

#MeToo-style allegations used to oust popular University of Michigan professor

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At the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, classes resumed last month. And for the first time in 33 years, English professor John Rubadeau did not introduce a course.

In early August, the 78-year-old Rubadeau's contract was terminated without benefits, four years before his contract was to expire. Rubadeau's termination has to do with allegations from his colleagues, although their exact nature has not been released to the public.

Rubadeau categorically denies any wrongdoing, and the American Federation of Teachers local for non-tenure track faculty, the Lecturers' Employee Organization (LEO), has filed a grievance to dispute the termination.

LEO Vice President Kirsten Herold told the school newspaper, the *Michigan Daily*, "You would think the evidence would be significant, but you would be wrong. He is not being found guilty of sexual harassment. It's a series of much smaller things that they used to make this decision. There are no allegations of sexual harassment. He's not been found guilty of things normally used to fire people."

Rubadeau is one of the most distinguished professors at the university, and is widely admired and even beloved by his students. In 2005, he received the Golden Apple Award, which is awarded to the most engaging and inspiring teachers at the university, based on student nominations.

Rubadeau's page on RateMyProfessor.com shows he has a perfect overall quality score of five. One student review there says, "If you like writing, cursing, blasphemy, having fun, and working your tail off, take this class. If you want to inspired to be your best self, take this class. If you value trust, friendship, and universal truths, take this class. English 425 with John was the best three hours of my week every week. I

would follow John to the end of the earth."

There has been an outpouring of support for Rubadeau from his former students after his typist, Parker Procida, sent a mass email alerting them of the professor's firing. The email prompted many to write letters of protest to the University.

Following the *Michigan Daily* article announcing the termination, one person commented, "I had him in a writing class 30 years ago this fall. One of my favorite instructors ever—did tons to develop my critical thinking and writing skills."

A comment on a follow-up *Daily* article reads: "Welcome to McCarthyism and the Salem Witchhunts [sic]! So now, the fact that someone feels 'uncomfortable' or detects eccentricity is grounds for dismissal? I know students who took his classes and continue to see him; he inspires their desire to write. And what a story this will be, in a few years' time, when thinking people come to their senses. It will be a tale of ambition, lust after position and money by the corrupt and mediocre, against the talented vulnerable people of our world."

This follow-up *Daily* article, "Claimant comes forward in misconduct case against John Rubadeau," sheds damning light on the harassment charges. While remaining anonymous, the graduate student whose grievance led to Rubadeau's firing explained his actions.

The graduate student noted Rubadeau's eccentric, assertive demeanor: "It was this weird behavior where if you didn't pay attention to him, he would make you pay attention to him. I couldn't shake him and it started to feel a little creepy. He would always be stopping me in the hall to talk to me and it got to the point where I felt I needed to wear headphones."

"His misconduct is somewhere between sounding

like an overreaction on my part or nothing at all and being something that I feel legally obligated to report. It's not a situation where it was nothing, but it's also not super clear in the University rules how he violated them.”

This is an incredible admission. According to the claimant himself, Rubadeau has not even committed an offense which falls under the “mandatory reporting” provision of Title IX civil rights law. This means that Rubadeau has not engaged in discrimination, nor has he engaged in unfair treatment on the basis of sex or sexual harassment.

As further evidence of Rubadeau's supposed misconduct, the anonymous graduate student points to the way the professor engaged with his students. Every wall of Rubadeau's former office was plastered with pictures of his former students. He held office hours at his home on weekends. The complainant said of this, “[D]epending on your perspective it can either be endearing or creepy.”

The mass of supportive comments for Rubadeau on social media evince that these peculiarities were not found to be “creepy,” but rather constitute one of the reasons he is held in such high regard.

This sordid episode validates the *World Socialist Web Site's* analysis of the #MeToo movement—that it has become, among other things, a foul arena for the settling of various political, financial or professional scores and the source as well for an unknown number of personal tragedies.



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