

DISCUSSION & REVIEW QUESTIONS:

- At the beginning of the video, Mr. Prager contends that, “If what I am about to tell you is true, almost everything we most treasure – freedom, beauty, reason, the family, economic well-being, and goodness – is in jeopardy. Who or what poses this threat? The answer is the most powerful ideology of the last hundred years – Leftism. Not liberalism, Leftism – or, if you prefer, Progressivism.” Why do you think that Mr. Prager makes a distinction between Liberalism and Leftism? In what ways do you think that Leftists pose a threat to ‘everything we most treasure?’
- Mr. Prager goes on to cite some examples of the Left’s war on treasured American values and culture, starting with, “...the Left’s near destruction of most universities as places of learning. In the words of Harvard professor Steven Pinker – an atheist and a Liberal – because of the Left, ‘universities are becoming laughing stocks of intolerance.’ At almost every university – and now high schools and even elementary schools – students are taught to shut down – not debate – those who differ with them. And to rely on feelings rather than reason.” What do you think Professor Pinker means when he characterizes universities as ‘laughing stocks of intolerance?’ Explain. In what ways do you think that students being so egregiously misled to shut down those whose differ with them and to use feelings rather than reason are being diserved and even being harmed? Explain.
- Citing another example, Mr. Prager explains that, “If there was anything virtually every American considered a bedrock value, it was freedom of speech. Yet, the Left is destroying even this unique American achievement. Almost half of America’s young people say they believe in free speech, but not for ‘hate speech.’ Yet, the whole point of free speech is that it allows people to express any political or social position, including what any one of us considers ‘hate speech.’ And ‘hate speech’ now means any position the Left differs with.” Why do you think that the Left wants to sensitize young people to be easily offended and to incentivize young people to embrace a victim mentality when challenged on their views? Do you agree with Mr. Prager’s assertion that ‘hate speech’ is defined as any position that the Left disagrees with? Why or why not?
- Later in the video, Mr. Prager points out another example, that, “The Left is destroying the Boy Scouts. They’re not even the Boy Scouts any more; they’re just the Scouts. The Left forced them to admit girls. Here’s the thing about the Left: it only destroys. It doesn’t build. The Boy Scouts have helped shape tens of millions of boys into independent, strong, good men. So where is the Left-wing version of the Boy Scouts? It doesn’t exist. There is none.” Why do you think that the Left destroyed the Boy Scouts? Explain. Do you find anything wrong with the fact that the Left forced the Boy Scouts to admit girls, but did not compel the Girl Scouts to admit boys? Why or why not?
- At the end of the video, Mr. Prager concludes by asking, “...why does the Left engage in so much destruction? Because it thinks America is essentially a bad country. But America is only bad compared to Utopia. And the Left is Utopian. Compared to other countries, America is close to paradise. Do you think it’s worth saving? The Left doesn’t. They want to, in their words, transform it, not save it.” Why do you think the Left feels so entitled to change an already existing nation (that a majority of that nation likes and wants) into something else, rather than go somewhere else that more aligns with their Utopian values or rather than start their own Utopian society from scratch? Do you think a Utopian society could actually exist, or do you think that Utopia is a fantasy that could never actually work in reality? Explain.

EXTEND THE LEARNING:

CASE STUDY: Debate

INSTRUCTIONS: Read the articles “Colleges Have No Right to Limit Students’ Free Speech,” “Why debating still matters,” and “The Art of Disagreeing,” then answer the questions that follow.

- How does the first author define the term ‘debate?’ Why have young people historically flocked to universities? What do American college campuses look and feel like now? What happened to the University of Delaware students who rolled a ‘free-speech’ ball around campus? What do safe spaces and free-speech zones enable? What do speech codes that exclude different ideologies do? What does the art of debate involve? According to Robert Sharpe, what is the essence of free speech? What does one have to first accept if arguments are to be properly heard? What did Ife Grillo learn, especially in terms of the process of debate? What does Ife say one must do when one gets up to speak on a subject? What was the RELEVANT/SCRAP exhibit, what happened to it, and what position did the groups of students on each side take regarding it? What happens when students have their conceptions of the world challenged? When does art happen? What must those in higher education negotiate between? How do civil disagreements help society, and what happens in the absence of such engagement?
- What value is there in listening to and understanding a differing point of view from your own? Do you think that people who have views different from your own should have just as much right to express their views as you have to express yours? Why or why not? Do you think that Leftists should be allowed to shut down free speech, especially on school campuses? Why or why not?
- What relevance do the points made in the articles have to the points made in the video? Explain.



