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Catholic professor punished for views

College removes man from classes after he expresses religious beliefs

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A college professor in Ohio has been punished for refusing to hide his religious identity from his students.

According to the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education, or FIRE, officials from Lakeland Community College removed Dr. James Tuttle from his philosophy classes and threatened him with dismissal because he made statements on his syllabi and in class that disclosed his traditional Catholic religious faith and how that shaped his personal philosophy.

"Asking a philosophy professor to divorce his deepest philosophic views from his teaching is both outrageous and absurd," said Greg Lukianoff, director of legal and public advocacy for FIRE. "To say that a philosophy professor cannot discuss religious ideas is to render him incapable of meaningful discussion of

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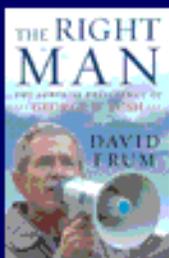
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some of the greatest minds in the history of his field. Feminists are not forced to veil their feminism, and Catholic philosophers should be free to be Catholic philosophers."

FIRE says last March, Tuttle was the target of a student complaint that contended he mentioned his Catholic beliefs too often. The student suggested the professor undergo "counseling for tolerance."

In an effort to address this issue, Tuttle added "disclaimers" to the syllabi of two of his classes saying that the professor was "a committed Catholic Christian philosopher and theologian," thereby hoping to inform students in advance about his perspective. The statement also encouraged any students who felt uncomfortable with Tuttle's views or methods to feel free to talk to him outside of class.

On April 21, the college's Dean James L. Brown wrote a letter to Tuttle, saying he was "more bothered by [Tuttle's] disclaimer than by anything I read in [the student]'s complaint." Brown suggested Tuttle "would be happier in a sectarian classroom."

Besides reducing Tuttle's class load, Brown subjected him to classroom monitoring by a fellow professor.

In December, FIRE says, Tuttle was given the last pick of classes for the upcoming semester – with a selection of courses that the group says administrators knew he did not wish to teach.

FIRE, a nonprofit educational foundation, has gone to bat for Tuttle by contacting Morris W. Beverage, the college's president, on his behalf. The organization now is asking supporters to contact the college to express their views on the treatment of the professor.

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