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Scholar to expose unconstitutional acts in classroom

By Crystal Apilado
News Writer
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Alan Charles Kors, a nationally acclaimed scholar from the University of Pennsylvania, will deliver a speech today to make students more aware of First Amendment violations that can occur in the classroom.

In his lecture, "Betrayal of Liberty and Dignity on College Campuses," Kors will share with students the importance of receiving a fair, complete and balanced education by challenging biased views in the classroom, said Derek Getman, junior majoring in management and College Republican representative, who is the coordinator of the event.

Getman said Kors is coming to encourage students to form their own opinions in the classroom, as well as challenge what the professor's opinions are. He said the opinions of professors could be correct or incorrect, but that students should not necessarily take what they are taught at face value; rather, they should delve deeper to expose the truth.

"We want to do our best to expose the possibility that your First Amendment rights are being taken away," Getman said. "You lose out on your education when you're not getting the whole story."

The nature of Kors' message is if there is a bias in a class, then a student is not getting the best education possible, Getman said.

"This is a message that we feel is important to everyone affiliated with the university," Getman said.

No one at WMU is being specifically targeted with this lecture, but it is a message that will only benefit anyone who hears it, Getman said. He said although the lecture is open to everyone, students should come because Kors' message will address what happens within the classroom.

"Any time you can add knowledge of any situation to your mind and stand outside the box, you should take the opportunity to learn about it," Getman said.

Kors is a co-director of the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education. FIRE is a non-profit educational foundation that identifies its goal to emphasize freedom of speech, academic freedom on college campuses in the United States, individual liberty, religious freedom, the rights of conscience, legal equality and due process.

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Kors has been actively involved in the defense of academic freedom by defending students on college campuses. In 1993, he helped defend a University of Pennsylvania student who was accused of violating the university's racial harassment policy in the "water buffalo" case. At UP, a student was disciplined under the university's speech code for telling several black women who he found to be disruptive that they were as loud as water buffalo.

Kors, a European intellectual history professor at the University of Pennsylvania since 1968, was confirmed by the U.S. Senate in 1992 to the council of the National Endowment of the Humanities, where he served for six years. He is currently on the executive boards for The Historical Society and the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies. He has also co-authored "The Shadow University: The Betrayal of Liberty on America's Campuses" and is the current editor in chief of the "Oxford Encyclopedia of the Enlightenment."

The free lecture is open to the public and will take place at 7 p.m. in room 2303 of Sangren Hall. Kors' lecture is sponsored by the College Republicans at WMU.

For more information on Kors or FIRE, visit the FIRE Web site at www.thefire.org.



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