

ABSTRACT

Rhetorical Constructions of Civility in Higher Education: Analyzing Salaita and Curry

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Higher education has seen an increase in pleas for civility. These calls have been in response to alleged instances of “incivility” demonstrated by their faculty members and students. Civility is understood as a requirement for civil dialogue and democratic deliberation. This expectation is not neutral, but ideological and therefore racialized. As a result, ideology determines what rhetoric is constituted as civil or uncivil. This thesis examines two main controversies: Dr. Steven Salaita and the University of Illinois-Urbana Champaign, and Dr. Tommy Curry and Texas A&M University.

The invocation and regulation of civility in higher education functions as a mode of citizenship for academic institutions that demarcates the “civil” scholar from the “uncivil” scholar. Particularly in the case of Dr. Salaita, donor influence has expanded and influences the dominant ideology. This corporatization of education has dangerous implication for the future of academic freedom and dissent.

Rhetorical Constructions of Civility in Higher Education: Analyzing Salaita and Curry

by

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A Thesis

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Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
Baylor University in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree
of
Master of Arts

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Accepted by the Graduate School

August 2017

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my mom, dad, and brother for providing unending support during this process. You have always been in my corner and you have made me the person I am today. Thank you, Grandma Belana, for always encouraging me to follow my dreams, no matter how big.

Next, I would like to thank my advisor, Dr. Scott J. Varda. I would not have been able to get through this program without you. I know we bump heads every now and then, but you have changed my life forever. Thank you for taking a chance on me. There is no doubt in my mind that without your guidance I would not have had multiple Ph.D. program acceptances and I'm not sure I would even have applied. Thank you for giving me a swift kick in the ass or a pep talk, whichever I needed at the time. I promise to make you proud.

I want to thank my thesis committee, Dr. Leslie A. Hahner and Dr. Coretta Pittman. Thank you for your patience and understanding. Dr. Hahner, you intimidate the hell out of me and I admire you so much. I hope that I can emulate your work ethic and brilliance. Thank you for all of the letters of recommendation and support you have provided during my time at Baylor. Dr. Pittman, I am so thankful that I got to work with you. When I met with you to talk about my thesis you told me, "You need to write this," and I knew that you were right. You made me feel like I could do this and that my research was valuable. I can't thank you enough.

To the Baylor debate team: you are the reason that I decided to pursue a Master's degree at Baylor. You are my family and you made my time at Baylor unforgettable. Dr. Gerber, thank you for telling me that I have what it takes to do this. Your words of encouragement meant more than you know. Special thanks to Sam, Alden, Trevor, Andrew, Greg, and Sarah. You listened to me agonize about my thesis and Ph.D. program decisions, in addition to so much more. To thank each of you would require a whole separate thesis. I love y'all so much, you kept me together when I could not do it myself.

Lastly, I would like to thank my UTNIF family. Finishing my thesis at debate camp was less than ideal, but you encouraged me and helped me in so many different ways. Toya Green, you inspire the hell out of me. You gave me amazing words of encouragement when I wanted to quit. I could not have done this without you. George Lee and Pedro Segura picked up the slack in our lab when I had to be gone to finish my thesis and I appreciate it more than you know. Roberto (Bobbio) Montero, thank you for letting me borrow your copy of the Undercommons, talking through ideas with me when I was struggling with my conclusion, and just generally keeping me on track in the homestretch. You are already an amazing teacher and you will be a phenomenal scholar. The educators at the UTNIF inspire me to be the best educator I can be and love y'all so much for it.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

The pursuit of higher education is one that often provides a path to a better future. Universities are sites that enable students to learn and grow into and educated, productive citizens. The university is also a site that fosters creativity and encourages students to think critically on a plethora of topics. The United States Supreme Court has described the university as “‘peculiarly the ‘marketplace of ideas’ that must encourage critical thought and questioning of social and political orthodoxy.’”¹ Chief Justice Warren agreed with this sentiment and added:

To impose any strait jacket upon the intellectual leaders in our colleges and universities would imperil the future of our Nation. No field of education is so thoroughly comprehended by man that new discoveries cannot yet be made....Scholarship cannot flourish in an atmosphere of suspicion and distrust. Teachers and students must always remain free to inquire, to study and to evaluate, to gain new maturity and understanding; otherwise our civilization will stagnate and die.²

Academic freedom is a necessary condition of a positive learning environment that encourages the pursuit of new knowledge without any threat of institutional restraint or backlash.

Although intellectual diversity is a foundational understanding of the university and academic communities, generally, there remain questions concerning which ideas are and should be considered legitimate in that marketplace. Additionally, there exist expectations regarding the style in which scholars present their arguments. Ideology plays a significant role in determining what scholarship is acceptable and protected under

determines who is or is not granted entrance into academic communities. In order to earn citizenship, scholars must demonstrate that they deserve to stay in the community by adhering to certain rules and regulations that are determined by ideological understandings of civil engagement.

This thesis will address the historical evolution of civility, analyze the role of ideology in the rhetorical construction of expectations of civility in the Steven Salaita case, and explore the co-constitutive nature of rhetorical constructions of race and civility as a mode of citizenship in the case of Tommy Curry. My argument is that the expectations of civility function as a rhetorical border that separates the civilized “us” from the uncivilized “them” thereby establishing the identity of the civilized scholar in opposition to the uncivilized other. This dichotomization saps the university of any emancipatory potential based on its ability to punish those who perform or embody incivility and furthermore provides the dominant ideology of the university with a tool to maintain its power, rather than encourage, the production of knowledge that is capable of challenging power. Lastly, this creates an environment that demands assimilation at the expense of diversity and creativity.

My thesis analyzes the charges of incivility against Dr. Steven Salaita and Dr. Tommy Curry. Dr. Steven Salaita, a Palestinian-American professor of indigenous studies, was a tenured professor of English at Virginia Tech University. In Fall 2013, Dr. Salaita was offered a tenured position in the indigenous studies department at the University of Illinois-Urbana Champaign. After a “rigorous, year-long faculty hiring process. Relying on UIUC’s contractual promise, Professor Salaita resigned from his tenured faculty position at Virginia Tech University.”³ Two weeks before Dr. Salaita was

scheduled to begin teaching classes, he received a letter from UIUC's Chancellor Phyllis Wise that notified Dr. Salaita that his appointment would, "not be recommended for submission to the board of trustees."⁴ This was completely unexpected and the university did not give a reason for this action at the time, Dr. Salaita explains:

"...without any warning, I received a letter from the chancellor, Phyllis Wise, informing me of my termination...A partisan political blog cherry-picked a few of those tweets...to create the false impression that I am anti-Semitic. Publicly disclosed documents reveal that, within days, University of Illinois donors who disagreed with my criticism of Israeli policy threatened to withhold money if I wasn't fired."⁵

On August 22, Chancellor Wise release an official statement regarding Dr. Salaita's termination that responded to some of the main criticisms of his termination. In response to the argument that his firing was due to his Anti-Zionist viewpoint, Chancellor Wise responded:

The decision regarding Prof. Salaita was not influenced in any way by his positions on the conflict in the Middle East nor his criticism of Israel....Some of our faculty are critical of Israel, while others are strong supporters. These debates make us stronger as an institution and force advocates of all viewpoints to confront the arguments and perspectives offered by others...What we cannot and will not tolerate at the University of Illinois are personal and disrespectful words or actions that demean and abuse either viewpoints themselves or those who express them. We have a particular duty to our students to ensure that they live in a community of scholarship that challenges their assumptions about the world but that also respects their rights as individuals.⁶

At first glance, this letter seems to be a powerful response to vulgar conduct, but after closer examination it is clear that these are just vague statements without particular linkages to what Dr. Salaita did and how his actions fit the characterization they are given in this letter. This response claims to protect the rights of individuals, while simultaneously limiting the rights of Dr. Salaita. Dr. Dana L. Cloud supports this understanding and adds, "Wise's argument uses the language of democratic participation

to actively exclude a voice from that process. Freedom of expression is necessary and desirable—until it is articulated to a counterhegemonic cause like the defense of Palestinians against Israeli slaughter and occupation.”⁷ Ultimately, on September 11, Chancellor Wise submitted a negative recommendation and the board of trustees voted to reject Dr. Salaita’s appointment on the basis of a lack of “civility.”⁸

Dr. Salaita’s case is not the only one of its kind, nor will it be the last. In May 2017, Rod Dreher, editor for *The American Conservative*, wrote a story entitled “When is OK to Kill Whites?”⁹ This article was in response to a 2012 interview of Texas A&M Professor, Dr. Tommy Curry, that discussed strategies of resistance, including self-defense, in response to anti-black violence.¹⁰ This interview was grossly misrepresented in Dreher’s article through sound bites that contained the most inflammatory rhetoric without context.

In Curry’s situation, the sound bites were used to rhetorically construct Dr. Curry as an “angry Black man” who violated the speech codes and mutual respect.¹¹ The violation of these speech codes was used to legitimize threats against him in the comment sections. Furthermore, this situation is exemplary of the racialized nature of civility and the unequal constraints that these expectations place on discussions of racism.

Expectations of civility and decorum in university settings are not the cause of the problem. Rather, declarations of incivility are symptomatic of structural matrices of power including, but not limited to: white supremacy, patriarchy, capitalism, disability that seek to maintain their salience through the silencing and expulsion of those who question their legitimacy. My thesis will conduct a rhetorical analysis of the ways in

which these expectations of civility are strategically utilized to stifle dissent that is in opposition to the dominant ideology.

Justification

Civility, as an expectation, permeates all parts of civil society. Even the term “civil” society denotes a particular expectation of societal interaction. It is used in most communities, although the expectations change depending on the setting. This standard exists in academic settings as a criterion for evaluating “collegiality” in regards to tenure and promotions, and more specifically, it is a part of the foundational understandings of rhetoric.¹² It is important to analyze the foundations of the academic community to understand the evolution of its current practices and norms. To require scholars and students to embody a particular notion of civility or incivility is a rhetorical act. To define that notion of civility is also a rhetorical act that has certain intentions and harmful consequences.

Expectations of “civility” function as a disciplinary mechanism for those who do not embody a particular notion of decorum. Evelyn Le Espiritu and Jasbir K. Puar argue that, “certain bodies are constructed to simply be, a priori, uncivil...it is not merely that the accusation of uncivil behavior is more likely thrown at bodies of color, of immigrants, of queers...They demonstrate for us what incivility is by virtue of the sheer presence of their non-normativity.”¹³ Dr. Salaita and Dr. Curry were accused of breaking speech codes, however, there is no standardized rubric to evaluate the “civility” of speech. Espiritu and Puar address this when they write, “the distinction here becomes less one of speech as uncivil than one of how the ideological evaluation of speech is used to reinforce the production of certain bodies as threatening, dangerous and uncivil.”¹⁴ The

rules and norms of academia are not neutral, nor are they applied equally. Academic freedom is protected until that freedom becomes threatening to structures of power. Dana Cloud turns to Gramsci to explain that:

The ruling class's willingness to participate in the ritual dances of civilized inclusion ceases when its material power is threatened. Behind every occasion for the practice of civility (the battle for hegemony on cultural and political, discursive terrain) stands an army with its guns—or at the very least the threat of exclusion and unemployment—at resisters' heads.¹⁵

This issue deserves attention and solutions in order to ensure that the asymmetrical regulation of civility does not continue. Academia has become a place that is not hospitable to difference.

This thesis provides important research for the field of rhetoric, especially amidst an increasingly polarized political climate that prompts difficult conversations. Expectations of civility are rhetorically constructed in accordance with the dominant ideology, therefore there is not singular interpretation of civility. The ambiguous nature of the term enables ideological interpretation to determine particular understandings of civility. Additionally, the study of civility can inform our teaching styles, scholarly engagement, and activism. As students, teachers, and scholars, the way we come to know and understand civility will spill over into the way we conduct our classrooms, participate in discussions and produce scholarship. The expectation of civility as an oppressive tool holds very real implications for the classroom experience. Students, as well as teachers, are constrained by this expectation, therefore it is valuable for the well-being of university settings and the production of knowledge to examine how these norms have changed the way educational communities operate and if those changes are good.

Research Questions and Method

Following Salaita and Curry, there continue to be cases of professors being fired or reprimanded on the basis of “incivility,” but there has not been much of an attempt to interrogate whether or not the current expectations are valuable. My thesis will focus on three main questions: What is civility, specifically in academic communities? What are the ways in which civility as an expectation has historically operated and what does that mean for its current usage? What does this understanding of civility mean for rhetoric more broadly? I have chosen to focus on the answers to these main questions because I believe the current research has focused on the symptoms of the problem, rather than the cause of the problem itself. Therefore, instead of just looking at how universities have responded poorly in regards to “uncivil” behavior, I ask why they deem that behavior to be uncivil in the first place? How do certain ideologies influence the way “civility” is perceived?

My thesis will be a rhetorical critique and close-textual analysis of the ways in which civility has been interpreted historically and in the cases of Salaita and Curry. The historical examination of civility is necessary to understand the different ways “civility” has been interpreted over time. The modern instantiation of civility cannot and should not be separated from its past. The understandings of the “uncivilized” haunts “civil society” and thus results in standards being created to avoid any confrontation with that which is “uncivilized.” The uncivil is put in opposition to everything that deliberation or democracy attempts to accomplish: consensus, politeness, cooperation and order. This analysis is a key component in understanding the way civility can function as a tool of citizenship to regulate what “deviant” types of knowledge, embodiment, and style can be

allowed in the academy. My thesis will analyze the rhetoric that defines civility, suggesting its ambiguity is deployed differently for different faculty. That is, the lack of a concrete definition or set of expectations, allows for different ideologies to interpret “civility” in a way that benefits the existing order. This means that any action could be deemed “uncivil,” which creates an impossible, arbitrary standard for scholars to meet. It also affords universities flexibility in their interpretation.

The cases of Dr. Salaita and Dr. Curry are important texts because they provide example of how expectations are upheld in current academic communities. Additionally, I can closely examine how UIUC donors and alumni brought the alleged “uncivil” actions to the attention of the administration and identify the point of contention between the donors and Dr. Salaita, especially in regards to ideological differences. Dr. Curry’s case provides an opportunity to evaluate the way race and civility are rhetorically constructed as modes of citizenship in order to exclude opinions that threaten the dominant ideology. Lastly, it provides a precedent for future cases regarding expectations of civility in an academic context. Ultimately, not everyone is afforded the right to academic freedom, especially those who do not uphold or adhere to dominant ideologies, which is why civility is not a neutral imposition, it is a strategic one.

