

To: Bakersfield College Student Government Association
From: Matthew Garrett, PhD
RE: CCA Grant for Distinguished Speakers: James Lindsay and/or Peter Boghossian
Date: March 12, 2022

Student Government Association Officers,

The Renegade Institute for Liberty would like to partner with BC's Student Government Association to co-host one or two "Distinguished Speaker" events featuring mathematician turned philosopher James Lindsay and/or philosopher Peter Boghossian.

Dr. James Lindsay is formally trained in mathematics, earning his PhD at the University of Tennessee in 2010. He began dabbling and publishing in atheist advocacy and gradually his research interests migrated into the philosophy of science and the broader philosophy of society. He grew particularly concerned with the corruption of sciences by religious-like adherence to unquestionable assumptions that, at times, ran contrary to empirical evidence. He is the founder of New Discourses and his writings generally serve to debunk religious devotion to academic theories. He is the author of nine books including *Cynical Theories* (2020) and *Race Marxism* (2022).

Lindsay emerged as a nationally recognized critic of thoughtless adherence to academic theories after he partnered with British scholar Helen Pluckrose and Portland State University Professor of Philosophy Peter Boghossian in 2017. Together the trio employed pseudonyms to submit twenty intentionally flawed and outright ludicrous academic papers that arrived at conclusions espoused by supposedly neutral academic journals. One by one the papers moved through peer review to publication in a variety of poststructuralist journals (often termed "grievance studies") which the authors suspected held low (or no) academic standards for works that drew preferred conclusions. One of the submissions argued that the male penis is not physically real but is only a social construct; another alleged to have inspected the testicles of tens of thousands of dogs to prove owner attitudes about human rape culture; another submission to a gender studies journal included extensive passages of Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, replacing Jews with men as the object of derision. The *Wall Street Journal* broke the story in 2019 before all the submissions had been published. Still, the incident proved an embarrassment for the academic journals who had published (and even granted awards to) the hoax scholarship. The entire incident raised serious questions about the rigor and integrity of peer reviewed academic work in the field of "grievance studies."

In the aftermath of that high profile incident, Lindsay published a series of books articulating how an irrational devotion to academic theories has taken hold in higher education, establishing an unquestionable belief system or religion wherein confirmation bias run amuck justifies manipulation of data – or outright fabrication of data – to arrive at preconceived notions. He and others have warned that these new academic theories have ushered in a total breakdown of evidence-based reasoning. His scholarship unpacks the origins of these dangerous theories and points to parallels examples in history as a cautionary tale for the current obsession.

Dr. Lindsay is a self-identified Obama Democrat with progressive views but is also among the fiercest critics of the "woke" movement (one of his books is titled *Countering Wokecraft*), which he has characterized as an ideological fervor absent critical thinking. He and his co-authors express grave concerns about the future of a world were emotional outbursts and preconceived conclusions

drawn from unquestionable ideological frameworks direct research and policy. But more than simply criticizing, his scholarship constitutes that absolute clearest articulation of how such ill-logic operates and how to recenter logic and reason in higher education.

If Dr. James Lindsay is unavailable, the Renegade Institute would also be excited to partner with SGA to host Dr. Peter Boghossian, who was until recently a professor of philosophy at Portland State University where his research and teaching centered on atheism, critical thinking, and the Socratic method. Boghossian is the author of [*A Manual for Creating Atheists*](#) (2013) and [*How to Have Impossible Conversations*](#) (2019). His participation in the above-mentioned Grievance Studies Affair led to hostile campus retaliation from the administration, colleagues and students, culminating in his resignation in 2021. His [resignation letter](#) constitutes a scathing rebuke of the lack of intellectual diversity and tolerance in higher education and outlines the ways in which the academy has fallen short of its noble charge. Soon after, the newly organized [University of Austin](#) (dedicated to open inquiry and truth seeking and governed by an impressive board of scholars) announced Boghossian as their founding professor to launch the new institution. Like Lindsay, Boghossian is a registered Democrat and progressive who has grown deeply concerned about the unquestionable religious devotion to particular tenants and the unseen intellectual framework that now guides research and policy.

