

Anti-feminist lawyer sparks furore over male studies course

By: **ANDREW TROUNSON**

A FURORE over the involvement of an anti-feminist lawyer in a proposed suite of male studies courses has exposed the divide between established masculinity studies, which is seen as sympathetic to feminism, and emerging field of male studies, which questions feminism. The proposed program included a course on how men are legally discriminated against, to be run by US-based anti-feminist lawyer Roy Den Hollander.

An outline for the course provided to the HES by Mr Den Hollander included a lecture on how men need to fight for their rights through civil disobedience.

According to reports, Mr Den Hollander has previously attempted to sue nightclubs offering discounted drinks only to women and Columbia University over its women's studies courses. He has also said the last source of power for men is firearms.

Michael Flood, co-director of the University of Wollongong's Centre for Research on Men and Masculinity, said while he wasn't familiar with the proposed content of the courses, the involvement of someone such as Mr Den Hollander raised concerns that the courses were anti-feminist and lacked academic rigour.

He said the emergence of male studies was a political ``backlash" against feminism, while in contrast masculinity studies was sympathetic to feminism.

But men's health researcher and men's studies advocate Greg Andresen said the views of one proposed lecturer shouldn't overshadow the possible merit of the courses. He said masculinity studies too readily accepted feminist paradigms in which maleness is presented as problematic.

``It is about the problem of men rather than men's problems," he said.

``This may be a serious attempt to redress this situation and it would be very sad if because of this controversy and fears about a backlash, it were curtailed before it even got off the ground," said Mr Andresen, who is a spokesman for Men's Health Australia and a researcher at One in Three that raises awareness of domestic violence against men.

Mr Andresen denied male studies was anti-feminist, describing himself as an equity-feminist supporting gender equality rather than accepting feminist ideas of a patriarchy. Mr Andresen said he didn't know Mr Den Hollander, and said his comments on firearms were concerning. ``Gun control doesn't sound like a mens' issue to me," he said. But Mr Den Hollander stood by the comments and said the course should not be threatened by the media controversy.

``Universities were supposed to be open to differing views, but today, under feminism, the winds of a cult-like conformity blow through the halls of academia, when centres of learning and the press believe they have discovered the one and only truth," he told the HES.

Anthea Taylor, president of the Australian Women's and Gender Studies Association, shared Dr Flood's concerns.

While she hadn't seen the course proposals, she said `` courses that have an anti-feminist agenda, or that are simply about telling students that feminism has gone too far, would add nothing of value to the academy."

The proposed courses have been developed by UniSA men's health academic Gary Misan, who as recently as November was canvassing demand for the courses. He has been asked by the university not to comment. A spokeswoman for UniSA said it rejected the courses on several grounds including academic priority, quality, viability and the strength of the disciplinary base.

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