

## **Political Science 185: Political Discourse on Today's College Campus**

Professors Boatright and Williams

Selected Tuesdays, 3:00-5:00

JEF 400

### Course Description

As has become clear over the past year, many Americans regard college campuses with deep distrust. American colleges and universities are sometimes seen as bastions of liberal thought, places where students and faculty rarely take the time to seriously engage with the centrist and conservative ideas that hold sway in Washington, DC today. Clark, like many schools, prides itself on being different from the rest of society. In today's polarized political climate, however, it is important that we think about some of the controversies on college campuses today and how they are perceived by those outside the academy. In cases where these perceptions are not fair, we should try to defend, in a civil fashion, the things that take place at Clark. In cases where critics have a point, we should think carefully about what we might do to welcome different points of view. The goal of this class is to help you understand how others see our community and how we can think objectively about the political choices our community has made about how we discuss controversial issues. Topics considered include speech policies, the political views of faculty and students, the ways in which colleges prepare students for civic engagement, and the role of media and outside funding in campus activities.

This is a Problems of Practice (POP) course. Per the Clark University webpage, "Problems of Practice (POP) courses are internship-like experiences that take place within an academic context. In these innovative courses, you will work on a faculty-led team to investigate and respond to an engaging and complex question, problem, or challenge that has significance beyond the borders of Clark's campus. You'll read relevant literature and scholarly texts, reflect on your experiences, and share your insights" (<http://www.clarku.edu/problems-practice-courses>).

### Course Requirements

This is a pass/no credit course. The most important requirement for this class is your attendance and participation. In order to receive credit for this course, you must:

- Be here
- Do all the readings
- For one of the class meetings, work with one or two of your classmates to develop a set of online discussion questions that you will post on Moodle by 5 pm on the Friday preceding the class
- Using your colleagues' proposed discussion questions, post analytical responses to the readings on Moodle in which you need to address the main theme/argument of the readings and the evidence provided. Consider how the readings are connected. Be sure to bring a copy to class, as well, as these will be the basis for our discussions. These responses must be posted by 8 am on Tuesday of class
- Every day check one of the various newspapers or aggregators (*New York Times*, *Slate*, *Real Clear Politics*, *Heterodox Academy* [published every Friday]) and read an article related to campus politics. The *Chronicle of Higher Education* and *Inside Higher Ed* also will have articles of relevance.
- At various points in the course, talk with friends and/or family about some of the issues we are discussing and be prepared to report on the results of these discussions
- Prepare a short essay on the class at the end of the semester
- Help to prepare an Academic Spree Day presentation on the class

### Measuring Perceptions of Speech on Campus

In conjunction with *Heterodox Academy*, an organization that studies “viewpoint diversity” on college campuses, we are hoping to develop and implement a campus-wide survey of student perceptions of speech on campus. If we are able to do this within a reasonable time frame, we will devote some time during class to exploring the results of this survey and their implications for Clark.

### Special Guests

During some of our class sessions we will have faculty guests – people from the Clark faculty or from other schools in the region. These guests will be chosen to help us explore particular topics and to add contrasting views to the discussion. Guests will be announced in advance; if you are one of the students scheduled to help lead discussion, one of your tasks will be to figure out what we should ask our guest lecturers.

### Schedule and Readings

(Note: All readings are available online; if no url is listed, a pdf of the reading is available on the course Moodle page.)

#### **January 14: Introduction to the Course\***

Jonathan Haidt, “The Age of Outrage: What the Current Political Climate is Doing to our Country and Our Universities,” *City Journal*, December 17, 2017. <https://www.city-journal.org/html/age-outrage-15608.html>.

Read and think about one of the recent political controversies that has taken place on an American college campus recently. You can find these by using the search term “political speech controversy” followed by, among others *Yale*, *Evergreen State*, *Middlebury*, *Williams College*, *Oberlin*, *Reed College*, *Claremont*, *College of the Holy Cross*, *Amherst* . . .

*\*ASSIGNMENT: Reflect on a conversation(s) you had with your family and/or friends during the winter break about politics. How did you handle any disagreements?*

#### **January 28: Free Speech on Campus**

➤ Possible Special Guest via Skype

American Association of University Professors, “Report: Freedom in the Classroom,” September-October 2007, <https://www.aaup.org/file/ACASO07FreedomClassrmRpt.pdf>

University of Chicago, “Introductory Letter to Freshmen,” September 2016, <https://www.chicagomaroon.com/article/2016/8/24/university-to-freshmen-dont-expect-safe-spaces-or-trigger-warnings/>

University of Chicago, “Faculty Response Letter,” September 2016, <https://www.chicagomaroon.com/article/2016/9/13/letter-faculty-respond-ellison-letter/>

Greg Lukianoff, Eric Posner, and Catherine J. Ross, “Free Speech on College Campuses,” *Cato Unbound*, January 2016, <https://www.cato-unbound.org/print-issue/2023>.

P. E. Moskowitz, “Everything you Think you Know about Free Speech is a Lie,” *The Nation*, August 20, 2019, <https://www.thenation.com/article/portland-speech-milo-antifa-koch/>

Stanley Fish, “Why Freedom of Speech is not an Academic Value,” in *The First* (New York, One Signal Publishers, 2019): 63-108.

Julie Voorhes and Marc Lendler, “Student Opinion on Campus Speech Rights: A Longitudinal Study” (August 27, 2018), [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=3239686](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3239686) or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3239686>

### **February 11: Issues in the classroom and on the Quad: Trigger Warnings, Safe Spaces, and Controversial Speakers on Campus**

American Association of University Professors, “On Trigger Warnings,” [https://www.aaup.org/file/2014-Trigger\\_Warnings.pdf](https://www.aaup.org/file/2014-Trigger_Warnings.pdf)

Greg Lukianoff and Jonathan Haidt, “The Coddling of the American Mind,” *The Atlantic*, September 2015, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/09/the-coddling-of-the-american-mind/399356/>

Robert Boyers, “Hostile and Unsafe: Ideas & the Fear of Diversity,” in *The Tyranny of Virtue: Identity, the Academy, and the Hunt for Political Heresies* (New York, Scribner, 2019): 87-110.

