

The Myth of Political Correctness: The Conservative Attack on Higher Education

By John K. Wilson

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The classics of Western culture are out, not being taught, replaced by second-rate and Third World texts. White males are a victimized minority on campuses across the country, thanks to affirmative action. Speech codes have silenced anyone who won't toe the liberal line. Feminists, wielding their brand of sexual correctness, have taken over. These are among the prevalent myths about higher education that John K. Wilson explodes.

The phrase "political correctness" is on everyone's lips, on radio and television, and in newspapers and magazines. The phenomenon itself, however, has been deceptively described. Wilson steps into the nation's favorite cultural fray to reveal that many of the most widely publicized anecdotes about PC are in fact more myth than reality. Based on his own experience as a student and in-depth research, he shows what's really going on beneath the hysteria and alarmism about political correctness and finds that the most disturbing examples of thought policing on campus have come from the right. The image of the college campus as a gulag of left-wing totalitarianism is false, argues Wilson, created largely through the exaggeration of deceptive stories by conservatives who hypocritically seek to silence their political opponents.

Many of today's most controversial topics are here: multiculturalism, reverse discrimination, speech codes, date rape, and sexual harassment. So are the well-recognized protagonists in the debate: Dinesh D'Souza, William Bennett, and Lynne Cheney, among others. In lively fashion and in meticulous detail, Wilson compares fact to fiction and lays one myth after another to rest, revealing the double standard that allows "conservative correctness" on college campuses to go unchallenged.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly
Wilson, a graduate student at the University of Chicago, began this persuasive tract when he was an undergraduate at the University of Illinois. Here he debunks the ``myth'' that ``political correctness'' has taken over our nation's colleges and universities; he goes so far as to assert that political correctness as defined by conservatives such as Dinesh D'Souza barely exists. Using hundreds of highly detailed examples of real campus conflicts over issues such as free speech, affirmative action, multiculturalism in the curriculum, and gender and race relations, Wilson convincingly argues that comparisons between liberals and Nazis, Joseph McCarthy and Saddam Hussein are ludicrous, cynical hype. He is similarly effective in demonstrating that conservatives still hold most positions of real power and influence in American higher education. At times Wilson's thesis seems a tad facile and wide-eyed; further, he often shuttles too quickly from example to example--more developed discussion of certain cases (particularly those in the chapter on ``The Myth of Speech Codes'') would have been more satisfying. But given that most effective political statements are at least slightly overdetermined, the simplicity of Wilson's thesis is oddly refreshing in--and perhaps a necessary response to--an especially murky debate.

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Review

"An admirably comprehensive guide to the Hydra-headed monster known as 'political correctness.' Wilson manages to address nearly every aspect of the PC onslaught. That he catalogues and dissects such an amazing array of right-wing malfeasance, journalistic sloppiness, and outright lying—and does so without descending to invective or ridicule—is testimony not only to his thoroughness but to his patience. This is an original, discerning, and extremely important book."—Michael Berubé, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

"John Wilson shows in copious and devastating detail that, as obnoxious as Political Correctness of the Left has sometimes been, the Political Correctness of the Right is far more pervasive, virulent, and well-funded—as well as virtually unpublicized."—Gerald Graff, author of *Beyond the Culture Wars*

"This book should once and for all put to rest the peculiar delusion that American campuses are being terrorized by 'politically correct' thought police. Anyone who's visited a campus knows better, of course, but John K. Wilson demolishes the myth with scholarly rigor and relentless investigative zeal. Now maybe we can get back to the real problems of higher education—like why it's becoming unaffordable for all but the rich."—Barbara Ehrenreich

From the Back Cover
"John Wilson shows in copious and devastating detail that, as obnoxious as Political Correctness of the Left has sometimes been, the Political Correctness of the Right is far more pervasive, virulent, and well-funded--as well as virtually unpublicized."--Gerald Graff, author of "Beyond the Culture Wars"

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