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UNC-Chapel Hill to Cut “Elements of Politics” – The Pope Center Offers \$2,000 to Keep It

RALEIGH, September 2—The John W. Pope Center for Higher Education Policy today offered to help finance a UNC-Chapel Hill honors course that university officials are cutting for alleged budget reasons.

“We’re happy to contribute \$2,000 of the \$7,500 the university says the course costs,” said Pope Center president Jane S. Shaw. “We hope others who are concerned that Carolina doesn’t seem to have enough money for serious courses, but plenty of money for frivolous courses, will also step up to the plate and help fund this extraordinary honors course,” she said.

The course, Elements of Politics, is taught each semester by English Department lecturer Larry Goldberg and examines the writings of Plato, Aristotle, Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and other great Western thinkers. Citing budget cuts and other priorities, the university’s honors program is eliminating half the sections next spring. According to an honors department spokesman, the course is considered a lower priority than study abroad programs and student research projects.

Shaw expressed “profound disappointment” at the university’s decision to reduce the series.

“Curtailing this distinguished series of lectures is another sign that UNC-Chapel Hill prefers lightweight courses over educational substance,” she said. Shaw noted that numerous honors courses taught this fall appear to be much less consequential, such as “The World of the Beat Generation: Transcultural Connections,” “Conspiracy Thinking in Contemporary America,” and “Costume History.”

The Pope Center is offering \$2,000 toward keeping Goldberg’s course. “While I am appalled at the university’s decision, if the university honestly can’t find the money, we want to make a contribution toward the cost of retaining the endangered section, if it is taught by Dr. Goldberg.

“From time to time, for similar amounts of money, the Pope Center brings speakers to North Carolina campuses to express ideas and views that are marginalized or disparaged in classrooms. In this case, Plato, Aristotle, Hobbes, and Locke are being marginalized and disparaged. That is tragic.”

Students and alumni have joined to support Goldberg with a website at <http://elementsofpolitics.com/> [<http://elementsofpolitics.com/>](http://elementsofpolitics.com/) and an online petition. In 2008, Dr. Goldberg was one of three winners of the Pope Center’s Spirit of Inquiry Award, which honors instructors for outstanding courses. The student who nominated him remarked: “I cannot emphasize enough how brilliant and engaging this guy is. You will never regret a moment spent in his class.” Another former student, Andrew Robinson, says of Goldberg: “He was absolutely the best professor I ever had in my life.”

The John W. Pope Center for Higher Education Policy is a nonprofit institute dedicated to improving higher education in North Carolina and throughout the country. It is named in honor of John William Pope—founder of Varsity Wholesalers, Inc. in Henderson, NC, and a former member of the university of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, Board of Trustees. Major funding for the Pope Center is provided by the John William Pope Foundation, a Raleigh-based charitable foundation that supports public policy, education, and human needs programs.

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