

Arguments about ROTC

by Will Stone in collaboration with Paul Ford

1. Does the course discriminate against applicants for admission by virtue of age, sex, physical condition, nationality, color, religion?

Courses and Degrees seems to say that ROTC courses discriminate on the first four grounds. I know of no other Stanford institution (except fraternities) that exercises such discriminatory control. I think such discrimination is ground for exclusion of the course.

2. Are students who are not regularly admitted Stanford students admitted to ROTC courses and given Stanford credit?

I have heard that outside students are admitted to fill the ROTC ranks -- students from Foothill, for example. This does not seem right to me if they get Stanford credit for such work

3. Do ROTC courses duplicate courses or treat material that is more appropriately given in a regular academic department?

4. Are students in any proposed ROTC course going to be subject to the existing punitive conditions if they decide to drop out of the Program?

If so, then I think any course under that program is inadmissible until the instructor can guarantee that such punitive clauses will under no conditions be invoked.

5. Are the instructors in any ROTC course free to teach their courses in any way they see fit, free of any coercive thought control by virtue of their institutional affiliation with the military?

I am not referring to voluntary allegiance -- as individuals -- to the military or to any other institution that invokes, or may invoke, dogmatic adherence to a line of thought or action, such as the Catholic Church or the Communist Party; I am referring to the direct representation of such an institution in the classroom -- the teacher as a representative of that institution (whether or not in uniform) Such representation seems to be directly and unarguably antithetical to our traditional notions of academic freedom -- as elucidated by the AAUP -- and should not be allowed

a. Would an ROTC instructor find it impossible (not just inexpedient) to teach in uniform?

A military uniform seems to me prima facie evidence of commitment not only to a certain profession, but to a set of duties, principles and beliefs that the individual is not free to question or abrogate -- except perhaps within severely censored limits. It seems to me prima facie evidence of what, in any academic community, we call a closed mind. I don't think closed minds have any place in the classrooms of any free university.

b. Would an ROTC instructor teaching Foundations of National Power be able to speak out frankly about the dangers of the Military-Industrial Complex -- to the point of showing the parallels between our present critical condition (pointed out by President Eisenhower) and that prevailing in Hitler's Germany?

c. Would an ROTC instructor teaching Foundations of National Power feel free -- and impelled, in the interests of fairness -- to give open consideration to the possible unconstitutionality of the Vietnam War (as the Massachusetts Legislature is doing) and see the Executive Act of waging an undeclared war as a threat to the Foundations of our National Power?

d. Would an ROTC instructor feel free-- and impelled -- to discuss openly in Foundations of National Power the widespread evidence of inefficiency (bombing of our own installations and men); corruption (cost overruns, black-marketeering, OX pay-off rings); conflicts-of-interest (there are I believe, about 700 retired generals on defense industry payrolls); the contribution of the military budget and spending to inflation (the major cause, with the present budget, as economists generally agree); the possible crimes against humanity committed in Vietnam (not only My Lai, but the very policy of search and destroy, bombing and napalming, enforced creation of refugee camps, and "free fire" zones, which have created My Lais as an almost daily event -- if often from a distance and out of sight of the victims); the fact that after years of war in Vietnam the power of Communism in the world has increased while we as a nation are demonstrably weaker (inflation, racial tension, pollution of cities, etc.); the encouragement the war and the military mind has given to the young to use violence as a way to solve problems? All these, and many more questions, are relevant to any examination of the foundations of national power military or otherwise. And one should be added: the sheer WASTE of our national resources incurred by the military -- a waste that surely is depleting our national "power" in serious ways.

e. Would an ROTC instructor feel free--and impelled-- to consult and call in experts in the University to help him teach courses when their services are clearly relevant? Would he, for example, use economists, historians, political scientists, and others in dealing with Foundations of National Power? Would he consult and call in psychologists, psychiatrists, physicians, historians and others when dealing with Leadership?

Unless the ROTC instructor of, say, a Leadership course is fully conversant with all theories of leadership, not just the military, then I think the question of his competence to teach might be raised. (Plato has a good deal to say about this; maybe a classicist might be called on as well.) The notion of military leadership alone is too thin and too narrow, I believe, for a course that is acceptable in a University of High Degree.

f. Can an ROTC instructor exercise complete freedom in his choice of textbooks or must he choose from a list of books approved by the military?

If there is an officially "approved" set of books (or other teaching materials), then I think this is an infringement of academic freedom and approaches the teaching of a "party line."

g. Would an ROTC instructor feel free to discuss religious, racial, and political matters openly in the classroom-- for example, bring to students' attention the open racism practiced in almost all branches of the armed forces until, roughly, 1945? Would he feel free to point out the flat contradiction (on many minds) between the pacifism of Jesus and the existence of chaplains in military service? Would he feel free--and impelled--to point to pacifists like David Harris (now in prison) as one of our great "leaders"?