

NO UNIVERSITY  
IS AN ISLAND

*Saving Academic Freedom*

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# Introduction

## *What Is Academic Freedom?*

The history of academic freedom in some respects predates the use of the term. The need for the concept grew out of the long history of universities and their struggle for freedom from church and state. The medieval university had sought a degree of independence from the church, but that did not entail doctrinal independence for the faculty. Nor was the chance that faculty might spread uncertainty among the general populace tolerated. It took later cultural changes—from developments in science and philosophy, to increased exposure to national differences, to wider commercial contacts—to prepare the ground for the modern university and its essential freedoms. Academic freedom thus embodies Enlightenment commitments to the pursuit of knowledge and their adaptation to different social and political realities. The term *akademische Freiheit* was in use in Germany by the early nineteenth century and gradually gained acceptance there over the following fifty years.

Transplanting the concept to the United States, however, required significant adjustment. Although German professors were effectively state employees, German universities were essentially self-governing. But it would be an error to assume that nineteenth-century German faculty members had full academic freedom as we understand it today. American universities on the other hand were governed not by faculty but by nineteenth-century versions of boards of trustees. As denominational institutions in the United States began to be replaced by secular ones, religious boards became less common. Secular institutions had governing boards

often composed of members of the business community. By the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries some of the conflicts between faculty and commercial interests that we know today were already in place in the United States. American universities faced interventions in their affairs quite unlike anything the German prototypes had experienced. When conflicts with their masters arose, American faculty discovered they were employees who could be dismissed at will.

In response to arbitrary dismissals and the threat they posed to the faculty's capacity to teach and pursue research in an unhindered fashion and to serve the broader needs of society, the founders of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) articulated guarantees of academic freedom and job security. The 1915 "Declaration of Principles on Academic Freedom and Academic Tenure" includes passages whose eloquence can still serve us well, albeit with some qualification. At the time, before faculty collective bargaining had arrived on the scene, there was no risk in rejecting the notion that faculty were employees. A more nuanced model is now required. Yet the 1915 Declaration's insistence on the fundamental autonomy of the faculty in its key areas of responsibility still stands, even if its qualified analogy between faculty members and judicial appointees seems at best hypothetical. The sense of urgency in the text will no doubt strike some readers as distinctly mandarin, though, as Bruce Robbins has warned, professionalism is always at risk of appearing elitist and undemocratic: "Indeed, it is hard *not* to present—as an offense against democracy. To repose interpretive authority in a community of professionals is to put it where it is not accessible to everyone" (Robbins 339). Jeffrey Nealon has suggested that the AAUP's analogy between faculty members and judicial appointees may in part have been designed to make faculty professional elitism seem familiar and acceptable. But the elitist element in the claim nonetheless makes it vulnerable not only to American anti-intellectualism but also to loss of public faith that what people want from higher education depends on faculty privilege. The argument that academic freedom is a social good thus needs to be made personal, to be supplemented by an appeal to the public's self-interest. Parents must, for example, be persuaded that their children cannot get the full benefit of higher education unless faculty have academic freedom and job security. People are also, of course, less tolerant of special privi-

leges when they are themselves confronted with employment insecurity or income loss. Here is a key passage from the AAUP's 1915 Declaration:

The freedom which is the subject of this report is the freedom of the teacher. Academic freedom in this sense comprises three elements: freedom of inquiry and research; freedom of teaching within the university or college; and freedom of extramural utterance and action. . . . These considerations make still more clear the nature of the relationship between university trustees and members of university faculties. The latter are the appointees, but not in any proper sense the employees of the former. For, once appointed, the scholar has professional functions to perform in which the appointing authorities have neither competency nor moral right to intervene. The responsibility of the university teacher is primarily to the public itself, and to the judgment of his own profession. . . . So far as the university teacher's independence of thought and utterance is concerned—though not in other regards—the relationship of professor to trustees may be compared to that between judges of the federal courts and the executive who appoints them. University teachers should be understood to be, with respect to the conclusions reached and expressed by them, no more subject to the control of the trustees than are the judges subject to the control of the president with respect to their decisions. (292, 295)

At the immediate functional level, academic freedom serves as my assurance that I can do as I choose in my teaching and research. No doubt that arrogant definition will light vengeful fires in the hearts of conservative adversaries. Yet it is marked by cultural, professional, disciplinary, legal, administrative, departmental, and psychological constraints that could take more than a lifetime to unravel. Even my desires do not arise independently. Most of what I want to do in the classroom grows out of decades of disciplinary and institutional involvement. I spend the overwhelming majority of class time analyzing texts. The course schedule is shaped by the syllabus I write, a syllabus that mirrors disciplinary protocols and amounts to a public commitment. Perhaps I could better challenge my students if I could dream more wildly and unpredictably, but for better or worse I am, like other faculty, a product of my times and my experience.

Academic freedom thus maximizes my flexibility within the bounds of the traditions that have shaped me and the professional responsibilities I have accepted. I cannot devote my class on African American poetry to the study of bird migration. But the discipline admits wide latitude on what a course in African American poetry might emphasize. Or what you might learn from African American poetry and apply to other subjects. In a 2007 online response to the AAUP's statement on "Freedom in the Classroom"—a notable moment in the current debates reshaping the meaning of academic freedom—Peter Wood and Steven Balch of the National Association of Scholars (NAS) expressed strong skepticism about the AAUP's assertion that a course on British Romanticism might devote some time to Harlem Renaissance poets. Yet I often conclude a course on a particular historical period by exploring its legacy, just as I often begin one by looking at its predecessors. I do not *have* to do so. But I can, whether or not the catalog description of the course covers such details. That right is covered by academic freedom. To be sure, the influence of the Romantic lyric is wide and deep, but there are many good reasons to unsettle student assumptions about the racialized character of literary influence by including, say, Harlem Renaissance poet Countee Cullen's poems about John Keats, including "To John Keats, Poet, at Spring Time," among the examples of the legacy of Romanticism. The NAS's bluster on this point represents an argument conducted in ignorance and bad faith. So long as we maintain the shared governance practices that promote academic freedom, I am, happily, protected from those who would police my teaching in ignorance of the historical record.

Unlike the NAS, conservative critic David Horowitz does not specialize in skepticism. He specializes in manufactured outrage, manufactured outrage about women's studies, manufactured outrage about the excesses of leftist professors. When I last debated him—at the University of Oregon in February 2008—students testified on a film shown before the debate that they had noted one clear example of faculty bias: disrespect for Fox News. Horowitz allowed that this was "the single worst example of political bias in the academy he had ever encountered." Obviously I am missing something. Disrespect for Fox News for me represents the exercise of the minimal intellectual and cultural judgment required of someone willing to stand before a classroom. So long as those who

share his unwarranted outrage have no power over me, I can continue to express such views in the classroom or in print. I am protected by academic freedom.

