

Academic Freedom in the Classroom:

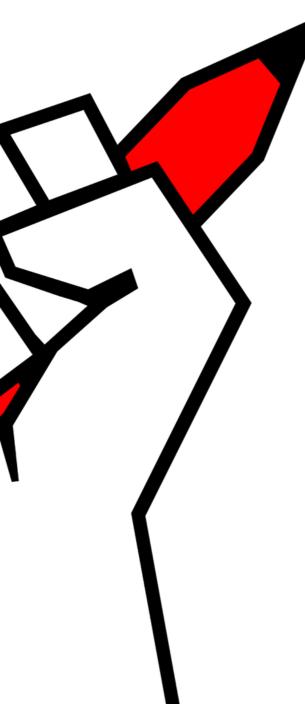
Maintaining Intellectual Curiosity in Times of Institutional Change

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Introduction

PART 1: WHAT ACADEMIC FREEDOM IS AND WHAT IT IS NOT?

What is "Academic Freedom"?

What does "Academic Freedom" mean to you as an academic and an educator?

Is there a difference in the two?

Brainstorm and share



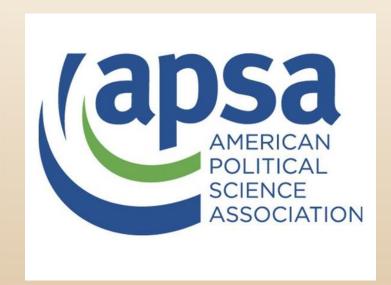
What is "Academic Freedom"?



"Institutions of higher education are conducted for the common good and not to further the interest of either the individual teacher or the institution as a whole. The common good depends upon the free search for truth and its free exposition."

1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure, American Association of University Professors

What is "Academic Freedom"?



...Political scientists conduct research on, or teach about, some of the most controversial and difficult subjects of our time and although political science faculty should not tell students how to vote or what to think, they must be free to teach the subject of politics in ways that help students evaluate evidence and understand competing arguments [...] Without such freedom, knowledge cannot be developed, opinions cannot be tested against evidence, and students will not learn as deeply as they might otherwise. All academics, no matter how controversial their subject, must be able to conduct research and teach without fear of intimidation or harassment.

Statement on Academic Freedom, American Political Science Association, April 17, 2007

What "Academic Freedom" Does

- Academic freedom **does** mean that both faculty members and students can engage in intellectual debate without fear of censorship or retaliation.
- Academic freedom **does** establish a faculty member's right to remain true to his or her pedagogical philosophy and intellectual commitments. It preserves the intellectual integrity of our educational system and thus serves the public good.
- Academic freedom in teaching **does** mean that both faculty members and students can make comparisons and contrasts between subjects taught in a course and any field of human knowledge or period of history.

- Academic freedom **does** protect faculty members and students from reprisals for disagreeing with administrative policies or proposals.
- Academic freedom **does** give faculty members and students the right to challenge one another's views, but not to penalize them for holding them
- Academic freedom **does** give faculty members substantial latitude in deciding how to teach the courses for which they are responsible.

What "Academic Freedom" Doesn't Do

- Academic freedom **does not** mean a faculty member can harass, threaten, intimidate, ridicule, or impose his or her views on students.
- Academic freedom **does not** protect faculty members from colleague or student challenges to or disagreement with their educational philosophy and practices.
- Academic freedom **does not** protect faculty members from non-university penalties if they break the law.

- Academic freedom **does not** protect faculty members from sanctions for professional misconduct, though sanctions require clear proof established through due process.
- Neither academic freedom nor tenure protects a faculty member who repeatedly skips class or refuses to teach the classes or subject matter assigned.
- Neither academic freedom nor tenure protects an incompetent teacher from losing his or her job. Academic freedom thus does not grant an unqualified guarantee of lifetime employment.

Real world controversy #1

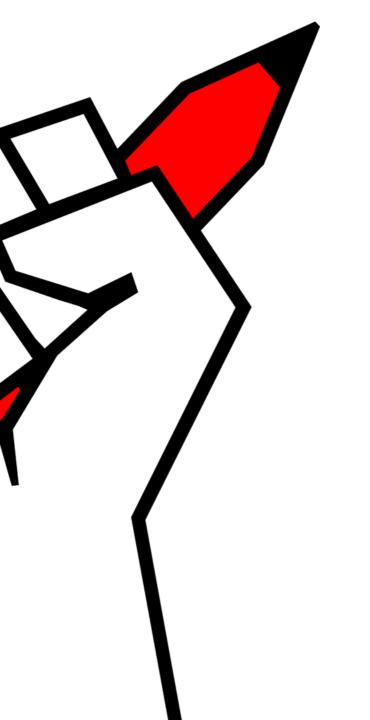
- Students complained that their English professor spent a significant portion of their classes talking about the QAnon conspiracy theory. One student described the professor's teaching style as "just babbling, basically." Another student said the professor's class was "chill" because he "goes over quizzes," but also "weird" because "you have politics being spouted at you for an hour instead of being taught actual English stuff."
- Is the faculty's academic freedom protected in this scenario.



