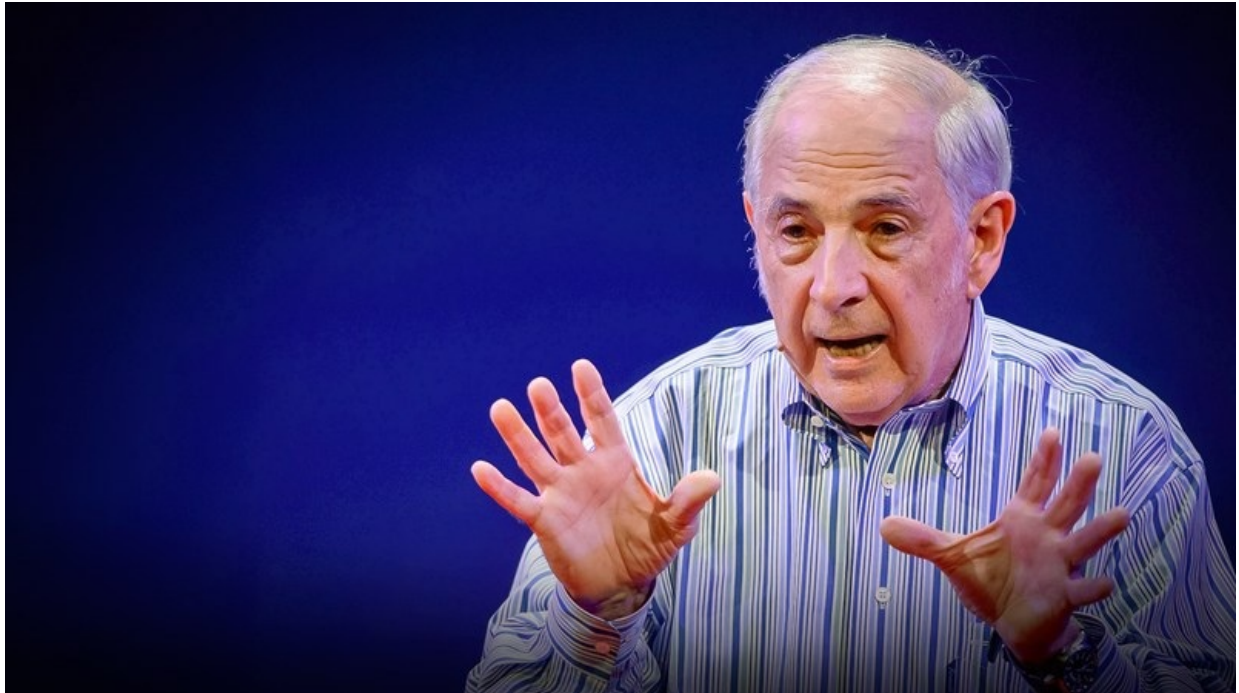


Renowned UC Berkeley Professor Accused of Groping Assistant, Watching Porn at Work



Summary: Professor John R. Searle was sued this week for allegedly sexually harassing his 24-year-old assistant.

The University of California--Berkeley has been slammed with another sexual misconduct scandal, and this time it involves one of their star professors, John R. Searle.

Searle, 84, is renowned for his work in philosophy of language and of the mind. He has taught at UC Berkeley since 1959, and in 2016, the university opened the John Searle Center for Social Ontology.

It was at the center where Searle allegedly harassed his research assistant, *Buzzfeed* reports. Joanna Ong, 24, said that in 2016 her former professor offered her a job, and it was in this environment when he showed her more than his ideas. She stated that she jumped at the opportunity to work for someone as respected as Searle and that she took the job, even though it had an unorthodox pay structure. The university would pay her a salary of \$1,000 a month, and Searle would pay her \$3,000 from his own pockets.

Ong said that Searle groped her after only one week on the job, and he grossly told her that he would "love her for a long time." In her complaint, she said that he also watched pornography at work and made sexist statements in her presence. After Ong declined his advances, she said that her salary was cut before she was eventually fired. She said that she complained to management, who did nothing to reprimand the old professor.

Ong said that she complained to the center's director Jennifer Hudin, a woman Ong once considered to be a mentor. Ong said that Hud did not report Searle to her higher ups but instead promised to "protect" Ong from future perverted advances. Ong claimed that Hud admitted that Searle used his position to have sexual relations with other students "in exchange for academic, monetary, or other benefits."

Ong said that Searle went on vacation after the groping and that when he returned, he was grouchy and mean to her. Without explanation, he cut her salary, and he told her to log onto a sugar daddy-sugar baby website to find young women for him to hire as an "assistant," essentially making Ong find her own replacement.

Ong, who is Asian-American, said that Searle also made disgusting racist comments to her such as "American imperialism? Oh boy, that sounds great, honey! Let's go to bed and do that right now!"

Ong said she reported the second round of harassment to Hudin, who again did not report him to upper management. Ong said Hudin admitted that she did not have the heart to do so out of respect for the octogenarian.

Ong said that in September 2016, she was told by Hudin that she was not needed at the center. She had only worked for a few months.

This week, Ong filed a lawsuit in Alameda County Superior Court against Searle and the Regents of the University of California. She is seeking damages for assault and sexual harassment as well as wrongful termination and the creation of a hostile work environment. Ong is represented by Los Angeles-based law firm [Kristensen Weisberg, LLP](#).

"As a philosopher, Searle should be familiar with the concept of coercion," Ong told *BuzzFeed News*.

Kristensen Weisberg said that Hudin and others at UC Berkeley were aware of Searle's lecherous behavior because there was a slew of evidence of sexual misconduct, including emails and complaints.

UC Berkeley told *Buzzfeed* that it could not comment on pending lawsuits due to university policy and privacy laws, but that it did not tolerate sexual harassment and assault. Hudin and Searle were contacted but did not provide comments on this story.

Earlier this month, Searle abruptly retired from teaching his undergraduate philosophy class, "Philosophy of the Mind," but he still is a named emeritus at the esteemed public university. The University has refused to answer why he is no longer teaching.

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Source: *Buzzfeed*

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What do you think about this lawsuit? Let us know in the comments below.

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