These functional examples, however, do not in themselves exhaust the complexity or flexibility of the concept of academic freedom. The concept of academic freedom exists in differential relationship with a series of other concepts, discourses, and cultural domains. It is of necessity frequently rearticulated to new challenges, technologies, and historical conditions. It has legal, professional, institutional, and symbolic meanings that cannot easily be encapsulated by a simple definition. When the AAUP a few years ago sought to adopt a slogan to promote itself, a couple of us independently came up with the same suggestion: “Academic freedom for a free society.” We were not alluding to the legal status of academic freedom. We were invoking its cultural and political meaning. The slogan recognized that the concept of academic freedom has links with other aspirational elements of American history and culture. It suggests that academic freedom has a fundamental relationship with the Declaration of Independence and with the Bill of Rights. It asks us to reflect on how academic freedom helps preserve our other freedoms, however imperfectly they may be realized. Indeed the U.S. Supreme Court in *Keyishan v. Board of Regents* in 1967 ruled that academic freedom is a “special concern” of the First Amendment, though the Court never really clarified what that meant. Did the Court mean to elevate academic freedom to a fundamental constitutional principle or merely to assign it to a subcategory to be limited by the character of college and university employment? As Stacy Smith notes, “federal courts often use, but do not explain, the term ‘academic freedom’” (300). Nonetheless, Justice Brennan’s language in the majority opinion is worth quoting more fully: “Academic freedom,” he wrote, “is of transcendent value to all of us and not merely to the teachers concerned. That freedom is therefore a special concern of the First Amendment, which does not tolerate laws that cast a pall of orthodoxy over the classroom.”

Brennan’s comment suggests that academic freedom is an individual right, since the individual teacher makes most pedagogical decisions. Yet, as Philippa Strum demonstrates, the Court has really never differentiated individual from institutional academic freedom: “As defined in the courts

of the United States it frequently appears as an institutional right—one that presumably can be exercised against the individual faculty member” (152). Though the courts have in other contexts treated academic freedom as an individual right, it is clear that in the end the AAUP will have to step in to define the distinction between institutional authority and individual faculty rights, recognizing that the latter, like free speech rights, are not absolute.

In *There's No Such Thing as Free Speech and It's a Good Thing, Too*, Stanley Fish argues that true freedom of speech does not exist and thus that the concept is useless, thereby ignoring the productive cultural and political work the concept does. The mixed psychological and legal force it bears gives the society a goal and a counter in the constant struggle over individual rights. Absolute academic freedom, similarly, cannot exist; it is not even clear we could imagine what it might be, given the kind of restraints on professional identity I outlined earlier. Nonetheless, academic freedom has a history in case law and legally enforceable status in some contexts, such as collective bargaining contracts. But it is also something less tangible—a value that can be promoted both within and without the higher education community, a concept we can debate, define, and redefine in the process of seeking to establish who we are as academics. Discussions of and reflections on academic freedom can be part of a process of self-discovery and self-definition.

Yet academic freedom is partly simply a guild privilege, benefit, and responsibility. In *For the Common Good*, Matthew Finkin and Robert Post define it as “the freedom of mind, inquiry, and expression necessary for proper performance of professional obligations” (38) or “the freedom to pursue the scholarly profession according to the standards of that profession” (7). Finkin and Post have a fairly broad view of what those professional obligations can be. Fish, as is discussed in chapter 7, has a much narrower view, one that severely limits academic freedom. Academic freedom nonetheless reflects a rough, if contested, social consensus that higher education and the society it serves benefit from a high degree of protection for both the professional and the extracurricular speech of faculty members. We have come some distance since a January 21, 1916, *New York Times* editorial offered a counterdefinition of academic freedom: “‘Academic freedom,’ that is the inalienable right of every college instruc-



tor to make a fool of himself and his college by . . . intemperate, sensational prattle about every subject under heaven, to his classes and to the public, and still keep on the payroll or be rift therefrom only by elaborate process, is cried to the winds by the organized dons.”

Many of the responsibilities and protections academic freedom entails reflect a consensus across the professoriate as a whole. But so long as faculty members receive disciplinary training and are appointed to disciplinary slots, and so long as colleges and universities are organized by departments that inherit disciplinary traditions, academic freedom will also embody unique discipline-specific expectations. But the right to resist or reject disciplinary paradigms is also fundamental to academic freedom. Moreover, as Judith Butler reminds us, disciplinary norms are always being contested; they are fundamentally in flux and in dispute. They are inevitably applied in differential, interested, and inconsistent ways. They do not represent stable, serene consensus. “Norms have origins other than the well-meaning and well-educated judgments of professionals. Academic norms are wrought not only from cognitive judgments but also from a confluence of historically evolved and changeable institutional and discursive practices” (Butler 129). And interdisciplinarity and multidisciplinarity, to say nothing of paradigm conflicts within disciplines, considerably complicate disciplinary norms.

In the end, academic freedom is worth little unless it is vested in the individual faculty member’s right to negotiate these overlapping and conflicted intellectual and professional commitments and decide for himself or herself how to proceed. Although I agree that academic freedom cannot simply be construed as an individual right, it is fundamentally exercised by individuals within professional and institutional traditions. Faculty need to argue for that position despite some federal court decisions, such as *Urofsky v. Gilmore*, decided by the Fourth Circuit in 2000, which held that academic freedom “inheres in the University, not in individual professors.” Academic freedom is both a right and a burden for individual faculty members. It recognizes that many of the choices and decisions faculty members make are context specific—specific to an individual’s research goals, specific to the dynamic that develops in individual classrooms. Academic freedom means that institutions should be very reluctant to intervene in an individual faculty member’s teaching and research.

But interventions are sometimes warranted, as when a faculty member is inclined to do corporate research on campus on the condition that the results not be published. Thus, Berkeley's Chancellor Robert Birgeneau was ill advised to claim that it was a violation of academic freedom to argue that British Petroleum should not be able to operate its own commercial research lab on campus in such a way as to be largely exempt from academic regulation, even if Berkeley faculty members wanted to collaborate in the research (Brenneman).

