

College Board pushes woke

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By Terry A. Hurlbut

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The College Board sent a clear signal to the country yesterday that it stands by, and will push, woke ideology. Their letter to the administration of Gov. Ron DeSantis (R-Fla.), stating their refusal to modify Advanced Placement (AP) course content, makes that abundantly clear. But parents everywhere, not merely in Florida, should look sharply at this letter and what it means.

The College Board and its quarrel with Florida

The College Board has quarreled with the Florida Department of Education ever since Gov. DeSantis barred the AP African American Studies course in January. A civil rights attorney threatened to sue the State over the ban. DeSantis put it in place after finding that the course essentially taught Critical Race Theory as a viable paradigm. (The teaching of Critical Race Theory is illegal in Florida.) Later, word came that the Florida Education Department had been in contact with the College Board all last year over the course. And while New Jersey expanded African American Studies, Virginia, like Florida, conducted a critical review of it. Also, DeSantis hinted in February that he might replace the high-school-level SAT with another test, the Classic Learning Test.

Not only do we need to build anew by returning to the foundations of our democracy, but CLT also offers the opportunity for all our colleges & universities to rightsize their priorities. <https://t.co/sOMbsh4lvM>

— Henry Mack III (@HenmackIII) February 16, 2023

On May 19, according to *The Hill*, Florida’s Education Department put the College Board on notice of the Parental Rights in Education Act, now extended to cover classes from kindergarten through the twelfth grade. Accordingly, they asked the Board to audit its courses to determine – no later than today (June 16) – whether and in what manner any of these courses would need modification to comply with the Act. Yesterday the College Board refused, point-blank. In a letter to the Office of Articulation in the Education Department, the College Board said:

We will not modify our courses to accommodate restrictions on teaching essential, college-level topics. Doing so would break the fundamental promise of AP: colleges wouldn’t broadly accept that course for credit and that course wouldn’t prepare students for careers in the discipline.

Wha-a-t!?

The company didn’t mention the African American Studies, except to acknowledge that it had amended the course. Instead it mentioned the AP Psychology course as one that Florida might ban for Parental Rights in Education violations. In the interest of being “clear from the outset where we stand,” the College Board quoted the American Psychological Association as saying any college-level course must provide a foundation on such topics as sexual orientation and gender identity.

We don’t know if the state of Florida will ban this course. To AP teachers in Florida, we are heartbroken by the possibility of Florida students being denied the opportunity to participate in this or any AP course. To AP teachers everywhere, please know we will not modify any of the 40 AP courses—from art to history to science—in response to regulations that would censor college-level standards for credit, placement, and career readiness.

That was the signal, not only to Florida, but to all fifty States – and to parents everywhere.

The College Board maintains its AP course catalog and student and teacher resources here. In fact its course index lists thirty-five subject-matter courses, plus Seminar and Research courses normally part of a two-year program. AP African American Studies *does not* appear here. They do offer a Psychology course, with nine “units.” Most of the titles seem harmless, except Unit 2: “Biological Bases of Behavior.” The syllabus advertises the course as equivalent to “a one-semester, introductory college course in psychology.”

Your editor took Psychology 101 at Yale – and learned, among other things, about Stanley Milgram’s Obedience Experiment in that class. But gender identity and sexual orientation *were not* part of that course in the fall of 1977. If it is today, then it shows that the American Psychological Association has gone woke for the sake of woke.

What about other courses?

The content of any other AP course they list, shouldn't contain concepts that violate the Parental Rights in Education Act. None of the syllabuses mention such elements. (Then again, neither does their syllabus for AP Psychology.) But recently a math teacher in California showed a "woke movie" with explicit content to her class. When students objected, she decried the objections as "inappropriate" and threatened Saturday detention if students refused to watch. This suggests that the College Board might insert "woke" concepts into course content in ways their syllabuses do not indicate.

Furthermore, a course in art history or English literature has ample opportunities to dwell on sexual themes in art and literature (*Sons and Lovers* by D. H. Lawrence springs to mind), or sexual proclivities of artists and literary creators (like, for example, Ernest Hemingway). Before even considering offering that to high-school students, one should assess their emotional maturity, in addition to their intellectual capacity.

What is the College Board trying to accomplish?

When your editor was in high and junior-high (or "upper middle") school, the College Board existed to offer a standard to help colleges determine who, among their many applicants, could do college work, and what extra preparation some of them might have. Actual teaching to prepare a student for an Advanced Placement Examination was the responsibility of the school. The College Board only recently took upon itself the responsibility to design courses leading to mastery of their exams. Nor did the College Board offer examinations in such a dizzying variety of subjects as they offer today.

But these offerings seem to come at a price. If the Board seriously expects people to believe that their "woke" ideology is necessary for "credit, placement and career readiness," then they are offering a distorted view of the world – or preparing students to distort reality for their prospective clients. That is the demonstrable case in AP Psychology and could be the case in other History and Social Sciences courses.

And why won't they offer any assurances that their STEM offerings are free of "woke" ideology? Would they warp students' understanding of the physical sciences and mathematics, as well as the social sciences? We shudder to think of how they might distort American history and civics! Would they also distort physics and chemistry, and especially biology?

Perhaps the Parallel Polis needs a Parallel Economy – and a Parallel Academy. And the College Board would *not* be part of that.