Literature Review

There are multiple interpretations of the term “civility.” This thesis attempts to parse through some of the interpretations that exist in the literature in order to understand their intended meaning and the way they function in academic communities. While there have been many scholars that have broached the subject of “civility” in political

communities as well as academic communities, my thesis will build upon these previous discussions.

Civility has been interpreted in a variety of ways, which is where I began my research. Christopher F. Zurn describes political civility as:

A tension-filled ideal. We have good normative reasons to strive for and encourage more civil political interactions, as they model our acknowledgement of others as equal citizens and facilitate high-quality democratic problem-solving. But we must simultaneously be attuned to civility's limitations, its possible pernicious side-effects, and its potential for strategic manipulation and oppressive abuse, particularly in contemporary, pluralistic and heterogeneous societies.¹⁶

More specifically, in regards to rhetoric, Mary E. Stuckey and Sean Patrick O'Rourke argue that, "rhetoric, community, and civility are united in the idea that 'good rhetoric' requires 'good faith,' and that such rhetoric somehow involves the avoidance of willful deception and the readiness to speak and listen with respect—what Wilson Carey McWilliams called 'civic dignity.'"¹⁷ While I agree with McWilliams notion that scholars should willingly speak and listen with respect, I do not believe that this is being accomplished and it is not simply the "uncivil" members who are being disrespectful or unwilling to listen, rather, the opposite seems true. It does not seem others are willing to listen when an issue is in contention with the dominant ideology or an ideology that they ascribe to. Additionally, the notion of "respect" is unclear. Is it disrespectful to speak out against violence? It is unclear if these norms are based on the form or style of an argument, i.e., tone, attitude, emotional expression, or the content of the argument itself, i.e., arguments that question institutional violence. My thesis will suggest that arguments or discourse can be labeled as both stylistically and argumentatively uncivil, which can deter the pursuit of certain scholarly work as well as constraints on the presentation of scholarship.

Stuckey and O'Rourke offer an understanding of civility as manners. This analysis is important due to the University's invocation of "collegiality" as an "unofficial" standard for evaluating tenure and promotions. They write:

A reliance on 'civility as manners' is the thinnest, most impoverished, and least helpful way of thinking about this relationship. In it, civility is reduced to its narrowest dimensions, limited to the tolerance of differing points of view. What is most important in this approach is that all communications arrive garbed in a veneer of care and concern in conformity to the reigning standards of conversational taste and etiquette.¹⁸

This understanding of civility as manners has implications for the possibility of "community" formation, as Stuckey and Rourke explain, "Community is only possible, in this understanding of civility, if politeness reigns and if social niceties are observed....Disagreements cannot be public, because to do so would endanger the fragile consensus of the national polity and threaten the tenuous hold we have on tolerance for one another's differences."¹⁹ In order to preserve the "fragile consensus" scholars are forced to avoid particular points of contention. The fear of institutional backlash is a silencing mechanism for those who may possess dissenting views.

The emphasis on decorum or politeness, specifically in response to violence, distracts from the initial injury. Rather than focus on the way someone decides to convey that response, perhaps the focus should be the violence that incited the response. Stuckey and O'Rourke discuss this when they write, "It is, in fact, often a distraction from real problems, a mode of silencing, and a potentially exclusionary understanding of community as the province of the privileged. It relies on an ideology of politeness and a conversational or "invitational rhetoric."²⁰ The ability to focus on the way someone expresses frustration allows the original argument to be buried in surface-level respectability politics, instead of the problem at hand. The problem becomes the

response, not the initial issue and is the most basic form of victim blaming. Michael Leff argues that the adherence to expectations of civility or decorum, “is to yield to appearance, to adhere to the mere surface, and to capitulate to the tyranny of a hollow and artificial social exterior.”²¹ I agree with Leff, norms of civility and decorum are used to dismiss particular arguments based on surface level claims about their legitimacy, generally based on the way the arguments are presented. Tone-policing is relevant to this discussion in that tone-policing attempts to force the speaker to communicate their idea in a polite, docile, tone for the argument to be heard at all. This is not an uncommon practice, many students are confronted with peers that ask them, “Why are you so upset about this?” “Calm down, I can’t talk to you when you’re like this. I want to have a civil conversation.” As a result, discussions can be shut down on the basis of uncivil discourse before the argument itself is evaluated, which undermines the exchange of ideas within educational settings.

Civility can also operate as a mode of citizenship through the rhetorical construction of borders. In his book *The Border Crossed Us*, David J. Cisneros analyzes the various understandings of borders and citizenship. He argues that conventionally, “borders are understood in a limited way as the strict territorial boundaries defining a nation-state.”²² This interpretation is insufficient, as it cannot account for the fact that borders are more than just “physical places...borders are also figurative spaces of identity, culture and community.”²³ Borders are not merely physical, but also ideological. Cisneros is interested in not only the “territorial borders of the nation-state but also in the boundaries of political and cultural community.”²⁴ These ideological borders construct an ideal citizenry that abides by specific rules of civil engagement in academia. Civility is

defined in opposition to incivility in an attempt to demarcate the civilized “us” from the uncivilized “other.”

Robert Asen forwards an understanding of citizenship “as a performance, not a possession.”²⁵ Asen argues that, a rhetorical understanding of citizenship requires a shift in our understanding of citizenship, “from a status attribute to a way of acting.”²⁶ In order to be granted citizenship into the university, non-normative bodies must sacrifice the parts of themselves that are deemed a threat to the dominant ideology. As a result, people of color are confronted with an impossible choice: They can either assimilate and ensure their academic and financial future or they can challenge norms of civility through performative incivility, which risks expulsion from the community.

This thesis will argue that expectations of civility are rhetorically constructed and enforced in order to clearly define the identity of the civil citizen/scholar of the university. This rhetoric establishes civility as the boundary of belonging in opposition to incivility in an attempt to demarcate the civilized “us” from the uncivilized “other.” This understanding of civility as citizenship allows us to understand the ideological tendencies of universities, especially in response to a potential threat to that nation, i.e. the university.

The expectation of civility in academic settings shapes whether or not the classroom environment is hospitable or hostile to difference and dissent. Civility attempts to establish a particular type of learning environment. While the classroom and learning environments purport themselves to be a place of creativity and learning, for some, it is a site of assimilation, suppression and discomfort for others. Many authors have discussed the suppressive nature of university spaces, historically and currently, and their strategies

to address them. Dr. George Yancy addresses the notion of “safe spaces” in universities.²⁷ This is relevant because “civility” is invoked in order to ensure that things stay safe and reasonable in the classroom in order for everyone to be comfortable. Yancy challenges this notion, “In my philosophy classrooms, I have attempted to create spaces that are “unsafe”—that is, spaces that do not perpetuate, in this case, the normative status of whiteness. Thus, in my classrooms I openly mark whiteness— ‘Look, a white!’ and despite the difficulty, I also help to nurture the sort of critical space for whites to do so as well.”²⁸ His approach is one that challenges the notion of civility and safety due to the benefit that discomfort and incivility can offer for interrogating whiteness, in addition to articulating the detriment that “safe spaces” result in. As Yancy writes, “If to create a “safe” space within the classroom is to elide white privilege, then such “safety” is actually an affront to both justice and the exercise of critical intelligence deployed toward the aim of emancipation.”²⁹ While “civility” attempts to achieve the most comfortable and safe environment, this goal ignores the possibility that discomfort can be a valuable when interrogating violent, persistent, ideological structures. Safety and comfort are already afforded to those who do not have to deal with the material effects of structural oppression and ultimately avoids any confrontation with privilege and injustice in favor of blissful, comfortable, ignorance. This results in ivory tower elitism and the production of scholarship that is uninformed and maintains hegemonic and oppressive regimes. Ultimately, these norms dictate the terms on which people can respond to their own oppression, rather than provide an environment that can inculcate the production of scholarship and strategies of resistance.

The formation and purpose of the university is an important site of analysis to understand the function of civility, as well as its consequences. Schools have historically been reserved for select students who were deemed fit to be the future leaders of the world, while excluding those who did not fit the bill. For many minority students, attending a university often requires a sacrifice of parts of themselves in order to be allowed to enter. bell hooks addresses this sentiment through her experiences with conformity: “I wanted to become a critical thinker. Yet that longing was often seen as a threat to authority. Individual white male students who were seen as ‘exceptional,’ were often allowed to chart their intellectual journeys, but the rest of us (and particularly those from marginal groups) were always expected to conform.”³⁰

The demand for assimilation or conformity results in frustration and emotional distress for those who feel that they have to muffle their divergent thoughts to be tolerated or face the consequences of expression. hooks elaborates:

Nonconformity on our part was viewed with suspicion, as empty gestures of defiance aimed at masking inferiority or substandard work. In those days, those of us from marginal groups who were allowed to enter prestigious, predominantly white colleges were made to feel that we were there not to learn but to prove that we were the equal of whites. We were there to prove this by showing how well we could become clones of our peers. As we constantly confronted biases, an undercurrent of stress diminished our learning experience.³¹

Even when universities diversify by accepting non-white students, the norms do not change, forcing minority students to feel like outsiders who constantly have to prove themselves to be worthy of their inclusion. Minority students are tolerated, but only on certain terms, which does not cultivate a healthy learning environment for those students. ³²As hooks writes, “My commitment to learning kept me attending classes. Yet, even so, because I did not conform—would not be an unquestioning passive student—

some professors treated me with contempt. I was slowly becoming estranged from education.”³³ hooks’ experience is very similar to my own and is what fuels my desire to interrogate the constraints that I feel the expectations of civility have placed on me as a student as well as on my work.

Although there are many negative aspects of the university and the norms it upholds, my response is not to get rid of it, but rather re-work it. In her book *Teaching To Transgress*, bell hooks adds a valuable perspective and pedagogy for university settings that my thesis will attempt to build on. Rather than attempt to place a limitation on the style or discourse of those who attempt to transgress structures of power, hooks suggests an “engaged pedagogy,” which is described as “more demanding than conventional critical or feminist pedagogy. For, unlike these two teaching practices, it emphasizes well-being...promotes their own well-being if they are to teach in a manner that empowers students.”³⁴ hooks’ pedagogy also interrogates the desire to distance oneself from expressing emotion, “The objectification of the teacher within bourgeois educational structures seemed to denigrate notions of wholeness and uphold the idea of a mind/body split, one that promotes and supports compartmentalization.”³⁵ Civility is an attempt to reinforce that split and to make sure things stay rational and logical in discussions, emotional responses are distractions from the conversation at hand. hooks continues, “The only important aspect of our identity was whether or not our minds functioned, whether we were able to do our jobs in the classroom. The self was presumably emptied out the moment the threshold was crossed, leaving in place only an objective mind—free of experiences and biases.”³⁶ Civility requires that we remain

“objective” and ignore the experiences that shape us and influence our work, or at the very least, to express those experiences in a way that will not be too “disruptive.”

This orientation towards emotional responses as “uncivil” or “disruptive” and wholly negative, is a fundamental error of academia. Emotions or emotional expression do not hinder the ability to be a good scholar, it enhances it. Not all people are productive scholars because they write about things they do not care about, sometimes they are the most affective scholars because it is real for them, it matters to them and is inextricably intertwined with the way they interpret and interact with the world. As a scholar, I am influenced by authors like bell hooks who emphasize the importance and value in the combination of rationality and emotion and I think that makes me a better academic. People are not built to categorize emotions from logic, it is unrealistic, which means the basis of this expectation is unrealistic as well. Dana Cloud addresses this concern, “‘Civility,’ then, is a convenient meta-level shorthand: We condemn what you said because it violates the rules for conversation. It was too emotional, i.e., it was a potentially incendiary statement of your personal investment in the issue. It revealed the presence of antagonism in the social totality.”³⁷ Therefore, perhaps it is not exactly an aversion to emotion, but rather an aversion to the emotional expression regarding abuse of power because it forces those systems into an uncomfortable confrontation with the violence that they perpetuate.

We should not always run to whatever is comfortable, instead we should continue to ask questions, interrogate oppressive structures and dwell in the discomfort, in order to achieve the best version of the university that we can and to encourage dissent, rather than demonize it. I ultimately agree with hooks when she writes:

The classroom remains the most radical space of possibility in the academy... I add my voice to the collective call for renewal and rejuvenation in our teaching practices. Urging all of us to open our minds and hearts so that we can know beyond the boundaries of what is acceptable, so that we can think and rethink, so that we can create new visions...enables transgressions—a movement against and beyond boundaries. It is that movement which makes education the practice of freedom.³⁸

I still have faith that the university is a place of possibility, but that possibility is limited in its current form and is incapable of encouraging transgression.

Structure

The second chapter will include an etymological and historical tracing of civility as a term and a value and a review of the literature that presents its different interpretations as it applies to engagement, deliberation, and contemporary higher education. This chapter will discuss the necessity of civility in certain situations, in addition to historical instances of teaching civility, such as the “civilizing mission” of indigenous boarding schools, to demonstrate the potential of civility as a strategy of assimilation.³⁹

The third chapter will be a close textual analysis of *Salaita vs. Kennedy et. al*, which will provide a primary example of the legal consequences that result from attempts to limit academic freedom. This will also provide some insight into the way the dominant ideology can interpret particular acts as uncivil in order to justify disciplinary action against certain bodies. The close-reading of this case demonstrates the reluctance of the university to remain impartial in the evaluation of such complaints in order to judge them fairly.

The fourth chapter will include a close textual analysis of Dr. Curry’s experience at Texas A&M as an example of the way ideology rhetorically constructs civility and race

as modes of citizenship. Charges of incivility are used to classify some individuals as outside the bounds of citizenship and thus justify their exclusion. This has dangerous implications for discussions of racialized violence due to the ideological investment in white supremacy and the tendency to avoid conversations about race that make white people uncomfortable.⁴⁰ This places an unfair burden on victims of racialized violence to communicate their grievances in a “civil” manner. They are expected to respond to incivility with civility or risk their employment status. Ultimately, expectations of civility as a mode of citizenship result in repression, inequality, and decreased dissent.

