



Stupid in America: Students Are So Bad, Professor Can't Grade Them

What does it say when in two days a teacher  exhausts the ink in his red pen? Since a nation cannot be “ignorant and free,” as Thomas Jefferson put it, it perhaps means we face a threat graver than the Red Menace.

Apathetic or even hostile students, dumbed-down tests, often incompetent and ideologically driven teachers, Cracker Jack-box degrees, morally toxic curricula, revisionist history, the new math — education has collapsed in America. And one of the sincere educators, wandering amidst the rubble, recently provided a window into this academic apocalypse.

Eileen F. Toplansky, a social commentator and adjunct English instructor at the college level, laments that a good number of her ex-students were so bad that it's difficult to even grade their work. She [provides many examples](#) of former students definitely not smarter than a fifth grader (the ones on TV, anyway), but opens with this striking unedited submission:

Attached is the actual outline for my ruff raft. Please, account this as credit therefore I'll prove my academic progression as acknowledgment for satisfactory of the course. The presentation shall be captivating with visualization being a current pet owner of a fish too!

Wow, this student is obviously very excited — about what I have no idea.

Professor Toplansky then reports that when “discussing illegal immigration and a concomitant rise in disease, another student writes this indecipherable ‘sentence’”:

The introduction gets a reader's attention by wondering what is the cause of the nice lady starving from times to times and what will the government to about the health benefits services at the end.

Perhaps the cause is that the nice lady received a faux education and had no marketable skills.

Many of Toplansky's students haven't even learned basic grammar, punctuation, or even capitalization rules. As she writes, often “‘White House’ is not capitalized, nor is ‘American,’ ‘Christian,’ or ‘English.’” Of course, this problem is greatly exacerbated when a generation is immersed in social media in which 140-character, Twitter-esque communication is the norm. Yet its root cause is far more troubling.

The professor also complains of “racial animus,” providing an example of prejudice that makes Archie Bunker appear articulate: “I do believe immigrants are what makes this country great is more of a culture thing I find Americans to be boring in most areas immigrants bring a certain color to an all white canvas so to speak,” one student wrote.

Then there are the excuses for apathy, such as that made by a young man who didn't read newspapers and proudly rationalized that he wouldn't open the *New York Times* because it was owned by “rich people.” (There are good reasons to avoid the *Times* — that's not one of them.)

More troubling still were the emotion-driven, nailed-shut minds. Toplansky mentions one girl totally unmoved by Dr. Thomas Sowell's explanation of how the minimum wage hurts the poor and by



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information indicating that McDonald's [supports](#) the wage "because it will substitute machinery for labor." As the professor related, "Denial was in full swing. When I asked her to refute the findings, she merely spluttered and yelled that it is the 'greed, greed, greed' of the companies."

Of course, this phenomenon is nothing new. As satirist Jonathan Swift observed three centuries ago (I'm paraphrasing), "You cannot reason a man out of a position he has not reasoned himself into." Yet it certainly has worsened in modern times. Just consider that a 2002 Barna Group [study](#) I've often cited found that among Americans, "the most common basis for moral decision-making was doing whatever feels right"; moreover, wrote Barna, "More than half of the young adults (52%) and teenagers (54%) base their moral choices on feelings and beneficial outcomes compared to just one-third of adults 36 and older who do so (32%)." Likewise, there was an interesting correlation. The study's focus was moral relativism, and Barna determined that only 22 percent of adults and six percent of teens believed in moral absolutes; this and other data indicate that relativism is also gaining ground over time.

It's no surprise that relativism and emotionalism are increasing correspondingly. When people believe in Truth (by definition absolute), they generally strive to use it as their yardstick when making moral decisions. When oblivious to this eternal guide, however, man is left with no more appealing an arbiter than his feelings. After all, they certainly are real — especially to the individual — and without anything transcendent and inerrant to go by, who is to say they're wrong?

It's as if we subscribed to "dietary relativism" and thus believed there were essentially no rules governing human nutrition. How could we then differentiate among foods other than by our palate's preferences? Our credo would become "If it tastes good, eat it." Similarly, is it any surprise that a characteristic mantra of our relativistic age is "If it feels good, do it"?

And the fact that hard work generally doesn't feel good — and disciplining kids doesn't, either — help explain our educational woes. A teacher [posting](#) under Toplansky's article provided his own testimonial, writing about a third grader who "refused to do anything in my class. If I asked students to take out their math books, he would just sit there and do nothing. If I put a book on his desk, he refused to look at it. He would not look at me while I was lecturing." This never would have happened in ages past; the boy would have found working preferable to frequent appointments with a backside-bound switch. Instead, such children today remain uncivilized and ill-behaved, becoming ever more brazen as the unanswered will, until their misbehavior crosses a line and action is finally taken by the only ones now empowered to do so — the police — and prison may be their lot.

This brings us to an oft-missed point. Obedience and discipline, two dirty words currently, are prerequisites for education for a simple reason:

How can someone learn from you if he's not first willing to listen to you?

Listening comes before learning.

This simple truth apparently eludes most modern academics. They instead distract themselves with new feel-good (feelings again) teaching paradigms, such as "outcome-based education," and social engineering. As an example of the latter, Professor Toplansky writes, "Teaching staff are bombarded with 'free panel discussions titled 'Whose Schools? OUR Schools! Support for Educators Building Safe Spaces for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Inter-sex, Two-Spirit Native Americans and Gender Non-conforming Youth and their Peers through Pedagogy today.'" Or educators are told that "exams often are [anxiety](#) provoking" and that, consequently, "more on-task behavior and higher academic self-esteem" are necessary. Teachers are also often heard saying, "We don't just teach 'facts';



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we teach kids how to think” (no, they don’t). Of course, demeaning facts is understandable when you’re peddling fiction and avoiding the fact that schools today are often just waystations between daycare and prison or the public dole.

This educational degradation has gotten so bad that a famous octogenarian ex-college professor just [proposed](#) that we stop teaching algebra to American students because it’s too hard. And with China already producing 10 times as many scientists as we do, this certainly should help — ease America into a fourth-rate, Third World mishmash of easily ruled serfs.


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