

High school changes 'sexist' Women's Studies course

18th April, 2017



A high school in Canada has come under fierce criticism on the Internet for a women's studies course it offered to its female students. The online backlash was because the course included what many believed to be sexist subjects that were unfit and

inappropriate for women in 21st century. These included 'polite conversation,' dinner party etiquette, and 'nail application skills'. There was also a subject titled: "How to enhance your style by using tips and tricks designed for your face and body shape." The course also had lessons on the basics of web design, reproductive health, the role of women in history, and a look at how beauty is seen by the media and different cultures around the world.

Among those who were shocked by the syllabus was actress and singer Siobhan Bryn. She wrote: "This is unbelievably sexist. Women's studies is not fashion and putting on a lunch." She asked: "Was this designed in the 1950's? Can you get someone who knows about women's studies to design this course?" Activist Meg Fenway said: "This is profoundly offensive and disrespectful." The school has since pulled the subjects from the syllabus. A spokesman said: "I know the way it comes across looks like we're supporting stereotyping girls....We want to do the best by our kids. We want them to have a positive image and build self-esteem. We want them to analyze things critically."

Sources: dailymail.co.uk / bbc.com / cbc.ca

Writing

What three things will help reduce sexism in society? Will these things happen?

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

high school / criticism / women's studies / backlash / conversation / web design / shocked / syllabus / fashion / the 1950's / stereotyping / self-esteem / image

True / False

- a) A high school in England was criticized a lot on the Internet. T / F
- b) Critics said parts of a women's studies course were fitting for women. T / F
- c) One of the courses was 'nail application skills'. T / F
- d) Another course was advanced web design. T / F
- e) A singer said it would be better to study fashion and making lunch. T / F
- f) A singer likened the course to something from the 50's. T / F
- g) The school is no longer teaching the subjects people criticized. T / F
- h) The school said it wanted to students to build their self-esteem. T / F

Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------|
| 1. fierce | a. deeply |
| 2. criticism | b. unsuitable |
| 3. inappropriate | c. function |
| 4. tips | d. created |
| 5. role | e. strong |
| 6. syllabus | f. incredibly |
| 7. unbelievably | g. self-respect |
| 8. designed | h. suggestions |
| 9. profoundly | i. curriculum |
| 10. self-esteem | j. disapproval |

Discussion – Student A

- a) What do you think of the criticism?
- b) What subjects should be in women's studies?
- c) How would someone teach 'polite conversation'?
- d) How polite is your conversation?
- e) What would you learn in a dinner party etiquette course?
- f) How useful is a course on nail application skills?
- g) What do you think of a course on enhancing your style?
- h) What do you think of the criticism?

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Phrase Match

- | | |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. come under fierce | a. esteem |
| 2. a women's studies course it | b. subjects |
| 3. sexist | c. critically |
| 4. unfit and inappropriate | d. by the media |
| 5. a look at how beauty is seen | e. offered |
| 6. designed in the | f. and disrespectful |
| 7. This is profoundly offensive | g. for women |
| 8. stereotyping | h. criticism on the Internet |
| 9. build self- | i. 1950's |
| 10. We want them to analyze things | j. girls |

Discussion – Student B

- What do you think about what you read?
- What three adjectives would you use to describe this story?
- Why did someone compare the syllabus to the 1950s?
- What do you think of the school for pulling the syllabus?
- To what degree did the course stereotype girls?
- What's the best way to teach kids about building self-esteem?
- How good are you at analyzing things critically?
- What questions would you like to ask the school?

Spelling

- come under ifecre criticism
- The online hbkasalc
- unfit and rrpipoinpeaat for women
- dinner party ttqiteeeu
- How to cnnheae your style
- pcioedrruvte health
- shocked by the blyassul
- This is profoundly fesiovfen and disrespectful
- noiretgpyste girls
- have a piteivos image
- build slef-seeemt
- analyze things caairltycl

Answers – Synonym Match

| | | | | |
|------|------|------|------|-------|
| 1. e | 2. j | 3. b | 4. h | 5. c |
| 6. i | 7. f | 8. d | 9. a | 10. g |

Role Play

Role A – Web Design

You think web design would be the best class for high school students to take. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their classes. Also, tell the others which is the least useful of these (and why): guitar, dinner party etiquette or respect in relationships.

Role B – Guitar

You think guitar would be the best class for high school students to take. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their classes. Also, tell the others which is the least useful of these (and why): web design, dinner party etiquette or respect in relationships.

Role C – Dinner Party Etiquette

You think dinner party etiquette would be the best class for high school students to take. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their classes. Also, tell the others which is the least useful of these (and why): guitar, web design or respect in relationships.

Role D – Respect in Relationships

You think respect in relationships would be the best class for high school students to take. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their classes. Also, tell the others which is the least useful of these (and why): guitar, dinner party etiquette or web design.

Speaking – School courses

Rank these with your partner. Put the best courses for kids to take at high school at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- | | |
|----------------------|----------------------------|
| • web design | • parenting skills |
| • guitar | • dinner party etiquette |
| • truth in the media | • polite conversation |
| • nutrition | • respect in relationships |

Answers – True False

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| a | F | b | F | c | T | d | F | e | F | f | T | g | T | h | T |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.