Finally, I will argue that the Salaita and Curry cases demonstrate that there are material consequences associated with the rhetorical construction of civility. Expectations of civility severely limit the university’s ability to fulfill its purpose as a site that encourages new knowledge production without the threat of punishment. More specifically, is the university capable of fostering dissent and emancipation when the pursuit of those goals clashes with the dominant ideology? This chapter will also address some of the potential impacts that expectations of civility and the threat of punishment has on scholars’ sense of belonging in academia. It influences the way they navigate academic spaces due to the hanging threat of expulsion from the university. This creates a hostile environment by necessitating self-monitoring, tone-policing, silencing, in addition to a chilling effect on certain types of knowledge production.

Notes

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² *Sweezy v. New Hampshire*, 354 US 234 (Supreme Court 1957).

³ Center for Constitutional Rights, “The Firing of Steven Salaita.”

⁴ American Association of University Professors, “Academic Freedom and Tenure: The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign,” April 2015, 1, http://www.aaup.org/file/UIUC%20Report_0.pdf.

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⁸ American Association of University Professors, “Academic Freedom and Tenure,” 1.

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¹¹ Rusty Surette, “A&M Professor Responds to Criticism, Says Life Has Been Threatened,” *KBTX-TV*, May 12, 2017, <http://www.kbtx.com/content/news/AM-Professor-responds-to-criticism-says-his-life-has-been-threatened-422133624.html>.

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¹³ Eryn Lê Espiritu, Jasbir K. Puar, and Steven Salaita, “Civility, Academic Freedom, and the Project of Decolonization: A Conversation with Steven Salaita,” *Qui Parle: Critical Humanities and Social Sciences* 24, no. 1 (2015): 64.

¹⁴ Espiritu, Puar, and Salaita, "Civility, Academic Freedom, and the Project of Decolonization," 64–65.

¹⁵ Cloud, “‘Civility’ as a Threat to Academic Freedom,” 15.

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²¹ Michael Leff, “Decorum and Rhetorical Interpretation: The Latin Humanistic Tradition and Contemporary Critical Theory.,” *Vichiana*, 3a, no. 1 (1990): 108.

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²³ Cisneros, *The Border Crossed Us*.

²⁴ Cisneros, *The Border Crossed Us*.

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²⁸ Yancy, *Look, A White!*, 53.

²⁹ Yancy, *Look, A White!*, 53.

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³⁴ hooks, *Teaching To Transgress*.15.

³⁵ hooks, *Teaching To Transgress*., 16.

³⁶ hooks, *Teaching To Transgress*. 16–17.

³⁷ Cloud, “‘Civility’ as a Threat to Academic Freedom,” 15.

³⁸ hooks, *Teaching To Transgress*, 12.

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CHAPTER TWO

“Civility” And Higher Education: A Historical Background

Introduction

As the political climate continues to create discontent and disagreement, more universities are receiving reports of “uncivil” conduct by faculty and students. Simultaneously, though not always in response to specific incidents of *incivility*, there has been a growing trend of campus wide pleas for civility.¹ Polls continue to show, Americans believe we are experiencing a “civility problem,”² and numerous critics have pointed to the same for colleges and universities. However, there is much disagreement over whether or not civility as an expectation is beneficial for higher education or a limitation on academic freedom.

Civility has operated under an assumption of consensus concerning its function within higher education. This supposed consensus guides the belief in decorum deemed necessary for academic communities.³ The consensus understanding of civility thereby acts to create norms that must be preserved in order for the institution to continue to function smoothly. As I explained in chapter one, “civility” should be understood as an ideograph, and is thus both rhetorically constructed and reflected of particular ideologies.⁴ Moreover, the view of civility as the result of a community consensus is also mutually reinforcing as civility has been explained as necessary to even reach consensus in the first place.⁵ That this construction is necessarily ideological should almost be

axiomatic. We should understand civility, not as a hard and fast rule, but rather as the reflection of particular ideological interpretations present at a given moment and place.

The notion of civility and consensus is obviously not universally accepted. Tav Nyong'o, Professor of American Studies at Yale University, writes, "Everywhere one turns these days, it seems, 'civility' is being held up as a norm to which we all agreed to be held accountable. When was this consensus to be civil arrived at? Nobody can quite say. It must have been when we weren't looking."⁶ Additionally, Dr. Kent M. Weeks notes, "Civility is not innate. It must be instilled. Thus, incorporating concepts of civility and decency in the educational system makes sense." Civility both is a condition for the education system and is cultivated by that system, which further demonstrates the necessity of analyzing the creation of this norm.

This chapter seeks to explain the historical roots of the rhetorically charged word "civility." In what follows, I chart the origins of the concept. Beginning in ancient Greece and Rome, I briefly describe its historical contours from its re-emergence following the end of European feudalism, to its elevation as a more individualistic code of manners during the Enlightenment, through its emphasis as a mode of public instruction for American schoolchildren, to today's all-encompassing obligation for self-policing of the presentation of arguments within the bounds of appropriate speech. I consider the importance of the term in the primary education practices of the US, including its colonizing influence on indigenous children, before turning to its elevation as a concept in higher education.

Early Understandings Of Civility

There are multiple roots that can be identified for the term “civility.” In its most basic terms, Merriam-Webster defines “civil” as, “of or relating to citizens...of or relating to the state or its citizenry...civilized, civil society...adequate in courtesy and politeness.”⁷ In this definition, civil comes from the Latin root “civilis.” For a definition that provides a bit more context for the practice of “civility,” *The International Encyclopedia of Political Communication* defines the word “civility” from the Latin *civitas* as, “the social body of Roman citizens united under law.”⁸ These definitions all have a tie to the law, civil society, or citizenship, which should be indicative of its function. However, civility as a concept predates even legalistic understandings of the word.

In ancient hunter-gatherer societies, civility functioned as a mode of cooperation that smoothed relations between cave dwelling humans. Constructing hunting parties required sustained communication and a collaboration between individuals. Civility, at least then, was a literal “survival skill.”⁹ Fast forward several thousand years, and the Greek democracy and Roman Republic alters its meaning quite substantially.

The construction of socializing norms through ancient Greek and Roman civilization was the foundation for modern notions of civility absent the explicit word “civility.” Similar to Schiappa’s assertion that the concept of rhetoric existed in ancient Greece prior to the popularization of the Greek word for “rhetoric,”¹⁰ the organizing principles of ancient Greece and Rome ought to be properly understood as constituting “civility,” even though no such word existed for the concept.¹¹ The Latin word “*Civitas*” is best understood as “citizenship,”¹² but this abstraction should also be understood as

representing, “normative behavior within the social and political context, civility in its early days of existence was firmly rooted in civil society—Cicero’s *societas civilis* and Aristotle’s *koinonia politike*—which exists in theoretical contrast to states of untamed nature or unstable governance.”¹³

Aristotle’s conception of civility greatly shaped Greek political thought. Aristotle posited that a “dignified and respectful affection, *philia*, should naturally prevail among fellow citizens of any virtuous state.”¹⁴ Moreover, Aristotle’s basis for defining a natural slave, or a barbarian, as distinct from a human who might be eligible for citizenship, was premised on their natural characteristics but also upon their relationship to society, and what they might offer society.¹⁵ In other words, even when discussing whether one was designed as a “natural slave,” one’s relationship to larger society is the key issue that defines whether one can be a citizen. The contrast of “civility” to an “untamed nature” also hints towards a desire for a “domesticated,” “tame,” or even “docile” subject, in opposition to those who occupy an “untamed,” “barbaric,” or “savage” position.

During the Renaissance, civility appeared again as a term of reverence. According to Troester & Mester, the term’s importance during the roughly 600 year period of the Middle Ages “could be fairly labeled a low point in the history of civility.”¹⁶ Following this “low point,” the term, much as European society generally, had greatly changed. Rather than Greek democracies or Roman republics, Europe now had French Kings and Queens and English Dukes and Duchesses. The concept of civility had likewise been altered to account for these new governing relations of power and civility came to be seen as “the proper conduct between lords and free men who served them—deference, cooperation, service, reciprocal rights and duties, and proper speech and dress.”¹⁷ During

the period, civility came to be understood as a social, political, and courtly word. To Shaefer's mind, these concepts were all well enshrined, and representative of the concept of civility, in the text of Magna Carta.¹⁸ With its references to reasonable and generally agreed upon concepts such as "general consent," "in accordance with the ancient usage," and "ancient obligation,"¹⁹ Magna Carta established its construction of civility rhetorically. Rules establishing deference to the elites were maintained—"Earls and barons shall be fined only by their equals"²⁰—but so were basic protections for so-called common people—"No constable or other royal official shall take corn or other movable goods from any man without immediate payment, unless the seller voluntarily offers postponement of this."²¹

Over the several hundred years that accounted for the era, civility was transformed in keeping with societal alterations. The individualistic focus of the *Enlightenment* era brought with it consequent changes to the meaning of civility. The Italian city-states were a site in which the "educated gentleman" flourished.²² The "educated gentleman," embodied civility through his display of "polished manners, courtly etiquette, fine speech" as well as his "love of beauty," "nobility of bearing," and "respect [for] others."²³ The figure of the educated gentleman came to represent the height of humanity, perhaps best paraphrased by the two word Latin phrase "mansion hominum."²⁴ The phrase meant that civility was the "anchor of our humanity"—otherwise considered as "humans acting their best, their most noble selves, acting civilized."²⁵

Accompanying the era domestically was an internationalist pursuit of land and resources that sought to colonize and civilize supposed barbarians. The West's expansion

toward and exploitation of indigenous peoples was accompanied with a turn toward individualized meanings of civility. Marquis de Mirabeau described the colonization process in 1756 as bringing peoples contacted by the West "out of the original state of barbarism and into the state of civility."²⁶ Here, "civility" became closely tied with notions of "civilization" and with the idea that there existed a pre-ordained mission for the West to instruct the rest of the world in the correct way of living.²⁷ As Anheier smartly notes, "this process involved diverse institutions and organizations, and it existed in a variety of imperial frameworks but was typically rooted in some sense of superiority."²⁸

As the Enlightenment came to a close, wide movements for individual political rights, rebellions, and outright revolutions became nearly commonplace. These historical events likewise accompanied alterations in understandings of civility. The French and American Revolutions, as well as the legal documents demanding and ensuring obligations and rights for some individuals, but that also ensured the smooth functioning of civil institutions. These documents legally codified the civilizing system of relations under which Americans might express themselves within a democratic context. Harriet Martineau, often referred to as the first female sociologist, when visiting America for the first time in the 1830s, agreed with Alexis de Tocqueville's assessment of the respect for the common man that was afforded in America. She noted, especially as compared to her home country of England, the "puerile and barbaric spirit of contempt is scarcely known in America."²⁹ "Nothing in American civilization struck me so forcibly and so pleurably," she wrote, "as the invariable respect paid to man, as man."³⁰ Though this praise seems high, especially as compared with European standards of civility, it belies a

fundamental concern with civility to this point historically—as with nearly all social institutions of the day, it is constructed around and inclusive of only men. And in the American context, white men.

American Civility

In the American context, the Civil War brought great changes to notions of civility, as women's spheres of influence expanded from the domestic to the public. Pre-war roles for women were nearly ubiquitously confined to the home, requiring exclusive domesticity for notions of respectability.³¹ Though some were forced to don disguises to participate in the war effort, women throughout the war acted as soldiers, medics, nurses, spies, farmers, couriers, and saboteurs.³² These forays into public life materially and fundamentally altered notions of civility.³³ By the end of the war, both White and Black women had demonstrated through their actions, and expressed through their words as poets, teachers, and advocates, the need for a more gender-inclusive social order. These efforts helped set the foundation for women's political gains in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.³⁴

The post war era saw substantial changes in notions of civility given the altered racial make-up of American public life. Reconstruction, a fact of life in both the North and the South, saw efforts to alter the material conditions governing daily political life through a new understanding of citizenship. Following a centuries-long effort to both maintain and justify racial chattel slavery, legal and political actors attempted to incorporate millions of new freed-slaves into the ranks of citizenship. This required substantial alterations in meanings of civility as previous ideological commitment underpinning slavery held that “the Negro, even when brought into modern civilization,

could not be civilized.”³⁵ Prior to the War, Blacks slaves were governed as property, and even free Black Americans in the North were governed by incredibly restrictive, legally codified codes of conduct.³⁶ Following the war, legal constructs were devised to support a thin veneer of legal equality, but, especially in the south, surface civility helped maintain the dominance of white supremacy.