Although academic freedom historically originates from the need to protect research independence, recent experience also suggests not only that controversial research can threaten a faculty member's career but also that teachers are at least as vulnerable in the classroom. The massive shift to contingent labor in the academy, addressed in detail in chapter 3—with so many college-level teachers subject to casual dismissal or non-renewal—means that protecting the academic freedom of those off the tenure track has become a critical priority. The AAUP also specifies that for some professionals academic freedom is a task-specific right. Thus, graduate students and academic professionals employed to teach classes must have full academic freedom in their teaching roles. It does not matter whether they are lecturing to five hundred students or leading a thirty-student discussion section. In teaching a discussion section of a lecture course offered by a faculty member, a graduate student or academic professional is guaranteed the right, after fairly representing the views of the week's lecture, to offer an independent perspective. Teachers cannot do their jobs adequately—displaying the frankness and intellectual courage essential to inspiring students and winning their respect—without the support and protection of academic freedom. Once again, the AAUP's 1915 Declaration, despite its gendered blindness, is clear on this point:

No man can be a successful teacher unless he enjoys the respect of his students, and their confidence in his intellectual integrity. It is clear, however, that this confidence will be impaired if there is suspicion on the part of the student that the teacher is not expressing himself fully or frankly, or that college or university teachers in general are a repressed and intimidated class who dare not speak with that candor and courage which youth always demands in those whom it is to esteem. The average student is a discern-

ing observer, who soon takes the measure of his instructor. It is not only the character of the instruction but also the character of the instructor that counts; and if the student has reason to believe that the instructor is not true to himself, the virtue of the instruction as an educative force is incalculably diminished. There must be in the mind of the teacher no mental reservation. He must give the student the best of what he has and what he is. (296)

In our own time, of course, the nature of those standing at the front of the classroom has radically changed. In response to increased use of graduate employees and academic professionals to teach—even to teach large lecture courses—the AAUP has had to clarify who merits academic freedom in the classroom. In “Statement on Graduate Students” (1999) and “College and University Academic and Professional Appointments” (2002), documents I helped to write that are published in the AAUP’s *Policy Documents and Reports*, popularly known as the *Redbook*, the organization states that nonprofessorial employees performing roles traditionally assigned to the faculty, especially teaching, require full academic freedom in that capacity. As “Statement on Graduate Students” makes clear, all graduate students also have the same academic freedom as faculty members have in their extramural statements and in their statements on institutional and departmental governance. But we need to distinguish between, say, the full academic freedom that a graduate student has in teaching a class or commenting on departmental governance versus the intellectual freedom, or qualified academic freedom, he or she has in fulfilling an assignment in a degree program.

All students, graduate and undergraduate, have intellectual freedom—including both freedom of thought and freedom of expression, along with the right to choose their own course of study, to hold their own beliefs, and to be protected from “prejudiced evaluation”—but they do not in my view have full academic freedom in every context, despite efforts from the Right to muddy the waters by arguing that they do. In the original German context, two parallel terms—*Lehrfreiheit* and *Lernfreiheit*—differentiated research and teaching freedoms, with the second term encompassing the student’s right to freedom from administrative coercion in the learning situation (Metzger 112–13). The use of differentiated, parallel

terms never quite caught on in the United States, perhaps in part because our heritage of religiously affiliated institutions of higher education and of small liberal arts colleges with highly organized programs left us less inclined to guarantee students freedom from curricular requirements and other interventions. Andrew West's 1885 essay "What Is Academic Freedom?" notably does not even mention faculty academic freedom; it devotes itself entirely to warning that the American college student is not prepared to "choose his studies and govern himself" (432). Working collaboratively with several other higher education organizations, the AAUP defined student rights in detail in the important 1967 "Joint Statement on Rights and Freedoms of Students." It remains perhaps the single best policy document about student rights ever written. Although one could simply differentiate between faculty and student academic freedom, as the AAUP's 1940 "Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure" does ("Academic freedom in its teaching aspect is fundamental for the protection of the rights of the teacher in teaching and of the student to freedom in learning"), I believe using different terms in the classroom and student context is the clearer route. The academic freedom that faculty have is based on professional training, expertise, and specific responsibilities. Students do not have the same professional status, but they have the freedom to explore ideas and the freedom to express themselves. Like faculty, students also merit personal respect, but that does not protect their ideas from severe critique. Not all ideas merit respect. Inevitably, as Matthew Finkin and Robert Post point out, some students will find critiques of their ideas embarrassing and experience them as personal assaults (105). Academic freedom must protect instructors from reprisals for challenging their students. That is one protection conservatives seek to undermine.

The intellectual freedom that both graduate and undergraduate students have gives them, among other things, the right to pursue their own research interests and publish whatever they wish, subject to any relevant review process. But that freedom does not protect them from professional consequences. A faculty member, for example, in my view has every right to refuse to write a letter of recommendation for a student who has, say, published an anti-Catholic, anti-Muslim, or anti-Semitic essay or an essay advocating genocide. A graduate program cannot discipline a student for

such statements, but it has a right to refuse a student's advancement in a degree program if the faculty members believe prejudices or convictions like these mean that no one in the program will ever be willing to write a recommendation on behalf of the student because everyone is convinced the student can never be an effective professional. A graduate student can do whatever research he or she wishes, but that freedom does not mandate that a dissertation committee agree that it fulfills the degree's requirements. Supervised research is not as free as the research one can do after earning the PhD; the awarding of the terminal degree signals the acquisition of full academic freedom. Yet assistant professors' academic freedom does not guarantee that their tenured colleagues will be enthusiastic about their work and recommend tenure. Nor does academic freedom mean that a senior faculty member's research will guarantee approval of a grant. The Right's attempts to claim full academic freedom for both students and faculty have muddied these waters by failing to draw such distinctions.

As I discuss in chapter 2, the assaults on classroom academic freedom from the Right are but one of the continuing and emerging threats to academic freedom. These begin with religious intolerance, with its insistence on doctrinal conformity, and extend to increasing corporatization, with its emphasis on disciplines that can produce income, to neoliberal ideology and the managerial administrative techniques that accompany it, and to the growing emphasis on higher education as job training. All these trends threaten both pedagogy and research. Academic freedom is also faced with serious legal challenges, mostly over the fundamental faculty right and responsibility to be engaged with and critique administrative policy without being punished for doing so.

Constitutional protections for employee speech on institutional policy at private corporations have never been sufficient. Now court cases are challenging employee speech regarding institutional policy at public institutions. These developments may represent far more serious threats than anything David Horowitz, Anne Neal, or the organizations they represent can muster. It is also a clear example of the difference between constitutional free speech, which guards against retaliation by the state, and academic freedom, which protects faculty from institutional repression. Only a strict adherence to principles of academic freedom can pro-

tect the essential role faculty must have in setting policy regarding their fundamental responsibilities, among them shaping the curriculum and hiring other faculty.

