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Home / News

https://www.bgdailynews.com/news/anti-vietnam-war-protestor-who-made-history-to-visit-wku/article_b80ae417-27e0-513d-a45d-95d3db70b7fb.html

Anti-Vietnam War protestor who made history to visit WKU

By AARON MUDD amudd@bgdailynews.com Nov 9, 2018

Mary Beth Tinker, who became a plaintiff in the landmark free speech Supreme Court case *Tinker v. Des Moines*, will share her story with Western Kentucky University students next week.

Tinker will speak at 6:30 p.m. Thursday at WKU's Downing Student Union in room 3005. The event, sponsored by the Fleischaker/Greene Scholars Program, is free and open to the public.

As a junior high school student in 1965, Tinker was one of several students suspended from school for wearing black armbands in opposition to the Vietnam War. Through their parents, the students sued the Des Moines Independent Community School District for violating their free speech rights, a case the Supreme Court ultimately affirmed.

Rich Shumate, an assistant journalism professor, invited Tinker to campus as part of a special topics course he's co-teaching through the Fleischaker/Greene Scholars in First Amendment Studies program.

The course, which is taught at the junior and senior levels, explores a different First Amendment issue each year, with this year's course focusing on protest.

Shumate invited Tinker to campus hoping his students would get to meet someone who's lived through a historic First Amendment battle. She will meet with Shumate's class one-on-one and a separate media law class during her visit.

"I think that it will sort of get them up close and personal with someone who stuck their neck out and advanced the cause of student rights," he said.

Tinker's visit is part of the broader Project 1968 initiative, which is an interdisciplinary program exploring the music, movements and other aspects of that pivotal year in American history during its 50th anniversary.

David Lee, a history professor who's teaching the Fleischaker/Greene course with Shumate, sees Tinker's visit and topic as one with lasting relevance, and something "I think our students are very much interested in," he said.

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