

Yale professor tied to Epstein tells students he's been 'relieved' of teaching duties

Nathaniel Rosenberg

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Yale professor David Gelernter, seen here in 1997, told students Tuesday that he has been “relieved” of his teaching duties over his correspondences with Jeffrey Epstein.
James Leynse/Corbis via Getty Images

Yale University computer science professor David Gelernter, who has come under scrutiny over the last week for his years-long correspondence with deceased sex trafficker Jeffrey Epstein, told his class Tuesday morning that he has been “relieved” of his teaching duties for the semester.

According to the message he sent to the class obtained by CT Insider, Gelernter said he had been removed from the class for emails he exchanged with Epstein.

“For now on I no longer teach CPSC 4500. I have no idea who my successor will be,” Gelernter wrote to the class.

In one of the emails, Gelernter wrote to Epstein about a female student he was recommending for a job in 2011, describing her as a “Yale sr, worked at Vogue last summer, runs her own campus mag, art major, completely connected, v small goodl=oking (sic) blonde,” documents show.

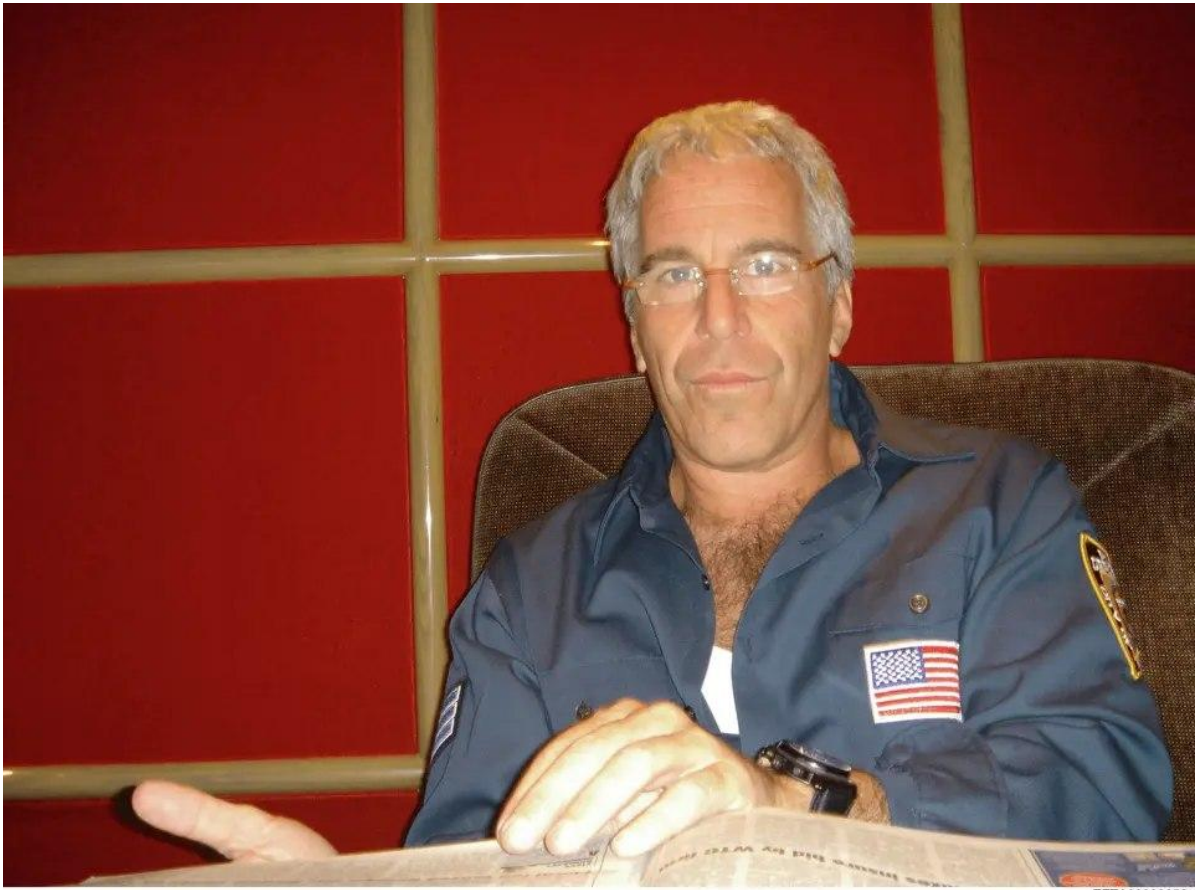
Yale spokesperson Karen Peart confirmed that Gelernter’s messages with Epstein were being reviewed by the university. She said Gelernter had “acknowledged and defended” his communications.

“The university does not condone the action taken by the professor or his described manner of providing recommendations for his students,” Peart said. “The professor’s conduct is under review. Until the review is completed, the professor will not teach his class.”

In his note to students on Tuesday, Gelernter defended his language, describing the student as a family friend of the professor and his wife. He said the student also stayed at their house on multiple occasions.

Gelernter also wrote that the student had wanted to be recommended for the job, which he said was working on the financial side of Epstein’s private bank.

Gelernter said that neither he nor the student knew that Epstein was a felon or sex trafficker. Epstein was convicted of soliciting a child prostitute in Florida in 2008.