Much the same conditions affect extramural speech outside a teacher's official areas of academic expertise. Constitutional guarantees protect your right to speak but do not prevent an employer from deciding that your extramural speech impairs your fitness for the job. Once again, institutional reprisals for faculty members' political speech in the public arena have to be prohibited by academic freedom, save instances when extramural speech demonstrates faculty ignorance about areas of professional expertise and thus demonstrates an inability to do their job adequately. Thus, a history professor, unlike an engineer, who asserts that the Holocaust did not happen in a speech off-campus may well raise doubts about his or her professional competence. Robert O'Neil addresses this issue—and the case of Northwestern University's notorious Holocaust-denying engineer Arthur Butz—in *Academic Freedom in the Wired World* (1–11). One can, however, also easily imagine some instances of external speech that would violate university rules and justify internal discipline, such as reading another faculty member's confidential tenure file aloud in a public square against the faculty member's wishes, though it is very difficult to craft reliable language listing prohibitions absent the details of specific cases.

A far more problematic area is public morality, where once again the benefit of the doubt must be given to faculty members making public statements. A faculty member should be able to advocate for nonviolent civil disobedience, but not for murder. A faculty member in a state that prohibited miscegenation should have been able to endorse it without penalty from his or her institution. Colleges and universities must resist mass sentiment. The AAUP censured the University of Illinois in 1963 after the institution fired a faculty member for speaking out on the issue of free love. In areas such as politics and sexuality, public certainty is often judged harshly by history.

In September 2007, the AAUP issued "Freedom in the Classroom," which detailed a series of pedagogical rights and responsibilities, responded to several arguments raised by critics of the academy, and mounted a strong defense of the faculty right to political speech within

the classroom. Most political speech in the classroom, we recognized, and as I explain further in chapter 7, grows out of comments on, analogies to, and contrasts with assigned subject matter. Such evaluative and comparative work represents nothing less than the life of the mind. The AAUP also supports occasional intrusions of commentary not directly relevant to the course subject, so long as they are not persistent enough to derail the class.

There were several rejoinders from the Right, all focused on the issue of political speech. Some faculty make a point of expressing their hope that students who take their courses leave more committed to social justice, more committed to minority rights. That is largely what Norma Cantu of the University of Texas meant when she remarked, at a December 2008 Modern Language Association panel on academic freedom, that she hopes her students are radicalized by her courses and trusts that other faculty share the same aim. David Horowitz, also on the panel, delivered a talk titled “Teach the Conflicts, Don’t Preach Them,” thereby endorsing Gerald Graff’s twenty-year mantra. Horowitz responded to Cantu with a phrase, “Weed them out,” despite his assertion a few minutes earlier that he has never urged the elimination of leftists from the faculty. The NAS resorts to the same horticultural metaphor in its analysis: “Those unable to modulate their behavior into valid pedagogical norms, should probably be weeded from the professoriate” (Wood and Balch 28). Given that our mechanisms and standards for evaluating pedagogical performance can change—and given that new mechanisms and standards are regularly advocated—perhaps I can be excused for not being altogether reassured by NAS’s invocation of “the normal procedures of the university” to do the weeding. Having in the course of my career conducted numerous interviews of people who lived through the 1950s, I have some awareness of how weeding is done. “No one,” the NAS assures us, “is attempting to purge the political Left from today’s campuses” (*ibid.* 34). Perhaps not, but they are surely trying to discredit them, cow them, restrict their academic freedom, selectively root out those committed to progressive pedagogies, and reduce the likelihood that more progressive faculty will be hired. Meanwhile, in areas such as Middle East studies, as I point out in chapter 4, we have seen organized efforts to deny tenure to leftist faculty.



Horowitz alternates claims that he is simply appealing to our better natures with implicit threats of chemical warfare: weed killer for the professoriate. He is essentially running a bait-and-switch operation, with protestations of reasonableness aimed at luring us into sanctioning a system to carry out official reprisals. Some of the same mix of conflicted impulses runs through the NAS manifesto by Wood and Balch. Thus, the assertion “We have called primarily for good institutional self-governance” is followed by the qualification that “the state, however, has a legitimate role to play at least with respect to public institutions of higher learning” (33). And the NAS then praises legislative hearings into possible political bias in the classroom. Perhaps one may be forgiven for suspecting that the NAS’s declared aims are shaped by what is politically possible.

I do not myself share Norma Cantu’s radicalizing goals, because forty years of teaching persuades me that they are unrealistic. I find that most undergraduates arrive on campus with fairly well formed political beliefs. I am, however, very much interested in putting progressive, radical, and conservative views before them, but the students drawn to my views are always those who already share them. Beyond that, I could not care less whether my classes convert or persuade them. I put ideas out for consideration. They can take them or leave them. Then we each get on with our lives.

At the same time, my classes are pervasively political. I ask you to give some attention to why that is the case. It is because of what I teach. My primary field is modern American poetry. I teach a course on the poetry of Langston Hughes and Claude McKay, two African American poets who spent much of their careers portraying, analyzing, and indicting American racism. I teach their poems sympathetically. We discuss the social and historical topics they address. And certainly we ask whether what they argued beginning in the second and third decades of the last century remains true. I also teach a survey course in modern American poetry. It includes a large number of poems about cultural attitudes toward gender, some progressive and others conservative. In the week I spend on the 1930s, we read a series of poems by Communist Party members. In the week on the 1950s, poems about nuclear war and poems describing and attacking McCarthyism, including several by Edwin Rolfe, are among those featured. The 1960s and 1970s weeks cover poems



about the Vietnam War. Politics has a place in my classroom because the poems we read are often thoroughly political. When the historical record includes poems of quality from a variety of political viewpoints, I represent the record fairly, though not with any aim of giving equal time. But it would falsify the record to suggest, for example, that poems, unlike a few popular songs, supporting the Vietnam War had much cultural presence or represent poetry of high quality.

Like most literature teachers, I try to teach texts sympathetically, and my syllabus emphasizes poems I consider of high quality. The one exception is my course on Holocaust poetry, in which I regularly expose the students to what I consider failed Holocaust poems. I also share a few Nazi anti-Semitic poems with my classes. I guess that counts as “balance,” though I do not disguise my own attitudes in class. I let my students know where I stand with regard to the historical events and social issues raised by the poems I teach, but I encourage them to agree or disagree as they will. This fits the AAUP’s model of showing them an instructor taking a strong position and modeling informed advocacy. That is part of what they should be able to do as intellectuals and citizens.

