



tragedy  
narcissism

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## DISCUSSION & REVIEW QUESTIONS:

- Miss Mac Donald informs us that the current narcissistic trend in academia is towards imposing “...an obsession with victimhood, and a relentless determination to reduce the stunning complexity of the past to identity and class politics” onto students. How does this position differ from the academic approach of the past, especially in regards to humanities courses?
- The ‘rebirth’ of examining important thinking from the past was so important that “...this dialogue between past and present would become a defining feature of Western civilization, inspiring important new movements in philosophy, art and architecture, and prompting the evolution of such radical ideas as constitutional government.” Considering this, why do you think that so much of current academia doesn’t positively value and revere it, but rather flat-out resents it, rejects it, and replaces the “...classical humanists’ hunger for learning...” with the myopic goal of exposing students to “...alternative rubrics of gender, sexuality, race, and class”?
- Do you see any value for yourself in examining “...what makes Shakespeare and Beethoven great” (as invoked in the song “My White Knight” from *The Music Man*)? Why or why not?
- We learn from Miss Mac Donald in the video that: “Rather than encouraging students to engage with the great minds of the past, today’s humanities professors seek only to confirm their own worldview.” What are the consequences of professors focusing so narrowly on equality, victimhood, and other politically correct nonsense instead of on “...the prose of George Eliot, the music of Bach or the art of van Dyck...” and why are those consequences so damaging to students and possibly to society?
- Knowledge is information that is understood to some degree. Wisdom is knowledge of the truth (of what’s important, of what’s beautiful, or any other kind of meaningful truth). At the end of the video Miss Mac Donald accuses humanities academia of denying broad-spectrum knowledge and wisdom to students. Do you agree that this is the fatal flaw that makes the current narcissistic academic environment so tragic? Why or why not?

## EXTEND THE LEARNING:

### CASE STUDY: University of Chicago

INSTRUCTIONS: Read the article, “Recommit to Free Speech on Campus” then answer the questions that follow.

- How should a university tread the line between accommodating genuine victims of bullying or verbal abuse and not coddling students who claim to be offended by the speech of others? Do you think that students have a ‘right’ to not be offended? Why or why not?
- Should professors have the power to so heavily influence students to become what Miss Mac Donald refers to as an “... academic narcissist, oblivious to beauty and nobility...”? If yes, why? If no, what is the alternative?

- Do you think that the student who viewed and characterized *The Great Gatsby* as “...abusive and misogynist violence...” is right to (presumably) engage in wholesale dismissal of the literature as a valid learning tool simply because that student was offended? Do you believe that this student typifies and substantiates Miss Mac Donald’s assertion that “this student learned to think like this at the university itself” due to Rutgers engaging in exposing students to “...alternative rubrics of gender, sexuality, race, and class”?
- Miss Mac Donald claims that students owe a “...loving duty...” to “those writers, artists and thinkers whose works made our world possible.” Do you agree with this sentiment? Why or why not?



# QUIZ

## WHO KILLED THE LIBERAL ARTS?

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1. The modern professoriate has repudiated the great humanist tradition on which much of Western Civilization has been built.
  - a. True
  - b. False
  
2. What is the only true justification for the humanities?
  - a. Truth
  - b. Love
  - c. Knowledge
  - d. Social Commentary
  
3. Which of the following courses is NOT required for a Bachelor's Degree in English at UCLA?
  - a. Critical Theory
  - b. Ethnicity
  - c. Shakespeare
  - d. Post-Colonial Studies
  
4. What problem did the Columbia University student have with the University's freshman core curriculum requirement to study Mozart?
  - a. Studying classical music should not be a requirement.
  - b. The University did not also require students to study Beethoven.
  - c. Mozart did not make important contributions to classical music.
  - d. It upholds the premises of white supremacy and racism.
  
5. What is the most important acquisition of all?
  - a. Wealth
  - b. Knowledge
  - c. Power
  - d. Wisdom



# QUIZ - ANSWER KEY

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<http://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2015/09/16/free-speech-campus-university-of-chicago-first-amendment-editorials-debates/72207112/>



## **Recommit to free speech on campus: Our view**

[The Editorial Board](#), 1:19 p.m. EDT September 16, 2015

**University of Chicago takes the lead; other colleges fail to follow.**



(Photo: Jannis Werner, Getty Images)

Give leaders at the University of Chicago an "A" for standing up for much-beleaguered freedom of speech on campus, and hand an "F" to many of the nation's colleges and universities for running in the opposite direction.

In recent years, the assault on campus free speech has often been led by an unlikely source: the students whose predecessors a generation ago were at the vanguard of debate and protest. Sometimes the motive is the usual suspect, liberal political correctness that seeks to scrub colleges of any conservative ideas. But recently, a desire by students to protect themselves and others from speech they consider hurtful is driving new assaults on academic freedom and freewheeling debate.

Just as children raised in overly clean houses devoid of bacteria become more vulnerable to allergies and asthma, many of today's college students — protected by "helicopter parents" — have become fearful of anything that could make them or their friends uncomfortable. President Obama criticized such oversensitivity at a town hall meeting in Des Moines on Monday, saying he disagreed with college students who "have to be coddled and protected from different points of view. ... That's not the way we learn."

Yet college administrators are often too happy to oblige their fragile students with speech codes, speech zones, disinvitations of controversial speakers and heavy-handed sanctions on anyone who dares to defy the strict rules — rules that seldom stand up to legal scrutiny when someone challenges them in court. More than half of [437 institutions surveyed last year by FIRE](#), a free-speech advocacy group, had restrictive speech codes; one in six confined anything that smacked of students' free expression to a special zone, often some out-of-the-way patch of campus land.

In January, [the University of Chicago revolted](#) against this dangerous trend, reaffirming its commitment to "completely free and open discussion of ideas," even when some or even most members of the community find the ideas "offensive, unwise, immoral or wrong-headed." The rationale? University President Hanna Holborn Gray put it well: "Education should not be intended to make people comfortable, it is meant to make them think."

To underscore how far universities have strayed from that goal, in the eight months since Chicago's policy statement, just two institutions have followed suit: Purdue University, the only public school to do so, and Princeton. Now, FIRE, the free-speech group, has launched a campaign to encourage more universities to join.

It won't be easy, given the lengths to which university leaders and students have gone to clamp down on ideas they find offensive or hurtful. Among the most ludicrous concepts is "trigger warnings," where professors are expected to advise students in advance that a book or lesson might trigger a traumatic reaction. Targeted classics have included *The Great Gatsby*, in which [a Rutgers student found](#) "abusive and misogynist violence." At law schools, student organizations have asked criminal law teachers to warn classes that a lesson on rape law might trigger traumatic memories, and some students want questions on rape law excised from tests, for fear it will upset them.

Supporters of such restrictions argue that they are somehow differentiating hate speech or disturbing speech from protected speech. But one of the great things about democracy is that it protects the right to speak even when the words spoken offend or hurt.

Practically speaking, this war on free speech does students a disservice by shielding them from the real world, where they won't be able to silence co-workers and bosses whose speech they dislike. If students aren't smart enough or mature enough to understand the values of free speech, it's up to institutions in the business of education to teach them.

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