QUIZ

THE LEFT RUINS EVERYTHING

1. Which of the following is the most powerful ideology of the last hundred years?

- a. Christianity
- b. Conservatism
- c. Liberalism
- d. Leftism

2. To the left, the primary purpose of art, sculpture, and music is _____.

- a. to elevate people
- b. to shock
- c. to educate
- d. to teach

3. Leftist professors have replaced the pursuit of excellence with the pursuit of diversity.

- a. True
- b. False

4. What did the left do to the Boy Scouts?

- a. Pressured them to change their name to the Girl Scouts.
- b. Praised their aim of shaping boys into independent, strong, good men.
- c. Put them out of business by creating their own group.
- d. Forced them to admit girls.

5. Teachers are told _____.

- a. not to refer to their students as “boys”
- b. not to refer to their students as “girls”
- c. to refer to their students as just “students”
- d. All of the above.



QUIZ - ANSWER KEY

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<http://time.com/4530197/college-free-speech-zone/>

Colleges Have No Right to Limit Students' Free Speech

The campus of the University of Chicago
Lonely Planet—Getty Images/Lonely Planet Images

By Cliff Maloney, Jr.

October 13, 2016

Maloney is the Executive Director at Young Americans for Liberty.

In grade school, I learned that debate is defined as “a discussion between people in which they express different opinions about something.”

Such open discourse was historically encouraged on our college campuses. Universities exemplified intellectual discussion and debate in America. No one voiced their opinions louder than students, professors and administrators. They pushed society’s limits by admitting women and people of color, and by encouraging diversity of thought amongst the college community. Historically, young people flocked to universities to learn more about the world around them, to encounter people from different backgrounds, to expand their minds and to form their own opinions.

Unfortunately, things have changed. Recently on college campuses, our open discourse has been threatened, particularly when discussing politics.

While the current presidential election represents polarizing wings of both the Democratic and Republican parties, we should be able to openly debate their policies and the direction in which they plan to take our

country if elected. We should be able to discuss the abuse of power within our government and the consistent violations of our Bill of Rights. We should be able to participate in the free market of ideas. But our students are being silenced.

University campuses are now home to a plethora of speech restrictions. From sidewalk-sized “free-speech zones” to the criminalization of microaggressions, America’s college campuses look and feel a lot more like an authoritarian dictatorship than they do the academic hubs of the modern free world. When rolling an inflated free-speech ball around campus, students at the University of Delaware were halted by campus police for their activities. A Young Americans for Liberty leader at Fairmont State University in West Virginia was confronted by security when he was attempting to speak with other students about the ideas he believes in. A man at Clemson University was barred from praying on campus because he was outside of the free-speech zone. And a student at Blinn College in Texas abolished her campus’ free-speech zone in a lawsuit after administrators demanded she seek special permission to advocate for self-defense.

How have we let this happen in America, the land of the free?

It’s because of what our universities have taught a generation of Americans: If you don’t agree with someone, are uncomfortable with an idea, or don’t find a joke funny, then their speech must be suppressed. Especially if they don’t politically agree with you.

Instead of actually debating ideas that span topics from the conventional to the taboo, a generation of American students don’t engage, they just get enraged. In doing so, many students believe that they have a right to literally shut other people up. This is not only a threat to the First Amendment, but also to American democracy.

In their manifestation, safe spaces and free-speech zones at public universities enable prejudice against unfavorable ideologies. Guised as progressive measures to ensure inclusion, these often unconstitutional policies exclude new and competing ideas, and are antithetical to a free academia. In excluding different ideologies, supposedly progressive campus speech codes do one thing: prevent the progression of ideas. Restrictive campus speech codes are, in fact, regressive.

With over 750 chapters nationwide at Young Americans for Liberty, we are fighting against public universities that stifle free speech. We’ve launched the national Fight for Free Speech campaign to reform unconstitutional speech codes and abolish these so-called free-speech zones on college campuses. By hosting events such as large free speech balls, YAL chapters across the country are petitioning their campuses to adopt the University of Chicago’s principles on freedom of expression—the hallmark of campus speech policies. Our members have geared up with First Amendment organizations to ensure that their free speech rights on campus are protected.