I make every effort to make students feel at ease expressing their own opinions. One way I do that is with humor. No doubt that makes me guilty of what Wood and Balch call “flippant analogy,” so they can if they choose accuse me of being “an instructor who is pedagogically self-indulgent and strews his class with irrelevancies” (29), who “strays from the topic of a course” (25). No doubt some of my humor is “gratuitous, politically motivated” (28) and employs the “tools of irony, sarcasm, and innuendo” (10). And in the absolutist rhetoric of the NAS, I am guilty of the ultimate heresy: “taking classroom time” (25), typically as much as fifteen seconds per class hour. I can, however, offer an evidentiary defense of the benefits of my pedagogy: my students have played a major role in reshaping the scholarly field of modern poetry (Rothberg and Garrett). Meanwhile, readers of this book will find similar strategies at work, because humor can also drive a point home. And, in the darkening groves of academe, we need humor to help us endure the moment when we see the forest, not just the trees.

Following AAUP principles, I have learned not to mock my students’ beliefs or their confusions. In “Freedom in the Classroom,” the AAUP

maintains that students should not, for example, be held up to ridicule “for advancing an idea grounded in religion, whether it is creationism or the geocentric theory of the solar system.” The first example, creationism, is of course one of the most common fundamentalist beliefs that teachers confront. It can include the conviction that the Earth and all its species really were created in seven days and that the fossil record was placed on Earth by God to test our faith. The second example, heliocentrism, is chosen to be implausible, to signal that, no matter how absurd and unscientific students’ convictions are, we should not humiliate students for them. Last year I was presented with the following question: “My minister says every August the university administration turns the campus over to be run by witches’ covens. Is that true?” In truth, I may have been too astonished to laugh. In any case, I answered that I have been on campus for nearly forty years and would surely have heard if that were the case. More prosaically, when a class was discussing a Langston Hughes poem about race discrimination, a student launched into a diatribe against “welfare cheats.” I asked if he knew whether there was an established welfare program in the 1920s, when the poem was written, and thus whether such a contemporary complaint could be relevant. Having restrained myself in the face of challenges such as these, it is pretty easy to avoid criticizing students for their political beliefs.

I have begun by relating some elements of my personal story because there are thousands of such faculty stories out there. The NAS has a much easier task ignoring our individual stories and demonizing hordes of anonymous progressive faculty by imagining we are misusing the classroom. Classroom practice is not only context specific and a function of each faculty member’s aims and beliefs but also a function of the relationship between a faculty member and students that develops over the course of a semester. If we want to engage in a serious, well-informed, and fully professional conversation about the role and status of political observations in the classroom, we need to credit and deal with the specific character of individual faculty practices. That requires input from the faculty members themselves, not simply the scorched-earth slander and error-ridden documentation that David Horowitz employs in *The Professors* and *One-Party Classroom* or the exceptionally crude and dishonorable yellow journalism of “How Many Ward Churchills?” a report by the

American Council of Trustees and Alumni (ACTA), which I discuss further in chapter 7.

The garden-variety red-baiting that Horowitz resorts to in *One-Party Classroom*—he finds a communist hiding in every humanities syllabus—marks a new low in cultural debate. He would cast out the loyal opposition by castigating them as the enemy. They are, he declares at the opening of his book, determined “to instill ideologies that are hostile to American society and its values” (Horowitz and Laksin 1). Horowitz cannot understand that the long progressive tradition of pressing the country to live up to its founding ideals may be the single best American political tradition we have.

Nonetheless, I regard ACTA’s publication of its “How Many” pamphlet as the watershed moment of indicative irresponsibility in more than a decade of university-oriented culture wars, since so much of Churchill’s recent professional history makes him an exceptional, not representative, figure—not only because his “little Eichmanns” remark was so ill considered and over the top but also because he has been the subject of a vast national debate, with his professional integrity being seriously questioned by faculty review committees and a limited number of plausible press reports on other of his activities, while others have defended him at length. But I do not find some of the NAS’s tactics inspiring either. Its response to “Freedom in the Classroom” lambastes the AAUP for failing to thoroughly investigate the prevalence of classroom political remarks, even though its own body of evidence is limited to a handful of anecdotes from among millions of students. In what is surely one of the most hollow rhetorical gestures in this whole cultural struggle, NAS trumpets, “The absence of evidence is not evidence of absence.” The AAUP has no interest in wasting its resources on a wild-goose chase. The organization has more important things to do.

The most widely criticized passage in “Freedom in the Classroom” is the one that asserts that an instructor teaching Melville’s 1851 novel *Moby-Dick* might compare its ship’s captain, Ahab, with George W. Bush. Given that the captain of a ship might well be a figure for the head of the ship of state, the analogy is not surprising. Indeed the comparison between Ahab and Bush already exists in Melville scholarship. Does the NAS believe classroom faculty should be prohibited from commenting

on published scholarship in the field? Presumably it is once again acting in ignorance of the scholarly record. The possibility that such a comparison might generate a very rich discussion has meanwhile been demonstrated by over one hundred comments provoked by a critical Stanley Fish column on the same subject in the online version of the *New York Times* (“George W. Bush and Melville’s Ahab: Discuss!”). This online dialogue, which I discuss in detail in chapter 7, creates a wonderful cyberspace classroom.

There are also some genuine cheap shots in the NAS report. Among these is the repeated feigned distress about the AAUP’s purported failure to provide a full account of the goals of higher education in “Freedom in the Classroom,” given that the statement primarily cites the importance of students acquiring “the desire and capacity for independent thinking.” But the AAUP statement was not intended to lay out all of higher education’s aims. That would have to be a long document of its own, not one focused on faculty rights and responsibilities in the classroom. And, in any case, the AAUP has produced a great many policy statements and reports engaged with a whole range of educational values and goals.

Elsewhere, the NAS joins forces with ACTA and Horowitz’s Students for Academic Freedom in betraying real ignorance about recent disciplinary and interdisciplinary work. By marketing false characterizations of academic disciplines, these groups are able to claim that academic freedom is being misused. The NAS’s crude view of postcolonialism—as claiming that all the ills of the developing world are due to their colonial history—bears no relation to the field as I know it. “Postcolonialism” is first of all a neutral historical category, referring to the decline of colonial empires over the past century and the reconstitution of nations and cultures under those conditions. The field acknowledges the varied mixture of affinity and resistance toward these countries’ colonial past that still shapes some of them. It has developed a sophisticated vocabulary and set of theoretical frameworks to help us understand these complex societies. That it includes anger at the legacies of colonialism is certainly true, but to reduce the field to that—its lowest common denominator—is both ill informed and irresponsible. What is more, attacks on “postcolonialism,” in the aftermath of 9/11, now stand in for conservative rage at any sympathy for Muslim societies.

