

“Texas Tech University's Department of English is committed to uphold the values of open, respectful discourse and exchange of ideas from the widest variety of intellectual, religious, class, cultural, and political perspectives.” – Texas Tech, Department of English, Mission and Vision Statement.

From: Batra, Kanika

Sent: Monday, November 26, 2018 2:48 PM

Subject: Protest letter against "The Case for Colonialism"

Dear Dr. Schovanec, Dr. Galyean, Dr. Sumner, and Dr. Balch:

We are a group of faculty across various disciplines at Texas Tech University, many of whom have research, teaching and service interests in Postcolonial and Decolonial Studies. We write to express our dismay at Texas Tech's invitation to Dr. Bruce Gilley to present a lecture titled "The Case for Colonialism" under the auspices of The Institute for the Study of Western Civilization. Disregarding for now the unfortunate nomenclature of both the Institute and Dr. Gilley's talk, we are deeply concerned at the message this lecture will send to students and faculty at the university.

Dr. Gilley's talk is clearly based on the essay he published in the journal *Third World Quarterly* in 2017. This article, which makes the case for continued colonization of Africa, also advocates apartheid-like segregationist policies regarding land use and settlement. The article has been discredited as historically inaccurate by the academic community and as an instance of racist and colonialist scholarship. Some responses include: Brandon Kendhammer's analysis in the *Washington Post*; Sahar Khan's commentary for the *Cato Institute*; Kenan Malik's article in the *New York Review of Books*; and Yannick Dupraz and Valeria Rueda's discussion on the *London School of Economics* blog. Additionally, the journal where it was published has been discredited as using the article as part of its clickbait strategy to garner readers.

In the details of the talk advertised at TTU it is specifically mentioned: "Gilley will argue that European colonialism in the 19th and 20th centuries had an overwhelmingly positive impact on colonial areas, whether located in India, Indonesia, Nigeria, or Belize. He will examine the empirical evidence and then seek to explain why colonialism fell out of favor and so rapidly disappeared in the 20th century. This will be followed by a discussion of post-colonial trajectories and the development of a new "neo-colonial" phenomenon: countries with weak administrative capabilities contracting with foreign governments to provide basic services, sometimes in specially cordoned zones." We are concerned that the rhetoric of the "positive impact" of European colonialism and "specially cordoned zones" is a thinly masked allusion to supremacy and segregation on racial lines.

A quick search shows that as of March 2018 Dr. Gilley was under investigation by the diversity office at Portland State University. A change.org petition protesting his article garnered several thousand signatures. We don't need our students thinking ideas advocating colonialism are valid, or that scholarship can state unsupported ideas even if it's retracted just to start discussion. This will likely bring bad press to TTU. More recently, the issue was covered in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* where Dr. Gilley states in an interview that the title "The Case for Colonialism" was a good headline. This is

certainly not the kind of headline TTU needs when serious efforts are being made to make our campus a diverse space where free speech is valued but inflammatory ideas are not welcome.

In expressing our concern we ask you to consider the following issues. First, at a time when Texas Tech has already made national news on racist comments by students, it is surely not in the institution's best interest to appear to patronize and promote rampantly colonialist scholarship. Second, this lecture does not in any way serve Texas Tech's efforts to promote diversity among students, staff, and faculty. Currently the Department of English is in the process of hiring 4 new faculty, one of whom is likely to be a specialist in North African/Middle Eastern literatures. Dr. Gilley's lecture sends a clear message that the university does not value Decolonial and Postcolonial perspectives. Finally, Dr. Gilley's lecture goes beyond the issue of free speech since as a Tier-1 institution Texas Tech should not be perceived as a promoter of discredited segregationist scholarship.

For these reasons we respectfully request that The Institute for the Study of Western Civilization withdraw the invitation to Dr. Gilley and issue a statement indicating that it does not support his views on colonialism. Since Dr. Gilley's talk was selectively advertised over Thanksgiving, it appears that the Institute is well aware of the controversy it might cause at Texas Tech.

Sincerely,

Dr. Kanika Batra, Professor, English

Dr. Curtis Bauer, Professor, English

Dr. Paul Bjerck, Associate Professor, History

Dr. Cordelia Barrera, Associate Professor, English

Dr. Michael Borshuk, Associate Professor, English

Dr. Anna Christina Ribeiro, Associate Professor, Philosophy

Dr. Kevin Chua, Associate Professor, Art History

Dr. Idoia Elola, Professor, Classical and Modern Languages and Literatures

Dr. Brian McFadden, Associate Professor, English

Dr. Julie Nelson Couch, Associate Professor, English

Dr. Jennifer Nish, Assistant Professor, English

Dr. Marta Kvande, Associate Professor, English

Dr. Francesca di Poppa, Associate Professor, Philosophy

Dr. Jill Patterson, Professor, English

Dr. Marjean Purinton, Professor, English

Dr. Rich Rice, Associate Professor, English

Dr. Alison Rukavina, Assistant Professor, English

Dr. John Samson, Associate Professor, English

Dr. Yuan Shu, Associate Professor, English

Dr. Christopher Smith, Professor, Musicology

Dr. Sara Spurgeon, Professor, English

Dr. Chris Taylor, Associate Professor, Architecture

Dr. Raychel Vasseur, Assistant Professor, Classical and Modern Languages and Literatures