

UNIVERZITA KARLOVA V PRAZE
Fakulta sociálních věd
Institut mezinárodních studií

PROTOKOL O HODNOCENÍ DIPLOMOVÉ PRÁCE
(Posudek vedoucího)

Práci předložil(a) student(ka): Tatiana Hořavová

Název práce: *The Debate on "Political Correctness" with Special Focus on Education: Intentions, Consequences and Controversies.*

Vedoucí práce (u externích vedoucích uveďte též adresu a funkci v rámci instituce):

Jana Sehnálková

1. OBSAH A CÍL PRÁCE (stručná informace o práci, formulace cíle):

The author outlines the topic of the thesis on p. 2: „**Why political correctness is criticized and why it attracts attention...** It will therefore focus mainly on the **debate about the phenomenon of political correctness**, trying to answer the questions of **what the debate includes, who takes part in it and how it has been developing** since the inception of political correctness. **Why is it important** and **what, if anything, does it show about the American society?**“

The author then continues by outlining her main hypothesis: „The thesis will then hold that political correctness, attempting to "solve the problems" of society and establish a sensitive, inclusive environment, has actually become a problem itself, as it is criticized and discussed mainly due to its unintended – either real or perceived – negative consequences, chief role among which is played by the concern that political correctness stifles free speech.“ (p. 2)

In order to narrow down the topic, the author aims to analyze political correctness in the realm of education (p. 3).

2. VĚCNÉ ZPRACOVÁNÍ (náročnost, tvůrčí přístup, argumentace, logická struktura, teoretické a metodologické ukotvení, práce s prameny a literaturou, vhodnost příloh apod.):

The author selected a very complicated problem that is rather difficult to grasp. As she writes in her conclusion, “political correctness, as this work has shown, is a convoluted phenomenon which defies clear categorization. The debate about PC is just as complex, pertaining to a number of seemingly unrelated issues and touching various old and new concerns.” Still, the author tries to explain the debate over political correctness and give concrete examples of its implementation. A reader unfamiliar with the debate and the concept of PC will definitely be enlightened, despite the complexity of the topic and the ambiguity of the concept. The work is based on an abundance of sources, although large part of them belongs to the conservative pool of critics of political correctness. A more balanced view would be desirable.

I consider the chapter on primary and secondary education the best part of the work, as it brings a thought-provoking analysis: it discusses the issues of political correctness in textbook publishing industry and also looks at how political correctness manifests itself in the preparation of tests or curricula and what conclusions can be drawn from it. The chapter is well-organized, the author proves her point. In her analysis of influence of PC on educational materials, the author refers to a number of primary materials, i.e. teaching standards, textbooks, test resources, student conduct codes. Here, the theses discusses the process of approving educational materials, with a case study of literature teaching. The primary sources that the author uses provide a good support for her arguments. I believe that the subchapters on affirmative action and political orientation of professors are redundant, as these topics are far more complex than the thesis' extent allows for. Also, it is not really clear how these are related

to the author's hypothesis. Similarly, this is the case of the chapter on campus life, which is more related to the issue of freedom of speech.

As a reader, I was slightly confused by the uncertainty over the difference between PC and the effort to influence the discourse by different ideologically-oriented groups. Is the fact that liberals see President Roosevelt as one of the greatest U.S. presidents while the conservatives portray him as a political failure still a PC-related issue? Or is it rather different interpretation? I believe that difference in interpretation is at the heart of the discussion about e.g. course names mentioned on p. 27. If PC means "conforming to a belief that language and practices which could offend political sensibilities (as in matters of sex or race) should be eliminated", it does not include differing interpretations, or does it?

3. FORMÁLNÍ A JAZYKOVÉ ZPRACOVÁNÍ (jazykový projev, správnost citace a odkazů na literaturu, grafická úprava, formální náležitosti práce apod.):

The thesis is generally well-written – the author should be commended for high standard of academic English. I would only welcome annotated overview of literature used, indented paragraphs when using long quotes and Italics for titles of magazines referenced in the text. There are a few typos – e.g. on p. 12 "differ fomr", on p. 31 "approved from classroom use", on p. 48 "disreagarding", on p. 63 repetition of "complained", but these are minor flaws. Also, the author writes about "left" and "right" when referring to different political positions. I believe it would be better if capitalized version of the Left and the Right was used. On p. 29, the author does not provide reference to Multicultural Guidelines developed by the publisher Scott Foresman-Addison Wesley in 1996.

