

## POLITICAL CORRECTNESS

“To learn who rules over you, simply find out who you are not allowed to criticize.”

Voltaire  
(1694-1778)

“Why can’t somebody give us a list of things that everybody thinks and nobody says, and another list of things that everybody says and nobody thinks.”

Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr.  
(1809-1894)

“It is by the goodness of God that in our country we have those three unspeakably precious things: freedom of speech, freedom of conscience, and the prudence never to practice either of them.... In America—as elsewhere—free speech is confined to the dead.”

Mark Twain  
(1835-1910)

“I know of no country in which there is so little independence of mind and real freedom of discussion as in America.... In America the majority raises formidable barriers around the liberty of opinion; within these barriers an author may write what he please, but woe to him if he goes beyond them.... In the United States, the majority undertakes to supply a multitude of ready-made opinions for the use of individuals, who are thus relieved from the necessity of forming opinions of their own.”

Alexis de Tocqueville  
*Democracy in America* (1835)

“Although the movement arises from the laudable desire to sweep away the debris of racism and sexism and hatred, it replaces old prejudices with new ones. It declares certain topics off-limits, certain expressions off-limits, even certain gestures off-limits.... In their own Orwellian way, crusades that demand correct behavior crush diversity in the name of diversity.”

President George W. Bush  
“President Assails Silencing of Unpopular Views”  
*Washington Post* (5 May 1991) A8

“We live in oppressive times. We have, as a nation, become our own thought police.”

David Mamet, dramatist (c.1992)

“Political correctness was once merely the bane of campus life. Now, incredibly, it has been enshrined as official U.S. policy.”

“The State of PC”  
*Wall Street Journal*  
(15 September 1994) A14

“The term ‘politically correct’ or ‘PC’ emerged in the 1980s as a sarcastic characterization of the attitudes and language expected of a good citizen in the modern multicultural society.... The liberal language of group tolerance and self-criticism was increasingly regarded as, at best, an unnecessary irritant and, at worst, censorious subversion.... Much of the liberal vocabulary of social accommodation became the object of scorn... The use of ‘native American’ instead of ‘Indian’ was ridiculed as PC, as was the semantic evolution from ‘colored’ to ‘Negro’ to ‘black’ to ‘African American.’ Feminist vocabulary such as the use of ‘Ms.’ was lampooned as PC, as was any restraint on the traditionally crude but good-natured sexual vocabulary of American males....

The ‘multicultural’ movement in education and scholarship was soon identified as a major source of ‘politically correct’ doctrine, fomented by the liberalism of university campuses. In April 1994, a conservative group of college students calling themselves the First Amendment Coalition met at Harvard

University to plot strategy to 'liberate' classrooms and campuses around the country from PC. The coalition issued 'The Cambridge Declaration,' which opposed ideological conformity, speech codes, favored status groups (i.e., affirmative action), and curriculum bias against Western traditions and American institutions... Much of the American public was no longer comfortable with the language of the civil rights era. Campus speech codes were the most publicized example of politically correct controls on expression.... In the early 1990s, when the courts ruled that speech codes at the University of Michigan and Wisconsin were unconstitutional infringements on free speech, most other campuses abandoned their codes. It turned out there were numerous other 'PC' speech codes scattered throughout America's corporate and government structure...

It was revealed that since 1965 the FBI had included in its background checks on judicial candidates an examination of any words they might have uttered reflecting 'potential bias or prejudice.' Such procedures were subsequently expanded to include other federal positions influencing policy or personnel, but now the bureau extended its concern to offensive statements about 'any class of citizens.'... In 1987, the terms 'politically correct' and 'political correctness' appeared 9 times in the *Washington Post*. In 1994 alone, these two terms were used 292 times in the *Post*, and the usage counts held at roughly that level into 1996. As the public relations campaign against political correctness gained momentum in the press, a number of ironic contradictions emerged. Because the characterization 'politically correct' had always been pejorative, it soon became highly incorrect to be politically correct....

Even the word 'liberal' became tainted, and from the time of the 1988 election campaigns, the press began referring to it as the 'L-word.'... Columnist and language maven William Safire defined PC in his political dictionary as 'conforming to liberal or far-left thought on sexual, racial, cultural or environmental issues.' Novelist Saul Bellow defined political correctness as 'free speech without debate'... Bellow and other conservative intellectuals claimed that the origins of PC lay in Marxism."

Herbert N. Foerstel  
*Free Expression and Censorship in America*  
(Greenwood 1997) 181-83

"Political correctness is not a coherent set of ideas or clearly spelled out propositions but a mindset, a diffuse attitude, a complex of taken-for-granted beliefs. It certainly incorporates many left-liberal ideas, but it is broader and not reducible to them. For the most part, it is rooted in and derives from the political attitudes and convictions associated with the 1960s...aspects of political correctness may even be considered matters of taste....There are disagreements within the politically correct 'community' as to what constitutes a breach of its informal norms.... Notwithstanding...possibilities for divergent interpretation, political correctness has numerous identifiable components and areas of concern. They include race relations, affirmative action, feminism, birth control, sexuality (and especially its less conventional forms), poverty, welfare policies, health care, drugs, crime, the natural environment, types of consumption, U.S. foreign policy, and even some (not fully articulated) conceptions of human nature.

A peculiar and contradictory aspect of political correctness is the simultaneous championing of 'diversity' and aversion to differentiation, the latter often conflated or confused with discrimination. Political correctness excludes the possibility that genuine differences may exist among groups of human beings that were not produced by morally reprehensible discriminatory attitudes, beliefs, or policies. Thus it is politically incorrect to allow 'tracking' in schools because it acknowledges differences between the capabilities of children and separates the more talented from the less talented, or the more motivated from the less motivated. Such distinctions are 'elitist' and discriminatory from the politically correct point of view. The embrace of 'diversity'—central to political correctness—is a code word that has little to do with genuine diversity of beliefs, values, and ethnic or other affiliations. Politically correct 'diversity' signifies aversion to groups, cultures, or values that are Western, white, heterosexual, or right-of-center. 'Diversity' and 'multiculturalism' overlap as both devalue traditional Western culture and traditions, sometimes dismissed altogether as noxious products of dead white males....

There are other positions linked to political correctness. Capitalism is generally held in contempt and blamed for poverty, racism, war, and sometimes even sexism and the overall deterioration of human relationships. Anti-Americanism, broadly defined, is also part of political correctness that holds the U.S.

responsible for a wide range of global problems besides all of the domestic injustices and failures. (Anti-capitalism and anti-Americanism converge.) In the politically correct view, even Islamic terrorism has its 'root causes' in American actions and policies."

Paul Hollander  
Professor emeritus of sociology, University of Massachusetts, Amherst  
"Peer Review, Political Correctness, and Human Nature"  
*Academic Questions* 26.2 (Summer 2013) 150-52

## BACKLASH AGAINST POLITICAL CORRECTNESS

"A recent president of the Modern Language Association, Professor Louis Kampf...in his presidential address of 1971 assured his colleagues that the teaching of literature in American colleges is now virtually at its end, having lost all rational justification."

Professor Lionel Trilling  
"Thomas Jefferson Lecture in the Humanities" (1972)  
quoted by Hilton Kramer & Roger Kimball  
*The New Criterion* (February 1995)

"As if our society had not rendered literature unimportant enough already, literary intellectuals have collaborated in ensuring its ineffectuality... The notion that 'reason has failed,' that 'objective truth is a lie,' that ideals such as 'humanism,' 'culture,' 'meaning,' 'tradition,' and the like are but so many rationalizations for oppression...can only lead to a repudiation of ideals as such or to the embrace of inverted ideals that defeat our own purposes."

Gerald Graff  
*Literature against Itself*  
(1979; Ivan R. Dee 1995) 29, 28, 120

"[Most] or what is written in [today's] journals is either hopelessly ignorant, deliberately obscurantist, commercially compromised, or politically motivated.... We are living in the aftermath of the insidious assault on the mind that was one of the most repulsive features of the radical movement of the Sixties.... The effect on the life of culture has been ongoing and catastrophic."