America is a land rooted in the ideas of a free society: the freedom to be who you are, to speak your mind and to innovate. By silencing our students and young people, we have started down a slippery slope. It is up to us to fight back to ensure that our First Amendment rights remain protected—not just on college campuses, but everywhere in America.

Why debating still matters

A team of teenagers from England have just won this year's World Schools Debating Championship. But what relevance do skills more often associated with ancient Greece – or public school – have in today's world?

Alex Clark

Sat 6 Aug 2016 04.00 EDT Last modified on Tue 28 Nov 2017 11.49 EST



Cicero in the Roman senate. Photograph: Baldwin H Ward/Kathryn C Ward

The current political scene might have been radically different if Remain had had Diodotus on its side: if you could persuade an assembly of Athenians bent on retribution to spare the lives of a group of rebels, then you could probably best Boris Johnson. The Mytilenian debate of 427BC is perhaps one of the ancient world's best examples of an argument with something vital at stake: following an unsuccessful insurrection in the city of Mytilene, the Athenians had voted to put to death not only the uprising's leaders, but all Mytilenian men, and to enslave its women and children. Fears that this judgment erred on the side of harshness led to a second debate, with Diodotus arguing for clemency, and Cleon, "the most violent man at Athens", opposing him.

Cleon's point was that justice must prevail in the face of the deliberate malice of the Mytilenians, and that a show of weakness by the imperial government was potentially disastrous; better, he said, to enforce bad laws than to shilly-shally around with good ones. And what, he asked his audience to imagine, would the rebels do if they were in the Athenians' shoes?

None of this daunted Diodotus, whose counter-argument began with a paean to the power of debate: "The good citizen," he insisted, "ought to triumph not by frightening his opponents, but by beating them fairly in argument." And beat Cleon he did, in a series of detailed appeals to his audience, setting out his belief in how Athens' long-term interests would best be served. The vote was close, but Diodotus won the day. The Mytileneans were spared.

Fast-forward two-and-a-half millennia – past the sight of Johnson and Michael Gove, both presidents of the Oxford Union in the late 1980s, practising in its august chamber for later life – to Stuttgart in July 2016, where Team England beat Canada in the final of the World Schools Debating Championship in a debate about states' responsibilities towards refugees. Like all good teenagers, the five members of the team (which is funded and supported by the English Speaking Union, who also provide coaching) regularly

found time to relax – rapping along to the soundtrack of Hamilton the musical was a favourite activity – but their focus and determination was undeniable.

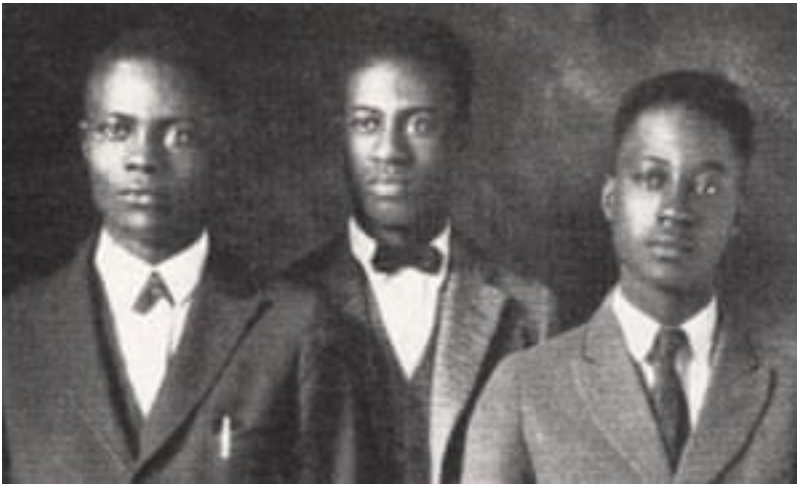
Their victory allows us to pose a question, or indeed a topic for debate: what is the value and relevance of this kind of debate in the contemporary world, where the word itself has come to be associated more with politicians slugging it out on TV than a honed, elegant rhetorical skill? Whichever side you're on, it's hard to see Owen Smith or Jeremy Corbyn as latterday Athenians; their first debate in Cardiff on Thursday night revealed some substantial, outward-looking argument, but also an awful lot of cagey positioning and irritable repudiation of the other's views, record and ability. And parliamentary debates rarely reach a level we might happily call Ciceronian.