The NAS's understanding of postmodern or poststructuralist relativism is no better. Postmodernism does not announce that there are no values; it argues instead that values are contingent, not transcendent. Thus, the struggle to sustain the values we believe in is even more important. Nor is all this reducible to power relations, unless you count persuasion and nonviolent witness as exercises of power. The work of sustaining the values we believe in is unending, because nothing is guaranteed. If the twentieth century taught us anything, it is that anything is possible within human behavior, that societies can endorse values that are genuinely monstrous. Relativism reminds us that only continuing education and advocacy can sustain human decency.

That said, I think the NAS does raise some real and substantive issues for discussion. That they are framed as attacks on the AAUP is regrettable, but they nonetheless represent the potential basis for a productive dialogue. The AAUP has, for example, long recognized that classroom freedoms are constrained in various ways. As Judith Areen writes, "Individual faculty have somewhat less freedom with respect to their teaching, as the authority to decide such institutional academic matters as what courses will be taught and what grading standards are to be followed is vested in the faculty as a body" (957). All faculty members have to conform to broad professional norms and expectations. Individual departments can set course requirements in a variety of ways, from mandating a minimum number of pages of writing in composition courses to mandating that introductory chemistry include some hands-on laboratory experience. Catalog descriptions set general parameters for coverage, though they typically allow very wide latitude in designing a syllabus and raising collateral topics. But academic freedom does not permit a faculty member to refuse to teach the course he or she is assigned.

Yet clear guidelines for differentiating between institutional or departmental authority and an individual teacher's professional independence really do not exist. Should that chemistry teacher be prohibited from teaching some experimental methods by way of computer simulation? Should composition teachers, no matter how many years of experience they have, be compelled to use a prescribed text book or, even worse, be told in what subject areas their paper assignments must fall? My answer to both questions is no. Even in multisection courses, academic freedom

requires that these power relations need to be negotiated in the context of respect for the individual teacher's pedagogical philosophy and goals. Compromises that honor both individual and institutional rights and interests need to be reached. As Robert O'Neil very helpfully points out in the eighth chapter ("Whose Academic Freedom") of his *Academic Freedom in the Wired World*, however, case law on such conflicts is sparse and far from encouraging, two of the worst cases (*Edwards v. California University of Pennsylvania* and *Brown v. Armenti*) having been decided in the Third Circuit in 1998 and 2001, the first by Supreme Court justice Samuel Alito when he was serving there (219–20). It is thus imperative that the AAUP establish its own values and precedents. To that end, I established an ad hoc committee in 2009 to report on this issue and make recommendations (Nelson, "Whose Academic Freedom?").

When professional norms may have been violated, it is the job of one's faculty peers to review conduct. The 1915 AAUP Declaration implicitly denies administrators the key role in deciding whether faculty members have exceeded the bounds of academic freedom; this power, it states, should never "be vested in bodies not composed of members of the academic profession" (298). Formal hearing bodies, however, are typically not disciplinary. Administrators may have responsibility for administering elections to faculty committees and for carrying out such penalties as a committee may assign. They can also bring charges to committees. Boards of trustees have final authority for dismissals. The 1915 Declaration also makes the powerful observation that "classroom utterances ought always to be considered privileged communications. Discussion in the classroom ought not to be supposed to be utterances for the public at large" (299). Thus, public monitoring of classrooms was deemed unacceptable. So much for conservative groups that claim to endorse the 1915 Declaration while encouraging legislative review of classroom presentations.

But for conservative groups the key problem area in establishing norms is disciplinary. Most departments instantiate some version of an international academic discipline, however selective they may be in emphasizing particular subdisciplines or choosing among competing disciplinary paradigms. As Joan Scott has written, "academic freedom protects those whose thinking challenges orthodoxy; at the same time the legitimacy of the challenge—the proof that the critic is not a madman or a crank—is

secured by membership in a disciplinary community based upon shared commitments to certain methods, standards, and beliefs” (“Academic Freedom” 166). Almost all permanent faculty members at four-year colleges and universities have undergone specialized disciplinary training. For better or worse, an academic discipline provides the primary context and intellectual horizon for the work most faculty members do. Although “Freedom in the Classroom” emphasizes that academic freedom mandates that faculty have the right to reflect on and critique their disciplines—and some of us have spent our careers partly doing so—the reality is that many faculty are ill equipped to think outside their disciplinary box. Indeed, many faculty members believe deeply in their discipline’s aims and areas of intellectual consensus. The most serious recruiting that most faculty do is not for their political beliefs but for their disciplinary values.

What fairly troubles the NAS is that academic disciplines or subdisciplines can pass through periods of relatively unreflective, even dogmatic, conviction and advocacy. Can this involve the discrediting of alternative points of view in the classroom and their implacable suppression in print? Yes. Although these practices may often eventually be corrected—both by internal disciplinary debate and by interaction with faculty from other areas—their real-time effects can be unwholesome. It has been difficult for many faculty to admit this in the midst of a sustained assault from the Right, but higher education advocates need to be more reflective and forthcoming about the complexity of disciplinary history and practice. The NAS adds that the standards for what counts as true within disciplines vary widely, especially when the humanities and social sciences are compared with hard-science disciplines.

As I suggested earlier, many of the disciplinary critiques leveled by conservatives have—in my view—been either poorly informed or based in ideological bias. As I detail in chapter 7, Horowitz regularly attacks women’s studies programs for teaching the theory that gender is socially constructed as a fact, an obsession that is one of the central arguments in *One-Party Classroom*. He seems unable or unwilling to distinguish between physical differences and the *cultural meaning and understanding* of them. In my view and the view of many others, all human understanding is culturally and historically constructed. We have no unmedi-



ated access to any facts. Consequently, I teach the cultural construction of gender as true, though my students are free to disagree. I advocate for this view, as the AAUP allows, not only because it is what I believe but also because my students should see how I arrive at and account for my intellectual commitments.

The NAS observes, in its own version of disciplinary confusion, that “it is indeed indoctrination to teach women’s studies students that women are universally oppressed by patriarchy” (Wood and Balch 5), a monolithic view that helped create women’s studies as a field in the 1970s but that has not dominated the field for at least twenty years. The change in the field was highlighted by a historic conference on pornography at Barnard in 1983, which helped free women’s studies from fundamentally conservative views of sexuality and introduced productive debates into the discipline. In some cases this new emphasis was signaled at the departmental level by programs adding “gender” to their title. Some gender studies programs are now headed by men, something that would have been virtually impossible in the 1970s. Disciplines thus can be self-healing; they can evolve past periods of ideological restraint. Yet a period of inflexible (and oppositional) conviction may be necessary to a field’s development.