With Reconstruction came alteration to practices used to secure civility’s meaning, ostensibly reformulated its purpose. Reconstruction era legal changes forced new public private arrangements that sought to secure positive rights for all legal citizens.³⁷ Though freed slaves were the target of the government’s protective action, the passage and enforcement of the Civil Rights Act of 1866, the “Fourteenth Amendment, federal supervision of southern elections, and the use of military to protect the rights of freed slaves” established a “new national presence” in the lives of all Americans.³⁸ This presence consequently shaped understandings of civility. Moreover, these efforts were reminiscent of values supported by the so-called Founding Fathers, and functioned as a partial fulfillment of the promise of American democracy.³⁹ However, these democratic ideals and new norms for civility merely papered over a continuation of an Antebellum tradition resulting in changes not much different, at least in the South, for most Black Americans. David Goldfield rightly notes, “The surface civility, the gracious manners, and the oral traditions handed down from the Civil War and Reconstruction generation provided a comforting and confining refuge for southern whites, a throwback to the fondly remembered Old South, a shelter to blind them to the inequities of their remembered past and the racial, social, and gender divisions that such a visionary history and its application generated.”⁴⁰

The late 19th, early 20th century also saw substantial changes in notions of civility owing to rapid financial inequality between the haves and have nots. Following Reconstruction, the populist notions of civility Martineau had so richly praised were threatened by an era of rapid accumulation of great wealth by a select few. Gold miners, war-profiteers, railroad barons, stockbrokers, real estate speculators, and copper mine owners “formed a new aristocracy” that threatened the “anti-Aristocracy sentiment of the American civility tradition.”⁴¹ Despite these threats, civility as combination of grace, ease, politeness, and an exchange of goodwill would remain associated with the term throughout the turn of and well into the 20th century.⁴²

Civilizing The Savages

The link between civility and educational pedagogy is strong and is historically situated as a bridge to some of the worst abuses of the American educational system. The connection of civility to primary education is no accident, as even today civility is understood as a central pillar undergirding all other educational outcomes. Jane Johnston, author and expert in early childhood and primary science, argues that “in the absence of civility, other educational goals prove infinitely harder to achieve.”⁴³ For educational theorists of the 18th century, “allied to ideals of civility, polite conduct was a key aim.”⁴⁴ As the Industrial Revolution expanded the scope and practice of primary education, instruction in notions of civility became an important part of the goals of primary education pedagogy.⁴⁵

Historically, civility has been closely tied to educational pedagogy and practice. John Locke’s *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*,⁴⁶ established civility as a way of living and as a set of skills and attitude that can be imposed by instruction.⁴⁷ As early as

the Second Great Awakening in the US, primary education was employed to ensure patriotism, civility, virtue, and morality.⁴⁸ During the late 19th century, academies across America focused on inculcating beliefs and practices of “republican motherhood” to perfect the American ideal of womanhood and motherhood.⁴⁹ Following reconstruction, Booker T. Washington’s efforts toward expanding education for Black Americans drew white support at least partially owing to its explicit invocation of civility—here, code for ensuring racial hierarchies were maintained.⁵⁰

The civilizing mission of the education system cannot be understated and the example of so-called “Indian Boarding Schools” displays some the worst examples of that system. As Dr. Troy A. Richardson writes, “The continuing exclusion and marginalization of Native American, African American and Latina/o experiences and knowledge from US schools is arguably one of the most enduring effects of colonialism.”⁵¹ Richardson argues that it, “... is important to shift the thinking away from colonialism as a historical event of colonial administration to coloniality as the normalization of the specific concepts and forms of theoretical knowledge which support relationships of subordination.”⁵² One of the earliest and longest existing programs of educationally “civilizing” populations was America’s horribly racist and misguided practice of “Indian Boarding Schools.”⁵³

The United States has a history of identifying particular “problems” that were tied to minority populations. As soon as settlers arrived in North America, they were faced with an “Indian problem.”⁵⁴ David Wallace Adams writes, “In the 1790s, no question was more pressing for the new national government than that of deciding the future status

of Indians. In the main, the policy issue could be reduced to this fact: Indians possessed the land, and whites wanted the land.”⁵⁵

The Bureau of Indian Affairs eventually identified the “Indian problem” as something that could be resolved through the forced education in boarding schools. At the end of the Civil War, “Congress was tired of war and dismayed by the lack of unity within the country, so it decided Natives would be forced to assimilate to white society and, more important, become good citizens of the United States.”⁵⁶ The BIA, “forbade the speaking of Indian languages, prohibited the conduct of traditional religious activities, outlawed traditional government, and made Indian people ashamed of who they were.” This was an act of brutalization, “emotionally, psychologically, physically, and spiritually.”⁵⁷

Richard Henry Pratt was a former Army officer and the founder of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School.⁵⁸ He thought of himself as the savior of the “savages.” He wrote:

It is a great mistake to think that the Indian is born an inevitable savage. He is born a blank, like the rest of us. Left in the surroundings of savagery, he grows to possess a savage language, superstition, and life. We, left in the surroundings of civilization, grow to possess a civilized language, life, and purpose. Transfer the infant white to the savage surroundings, he will grow to possess a savage language, superstition, and habit. Transfer the savage-born infant to the surroundings of civilization, and he will grow to possess a civilized language and habit.⁵⁹

Pratt believed that, “Indians’ inferiority was cultural, not racial, and that even Native Americans could become educated and ‘civilized’ if only given the same opportunities provided to white Americans, African Americans, and immigrants.”⁶⁰ This was one of the first major attempts to teach civility in education, especially across racial lines.

Teachers would tell indigenous students that the, “Indian in you shall die.”⁶¹ The

boarding school was not merely a site where indigenous children were taught to read and write, it was a strategic, cultural genocide of indigenous culture. The only way for the children to truly assimilate was if they were to rid themselves of everything savage or uncivil, which in this case, was every aspect of their culture.

Pratt did not see anything wrong with the establishment of boarding schools. He thought he was giving them opportunities that they would not have otherwise. While he is not completely incorrect about the lack of opportunity, he conveniently leaves out the fact that indigenous populations had limited opportunities because they were identified as a “problem” and therefore subject to genocide. So while school was an opportunity, it was also a death sentence for indigenous culture. Pratt wanted to “Americanize” the “savage,” he did not want to just teach them how to read and write, “The goal of schools like Carlisle, Hampton Institute and the Phoenix Indian School was to make Natives dress, speak and act like whites.”⁶²

This is all done under the guise of benign assistance, however, “the goal was assimilation, not education. In this system, Natives could never become equals with their white counterparts and schooling was just another way the government could control the Indians.”⁶³ Richard Henry Pratt kicked off the civilizing mission by creating a tool that could be interpreted as morally good. He wrote, “Even wild turkeys only need the environment and kind treatment of domestic civilized life to become a very part of it.”⁶⁴ The equating of indigenous people to “wild turkeys” is demonstrative of the dehumanizing analytic of civility. It uses education as a weapon in civil society’s arsenal. The most dangerous weapons are those that fool its victims into believing that it is a

reward, not a punishment. Furthermore, the description of civilized life as “kind treatment” further serves to romanticize the nature of civilization.

The program of “Indian boarding schools” were justified through the rhetoric of civility. When establishing the legitimacy of these boarding schools, officials frequently assured the schools would ensure “appropriate participation in the given political order, to promote patriotism by teaching myths, history, and stories about the country, its leaders, and government and to ensure order, public civility, and conformity to laws.”⁶⁵ Some of these boarding schools even establishing “Outing Programs” that placed Native children with white families for the ostensible purpose of placing students in middle class homes to inculcate them in the life practices of “normal” Americans.⁶⁶ Predictably, the program became a way to ensure a supply of “cheap Indian labor.”⁶⁷ Most interesting, however, is the way in which the program was justified rhetorically. Crafting responses that might ensure popular support for not only taking Natives from their families, but then placing them with strange families without the approval of their parents, the program was described as trying to ensure Native children were able to “soak up American culture.”⁶⁸ The program did not originate with the boarding schools, but rather, was infused with the racist 17th century belief in the utility that Algonquin children ought to “live in English homes to receive exposure to Christianity and ‘civility’.”⁶⁹

This history of civility can illuminate the ways it perpetuates unequal treatment. This brief analysis of Indian Boarding schools demonstrates the problematic nature inherent to the concept. To label someone’s action as uncivil is the nice way of saying that they are behaving in an uncivilized or savage manner. This is a rhetorically violent move that seeks to disproportionately punish those who occupy the position of the so-

called “savage,” barbarian”, etc. It is no coincidence that many of those who have been subject to disciplinary action are those who are pre-emptively marked as different and demonstrate a difference in ideology. This move towards the “civil” behavior is a strategic distancing from those who behave in a “savage” manner. The problem is that “savagery” can be applied to anything that contradicts the dominant ideology. It can be used to describe crimes such as murder and sexual assault, but has also been applied to tweets that challenge American colonialism.

As such, the rhetoric of civility has been used, historically, as an attempt to justify the assimilation of those perceived as “primitive,” “savage,” or “uncivil.” In order to be appropriate enough for civil society, difference must be completely stripped and civility instilled. Ultimately, it is not possible to both maintain a culture that has different ideals that civil society and to be a part of that same civil society. As the next section displays, the move from “civility” as assimilation in primary education to “civility” as “appropriate conduct and demeanor” in higher education is inextricably connected.

Historical Underpinnings for Civility and Higher Education

Utilizing the understanding of civility through the lens of civil society we can analyze its application to higher education. While there are different understandings concerning the role of higher education, the invocation of expectations of civility demonstrate the education system’s desire to fulfill its purpose of producing “good citizens.” Two competing strains of educational pedagogy have long existed in American higher education—a focus on producing knowledge and a focus on producing good citizens.⁷⁰ Though Allen rightly notes there is “no universally accepted view of the purpose of higher education,” Rhonda Wynne notes “scholarship, teaching, and public

service are considered the primary missions of the university.”⁷¹ Instead of promoting critical thinking skills, civility seeks to assimilate students into serving a set of purposes centered around citizenship. Citizenship relies on a universal conception of “good citizens” that fulfill their purpose of production for the institution. Individuals and ideas deemed outside the realm of citizenship are not afforded the protections of civil society.

Historically, higher education has been understood as, “a collective technique which a society employs to instruct its youth in the values and accomplishments of the civilization within which it exists.”⁷² The values of the education systems are subject to the value of its society, as Henri Irénée Marrou writes, “It is therefore a secondary activity, subordinate to the life of the civilization of which it forms a part, and normally appearing as its epitome.”⁷³ This idea has a long intellectual lineage. Noah Webster, a leader in the “Americanization” movement and an early influencer on construction of higher education,⁷⁴ “wrote textbooks, the first of which was published in 1829 and sold over twenty million copies, used for Americanization that focused on creating a uniform language and ‘harmony of the United States.’”⁷⁵ While creating a uniform language is a seemingly logistical decision, the Americanization efforts did not stop at language, “In addition to language, the Americanization effort established an overall separation from the country’s colonial past through a unified religious-political identity.”⁷⁶ Webster believed, “Education, in a great measure, forms the moral characters of men, and morals are the basis of government.”⁷⁷ Based on his understanding, higher education should be utilized to teach and refine the upmost moral character in order to maintain the current system of government. Positing education as a training ground for effective governance means the elites interpret what is and is not moral. While this can be seen through laws

that are beneficial to educational institutions, e.g. sexual assault prohibitions, civility does not inherently possess a moral question outside its connection to civil society.

Webster's influence has obviously waned over time, but his influence on the modern university remains strong.⁷⁸ His strain of intellectual thought was steeped in civility and continues to help shape the parameters of university life today.⁷⁹ As I explain in the next section, civility's meaning and value maintains a central role in a wide range of on-going debates over higher education. While a concrete meaning of civility is not universally accepted, it is well enough understood that administrators and faculty members have quite strong feelings about the concept.

Calls for Civility in Higher Education

Academic administrators have become increasingly concerned with the decline in "civility" in higher education.⁸⁰ Debates over the meaning and importance of have occurred throughout history, as previously outlined in this chapter. Pleas for civility seem to occur, "when there is some especially hot-button, polarizing issue in academe."⁸¹ The political climate has resulted in deep divisions and unrest, therefore, there has been a recent spike in pleas for civility by Chief Academic Officers. Several universities including the University of California-Berkeley, Ohio University, and Penn State University have all issued campus-wide letters that emphasize the necessity of civility.⁸² A 2014 survey of college and university Chief Academic Officers, representing 647 institutions, indicated that, "a majority of provosts are concerned about declining faculty civility in American higher education." According to the study, incivility has become such a serious problem that many of those provosts, "believe that civility is a legitimate criterion for hiring and evaluating faculty members."⁸³

A primary reason provosts feel the need to add civility as a criterion for hiring and evaluation is not due to their fears of faculty members mistreating their students, instead the survey revealed, "...provosts are confident that faculty members show civility in their treatment of students, but have mixed views on whether professors show civility in dealings with colleagues and doubt how much civility is shown to administrators."⁸⁴ In order to test the validity of administrators' concerns, it is useful to analyze the justifications and criticisms of civility as an expectation of higher education in the workplace and the classroom, in addition to the role of freedom of speech.

Advantages of Expectations of Civility

The push to use civility as a criteria for hiring and evaluation has had mixed responses from faculty and provosts. From the 2014 survey, provost responded when, "Asked if civility is a legitimate criterion to consider in making faculty hiring decisions, 45 percent of provosts strongly agree and 39 percent agree. Asked if civility is a legitimate criterion in evaluating faculty members, 41 percent strongly agree and 42 percent agree."⁸⁵ However, despite a large percentage of provost participation in this survey, "discussions of academic incivility and possible remedies have a hard time gaining traction. They usually are subsumed under the broader and softer term 'collegiality,' the professional relationships that unite us in a common purpose."⁸⁶ "Collegiality" as a "softer" term, attempts to side-step the baggage and division over the term "civility." Collegiality seems to be a more appropriate term to describe the provosts concern about relations between faculty and administrators.

Based on the claim that chief academic officers are primarily concerned with incivility toward administrators, we can analyze the benefits of civility in higher

education as it applies to the work environment. Civility in its most basic form, as manners or respect, can be important for pleasant work environment. Based on this understanding of civility, an example of incivility could include, "...rude, bullying behavior in the workplace."⁸⁷ Researchers have found that, "incivility causes unhealthy stress not only for its targets but also for those who witness it. It derails productive work, turns away potential collaborators who would just as soon avoid the nastiness, and in general crushes souls." These instances of incivility, as bad manners or disrespect, can cause a "barrier to interdisciplinarity."⁸⁸ If a colleague is consistently rude without reason, it may be reasonable to consider that when evaluating their performance, but evaluating collegiality should not come at the expense of traditional areas: "teaching, scholarship, and service."⁸⁹ Ultimately, collegiality, or the lack thereof, should be evaluated contextually.

Classroom Incivility

Expectations of civility in the classroom are a bit easier to outline and more defensible, however there are still some gray areas. Some behavior may be acceptable to some educators and unacceptable to others. Dr. Lloyd J. Feldmann defines classroom incivility as, "any action that interferes with a harmonious and cooperative learning atmosphere in the classroom."⁹⁰ He outlines four categories of uncivil behavior: "annoyances," "classroom terrorism," "threats to bring social or political pressure onto the instructor," and "violence or threats of violence towards another person."⁹¹

Annoyances are somewhat minor disruptions and can include students arriving late, leaving early, or using electronics during class, therefore causing a disruption and can be interpreted as disrespectful. Classroom terrorism, "monopolizing classroom time

with personal agendas”⁹² is explained by Feldmann through a few examples, “A student who has some other topic that he or she wants to address regardless of its usefulness to the class. This...takes learning time away from the rest of the class.”⁹³ Another example is “a student who is vocally intolerant of the ideas and opinions of other students in the class.”⁹⁴ Threats to instructors can include intimidating faculty by threatening to give a negative course evaluation or file a complaint with the department. The last category is physical violence or threats of violence towards other students or faculty members.

