

December 10, 2007

Louise Pagé-Valin
Associate Vice-President
Human Resources Services
University of Ottawa
Tabaret Hall
550 Cumberland Street
(delivered by hand)

Re: Grievance G-14 (my code); SCI 1101 Fall 2006 course content; continued harassment by the university

Grievance against the university's step toward firing professor for using too broad a view in teaching Science in Society course

This grievance is made public, in the interest of transparency and the public good.

Dear Mrs. Pagé-Valin:

On April 30, 2007, the university cancelled my *Science in Society* course, which featured activists as guest speakers, and which was held in the largest auditorium on campus. It did this without discussion with me and without providing an explanation, despite overwhelming student and community interest in the course and in the face of public and campus protests.

This course (SCI 1101) had been approved in August 2006 following considerable student and community pressure against unwarranted institutional resistance to having such a course in the Faculty of Science.

I gave the course with great success in the fall term of 2006 and students and community members acclaimed its many novel features:

<http://freedomofexpress.tripod.com/id47.html>

The official Senate-approved course description (that I largely developed) is as follows:

The course critically examines the role of science and scientists in society and the responsibility of citizens having to deal with the complex socio-economic, environmental, political, and ethical issues raised by advances in science and technology. The grading system is S/NS.

It is an interdisciplinary course and it is the first course in the Faculty of Science to have a Science (SCI) course code. It is the first course in the Faculty of Science to discuss the role of

science and the responsibilities of scientists in society. It was to be given every year and to alternate between French and English as the predominant language of instruction.

On May 18, 2007, I grieved the fact that the upper administration, and President Gilles Patry himself in particular, had directly intervened to cancel my course. Such intervention is contrary to the rules that govern the university and the rules on how a professor is assigned her workload. (Grievance G-9, my code, [attached](#).)

The university has now taken a step toward firing me for allegedly not following the official course description for SCI 1101 in the fall 2006 term. (Letter of reprimand dated November 20, 2007, signed by the dean of the Faculty of Science, André E. Lalonde, [attached](#).)

The November 20, 2007, letter of reprimand is blatantly without merit. An official course description is not meant to limit content or to constrain content to particular political perspectives. It is meant as a guide of what is to be minimally expected by registered students.

SCI 1101, fall 2006, eminently satisfied its intended curriculum purpose and was greatly appreciated as such. The university's attack appears as petty, as without cause, as in bad faith, as a discriminatory measure against me, and as politically motivated to cover its past errors and violations.

My view of why people have failed to understand science in society is that the societal context itself is not understood. For this reason, I made significant efforts to cover the complex fundamentals about society and its mechanisms so that science in society could be understood in a new and deeper way. Therefore, some invited speakers dealt with some of the most complex societal challenges that are not, on the face of it, related to science and technology. As a result, for example, the final talk about professional scientists and the science enterprise, by invited speaker physicist Dr. Jeff Schmidt, was so well framed and contextualized that most students will not forget it for the rest of their lives.

The dean of the Faculty of Science first expressed his unfounded concerns about the content of the fall 2006 course, on December 1, 2006, then on March 19, 2007, and again on August 27, 2007. Each newly expressed concern did not acknowledge my previous prompt and detailed answers or express any perceived deficiencies in my answers. It was as though the dean was on a mission to fabricate a case against the fall 2006 offering of SCI 1101 without regard for any first-hand information about the actual course.

The November 20th letter of reprimand is part of a program of heavy handed suppression of my academic freedom and appears to be intended as intimidation and as a late-in-time tactic to protect President Patry and the university administration from my grievances for harassment, malfeasance, and undue interference in my workload in cancelling SCI 1101.

The transcript of our meeting of August 27, 2007, makes much of this amply clear (39.4.2.1 meeting, transcript [attached](#)).

A formal grievance such as this one is the required first step to remove the university's letter of reprimand and threat of dismissal. I also ask that the university's reprimand be understood as

part of a continuing and sustained harassment campaign against me (see below) and that reparations be made accordingly (see below): an unqualified written apology, monetary reparation to fund a student scholarship, and credit toward my next sabbatical leave for loss of professional development time.

DETAILS AND MORE SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

Some of the anomalies and violations of the Collective Agreement related to and leading to the letter of reprimand of November 20, 2007, are described in my previous grievances G-10 and G-12 (my codes, [attached](#)).

The November 20, 2007, letter of reprimand must also be understood in the broad context of sustained and continuing harassment by the employer, including alleged malfeasance by the President, that has been documented in my previous grievances ([attached](#)) G-9 and G-11 (my codes).

REPARATIONS

- (1) I ask that the letter of reprimand and of threat be removed from my file.
- (2) I ask for an unqualified written apology from the employer for this element of harassment that is obviously without merit, signed by all university officers who played a role in the dean's action.
- (3) I ask that the general harassment and repression context be considered and evaluated in attributing me significant and fair monetary reparation, for loss of professional advancement, for pain and suffering, for unjust treatment, and for incidences of defamation.

I pledge to donate the entire latter amount to an independent scholarship or scholarship fund, to be jointly administered by several student groups or associations, for activist students and community members (such as members of the FEC) who have made particularly incisive and insightful criticisms of university governance and management and/or who have lead actions to make perceived institutional problems into public issues. This would be a small price to pay to nurture and encourage vigilant and independent criticism. It would also help make the needed activists of tomorrow.

- (4) To help in partially recovering lost time and lost research career advancement, I ask to be attributed four year-of-service credits toward my next sabbatical leave(s).

Sincerely,

Denis Rancourt
(Professor)

Attached supporting documents:

G-14-1	University's November 20, 2007, letter of reprimand	(2 pages)
G-14-2	Official transcript of August 27, 2007, 39.4.2.1 meeting	(18 pages)
G-14-3	Grievance G-10, filed July 9, 2007	(26 pages)
G-14-4	Grievance G-12, filed September 17, 2007	(77 pages)
G-14-5	Grievance G-9, filed May 18, 2007	(12 pages)
G-14-6	Supporting documents for grievance G-9, sent July 16, 2007	(approx. 250 pages)
G-14-7	Grievance G-11, filed August 16, 2007	(84 pages)