

----- Original Message -----

From : Erin M. Latona[mailto:erin.latona@templejc.edu]

Sent : 10/25/2008 11:52:17 AM

To : mark.a.smith@templejc.edu

Cc :

Subject : FW: Kerry Laird

Good morning, Mark (actually, good afternoon),

Lesley came by and spoke to me on Thursday about Kerry Laird's door. As you know, the comic strip that contained profanity has been removed. However, Lesley conveyed your concern about a current posting that contains a quotation from German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche and your request that the sign be removed. On Thursday afternoon, I copied you on my email response to Lesley requesting that you or Lesley convey your request to remove the Nietzsche quotation. I just wanted to follow up with you to explain my reasons for that request.

When Lesley and I spoke on Thursday, and she told me about the Nietzsche quotation, she told me that she had passed the matter on to you, and that she and I were removed from that particular situation.

Also, I'm reluctant to ask Kerry to remove the Nietzsche quotation from his door, as I believe doing so may put me in a position of infringing upon his freedom of academic expression. Nietzsche is a renowned 19th Century philosopher, known not only for his contributions to current atheistic/agnostic thought, but also for his influence on modern culture, including literature, philosophy, visual arts, sociology, and political thought. Nietzsche is a common focus of discussion not only in college-level philosophy courses, but also in 19th Century literary criticism and the literary modernism movement. From my own personal experience teaching British Literature I and British Literature II, many of the early works are heavily influenced by Biblical teachings, which we discuss freely in class. When we reach modernism, Nietzsche's position is discussed, specifically as a counter-point/perspective of earlier Biblically-influenced works of literature. Although the majority of our students are Christian, I have had atheist and agnostic students who expressed their relief at hearing "the other side" of literary influence during the 19th Century. Further, Christian students are often relieved to hear the objective foundations of atheistic and agnostic thought, if only to help them to better understand those around them who hold those perspectives.

Finally, my reluctance is based upon my concern that to ask Kerry to remove the sign would convey a lack of tolerance for religious freedom. There are many offices around campus, including "open" offices (reception areas, etc.) visible to students, that contain Biblical messages and phrases, such as, "With God all things are possible," and "I pray, therefore I am," just to name a couple that I've seen personally. Although I am a Christian, believe in God, and believe that Jesus Christ was the son of God, I recognize and appreciate that students, staff, and other faculty members hold views different than my own; I am concerned that asking Kerry to remove the Nietzsche quote would convey

a lack of tolerance for another's religious view.

I hope this better explains my request that I remain removed from this particular situation, as Lesley conveyed to me Thursday afternoon. If you'd like to discuss this further, I am more than happy to do so.

Have a great weekend,

Erin Latona, English Instructor and Chair
Communications Dept.