But academic disciplines can be coercive enterprises. Contrary to the NAS’s train of thought, however, they enforce paradigms mostly by rewarding, rather than punishing, their members and their students. Under normal circumstances, rewarding conformity to disciplinary norms and expectations, as Michel Foucault has helped show us, is the most effective cultural strategy. Affirmation, not ridicule, is the weapon of choice. While the AAUP, in turn, can work to curtail ridicule and to protect the freedom to disagree, there is precious little it can do to relieve the power of affirmation. Disciplinary training opens intellectual opportunities for students and faculty alike; it generates intellectual excitement and agency. It also closes off options and curtails dissent. That is its core paradox. Politics—in the narrow sense of supporting attitudes conventionally categorized as political—is often a very small part of this pattern, though in a much broader sense the politics of disciplinarity is pervasive.

Of course, rewards for conformity are also balanced by potential punishment, and the culture wars, campus speech codes, and political repre-



sals against controversial speech have all contributed to a climate in which compliance, with its rewards, looks better than resistance, with its penalties. Certainly the threat of charges and hearings is a sufficient reason to choose behavior likely to be rewarded (Sniderman). The more high-profile assaults on academic freedom have also reinforced a tendency to isolate overt political speech and suppress reflection on the pervasive politics of knowledge.

The NAS has chosen to ignore this more fundamentally political character of disciplinarity because its altogether selective critique of academic disciplines and their use of academic freedom is itself a thoroughly political construct. What about the philosophy departments that teach only Anglo-American philosophy and disparage those students who develop an interest in Continental philosophy? What about the psychology departments so embedded in a positivist ideology that their faculty members have effectively disavowed belief in human consciousness? What about the political science departments whose constricted view of modernization led them for decades to endorse only USAID models for development? What about the sociology departments so committed to quantitative research that they suppress students' curiosity about qualitative sociology? I sometimes feel that dealing with the NAS and its few thousand members is like confronting a claque of Iranian mullahs who are paradoxically resentful of modernity but committed to bowing five times a day toward Wall Street. Indeed, disciplinary bias can become political in the narrower sense. How many business schools give balanced treatment to the benefits of unionization? How many economics departments offer introductory courses with a healthy (and, may one say, timely) skepticism toward free-market principles, instead of effectively exporting a supply-and-demand gospel worldwide? Despite all this, Horowitz and the NAS think women's studies is the great risk to intellectual openness.

Pressure on academic disciplines to reform themselves and critique their own paradigms is appropriate and necessary, but the NAS's roster of problem disciplines is both inadequate and dishonorable. Horowitz expands his list of defective academic specializations in *One-Party Classroom* to include "Women's Studies, African-American Studies, Peace Studies, Cultural Studies, Chicano Studies, Gay Lesbian Studies, Post-Colonial Studies, Whiteness Studies, Community Studies, and recently

politicized disciplines such as Cultural Anthropology and Sociology” (283), but it is still an ideologically biased list. Despite the Right’s efforts to hold the hard sciences blameless, the cultural effect of these assaults is arguably broader: to discredit disciplinaryity itself. Academia presently operates with what amounts to a Darwinian theory of the survival of ideas: those ideas that find their disciplinary niche survive and prosper, reproducing themselves and evolving. The Right seeks to undermine disciplinary credibility so that the new niche that provides the only test for academic thought is the market-dominated environment of public political debate.

Yet disciplines are for the foreseeable future the only rational models for organizing faculty we have. Thus, “Freedom in the Classroom” relies on disciplinary consensus as a guide to what faculty can require their students to master, what faculty can insist that students be able to comprehend and apply. Disciplinaryity is also a guide to what many faculty members may well believe about their subject matter and their preferred objects of study. Although one might endorse greater ongoing skepticism and reflexivity about disciplinary consensus, it is highly unrealistic to mandate it. These dour attitudes toward disciplinaryity and its effects on colleagues, I should add, may not reflect the views of my AAUP colleagues, but they help explain why I am willing to endorse the cold realism of “Freedom in the Classroom” on this count. I agree with the NAS that “‘accepted as true within a relevant discipline’ is not the same as true” (Wood and Balch 5). The AAUP has in response deleted the words “as true” from the phrase in its revised version of “Freedom in the Classroom.” It is also worth considering what it means to claim, as the NAS does, that “some disciplines have much stronger epistemological warrant than others” (*ibid.*). Epistemological warrant, alas, is also culturally constructed and managed, not an absolute ontological condition.

The AAUP’s 1915 Declaration relies on the scientific method as a model for the ideal exercise of academic freedom. In a broad, multidisciplinary context, that means rationality, willingness to test hypotheses against evidence, openness to counterclaims by peers, and so forth. The NAS wants to cast this as a choice between scientific method and the blind willfulness of disciplinary conviction. But different disciplines and subdisciplines focus on different kinds of evidence, deal with them differently,

and negotiate scholarly debate differently. The humanities fields I know best—literature, history, and art criticism—all have textual and historical evidence at stake, but the textual evidence is open to variable interpretation, and the historical record changes continually.

In my field, poetry, the primary evidence is the incredibly compressed and ambiguous language of the poem itself. Next comes the language of all the other poems by the same author, then all the other potentially relevant texts and discourses of the historical period. An author's intentions may be relevant, if we can discern them, but authors are often not in full control of the meanings and effects of their discourse. It is the job of the discipline to help establish the nature of evidence—how it should be handled, what the field's interpretive protocols are.

Given that academic freedom is grounded in professional training and expertise, reliance on disciplinary consensus to judge faculty appointments, tenure decisions, curricular design, and much of classroom advocacy may simply be unavoidable. The AAUP is not arguing for "disciplinary infallibility," to cite the NAS's clever but overheated phrase; it has simply recognized how academic knowledge is organized and administered. Meanwhile, both the AAUP and the NAS urge tolerance of and encouragement of dissent. Yet administrative judgments and decisions made outside disciplinary norms are far more likely to be arbitrary. Nonetheless, a certain price is paid by all for the highly departmentalized organization of the modern university. Despite these reservations, I endorse many of my discipline's values. The only really relentless recruitment I do is not for leftist politics but for the love of poetry.

One would hardly think that the commitment to teaching and writing about poetry would be at the crux of one recent effort to eviscerate academic freedom, but it is, as is detailed in my discussion of Stanley Fish's *Save the World on Your Own Time* (2008) in chapter 7. The book is important because its determined assault on academic freedom comes not from the Right but rather from a faculty member who once possessed moderately progressive credentials. It will thus be cited by many people who would never use Horowitz or other far-Right cultural critics to support constraints on classroom freedom.