"A Note on *The New Criterion*"  
(September 1982)

"The American university in the sixties was experiencing the same dismantling of the structure of rational inquiry as had the German university in the thirties.... The major student activity in social science was to identify heretics.... It is the humanities that have suffered the most as a result of the sixties. The lack of student interest...the vanishing of jobs for Ph.D.s, the lack of public sympathy, came from the overturning of the old order, where their place was assured. They have gotten what they deserved, but we have unfortunately all lost.... The professors of humanities are in an impossible situation and do not believe in themselves or what they do.... Humanists ran like lemmings into the sea, thinking they would refresh and revitalize themselves in it. They drowned."

Allan Bloom  
*The Closing of the American Mind:  
How Higher Education Has Failed Democracy  
and Impoverished the Souls of Today's Students* (1987) 313, 352-53, 355

"J. Scott Armstrong, a professor at the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School and Editor of the *Journal of Forecasting*, conducted an analysis of academic writing and concluded that professors who wish to be published in the academic press must: '(1) not pick an important problem, (2) not challenge existing beliefs, (3) not obtain surprising results, (4) not use simple methods, (5) not provide full disclosure of methodology, sources and findings, and (6) not write clearly'."

Charles J. Sykes  
*ProfScam: Professors and the Demise of Higher Education*  
(Regnery 1988) 105-06

“Cultural egocentricity has replaced cosmopolitanism as the ethic.”

Professor Michael O'Brien  
History, U Miami

“A Paradox of Intellectual Life since the 60s:  
We Are Cosmopolitan, Our Scholarship Is Not”  
*Chronicle of Higher Education*  
(28 October 1988) B-1, B-2

“It may be that old-style literary criticism, and even literature...are indeed on the point of extinction.”

Frank Kermode, distinguished literary critic  
*An Appetite for Poetry*  
(Harvard 1989) 6-7

“Since 1970 the number of students majoring in the humanities has declined by about half, by nearly two-thirds in the case of history... The humanities have...repudiated the ideal of disinterested scholarship to pursue various politicized educational agendas, and...have in many instances abandoned the study of the great works of the Western tradition to lavish attention on material that is secondary, trivial, or of dubious intellectual importance...We have for some time now been witnessing an aggressive effort to erase the qualitative distinction between high culture and popular culture and to introduce the methods, concerns, and subject matter of the social sciences into the humanities.

More and more, courses in literature seem like amateur exercises in sociological or anthropological sermonizing.... The word *multicultural* and its variants have become code words for an approach to the humanities that is in effect *anti-cultural*—at least anti-high cultural... Rhetoric promising greater openness, diversity, and pluralism actually helps to perpetuate the most stringent intellectual conformity.”

Roger Kimball  
*Tenured Radicals: How Politics Has Corrupted Our Higher Education*  
(Harper 1990) 35, 36, 45, 19

“When we adopt other people’s theories, we are like Frankenstein doing other people’s wills. It’s like someone drinking some good stuff, vomiting it, and then we have to catch the vomit and drink it ourselves.... The Greeks gave back the vomit of the African way.... Don’t become the vomit-drinkers!”

Karen Brady  
“Principal Presses Indians’ Place in Textbooks”  
*The Buffalo News*  
(21 August 1990)

“Students are taught that Greek philosophy was plagiarized from black African Egypt (Plato and Aristotle, it turns out, are figures of derision for Afro-centrists) and, more generally, that ‘all Western knowledge is a corruption of Egyptian, i.e., black African thought, and must therefore be junked’.... The deepest foolishness of multiculturalism shows itself in the puerile attacks it mounts on the cogency of scientific rationality... There has never in history been a society more open to other cultures than our own; nor has any tradition been more committed to self-criticism... The figure of Socrates endlessly inviting self-scrutiny and rational explanation is a definitive image of the Western spirit.... The word ‘individual’ is a ‘Red Flag’ phrase today, which is considered by many to be RACIST.”

Roger Kimball  
“Tenured Radicals”: a postscript  
*The New Criterion*  
(January 1991)

“American college campuses are in the grip of the loony left... The kind of rigid, ideological nonsense that is being forced upon college students by these wild-eyed zealots of academia would be funny if it

weren't so scary. At the University of Minnesota, the entire department of Scandinavian Studies, including one woman, were charged with sexual harassment."

Mona Charen  
"Thought Police Control Campus"  
syndicated column, *The Oregonian*  
(9 December 1990)

"Professor Alan Kors of the University of Pennsylvania observes that campuses today have 'the cultural diversity of Bierut. There are separate armed camps. The black kids don't mix with the white kids. The Asians are off by themselves. Oppression is the great status symbol... Multiculturalism means people anywhere in the world who think like left-wing American intellectuals.'... Instead of celebrating what people share, today's campuses are dedicated to the inculcation of group resentments. The Western tradition is scorned as the font of racism, sexism, homophobia and so on.... Advertisements for academic posts listed in the Chronicle of Higher Education now often specify a feminist political orientation for instructors."

Mona Charen  
"Some Professors Stand Up for Rights"  
syndicated column, *The Oregonian*  
(10 December 1990)

"There's a 'Politically Correct Way to Talk about Race, Sex and Ideas. Is this the New Enlightenment—Or the New McCarthyism?... This agenda is broadly shared by most organizations of minority students, feminists and gays. It is also the program of a generation of campus radicals who grew up in the 60s and are now achieving positions of academic influence... In the context of PC, political content is the most important thing about everything.... What is distressing is that at the university, of all places, tolerance has to be imposed rather than taught, and that 'progress' so often is just the replacement of one repressive orthodoxy by another...."

[Stanley] Fish called NAS [National Association of Scholars], and by implication its members, 'racist, sexist and homophobic.' 'That,' notes [a colleague] is like calling someone a communist in the McCarthy years'...Where PC reigns, one defies it at one's peril.... PC rejects 'hierarchy' [yet] PC is, strictly speaking, a totalitarian philosophy...The University of Connecticut issued a proclamation banning 'inappropriate laughter' and 'conspicuous exclusion of students from conversations.'... Students censor even the most ordinary of opinions.... There are in fact some who recognize the tyranny of PC, but see it only as a transitional phase, which will no longer be necessary once the virtues of tolerance are internalized. Does that sound familiar? It's the dictatorship of the proletariat, to be followed by the withering away of the state." [The Communist theory of Karl Marx]

"Thought Police"  
*Newsweek* cover story  
(24 December 1990)

"If you make any judgment or assessment as to the quality of a work, then somehow you aren't being an intellectual egalitarian.'... At a conference recently she referred to Czeslaw Milosz's book *The Captive Mind* as a 'classic'; to which another female professor exclaimed in dismay that the word *classic* 'makes me feel oppressed'."

Professor Jean Bethke Elshtain  
Political Science, Vanderbilt University  
quoted in *Newsweek* (24 December 1990) 53

"*The Heath Anthology of American Literature* [1990] is a monument to the intellectual bankruptcy of the multicultural imperatives it champions. It is a systematic attempt to subject the study of American literature and culture to the strictures of affirmative-action thinking. For the editors of the *Heath Anthology*, questions of quality and of literary excellence—when they arise at all—take a distant back seat to the diversity quotient. If there are Zunis out there some of them must have written something—or at least said something that someone else wrote down—and by God samples of those utterances must be dug up and

placed alongside the works of Hawthorne and Melville, Wharton and James as exemplary products of American literature....

It is especially disastrous considered as a textbook designed to introduce students to the riches of American literature.... A mere twenty pages—*twenty* pages—to the work of William Faulkner. But there is room for plenty of Zuni and Aztec poetry in English translation...hundreds and hundreds of pages of third rate popular literature by women... *The Heath Anthology* offers students ‘by far the widest sampling of the work of minority and white women writers available in any anthology of American literature... 109 women of all races, 25 individual Native American authors,’ etc....[with] an introduction that simply reeks of political rectitude.”