These behavioral expectations are necessary in order to ensure classroom safety for the students as well as the faculty members. Establishing these expectations is explained as the responsibility of the faculty member. Outlining clear expectations can help to avoid uncivil classroom behavior by removing some of the ambiguity associated with civility, as demonstrated when civility is described vaguely as “mutual respect.”⁹⁵ However, educators should also keep in mind that uncivil behavior is not always intentional or malicious, “Classroom incivility does not occur in a vacuum. As faculty members, we can become so focused on the events in our classrooms that we overlook external forces that may affect those interactions.”⁹⁶ People have bad days and educators should take this into account when they address issues of classroom incivility. Additionally, faculty members also have a responsibility to treat their students with respect before they can earn the respect of their students.

Disadvantages of Expectations of Civility

While civility or “collegiality” as a criterion is supported by a significant percentage of provosts, faculty have reservations about the potential dangers this might pose to academic freedom. According to a report by the American Association of

University Professors, “In the heat of important decisions regarding promotion or tenure, as well as other matters involving such traditional areas of faculty responsibility as curriculum or academic hiring, collegiality may be confused with the expectation that a faculty member display ‘enthusiasm’ or ‘dedication, ‘evince ‘ a constructive attitude’ that will ‘foster harmony,’ or display an excessive deference to administrative or faculty decisions where these may require reasoned discussion.”⁹⁷ The AAUP report continues and stresses the threat to academic freedom, “Such expectations are flatly contrary to elementary principles of academic freedom, which protect a faculty member’s right to dissent from the judgments of colleagues and administrators.”⁹⁸

The ability to make hiring decisions based on civility maintains the unequal power relationship between faculty and administrators. The call for politeness and collegiality, especially between faculty and administrators, gives administrators the power “to cast a pall of stale uniformity places it in direct tension with the value of faculty diversity in all its contemporary manifestations.”⁹⁹ This desire for uniformity, the AAUP argues, “holds the potential of chilling faculty debate and discussion.” The report points out, “Criticism and opposition do not necessarily conflict with collegiality.”¹⁰⁰ However, criticism or disagreement with administrators is not taken lightly. As a result, faculty members are, “worried that the issue of civility could be used to block the hiring or promotion of many with unpopular views.”¹⁰¹ Collegiality as criteria places an impossible burden on faculty members because as employees of the school, they are a representation of the institution and therefore, they are assumed to also represent their institution’s beliefs, which includes the beliefs of the donors that help sustain the university. This is further demonstrated by survey data that indicates, “Half of presidents

agree or strongly agree that speaking out about important issues might offend their institution's trustees and donors (50 percent)."¹⁰² This places the responsibility of faculty to speak out, but also subjects them to disciplinary measures.

Issues of incivility and subsequent calls for civility seem to be more prevalent during times of controversy, particularly involving the university's administration. Penn State's leadership issued a statement calling for civility in response to criticism of the leadership's actions surrounding the Jerry Sandusky child sex abuse scandal.¹⁰³ The letter opened by celebrating Penn State's legacy of civility, "For decades, few universities could match the considerate manner in which Penn Staters treated both friend and opponent. In particular, to see someone wearing a Penn State T-shirt while traveling was a guarantee of a common bond and warm conversation no matter how distant the location. Today, that rather remarkable bond is under stress."¹⁰⁴ They vaguely addressed the controversy and wrote, "There are honest disagreements on fundamental issues related to whether our institution acted appropriately, how our institution handled a crisis, and whether the sanctions that resulted are appropriate. Reasonable people can be found on all sides of these issues... We are likely never to have the full story. We are equally likely never to reach consensus."

While the leadership acknowledges that there are reasonable criticisms, they shifted the onus on the Penn State community to practice civility, "The question is whether a lack of civility in discussing these issues will create a deeper divide, one that alters the remarkable bond that exists between all those who are a part of the Penn State community."¹⁰⁵ It is unclear in this letter as to what acts were deemed uncivil. The leadership expressed the consequences of incivility such as, "the long time donor of time

and treasure who no longer feels welcome.”¹⁰⁶ Although this letter may have intended to be a general call for civility, it is no coincidence that it follows a major scandal in which the leadership was the subject of criticism. This letter neglects to mention the scandal by name, nor does it attempt to take responsibility for the actions of the administration. Instead, they focus on encouraging the community move on from the scandal in order to avoid divisiveness and incivility, specifically towards the administrations. This prioritizes the comfort of the administration and its donors over the needs community.

The Role Freedom of Speech

Many advocates for and against civility invoke the first amendment to justify their position. Proponents for civility argue that freedom of speech requires civility, while those who push back against civility disagree with that premise. Ultimately, there needs to be a distinction between uncivil speech, civil speech, and hate speech, but most debates about civility only discuss civil and uncivil speech, which makes it more difficult to categorize alleged instances of incivility. Analyzing these categories can provide some insight into the arguments for and against civility on the basis of free speech.

Former Wesleyan University President Michael S. Roth addressed the issue of free speech in higher education, “I agree that freedom of expression is essential for education and for democracy. But speech is never absolutely free; it always takes place for specific purposes and against a background of some expression that is limited or prohibited. Hate speech and harassment fall into these legal or procedural categories.”¹⁰⁷ Civility has become a limitation on free speech that is rhetorically constructed by the dominant ideology. This ideological constraint lends credence to the necessary distinction between civil speech, hate speech and uncivil speech, rather than solely civil/uncivil.

Hate speech is defined as “rhetoric that threatens, insults, or offends groups based on characteristics such as race, religion, sexual orientation, disability, and other traits.”¹⁰⁸

While many might believe this type of speech should not be constitutionally protected, there is no “hate speech” exemption to first amendment jurisprudence.¹⁰⁹

Context matters when evaluating alleged instances of civility. Speech does not happen in a vacuum and should not be evaluated as such. Not all uncivil speech can be categorized as hate speech and not all civil speech is devoid of hateful content. However, the current dialectic between civil and uncivil results in treating alleged issues of incivility equally, regardless of the context. This ignores the nuances of particular “uncivil” acts that should not be subject to disciplinary action. James Hanley explains, “Civility may be conducive to controversial speech, but not specifically to the concept of *free* speech. And I don’t think we can seriously argue that all speech deserves a civil response, even when it is legal, and even when it is itself civilly phrased.”¹¹⁰

If speech is delivered in a non-threatening manner, the content is assumed to be civil, but counter-examples can easily demonstrate the importance of content as well as form. For example, Hanley offers, “Rape ought not be a personal crime against women, but a property crimes against the man to whom she belongs”¹¹¹ as an instance in which no amount of polite style will render the content “civil.” Politely uttering hate speech does not lessen the degree of rhetorical violence. Hate speech should be understood as going beyond mere incivility. It is rhetorically violent, not simply bad manners or disrespect. It is dehumanizing and has material effects, which is why it should occupy its own category and should be constrained. However, most civility codes, given its constitutionally protected status, do not ban hate speech.

Civility as a prior condition for effective freedom of speech also has its defenders. For example, Chancellor Nicholas Dirks at the University of California-Berkeley issued a school wide statement that emphasized the importance of civility. He opened his letter by recognizing, “the 50th anniversary of the Free Speech Movement, which made the right to free expression of ideas a signature issue for our campus, and indeed for universities around the world. Free speech is the cornerstone of our nation and society.” Although he seems to support freedom of speech, he does not do so without stipulation, “Simply put, courteousness and respect in words and deeds are basic preconditions to any meaningful exchange of ideas. In this sense, free speech and civility are two sides of a single coin: the coin of open, democratic society.”¹¹²

Chancellor Dirks has come under fire for his invocation of the Free Speech Movement, while simultaneously identifying civility as a pre-requisite. Ken White, an attorney, has responded to Chancellor Dirk’s letter and argued that demanding civility is contrary to the goals of the Free Speech Movement, “Berkeley's free speech movement did not seek to protect civil speech; the Vietnam war was not an occasion for civility.”¹¹³ White also explicitly responds to Dirk’s claims that civility is a pre-requisite for freedom of speech, “Civility is not weighed equally with free speech. It is not a prerequisite of free speech. It is a value, an idea, to be tested in the marketplace of ideas with other values. Free speech is often uncivil.”¹¹⁴ His statement was directed at Berkeley’s campus, but his formal plea is part of a broader trend by administrators, Michael Meranze argues, “Although each of these administrative statements have responded to specific local events, the repetitive invocation of ‘civil’ and ‘civility to set limits to acceptable speech bespeaks a broader and deeper challenge to intellectual freedom on college and university

campuses. “¹¹⁵ These statements seek to establish a dangerous precedent that demands freedom of speech be circumvented through an expectation of civility, but more specifically one that is determined by the dominant ideology.

Although there are strong arguments for why civility is not required to speak freely, this privilege should not be taken lightly. Hanley argues, “Civility is a good thing, and like all good things, it is best used in moderation...But while free speech to some extent thrives in moderation, it also sometimes strategically uses incivility to really make its message heard.”¹¹⁶ Even if people disagree with the potential constraints of civility, they can resort to “uncivil” speech, but should not participate in hate speech. For example, Rush Limbaugh, deemed by some as “the most uncivil of all the uncivil commentators on the air today,”¹¹⁷ when discussing civility, argued, “We keep hearing about ‘uncivil,’ and I love our previous caller’s comment that this civility equals censorship. That’s exactly what Obama and the left mean when they start talking about civility. ‘We need to bring civility back to our discourse,’ that means shut us up! Censorship.”¹¹⁸

It is a pretty broad claim to assert that civility is only used for censorship. Additionally, unrealistic calls for the complete elimination of civility as an expectation, would also allow for hate speech without consequence. Limbaugh’s adamant disagreement with expectations of civility is primarily based on his belief that the political right is held to an unfair standard the political left is not. He argues, “Republicans are civil, as the left defines it. They don’t say anything. That’s exactly what civil means.”¹¹⁹ Rush Limbaugh has severely mischaracterized the role of civility, especially as it pertains to elite politicians, often backed by large amounts of money and

power. Their status affords them an immense privilege to have the influence to express their opinions and there is no way Republicans would ever just “sit quietly.” Limbaugh has attempted to portray the right as victims, when they have used their material resources to further disenfranchise minority populations. If anything, Limbaugh has only further proven the legitimacy of civility as an expectation.

Conclusion

Civility has been taught in schools since before Europeans established their own civilization in North America. Civility is taught in schools because schools are understood as the training ground for teaching students how to be “good citizens” that are productive for civil society. Teaching civility has provided positive and negative effects on higher education. While teaching students to be respectful of each other is a good example of teaching civility. The boarding schools expanded from teaching civility as manners or citizenship, to teaching civility as western assimilation. Contemporary teachings of civility, in their most basic form, interpret civility as mutual respect even in disagreement, in order to ensure effective deliberation.

Civility as a value, has positive benefits, especially because it can provide a disciplinary mechanism to be used against those who speak hatefully. However, with great power comes great responsibility and those who interpret civility are not devoid of a personal ideology and agenda. The vague nature of civility as an evaluation criteria, gives those in power the wiggle room they need to interpret civility in a way that is most beneficial to their vision for deliberation.

Calls for “civility” in higher education by university leadership have sparked heated debates amongst the academic community. Rather than immediately joining this

debate and choosing a side, it is imperative that members of higher education understand what the leadership means when they call for “civility” or “civil” discourse. The vague nature of civility as a rhetorical tactic leaves it open to numerous interpretations. This chapter has analyzed the evolution of civility throughout history in order to provide a deeper understanding of civility as an ideal. More specifically, the etymological analysis of “civility” as a term provided insight into the way “civility” has been rhetorically constructed historically and in the present.

My next chapter turns to one of the more recent and well known instances of controversy surrounding charges of incivility. The University of Illinois-Urbana Champaign charges of “incivility” against Dr. Steven Salaita that ultimately result in his offer of employment being rescinded. This case will allow for a deeper understanding of the way civility is carried out as a disciplinary technology. It also demonstrates the role that ideology plays in the rhetorical construction of civility and incivility.

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CHAPTER THREE

“Civility” And Ideology: An Analysis of Salaita

Introduction

The controversy surrounding the University of Illinois-Urbana Champaign’s unhiring of Dr. Steven Salaita has rightly garnered the attention of the broader academic community.¹ The case has been widely debated due to its potential implications for academic freedom in higher education. Although it was unclear in Chancellor Wise’s letter what comments Dr. Salaita made that resulted in his termination, eventually University officials acknowledged “their decision was based on Professor Salaita’s tweets critical of Israeli government atrocities in Gaza that they deemed ‘uncivil.’”²

The administration constructed Dr. Salaita as uncivil, despite wide-ranging academic support from elsewhere on campus.³ For the University Administration, Salaita’s twitter activity evidenced a threat to the learning environment. As such, he was deemed “unsuitable to teach at the University campus.”⁴ Salaita, as well as almost 350 protesting faculty members,⁵ contended his firing to be in error, and argued “he had been fired without the due process Illinois promises tenured faculty members.”⁶ As a result, UIUC was vulnerable to legal action by Salaita.

Incivility, in this instance, was rhetorically constructed to mean malicious or inflammatory rhetoric that demonstrates intolerance towards a particular ideology and those who subscribe to it. The Board Of Trustees constructed this expectation in their establishment of the “acceptable form of civil argument,” “Disrespectful and demeaning

speech that promotes malice is not an acceptable form of civil argument if we wish to ensure that students, faculty and staff are comfortable in a place of scholarship and education.”⁷

More specifically, the “uncivil” rhetoric offended the ideology held by majority stakeholders. Alumni donors, were seen as both invaluable and infallible parts of the UIUC community, while Dr. Salaita was seen as disposable. In framing Dr. Salaita as “malicious,” “uncivil,” and “unprofessional,” UIUC officials discursively established his position as threatening to the learning environment and therefore, undeserving of institutional protection.

This chapter will engage in a close-textual analysis of the major texts surrounding the controversy. This will include Salaita’s tweets, statements from the UIUC administration (Chancellor Wise, Board of Trustees, and donors), and external criticism from the academic community. Examining the texts will provide insight into the university’s rhetorical construction of “civility” as it relates to Dr. Salaita.