Real world controversy #2

- A biology professor at a university published research, which he claims proves the "young-Earth" creationist view – that the world is only 5,000 years old.
- Two weeks after his article was published, the university fired the biology professor.
- The university argued that it acted due to budgetary adjustments and a declining need for his services; he was a part-time, temporary employee, it said.
- Was the professor's academic freedom violated?





PART 2: CHALLENGES TO ACADEMIC FREEDOM IN THE AGE OF POLITICAL CHANGE

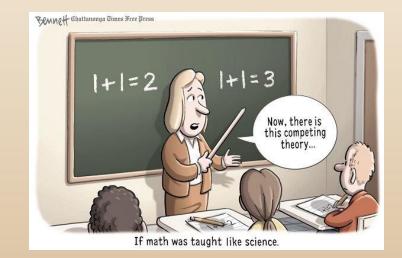
Challenge 1 Fed: Trump and DOE Initiative re College Campus Freedom of Speech

 President Trump signed an Executive Order in March 2019 threatening to withhold federal funding from higher education institutions that do not promote "open, intellectually engaging, and diverse debate".



Challenge 1 Fed: Trump and DOE Initiative re College Campus Freedom of Speech

 How do these types of policies impact the established definition of academic freedom as outlined by APSA and AAUP?



CHALLENGE 2 State: Garcetti v. Ceballos (2006) decision

• In a 5-4 ruling the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that when public employees, speak, "pursuant to their official duties, the employees are not speaking as citizens for First Amendment purposes, and the Constitution does not insulate their communications from employer discipline".





[&]quot;Garcetti v. Ceballos." Oyez, www.oyez.org/cases/2005/04-473. Accessed 17 Aug. 2019.

CHALLENGE 2 State Level: Garcetti v. Ceballos (2006) decision

What are the implications for faculty?



CHALLENGE 2 State: Garcetti v. Ceballos (2006) decision

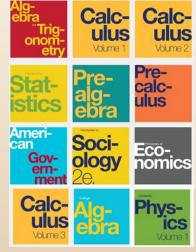
The implications?

- While certainly a dangerous precedent for public employees, college faculty may have additional protections at the state and institutional levels.
- Faculty and staff unions may also provide additional protections
- More needs to be done to guard against further assaults on Academic Freedom



CHALLENGE 3: OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES (OER)

 Discussion Question: Are colleges infringing on Academic Freedom by encouraging faculty to adopt Open Educational Resources (OER)?



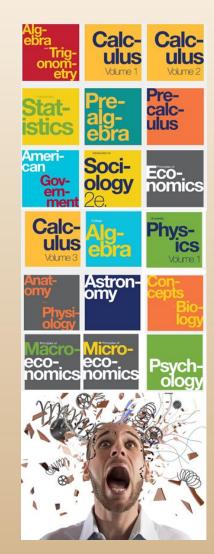
CLAIM: The college is pushing faculty to adopt open source textbooks, which takes away from my freedom to teach my classes according to my preferences.



CHALLENGE 3: OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES (OER)

The Reality

- So long as a mandatory policy is not put in place or a pre-selected list is endorsed, simply encouraging faculty to adopt OER's is NOT an infringement on Academic Freedom.
- Faculty maintain broad discretion in designing, and evaluating the curriculum, so long as they follow adopted learning outcomes.
- As community college faculty we should be aware that most of our students are lowincome and disproportionally harmed by higher education costs.
 - OER offers an equity-minded solution



CHALLENGE 4: RECODING LECTURES

 Are policies that encourage faculty to allow recordings of their lectures an infringement on Academic Freedom?

 What are some concerns faculty have?



CHALLENGE 4: RECODING LECTURES

- Political Science deals with difficult, often controversial (hot button) topics.
- As faculty, try to encourage a high level of student engagement and class participation. The best type of learning environment is one where trust is established early on.
- Lecture content is often spontaneous and responsive to student input. Selfcensorship is not conducive to a robust learning atmosphere.
 - Remember that academic freedom is your right!

