Intellectual Freedom: power, bias, control, authority, safety, privilege, censorship, technology and social justice

Fall 2019

IDH 2930 - (Un)Common Read  
Class Number: 23216  
Section: 008B

Little Hall, Room 0119  
Wednesday, Period 4 (10:40 AM - 11:30 AM)

Brian W. Keith, Associate Dean, George A. Smathers Libraries  
bwkeith@ufl.edu (preferred)  
352-273-2600  
Office hours upon request (feel free to request!)

UF Course Catalogue Abstract:

This is a discussion-based class in which we will consider a broad range of important and timely questions. What is intellectual freedom? When are ideas and/or speech too dangerous or offensive? When is censorship okay? Who should control and own information and what are the implications on the greater good? What is the purpose of higher education? How important is safety in learning? How do power, technology, money, bias and privilege interact below the surface of these questions and seek to shape what we can experience and know?

Spoiler: we will not agree on all of the answers. That is the point.

These topics will be introduced and framed through readings and multimedia materials, popular and scholarly, but the focus will be our class dialogues. The class will be a space where we can reconsider our assumptions, think about important topics that we have never really considered and benefit from the consideration of other people’s perspectives.

Conduct/Collegiality:

We will develop a set of Ground Rules early on in the semester. We can revisit and update them throughout the semester. These will relate to in-person and online interactions. They will be posted on the Canvas site for our class. Adherence to these will be expected from all of us.

Grading Policy:

This is a graded class.

Your final course grade will be based on the following activities:
• Participation (50%) – I expect you to equitably participate actively and collegially in all discussions, share insights and observations, ask thoughtful questions, share confusions, help each other, and so forth. Your participation grade will depend on the regularity and substance of your contributions to our class discussions.

Attendance will be taken. You can miss one class session without penalty. More than one absence will reduce your participation grade proportionally, with the rationale being that you cannot participate if you are not present.

• Discussion Topics (25%) – For most weeks you are required to submit (at least 2) potential discussion topics/prompts. These will reflect that week’s readings and the topics covered or related. We will rely on these to help determine the topics we discuss during our face to face sessions. These are due by noon the Tuesday before the class and will be submitted in Canvas.

• Written Assignments (25%) – There are 5 short written assignments, in addition to 2 really short outside of class assignments. These will relate to the readings and discussions and are due during the week following the class session covering the associated topics - so that you can benefit from the week’s discussion and the thoughts and observations of your peers. Your submissions will be posted in Canvas - our time is really limited, so this is another opportunity for us to learn from each other.

Late Assignments
I am open to granting extensions if you have a compelling reason; I understand that this course is not your only commitment this semester. However, I will grant extensions only before the due date, so be sure to communicate with me early on if you don't think you'll be able to meet the deadline. If I don't hear from you before the due date, I will deduct 2 percentage points from your class grade for every day that your assignment is overdue.

Make-up Work
I do not assign make-up work in this course. You'll be graded based on the assigned coursework.

Accommodations for students with disabilities:
Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

Campus Resources:
Health and Wellness
U Matter, We Care: If you or a friend is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu or 352 392- 1575 so that a team member can reach out to the student.
Counseling and Wellness Center: http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx, 392-1575

Library Support
Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the Libraries or finding resources: http://cms.uflib.ufl.edu/ask.

UF grading policies for assigning grade points:
UF class attendance and assignment make-up policies:


Online course evaluation process:

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/.

Cheating, plagiarism, etc.:

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Honor Code (http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honorcode/) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor.
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<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Key content and activity</th>
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| 1 8/21 | **Welcome, Course Overview, and Ground Rules**  
In this session we will review syllabus and discuss course format and expectations. Critically, we will collaboratively establish Ground Rules for the collegial discussion of challenging topics, which serve as the core of this course. |
| 2 8/28 | **Freedom and Rights**  
This session will be an introduction to the fundamental and evolving freedoms that frame our political society and, in many ways, intellectual pursuits. We will also begin our consideration of the role of privilege (Note the out of class assignments).  
**Assigned Readings:**  
- American Civil Liberties Union. (n.d.) THE BILL OF RIGHTS: A BRIEF HISTORY.  
  [https://www.aclu.org/other/bill-rights-brief-history](https://www.aclu.org/other/bill-rights-brief-history)  
  [http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/censorship/faq](http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/censorship/faq)  
**Assignments BEFORE class:**  
1. Take one or more of the Project Implicit, Implicit Association Tests (IAT) at  
   [https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html](https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html)  
2. Take a virtual Privilege Walk, and bring the result to class. |
| 3 9/4 | **Intellectual Freedom & Censorship**  
We will examine intellectual freedom in its historical context and carry our discussion into current defenses of literary intellectual freedom.  
**Assigned Readings:**  
  [http://www.ala.org/advocacy/bbooks/frequentlychallengedbooks/top10](http://www.ala.org/advocacy/bbooks/frequentlychallengedbooks/top10)  
**Short Written Assignment: Suggested Topics**  
- What do you think about the IAT and Privilege Walk? Share your opinions about, critique of, observations resulting from, etc.? (250 - 500 words) |
| 4 | **Intellectual Freedom & Censorship (Continued)**  
This session will center on censorship and its impact on individuals, social movements, and society as a
### Assigned Readings:


### Intellectual Freedom and Racist Content

This session will consider the presence, significance, and implications of racist information.

#### Assigned Readings:

- Amazon reviews [https://www.amazon.com/Birthday-Cake-George-Washington/product-reviews/0545538238/ref=cm_cr_getr_d_show_all?ie=UTF8&reviewerType=all_reviews&pageNumber=1#reviews-filter-bar](https://www.amazon.com/Birthday-Cake-George-Washington/product-reviews/0545538238/ref=cm_cr_getr_d_show_all?ie=UTF8&reviewerType=all_reviews&pageNumber=1#reviews-filter-bar)

### Short Written Assignment: Suggested Topics

- Identify a current or recent popular, unchallenged work (film, print, etc.) that you feel is offensive due to its depictions of women, certain races or other groups of people. Describe the work, the audience and the offensive content (in general terms, please). Do you think it will be challenged in your lifetime? Why or why not? Should it be challenged? What can we learn about our society from this work and the inclusion of this material? (250 - 500 words)

### Site Visit and Curator Talk: The Baldwin Library of Historical Children’s Literature

The session will be in the form of a site visit to the Smathers Library Baldwin Library of Historical Children’s Literature.

The Baldwin Library of Historical Children’s Literature in the Department of Special and Area Studies Collections at the University of Florida’s George A. Smathers Libraries contains more than 130,000 books.
and periodicals published in the United States and Great Britain from the mid-1600s to present day.

Presentation and dialogue with Suzan Alteri, Curator of the Baldwin Library

**Assigned Readings:**

7  **Intellectual Freedom and Sexuality (and Process Baldwin Visit)**
This session will include a group processing of the Baldwin visit and a discussion of Minstrel Music as archival materials and the implications of these offensive historical materials.

10/2  **This session will ALSO include a discussion of Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic.**

**Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic** is a 2006 graphic memoir by the American cartoonist Alison Bechdel, author of the comic strip Dykes to Watch Out For. It chronicles the author's childhood and youth in rural Pennsylvania, focusing on her complex relationship with her father. The book addresses themes of sexual orientation, gender roles, suicide, emotional abuse, dysfunctional family life, and the role of literature in understanding oneself and one's family. In 2015, a selection committee at Duke University (comprised of students, faculty, and staff) chose this memoir as a recommended reading for all incoming freshmen. The committee selected the title because it would stimulate interesting and useful discussion about what it means, as a young adult, to take a position on a controversial topic. The book contained 1 page of sex between two women and 1 panel showing a teenager masturbating. The book also portrays issues of mental health, interpersonal relationships, and human rights. About 20 students in the incoming freshmen class refused to read the book because of the graphic visual depictions of sexuality which they felt reading would contradict their religious beliefs.

**Assigned Readings:**
- Chappell, B. (2015). Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic. Salem Press Encyclopedia Of Literature (Note: This is on Course Reserves in Library West. Do not feel like you have to read this book, but in case you would like a sense of the material, it is available.)
- Grasso, Brian (2015). I’m a Duke freshman. Here’s why I refused to read ‘Fun Home.’  