The proposed event(s) would center on an address given by James Lindsay and/or Peter Boghossian regarding the epistemological crisis of higher education. Their work directly addresses the very concept of learning, and how to promote individual intellectual competency; that is, they advocate individual intellectual empowerment free of rigid structural theories that might subconsciously drive conclusions. Questions about how we find and recognize truth should be central to much of our work at Bakersfield College, however, as of late our institution has also increasingly fallen victim to ideological group think that is detrimental to diversity of thought.

Lindsay and/or Boghossian's message exemplify BC's Core Values of "Learning," "Integrity," and "Diversity." The BC Mission defines learning as developing "curiosity, inquiry, critical thinking and creativity." Likewise, BC's Strategic Directions define the learning as developing "curiosity, inquiry, and empowered learners." Additionally, the BC Mission of advancing "critical thinking" and AA requirement in critical thinking required of all degree seeking students is keenly addressed by the work of these scholars. Indeed, their Grievance Studies Hoax papers are event noted examples in at least one of BC's "critical thinking" courses. The purpose of Lindsay and Boghossian's lifework and an address by either of them would help BC fulfil its stated goals and the quintessential spirit of higher education.

The Renegade Institute for Liberty would eagerly co-sponsor an event (or two) featuring one (or both) of these guest speakers. The theme of such an address would center on the threat to critical thinking posed by ideological commitments that often operate subconsciously with implicit buy-in by students and scholars that have not paused to think about the broader conceptual framework they are adopting. Both Lindsay and Boghossian are skilled speakers on the issue of insidious ideologies that are undermining intellectual honesty and truth-seeking.

Both Lindsay and Boghossian charge a fee of at least \$5,000, plus transportation and lodging, and both are in high demand. The Renegade Institute seeks partnership with SGA to cover those costs.

Lindsay may be contracted through the Young Americans Foundation (<https://www.yaf.org/speakers/james-lindsay/>), and in the past Dr. Nicky Damania has worked with that entity and may be able to secure preferred pricing of some sort. Dr. Boghossian's speaking events may be contracted through Central Park Speakers and his agent Jamie Black (jamie@centralparkspeakers.com).

The Renegade Institute faculty prefer to host Dr. Lindsay but would support either speaker by promoting the event and our own publicity efforts. Indeed, we have a donation currently in our account earmarked for advertisement that we would be willing to draw on to spend an additional \$500 to promote the event in social media or other means to ensure that we can fill the new Administration Building conference center. Additionally, we request that the ICA include permission for BC and/or the Renegade Institute to record and publicly post the lecture so that it is accessible to online students and to those who could not attend the event in person. Both speakers are frequently recorded and Lindsay in particular has even been willing to allow recordings of lengthy impromptu remarks, so it is likely he would be quite willing to allow a recording; he may even assume that is expected. Please include a request to record the event.

The Renegade Institute is a coalition of two dozen BC faculty across a variety of disciplines at Bakersfield College and many of these members have expressed a willingness to urge students to attend a James Lindsay event. Multiple faculty from various fields feel confident that Lindsay and Boghossian's message would compliment their curriculum, particularly faculty in STEM, Education, and the Social Sciences. A Lindsay/Boghossian message would also resonate with Program Learning Outcomes in the Humanities, Social and Behavioral Sciences. For example, one History PLO calls for developing students' ability to analyze major forces, events, people, systems and institutions, with attention to ethnic and other social identities. This is very much the focus of Lindsay and Boghossian, and race/ethnicity in particular has become central to Lindsay's more recent work. Also, Dr. Lindsay and Dr. Boghossian may also draw in community members.

The Renegade Institute faculty are also happy to assist with the event as needed to host the guest(s) for meals, shuttle them around town or campus as needed, MC or otherwise assist in the event. We are eager to partner with SGA on this potential event(s).

Thank you for considering this proposal.

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