

Letters to the Editor

To the Editor:

I protest the publication of "Assessment of Audio Visuals on Central America," which appeared in the Fall, 1984 issue of *NEWS*.

The article describes a study in which the author presented some dozen films to his class on Central American and Caribbean Politics. All but one of the films — an ABC documentary — are communist propaganda films. Several were produced by the communist governments of Cuba and Nicaragua; the rest by groups who propagandize on their behalf in the U.S. The purpose of the study was to assess the effectiveness of the films in gaining student acceptance. The results will apparently guide other faculty interested in sponsoring the communist "point of view" on Central America in their courses by helping them pick the most effective films, i.e., those that elicited the most favorable responses from the author's class.

The films included in the study — except the ABC documentary — unjustly blame the United States for real or imagined ills in Central America, falsely allege that communist-dominated fronts of guerrillas and terrorists who have systematically murdered thousands of people and destroyed millions of dollars of property have popular support, pretend that Castro's 25-year old totalitarian despotism is a benign welfare state (a sort of nursery where "new" men and women are being bred and nurtured) and cynically deny that Soviet client-states in the Americas pose a security threat to their neighbors or to the United States.

The author reports that he warned his class that the films were "propaganda" — as are most political messages. This assertion is itself a piece of communist propaganda, aimed at obliterating all differences in validity and reliability between what the communists say and what democratic parties competing for votes in countries informed by an unfettered press say. It reduces the Republicans and Democrats to the same level as the Sandinistas, and equates the pronouncements of an American president with those of a communist despot.

To the Editor:

A person who doesn't know how to read shouldn't write — and it is obvious from his letter in the winter 1985 issue of the *NEWS* that Dr. Charles R. Foster has not really read my article on using FBIS Reports in the introductory international politics course.

For Dr. Foster's information, many FBIS articles run to several pages — not the single paragraph he implies. Furthermore, the reports include not only shortwave broadcasts, but also translations of newspaper stories, magazine articles, speeches, press conferences, and policy statements. Although it is expensive to subscribe to the *Daily Reports*, the cost is not prohibitive when averaged out over the number of students taking the course, and the reports are available free to any depository library that cares to request them. Unlike Dr. Foster, I have never felt it an imposition to ask students to spend time in the library. All the same, they may obtain personal copies of key FBIS stories by the simple expedient of using a Xerox machine.

Having dismissed the "liberal myth of objectivity," the author expresses disappointment with those students who persisted in labeling the films propaganda and who asked for a more balanced presentation on Central America. Furthermore, he happily notes that some students "appreciated" a film about daily life in communist-controlled areas of El Salvador — from which, according to *The New York Times*, thousands of peasants have fled to avoid, among other terrors, the gangpressing of their children into cannon fodder for the guerrillas — for "the graphic presentations of differences between capitalism and socialism." "Clearly," the author concludes, "some audio-visuals provide a useful, indeed perhaps indispensable, mode of bridging the gap between head and heart." His propagandistic purposes could not be more plainly stated.

In his study, the author found that students responded better to "cool" than to "hot" propaganda. He made use of this finding in the article, which is written in a "cool" style. It begins as an innocuous study of "audio-visuals" in a teacher's "pedagogical arsenal." It is not until later that the reader learns that the author was using the films to "infuse some awareness of political realities" in Central America, and to "make the infusion of a good neighbor policy less unrealistic." What constitutes such a policy is not made explicit; but given the content of the films, one infers that it means being sympathetic, supportive, and certainly not hostile to communism in Central America.

Communist propaganda directed at faculty and students on American campuses is neither new nor surprising. What is shocking is that an organ of the American Political Science Association would lend itself to such an activity. How could such a piece be published in *NEWS*?

Alfred G. Cuzan
University of West Florida

Editors Note: Professor Cuzan is the author of "Misreading the Central American Crisis," *The Times of the Americas* (November 21, 1984), p.9.

I don't know that anyone alerted us to the imminence of the Camp David accords, and Dr. Foster's claim to 20/20 hindsight here is simply astounding. Also, I wonder how he can advocate students playing "the role of a Chinese or Romanian policy maker" if he is so averse to their analyzing the current foreign policy positions of these countries and employing standard reference and research tools. I cannot accept Dr. Foster's assumption that everything in the foreign media can be dismissed as misinformation or propaganda. As I stated in my article, the FBIS assignment has proven valuable in helping students to distinguish between hard information, analysis and commentary, and propaganda. In fact, as any careful student would immediately discern, Dr. Foster's letter is replete with hackneyed propaganda techniques: out-of-context quotations, false analogies, logical non-sequiturs, name calling, and the most supercilious posturing.