“The Heath Travesty of American Literature”  
*The New Criterion*  
(October 1990)

“The ailment of hypersensitivity, a symptom of the disease of political correctness, is breaking out in journalism. Fresh evidence comes from the University of Missouri School of Journalism’s *Dictionary of Cautionary Words and Phrases: An Excerpt from the Newspaper Content Analysis Compiled by 1989 Multicultural Management Program Fellows*... Copies will presumably be distributed to the young along with other condoms.... Will separate editions of newspapers be required for total inoffensiveness?... Once again, language is being dragooned into the service of a fashionable political orthodoxy.... Attend to the reason why *articulate* is banned in certain circumstances: ‘Can be considered offensive when referring to a minority, particularly a black person, and his or her ability to handle the English language.’... So no black person may be described as articulate. Equality triumphant!”

Walter Goodman, TV critic  
*The New York Times*  
(27 January 1991)

“As the historian Diane Ravitch has pointed out in a perceptive essay on the subject, multiculturalism ‘has its roots in the ideology of ethnic separatism and in the black nationalist movement.’ In this sense, multiculturalism denies the ideal of the United States as an integrated society in which peoples of different races, and ethnic backgrounds can live together in a state of social harmony. The multiculturalist replaces the traditional integrationist image of our society with the ethnically and racially divisive image of the United States as a kind of salad or mosaic: A potpourri of essentially unassimilable elements...the attack on the idea of a common culture is a rejection of the idea of a common humanity....

What separates us—be it gender, ethnicity, class, or race—is used as a totem to confer the coveted status of victimhood upon certain approved groups.... Multiculturalism provides a convenient umbrella for the smorgasbord of radical ideologies now regnant in the academy.... Categories of thought that have their home in the social sciences are imported into the arts and humanities and granted the status of golden explanatory keys.... Questions of artistic quality are systematically replaced with tests for political relevance... Whereas the New Critics drew on the essentially literary resources of rhetorical analysis to give us a deeper appreciation of literature, our multiculturalists employ the tools of ethnic and sexual redress in order to transform literature into a species of political propaganda and virtue mongering.”

Roger Kimball  
“*Tenured Radicals*: a postscript”  
*The New Criterion*  
(January 1991) 5-6

“Most American universities have diluted or displaced their ‘core curriculum’ in the great works of Western civilization to make room for new course requirements stressing non-Western cultures, Afro-American Studies, and Women’s Studies... Professors who cross the academic parameters of what may be said in the classroom have found themselves the object of organized vilification and administrative penalties... The study of other cultures can never compensate for a lack of thorough familiarity with the founding principles of one’s own culture.... Many of the younger generation of faculty in the universities express lack of interest, if not contempt, for the Western classics.... Harvard and many other universities

have generated a provincial and oppressive milieu which penalizes critical thought and stimulates deep if inarticulate resentment...while the number of humanities majors plummets.”

Dinesh D’Souza  
*Illiberal Education: The Politics of Race and Sex on Campus*  
(Free Press 1991) 255, 304

“For the first time in the history of American higher education, the barbarians are running the place.”

Professor Alan Kors  
University of Pennsylvania  
quoted by Dinesh D’Souza  
*Illiberal Education* (1991) 257

“A major legacy of the 1960s in the academy has been the destruction of standards. The very idea that some works might be more worth reading than others, together with the ideal of excellence that informs it, is regarded with suspicion as ‘hierarchical’ and ‘elitist.’ Nowhere has this been more apparent than in the attack on the canon.... Nowadays, many liberal-arts majors are being graduated having read little more than a handful of popular novels, a bit of esoteric literary theory, and various works that confirm their chosen ideological prejudices... The classical liberal position—which fought for the ideals of quality, disinterested scholarship, and for advancement according to merit, not adherence to a given political line—is now castigated as conservative and reactionary.

Professor [Stanley] Fish, for example, has gone to great pains to demonstrate that ‘there is no such thing as intrinsic merit,’ only conventional opinion.... But then we must remember that Professor Fish proudly identifies himself as a sophist, one who, in the classical formula, ‘makes the stronger argument appear weaker, the weaker argument appear stronger.’” [Fish is also a lawyer.]

Roger Kimball  
“*Tenured Radicals: a postscript*”  
*The New Criterion*  
(January 1991) 9-10

“It is very sad for me to see so many people from the sixties’ cohort become enemies of true diversity. What we have now in universities is a kind of liberal closed-mindedness, a leveling impulse.... At Harvard I have met a number of devoutly religious students—evangelical Christians, many of them—who find the atmosphere very intolerant.”

Professor David Riesman  
Sociology, Harvard  
quoted by Dinesh D’Souza  
*Illiberal Education* (1991) 226

“Our university campuses are now islands of repression in a sea of freedom.”

Professor Abigail Thernston  
Political Science, Harvard  
quoted by Dinesh D’Souza  
*Illiberal Education* (1991) 227

“The MLA [Modern Language Association] represents the epicenter of academic political correctness in the humanities... It was not so long ago that the inability to distinguish between aesthetic judgment and political propagandizing would have disqualified someone from teaching. Nowadays, the inability to make such distinctions is taken as a sign of superior insight....

For several years now, the annual meeting of the MLA has provided observers of the academic scene with a spectacle as appalling as it is rich in unintended comedy. The full range of barbarous jargon, intellectual posturing, and aggressive politicization that has infected the academic study of the humanities in this country is in full, florid bloom at the MLA.... The chief substitutes for literature on display at this

year's MLA were Marxism, feminism, what we might call homosexuality, 'cultural studies,' ethnic studies, and any of a number of indeterminate mixtures of the above leavened with dollops of deconstructivist or poststructuralist theory—in other words, multiculturalism *de luxe*.... All reject the ideal of scholarly disinterestedness; all exhibit a pervasive animus against the achievements and values of Western culture; all systematically subjugate the teaching and study of literature to political imperatives; and all are extraordinarily intolerant of dissent....

Preferring Western culture and its heritage to others is held to be especially ethnocentric and racist. The thoughtless egalitarianism behind these ideas helps to explain the current academic obsession with the notion of 'difference' and the widespread insistence that our differences...must be given priority over our common humanity.... 'Transcendent,' like 'universalist,' is a naughty word for the politically correct multiculturalist largely because, if taken seriously, it suggests that the qualities that unite us as human beings are more important than the contingencies that separate us... Deviation from the multicultural orthodoxy on any number of issues is punished by social ostracism, mandatory 'consciousness-raising' classes, or even suspension or expulsion."

Roger Kimball  
"The MLA in Chicago"  
*The New Criterion*  
(February 1991)

"The MLA is saturated with the ideology that politics permeates everything... The reduction of the study of literature to sociology, and of sociology to mere ideological assertion...[is] infantile... Melville's white whale? Probably a penis. Grab a harpoon!"

George Will, syndicated columnist  
"Literary Politics"  
*Newsweek*  
(22 April 1991)

"President Bush stepped into a growing debate over freedom of speech...saying Americans should be 'alarmed at the rise of intolerance in our land.' Bush assailed 'the notion of political correctness' in a commencement address at the University of Michigan... A small group of hecklers shouted... Professors on some college campuses have complained of pressure to blend what they consider leftist political doctrine into their teaching."

Terence Hunt  
Associated Press  
*The Oregonian*  
(5 May 1991)

"As one who saw his professors fired during the McCarthy era, and who had to fight, as a pro-Communist Marxist, for his own right to teach, I fear that our conservative colleagues are today facing a new McCarthyism in some ways more effective and vicious than the old.... Most of the purges of those years were conducted by administrators and faculties who loudly proclaimed their own liberalism—by the same kind of people, that is, who are enforcing 'political correctness'."

Eugene D. Genovese  
"Heresy, Yes—Sensitivity, No"  
*The New Republic*  
(15 April 1991) 30

"A recent report in the journal *Science*...tracked how infrequently a researcher's work is cited by others within five years of publication... In American literature 99.8 percent [were *not* cited within five years]... One may conclude that much research is self-defensive and self-indulgent."

David Alexander  
Review of *Begin Here: The Forgotten Conditions of Teaching and Learning* (1991)  
by Jacques Barzun  
*The New York Times Book Review*  
(21 April 1991)



“Some people are just plain sick of it.”

