

Dark Days in US Academe

By [Global Research](#)

Global Research, June 05, 2006

groups.yahoo.com/group/foracademicfreedom/
5 June 2006

Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [Police State & Civil Rights](#)

Roosevelt University of Chicago, IL has fired a philosophy and religion professor for allowing students in his class to ask questions about Judaism and Islam. The chair of the department, Susan Weininger, fired the professor, Douglas Giles, saying that students should not be allowed to ask whatever questions they want in class. Weininger ordered Giles to censor his curriculum, restrict his students' questions, and to not respond to controversial questions or comments from students.

Weininger said that free discussion in world religions could "open up Judaism to criticism." Any such material, she said, was not permissible to be mentioned in class discussion, textbooks, or examinations. Further, she ordered Giles to forbid any and all discussion of the "Palestinian issue," any mention of Palestinian rights, the Muslim belief in the holiness of Jerusalem, and Zionism. When Professor Giles refused to censor his students, Weininger fired him.

The Roosevelt Adjunct Faculty Organization (RAFO) filed a grievance on behalf of Giles citing the faculty contract forbidding the university from restricting academic freedom. Roosevelt University Associate Provost Louis Love denied the union's claim saying that Weininger was entitled, as department chair, to set a professor's curriculum and that this was not an academic freedom issue, but a "pedagogical issue." RAFO has appealed the ruling to arbitration, confident that Prof. Giles' academic freedom was violated and an impartial arbitrator would find this so.

This case is just one example of a growing trend of right-wing attempts to censor the academic freedom of professors and students. Here, a department chair who called all Palestinians "animals" and says college religion courses should teach that only Jews have a legitimate claim to the land of Israel, has fired a professor whose only "sins" were refusing to teach a biased class and allowing open discussion in his classroom. This can NOT be allowed to stand.

Students of Professor Giles have started a Yahoo Group to connect activists nationwide who want to help us force Roosevelt University to end censorship and reinstate Giles.

More information is available at: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/foracademicfreedom/>

Statement of Professor Douglas Giles

Basic Facts of the Academic Freedom Violation at Roosevelt University by DJ ProFusion Mon May 08, 2006 at 09:39:30 PM PDT

Since so many people have asked, I thought it would be good to recount the basic facts of the academic freedom case at Roosevelt University.

I am Douglas Giles, the adjunct professor who was fired for allowing students to speak openly in a World Religions class. I have taught college philosophy, ethics, and religion since 1998. I believe that students deserve the opportunity to learn divergent viewpoints and make up their own minds. As such, I welcome questions and allow students to share their opinions and experiences as discussion is absolutely crucial to quality education.

Roosevelt University's Chair of the Department of History, Art History and Philosophy, Susan Weininger is an art history professor who has never taught religion or philosophy. Other than the interview in which she hired me in December 2003, she and I had not spoken before a series of phone calls she placed to me at my home in September 2005. In these phone calls, she told me, as department chair, to change my World Religions curriculum to exclude certain opinions and facts:

* Students should not be allowed to ask whatever questions they want in class * Nothing should be mentioned in class, textbooks, or examinations that could possibly open up Judaism to criticism, especially any mention of Zionism * Nothing related to Palestinians or Islamic beliefs about Jerusalem should be mentioned * Discussion of Zionism or the Palestinian issue was "disrespectful to any Jews in the class"

I replied that those restrictions would lead to a biased class. She then made a series of disparaging comments about Palestinians concluding with the following: W: "I hear you even allowed a Muslim to speak in class." G: "Yes, of course, I allowed all students to speak, regardless of their religion!" W: "You shouldn't! What disturbs me is that you act like the Palestinians have a side in this. They don't have a side! They are ANIMALS (emphasis hers)! They strap bombs to their bodies and blow up women and children! They are NOT CIVILIZED! (emphasis hers)" She then ordered me to never bring up the conversation again to anyone and hung up. I did report the conversations to my union representative. Within a few days, I received a letter from Weininger saying I would no longer be teaching at Roosevelt.

The reason for my job termination is clear. Because I allowed open and respectful discussion of Judaism and Islam in my classes, I am censored from teaching at Roosevelt. My union, RAFO (Roosevelt Adjunct Faculty Organization - <http://rafo.org>) has consistently supported me in fighting this violation of academic freedom. They filed a formal grievance Nov. 29, 2005. Roosevelt's response has been a succession of disingenuous delaying tactics. Every communication their story changes, yet, Roosevelt has never once denied that Weininger made the statements. Roosevelt's Associate Provost, Louise Love, has even defended Weininger's statements saying that "as chair of the department, Weininger had a right to express her views," that "it is within the University's province to determine its curriculum," and that Weininger's demand that Giles restrict the content of the course "is not an issue of academic freedom but a pedagogical one." Love even characterized Weininger's comments disparaging Palestinians as an "academic discussion" where Weininger was "defending her position passionately."

RAFO's executive council members have gone above and beyond the call and I can't praise them enough. They have risked their own faculty positions to fight for the rights of all faculty and students at Roosevelt. They have been extraordinarily patient and have given

Roosevelt every opportunity to resolve this case. In response, Roosevelt has offered four different cover stories to try and shift the argument away from the academic freedom violation. Their cover stores are clearly manufactured, self-contradictory, and at times laughable in how obviously false they are. In essence, Roosevelt has been lying. Roosevelt also has continually refused to consider our evidence, speak with our witnesses, refused to negotiate in good faith, refused to provide requested information, and conducted themselves in such a manner that RAFO has filed two additional grievances over Roosevelt's contract violations. We are currently scheduled for national arbitration and are supported in our academic freedom case by the Illinois Education Association.

I hope that you also find this deeply troubling. This ugly episode impinges on all of us and our freedom to teach and learn without interference. In no way should faculty and staff ever be censored or pressured to discuss subjects from only one biased perspective. If these acts are allowed to stand, then the standards and learning environment of education not only at Roosevelt University but everywhere have been damaged.

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