

I have been in this class all 16 weeks of Fall semester '23. I am taking this class for my PI tag, and I heard nothing about this class prior to taking it.

This class differs from Christ and His Kingdom as it:

1. Promotes division and hostility by placing blame
2. Misuses scripture to promote a socialist worldview
3. Doesn't allow for freedom of thought or expression

In this class, I expected to learn about different governmental systems and the way that different parts of the world approach justice; instead, Professor Cartagena complains exclusively of the evils of our capitalist system and how white supremacy has infiltrated all aspects of our society.

I came out of the first week of class this semester wondering "Am I racist?" because the narrative that is explicitly pushed in class is this: white people, by the nature of their whiteness and the money that they possess, are inherently racist and oppressive. In class we read homilies by St. Basil which explicitly stated that having money keeps you out of the kingdom of heaven, and that wealth acquisition is evil and anti-Christ. We also read articles by Elsa Tamez which claimed that "all rich people are oppressors." Further, it was disturbing to me to have to do a slideshow presentation on Basil's homilies and connect them to Tamez, essentially damning myself and my fellow white classmates because of our presumed wealth and the color of our skin.

My roommate's experience in this class has also been one of deep confusion and distress. She was able to gather that what our professor was saying didn't line up with Biblical truth, but because he was quoting scripture often, and appealing to our empathy and good-will, she found it difficult to differentiate between what was truthful and not, and she often felt anxious while trying to decipher the truth. As a minority, she felt attacked by the victim mindset which he pushed in his class, one where the minority groups ought to see themselves as continuously done wrong and disregarded by white people. My roommate didn't want to feel like she needed to be hard-hearted towards others, but the insistent pathos of our professor made her feel like it would be unjust and unwise not to. Professor Cartagena also told our class that he does not give much homework because minorities on campus are oppressed enough already and don't need more homework oppressing them further, especially when they may be working more than one job to pay for their school.

There is not an open discourse in this class. We must agree exactly with what the professor is promoting or we will receive a low grade on our papers and presentations. Professor Cartagena's views are so strong in opposition to other viewpoints that there is no room for discourse or even for the sharing of different ideas. He has said in class, "Do you agree with what I said here or what I said here?", never "Do you agree with what I've said at all?" or "What is your own personal view of this issue?" It is explicitly noted that any viewpoint aside from his own regarding racial and economic issues is racist and oppressive.

Central to a liberal arts education should be the opportunity to explore different viewpoints, not be shown only one and given a poor grade if you question it. On one of my weekly "Expression of Gratitude" papers where we exegete four quotes from the readings from that week and state why we're grateful for them, I noted that I did not understand the author's claim and was grateful for the opportunity to think more deeply about it. In response to this, Professor Cartagena gave me a grade significantly less than I had been receiving previously and reprimanded me for "clearly not understanding the claims of the author" (who was a racialized minority person).

For Professor Cartagena, racism and capitalism are inextricably linked, as he often references notions like "the world before capitalism and racialization versus the world after" (9/29) and "the simultaneous rise of racialism and capitalism" (10/2). He has stated as well that, "Capitalism is intimately intertwined with white supremacy" (10/2) and "Racism and nationalism developed together and are still a part of modern capitalism" (10/4). One class period I

remember being astonished by hearing him say, “If you’re aiming to live a comfortable life, you won’t be a member of the Kingdom.”

During parents’ weekend, there was a sign on our door that read “Thank you so much for your interest in a class that meets in this room today. Unfortunately, we are unable to accept visitors in these classes.” I presume because he was aware of the unpopular and unsanctioned content he was teaching, he didn’t want any parents to sit in on class. Some parents sat in anyways though, and it was incredibly apparent to me as well as other classmates that Professor Cartagena was censoring his language for the new audience and was not speaking at all like he would in a normal class period. Additionally, during normal class times he will open and close the classroom door depending on the severity of the content and viewpoints which he is endorsing.

In relation to the hostility and division bred in this class, Professor Cartagena often speaks very poorly of Chaplain Wilson and President Ryken, claiming that they are weak for not addressing certain issues during chapel time and saying also that they make many of their administrative decisions notably out of a fear of looking racist and intolerant. The same is true for any chapel speakers who are not minorities—Professor Cartagena is very critical and condemnatory of any preacher who does not meet his fixed expectations for the sermon.

Furthermore, even though our class is scheduled to meet three times a week on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, Professor Cartagena cancelled Friday classes for the last month or so of the semester and told us he was doing so because he knows we have a lot of work to do in other courses.

In this class, I feel as though I am experiencing a counter racism that cannot be vocalized. The messaging in the class is that white supremacy is alive and well, I am complicit in it whether I like it or not, and it is inescapable. I feel as though I am painted as evil, racist, oppressive, un-Christlike and unsavable because of my race. This class cultivates a cultish atmosphere where students are not allowed to disagree or question Professor Cartagena’s views without punishment. Coming to Wheaton, I did not expect to be subject to the irresponsible pedagogy that Professor Cartagena promotes, and I believe that it is harmful to the academic and relational environment for him to continue teaching here. I am a firsthand witness to the one sided and unbalanced narrative that he brings to class, and the hatred and division that is has bred and will continue to breed in the classrooms that he leads.