Steven Salaita and the University of Illinois-Urbana Champaign

Salaita’s Most “Uncivil” Tweets

In October of 2013, Dr. Salaita was offered a tenured position at UIUC in the American Indian Studies program.⁸ UIUC officials has wanted Dr. Salaita to begin in January of 2014, but he negotiated to begin in the Fall 2014, tweeting out his enthusiasm for the position in late July of 2014.⁹ In between his being offered the position, and his arrival on campus, he tweeted a number messages various stakeholders at the UIUC found troublesome. Though I do not analyze the tweets themselves, it is useful to include

some of the most cited tweets in the discussion of his “incivility.” A few examples from his account that got significant attention include:

You may be too refined to say it, but I’m not: I wish all the f**king West Bank settlers would go missing. (June 19).

Let’s cut to the chase: If you’re defending #Israel right now you’re an awful human being. (July 8)

By eagerly conflating Jewishness and Israel, Zionists are partly responsible when people say antisemitic sh*t in response to Israeli terror. (July 10)

Do you have to visit your physician for prolonged erections when you see pictures of dead children in #Gaza? (July 16)

“If it weren’t for Hamas, Israel wouldn’t have to bomb children.” Look, motherf**cker, if it weren’t for Israel there’d be no #GazaStrip.” (July 18)

Zionists: transforming ‘antisemitism’ from something horrible into something honorable since 1948. (July 19)¹⁰

The University’s Board of Trustee’s ostensibly believed Salaita’s expression of his viewpoints in this “uncivil” manner was an accurate reflection of him as a professor, and hence an ill-suited fit for UIUC. It is not completely unreasonable to argue these tweets engage in “uncivil” or inflammatory rhetoric. However, the question this chapter seeks to address is whether or not “incivility” is a justification for the unhiring of Dr. Salaita, and how specifically civility was rhetorically constructed by those in a position to fire, or influence the firing of, Dr. Salaita.

Donor E-mails

In order to understand the ideological nature of the complaints against Salaita, it is useful to analyze the correspondence between some of the donors and the board of trustees, despite the wishes of those involved to keep these emails secret. The Administration has publicly stated that, “The Board’s decision concerning Dr. Salaita was not reached hastily. Nor was it the result of external pressure.”¹¹ Despite this claim, Dr. Salaita and his legal team filed a Freedom of Information Act lawsuit against UIUC,

“seeking email correspondence to and from administrators and trustees regarding his firing.”¹² The University “tried to avoid transparency by claiming it was ‘unduly burdensome’ to provide Professor Salaita with emails related to his firing.”¹³ However, the judge agreed with Salaita’s team and ruled that, “the release of the emails is in the public interest and ordered the officials to turn them over.”¹⁴ Dr. Salaita and his attorneys were granted access to the correspondence. After reviewing the e-mails, they found that multiple UIUC donors, “unlawfully threatened future donations to the University if it did not fire Professor Salaita on account of his political views.”¹⁵ Although the administration vehemently denies claims that donor’s spurred their decision, the e-mails and the actions taken to conceal the e-mails, tell a different story. An e-mail from Chancellor Wise addressed this, “Robin has warned me and others not to use email since we are now in litigation phase. We are doing virtually nothing over our Illinois email addresses. I am even being careful with this email address and deleting after sending.”¹⁶ They attempted to hide emails in order to avoid publicizing their rhetorical strategy to construct his actions as sufficient for termination. In addition to constructing an atypical understanding of civility, it is now clear the board of trustees did not want to be subject to legal action regarding their treatment of the situation.

Regardless of the administration’s assurance that donor pressure was not a consideration, there was obviously significant donor pressure to fire Salaita. One alum wrote, “Having been a multiple 6 figure donor to Illinois over the years I know our support is ending as we vehemently disagree with the approach this individual espouses. This is doubly unfortunate for the school as we have been blessed in our careers and have accumulated quite a balance sheet over my 35 year career.”¹⁷ This particular donor was

not shy about flexing their financial muscles in order to get the attention of the administration. It is not surprising that the administration would consider the input of significant contributors to the university, donor's ensure the future of the institution and invest in its mission, especially in the new age of higher education austerity.¹⁸

The e-mails that were released exposed inconsistencies in the narrative constructed by the University. Specifically, some e-mails contradicted previous statements surrounding Salaita's employment status. In initial statements Chancellor Wise "maintained that Salaita was not fired, but that he simply had never been hired, as the board never gave its approval."¹⁹ This was likely an attempt to rhetorically construct Salaita as outside the protections of "the due process of a tenured faculty member."²⁰ However, uncovered in the e-mails released by the FOIA lawsuit were, "multiple references by Wise and other Illinois officials to Salaita already having been offered a job at the time that Wise blocked him from starting it. The emails don't show a debate about what to do about a proposed hire moving through the system, but about one that has effectively been made."²¹ As there was no actual controversy over whether or not Dr. Salaita had been officially hired, these public declarations should rightfully be considered attempts to construct Salaita as exempt from tenure ensured due process protections.

The power that is afforded to donors at most universities is extremely concerning. The trend from at least the 1980s onward, for most large universities, was for new undertakings to be coordinated with numerous financial gifts from alumni or foundation donors.²² Moreover, this arrangement, coupled with the nonprofit status of top research universities and colleges, assures donors that their contributions "will be used for their intended purposes."²³ The corporatization of education incentivizes academic institutions

to choose the most lucrative ideology, not the most beneficial ideology for academic freedom. Dominant ideologies of a university are never chosen in singular moves, but are rather constructed, decision by decision, until a dominant understanding of the world emerges. The increasing move toward austerity from state legislatures, and the resultant reliance on private donors, ensures the monied interests of financially well off alumni rule the day.

Donor-driven leverage renders university decisions reliant on assuaging concerns of their financial masters, often in tension with faculty decisions. This sets a dangerous precedent for donor influence on major institutional decisions. The ubiquity of donor-driven budgets allow oversized influence on the trajectory of educational institutions. Denise Cummings, a former professor of psychology at both Yale and UIUC explained the problem well,

“Professors in American universities develop their own courses and select their own curricular materials. So this means that these wealthy donors exercised direct control over curricular content — what students can and will learn in the classroom — when they decided who should be hired to teach at UIUC.”²⁴

For Dr. Cummings, the case of Salaita was a clear example of donors overriding “faculty governance in order to control faculty hiring.”²⁵

Donor influence makes “civility” even more rhetorically malleable because scholars are not only held to the espoused ideology of the university administration, but also the donors that sustain the university. This places a nearly impossible burden on scholars to meet because they must always make sure they do not disagree with the wrong people. University of Illinois Board Chairman, Christopher Kennedy explained this further, “We have to be sensitive to the community that we were founded to serve. ... At the University of Illinois, we take enormous tax subsidies from people in our state. We

can't be so cavalier to think that any behavior is acceptable.”²⁶ According to the board, there is a responsibility of the institution to behave in a way that will not upset the people who donate money. The goal post will continue to move as long as there are multiple people with different viewpoints involved. There is a higher expectation for those who hold dissenting ideologies to present them in “civil” manner. Moreover, Kennedy’s claim here about the need to fulfill the expectations of state residents as the university takes “enormous tax subsidies” from “people in our state,” actually attempts to paper over the real concerns of private donors over Salaita’s comments. There were no calls from the State of Illinois to rein in a new professor, rather, these calls were exclusively from private donors. “Private donors, who are our real bosses,” however, isn’t a rhetorically tenable position for university officials to take. As such, Dr. Salaita’s discursive “crimes” had to be framed as a violation of the time honored notion of civility.

Chancellor Phyllis Wise and the Board of Trustees

Chancellor Wise and the Board of Trustees carefully constructed their justifications for the decision to unhire Dr. Salaita. In their statements, they rhetorically construct Dr. Salaita as a threat to the university and its goals of respectful disagreements, ensuring a “safe harbor” for civil deliberation, and the creation of “productive citizens.”²⁷ Publicly, they were adamant that their decision was not due to the beliefs that he held, but instead described his actions as lacking “civility” by displaying a lack in “professionalism,” “thoughtfulness,” and “temperament.” For these reasons, they felt justified in bypassing traditional hiring and firing procedures. This section will focus on the specific statements and their role in the construction of Salaita as “uncivil.”

On Civility as Respect

Chancellor Wise and the Board of Trustees claimed that the decision to rescind Dr. Salaita's offer of unemployment was not due to his beliefs, "The decision regarding Prof. Salaita was not influenced in any way by his positions on the conflict in the Middle East nor his criticism of Israel. Our university is home to a wide diversity of opinions... Some of our faculty are critical of Israel, while others are strong supporters."²⁸ In the same statement, she also explained, "One of our core missions is to welcome and encourage differing perspectives. Robust – and even intense and provocative – debate and disagreement are deeply valued and critical to the success of our university." Wise then articulates the exception to that mission, "What we cannot and will not tolerate at the University of Illinois are personal and disrespectful words or actions that demean and abuse either viewpoints themselves or those who express them."²⁹

It is unclear based on these statements what the distinction is between "intense," "provocative," and "uncivil." Based on the response to his rhetoric, it seems that the line may be how offensive the rhetoric is perceived by others, in particular, major donors. Chancellor Wise addressed the "line" somewhat in an e-mail, "The real question for me is when does freedom of speech cross the line into hateful, harassing unprofessional speech and action."³⁰ According to Wise, Dr. Salaita arguably crossed the line because he was perceived as "harassing" and "unprofessional." Scott Jaschik, founder and editor of *Inside Higher Ed*, makes a valid point in response, "While there has been much criticism of Salaita's comments and tone, there have not been reports of unprofessional 'action' by him, and it is unclear what Wise means there."³¹

Chancellor Wise’s letter seems to imply that, “you can politely disagree with the Ku Klux Klan, but be careful not to demean any of their viewpoints.”³² This sets a dangerous precedent, as Moshman and Elder point out, “If this standard were applied consistently, there would probably be no one left to teach (or learn) at the University of Illinois. Is there anyone who hasn’t ‘demeaned’ a ‘viewpoint’? But of course the standard is not applied consistently, nor could it be.”³³ This conflates civility with niceness, as Dr. John K. Wilson, UIUC alumni points out, “Civility does not mean politeness or niceness. For example, if a UIUC professor disagrees with the Board’s decision in this case but refuses to criticize them due to politeness or fear, that professor is not displaying civility. Civility requires that you engage in public discussion and debate with honesty.”³⁴

On Civility as Safe Harbor for Deliberation

The Board of Trustees argued that “civility” is required for effective deliberation. On the topic of civil deliberation they argue, “Our campuses must be safe harbors where students and faculty from all backgrounds and cultures feel valued, respected and comfortable expressing their views.”³⁵ Chancellor Wise echoed this sentiment in her statement:

A Jewish student, a Palestinian student, or any student of any faith or background must feel confident that personal views can be expressed and that philosophical disagreements with a faculty member can be debated in a civil, thoughtful and mutually respectful manner. Most important, every student must know that every instructor recognizes and values that student as a human being. If we have lost that, we have lost much more than our standing as a world-class institution of higher education.³⁶

This statement is based on the premise that Dr. Salaita’s social media conduct would spillover into his classroom. The university felt that Dr. Salaita’s expression of his viewpoints in this “uncivil” manner was reflection of him as a professor and therefore

posed a threat to the learning environment of the university. The last paragraph of Chancellor Wise' letter says, "Any student of any faith or background must feel confident that personal views can be expressed and that philosophical disagreements can be debated in a civil, thoughtful and mutually respectful manner."³⁷

Concerning the alleged threat that Salaita posed to the safety of his students to feel comfortable sharing their beliefs, John K. Wilson responds to this claim, "It's true that students and faculty often do want to feel valued, respected, and comfortable (although these are not fundamental rights). But it's also true that sometimes students and faculty need to be challenged, questioned, and made uncomfortable. A university where everyone is always comfortable is a university that suppresses dissent and questioning. Universities are not safe harbors; they are free harbors for the expression of controversial ideas."³⁸

Additionally, the administration did provide any evidence to support the concern that Dr. Salaita would engage in disagreement in the classroom in an uncivil manner. Additionally, there is no reason to believe that Dr. Salaita would not value students as human beings. In fact, the university evaluations demonstrated that he had positive evaluations from students.³⁹ If anything, his beliefs are aligned with this expectation due to his pleas for the acknowledgment of violence committed against Palestinian children, "“If #Israel affirms life, then why do so many Zionists celebrate the slaughter of children? What's that? Oh, I see JEWISH life.”⁴⁰ While this tweet was among the ones marked as inflammatory, it speaks to the unequal valuation of some lives over others.

The Board of Trustees believe that the university community should foster an environment that lends itself to creating "productive citizens" through civil deliberation:

We also have a responsibility to develop productive citizens of our democracy. As a nation, we are only as strong as the next generation of participants in the public sphere. The University of Illinois must shape men and women who will contribute as citizens in a diverse and multi-cultural democracy. To succeed in this mission, we must constantly reinforce our expectation of a university community that values civility as much as scholarship.⁴¹

The Board of Trustees perceived Salaita's rhetoric as posing a threat to this goal, "Disrespectful and demeaning speech that promotes malice is not an acceptable form of civil argument if we wish to ensure that students, faculty and staff are comfortable in a place of scholarship and education...There can be no place for that in our democracy, and therefore, there will be no place for it in our university."⁴² The University's response conflates Salaita's tweets, outside the space of the university, but within the space of "our democracy," as infecting the purity of the deliberative process in the academy. Especially evident here, but implicit throughout the Administration's response, is the belief that at least for professors, there is no outside of the university—all intellectual activities of faculty necessarily inform their academic persona and activities.

Moreover, the Administration frames civility as equally important a contribution to the university space as a professor's scholarship. In so doing, civility is constructed less as a quality of participation within deliberative spaces, but more as a required goal to be sought after itself. Emphasizing civility as equally important as scholarship has some risky implications. John K. Wilson elaborates, "Consider what this means: in hiring faculty, the Board of Trustees is announcing that qualifications should be 50% based on niceness, and 50% based on quality of scholarship (teaching ability is apparently not important at all to the Board). This is the recipe for a university of polite half-wits."⁴³ As previously mentioned, this may result in faculty members choosing to polite rather than engage in criticism that may be perceived as uncivil. Where civility is elevated as equally

important to a professor's academic production, it is likely more scholars would be subject to similar disciplinary action, and less scholarship that questions dominant ideologies would be produced.

