



October 29, 2018

TO: Senior Leadership Team
FROM: Rich Baum
RE: The Presence of Milo Yiannopoulos in a Liberal Studies Class

Yesterday the University learned through press accounts that a professor in the Liberal Studies Program, Michael Rectenwald, has invited a controversial public figure, Milo Yiannopoulos, to speak in his class this Wednesday.

In extending this invitation, Professor Rectenwald notified neither the Liberal Studies Program nor the University; we learned of the invitation from newspaper accounts.

Notwithstanding that, Our Public Safety Department has evaluated the circumstances of Mr. Yiannopoulos' appearance and believes the class can proceed safely.

Below is the public statement we will be using.

STATEMENT BY NYU SPOKESMAN JOHN BECKMAN, Sr. VP FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS

"At NYU, academic freedom and the free exchange of ideas are fundamental, guiding principles. In line with these principles, faculty have wide authority over academic matters, such as their pursuit of their research and the conduct of their classes.

"Therefore, if a faculty member invites a speaker to his or her class, as Professor Michael Rectenwald did in this case, the assumption is that - barring insurmountable issues of public safety or disruption - the speaker will be able to appear in class and be heard. This is true even when the speaker is controversial.

"Many institutions in our society speak with a single voice. That is not true of universities. The role of universities is to be a forum for many voices and many ideas, sometimes even ideas that are repudiated by much of the community. A controversial speaker's appearance at a university must be understood not as the institution's endorsement of the speaker's views, but as the fulfillment of its commitment to the free exchange of ideas.

"Mr. Yiannopoulos has espoused many ideas that are at odds with the values of the NYU community and are offensive to its members. But as an invited speaker, he will be allowed to address Professor Rectenwald's class because even in the face of controversy and profound disagreement, adherence to the principles of academic freedom is a core value."

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BACKGROUND BRIEFING FOR THE NEWS MEDIA

Milo Yiannopoulos was invited by Michael Rectenwald, a professor in NYU's Liberal Studies, to speak to his students for a regularly scheduled class of his.

Professor Rectenwald did not seek approval of or notify the University or Liberal Studies of his invitation to Mr. Yiannopoulos. The University learned about it from press accounts on Sunday, Oct 28, in which Prof. Rectenwald was quoted.

*As it is a regular class session, it will **not** be open to the public or to the media. It is open only to Prof. Rectenwald; his invited speaker, Mr. Yiannopoulos; and the class' regular students.*