

Dr. Tom McMullen is a tenured, associate professor who has served almost 24 years in Georgia Southern University's History Department. He provided this statement, via email, in response to questions the Statesboro Herald asked in follow-up to the memo he was issued by the University on Dec. 5

Dr. Tom McMullen's statement:

I do have several reservations about the memo and the whole investigation. Here are some:

First, regarding the Ten Commandments, which many of your questions concerned: For the GSU investigation, I had submitted to my bosses a Wall Street Journal essay about cheating, along with the other requested materials covering the past two years.

Sad to say, cheating occurs at GSU. And because I usually curve the test results, cheaters especially gain an advantage. This is not fair to the rest of the students.

In 2012, I read "Why We Lie" by Duke University's Dan Ariely in the Wall Street Journal. Dr. Ariely explains that "Over the past decade or so, my colleagues and I have taken a close look at why people cheat, using a variety of experiments." The bottom line is that, given the opportunity, "almost everybody cheats—just by a little."

But there is an exception to this result. In one experiment with 450 students, researchers "asked half of them to recall the Ten Commandments and the other half to recall 10 books that they had read in high school. Among the group who recalled the 10 books, we saw the typical widespread but moderate cheating. But in the group that was asked to recall the Ten Commandments, we observed no cheating whatsoever. We reran the experiment, reminding students of their schools' honor codes instead of the Ten Commandments, and we got the same result." That is to say, there was still moderate cheating in one half and no cheating for the Ten Commandments half. The writer of the GSU memo did not understand this last point. See <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052702304840904577422090> for the full report.

I want to reduce cheating. Because of the research reported in this article, I started asking an extra credit question on the Ten Commandments in my World History I and II classes. Naturally, both of these subjects include religion and I thought I could do so. Besides, the student honor code is against cheating. Nevertheless, the next day after receiving the 5 December memo, I emailed my World History I and II students that there would be no extra credit question about the Ten Commandments on the Final Exam.

My second reservation to the memo is that the World History I textbook used during the investigation period has the Ten Commandments in it. Therefore, I should be able to ask about them in that class.

Third; the World History II textbook used during the investigation period specifically mentions Friedrich Nietzsche by name. He is a philosopher famous for stating that "God is dead." Thus, the extra credit for reporting on the philosophy class debate in the movie "God's Not Dead" is within the scope of the course. The memo writer did not understand that the debate in question took place in the movie classroom, not in my classroom.

Fourth; Georgia 20-2-145 concerns a K-12 character education program that includes "respect for the Creator" as a value. The main person in the investigation did not know this at the time. I learned this in a 17 December meeting that I had requested with the memo writer.

Fifth; when we come to Darwinism in my World History II class, I do question that we descended from a common ancestor. Darwinists do not like connecting eugenics (where some 65,000 citizens were forcibly sterilized in the US) with Darwinian evolutionary theory but Georgia Senate Resolution 247 does just that. Again, the main person in the investigation did not know this at the time.

Sixth; no one from the administration asked me my side of the story. I only learned of the investigation on 3 November when a colleague gave me a copy of an atheist website crowing over it. My only prior warning consisted of emails from strangers, most of which were mocking and one hateful. Not knowing what was up, I was concerned about my wife.

Seventh; my upper level course for next semester was cancelled without my even knowing or being informed about the change.

Eighth; all, or some of this investigation could have been cleared up without sending anything to the atheists. GSU could have handled the whole thing internally without answering the atheists at all. I am told the FFRF loses most of their cases.