

5 February 2020

**What topics should be allowed under Academic Freedom and the Faculty Code of Ethics?:
Statement made at February 5th Faculty Senate Meeting**

One framework of understanding the relationship between academic freedom and the faculty code of ethics is that faculty are free to decide what topics to research/teach/discuss but the discussion must “foster an environment of mutual respect.”

Unfortunately, as I have discovered over the last week, there is no bright line dividing the freedom of what can be discussed and the restrictions on how it can be discussed.

What views are now banned on college campuses? We are not talking here about direct physical threats. Those are already illegal, and universities should call the police if they are made. Nor is anyone on campus advocating slavery, genocide, or child molestation. Such speech might be protected by the First Amendment, but nobody is seriously advocating them.

That is not what academic freedom on campus is about. It is the freedom to voice — and hear — unpopular views on topics without committing an ethics violation. Unfortunately, colleges across America have banned or limited in place and/or time a wide variety of topics where it is believed that the topic itself or one view of the topic is considered offensive to the community – a violation of the necessity for mutual respect. For each of these topics, there is only one view or opinion that is acceptable. Alternative views are sanctioned.

I have a list - in alphabetic order – of topics most of which have been banned or have resulted in official or unofficial sanctions on one or more American college campuses.

abortion, adoption of children by homosexuals, affirmative action, all lives matter, America should be a melting pot, biological sex is real, black lives matter, blue lives matter, climate change, college football can heal communities, color blind, cultural appropriation, critical race theory, diversity oaths, English as the official language, gender transition of children, gun control, hate speech should be censored, illegal aliens, implicit bias, Islam devalues women, land of opportunity, legal vote, marriage is between a man and a woman, merit-based admissions, microeconomics of poverty, most qualified person should get the job, myths about poverty, non-black minority group successes, personal responsibility, pornography, reparations for slavery, self-selected pronouns, sexual preferences, sexual reassignment surgery, slavery in the MENA, socialism, snowflakes, support for Hong Kong, support for Israel, systemic racism, trans women competing in women’s sports, white fragility, white privilege, and Wuhan virus.

Question: Could the Code of Ethics be used to sanction the presentation of unpopular views on controversial topics such as these? Thank you!