And yet the art of debate involves mastering skills of obvious intrinsic value: the confidence to speak in public, and make sense; the construction of a logical argument; the ability to read an audience's reactions; and, perhaps most importantly, the willingness to hear others' arguments, and to respond to them. For Rosa Thomas, one of Team England's members, being brought face to face with the reality of other debaters' lives was particularly memorable: "It makes you more aware of your national assumptions," she says. "For example, that there is a national health service. But you can't rely on this with an international audience. Also, you are aware that when talking about other countries, there will be individuals from those places in the audience. It makes you think about using more nuanced examples – I remember thinking this during the semi-final, when I used the Israel-Palestine conflict as an example, and seeing some members of the Israel team in the audience."

If a perception of this kind of competitive debating as old-fashioned and the preserve of public schools and university societies goes unchallenged, then we lose a great deal. Robert Sharpe of the worldwide writers' association English PEN sees charges of elitism as a shame, because "the skills one learns through a good debate are crucial for modern life. Political events continue to remind us of the importance of persuasive arguments and good oratory that appeal not only to our rational side, but our emotional side too." He also thinks the ability to see the other side is particularly important. "The essence of free speech is that we allow people with whom we disagree to speak. Wrongheaded views will be aired. But free speech means no one gets the last word. We can – and indeed, we should – use our own right to free speech to challenge expression we think is unpleasant or wrong. To do this we need to be equipped to argue in public. Debating competitions are a fantastic way to teach this important skill to young people." Later this year, English PEN will join the Chamber Debate in the House of Lords, in which students from state schools across the country will discuss the issue of free speech.

The discussion of the possible limits and limitations of free speech recurs on an almost constant basis across social media, and perhaps nowhere so starkly as on Twitter, where those disagreeing with one another rail at anyone who will listen – and indeed, anyone who won't. Twitter's problem is its encouragement of the individual's "broadcast mode", where the superficial appearance of a conversation is, in fact, two or more people simply stating and restating their views with ever-intensifying fury. Nothing real is at stake: the exchange can be abandoned at any point. Hacked off with someone? Block them. Too shy to block? Mute (the word is telling).

But the powerful thing Twitter has going for it is that there is no barrier to entry if you have access to the internet. To take part in a debate, you have to be allowed through the front door in the first place; it's striking, if not surprising, that Iffe Grillo is the only state-educated member of the English debating team. His path to Stuttgart began when he joined Debate Mate, an organisation founded to encourage children from less privileged backgrounds to learn. Meg Hillier, MP for Hackney South and Shoreditch, which contains Grillo's school, the Bridge Academy, makes the point that his success is particularly exciting because "it shows that Hackney schools are not just about exam results and rote learning, they're about teaching wider life skills. The ability to speak well is something that's useful throughout the employment process." Hillier also thinks the idea of a generation plugged into social media, not listening to one another, is unduly pessimistic: "I was at a debate on the EU referendum the other day, and it was full of talented, bright young people making their case very reasonably. I told them we could probably learn from them in parliament."



Melvin B Tolson (centre), who led his Wiley College debate team to a famous victory against Harvard in 1935, and inspired the film *The Great Debaters*. Photograph: Courtesy of Wiley College/Wiley College

Those still in need of convincing of the importance of debate as a force for social change should watch *The Great Debaters*, in which Denzel Washington stars as Melvin B Tolson, a real-life teacher at the largely black Wiley College in Texas, who in the 1930s coached his debating team in the face of prejudice. And the idea of prejudice within debate is key throughout history: for arguments to be properly heard, one has first to accept that all have the right to make them, and to believe in a commonality of capability, capacity and sensibility.

Think, for example, of the fourth act of *The Merchant of Venice*, in which the characters gather to determine whether Shylock shall have his pound of flesh from Antonio. As Bassanio pleads with Shylock, Antonio tells him, “I pray you, think you question with the Jew: / You may as well go stand upon the beach / And bid the main flood bate his usual height”; he ends with a declaration that nothing is harder than a Jew’s heart. The point may seem to be simply describing Shylock’s implacability – but the fact that it occurs as Shylock is using logic and reason to rebuff the noblemen creates a link between his capacity for debate and the idea of him as inhumane, beyond empathy. It’s not that Shylock isn’t good enough at winning the argument; it’s that he’s too good.

