

Rice University Sacrifices Academic Standards on the Altar of Fantasy Islam

DEC 18, 2020 11:00 AM BY STEPHEN M. KIRBY



...the United States created the foundation on which great research universities could be built. Those core values included...organized skepticism (the willingness to entertain the most radical of ideas, but subject the claims to truth and fact to the most rigorous scrutiny)...

Jonathan R. Cole, John Mitchell Mason Professor of the University at Columbia University^[1]

The *Mission Statement* of Rice University (Houston, TX) states that it is “a leading research university.”^[2] Unfortunately, Rice University seems to be lacking in the core value of “organized skepticism.” Here is why.

Dr. Craig Considine is a Lecturer in the Department of Sociology at Rice University. In July 2020, Considine’s new book, *The Humanity of Muhammad: A Christian View*, was published. Unfortunately, Considine’s book not only misrepresented “the life and impact” of Muhammad, but it was based on Considine’s version of *Fantasy Islam*, which was

created to fit his narrative. Consequently, I wrote a three-part article about Considine's book that was published by *Jihad Watch* on December 1st – 3rd: "The Fantasy Islam of Rice University's Craig Considine."^[3]

On December 3, Dr. Carl Goldberg emailed Craig Considine the links to my three-part article and asked for Considine's response to my article.

From December 3-5, either Dr. Goldberg or I emailed the following Rice University personnel the links to my three-part article pointing out how Considine's book created a fantasy version of Islam to fit Considine's narrative:

David Leebron, Rice University President

Reginald DesRoches, Rice University Provost

Linda L. Thrane, Vice President for Public Affairs

Doug Miller, Director of News and Media relations

Jeff Falk, Director of National Media Relations

Amy McCaig, Senior Media Relations Specialist

Arie Wilson Passwaters, Editor, *Rice News*

Editor, *Rice Thresher* (Student Newspaper)

As of December 16, neither of us have received any replies.

But this was not Rice University's only involvement with *Fantasy Islam*.

On November 9-10, 2020, Dr. Zahra Jamal, Associate Director at the Boniuk Institute for Religious Tolerance, Rice University, was the main presenter in an online presentation for the Iowa Law Enforcement Academy: "Engaging and Building Partnerships with Muslim Americans."

Jamal had created her own version of *Fantasy Islam* and gave that version in her presentation. As a result of that presentation, I wrote the following article that appeared in *Jihad Watch* on November 17, 2020: "The Iowa Law Enforcement Academy meets Fantasy Islam."^[4]

On December 5, I sent this email to Dr. Jamal:

Dr. Jamal,

I am writing with regard to your November 9-10, 2020 online presentation for the Iowa Law Enforcement Academy: “Engaging and Building Partnerships with Muslim Americans.”

Below is a link to my recent article pointing out how inaccurately you presented Islam. I concluded my article by noting:

At the ILEA website we find this

Here at ILEA, we are excited to serve the people of Iowa as we bring excellence in training, testing, and standards to peace officers, telecommunicators, and jailers across the state.

Unfortunately, with this particular class the “excellence in training” about Islam was replaced with Dr. Zahra Jamal’s Fantasy Islam.

“The Iowa Law Enforcement Academy meets Fantasy Islam”

<https://www.jihadwatch.org/2020/11/the-iowa-law-enforcement-academy-meets-fantasy-islam>

I look forward to your reply.

I copied this email to the following Rice University personnel:

David Leebron, Rice University President

Reginald DesRoches, Rice University Provost

Linda L. Thrane, Vice President for Public Affairs

Dr. Paula Sanders, Director Boniuk Institute

Dr. Gayle Pagnoni, Program Director Boniuk Institute

Doug Miller, Director of News and Media relations

Jeff Falk, Director of National Media Relations

Amy McCaig, Senior Media Relations Specialist

Arie Wilson Passwaters, Editor, *Rice News*

Editor, *Rice Thresher* (Student Newspaper)

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Conclusion

At the beginning of this article, I quoted from Columbia University Professor Jonathan Cole that a core value for a research university is “organized skepticism,” which Cole defined as

the willingness to entertain the most radical of ideas, but subject the claims to truth and fact to the most rigorous scrutiny...

Craig Considine and Zahra Jamal have certainly entertained “the most radical of ideas” by creating their respective versions of *Fantasy Islam*, but there appears to have been no “organized skepticism” about this from within the ranks of Rice University.

Rice University apparently has no problem when its professors make up their own “truths and facts” about Islam, even though those “truths and facts” fly in the face of the commands of Allah in the Koran, the teachings and example of Muhammad, and the writings over the centuries by authoritative Muslim scholars. If this is allowable for the professors, then shouldn’t Rice University students be allowed to similarly create their own “truths and facts,” without having to face “organized skepticism”?

With this approach, Rice University could go from being just another “leading research university” to becoming the preeminent *Fantasy Research* university in the United States!

Dr. Stephen M. Kirby is the author of six books about Islam. His latest book is *Islamic Doctrine versus the U.S. Constitution: The Dilemma for Muslim Public Officials*.

[1] Jonathan R. Cole, “The Triumph of America’s Research University,” *The Atlantic*, September 20, 2016, <https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2016/09/the-triumph-of-americas-research-university/500798/>.

[2] <https://www.rice.edu/mission-values>

[3] Stephen M. Kirby, “The Fantasy Islam of Rice University’s Craig Considine,” *Jihad Watch*:

Part 1 – December 1, 2020

<https://www.jihadwatch.org/2020/12/the-fantasy-islam-of-rice-universitys-craig-considine-part-1>

Part 2 – December 2, 2020

<https://www.jihadwatch.org/2020/12/the-fantasy-islam-of-rice-universitys-craig-considine-part-2>

Part 3 – December 3, 2020

<https://www.jihadwatch.org/2020/12/the-fantasy-islam-of-rice-universitys-craig-considine-part-3>

[4] Stephen M. Kirby, “The Iowa Law Enforcement Academy meets Fantasy Islam,” *Jihad Watch*, November 17, 2020, <https://www.jihadwatch.org/2020/11/the-iowa-law-enforcement-academy-meets-fantasy-islam>.