

Instructor who doubts 9/11 compares Bush to Hitler

BY CARRIE ANTLFINGER
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MILWAUKEE — A University of Wisconsin-Madison instructor who has come under scrutiny for saying that the U.S. government orchestrated the Sept. 11 attacks compares President Bush to Adolf Hitler in an essay that his students are being required to buy.

The essay, "Interpreting the Unspeakable: The Myth of 9/11," is part of a \$20 book of essays from 15 authors called "9/11 and American Empire: Muslims, Jews, and Christians Speak Out," according to an unedited copy first obtained by WKOW-TV in Madison and later by the Associated Press.

The book is on the syllabus for the twice-a-week course, "Islam: Religion and Culture," being taught by part-time instructor Kevin Barrett, but only three of the essays are required reading, not including Barrett's essay.

Barrett is active in a group called Scholars for 9/11 Truth, whose members say U.S. officials, not al-Qaida terrorists, were behind the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on Sept. 11, 2001.

"Like Bush and the neocons, Hitler and the Nazis inaugurated their new era by destroying an architectural monument and blaming its destruction on their designated enemies," he wrote.

Barrett said Tuesday he was comparing the attacks to the burning of the German parliament building, the Reichstag, in 1933, a key event in the establishment of the Nazi dictatorship.

"That's not comparing them as people, that's comparing the Reichstag fire to the demolition of the World Trade Center, and that's an accurate comparison that I would stand by," he said.

But he did say in an interview: "Hitler had a good 20 to 30 IQ points on Bush so comparing Bush to Hitler would in many ways be an insult to Hitler."

Moira Megargee, publicity director for the Northampton, Mass., publisher Interlink, said the book is due out at the end of November, and the editing isn't finished.

"It is not final, and for all we know, that essay may not be in the book or may be edited," she said.

The UW's decision to allow Barrett to teach the course touched off a firestorm of controversy over the summer once his views became widely known.

Sixty-one state legislators denounced the move, and one county board cut its funding for the UW-Extension by \$8,247 — the amount Barrett will earn for teaching the course — in a symbolic protest, even though the course has nothing to do with that branch of the UW System.

The two major-party gubernatorial candidates said Tuesday they still believe he should have been fired.

"The governor feels this is crazy, offensive and shouldn't be in the classroom," said Matt Canter, spokesman for Democratic Gov. Jim Doyle.

In a statement, Republican Mark Green said: "Kevin Barrett continues to make a complete mockery of the University of Wisconsin and our great state."

One essay Barrett is requiring is entitled: "A Clash Between Justice and Greed," about how conflicts between Islam and the western world were made up after the "collapse of the Soviet Union to justify U.S. 'defense' spending, and to provide a pretext of controlling the world's resources."

"The Remaking of Islam in the Post 911 Era" is about the assault of Islamic people by the Rand Corporation.

The author of "Interpreting Terrorism: Muslim Problem or Covert Operations Nightmare?" contends some Western intelligence agencies are doing acts of terrorism to make it look like radical Islamics.

UW-Madison Provost Patrick Farrell decided to retain Barrett for the course after reviewing his plans and qualifications. He said Barrett could present his ideas during one week of the course as long as students were allowed to challenge them.

He later warned Barrett to stop seeking publicity for his personal political views.

Farrell said Tuesday that he hasn't seen the essay but faculty can assign readings that may not be popular to everyone.

"I think part of the role of any challenging course here is going to encourage students to think of things from a variety of perspectives," he said.

Farrell said it's common for instructors or professors to require books they have written or contributed to.

"For many faculty a book represents their best thinking on how an issue should be presented, so why not use that 'best thinking' for the students they teach?" he said in an e-mail.

In the essay, Barrett restates many of his controversial views of the terrorist attacks.

Barrett said required class reading will also represent mainstream views on the Sept. 11 attacks.