As Fish's work and the critiques by the NAS make clear, nothing less than faculty members' very jobs and their intellectual integrity, as well as

the integrity of higher education and its capacity to challenge and inspire our students, is at stake in the current struggles over academic freedom. Much as we might like to imagine that academic freedom is a stable, unchanging value, a kind of Platonic form, in truth it is under constant pressure to redefine its nature, its scope, and its application. The need to clarify academic freedom anew, to elaborate on its implications, and to respond to its critics is never ending. It is important to remember in this context that both the AAUP itself and its classic statements of principle developed in specific historical contexts and reflect specific cultural and political struggles: “Professional academic freedom grew out of collective faculty resistance to university administrators and trustees in the early 1900s, at the height of capitalist industrialization . . . in a social movement at the turn of the twentieth century, when faculty made collective demands for autonomy over their research, teaching, and professional self-governance” (Lieberwitz 267–68).

In the introduction to a 1990 bibliography on academic freedom, Janet Sinder observed that academic freedom, as a result of its history, is “a subject with many facets: academic freedom of public and private school teachers, of university professors, of universities themselves, and of students” (383). William Van Alstyne warns us in the same volume that “the AAUP’s own notions of the varieties of academic freedom, like the notions of the Supreme Court, have become more complex over time” (83), a statement that is even more true now. Developments since then would lead us to warn that a distinction between the rights of teachers at public and private institutions would have to be applied to university professors as well. Indeed, academic freedom in the United States—as a reality and as a concept—has evolved over a century and more in response to changing social and political conditions, changing forms of university governance, developing case law in the courts, and AAUP investigations and policy statements, as David Rabban suggests: “Threats to professors from university trustees loomed behind the seminal professional definition produced in 1915. . . . Threats to universities from the state, arising out of general concerns during the late 1940s and 1950s about the dangers of communism to American society and institutions prompted the cases that led the Supreme Court to identify academic freedom as a first amendment right” (229).

With so many different registers and contexts for defining academic freedom, it must clearly continue to be discussed and debated. Yet most faculty members are not well versed in the relevant history or issues. Stanley Fish, as I discuss in chapter 7, argues that for some faculty academic freedom is no more than a “magical” term they invoke to justify unacceptable practices. In 1996, Richard Rorty worried that faculty understanding of academic freedom has so declined that for some it does little more than name “some complicated local folkways” (21). *No University Is an Island* is designed to help remedy that situation. But the remedy cannot be limited to a philosophical and historical review of the development of academic freedom in the United States. That has been ably done by others, notably at first by Richard Hofstadter and Walter Metzger. Academic freedom now confronts challenges powerful enough to ask not what its future will be but whether it will have a future at all. The uncertain answer to that question lies in the politics of struggle, which is my main focus in what follows.

Since the American Association of University Professors first investigated institutional violations of academic freedom and issued its historic 1915 “Declaration of Principles on Academic Freedom and Academic Tenure,” it has been the major force in the effort to define and protect this fundamental value. This book is first of all an effort to evaluate the state of academic freedom in the emerging neoliberal university and then an effort to judge what role the AAUP can play in preserving it. This introduction defines academic freedom and reviews some of the challenges it now faces, because it is in response to current challenges, as the quotation from David Rabban suggests, that academic freedom is historically clarified, defended, and sometimes put at risk.

*No University Is an Island* aims to track the effects of these political forces and to suggest how both the AAUP and faculty nationwide can better resist them. Chapter 1 outlines the relationship between academic freedom and shared governance, the latter concept being critical to sustaining academic freedom but arguably even less well understood. Chapter 2 identifies sixteen specific threats to academic freedom, a number of them still emerging. Chapter 3 takes on the pervasive threat to academic freedom built into our increasing reliance on contingent faculty with no job security. Chapter 4 joins the effort to break the Left’s relative silence

on the issue of political correctness and assesses its impact on academic freedom and the faculty. In chapters 5 and 6, I argue that collective bargaining can play a major role in preserving faculty responsibilities and rights, resisting neoliberal ideology, and reforming the professoriate but that the character of unionization will have to be transformed if it is to play a more progressive role in the future. As the reader will discover, a number of events are treated more than once in what follows, receiving, for example, a shared governance evaluation in chapter 1 and an academic freedom analysis in chapter 2. My debates with other scholars are comparably contextualized and are thus sometimes staged in more than one chapter. And in order to give each chapter some capacity to stand on its own, I repeat some arguments briefly, while pointing the reader to the chapter where they receive more detailed coverage.

In describing the current state of higher education, especially in chapters 2 and 4, I draw detailed examples from the institution I know best, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. In evaluating the AAUP's role, especially in chapters 7 through 9, I draw on fifteen years in its national leadership. Although I was elected the forty-ninth president of the AAUP in 2006 and reelected in 2008, I cannot pretend to speak officially for the organization in everything that follows. For one thing, on some of the finer points of academic freedom—such as whether it covers the disclosure of political beliefs in the classroom in acts or comments not related to class assignments—not everyone in the AAUP leadership agrees. More fundamentally, however, I have decided to reveal more of how the AAUP functions and has responded to recent challenges than others in the leadership or on the staff have done before. Some of my colleagues have urged me to do so. Others have urged me to remain silent. I am convinced, however, that the organization cannot thrive unless faculty members generally have a greater stake in its operation. I do not believe that to be possible unless there is more knowledge, both of what is at stake and of how the AAUP has struggled to balance its competing constituencies and competing visions. People also must understand how the AAUP has suffered from the way it has negotiated these challenges. Although all organizations pay a price for the very bureaucratic structures that enable them to function, and all organizations fall prey to the vagaries of human character, when the organization's effectiveness and very

existence is threatened thereby, broader revelation and discussion is necessary. That said, there is no question that, save for two periods—when it succumbed to repressive national law and public hysteria during World War I and when it retreated into silence in the face of McCarthyism—the AAUP’s record of putting the principles of academic freedom into writing and defending them has been unequalled in the higher education community. It was the organization’s general secretary, Ralph Hinstead, who prevented the AAUP from doing investigations in the 1950s; members who wanted investigations staged a revolt and ordered him ousted in 1955. He died at his desk before he could leave, and the AAUP again began to defend academic freedom. Thus, in the early 1950s there were effectively two AAUPs: one represented by the national office and one represented by the members.

That kind of broad interest in and commitment to the AAUP’s efforts is one this book aims to help restore. Although faculty members in a wide variety of disciplines continue to contribute to discussions of academic freedom—from law to history to education to literature—their number is far fewer than it should be. Everyone in higher education should follow the debates about academic freedom and express their own views in their venues of choice. This book is designed to promote that engagement. Chapter 1 addresses the fundamental governance structures that sustain academic freedom, structures also in need of repair.