Alan Phelps  
“The PC Problem: PC Debate Divides Schools Nationwide”  
*Daily Nebraskan*  
reprinted in *U: The National College Newspaper*  
(5 September 1991)

“Far from being the product of ‘right-wing disinformation,’ PC was in fact a spontaneous coinage of the undergraduate students who were its first victims—a response to the new prohibitions on speech and thought that were initiated by administrative edict and classroom rule. One of the first widely recognized expressions of this rebellion came to us from Brown University...in the form of the satirical cartoon strip ‘Thatch.’ Created by Jeff Shesol, then an undergraduate at Brown, the strip featured the absurd divagations of a character called ‘Politically Correct Person’.”

Notes & Comments  
*The New Criterion*  
(February 1992)

“‘The ‘politically correct’ approach to curing cultural inequities has eroded free speech on campuses.”

Everett E. Dennis  
former Dean, University of Oregon School of Journalism  
*The Oregonian* (2 October 1992)

“A vision of political correctness cum intellectual terrorism.”      Review of *Oleanna* by David Mamet  
*Time* (1992)

“What are they advocating? ... Serious revision in (or abolition of) the canon of literary texts that are taught to American university students... The second and even more problematic call here is for the full-scale politicization of the liberal arts program to the tenets of the cultural left.”

Andrew Wachtel  
Review of *The Politics of Liberal Education*  
Darryl J. Gless and Barbara Herrnstein, eds. (Duke 1992)  
*Heterodoxy* (1992)

“As a member of the Modern Language Association, I want to express to you my gratitude for exposing some of the silliness that has of late come to characterize the discipline of literary study... The expose of PC...in the universities has really just begun. I would like to see more attention devoted to PC hiring policies... (Please do not print my name... Obviously, my career could be ruined.)”

Letter to the Editor  
*Heterodoxy*  
(May 1992)

“In the name of class-race-gender equality, teachers and students all over America are now being trained in intolerance to defame and exclude those who do not follow the party line. The cultural damage seems irrevocable.”

Alfred Kazin, distinguished literary critic  
*Heterodoxy*  
(October 1992)

“If in principle, the danger to liberal education could come from the right, it now (as opposed to thirty years ago) comes primarily from the self-styled left.... Bromwich understands that those who profess and enforce such groupthink ‘want no single person ever to survive as singular... The caring groups are really hard as nails: they want to destroy us, each of us, and always for the sake of all...the new fundamentalists who enforce a rigid, left-wing moralism on the university that makes real *thinking* impossible.”

Saul Morson

Review of *Politics by Other Means:  
Higher Education and Group Thinking*  
by David Bromwich (Yale 1992)  
*Heterodoxy* (1992)

“Presentation after presentation at this year’s convention made it clear that the left-wing takeover of the MLA is now complete. What had once been an association of literary scholars today has become, in all but name, an openly aggressive political-action organization that has turned the classrooms of the nation into an arena for propagating left-wing causes and radical life-styles.... Even the titles of many papers delivered at recent MLA conventions are unprintable in the mainstream media... Some of the more extreme varieties of ‘alternative’ behavior—including, in at least one instance, sex with infants—were extolled as if they represented some ideal human achievement.”

*The New Criterion*  
(February 1993) 1

“What, professors want to know, is going wrong? It does no good to tell them that they have corrupted the rich curriculum of literature in English into a mind-numbing, monotonous replication of the same old left-wing ideological harangue—the race, class, gender victimization thing... Sixties radicals, who have attained senior professorships and risen to institutional power—a generation or more will have to pass before the aims and purposes of a genuine liberal education can be reasserted and achieved. As lit-profs are a national laughingstock, the only proper response is to ignore the freaks.”

James W. Tuttleton  
“Back to the Sixties with Spinductor Graff”  
*The New Criterion*  
(March 1993) 28

“American higher education is facing widespread demands to eliminate the allegedly ‘Eurocentric’ and ‘patriarchal’ bias of the curriculum... A sound curriculum cannot be built by replacing [aesthetic] standards with the principle of proportional representation of authors, classified ethnically, biologically, or geographically... The idea that the traditional curriculum ‘excludes’ the contribution of all but males of European descent is patently false. That the liberal arts oppress minorities and women is yet more ludicrous.... The assertion that cognition is determined by group membership is itself an example of stereotypic thinking... ‘multicultural education’ should not take place at the expense of studies that transcend cultural differences... The banner of ‘cultural diversity’ is apparently being raised by some whose paramount interest actually lies in attacking the West and its institutions... We urge our colleagues to...rebut the false charges being made against existing disciplines...and reject the allegations of ‘racism’ and ‘sexism’ that are frequently leveled against honest critics of the new proposals, and which only have the effect of stifling much-needed debate.”

“IS THE CURRICULUM BIASED?”  
A STATEMENT OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOLARS”  
professional organization formed to oppose the Modern Language Association  
ad flyer (March 1993)

“It is now official. We have it on the authority of the Modern Language Association, the largest organization of professors of language and literature in the United States, that there is no longer a discipline, a profession, a vocation of literature studies—at least not in the university. Literary study nowadays, it is said, presents a condition of ‘methodological instability, even anarchy,’ in which even the concept of literature has been abandoned as defunct... What makes the New Orthodoxy of the MLA so dismaying is that its contempt for literature as such...is spread by ignoramuses, which we have always had with us, but by university professors themselves, who are the new cultural philistines. And by insisting that there is no discipline here, no center of study, only competing discourses or ‘rhetorics,’ they also subvert a graduate education meant to prepare the next generation of teachers.”

*The New Criterion*  
(June 1993) 4

“Stop the Thought Police. Join the Individual Rights Foundation... Today academics lead the way in questioning the validity of First Amendment jurisprudence.”

WANTED FOR CAMPUS THOUGHT CRIMES?  
ad flyer (1994)

“Featuring Activists from Across the Country, National First Amendment Coalition Membership Meeting.”

CENSORSHIP ON CAMPUS  
Conference at Columbia University, New York City  
ad flyer (1994)

“We, students of American colleges and universities, have assembled here at Harvard University on this 11<sup>th</sup> day of April 1994 to voice our concerns about the state of academic and intellectual freedom in higher education... The Individual Rights Foundation sponsored a conference...to launch the First Amendment Coalition, a national student organization whose agenda is to remove the blight of political correctness from America’s universities. Representatives from 36 colleges attended, including Harvard, Yale, Columbia, Cornell, Swarthmore, Princeton, Catholic University, and the University of Florida.”

“THE CAMBRIDGE DECLARATION” (1994)

“Today’s passion for political correctness is the pale bureaucratic offspring of the passions produced by the antiwar, black power, and feminist movements.... Out of that revealed truth was born what might be called leftist fundamentalism, the assumption that the ‘68-ers, having achieved veridical truth, were then required to impose that truth on the unbelievers. Enter Marcuse and his 1969 left-wing attack on free speech.... But by the mid-1970s the utopian hopes for racial harmony aroused by the civil rights movement and its social science literature crashed into the dystopian reality of what would shortly come to be known as the underclass.... The real disaster was the overextension of social science.... The spirit of ‘68, the spirit of unrestrained subjectivity, redefined not only science but rationality itself and majoritarian democracy as authoritarian restraints on individual desire....

For those struck blind by ‘the singular evil of America,’ political correctness was and is to campus politics what water is to fish.... In practical terms, the upshot on the campus was that a mixture of bullying moralism and interest-group politics organized as competing claims to victimization came to dominate campus life. Reality was to be rewritten and reinforced by a new form of coerced consensus.... For all its rhetorical swagger and bureaucratic muscle on campus, PC is, in part, a counsel of despair. It says that objectivity and rationality have to be ceded to the right because it is no longer possible in classic leftist fashion to speak truth to power. The attempt to contain debate by arguing for a new ‘right’ not to be offended is likewise an admission of failure. It’s an admission that the left-liberal policies of the past quarter century, particularly on the racial quotas to which the universities are so deeply committed, can’t stand up to critical scrutiny. In the long run PC will fail not only the universities but the ‘victims’ over whose interest it presumes to stand guard as well.”

