

# OU students ask about U.S. aims

By Pat Murphy  
staff writer

As the country nudges closer to war in the Middle East, growing numbers of students at Oakland University are asking about the involvement of the United States . . . and demanding answers.

"I'm not decided on the U.S. role," said Debbie Shepard, a junior from Rochester Hills. "But I'm anxious to get as much information as I can before making up my mind."

Shepard was one of about 50 students who attended a Middle East Teach-in Tuesday at the Oakland Center, a focal point of campus life on the Auburn Hills campus.

The turnout was disappointing to some, like Lisa Guerra of Detroit. "Why aren't there a lot more students here?" she asked. "Don't they realize what is happening?"

But the turnout was encouraging to others, including Shea Howell, an associate professor in the journalism department who said she helped organize the teach-in about 48 hours earlier.

**CONSIDERING THE** hasty arguments and minimal publicity, "I'm really encouraged," she said. "Especially when students want to keep it going."

She was referring to the sign-up sheet circulating among the crowd and students signing up for committees to protest U.S. involvement.

"I've been an activist all my life," Howell said. "We were much further along in the last war (Vietnam) before we had crowds this large."

Howell and guest speaker Francis Shor, an associate professor of humanities at Wayne State University, acknowledged early that Tuesday's teach-in was not intended as a balanced presentation of all factors leading up to the U.S. counting down to war with Saddam Hussein, president of Iraq.

They did not defend Hussein's invasion of Kuwait or the rape of the country that followed.

But the 40-minute video followed by a question-and-answer period was designed to present some of the underlying factors that led first to the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq and subsequently the U.S. preparing for war.

These factors were either ignored or underplayed in the media, explained Howell. But they are crucial to understanding U.S. involvement.

BY OBJECTIVELY looking at those factors, Howell and Shor said students and others would likely come to the conclusion they had reached earlier: The U.S. is wrong to go to war with Iraq and that war would mean American service personnel dying for oil.

A number of students apparently agreed. Dozens signed up for an organization to continue informational meetings and protests, including two on Wednesday. "We want to protest U.S. policies," said Guerra. "But we want to support the government. Some of them are our friends, brothers, sisters and cousins."

About a dozen students were interested in a massive protest march on Washington, D.C., tentatively scheduled for Jan. 26.

But other students, including Stephen Dibert of West Bloomfield, said the teach-in was unbalanced.

"There are a number of good reasons for the U.S. to be there," said Dibert, who said he is studying Middle East history and politics. "Our being there goes back 60 years or more and it's very complicated. The presentation today was too left-wing, too anti-American."

IN THE VIDEO or during discussions the teach-in covered a wide range of topics ranging from the Truman Doctrine (outlined by then-President Harry Truman in March 1947) to the U.S.'s current refusal to link a peace conference on the Palestinian problem. For example:

• The allegation that the U.S. is inflexible by refusing to link an Iraqi pullout to negotiations on the Palestinian problem in the Israeli-occupied territories in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.



Oakland University junior Deborah Shepard, 21, of Rochester Hills, listens to the discussion Tuesday afternoon at the student center.

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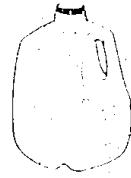
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