

PL 350: Final Paper and Role Play on Prostitution and Pornography

Imagine that you are appearing at a meeting of the city council in which testimony for and against the proposal to open a strip club is being heard and discussed. You may adopt one of the following roles. Note that unless specified, you can play the role as male or female.

In favor of granting a permit to operate the strip club:

Strip Club Owner – You are a businessman who, with your partners, already owns one strip club, and wants to open a strip club in an area of the city where there is a mix of residential and commercial properties.

Stripper – You are a 28 year old college-educated woman who is earning a master's degree in business administration, and supporting yourself as an exotic dancer. You think of yourself as a feminist, but you support pornography and strip clubs.

Alderman – You represent the strip club owner's district and have offered him your support. While not a patron of strip clubs yourself, you believe that citizens have a right to patronize strip clubs if they choose.

Law school professor – You are a professor at the local law school whose specialty is the First Amendment and censorship issues. You oppose censorship of pornography, and are in favor of licenses for strip clubs.

Opposed to granting a permit to operate the strip club:

Staff person for the National Organization of Women - You are a staff person who specializes in public policy in regard to sexual harassment, hate speech and violence against women.

PTA president in a local high school – You are the mother of teenage daughters and sons whose school is in the vicinity of the proposed club. You have raised your children to be feminists.

Restaurant owner in the neighborhood – You own a restaurant in the neighborhood. Your sister was a victim of rape and you are a vocal opponent of pornography.

Feminist philosophy professor at the nearby college – You have written articles which advocate restrictions on pornography and have helped to develop ordinances in other cities which restrict pornography. You have also publicly opposed stripping as a form of oppression of women.

PL 350: American Philosophy
Final Project on Pornography and Prostitution

With this assessment, we are going to take a different approach to the issue than the writing of position papers alone. We will imagine together that there is a city council hearing being conducted on whether to grant a license to operate a strip club. This assessment is based on a series of events that occurred in Milwaukee in early fall, 2010 when partners in an existing strip club applied to the City of Milwaukee to renovate two existing buildings in the Third Ward and downtown on Water Street in order to operate strip clubs in both locations. Although the partners already operated a strip club, they met a lot of resistance from neighbors to their proposal, and their application was denied both by the city licensing committee and the whole Common Council. They are currently suing the City of Milwaukee over the denial of their license application. See the following local news links for background on the licensing debate:

<http://www.cbs58.com/index.php?aid=14113&>

Sept 20 licensing committee denies license to two strip clubs

<http://www.wisn.com/news/25385589/detail.html>

club owners sue city over denial of licenses

<http://thirdcoastdigest.com/2010/09/residents-have-their-say-not-in-my-backyard/>

editorial condemning the denial of the permits

For this assessment, you will imagine that you are one of the citizens who testified before the licensing committee either in favor of or against the strip club license for the Third Ward location. You will select one of the roles from the list provided, and from your character's perspective, write a 2-3 page paper in which you give his or her position on whether the license should be granted. (You do not have to select a character who would share your own view of the issue.) Make your character's assumptions about free speech rights, gender roles in society, and the good of the community explicit in your paper. You should draw on and refer to our course readings on pornography and prostitution to support your character's position. Feel free to imagine additional details about your character and his/her circumstances to enhance the impact of your paper. You will use this paper to prepare for portraying your character in the "hearing" we will conduct in class.

Paper criteria:

The student states clearly and logically the position of the character she has selected on the issue of whether to grant a license to operate an adult book store.

The student clearly states the character's assumptions about free speech rights, gender roles and the good of the community.

The student appropriately draws upon and explicitly refers to course readings on pornography and prostitution to support her character's position.

The student adopts communication styles and rhetorical strategies appropriate to the character she has selected.

Panel criteria:

The student clearly and logically states the position of her character.

The student clearly states the assumptions of her character about free speech, gender roles and the public good.

The student appropriately draws upon and explicitly refers to course readings on pornography and prostitution.

The student adopts communication styles (including vocal characteristics, gesture and body language) and rhetorical strategies appropriate to the character she has selected.

The student accurately self-assesses her written and oral performance.