Fred Siegel

“Anti-rationalism”

*Our Country, Our Culture: The Politics of Political Correctness*  
(*Partisan Review* 1994) 258-64

“While we have seen the apparent death of Communism, ways of thinking that were born under Communism or strengthened by Communism still govern our lives.... The heritage of dead and empty language these days is still to be found in some areas of academic and particularly in some areas of sociology, psychology, and some literary criticism.... Yes, I do know the obfuscations of academia did not begin with Communism, as Swift, for one, tells us, but the pedantries and verbosity of Communism had their roots in German academia. And now it has become a kind of mildew blighting the whole world.... Socialist realism created novels written in a language as dead as the books that are a product of academia.... Raising consciousness, like commitment, like political correctness, is a continuation of that old bully, the Party Line....

Whole literary departments in a thousand universities are in the grip of this way of thinking... I think it is nursery behavior, very primitive stuff.... It troubles me that political correctness does not seem to know what its exemplars and predecessors are; it troubles me a good deal more that they may know and do not care.... The lunatic fringe so quickly ceases to be a fringe; the tail begins to wag the dog.... [Their] real motive is a desire for power over others. The fact that they see themselves as antiracists, or feminists, or whatever does not make them any less rabble-rousers. Political correctness did not invent intolerance in universities, which is an evident child of Communism. If intolerance, not to say despotism, governed universities in Communist countries, then the same attitude of mind has infected areas in the West and often sets the tone in a university... The students might very well [be] shocked to hear that their behavior [is] a visual representation of the closed minds of young Communist activists....

Successive political movements have invented or exaggerated the oppression in Western countries.... I wonder what are the psychological mechanisms underlying the need to denigrate one's own country and seek eternally for paradises somewhere else?... Because of the Soviet Union it has been impossible even to consider creating a just society that is not either socialist or Communist. We did not have to identify with the Soviet Union, with its seventy-odd years of logic-chopping, of idiotic rhetoric, brutality, concentration camps, programs against the Jews. Again and again, failure."

Doris Lessing  
"Unexamined Mental Attitudes Left Behind by Communism"  
*Our Country, Our Culture* (1994) 117-25

"Political correctness is an important theme in the raging 'culture war' that has replaced the struggle over Communism as the primary locus of partisan conflict in American intellectual life.... The self-censorship which results is the hidden fact of political correctness. For every act of aberrant speech seen to be punished by 'thought police,' there are countless critical arguments, dissents from received truth, unpleasant factual reports, or nonconformist deviations of thought which go unexpressed.... A speaker's violation of protocol turns attention from the worth of his case toward an inquiry into his character... James Coleman, perhaps the world's leading scholar of educational policy, recalls that in 1976 the president and a number of prominent members of the American Sociological Association tried to have him censured for the 'crime' of discovering, and announcing, that city-wide busing for school desegregation purposes caused white flight.... Far-reaching social policies had been erected on the presumption that it was not true."

Glenn C. Loury  
"Self-censorship"  
*Our Country, Our Culture* (1994) 132, 135, 141

"The Bill of Rights is once more in peril, especially its cornerstone, the First Amendment....The ideologues of multiculturalism go father than simply calling attention to neglected groups and themes. They would reject the historical purposes of assimilation and integration.... They would have our educational system reinforce, promote and perpetuate ethnic communities and do so at the expense of a common culture and a common national identity.... The multicultural ideologues approach the Constitution from a different perspective. They regard it as a document written for groups and therefore would curtail individual rights in order to protect group rights....

As Henry Louis Gates, Jr., the W. E. B. Dubois Professor of the Humanities at Harvard, notes, 'Civil liberties are regarded by many as a chief obstacle to civil rights.... The byword among many black activists and black intellectuals is no longer the political imperative to protect free speech; it is the moral imperative to suppress 'hate speech.'... According to a *New York Times* computer search, there were one hundred three newspaper references to 'political correctness' in 1988; ten thousand in 1993.... Some proponents like Catherine Mckinnon even argue that the state has a constitutional duty to prohibit expression that promotes inequality.... Censorship of racist expression could well create precedents for future censorship of others sorts of expression.... Radicals are always in the minority, and minorities gain the most from the protections of the Bill of Rights.... To silence an idea because it might offend a minority doesn't protect that minority. It deprives it of the tool it needs most—the right to talk back....

The rise of left-wing thought police reminds one of the right-wing students who in Joe McCarthy's day used to haunt the classrooms of liberal professors (like me), hoping to catch and report whiffs of Marxism emanating from the podium... Beware the insensitivity standard! Ray Bradbury foresaw all this more than forty years ago in *Fahrenheit 451*—the demand of minorities to burn the books that might make them unhappy.... What was dystopian fantasy for Ray Bradbury forty years ago is moving into actuality today.... Does the fact that *The Satanic Verses* hurts the feelings of devout Muslims really justify the murder of Salman Rushdie?... The hurt-feelings standard, if imposed in the past, would have silenced Mark Twain, Ambrose Bierce...H. L. Mencken, and so many others whose scorching wit has cultivated and illuminated American life."

Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr.  
"Multiculturalism vs. The Bill of Rights"  
*Our Country, Our Culture* (1994) 216, 220, 222

"As a whole and especially in its extreme forms, this 'movement' has created a dogmatic and intolerant atmosphere in the universities and elsewhere in the culture that is hostile to the exchange of ideas and harmful to the education of the students."

Edith Kurzweil and William Phillips, eds.  
Introduction  
*Our Country, Our Culture* (1994) 7

"To be sure, the political correctniks are out there in clamorous numbers, and some of them are prepared to be ruthlessly coercive in relation to curriculum, appointments, promotions, and the evaluation of scholarship.... A would-be revolutionary movement operating within the circumscribed sphere of the academy, in the context of a society that offers not the slightest prospect of radical political change.... The revolutionary impulse, by and large, manifests itself in the generation of humanities scholars and social-science scholars now in their thirties and forties... The conformism explains the susceptibility of the senior scholars to the pressures of radicalism from the middle generation below.... For the generation that has joined academia since the early seventies, it looks more like a crowded social hall where the labor of using precise language is displaced by the recitation of buzzwords, scholarly reflection by conference-hopping, and independent analysis by groupthink.... Some departments of English...have made Toni Morrison more important than Shakespeare—required reading for all sections of freshman English..."

The correctniks may be a distinct minority of the profession—I would guess that in fact they are—and yet exert an influence out of proportion to their numbers. The Slavist scholar Gary Saul Morson, one of the important new critics to have emerged over the last ten years, put it to me this way in conversation not long ago: No more than twenty percent of a department need to be made up of ideological activists in order to ensure the takeover of the department.... One can scarcely avoid running into twenty-year-olds on the campuses who after one semester with a single insistent professor have become party-liners of one sort or another, spouting the predictable formulas, having replaced the challenging stuff of literature and history with a set of deadening abstractions that lull the young mind with a false sense of profundity.... We are clearly not so literate a culture as we once were..."

The teaching of literature has to do above all with the reading of literary texts, not merely with reading through them to a supposed network of discourses of power.... At its worst, the current fashion of insistently reading for the agenda has led to classes in literature that are little more than ideological indoctrination sessions, or what may be even more ominous because of the way it impinges on the freedom of privacy, sexual encounter groups. This is precisely what I mean by a treason of the intellectuals. Much of this reading for the political agenda can be sold to the young through the sheer weight of authority exerted by their teachers, but it also appeals strongly to one of the most venal instincts: the desire not exactly to be virtuous but to feel virtuously superior to society at large.... As with all forms of fundamentalism, it is not really possible to argue with adherents of this sort of dour ideological puritanism."