The slaughter of the Mytileneans, the extraction of a pound of flesh; not all debates have such visceral and bloodthirsty subject matter. But the greatest encounters have altered the course of history: Thomas Huxley and Bishop Wilberforce dissecting the theory of evolution in Oxford in 1860; the war cabinet debate of 1940 that led to Churchill’s ascendancy; Richard Nixon’s sweat-coated appearance against a fit, tanned JFK in the 1960 presidential race.

The elision of the purer forms of debate with politicians seeking advancement is a more recent development – and one we might be ambivalent about inasmuch as it rewards the slick and telegenic. Jeremy Corbyn’s fervent following demonstrates that the electorate is keen for what it sees as authenticity and a lack of spin; others may argue that Corbyn’s plain-speaking is also a persona. I asked Sam Leith, author of *You Talkin’ to Me? Rhetoric from Aristotle to Obama*, what he thought.

“It’s tempting to look at modern-day political debates and think what a long way we’ve come from the days of Cicero and Pericles,” he told me. “But it’s worth remembering that the whole game is knowing your audience, and knowing the medium. Nowadays, the main audience for a debate won’t be the people in earshot: the exchange is intended to be, as it were, overheard by hundreds of thousands of people on television and social media. So, of course, people don’t make three-hour-long, perfectly turned speeches intended to be taken in whole: they semaphore emotion, repeat key words, pepper it with catchphrases and soundbites. And that’s what works.”

And what’s his view of a young generation of Ciceros? “Debating in schools seems to teach you things unlearnable in other ways: not only how to construct an argument (and rejig it on the hoof), but how its

success depends more than anything on the form of its expression. It teaches you to think on your feet and fight dirty. Plus public speaking is shit-scary, and that's good for kids."

If we are to hold our politicians to account – especially as we enter a protracted period of negotiations about our national future – then it is as well to be able to follow the arguments of those in power and expose their inconsistencies. We have just come through an epochal political event that saw the repeated claim by voters that they couldn't make their way through the thicket of facts, half-facts and rhetoric put before them. Time to say goodbye to that cloud of unknowing: joining the debate is more of a necessity than ever before.



Team England, winners of the 2016 World Schools Debating Championship. From left: Ed Bracey, Ife Grillo, captain Kenza Wilks, Rosa Thomas and Archie Hall. Photograph: Gigi Giannella

'It makes you question your own opinions'

Ife Grillo, member of England's 2016 champion debating team

I did a lot of debating at school before deciding to enter. At first I was skeptical – do I really want to spend my summer debating? But after the first trial I knew I wanted to be in the England team. It took three tries to get a place.

One of the big things I've learned is that it's not just about speaking well – it's about learning to embrace a wide variety of arguments. The audience should not be able to tell whether you personally believe something. The process forces you to at least respect the other side of an argument and it makes you question your own opinion.

This was particularly the case during one motion, which was "This House believes that the Obama administration's foreign policy has done more harm than good". I have always really respected Obama, and he is one of my favourite speakers. I didn't want to hate him. But I had to think about the perspectives of people in places like Syria and Yemen. When you get up to speak you have to set aside your emotions and put yourself in someone else's shoes. It's like acting in that sense.

I used to do a lot of slam poetry in London, too, which helped a lot. The last spoken word I did was in March at the Southbank – a poem called I Stand, about solidarity around the world. Maya Angelou is a big inspiration – she is a speaker who always makes me feel something. I love her poem *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*.

Another huge help was the fact that Kenza was a phenomenal captain. I think the main reason we won was our teamwork. We knew what made us frustrated or annoyed.

I knew when Rosa was writing, for example, she didn't like any of us to speak, and I had to respect that. We were really good at coordinating with each other. It was more stressful to be in the audience watching – you have less control. I would be thinking, "Come on! Say that thing we talked about!" By the end I had much more faith that they would do their thing and I was much more relaxed.

This is probably one of the most diverse teams England has had. We all have different backgrounds. Diversity is not just a buzzword – it genuinely brings a lot of value to debating. The more experiences and backgrounds there are, the stronger the team.