Bon appétite, Dr. Foster, with your "fully cooked meal."

John Merrill
Lafayette College

Reply to Professor Cuzan To the Editor:

Having been red-baited in the past by prose far more sophisticated than this, my first impulse is to ignore this revived Cold War diatribe. But a reading of the McCarthy era reminds me that public silence may indeed imply consent. I am unsure if our collective academic freedom is threatened by vitriol such as this. I just surmise that we cannot afford to assume otherwise.

I want to promote communist "point of view" films? Then why did I report that the ABC documentary received a student rating of 87, far above the materials produced by the Cuban regime, namely "For the First Time" (68) and "Isle of Youth" (76)? The data clearly imply that overtly propagandistic materials be avoided. Pay attention, Mr. Cuzan.

Propaganda? Obviously the author has not even reviewed the materials. Otherwise he would have observed Alexander Haig's testimony to Congress about U.S. missionary "gun-runners," U.S. embassy officials in El Salvador on the death squads, Reagan's statements on Central America, U.S. transnational corporate executives on investment climates, Salvadoran military officers interviewed by U.S. congressional delegations, and so on. Maybe he thinks these people are all subversive communists too? (Given the tone of the letter, he just might.)

Maybe he wants our students to hear about the region from the Americans prevented or intimidated from traveling to Cuba, from the Sandinistas denied visas by the State Department, from the Salvadoran refugees shipped back by the INS into the waiting arms of military death squads, and from the U.S. correspondents prevented from reporting on the early days of the Grenada invasion?

Maybe our students should only hear about the region from academic peons of the powers-that-be, like political scientist (sic?) Jeane Kirkpatrick, who on ABC *Nightline* called Mexico the "Colossus of the North" (sic again).

Maybe he has forgotten that the White House and media have allowed Tito, Ceausescu, Deng and other random communists to spout their "propaganda" before the American people. Write your letter to the White House and Dan Rather, Mr. Cuzan.

Maybe he just wants to prevent our students from seeing "communist" guerrillas wearing liberation-theology crosses around their necks. It really throws a clinker into one's *idée-fixe*.

So I am a pro-communist subversive in academia? I will avoid a listing of my articles in refereed journals which examine the human rights violations of the USSR. The point is simply that Mr. Cuzan, who apparently assigns homework to students, does not even do his own.

In sum, the letter is an insult to the discriminating capability of my students, the motives of myself and other political scientists who want to give students access to primary-source materials, and to the editors of the *NEWS*, who apparently are supposed to check out the CP-card-carrying-capacity of all its contributors.

So put a lid on it, Mr. Cuzan. We are tired of you and your (this next word should give you a thrill) "ilk." We have better things to do than shoot dead horses.

David Kowalewski
University of Texas at San Antonio

Graduate Training in Public Service Ethics

by Latheef N. Ahmed
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Introduction

Educating and training professional administrators in public service ethics is complex. Just one of the many questions is whether ethics can be taught in the classroom at all, particularly to graduate students at a late period in their lives. Essential life patterns of our MPS and MBA students have already been established during their formative years, and their jobs and other adult experiences influence their thinking, feeling and acting. What is "practical" administrative behavior vs. high sounding ethical prescriptions and codes? Recognizing such caveats, the following account documents the author's classroom teaching experience.

The unique student body involved combined MPA and MBA students, who were all part or full time practitioners and mature individuals. This setting provided an opportunity for government-business cross study and dialogue on administrative ethics. Public administration students had their own perceptions and values, as did the Business Administration students. Ethical questions and readings were integrated with cultural, economic and political readings and analyses and not as a separate course. The right political choice may not be so economically or culturally, and vice versa. Students tried to tackle the cultural, economic and political variables in attempting a three dimensional micro-macro approach to administrative ethics. How do administrators develop positive individual ethics at the micro level as they interact with the macro forces of the subsystems and the system? Are there any integrated formulas, strategies, tactics? Frustration and excitement characterized the class and hallway debates. The Waldo-Hennigan multidimensional ethical "map" resulted in even more excitement.

The result was a general agreement on the part of the combined student body that "dialoguing" on administrative ethics for "value clarification" was a useful exercise combined with on-the-job experience at the agency level. Current, concrete, practical ethical issues that agencies face may be debated in seminars, with personnel or organization development departments providing knowledgeable outside people to serve as facilitators for the dialogues.

This experiential teaching approach may contain implications for ethics courses in general. The learning model in David A. Kolb *et al.* suggests that we teachers have to reverse the standard teaching approach of "you conceptualize and then you operationalize." On the contrary, we should first consider operationalization in terms of student needs and their own concrete, life

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