4. STRUČNÝ KOMENTÁŘ HODNOTITELE (celkový dojem z bakalářské práce, silné a slabé stránky, originalita myšlenek, naplnění cíle apod.):

In my view, the author is ambitious with all the goals/questions she poses at the beginning of her work, as she then answers only some of them. While she covers the "debate about the phenomenon of political correctness" pertaining to education and answers some of the "the questions of what the debate includes", in chapter 1.3 called *The Origins and Development of Political Correctness*, the author seems to start looking at „how [PC] has been developing since the inception of political correctness“. However, she does not offer a deeper look into the evolution of this phenomenon. Similarly, the question of "Why is it important and what, if anything, does it show about the American society?" is not really answered. While the author presents views of individual supporters and critics of PC, particularly in academic and political/journalistic discourse, it is hard to identify the main proponents and opponents of PC.

The author maybe relying too much on resources written in opposition to political correctness (Ravitch, Kimball, D'Sousa, Bloom, Cheney), which, in my opinion, leads to the fact that the author often seems to side with the critics of the concept of political correctness. On p. 12, she writes: „The reasons why the conservatives and traditionalists criticize "political correctness" include the view that "political correctness" is an orthodoxy imposed on society, that it stands for intolerance by not allowing points of view that differ from the "politically correct ones", silences public discourse, infringes on people's freedom of speech and that it is essentially un-American and undermines democracy.“ This is in fact the position that the author actually takes in most of her thesis. In fact, substantial portion of the thesis is devoted to the criticism of PC.

5. SPOLUPRÁCE S VEDOUCÍM PRÁCE (komunikace s vedoucím práce, schopnost reflektovat připomínky, posun od původního záměru apod.)

The author of the thesis originally intended to look at the linguistic aspects of political correctness. She then changed and narrowed down the topic to the issue of political correctness in education.

6. OTÁZKY A PŘIPOMÍNKY DOPORUČENÉ K BLIŽŠÍMU VYSVĚTLENÍ PŘI OBHAJOBĚ (jedna až tři):

- You refer to the Culture Wars – could you explain what the Culture Wars are and how they relate to PC?
- What is the relationship between multiculturalism, identity politics, and political correctness, as this may be confusing for the reader? Is not multiculturalism much broader term than PC? Or in other words, is not PC a subset of multiculturalism?
- Do you agree with Ravitch's claim that pretending problems and controversies do not exist, children are effectively taught to avoid dealing with reality.“? Do you think that different linguistic representation is enough to misinterpret e.g. the facts about slavery? Is not it true that the institution of slavery can be realistically described without using the charged words?
- Can PC be really credited with bringing back the discussion on gender and race, as you mention (or more precisely quote Sarah Dunant) on p. 10?
- Critics of PC call for „disinterested pursuit of knowledge“. Is such endeavor really possible?

7. DOPORUČENÍ / NEDOPORUČENÍ K OBHAJOBĚ A NAVRHOVANÁ ZNÁMKA

(výborně, velmi dobře, dobře, nevyhověl):

Despite the above-mentioned remarks, Tatiana Hořavová's thesis is well-written and fulfills all the requirements for Master's thesis. I recommend the thesis to be defended and propose **VERY GOOD** grade.

Datum: August 22, 2013

Podpis: Jana Sehnálková

Pozn.: Hodnocení pište k jednotlivým bodům, pokud nepíšete v textovém editoru, použijte při nedostatku místa zadní stranu nebo příložený list. V hodnocení práce se pokuste oddělit ty její nedostatky, které jsou, podle vašeho mínění, obhajobou neodstranitelné (např. chybí kritické zhodnocení pramenů a literatury), od těch věcí, které student může dobrou obhajobou napravit; poměr těchto dvou položek berte prosím v úvahu při stanovení konečné známky.