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**Editor's Note:** Our organization has been attacked in recent days by members of the media and others who questioned the validity of the story of a University of Northern Colorado student who was required to write an essay on her criminology exam explaining "why President Bush is a war criminal." When the student wrote instead about why Saddam Hussein is a war criminal, she was given a failing grade. These attacks were initiated by Prof. Mano Singham in a March 3 column in the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* and were quickly picked up by [mediamatters.org](http://mediamatters.org) and other internet news sources. The following report clarifies the details of the story. It also highlights the pressing need for an Academic Bill of Rights to protect these students who have faced classroom indoctrination or abuse, yet remain too frightened to report these violations, even years after the fact, for fear of endangering their future academic careers.

## University of Northern Colorado Story Confirmed

By Ryan Call--SAF Central Regional Coordinator--03/14/05

The student was a sophomore at the University of Northern Colorado in Greeley, enrolled in a three-credit Criminology course in the Sociology Department during the spring semester of 2003. The course was required for the "Criminal Justice Emphasis" for the Sociology B.A. degree. The course was taught by Assistant Professor Robert Dunkley, who is still with UNC as an Assistant Professor in the newly-formed Criminal Justice Department. The course is now offered through the Criminal Justice Department, as opposed to Sociology, which may explain why some members of the media failed to find it listed among the current course offerings in the Sociology Department at UNC.

Taken from the 2002-2003 UNC Course Catalog, the course description is as follows: "SOC 346 - Criminology. Prerequisite: SOC 100 or equivalent. Survey criminal behavior generally, including theories of causation, types of crime, extent of crime, law enforcement, criminal justice, punishment and treatment."

The final exam format was a four-question essay exam. The student recalls that the fourth exam question was phrased: "Explain why President Bush is a war criminal." The student instead answered the question by discussing why Saddam Hussein was a war criminal, and received a failing grade. The student, deeply upset by both the unfair and politically-loaded question, as well as her failing grade, contacted the department chair and filed a complaint to begin the official appeals process.

During the appeals process, the professor claimed the exam question read: "Explain why President Bush could be considered a war criminal." During the appeals process, however, the professor was unable to produce copies of either the final exam or the student's final exam essay, for which she had received a failing grade. The student reported that the reason given by the department chair and the dean was that it was Professor Dunkley's first semester teaching at UNC, and he didn't know he should have kept copies of the exam.

UNC President Kay Norton was both aware of and involved with the appeals process as it unfolded regarding


this incident. In fact, when President Norton appeared along with the presidents from other top Colorado universities before a legislative hearing of the Joint Education Committee on September 9, 2004, not only did she acknowledge that she was aware of the situation, but she was able to describe to the members of the committee what steps the university had taken to deal with the student's complaints.

For an example of the press coverage of the September 2004 legislative hearing, see Valerie Richardson, "Academic Bias Cited at Colorado Schools," Washington Times, 10/9/2004, available at <http://www.washingtontimes.com/national/20040909-110959-3265r.htm>. For example, the Washington Times article included information about a number of other students who shared examples of bias in the classroom, including an alarming report from a CU-Boulder law student who reported that his property law instructor, Professor David Hill, told his class during the first few days of class that "'the R in Republican stands for racist,' called Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas an 'Uncle Tom,' and when confronted about such remarks, said 'there are plenty of other Nazis like you out there.'"

An audio file of the relevant portions of UNC President Norton's testimony, along with a transcript, will be posted to the Students for Academic Freedom website on Monday. In addition, the student has agreed to allow us to post a copy of letters she received from the department chair during the appeal's process. These letters, with only the student's name excised, will be posted as soon as the student returns from spring break.

The student is now a senior at UNC, but given both the current uproar involving Ward Churchill at CU-Boulder, as well as the fact that the student has recently been accepted to a graduate program, she is still reticent to reveal her name and we have agreed to respect her wishes.

Ryan Call, a regional director for Students for Academic Freedom spoke with the student just a couple of days ago to confirm her story, and is willing to speak with any member of the media who would like additional details or clarification. Ryan Call, a third-year law student at the University of Denver, may be contacted at [rcall05@law.du.edu](mailto:rcall05@law.du.edu). In addition, Erin Bergstrom, who originally interviewed the student in 2003, has agreed to be contacted to verify the student's claims, and can be reached by contacting Ryan Call.

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