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An interesting situation...



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Author

Message

twilde
Guest

Posted: Tue Mar 09, 2004 2:44 am Post subject: An interesting situation...



An interesting situation has recently presented itself within a GSE&IS Discussion Forum. When it appears that postings not only do not suddenly disappear, but in fact remain up for long after a forum has stopped being actively used, "New Topics" that had recently been posted in the ED 229 (McLaren) Discussion Forum were summarily removed. Two earlier postings to this forum that were attempting to develop interest in (and possibly discussion on) a particular topic had been allowed to stay for a week or so, but when the third, related topic was posted to carry the matter a bit further, it (along with these earlier two) were 'disappeared' a day later.

Apparently then, discussion on why a "new topic" must be removed from discussion, before it is removed, is not to be had in that GSE&IS Discussion Forum. Of course, one can imagine topics posted that clearly require immediate removal without prior discussion as to why; all concerned would recognize such postings as obscene, offensive, unintelligible, or detrimental to the aims and purposes of the forum users themselves. However, aside from such obvious cases, it would seem in the clear interest of fostering discussion to explain why particular topics are 'disappeared,' ideally before, but perhaps after, the disappearing action. In fact, those doing the axing of topics bear the burden of argument; absent this argument, they are engaged solely in censoring, and simply because they happen to be at the levers of power.

I'll repost here the three topics that were summarily axed from the ED 229 (McLaren) Discussion Forum, on the assumption that one Discussion Forum cannot exercise its powers of censoring within another Discussion Forum. The three postings are titled "Silence is golden," "A few questions to prompt discussion?" and "Fact checking cannot be expected," respective to chronology. And I'll repost them here also on the faint notion that the apparently offending third posting (which took down the earlier two with it) actually held something substantive enough to cause the usual academic rhetoric supporting free discussion and open debate to be quickly dispensed with by the very individual(s) who use this same rhetoric as currency in the academic "free market."

I'll hazard a guess here that what led to the disappearing of my postings was not so much the topic itself (my summary termination from the GSE&IS), but that I had committed the grave error of pointing out as an aside what is already quite obvious to readers of the ED 229 (McLaren) Discussion Forum: namely, the "discussion" consists somewhat of the plugging of one's own work and writings, which is in fact a form of "self-promotion." Of course, the dull irony here is that once even a benign and superficially critical remark is cast as an aside into a "Critical Theory" "discussion forum," we are immediately treated to the "Power, Politics & Liberation" found in the course title's subheading, as long as we see that liberation is indeed found in using one's power to shield oneself (and everyone else) from words not to that one's liking, which is of course just shrewd (and crude) politics. In fact, with the removal of these postings, we now have a clear understanding that "Critical Theory" has no use for criticism, and that "Power" and "Politics" are used here just as they are used elsewhere, for their traditional purposes; as is "Liberation," as those in power and politics have long used it, and continue to use it, in Iraq, for a present-day example.

(Just following the disappearance of my postings, a message was posted to inform the ED 229 students that they were soon to be receiving "instructions...about posting on the message board" via e-mail. Perhaps these "instructions" about posting on the message board should be shared for the benefit of all participants, as instructions by definition indicate that they are to be followed in order to correctly 'play the game,' in a manner of speaking.)

The significance of what might be seen initially as a minor removal operation is not slight, if we consider the issues and questions raised in those postings and then ask whether the reasons for removing those postings serve us better than the content of those postings. Of course, without any reasons offered for their removal, it's at least safe to say that the postings' content was not harming anyone, save the one(s) using the forum to exercise their power to control what students (and guests) read. And when we consider that the postings are attempting to bring facts and information to students (and faculty) on an issue of immediate importance to the entire UCLA student body, their removal cannot be treated lightly. After all, UCLA students (and some faculty as well) have a very real and immediate interest in their termination from UCLA. So that

when a UCLA student's advisor and division head write that "no enquiries" were made concerning the information used to terminate a student's academic career, the entire UCLA student body faces an administrative operation that significantly impacts its place within the university. When a student's advisor states that he is willing to argue that his student "has been made to pay" with his academic career for "department error," "professor and university disorganisation," and "carelessness by whoever issues the dismissal notice (for their failure to verify the situation)," and the student's advisor is not provided a forum to make this argument, every UCLA student then stands in a significantly altered student/faculty relationship. And when a student is told by a UCLA administrator that a student cannot expect the university to check facts before it terminates a student's academic career, every UCLA student is put on notice that a UCLA administrator can and does act with complete impunity.

In other words, we might better argue that instead of summarily removing postings dealing with these important facts and issues, UCLA students as well as those exercising control over the GSE&IS Discussion Forums ought to be bringing wider

attention to the postings and the entire Discussion Forum site, and attempting to foster (rather than quash) discussion on the serious questions that are obviously raised by these statements made by UCLA faculty and administrators. However, should these (and future) postings be disappeared again, then at least we'll know that the GSE&IS Discussion Forums are not in fact forums for discussion of important issues and questions concerning UCLA students and faculty, but are instead to be used for mundane scheduling matters, important but largely innocuous academic exchanges, and as is the case in some forums, a space for free advertising (with web links provided) and a www.stage for one's self-promotional rhetoric.

In the next posting, I'll include some UCLA faculty discussion on the matter of my termination from the GSE&IS, as well as some remarks on the same by those elected to represent UCLA graduate students and their academic careers.

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