Next year I am taking a year out. I'm doing some work for a think tank and also some debate coaching. I'm not sure what I would like to do after that, but I am thinking of politics. I'm also doing some work with the Youth Select Committee (a British Youth Council initiative supported by the House of Commons), as I am a big believer in getting more young people engaged with politics – particularly now, when there are so many angry young people who feel they are not being listened to. *Ife Grillo was speaking to Sarah Whitehead*

<https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2018/11/27/shutting-down-exhibit-campus-prohibits-discussion-debate-and-learning-opinion>

The Art of Disagreeing

The whole point of art is to spur debate and discussion, argue Emily Chamlee-Wright and Sarah Skwire, so why shut down an exhibit on a campus?

By

Emily Chamlee-Wright and Sarah Skwire

November 27, 2018



Empty gallery at Mary Baldwin University after the removal of the exhibit "RELEVANT/SCRAP."

The recent closure of an art exhibit at Mary Baldwin University after accusations of racist content reminds us that art is both dangerous and valuable because it is open to interpretation.

The artists who created the "RELEVANT/SCRAP" exhibit, which repurposes images of Southern Confederate monuments, say that their exhibit is an acknowledgment that such monuments are painful reminders, and even renewals, of past oppressions. The students who objected to the exhibit say that the images do not interrogate the monuments' racism -- they simply repeat it. In response to those objections, the exhibit was closed after two days, and all the art was removed.

We could argue endlessly about whether the artists or the students are right about how to understand the "RELEVANT/SCRAP" exhibit. Other viewers may have altogether different interpretations to offer. And, in fact, that kind of argument is, for many of us, the whole point of art: to spur a debate and discussion that outlasts our own immediate time. Consider, for example, the debates over whether Shakespeare's *Henry V*

is pro- or anti-war, or whether highly sexualized modern rock stars are feminist reclamations of power or recursions to the worst kind of objectification.

For many of us who value the intellectual and moral challenges of a rigorous liberal arts education, such debates with and among our students are not only a pleasure to engage in but also a sign that education is happening. In front of our eyes -- in our classrooms, college theaters, art galleries and concert spaces -- our students are seeing their conceptions of the world challenged. In response, they change their minds, refine their positions, learn to express their ideas more clearly or simply come to a better understanding of those who disagree with them.

Art, in its many forms, is an ideal spark for this kind of educational process. That is because art happens when our perceptions shift. Pointillist painters knew this and created paintings that were representational when seen from across the room but dissolved into dots when viewed close up. The Dada and Pop Art movements knew it when they elevated mundane objects like urinals and soup cans into creations that demanded time, attention and study. We come to works of art thinking that we are certain and that our ideas are clear. We leave understanding that the world is more complex than we have dreamed. Art demands that we re-examine what we think we know.

Margaret Atwood's poem "You Fit Into Me" recreates that experience for her readers in 16 short words.

*You fit into me
like a hook into an eye
a fish hook
an open eye*

By the time we have reached the poem's last six words, all of the things we thought we knew in the first 10 have been challenged. And we have learned, perhaps, not to assume that we understand a work of art until we have explored it completely.

None of these educational moments can happen when the art that inspires such debates is hidden away.

We in higher education must find ways to negotiate between, on the one hand, our responsibilities to the sensibilities of students trying to find their way in our increasingly partisan and tense culture and, on the other, our responsibilities to the educational value of debate, discussion and disagreement. The use of abusive images and terminology is obviously not acceptable on campuses or any civilized institution. But the discussion of them must be. It is our job to find ways to ensure that such discussions can thrive and that they can be respectful, rich and productive.

That kind of discussion over campus conflicts is how we model civil engagement for our students -- and we mean that in both senses of the word "civil." Such disagreements should be courteous, no matter how vigorous and deeply felt. And those disagreements, given space to allow us to learn from one another, help to make the society we share a better and stronger one. The absence of such engagement, in contrast, leads only to deeper and more permanent divisions.

Art on a campus is a laboratory for exploring differing points of view, for interrogating one's own immediate response, and for learning how to form judgments about matters that require sustained interpretation. Denying our students that laboratory risks leaving them without the skills to navigate the morally complex terrain that they face now and that lies before them when they leave the university.

The college years have always been a time when students not only learn how to think but are also offered material about what to think and the time in which to do the thinking. Shutting down art that is intended to do all those things is no way to teach the vital art of disagreement.

Emily Chamlee-Wright is president and CEO of the Institute for Humane Studies at George Mason University. Sarah Skwire is a senior fellow at Liberty Fund.