. Orrin Hatch, as well as liberal Democratic Sen. Ted Kennedy, is remarkable.

Videotape may be the only way to break the virtual monopoly of the political left on American college campuses.

Incidentally, this political lopsidedness is not all spontaneous. Candidates for faculty positions are often asked ideological questions in their job interviews. They may be asked whether they are for or against affirmative action, whether they incorporate "feminist scholarship" into their work, or whether they sub-

scribe to the new trinity of race, class and gender.

Despite all the academic cant about "diversity," there is an ideological conformity on many campuses that keeps outstanding scholars and teachers away — or even outside the entire teaching profession — when their views are not "politically correct."

Videotaped lectures could bring such people to colleges and universities where hoodlum disruption would otherwise keep them from giving even an occasional public lecture, either because they do not feel like putting up with barbarians or because the college administration caves in by not inviting anyone who might set off the nasties.

Best-selling writer and former professor Shelby Steele, for example, has never received a single job offer from Ivy League colleges that claim to be trying desperately to add black faculty in the name of "diversity." What they mean by diversity is black leftists, white leftists, female leftists and Hispanic leftists — in short, ideological conformity hiding behind physical differences.

Peter Duignan of the Hoover Institution has written books praised in scholarly journals around the world, but he has never been on the faculty of any college or university, despite being a great talker as well as scholar. He is not "politically correct" on what one must be most politically correct about — the history of Africa.

All sorts of crazies are teaching all sorts of hogwash about the history of Africa, but the only way their students are likely to hear what Mr. Duignan has to say is if someone persuades him to do lectures on tape.

Many years ago, a critic referred to television as "a vast wasteland." Today, that description applies to the education on too many college and university campuses. It would be a real irony if televised lectures are able to rescue academia from its stultifying conformity.

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