Robert Alter  
"The Persistence of Reading"  
*Our Country, Our Culture* (1994) 8-14

“The sixties generation, in short, became permanently estranged from the political traditions of the American republic—and this is the generation that is now moving into the intellectual and administrative leadership of our universities.... Like any member of a lively English department, I have witnessed its effects: fragmentation into ideological blocs; rising anxiety among graduate students about which camp is best to join; a rush to bring into the curriculum works of marginal intellectual significance for the sake of their representativeness, timidity in evaluating the work of minority candidates for degrees and appointments, and most of all, an atmosphere of mutual suspicion and intolerance....

In the nearly ten years I have taught at Columbia, the conspicuous professionalism of literary study has enormously increased (the preposterous self-importance that now infests academic criticism, along with its panoply of conventions and journals, is best documented by David Lodge)... The writers and young teachers of the 1960s were offended by moderation. They had had enough of liberal centrism.... [They] dreamt of a universal end to repression.... All of American history was rewritten in the light of a national penchant for violence and racist brutality.... [They spread] adolescent rebellion on a national scale.... It is not, I think, too much to call this shift toward playfulness and the deliberately outrageous (*Dr. Strangelove, Cathc-22*) a revolution in sensibility.... Marxism still provided a conceptual framework for understanding the ‘imperialist’ war that was the immediate reason for the danger. But in the 1980s, this singular, omni-explanatory theory of evil was lost; although American academics still employ in vocabulary, and some of its key ideas remain salient, Marxism in its dogmatic form is over....

What my generation does not seem to have learned is that the psychic satisfactions of anger are fleeting.... It now seems clear that what died in the sixties is... ‘the associated life.’... The new mood of ‘political correctness’ is, in other words, essentially separatist, not reformist...built on a ‘doctrine of separation and difference’; it promotes the satisfaction of feeling victimized; it tends to avoid discussion of responsibility or civic obligation or human connectedness. Most important, it leads nowhere, except to bitterness and division.”

Andrew Delbanco  
“The Politics of Separatism”  
*Our Country, Our Culture* (1994) 35-40

“The emergence of political correctness in the late 1980s reveals a university bearing little resemblance to an earlier image of academic life. Far from cloistered, this university is politically engaged. Its humanities professors are more preoccupied with Madonna than Milton.... What was once a milieu of gentlemanly conservatism had become the home of assertive women and minorities.... If the political correctness movement of the late 1980s is the outcome of the politics of the late 1960s then one of the more puzzling of its aspects is how those who once tried to lock college presidents out of their offices came to depend on presidents to support their demands. Just as today’s activists campaign to let homosexuals into the same military from which yesterday’s radicals were trying to escape, academic leftists cannot obtain their objectives without the support of the college leadership they once denounced.... 1960s radicals sought to abolish *in loco parentis*; 1990s radicals, often the same people, seek to re-impose it....

At most private four-year liberal arts colleges, the office of the dean of students has become a partisan of feminist and minority complaints.... The college presidents picked under the new rules find demands for redemption more comfortable than demands to take ideas seriously....[and] it is far cheaper to support a Marxist economics department than a neoclassical one.... This new generation was suspicious of power. Academic self-governance became its watchword.... Generally speaking, the reformers want three things: programs, power, and money... Beneath the bombast...there is a bureaucrat trying to escape. The demands of those who want the university to acknowledge the contributions of once-excluded groups take on the character of psychodramas; it is not what you say but how you ‘really felt’ that matters. The period when political correctness achieved its high point was a period of emotion, not one of reason.... As Henry Louis Gates, Jr. had pointed out, some of the more exotic forms of Afrocentrism resemble twelve-step recovery programs....the triumph of therapy over intellectuality...

The ‘traditionalists’ are usually men and usually in their fifties. They seem disproportionately ethnic, as if still marked by the streets of Brooklyn.... They find the class of professional grievance managers, those who speak for the excluded—loathsome, for, from their point of view, they are standing in the way of all

those aspiring minority children who ought to be able to test themselves out in the marketplace of ideas without hand-holding.... But merit is also suspect among those who advocate the incorporation of a race-class-gender perspective. From their perspective, advancement within the university involves the representation of groups, not as the accomplishment of individuals. Merit, like so many other concepts brought under the scrutiny of a postmodern consciousness, is understood to be an artificial construct imposed by those who have power upon those who lack it.”

Alan Wolfe  
“The New Class Comes Home”  
*Our Country, Our Culture* (1994) 283-91

“Left extremists usually try to discredit their critics by labeling them conservatives or reactionaries. Thus, the Stalinists called the anti-Stalinists imperialists, reactionaries, and enemies of progress.... Instead of simply arguing their case, the politically correct academics have distorted and smeared the opposition.... They try to isolate them from their students and from the rest of the faculty, by calling them...racists, and homophobes.... There are no demands made, for instance, by the Polish, or Italian, of Danish, or Brazilian, of Czech, or Russian, or Jewish, or Asian people—among many others—to have their cultures given equal, if not greater, representation in American education...”

We’re lost in an ideological nihilism that borders on chaos.... Both the literary and the general theory have their source in the line that runs from Saussure through Levi-Strauss, Lacan, Derrida, and Foucault... The systems of the American theorists, like those of the French, are self-referential and self-contained. Thus they cannot be checked against either reality or with other ideas. These concepts died a natural death in France, yet they found a new life in the American academy.”

William Phillips  
“Against Political Correctness: Eleven Points”  
*Our Country, Our Culture* (1994) 195-98, 200-01

“Can anyone doubt at this late date that both political correctness and multiculturalism are a real threat to the integrity of our culture?... Many former socialists have moved to this new agenda for their political struggles in the nineties... The Marxian project never dies; it just lives on in academia... PC academics talk only to themselves... The academy seems more and more mired in madness.”

Professor Ronald Radosh  
History, Adelphi University  
“McCarthyism of the Left”  
*Our Country, Our Culture* (1994) 202, 205-06

“It is easy to forget that the term gained currency only three to four years ago...with impatient college students. ‘Politically correct’ described the self-righteous, non-smoking, ecologically sensitive, vegetarian, feminist, non-racist, sandal-wearing beneficiaries of capitalism—faculty as well as students—who paraded their outworn sixties-radicalism in the classroom and in their social life. Mostly, it was a joke. Who could take these people seriously? Thus it is that the acronym ‘PC’ first won larger notice in a student cartoon strip out of Brown University, an institution still distinguished for its overweening quotient of political correctness if little else....”

As the ethos of political correctness spread and codified, what seemed at first a disagreeable joke began to appear considerably more ominous. The odor of totalitarian intolerance was unmistakable.... Why worry about education when there is so much reeducation, so much consciousness-raising and sensitivity training, to be done!... No wonder the adjective ‘Orwellian’ is so often used to describe the rhetoric of political correctness. It is a perfect illustration of Orwellian ‘doublethink’ and the principle enunciated in *Animal Farm* that ‘all animals are equal, but some are more equal than others’.”

Roger Kimball  
“From Farce to Tragedy”  
*Our Country, Our Culture* (1994) 66-69

“The essential thing to remember about the political correctness movement at this point in our history is that in the realm of education, culture, and the arts the champions of PC have already achieved a decisive

victory. They have succeeded in changing the way books, ideas, and every intellectual and artistic endeavor are discussed and assessed. In the classroom and in the media, in foundations and government agencies, in arts organizations, critical journals, and public intellectual forums, the consequences of censorship (and the wider phenomenon of self-censorship) in the service of PC are now so fully established that an entire generation of younger artists, writers, intellectuals, academics, and cultural bureaucrats takes the rhetoric and indeed the philosophical premises of political correctness for granted and conducts its affairs according to its dictates.

Some of this is purely cynical, of course. It is a way of getting ahead in a political environment that now anathematizes all dissent from PC orthodoxy as racist, sexist, homophobic, and so on. But whether the support for PC is cynical or genuine, the result is the same. At every level of culture and the arts, PC has already altered the terms of employment, the agenda of events, the patterns of patronage, the language of criticism, and choice of books to be published and accorded favorable notice, and even the way bookshops stock their shelves and display their titles. Careers are now made and unmade on the basis of PC criteria, and professional life is divided along PC lines....

