

# Forbes

## Earth To Daily Caller: There Are Conservatives On Campus

Brian Domitrovic

March 8, 2017

On Monday, the *Daily Caller* caused another sensation with a story that students at a big public university on Texas are given all sorts of things—scholarships, laptops, honors credit—to take a course in white privilege and #Black Lives Matter. Fox News was credulous enough to pick up the story, tweetstorms ensued, and a big national conversation erupted about how the left has captured Sam Houston State University.

Wait—I’ve heard of that place. That’s the only public university that has ever had one of its own named to the most prominent position for conservatives in academia, the Visiting Scholar in Conservative Thought and Policy at the University of Colorado Boulder. I’m quite sure of this, because I myself was this scholar last year, and I’ve taught at Sam Houston State for twelve years, these last six as history department chair. “Sam” (as our place is known) is loony left? Could have fooled me.

And I would have to be the one to fool. As the vapid story broke, on Monday, students of mine were sifting through a big collection of primary documents from one of the originators of supply-side economics, the Cato Institute economist Alan Reynolds, who has donated his papers for me to house at Sam’s archive as a public service. These Sam Houston State students were holding in their hands and scrutinizing original correspondence—that is correct, *original correspondence*—from F.A. Hayek, Milton Friedman, William F. Buckley, and further luminaries from the conservative tradition. They are organizing all this, drawing up a finding aid, and in no time you can come to Huntsville, Texas to find one of the key collections, along with those in the Hoover Institution in California, on the movement that gave us the Ronald Reagan revolution in economics.

The thing about conservatives in academia is that they are not in the top places, Robbie George at Princeton notwithstanding. The top places are happy as clams with their race/class/gender, “history of capitalism,” climate change, and economic inequality rabbit holes, leaving scholarly conservatives to find homes at more modest institutions that might prove hospitable.

That’s what’s funny about the *Daily Caller* piece. Sam Houston State is demonstrably one of those places—one of those rare academic institutions that says to conservatives, sure, come on in, happy to have you do your thing. I should point out that in addition to the white privilege course here at Sam, students can also take a course in civil war history from a finalist for last

year's Pulitzer prize, a World War II course from Yale expert Timothy Snyder's top recent graduate student, and naval history from the runner up for last year's Anderson medal (the top prize in nautical history).

All those criticisms about the left capturing universities usually stroll out the trope that universities have abandoned military history. That wasn't quite possible in the *Daily Caller's* hit piece, because Sam has just about the greatest constellation of young military historians in the nation.

As for the Honors Program that the *Caller* said is at the root of the white-privilege fixation-problem at Sam Houston State, somebody had better let Un-Koch My Campus know about it. Because our Honors College guided fifteen of its top students to a Koch-backed seminar on classics in free-market thought here at Sam back in October, two of whom have now won follow-up fellowships for an event at Wake Forest this summer. Here's the scary thing: Honors is about to do the same for another Koch-ed up free-market event at our institution again in April.

And back in January, Honors stacked our quiz team in the inaugural American Heritage and Western Civilization Challenge Bowl, an event explicitly set up to bring back the culture of traditional subjects. Our team won the event outright--the champions--and walked away with thousands of dollars in prizes. If there are charges that Sam Houston Honors is sodden with leftyism, its students are laughing all the way to the bank.

As for the white privilege/BLM course: so what? I know the professor, Ervin Malakaj, and he's a civilized, fascinating, and way-too-much-fun gem. Universities are supposed to offer the range of the best of what has been thought and said, per Matthew Arnold. Sam has the white privilege course, taught by a certified *Mensch*, and alongside it an enormous complement of traditional college courses, a gross commitment to conservative scholarly themes, and the huge law-enforcement education program that has been the signature of the school for fifty years.

If the "conservative" chat-room correspondents and television-watchers who puffed up the *Caller* and Fox News reporting on this non-scandal want to up their game, they could devote some energy to practical things like a tax cut. The easiest way to privatize universities once again—and this is a major cause of mine—is to increase the number of rich people in this country who have the means to contribute to endowments. Cut the income tax, and you can fund universities to your liking to your heart's content. A model you might follow in that case is Sam Houston State.