



Written by [Steve Byas](#) on January 26, 2016

## Missouri Professor Faces Assault Charge

The University of Missouri is facing continued bad publicity emanating from its campus turmoil of last year. Now, a professor who joined the students in the protests has been charged with assaulting a student journalist.

Melissa Click (shown), a communications professor at the Columbia, Missouri, campus, called for “some muscle” to remove Mark Schierbecker from videotaping the protests on the Carnahan Quad. She now faces a Class C misdemeanor simple assault charge as a result of the incident.



Click was originally referred to in the media as a professor in the journalism department as well, but David Kurpius, dean of the Missouri School of Journalism, clarified this for *The New American*. “Dr. Melissa Click is an assistant professor in the MU Department of Communication in the College of Arts and Science. Until November 10, she held a courtesy appointment with the School of Journalism, which allowed her to work with a small number of graduate students on their master’s or doctoral committees. She never taught a course in the journalism school.”

It is quite understandable that Dean Kurpius does not want the journalism school at Missouri associated with Professor Click. After all, Missouri has had a long reputation as one of the premier journalism schools in the country, and for the public to think that one of its professors actually attempted to thwart the covering of a legitimate news story by a student journalist seems contradictory to its mission.

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Click was cited for the incident, caught on film, in which she appeared to initiate physical contact with and berate a student journalist. The journalist was attempting to conduct investigative interviews of students who were involved in protests calling for the resignation of the university president and the chancellor.

The protests were part of the effort to force the removal of Tim Wolfe, president of the University of Missouri. Wolfe eventually did resign, after at least 30 black football players at the Southeastern Conference school declared they would not practice or play in the next game unless he stepped down. They alleged on Twitter that he had been negligent in adequately addressing concerns of black students about multiple racial incidents on the campus over the previous few months.

The tweet read, “The athletes of color on the University of Missouri football team truly believes ‘Injustice Anywhere is a threat to Justice Everywhere.’” The action of the athletes was precipitated when graduate student Jonathan Butler went on a hunger strike, demanding Wolfe’s removal.

The president of the student government, who is black, said in September that people in a pickup truck yelled racial slurs at him as they passed by. This was followed by allegations of other similar racial episodes. It is not clear what the protesters wanted Wolfe to do about the incidents, unless the perpetrators were identified, but one demand was that Wolfe “acknowledge his white male privilege.”



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The video of the alleged assault was taken by Mark Schierbecker and was posted on the Internet. He was filming student journalist Tim Tai, who in turn was attempting to simply film the protest. But protesters were yelling and pushing Tai. Schierbecker then approached Click, who demanded that he leave. When he refused to do so, Click turned and yelled at other protesters, pleading for “some muscle” to remove him. Schierbecker appears to catch on film an effort of Click to grab his camera.

If convicted, Click could be fined up to \$300 and face 15 days in jail.

Instead of defending the rights of the student journalists, however, more than 100 professors at Missouri have risen up to defend Click. In a letter, these faculty members argue that Click was the one who had been wronged. “We believe that Click has been wronged in the media by those who have attacked her personally and have called for her dismissal. We affirm our support of her as a colleague, a teacher, and a scholar, and we call upon the University to defend her First Amendment rights of protest and her freedom to act as a private citizen.”

Perhaps this defiant attitude, and the utter disregard it demonstrates for the First Amendment rights of student journalists, explains the unfavorable reaction to what is going on at Missouri by state legislators, potential football recruits, donors, and students who have opted against attending the school.

Over 100 members of the Missouri Legislature have expressed outrage at what is going on at the school, and have demanded the termination of Professor Click. “The fact that, as a professor teaching in the communications department ... she displayed such a complete disregard for the First Amendment rights of reporters should be enough to question her competency and aptitude for the job. It should be evident that these actions are inappropriate, illegal, and unacceptable for a faculty member at the University of Missouri.”

Another employee of the university, Janna Basler, assistant director for Greek Life, was also criticized by the legislators for pushing into a student reporter as he was attempting to cover the protest.

The University of Missouri is beginning to pay a price for the political correctness of a large portion of its faculty and student body — which may be sending a warning signal to other universities.

Administrators fear that the university’s decline in student applications for admission this year is a result of last year’s protests. Admissions Director Chuck May admitted, “While we don’t have any clear data, we know that the events this past fall have had an impact, and we are answering any questions that parents and students have about those events.”

Applications for admission to the university have decreased nearly five percent from the previous year. The drop in graduate student applications — 19 percent — is even more dramatic.

After last year’s season, some recruits who were considering playing football for Missouri opted to de-commit from playing for the Southeastern Conference program.

The actions of Basler and Click illustrate that the modern college campus has far too often been a bastion of leftist indoctrination and intimidation, and has now become the site of actual physical violence against those who do not meekly accept the worldview of the Left. Conservatives are routinely kept from speaking on campus, or are not even invited to speak. Others decline invitations, rather than subject themselves to possible bodily harm at the hands of campus radicals.

“This is just the beginning in dismantling systems of oppression in higher education, specifically the UM system,” predicted Marshall Allen, a member of Concerned Student 1950, a liberal protest group on the



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campus. Students are also calling for “full shared governance” over the university, and to have a say in the hiring decision of the next president.

With some football recruits having second thoughts about going to a school in which the football team would rather strike for this or that liberal cause, and a number of non-athlete students opting to look elsewhere for a place to spend their tuition dollars, the University of Missouri is paying a price for appearing to champion leftist causes. Attempting to stem the erosion of new student applications, faculty members have even taken to making personal phone calls to accepted students, encouraging them to not let these recent events keep them from attending the university.

Once seen as a bastion of free speech, universities have in countless cases become institutions of authoritarianism. A recent poll by McLaughlin & Associates, sponsored by Yale University’s William F. Buckley, Jr. Program, revealed that the free exchange of ideas is not a highly valued commodity on the modern U.S. college campus. The poll queried 800 undergraduates across the country, with the startling revelation that 72 percent of respondents agreed with the statement, “Any student or faculty member on campus who uses language that is considered racist, sexist, homophobic or otherwise offensive should be subject to disciplinary action.”

One must ask: Who will make these judgments as to what is racist, sexist, homophobic, or otherwise offensive? After all, some regard any criticism of President Obama as “racist.” Others castigate the Roman Catholic Church as “sexist” for its doctrinal position of refusing to ordain women to the priesthood. A Christian student or faculty member who expresses that the entire Bible is the Word of God will be labeled “homophobic” by many. The very existence of conservative political, economic, or social views is taken as offensive by the American Left.

A recent article in *The Austrian*, published by the Mises Institute, charged that academia “is the greatest offender” in the push for criminalization of certain types of speech.

It is to be hoped that an increasing number of students will choose not to support such authoritarian attitudes, by enrolling in universities that exist to advance learning in an atmosphere of free speech, and bypassing those institutions that have degenerated into indoctrination centers for progressive causes.

*Photo: AP Images*

*Steve Byas is a professor of history at Hillsdale Free Will Baptist College in Moore, Oklahoma. His book, History’s Greatest Libels, challenges some of the greatest lies of history about some of the greatest personalities of history, such as George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Warren Harding, and Joseph McCarthy.*



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