Foremost among these doctrines and policies is the concept of ‘affirmative action,’ which, in establishing race-based and gender-based criteria of employment and preferment, succeeded in demonizing traditional standards of merit in favor of ‘minority’ quotas.... Acceptance of affirmative action entailed the dismantling of the meritocratic system that had long been the foundation of liberal culture. When the liberals caved in to the radicals on this issue, they surrendered their right to invoke any but a race- or gender-based criterion of judgment in the assessment of professional accomplishment...this protection racket soon degenerated into a programmatic effort to discredit all critical discourse—which means, in effect, all standards of cultural achievement—that are not based on race and gender....

The term ‘political correctness,’ in current usage, was coined by these undergraduates to ridicule the kind of instruction they were receiving from faculty recruited through affirmative-action hiring practices.... Such ridicule—almost always ascribed by PC *apparatchiks* to racist, sexist, or homophobic motives—had to be quelled...to allow the policy of affirmative action to [continue].... For the juggernaut of affirmative action to succeed in its mission, derision had to be made a punishable offense.... The prospects for...a reversal are bleaker than ever, of course, with a PC administration in the White House and a PC Congress... Opponents of PC thus face an ideological monolith that daily increases its power and prerogatives...what the British writer Paul Johnson has called liberal fascism.... PC has been responsible for a corruption of our language on a truly Orwellian scale, yet we still lack a new Orwell.”

Hilton Kramer  
“Confronting the Monolith”  
*Our Country, Our Culture* (1994) 72-75

“You can trace the decline of standards to the 1930s or the 1960s... The 1960s brought a revival of the attack on objective standards.... One of the tenets of political correctness is that objectivity is impossible... The literature of the 1960s, eagerly consumed by aspiring teachers, emphasized the oppressive nature of traditional schools.... Students often ask, ‘Will it be on the test? Do I need to know this?’ The answer to almost everything in the traditional curriculum was, ‘No. Take whatever you want.’... The reforms of the 1960s produced a sharp decline in academic achievement and in academic standards.... In 1975, *The New York Times* noted that SAT scores had peaked in 1963-64 and had fallen steadily and precipitously... Even after the composition of the test-takers stabilized in the early 1970s, the scores continued to fall...[to a low point in 1980, rose a bit, then continued falling] Whereas ‘fair’ used to mean that the test was the same for everyone, ‘fair’ now means that the same proportion of all groups will succeed on any test.”

Diane Ravitch  
former Assistant Secretary, U.S. Department of Education  
“The War on Standards”  
*Our Country, Our Culture* (1994) 210-14



“A lot of grade inflation in the humanities is due to the fact that many courses now have an ideological basis.”

Professor William Cole  
English Department, Harvard  
quoted by David Lehman, poet and critic  
*Our Country, Our Culture* (1994) 115

“The multiculturalist agenda is overwhelmingly a political agenda and has very little to do with the essential tasks and mission of a modern university.”

Professor Brigitte Berger  
Sociology, Boston University  
“Multiculturalism and the Modern University”  
*Our Country, Our Culture* (1994) 16

“Political correctness has a history. Leninists used it approvingly to indicate proper party-line behavior...The same academics who most vociferously promote diversity wind up with the most monolithic classrooms.... What else is political correctness but a massive case of intolerance—the inability or unwillingness to tolerate a rival point of view?... Artistic works are being judged not by real criteria but by something else, something resembling touchy-feely boosterism.... If you really want to strike at the very roots of political correctness...scrap tenure.”

David Lehman, poet and critic  
“The Reign of Intolerance”  
*Our Country, Our Culture* (1994) 11-16

“Chekhov once wrote, ‘Great writers and thinkers must occupy themselves with politics only to put up a defense against politics.’ Lest the mindless form of politics called political correctness roll over us like a juggernaut, obliterating all serious art and original thought, we had better find that protective line of defense, and find it soon.”

Robert Brustein  
“Dumbocracy in America”  
*Our Country, Our Culture* (1994) 33

“The new view, according to Duke University professor Frank Lentricchia, “seeks not to find the foundation and conditions of truth but to exercise power for the purpose of social change.... Although the postmodern critique of objectivity has been put in the service of leftist causes, it seems more akin to fascism in its roots... If the great intellectual achievements of civilization are taught solely as instruments of oppression or are simply thrown out of the curriculum to make room for more ‘empowering’ materials, they will be lost... Any counter argument will be seen as oppressive.”

Jerry L. Martin  
former Assistant Chair, National Endowment for the Humanities  
“The Postmodern Argument Considered”  
*Our Country, Our Culture* (1994) 163, 177, 178

“A good part of the phenomena that fall into the category of political correctness was already clearly described in its general outlines more than forty years ago [in] George Orwell’s classic essay of 1946, ‘Politics and the English Language’...particularly in the Appendix on Newspeak.”

Steven Marcus  
VP for Arts & Sciences & Dean  
Columbia University  
“Soft Totalitarianism”  
*Our Country, Our Culture* (1994) 155

“It is the brutal, ugly inquisitor of this decade... I think of the havoc political correctness played in New York political life, in American politics, hobbling the Democratic Party in particular. (I do not even allude to its distortions in the world of nonprofit foundations and arts councils.)”

Mark Mirsky, Editor

*Fiction magazine*  
"False Gods"  
*Our Country, Our Culture* (1994) 194, 193

"It has not been part of the theory of what the university was trying to do that we should encourage self-definition by ethnicity, race, gender, or class. On the contrary...we were trying to encourage students to rise above the accidents of such features. But to a sizable number of American academics, it has now become acceptable to think that the most important thing in one's life is precisely these features.... For the traditionalists, what matters is the individual within the universal. For the challengers, the universal is an illusion, and the individual has an identity only as a member of some subgroup."

Professor John Searle  
Philosophy, University of California, Berkeley  
"Is There a Crisis in American Higher Education?"  
*Our Country, Our Culture* (1994) 232-33

"The prevailing discourse excludes persons of conservative or even liberal persuasion who do not view all the evils of the modern world as springing from Western imperialism and who are concerned with the discovery of commonalities among people rather than differences. Exclusion means that these views are ignored or are treated with contempt as reactionary. To be excluded means not to be part of the discussion; it may mean not to be considered seriously for a grant or for a job.... It is an irony that for all the talk about difference, real differences of view are often not tolerated in cultural debate."

Professor Eugene Goodheart  
English, Brandeis University  
"PC or Not PC"  
*Our Country, Our Culture* (1994) 50-51

"Over the past year one could hardly pick up a publication on the Continent without finding an article on the latest American hysteria... Europeans do not believe that political democracy is incompatible with intellectual or aesthetic hierarchy; Americans do... No wonder Europeans have concluded that our multiculturalism is...a new, sinister form of puritanical democratic boosterism.... America is rediscovering its provincial, nativist, anti-intellectual roots. This is a passionate rediscovery, and passionate nations, like passionate people, are notoriously deaf to the voice of reason...it is time to disconnect."

Professor Mark Lilla  
Political Theory, NYU  
"Only Disconnect...."  
*Our Country, Our Culture* (1994) 126, 127, 131

"Historically, in the academic tradition, admission to the prescribed curriculum or 'canon' effectively guaranteed a targeted stream of critical analysis. In contrast, the introduction of a work into the contemporary prescribed curriculum virtually guarantees immunity from criticism... Their goal has been to pursue radical theorizing separated from the failures of radical practice."

Professor David Sidorsky  
Philosophy, Columbia University  
"Multiculturalism and the University"  
*Our Country, Our Culture* (1994) 250-55

"They sincerely question the right of anybody to publish or teach truths that are offensive to any citizens, and reject authority based on superior knowledge.... And a strong element among them is quite prepared to attack or abandon academic freedom, freedom of speech, and freedom of the press in their protests and crusades for good causes. And furthermore anyone who seeks to defend these freedoms may expect to be denounced as a conservative or reactionary..."