**Short Written Assignment: Suggested Topics**
- Provide a definition, relevant to student learning in higher education settings, for “emotional distress” and “emotional discomfort”. What are the parallels and differences?
- What are the parallels and differences between the material and challenges against “Huckleberry Finn” or “A Birthday Cake for George Washington”, and “Fun Home”?
- Should “Huckleberry Finn” or “Fun Home” be required reading for high school students? How about college students? (250 - 500 words)

8  **Intellectual Freedom and College**
This session will center on the purpose(s) of college in historical and contemporary contexts.

10/9  **Assigned Readings:**
- AAC&U. (n.d.). What Is a Liberal Education?  
  [https://www.aacu.org/leap/what-is-a-liberal-education](https://www.aacu.org/leap/what-is-a-liberal-education)
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<th>9</th>
<th>Intellectual Freedom and Campus Speech</th>
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<td>10/16</td>
<td>This session will center on free speech on college campuses in its historical and contemporary contexts. Special attention will be given to our experiences as students and members of the campus community.</td>
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<td><strong>Assigned Readings:</strong></td>
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<td>- ACLU. (n.d.). Speech on Campus. <a href="https://www.aclu.org/other/speech-campus">https://www.aclu.org/other/speech-campus</a></td>
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<th>10</th>
<th>Intellectual Freedom and Safety and Inclusion</th>
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<td>10/23</td>
<td>This session will allow us to consider the balance and conflicts inherent between safety and information-based freedom, and the implications for inclusivity.</td>
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<td><strong>Assigned Readings:</strong></td>
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**Short Written Assignment: Suggested Topics**

- Using what you’ve learned about intellectual freedom and censorship, evaluate the Libraries’ Inclusion and Intellectual Freedom Statement. How does the statement reflect or align with the University’s priorities? Is anyone left out? What changes would you make?
- Rewrite the Inclusion and Intellectual Freedom Statement to reflect what you know about intellectual freedom. If you feel that the statement does not need to be rewritten, use this space to...
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<th>11</th>
<th>10/30</th>
<th>Intellectual Freedom and Scholarly Communications: the Economics of Information</th>
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<td>How is scholarship produced, distributed (brought to market), and accessed by the relevant communities of intellectuals? In this session we will explore these critical supports and inhibitors of intellectual freedom.</td>
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<td><strong>Assigned Readings:</strong></td>
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|    |       | • Purdue University. (n.d.). Copyright Overview  
https://www.lib.purdue.edu/ucog/PrivacyBasics/index.html  |
|    |       | • Jaschik, Scott. (2015, November 2). Language of Protest  
|    |       | • Hu, J. (2016, January 26). Academics Want You to Read Their Work for Free  
|    |       | • Esposito, J. (2018, January 9). Why Elsevier is a Library’s Best Friend  
https://scholarlykitchen.sspnet.org/2018/01/09/50692/  |
|    |       | **Short Written Assignment: Suggested Topics**                       |
|    |       | • What are the implications (good and bad/positives and negatives) of the system of scholarly communications, as it exists, for intellectual freedom? What are the ethical considerations of the way the system is designed and the pirating of the system? (250 - 500 words) |

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<th>11/6</th>
<th>Intellectual Freedom and Gender</th>
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<td><strong>Assigned Readings:</strong></td>
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https://www.chronicle.com/article/How-a-Rant-Against-Short/244026  |
|    |      | • Hecht, K. (2018, July 26). Twitter Post by Kirsten Hecht @HellbenderHecht.  
https://twitter.com/HellbenderHecht/status/1022533378795548673  |
https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0212852#sec001  |
https://nmwa.org/advocate/get-facts  |

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<th>Intellectual Freedom, Privacy, Ethics and Digital Technology</th>
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https://www.washingtonpost.com/podcasts/constitutional/episode--privacy?utm_term=.22c1eb39a71a  |
https://www.law.cornell.edu/supremecourt/text/485/46  |
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<th>Intellectual Freedom, Privacy, Ethics and Digital Technology (Continued)</th>
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<td>This session will be a recap of the module and a discussion of current issues related to intellectual freedom, privacy and censorship.</td>
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<th>Intellectual Freedom and Being an Intellectual</th>
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