

N.B. The posting below will shortly be put into a forum for a current course as an experiment of sorts. The dilemma that it will likely pose for the lead participant in that forum will be how soon to axe it from wider view. On one hand, if he axes it too soon, his summary execution will then call into question (for some) his (loudly) stated commitment to academic and ethical principles (to say nothing of his rallying cries for active “democratic” participation); i.e., we’ll get a strong whiff of censorship from a self-proclaimed protector of academic and public freedoms. On the other hand, if he stays the axe and leaves the posting for any length of time at all, he’ll be allowing people some time to consider that if he says nothing about it and/or simply dismisses any comments it might raise (albeit by a rather remote chance), he risks having his work (along with his ultra-splashy website) seen (by some) in the view I quote below.

This is no trifle of a dilemma, in my view, as in my experience it’s an extremely rare professor who’s willing to allow anyone (but especially a student, current or ex-) to stand in the middle of the house he’s worked years to construct and argue that his is in fact a house of cards. Of course, the circumstances don’t often permit this, for reasons that needn’t be stated here, but that are nonetheless obvious. However, the facts and circumstances of my termination from GSE&IS not only permit this; they require a professor to either fulfill both academic and ethical responsibilities to faculty colleagues and students, or actively work to keep the silence all around—all the while counting on the fact that with time, this annoying background noise will likely subside.

My guess is that this posting might put the death knell to Chu’s abandoned “Critical Issues” forum that I’ve been posting to on and off for the past several months, and might keep my postings off all the others to boot (though I must say

that I've appreciated the happy coincidence found in this abandoned forum's title, as I see it as quite appropriate for the matter at hand). And I say this because it took only a few much milder comments than those below to have professor McLaren's "radical" forum locked to all but those to whom he provides a password, and that was more than several months ago; it's been locked to guests and "outsiders" ever since. Hence, we were treated to a true and clear object lesson taken from his (dis)course on Power, Liberation, and Critical Theory, whereby he uses his power to liberate his audience from words that he alone deems too critical for their ears, thus lending no small amount of substantiation to the house-of-cards point I made above—precisely because he advertises himself so widely and loudly as an aggressive supporter (and ostensibly, a leading practitioner) of all the "praxis" that is supposed to follow out of his "critical theory." (And we might well consider, too, that this is precisely what is meant by the "harshest critics" in the short commentary quoted below.)

The posting:

Whether as UCLA students, faculty, or as "outside" guests, clearly we're to understand that this particular discussion forum welcomes issues of the sort that follow these introductory remarks. And we're to understand this in no small part from the nature of the content found on the otherwise phenomenally media-slick website for the lead participant in this forum. That is, from this site's content we're to understand that issues which appear at first glance to substantially undermine the very foundation of the educational institution supporting both this website and this discussion forum are to be energetically taken up and put before all others who profess to be working to ensure the integrity of this institution's

foundational principles. Needless to say—because this website and discussion forum (loudly) imply as much—these same people (both inside and outside the university) then carefully examine the facts of these issues, determine whether these facts do indeed violate the university’s founding principles, and if so, then take the steps they deem necessary to address the violations, hopefully in a manner which removes the possibility that these same violations will occur in the future.

That’s what we are to understand; that is, if we take seriously both the content of the website and a central purpose of this discussion forum (or at least to the extent that we take ourselves seriously as we contribute to these). And no doubt we do take the website, discussion forum, and ourselves seriously, at least judging from the fact that no one is making light of other serious problems both forums are attempting to address, if not altogether solve. In fact, we see our critically-minded efforts as weighty contributions to substantial (if not truly radical) social change.

However, if we allow that we have in fact gained this understanding from these same education-based locations, it would be unthinkable that these same critically-minded contributors (read: we) would remain silent when presented with a claim that there exists an otherwise unheard faculty member’s argument that a UCLA student “ha[s] been made to pay with [his] academic career for department error..., professor and university disorganization..., [and] carelessness by whoever...issues the dismissal notice (for their failure to verify the situation).” Indeed, if we allow ourselves the above understanding, we also necessarily understand that by our refusal to take up this argument and have it heard by all UCLA students, we are actively working to undermine the academic and ethical integrity of the university and, consequently, our own scholarly contributions from within it. Silence is, after all, an activity of immense effect, and of immense long-term consequences.

Or, given that this silence prevails, it very well could be that we, as the critically-minded contributors who frequent (and take seriously) this forum and its lead participant's associated website, are thereby providing no small amount of substantiation to the following short commentary on our educational institution:

“What is important in the present context is the contribution of the harshest critics (within the mainstream) of reinforcing the system of indoctrination, of which they themselves are victims—as is the norm for the educated classes, who are typically the most profoundly indoctrinated and, in a deep sense, the most ignorant group, the victims as well as the purveyors of the doctrines of faith. The great achievement of the critics is to prevent the realization that what is happening today is not some departure from our historical ideals and practice, to be attributed to the personal failings of this or that individual. Rather, it is the systematic expression of the way our institutions function and will continue to function unless impeded by an aroused public that comes to understand their nature and their true history—exactly what our educational institutions must prevent if they are to fulfill their function, namely, to serve power and privilege.”

Indeed, this view of our educational institution by another well known and widely cited critic will be as incomprehensible as if it were stated in a Martian language to those who choose to remain silent, even as they sometimes reference this same critic in an effort to further legitimate themselves as the “harshest critics” in question here...leaving these individuals all the more comfortable in their silence.