



YAL hosts political debate

By Elizabeth Moomey - October 24, 2012

The Young Americans for Liberty hosted a debate showcasing liberal, libertarian and conservative philosophies on Wednesday night in Dabney Hall.

Rick Perlstein, a historian and journalist who recently wrote a political column in Rolling Stone argued the liberal viewpoint. Jim Harper, director of information policy studies at the Cato Institute, represented libertarian ideas. Mike Adams, criminal justice professor at UNC-Wilmington and Townhall columnist, reasoned the conservative stance. Kory Swanson, vice president of the John Locke Foundation, moderated.

The different ideologists debated many points from gay marriage to health care. Ross Bradley, a sophomore in chemical engineering and YAL president, encouraged the discussion of topics that pertained to college students, like the economy and civil liberties such as the war on drugs and gay marriage.

Like the presidential debates, they had a time limit. The first portion was for questions asked by the moderator. Audience members could ask questions to the debaters individually at the end.

Bradley said he hoped the debate would show students that libertarianism is the “best of both worlds by the out of your bedroom and out of your wallet” idea.

Because of the mixed political affiliations represented in the audience, the debate became controversial—which Bradley said he liked, though some students were quite upset about responses to some of the questions.

“I thought it was worthless,” James Aughenbaugh, a junior in political science, said.

“The debaters belittled each other, ignored the issues and sarcastically debated each other.”

The debaters said they were impressed with both the event and the audience. The audience was “very intelligent and very heartfelt for a bunch of engineers,” Perlstein said jokingly.

Harper agreed.

“The students here were as engaged as could be,” Harper said.

Adams said he had a good experience as well, but received some grief from the audience. “I took a lot of jabs,” Adams said. “Though I’m not angry, [for] people who preach civility I just think they are silly.”

Swanson said he thought the “three different political philosophies gave a good argument and were a good representation, they know the issues backwards and forwards.”

The YAL foundation selected him to moderate the debate because of the quality of the speakers.

Harper said he excitedly agreed to participate in the debate when YAL approached him. “It is sort of my job to share my ideas,” Harper said.

Perlstein said he came because he had never been to North Carolina and wanted to “have some fun” and “has to pay the rent.”

Adams said he liked that people got to see the contrast between liberal, libertarian and conservative, which was Bradley’s goal.

“A whole lot of people don’t know about the liberty movement,” Bradley said. “It’s not just a right left debate.”

Though the moderator and debaters were happy about the outcome of the debate, Swanson said he wished there had been more time.

Adams said he thought he would have been more organized if he knew more about the structure.

Bradley said he was first worried about there being empty seats, but the two level lecture hall was mostly filled.

At the event, refreshments were served. After the debate, students were invited to join the debaters on an outing to Mitch’s Tavern on Hillsborough Street.