And yet these same critics accuse their opponents of politicizing the academy. Thus they attempt to turn the tables on the defenders of freedom by bringing the same charges against them that are leveled against

the assault on freedom... Group indoctrination and propaganda have no place in universities... The university is not a political institution and must not be misused as such... The university is a place where the unthinkable can be taught, the unmentionable can be discussed, and the unchallengeable can be challenged. Such a place must encourage and protest to the fullest the rights of dissent and complete freedom to express views that some will find offensive, even painful.”

Professor C. Vann Woodward  
prominent historian, Yale University  
“Political Fallacies in the Academy”  
*Our Country, Our Culture* (1994) 292, 295-97

“The MLA passed from the realm of farce and scandal to what it is today: an intellectual catastrophe with immense consequences for the future of American cultural life... Race, gender, empire, and gayness are the only aspects under which literature is seen to exist there.... One of the most welcome developments on the literary front is the Association of Literary Scholars and Critics, a new organization that has now been created to challenge the doctrinaire radicalism of the MLA and to provide an independent forum to support the study of literature—if we may put it so—as literature.”

*The New Criterion*  
(October 1994)

“We are destroying all intellectual and esthetic standards in the humanities and social sciences, in the name of social justice... I do not believe that literary studies as such have a future.”

Professor Harold Bloom  
Yale & NYU  
the most published literary critic in history  
*The Western Canon*  
(Harcourt 1994)

“In my classes, I notice now that people who are not minorities are too afraid to speak, too wary of being called a ‘racist,’ ‘sexist,’ etc. through some misplaced word or ‘incorrect’ idea... I have also spoken to people who are minorities and say that they, too, are afraid to speak up in class... The P.C. movement has gone too far; there is no longer an open forum in the university for all students to share ideas and learn about one another.”

Kate Comiskey, student  
Portland State University  
“P.C. Language Blocks Communication”  
Letter to *The Vanguard*  
(16-22 July 1997)

“We analyzed the responses of nearly 3,400 full-time faculty members who participated in a study by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching... Almost three-fourths of the professorate agreed that institutions of higher learning should be active in helping to resolve basic social problems. Those most committed were women, particularly social scientists who held appointments at liberal arts colleges... When asked about a variety of issues relating to multiculturalism in the curriculum, more than one-third refused to take a position on the topics... 65 percent believe that the growing emphasis on multiculturalism nationwide will have a positive effect on the curriculum... It is unlikely that we will soon see dramatic reform on the American campus.”

Lionel S. Lewis & Philip G. Altbach  
“The Dilemma of Higher Education”  
*Academe* (July/August 1997)

“A candid, controversial look into the politics of higher education based on Hamilton’s personal experience with suppression of academic speech and obstacles to the pursuit of academic quality... Hamilton is concerned that academic freedom is once again a ‘waving flame’ and advises reliance more on quick and strong personal response and on the courts than on the academic faculty which does not do well at ‘supervision of itself.’”

President Emeritus Clark Kerr

“In ‘Reading at Risk: A Survey of Literary Reading in America,’ a 2004 report by the National Endowment for the Arts...a representative sample of 17,135 adults, aged 18 or older, was interviewed in 2002 to determine how often they read literature... Throughout, the survey compares its results with data from 1992 and 1982...[it] details a marked decline in reading among all groups surveyed and an accelerated decline among college-age readers.... Literary reading by adults with some college education declined by 18.6 percent; the reading of those holding college or graduate degrees fell by 10.5 percent.... The smallest decline in reading literature over the 1982-2002 period occurred in the 65-74 age cohort; the largest, in the 18-24 and 25-34 age groups.

Almost 60 percent of 18-to-24-year-olds read literature in 1982. Twenty years later, less than 43 percent did, a drop of 17 percentage points. Since 1992, literary reading among those from 18 to 24 has declined by almost 20 percent. For the same period, the literary reading of those in the 25-34 age group fell by 12.6 percent. These declines are statistically important because adults from 18 to 34 were the most likely to read literature in 1982; by 2002 the 18-24 age group was the least likely...the report found that 43.4 percent of adults had read no books and 53.3 percent had read no literature in 2002.... Fifteen years ago, I required students in my English classes to read texts closely and aloud. Though few were accomplished readers, the students read capably. I still require such reading, but now have students who actually must sound out multi syllabic words.... Moving so haltingly means that many students cannot keep a novel’s key parts in memory as they read.”

Larry T. Shillock  
Associate Professor of English  
Head of the Humanities Division, Wilson College  
“A Response to ‘Reading at Risk: A Survey of Literary Reading in America’”  
*The Bloomsbury Review* (May/June 2005) 36

“The power base of the left in America is now in the universities... To identify 101 radical professors for this volume, it was not necessary to scour university faculties. This sample is but the tip of the academic iceberg, and it would have been no problem to provide a thousand such profiles or even ten times the number.... Out of the more than 250 Peace Studies programs whose agendas are overly political rather than scholarly, this collection includes only half a dozen professors. The same is true for other ideological fields like women’s studies, African American studies, gay and lesbian studies, post-colonial studies, queer studies, whiteness studies, and cultural studies.... Never before in the history of the modern research university have entire departments and fields been devoted to purely ideological pursuits....

A primary cause of this development is the overwhelming prevalence of leftists (and ‘liberals’) on academic faculties along with the corresponding absence of other, critical, perspectives.... Numerous surveys of political attitudes among university professors have established that the ratio of faculty members holding views to the left of the political spectrum over those holding conservative views ranges from 5-1 to 9-1 and is steadily increasing.... Cultural studies, peace studies, whiteness studies, post-colonial studies, and global studies—even social justice studies—came into being as interdisciplinary fields shaped by narrow, one-sided political agendas. Some of these programs attacked American foreign policy and the American military, others America’s self-image and national identity. Collectively, they marked a dramatic departure from the academic interests of the past, providing institutional settings for political indoctrination: the exposition and development of radical theory, the education and training of radical cadre, and the recruitment of students to radical causes.

Because the new activist departments were ‘interdisciplinary,’ they were able to spread their influence through the traditional fields until virtually every English Department, History Department, and law school now draws on Women’s Studies and African American Studies Departments for courses and faculty.... This transformation has been the work of an academic generation that came of age as anti-war radicals in the Vietnam era. Many of these activists stayed in school to avoid the military draft and earned PhDs,

taking their political activism with them when they became tenure-track professors in the 1970s.... The principal leaders of the Weather Underground later became professors (and are profiled in this book)....

The Santa Cruz campus [University of California] is a fertile ground for Communist politics. An old Berkeley comrade of Professor Aptheker's—also from the scion of a famous Communist family—Conn Hallinan, is the university's Provost. Hallinan's father, Vincent, was a wealthy lawyer who ran as the presidential candidate for the Communist-created and controlled Progressive Party in 1952. Hallinan had to conduct his presidential campaign from his prison cell at McNeil Island federal penitentiary in Washington State, where he was serving time for tax evasion.) The Santa Cruz faculty also includes Professor Angela Davis, winner of a Lenin Peace Prize from the East German police state during the Cold War. Aptheker, Hallinan, and Davis were expelled from the Communist Party in 1991 after the failed coup against Gorbachev...

Professor [Michael] Berube [Marxist English professor at Pennsylvania State] took exception to one professor's claim that university English departments had become 'laughingstocks' because of their overt political agendas. Conceding that English departments had been steadily losing students over the years, Professor Berube was impatient with the notion that the blame for this lack of interest rested with the left-wing character of the departments themselves, and their jettisoning of the traditional literary canon in favor of modish political subspecialties under the guise of 'literary theory.' By Professor Berube's lights, the only corrective to the 'laughingstock' reputation attached to university English departments should be the introduction of *more theory*."

David Horowitz

*The Professors: The 101 Most Dangerous Academics in America*  
(Regnery 2006) ix, x-xi, xii, xxiv, xxxiii, 15, 73

See also *Debating PC: The Controversy over Political Correctness* (1992) edited by Paul Berman; *Are You Politically Correct? Debating America's Cultural Standards* (1993) edited by Francis Beckwith and Michael Berman; *Once upon a More Enlightened Time: More Politically Correct Bedtime Stories* (1995) by James Garner; and *The Disuniting of America* (1998) by Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.

Michael Hollister (2015)