Civility as Temperament

The Board of Trustees used Dr. Salaita's tweets to rhetorically construct him as personally unfit to be a faculty member, in addition to attacking his credibility as a scholar of Middle Eastern studies. The Board of Trustees explained, "These statements and many more like them demonstrate that Dr. Salaita lacks the judgment, temperament and thoughtfulness to serve as a member of our faculty in any capacity, but particularly to teach courses related to the Middle East."⁴⁴ Here, the Board of Trustees posits judgement, temperament and thoughtfulness as prerequisite to enter the academic space as a professor. In so doing, the Board simultaneously elevates a notion of rationality as central to the deliberative space and posits Salaita as necessarily irrational.

In their construction of Salaita's as ill-tempered, the Board of Trustees falls back into the tendency of higher education to elevate rationality and the absence of emotion as the standard for good educators. Dana Cloud addresses this tendency when she writes, "Born alongside Cartesian philosophy, the norm of civility included the suspicion of emotion and the fear of the irrational, unruly mob."⁴⁵ In their statement, the board's accusation that Salaita lacks the "temperament" to serve as a faculty member, specifically regarding the Middle East. Characterizing Dr. Salaita as lacking the "judgment" and "thoughtfulness," posits Salaita as "irrational." In so doing, they functionally describe, not simply his demeanor, but his ideas as beyond the norms of rational discourse. Moreover, absent any basis for the qualification "particularly to teach

courses related to the Middle East,” presumes a set of unevidenced facts that render the Middle East a unique site where emotion not be considered fair game. All of which is underscored by the fact that the BOT assert they are more qualified to decide what is important regarding Middle Eastern studies than an extremely well published professor in the field.

University Support for Salaita

Neither the UIUC administration’s firing decision, nor its construction of civility, was supported by its faculty writ large. The decision not to approve Dr. Salaita’s appointment was a unilateral one. Regardless of the universities feelings surrounding Salaita’s rhetoric, “incivility” is not an established justification for disciplinary action that bypasses established policy. The American Indian studies department at UIUC did not hesitate to make their opinion known when they voted no confidence in Chancellor Wise and wrote, “In clear disregard of basic principles of shared governance and unit autonomy, and without basic courtesy and respect for collegiality, Chancellor Wise did not consult American Indian Studies nor the college before making her decision.”⁴⁶ The unilateral action taken by Chancellor Wise undermines the very process she seeks to protect. The “chain of command” was ignored and the deliberation that occurred regarding Dr. Salaita’s case indicated that there were no grounds to terminate him. Despite these recommendations, Chancellor Wise proceeded to terminate Dr. Salaita. Ultimately, the standards that have been invoked in the name of “civil” democratic deliberation are simultaneously ignored if members of the dominant ideology feel threatened.

The administration expressed concern regarding whether or not Salaita was fit to be a faculty member at the University, in addition to being unfit to teach courses on the Middle East. These concerns were not echoed by Robert Warrior the director of American Studies department who selected Dr. Salaita as a valuable addition to the faculty, “What became compelling about his work is the comparative analysis of the experiences of American Indian people and Palestinian people, which is at the heart of his work.”⁴⁷

Additionally, the Asian American Studies department at the University of Illinois-Chicago issued a statement in response to Salaita’s unhiring:

We...stand in solidarity with our colleagues at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and the growing international movement in support of reinstating Prof. Steven Salaita at UIUC. We view UIUC Chancellor Phyllis Wise's decision and the approval by President Easter and the Board of Trustees to rescind the job offer to Prof. Steven Salaita as a blatant disregard for the principles of shared governance and a grave violation of academic freedom and the First Amendment right to freedom of speech.⁴⁸

These are only a few of the statements in support of Dr. Salaita from the University of Illinois community, but they demonstrate the lack of consensus surrounding the actions of the University. Additionally, they provide some doubt as to the threat that he posed to the University community. Moreover, while a shared sentiment of much of the faculty regarding the firing of Salaita, the response of Asian-American Studies department sought to frame Salaita’s firing not as support for civility, but rather as a violation of shared governance and an encroachment on freedom of expression. Positing their support for Salaita’s reinstatement as both a violation of shared governance *and* as a free expression concern, the department sought to construct the Administration’s decision as an atypical process, and hence a threat to faculty governance of the university. However,

their response also constructed Salaita's speech as firmly within the bounds of legitimate free expression for a faculty member, and thus, civil.

AAUP Responses to the Controversy

The American Association of University Professors (AAUP) expressed their condemnation of the UIUC decision, and in so doing, cast much doubt on the veracity of the claim made by the UIUC Administration. The AAUP, a more than hundred year old professional organization committed to the ideal of the freedom of expression in the university, is committed to “advance academic freedom and shared governance; to define fundamental professional values and standards for higher education; to promote the economic security of faculty, academic professionals, graduate students, post-doctoral fellows, and all those engaged in teaching and research in higher education; to help the higher education community organize to make our goals a reality; and to ensure higher education's contribution to the common good.”⁴⁹ The AAUP described the firing decision as a “violation of the 1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure and the university's own stated policies on the subject.”⁵⁰

According to the AAUP, there are certain limitations concerning disciplinary action based on expression outside the classroom, “College and university teachers are citizens, members of a learned profession, and officers of an educational institution. When they speak or write as citizens, they should be free from institutional censorship or discipline, but their special position in the community imposes special obligations.”⁵¹ Additionally, the AAUP explains how these expressions outside the classroom should be evaluated, specifically in regards to potential termination, “The controlling principle is that a faculty member's expression of opinion as a citizen cannot constitute grounds for

dismissal unless it clearly demonstrates the faculty member's fitness for the position. Moreover, a final decision should take into account the faculty member's entire record as a teacher and a scholar."⁵² After reviewing Dr. Salaita's case, the AAUP voted to, "censure the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) for its termination of tenured professor Steven Salaita for his personal tweets criticizing Israel's 2014 assault on Gaza."⁵³

While the AAUP spoke favorably towards the notions of civility and tolerance, they cautioned that such standards risk silencing of lawful and productive expression as well as threatened to silence unpopular speech. The AAUP expressed support for both civility and tolerance, but did so in relation to its view that such concepts are superior to explicit speech codes.⁵⁴ Moreover, while positing civility as important to the educational environment of the university, the AAUP cautioned that the "standard of civility conflates the tone of an enunciation with its content."⁵⁵ This is especially true given the AAUP's insistence that academic freedom extend beyond the classroom and one's scholarship. Since its establishment more than a century ago, the AAUP "has posited that freedom of extramural speech is an element of academic freedom."⁵⁶ In short, while the AAUP was generally supportive of the idea of civility, it was quick to caution that such constructions risk situations where accusations of "incivility may easily become a pretext for the adverse evaluation of politically controversial academics."⁵⁷

Salaita's Response

Although Salaita's tweets that garnered the attention of donors contained rhetoric that was categorized as "uncivil," these tweets were a mere snapshot of his rhetoric and not truly and fair representation of his ideology or his conduct. Additionally, these tweets

should not overshadow his performance as a professor. Donors and the administration expressed concern about the implications of his ideology on his treatment of students in the classroom.

In his most recent book, *Uncivil Rites: Palestine and the Limits of Academic Freedom*, Dr. Salaita discusses his experience with UIUC and writes about some of the tweets that cost him his job. To begin this discussion, he first poses a series of questions: “Does twitter lend itself to civility? What ethical responsibilities pertain to users of the platform? Is it a good idea for scholars to tweet? Is it even appropriate?”⁵⁸ Dr. Salaita’s tweets were viewed as singular statements absent of context. The form of his grievance, an “uncivil” tweet, allowed for the content of the tweet to be ignored, causing his termination. Although, when it comes to discussions regarding the Israel-Palestine conflict, the content is also sufficient to cause uproar considering Dr. Salaita’s anti-Zionist viewpoints. Ultimately, Dr. Salaita argues for the importance of context, especially when using a medium such as twitter. He writes, “These questions are difficult to answer without concomitant analysis of the medium and the conditions of public discourse in general. Rhetoric arises in a context. In fact, it is context that allows us to identify an act of rhetoric in the first place. It is foolish to treat a tweet as if it is an aphorism (or, for that matter, to treat an aphorism as if it’s merely aphoristic).”⁵⁹

He first addresses twitter as a medium of communication and the way it should be interpreted. He specifically addresses a tweet that garnered the most criticism, “You may be too refined to say it, but I’m not: I wish all the fucking West Bank settlers would go missing.” To add some context for this tweet, Dr. Salaita explains, “I sent that tweet on June 19, 2014, less than two weeks after the disappearance of three Israeli teenagers and

eleven days before they were found buried in a shallow grave near Khalil (Hebron).”⁶⁰ According to Salaita, the Israeli government responded to this by blaming Hamas and engaged in violence towards them, despite the fact that they were not to blame. In response to the disappearance of the teenagers, “the phrase ‘gone missing’ or ‘go missing’ was in wide circulation.”⁶¹ He continues, “The teenagers lived in a settlement... I thought it a suitable moment to reflect on a fundamental Palestinian desire to end military occupation. I invoked the ‘go missing’ phrase because of its currency in that moment.”⁶² In response to the claims that Dr. Salaita was attempting to incite violence, he writes:

At this point in my life, I’ve shared more than ten thousand tweets, published six books and many scholarly articles, and written dozens of essays. Nowhere in that body of work do I endorse abduction or murder. If folks want to weigh one tweet whose meaning is unclear against a career-spanning sample size, then it would help their case if they could find at least one more thing I’ve said that endorses or implies violent commitments. We also need to consider that the tweet was interpreted in the worst possible light by people who had targeted me for recrimination long before I ever composed it.⁶³

He also makes an important point regarding the labeling of his rhetoric as “violent”, “If you decide anyway to judge it as violent, then I hope you might at least acknowledge that the word ‘violence’ isn’t neutral.”⁶⁴

Salaita also claims that the response to his tweets is likely about more than just the potential threat of violence, but instead, “about the profound anxieties of colonial self-esteem....Few things are as frustrating as an oppressor who demands adoration. My tweet it, in its ambivalent crudeness, rejects that possibility. The recalcitrance of the native has always been a psychological blow to colonizers.”⁶⁵ Is it wrong or uncivil for colonized people to express frustration with colonization? Current ideological interpretations seem to indicate that it is uncivil, but never pause to evaluate the potential

benefits of that incivility or at the very least, attempt to understand the violence and frustrations that causes these sentiments. Dr. Salaita addresses this more specifically, “Palestinians don’t like settlers. They don’t want settlers in their ancestral land. They want the settlers gone, to go missing if you will. It’s a normal reaction to the continual pain and suffering the settlers inflict.”⁶⁶

This gives credence to his earlier claim concerning the importance of context in these situations. His statements are likely dismissed at a surface level based on his style and tone, but there was not a claim made in response to whether or not these are legitimate grievances that should be expressed in a way that is helpful to those who are victims of violence. The current expectations of decorum and civility have not been amenable to the expression of these viewpoints and will not unless there is a serious effort to interrogate its legitimacy as an analytic. In short, Salaita’s explanation should make clear that in this instance, calls for civility were actually calls for censorship on his view of the Israeli occupation, rather than an insistence on appropriate decorum for the university.

The Role of Ideology in Academic Freedom

Although the UIUC settled with Dr. Salaita’s case through a financial agreement of just under a million dollars,⁶⁷ it is important to analyze the attempt to restrict his academic freedom in order to address the shift towards notions of “civility” and the role of ideology. The Pro-Israel ideology of the UIUC donors influenced the board of trustees’ ability to be impartial on the question of whether or not Salaita’s comments were protected by academic freedom. It is difficult to say whether or not there would have been outcry had he made the same comments while he was at an institution where a Pro-

Israel ideology was less prominent. At the same time, it was not a secret that Professor Salaita's scholarship discussed Anti-Zionism with books titled: *Israel's Dead Soul*, *Anti-Arab Racism in the USA*, *Holy Land in Transit: Colonialism and the Quest for Canaan* (*Middle East Studies Beyond Dominant Paradigms*).

The AAUP specifically outlines in the "Principles of Academic Freedom and Tenure," that, "Limitations of academic freedom because of religious or other aims of the institution should be clearly stated in writing at the time of the appointment."⁶⁸

Considering it was public knowledge that Dr. Salaita wrote about Anti-Zionism, the university should have included any issues they had with his expression of this viewpoint in his initial offer. Therefore, it seems that the major issue with Salaita was his social media comments regarding Anti-Zionism and Gaza during the summer of 2014. This demonstrates that even if he is granted a level of academic freedom, the UIUC Administration did not feel that he was "civil" enough to exercise his freedom of expression. Moreover, even this configuration ultimately denies Dr. Salaita's extramural freedom of expression, which is vital, so says the AAUP, to the academic freedom of a faculty member. As previously discussed, there evaluating academic freedom with a focus on civility risks the silencing of faculty whose views may run counter to those of the university.

Civility and the Body

The ideological nature of civility ensures that certain bodies will be interpreted as "a priori uncivil. In their article, "Civility, Academic Freedom, and the Project of Decolonization, Evyn Lê Espiritu, Jasbir K. explain the way civility is disproportionately regulatory towards "non-normative" groups:

What this two-year long training in etiquette and normativizing of white middle-class cultural codes blatantly revealed, I suggest, is not just that political and social speech and actions can be understood within a civil/uncivil binary but that certain bodies are constructed to simply be, a priori, uncivil. That is to say, it is not merely that the accusation of uncivil behavior is more likely thrown at bodies of color, of immigrants, of queers. More trenchantly, these bodies are always already suspect— always seen as primed toward uncivil behavior. They demonstrate for us what incivility is by virtue of the sheer presence of their non-normativity.⁶⁹

The historical context of “incivility” as it relates to being “uncivilized” demonstrates the way it was used to dehumanize populations that were deemed as “primitive” or “savage.”⁷⁰ This racialized component of civility allows for certain bodies to be constructed as “non-human,” “sub-human,” or “non-citizen in order to justify their exclusion and exploitation.

It is easier to dismiss viewpoints under the guise of “incivility” than it is to legitimately evaluate the legitimacy of said viewpoint or admit that there is ideological bias.. In the context of Salaita, rather than question whether his Anti-Zionist criticisms were accurate, or at the very least, justified, he was categorized as uncivil and therefore subject to termination. In a more simplified sense, the board and the donors did not like his tone and they felt that it was an attack on their Jewish heritage. Espiritu and Puar address this potential bias, “Thus the distinction here becomes less one of speech as uncivil than one of how the ideological evaluation of speech is used to reinforce the production of certain bodies as threatening, dangerous, and uncivil.”⁷¹ The donor’s Pro-Israel ideology resulted in the policing of speech that they deemed to be ideologically antagonistic with their ideology and their identity.

