

Published on the web by K. Westhues, 2007, as part of the self-study and documents on "the Westhues case," 1993-1998. For the context, paste the following URL into your browser:
<http://arts.uwaterloo.ca/~kwesthue/self-study.htm>

December 20, 1993

To: Ronald Lambert, Chair, Department of Sociology

Copies:

Aidi Nelson
Brian Hendley, Dean of Arts
Patricia Rowe, Dean of Graduate Studies, Arts
Heather MacDougall, Associate Dean of Graduate Affairs
Robin Banks, Associate Provost, Academic Affairs
James Downey, President
James Brox, President, Faculty Association
Kenneth Westhues

Re: Ken Westhues' Role in the Graduate Program in Sociology

From: The Undersigned Members of the Sociology Department, at their own behest, as academic citizens of the University of Waterloo

As a consequence of (1) a series of verbal assaults (personal denigrations, character assassinations as well as work-related harassments and intimidations) from Ken Westhues, directed toward members of our department (most recently some particularly vicious verbal attacks on a junior, untenured faculty member) who in good faith have been conducting departmentally assigned duties involving the graduate program; (2) subversions of the graduate examination process by undue and inappropriate interference in examination and grading practices; and (3) promoting preferential treatment for certain students in the graduate program, we insist that Ken Westhues immediately be removed from all duties and obligations associated with the graduate program.

The behaviours to which we refer are unwarranted, uncollegial, unethical, academically reprehensible, and (in the first matter) downright cruel. Further, while each instance has its own context, we have observed a pattern of behaviour which appears to have become more systematic and patterned, as well as more intense, over time. We understand that academics will have differing points of view on things, but these behaviours have far exceeded reasonable boundaries of divergence among professional scholars.

We can not and will not tolerate such behaviours, for effectively they (intentionally or otherwise) subvert the graduate program. Not only do these activities invite invidious comparisons on the part of graduate students, but they also create a work atmosphere characterized by high levels of distrust, insecurity, and personal anxiety. As well, especially if allowed to persist, they have the effect of jeopardizing the overall integrity of the graduate program both in our department

and in the university more generally.

Unfortunately, Ken Westhues appears to have lost his ability to maintain an appropriate perspective on graduate education, and there is also no reason to suppose that this could be turned around in the very near future.

Consequently, we recommend that Ken Westhues immediately be removed from all duties and obligations associated with the graduate program and that this condition remain in effect for a period of 5 (five) years.

We do not propose that this ban be automatically lifted after a five year period, but rather insist that Ken Westhues not be eligible for reconsideration of these duties until at least five years have passed, during which time he would have opportunity to show members of this department (the people who have to work with him on a day to day basis and who have to face these problems in a direct personal manner) that he is endeavouring to become a good departmental citizen.

So far as the undersigned are concerned, Ken Westhues is no longer a member of the graduate faculty, effective immediately. None of us will serve on a graduate student thesis committee chaired by Ken Westhues. Our position is that Ken Westhues should not be assigned to any examining committees for PhD comprehensive exams, nor should he be assigned to teach graduate courses.

It is with deep regret that we take this action, but these behaviours cut so deeply into the fabric of academic freedom (of his colleagues), collegial fair play and professional integrity, and equality and acceptable standards for graduate education that we consider no lesser lines of action appropriate.

Robert P. ...
John ...

Audrey Wipper
Robert H. ...



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December 22, 1993

Professors Hiscott, Goyder, Prus, and Wipper
Department of Sociology
University of Waterloo

Dear Colleagues:

Thank you for the copy of your memorandum to Ron Lambert, Chair, Department of Sociology, dated December 20. I have grave concerns over the tone of your memo and the actions that you propose. To paraphrase your memo, it appears that your department has lost its ability to maintain an appropriate perspective on collegial behaviour, and there is little reason to suppose that this could be turned around in the very near future. I appreciate your concern regarding the friction in the department, but, by what right do you judge that Professor Westhues is solely responsible and advocate serious academic sanctions without giving him a chance to defend himself?

I have no problems with a call for the chair of your department to attempt to take actions to relieve the frictions that obviously exist. Professor Dubinski, Chair of FAUW's AF&T Committee has already tried to mediate part of the dispute. If such efforts fail, Policy 63 on Faculty Grievances offers the proper route for resolution of such conflicts.

I have no idea who is responsible for the problems currently affecting your department. However, as President of the Faculty Association, I strongly reject your call for action against Professor Westhues without due process.

Yours sincerely

James A. Brox
President, The Faculty Association
of the University of Waterloo

- c.c. Ron Lambert, Chair, Department of Sociology
- c.c. Roman Dubinski, Chair, AF&T Committee
- c.c. Robin Banks, Associate Provost-Academic Affairs
- c.c. Patricia Rowe, Dean of Graduate Studies
- c.c. Heather MacDougall, Associate Dean of Graduate Affairs
- c.c. Brian Hendley, Dean, Faculty of Arts
- c.c. James Downey, President, University of Waterloo
- c.c. Ken Westhues, Department of Sociology
- c.c. Adie Nelson, Department of Sociology

January 10, 1994

To: James Brox, President, Faculty Association

Copies:

Brian Hendley, Dean of Arts
Patricia Rowe, Dean of Graduate Studies
Heather MacDougall, Associate Dean of Graduate Affairs, Arts
Robin Banks, Associate Provost, Academic Affairs
James Downey, President
Kenneth Westhues, Sociology
Adie Nelson, Sociology
Ronald Lambert, Chair, Department of Sociology

Re: Brox letter of December 22, 1993 (received January 4, 1994), regarding Ken Westhues' Role in the Graduate Program in Sociology

From: Professors Hiscott, Goyder, Prus, and Wipper, Sociology

Although your response to the memo we wrote to Professor Lambert was very prompt and appears well-intentioned, we were quite disappointed by both the substance and accuracy of your statement, as well as the seeming lack of concern you exhibited regarding the actual problems Ken Westhues' behaviour has generated with respect to the graduate program in our department.

First, your allegation that our department has lost its ability to maintain an appropriate perspective on collegial behaviour is a highly unwarranted presumption on your part. It signifies an attempt to shift the locus of responsibility from Ken Westhues (for his actions) to the department. To imply that our statement was in any way a criticism of our department or our chair, likewise, is an inaccurate position for you to assume.

Because we refuse to allow our colleagues or ourselves to be dictated to, demeaned by, or harassed by Ken Westhues with respect to our university duties, you act as if we have done something wrong. This is nonsense and detracts significantly from the central issue as defined in our earlier memo.

While professing impartiality by proclaiming that you are only interested in due process, it must be noted that you also have (or claim to have) no knowledge of the situations which we find so reprehensible. We do not see how the content of our letter violates due process. In any case, from our perspective, the content is crucial! Another letter of condemnation regarding Ken Westhues' conduct with respect to the graduate program has been submitted to the Chair from

seven other members of the department.

We acknowledge the sense of obligation you experience to support Ken Westhues as the person who first sought FAUW assistance, and we are not opposed to your concern in attending to his interests, but may we remind you that your mandate extends to being of service to all members of the university faculty.

L. H. Hunsicker

Robert H. Hunsicker

A. Hunsicker
J. H. Hunsicker