This undated photo released by the U.S. Department of Justice shows Jeffrey Epstein. (U.S. Department of Justice via AP)

“If Yale had treated her like the adult she was and not like a Ward in Chancellery (belonging to the Engineering Dean?) none of this would have happened,” Gelernter wrote in his Tuesday message. “The university’s Smoking Gun is a personal, private

email, dug out of the dump of Epstein files. (If someone handed you a a stack of other people’s private correspondence, would you dive in and read them? Of course not. Gentlemen and ladies don’t read each other’s mail. (Courtesy 101.)”

In his message, Gelernter appeared to reference Jeffrey Brock, the dean of Yale’s School of Engineering & Applied Science. Gelernter wrote a letter to Brock last week, defending his recommendation of the student.

A student told CT Insider that Gelernter’s class on Tuesday was taught by Holly Rushmeier, the chair of the computer science department. She told students that she would be taking over the class for the rest of the semester.

Gelernter, Brock and Rushmeier did not immediately respond to requests for comment on Tuesday.



Yale University campus in New Haven.
Hearst Connecticut Media

The computer science professor — who first drew international attention in 1993 after he was injured by a mail bomb sent to him by Ted Kaczynski, known as the “Unabomber” — maintained correspondence with Epstein between 2009 and 2015, according to documents released last month by the Department of Justice.

The documents show that the two men discussed Gelernter’s business ventures, the role of sex in his art and the novel “Lolita,” among other topics. Gelernter also visited

Epstein in New York City on multiple occasions, and repeatedly, if unsuccessfully, invited him to New Haven.

“From my standpoint, he was one of the two (maybe three) smartest men I’d ever met,” Gelernter wrote of Epstein on Feb. 2, describing him as a “brilliant & funny conversationalist,” in an email in response to questions sent by CT Insider.

Gelernter, who has tenure, has taught at Yale for more than three decades, though he and his classes have consistently received negative reviews from students, according to Yale’s internal student feedback system, with the professor ranking last out of 82 computer science professors on multiple teaching metrics.

David Gelernter ranks last among Yale CS profs

Based on average student evaluations, Gelernter ranks last among 82 professors who have taught Yale computer science courses since 2020.

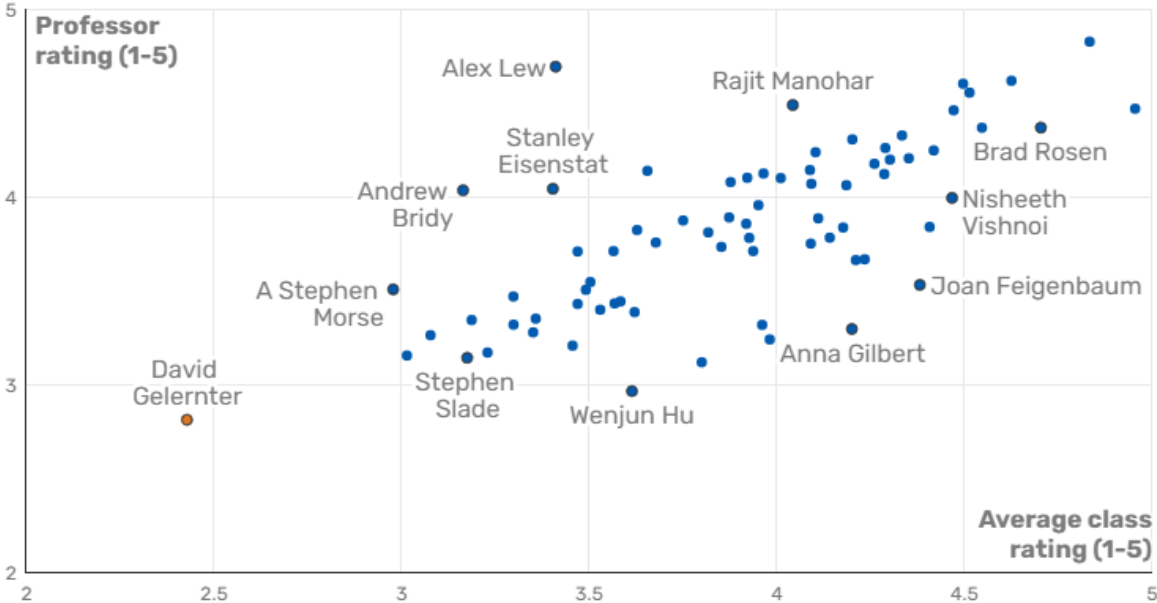


Chart: Derek Turner & Nathaniel Rosenberg, Hearst Connecticut Media Group

Source: CourseTable • Download image

According to student feedback, he particularly struggled with grading and returning assignments on time, something he discussed with Epstein in multiple exchanges in May 2011, writing at one point that he “Just (found) out my grades for srs are due yesterday or they won’t graduate.”

It was not immediately clear what Gelernter being relieved of teaching his class for the semester meant for his longer-term standing at Yale, something he admitted in his Tuesday morning note to students.

“You’ve been a marvelous class — and not only on intellectual terms,” Gelernter wrote to conclude his Tuesday message. “You’re way out of the ordinary, and I’ll always remember that. If my very last class at Yale turns out to be CPSC 450 (or a piece of it), e–then, a thousand thanks. A million.”

Nathaniel Rosenberg is a Hearst Fellow covering breaking and trending news with Hearst Connecticut. He previously wrote for the Philadelphia Inquirer, Milwaukee Journal Sentinel and New Haven Independent. Nathaniel graduated from Yale University with a degree in History. Please send him tips, story ideas and any amusing jokes at nathaniel.rosenberg@hearst.com.

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