

Dear Peucinians,

Last week we discussed our possible obligation as Peucinians to join the Academy, representing, perhaps, Bowdoin's "best and brightest." In a very close vote, the resolution failed, but not without provoking serious contemplation. We are assured that this perennial resolution will be up for debate in the coming years.

This week we meet in a round table format to discuss:

RESOLVED: BOWDOIN'S ACADEMICS ARE IMPROVED BY IDENTITY STUDIES.

Bowdoin boasts several identity studies, including, but not limited to, Africana Studies, Gender and Women's Studies and Gay and Lesbian Studies. In these subjects, students are offered the chance to explore in depth certain aspects of our past, present, and future collective experience, which have gone under-appreciated, ignored, or actively prohibited from academic discourse. Furthermore, these studies may offer academic or even social support to people seeking to better understand themselves, others, and the world around them. These subjects, in crossing departmental lines, are able to draw on various disciplines - such as anthropology and sociology, among others - to create a broader spectrum of investigation. These subjects are, in effect, responsive to the changing needs and foci of society in order to, in part, bring light to social injustice and suggest solutions.

Are these purportedly open-minded studies, however, in some way closing the mind of the Bowdoin student to the investigation and elucidation of something higher, something more meaningful? Are identity studies somehow inherently non-neutral because they are reactions to perceived injustices? It seems that each identity study, as a coherent department at Bowdoin, makes a claim as to what is just, or at least what is unjust, asking each student to replay that injustice and condemn it. Are the general disciplines - Government, English, History, among others - somehow more neutral or more universalizing in their generality? Do they seek to give us the opportunity to investigate a broad range of topics, rather than to simply sign on to an agenda? Are these disciplines really more truthful to and more helpful in understanding our collective experience?

Please join us on the third floor of Massachusetts Hall tomorrow night at 7:30 sharp to debate this resolution.

Yours truly,

Allan Bloom and Adam Smith