Payton Jones, Benjamin Bellett, and Richard McNally, “Helping or Harming? The Effect of Trigger Warnings on Individuals with Trauma Histories,” OSF Preprints, July 10, 2019, <https://osf.io/axn6z/>

### **February 25: Discourse Projects on Other Campuses**

➤ Special Guest: Professor Brendan Kane, Department of History, University of Connecticut  
Browse the Humility & Conviction in Public Life website, <https://humilityandconviction.uconn.edu/>  
Michael Lynch, “Teaching Humility in an Age of Arrogance,” *Chronicle of Higher Education*, June 5, 2017, <https://www.chronicle.com/article/Teaching-Humility-in-an-Age-of/240266>.

Beth McMurtrie, “These Professors Help Student See why Others Think Differently,” *Chronicle of Higher Education*, September 22, 2019, <https://www.chronicle.com/article/These-Professors-Help-Students/247172>.

Allison Stanger, “Exploring Free Speech on College Campuses” (Senate Hearing Testimony), October 26, 2017, <https://www.help.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Stanger.pdf>.

Chris Bodener, “The Surprising Revolt at the Most Liberal School in the Country,” *The Atlantic*, November 2, 2017, <https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2017/11/the-surprising-revolt-at-reed/544682/>

### **March 10: Why have Conservatives Become Less Supportive of Academia?**

➤ Special Guest: Professor Molly McGrath, Department of Philosophy, Assumption College  
Joshua Dunn and Jon Shields, *Passing on the Right: Conservative Professors in the Progressive University* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016) [selections]

Amy Binder and Kate Wood, “Sponsored Conservatism,” in *Becoming Right: How Campuses Shape Young Conservatives* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013): 76-112.

Joe Pinsker, “Republicans Changed their Minds about Higher Education Really Quickly,” *The Atlantic*, August 21, 2019, <https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2019/08/republicans-conservatives-college/596497/>

Patrick Deneen, “Liberalism against the Liberal Arts,” in *Why Liberalism Failed* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2018): 110-30.

### **March 18: Clark University Scholars at Risk Event (3:00; Location TBA)**

“Free to Think: Response of the Scholars at Risk Academic Freedom Monitoring Project 2019.” On line, <https://www.scholarsatrisk.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Scholars-at-Risk-Free-to-Think-2019.pdf>.

### **March 24: Philanthropy and Academia**

David W. Johnson, "Academe on the Auction Block," *The Baffler* 36 (2017),

<https://thebaffler.com/salvos/academe-on-the-auction-block-johnson>

Daniel Drezner, "Academia and the War on College" (ch 3) and "The Disciplines, or, Why Economics Thrives while Political Science Survives in the Ideas Industry" (ch 4), in *The Ideas Industry: How Pessimists, Partisans, and Plutocrats are Transforming the Marketplace of Ideas* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).

Rob Reich, "Repugnant to the Whole Idea of a Democratic Society? On the role of foundations," in *Just Giving: Why Philanthropy is Failing Democracy and How it can do Better* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018): 135-68.

### **April 14: Changes in the Media**

➤ Possible Special Guest via Skype

Sarah Sobieraj and Jeff Berry, "The Perfect Storm," and "It's a Business," in *The Outrage Industry: Political Opinion Media and the New Incivility* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013): 66-125.

Jeffrey Gottfried and Elizabeth Grieco, "Nearly three-quarters of Republicans say the news media don't understand people like them," *Pew Research Center*, January 18, 2019, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/01/18/nearly-three-quarters-of-republicans-say-the-news-media-dont-understand-people-like-them/>

Jeffery Gottfried, et al, "Trusting the News Media in the Trump Era," *Pew Research Center*, December 12, 2019, <https://www.journalism.org/2019/12/12/trusting-the-news-media-in-the-trump-era/>

Elizabeth Grieco, "9 Charts about America's Newsrooms," *Pew Research Center*, November 26, 2019, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/11/26/9-charts-about-americas-newsrooms/>

David Lazer et al, "The Science of Fake News," *Science* 359, 6380 (March 9, 2018): 1094-1096, [https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/mbaum/files/science\\_of\\_fake\\_news.pdf](https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/mbaum/files/science_of_fake_news.pdf)

Soroush Vosoughi, Deb Roy, and Sinan Aral, "The spread of true and false news online," *Science* 359 (March 9, 2018): 1146-1151, <https://science.sciencemag.org/content/sci/359/6380/1146.full.pdf>

### **April 21: Political Discourse and the Future of U.S. Democracy**

#### **Wrap-Up/Final Thoughts**

"Public Highly Critical of State of Political Discourse in the U.S.," *Pew Research Center*, June 19, 2019, <https://www.people-press.org/2019/06/19/public-highly-critical-of-state-of-political-discourse-in-the-u-s/>

Sean Illing, "The rot at the heart of American democracy," *Vox*, November 4, 2019, <https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2019/11/4/20898605/america-democracy-populism-republicans-daniel-ziblatt>

Rick Shenkman, "The Shocking Paper Predicting the End of Democracy," *Politico*, September 8, 2019, <https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2019/09/08/shawn-rosenberg-democracy-228045>

Nancy Rosenblum and Russell Muirhead, *A Lot of People Are Saying: The New Conspiracism and the Assault on Democracy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019), selections TBA.

### **April 22: Academic Spree Day**