For the case of Dr. Salaita and the UIUC, the construction of civility as a norm demonstrates well the idea that civility, especially as applied to Arab or Muslim

professors, is necessarily raced and implicitly racist.⁷² Civility is not always based on how views are expressed, i.e. their tone, but what those views are and who is expressing them. Academic freedom will be allowed only insofar as it does not threaten the dominant ideology. In Salaita's case, his discourse was perceived as Anti-Israel and was therefore deemed threatening by Pro-Israel donors:

Salaita is targeted because he would represent the first voice of Palestinian background on this campus who has a record of substantial and articulate advocacy on this issue. He could have set a precedent and by his presence and voice begun to change the atmosphere on a campus that...has lacked a bold and persuasive advocate for Palestinian justice among its faculty, and has lacked scholars who forthrightly address Zionist colonialism, ethnic cleansing and racism in their work.⁷³

As the Salaita case demonstrated, there is a higher expectation placed on the rhetoric of dissent due to its relationship to the dominant ideology. Dr. Salaita

The Conflation of Anti-Zionism and Anti-Semitism

There has been extensive debate over whether or not the first amendment protects the speech of students and teachers. Ultimately, the lack of legal specificity or clarity on this issue demonstrates that there is room for ideology to fill in and determine the way these policies are interpreted and regulated. This poses an important question: Where do we draw the line between hate speech and criticism of violence? Espiritu and Puar's explanation of the ideological evaluation of speech is extremely apt for this situation. The UIUC donors' restriction of speech based on differing ideologies, would justify stifling dissent in response to the Holocaust. The potential chilling effect on Anti-Zionist scholarship could continue the tradition of sweeping selective instances of violence under the rug, while actively protesting others, which is exceptionalism par excellence.

This exceptionalism is particularly salient in regards to the Israel-Palestine conflict. Salaita argues that:

The labor of social media is not counted as professional contribution, yet it is penalized when deemed unsavory....Scholar-activists of color are expected to foster and maintain community ties and produce themselves as implicated representatives and activists, yet they are never explicitly rewarded for this work, and worse, are actively punished for it when it discomfits the status quo.⁷⁴

Academia allows the flourishing of specific community ties, but this does not extend to the subject of Palestinian and Anti-Zionist groups. The policing of Salaita's speech had little to do with the fact that he was dissenting, but had everything to do with whom he dissented against, which demonstrates the saliency of ideological dominance. The status quo supports Israel and academia has done an empirically fine job ensuring that the status quo does not change:

What has always been true about the US academy, and in particular the US academic left: that the question of Palestine, and solidarity with Palestine, is beyond the pale, a taboo topic that historically has been and currently is the single largest issue redefining the terms of academic freedom in the United States....the convergence of these three issues—academic freedom, the erosion of faculty governance, and political work on Palestine, especially as it relates to and links with the United States as a settler colonial state—is not coincidental, but rather constitutive and intrinsic.⁷⁵

Academic freedom is supposed to be judged based on the ability to demonstrate more than just personal opinion, but also a breadth of knowledge that inculcates opposing viewpoints. While the board put the burden on Salaita to be less one-sided or ideological in his teaching and social media presence, they refused to put the same burden on themselves.

The assumption that Salaita's comments were targeted at Jewish people generally seems to be misguided and therefore bolsters the argument that the termination was based on the perception that Salaita was criticizing a population of people, rather than the

violent actions of the Israeli government in regards to attacks on Gaza. Espiritu and Puar aptly bring attention to the fact that, “These tweets were written during a fifty- one- day- long Israeli military assault on Gaza, a carnage that surely might make us pause at the use of the term ‘uncivil.’”⁷⁶ Salaita argues that the university cherry-picked particular tweets in order to portray him as “uncivil.” Salaita claims that he actively speaks out against anti-Semitism, including on his twitter. Some of the tweets that were overlooked by the board of trustees:

I absolutely have empathy for Israeli civilians who are harmed. Because I'm capable of empathy, I deeply oppose colonization and ethnocracy. (July 17)
It's a beautiful thing to see our Jewish brothers and sisters around the world deploring #Israel's brutality in #Gaza. (July 18)
My stand is fundamentally one of acknowledging and countering the horror of antisemitism. (July 19)
I refuse to conceptualize #Israel/#Palestine as JewishArab acrimony. I am in solidarity with many Jews and in disagreement with many Arabs. (July 27)⁷⁷

The cherry-picking of statements supports the previous claim that the ideological evaluation of speech serves to perpetuate the idea that Salaita was an “uncivil,” “dangerous,” “violent,” person of color, or at the very least, that he is an anti-Semite based on his pro-Palestinian views and Palestinian heritage. Although Salaita had an emotional response to the attacks, is it really an unreasonable response? How is what he did any different from what the donors did in response? This is demonstrative of Foucault's understanding of truth-telling as dependent on positions of power, in this case, alignment with the dominant ideology.

While many supporters of Salaita were angered by UIUC's limitation on the basis of academic freedom, this should not distract from the real issue with Salaita's rhetoric which was his Anti-Israel/Pro-Palestine perspective. David Green writes:

Unfortunately the general Palestinian background and specifically the context of Gaza seem to me to have been marginalized or are perceived to be irrelevant to the arguments of many of Salaita's supporters. Yes, this is an open and shut case of the violation of academic freedom and an abuse of 'shared governance.' But the question is also and still Palestine, because that's what's driving the repression. Sure, it doesn't matter from an academic freedom perspective what Salaita tweeted. But it's the subversive and pointed nature of those tweets that need to be substantively defended.⁷⁸

The importance of the Salaita case is not just its relevance to the debate over academic freedom, but instead, how is academic freedom ideologically interpreted to exclude scholars and scholarship that disagree with the dominant ideology or the ideology that is propagated by the most wealthy donors, Green continues:

It seems clear to us that principles of academic freedom and freedom of speech are easily abandoned in the face of a juggernaut of donors, trustees, and administrators who are invested on a number of levels in the manner in which our government projects its power in the Middle East, and in which Israel (with U.S. military and diplomatic support) projects its power in occupied Palestine, including Gaza.⁷⁹

If institutions continue to capitulate to demands from the highest bidder, donor influence may pose an insurmountable obstacle for critical intellectuals.

Chilling Effect

The effects of these cases extend beyond the individual employees. As might be expected, controversies regarding academic freedom have the potential to dis-incentivize dissent, or research generally, due to fear of repercussions. Additionally, it sends a signal to scholars that universities are less likely to come to their defense when they are caught between donors and employees, which is interesting given the emphasis on "loyalty" mentioned in the Kansas case. In Joanna Kempner's article, "The Chilling Effect: How Do Researchers React to Controversy," she explains her findings regarding the connection between political controversy and the production of new research, "More frequently,

scientists self-censor for pragmatic reasons. For example, many scientists self-censor rather than publish findings contrary to disciplinary or ideological boundaries.”⁸⁰ After interviewing a number of researchers who worked during a time of political controversy, the study showed that there was a variety of self-censorship strategies researchers used in order to avoid negative consequences:

For some (7%), studies were reframed in ways thought to be less politically sensitive, perhaps by avoiding research on marginalized or stigmatized populations. For example, a sexuality researcher reported that they chose to forego studies on single men and women with minority sexual preferences in favor of studies on the role of sexual health within monogamous, married heterosexual couples.⁸¹

Although not everyone chose this method, there were a significant number of people that decided to completely change their area of study, especially areas of study that are not being researched, such as marginalized populations. The chilling effect has the potential to limit the discovery of particular truths and ultimately, ideology plays a large role in determining what truths are told and in what way.

Conclusion

The statements by Chancellor Wise, donors, and the Board of Trustees are an attempt to rhetorically construct Dr. Salaita as a threat to the learning environment of the University. This construction is not without ideological investments. Although the statements focused on the “tone” of Dr. Salaita’s expression, it is hard to believe that it was the only consideration. Ideology determines what is perceived as “civil” or “uncivil.” Moreover, the University of Illinois had a financial incentive, in the form of donor pressure, to construct Salaita’s rhetoric as sufficiently threatening in order to justify unfairly unhiring him.

The controversy surrounding UIUC's decision has prompted debate among the larger academic community as well. Many scholars in the academic community have voiced support for Dr. Salaita, while the opposition primarily stems from administrators, donors, and external institutions. Dr. Dana Cloud emphasizes the importance of fighting for Dr. Salaita, "to fight for Steven Salaita is to engage the struggle that made silencing him so important to Phyllis Wise. Most fights for academic freedom are not only about academic freedom but also about the injustices intellectuals should teach, speak, and organize against."⁸²

Dr. Cloud argues that civility, especially in this instance, is about something bigger than a series of tweets, but instead it is about, "the war in Gaza and the emergence of a political antagonism in the US and elsewhere that threatens any ideological unity regarding Israel, Palestine, and the US's relation to them."⁸³ If Dr. Salaita had aggressively criticized Palestine, it seems less likely that the donors would have had an issue with tweets because they might agree with him. This double-standard is invoked in order to protect the interests of those in power. Cloud explains further, "It could never be made explicit in the University's rationale, of course, that one cannot criticize Israel because it is the proxy state of the US in a region rich in oil and of strategic geopolitical importance for the US and its interests, and against which Palestinians have engaged in armed resistance."⁸⁴ This is an example of moving the goal-post in order to protect the interests of those in power, while maintaining more strict interpretations of civility for those who challenge the status quo.

Based on the review of multiple cases involving an unequal regulation of civility, it seems highly unlikely that institutions will protect the rights of those who disagree with

them. This undermines any attempt at equality and until it is remedied, institutions cannot feign acceptance, equal opportunity, or emancipatory potential. The institutional response is to strengthen their previous standards and attempt to codify them through policies such as the social media policies that the Kansas Board of Regents created in response to the uncivil actions of one of their faculty members. This allows them to more easily discipline uncivilized bodies because their policies are produced in opposition to those bodies. As a result, certain bodies will always be marked as uncivilized and are therefore more vulnerable to violence. Rather than attempt to interrogate their understandings of civility, institutions will continue to protect their own interests at the expense of others, even when faced with arguments that disprove their viewpoint.

This case has long last effects for higher education. The decision in the Salaita case sets a precedent for the evaluation of civility in employment decisions. It serves as a warning for those who dare challenge the dominant ideology of the institution and its donors. Rather than ensure a healthy learning environment, this creates a looming threat to scholars and coerces them into compliance. It also limits the discussions that can be had in university settings. As previously stated, the heralding of civility prioritizes niceness and “safe harbors” for deliberation over uncomfortable conversations that can be beneficial. Ultimately, this creates a constraint on the development of “productive citizens” by shielding them from controversial topics.

Notes

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⁸¹ Joanna Kempner, “The Chilling Effect,” 1575.

⁸² Cloud, “‘Civility’ as a Threat to Academic Freedom,” 16.

⁸³ Cloud, “‘Civility’ as a Threat to Academic Freedom,” 15–16.

⁸⁴ Cloud, “‘Civility’ as a Threat to Academic Freedom,” 15.

CHAPTER FOUR

Civility as Constitutive of Race and Citizenship

Introduction

Three years after the Salaita controversy, President Michael Young of Texas A&M University found himself in the middle of a controversy regarding academic freedom and freedom of speech. In May of 2017, Rod Dreher, a writer for the American Conservative, wrote an article entitled “When is it Okay to Kill Whites?”¹ In his article, he included a link to an interview on YouTube between Texas A&M Professor, Dr. Tommy Curry, and talk show host and author, Rob Redding, Jr.. In this interview they broached, “questions about violence against whites need to be addressed through a historical lens and how blacks need to reclaim conversations about the Second Amendment to highlight their own concerns about protection from race-based violence.”²

This conversation has been distorted by Rod Dreher in order to rhetorically construct Dr. Curry as violent and racist against White people.³ Dreher’s story caught the attention of other conservative news outlets who also ran the story and called for Dr. Curry to be fired.⁴ Shortly after these stories were released, Texas A & M President Michael K. Young issued a campus-wide statement that condemned Dr. Curry’s “disturbing comments about race and violence” and rhetorically posited him in opposition to “Aggie core values.”⁵

Although the President did not explicitly use the term “civility” in his statement, this situation is reminiscent to that of Dr. Steven Salaita due to the invocation of

particular “values” surrounding speech codes. This particular case is demonstrative of the racialized nature of speech codes and their function as a mode of citizenship in higher education. This chapter will utilize close-textual analysis of President Young’s statements, articles that circulated Dr. Curry’s interview, Dr. Curry’s response, and those who have come to his defense. Additionally, this chapter will analyze the rhetorical construction of civility as it relates to race and the construction of citizenship.

Dr. Tommy Curry and Texas A&M University

Dr. Tommy Curry is a Full Professor in the department of Philosophy at Texas A & M University, and by all accounts should be heralded as an academic superstar.⁶ He is among the youngest full professors in the history of his discipline.⁷ Tenured after only three years at Texas A. & M., and achieving the rank of full professor following his 6th year, Dr. Curry’s academic prowess should have been unassailable.⁸ He amassed the largest portfolio of academic materials ever presented as credentials for a Texas A. & M. Philosophy Professor (including an edited book, two monographs, two 2 edited journals, and 56 peer-reviewed articles and book chapters) and was named a prestigious Rothrock Fellow.⁹ However, as he was receiving news of his successful promotion to full professor in May of this year, an ultra-conservative online newspaper was preparing to attack his work on the basis of a nearly 5 year old YouTube video, in an effort to describe his views as “racist bilge” and beyond the norms of the Texas A. & M. community.¹⁰

To better understand how civility was rhetorically constructed in this controversy, I closely analyze a number of texts surrounding the controversy. These include a Rod Dreher American Conservative essay that began the controversy, several representative

samples of public response via comment sections, other media outlet's coverage, two letters from the President of Texas A. & M., as well as Dr. Curry's response.

The American Conservative

The American Conservative is “a bi-monthly journal of opinion published by the American Ideas Institute.” *The American Conservative* article marked the public beginning of the Curry controversy. Before delving into the text of the article that criminalized Dr. Curry, it is important to examine the author and publication initiating the episode. The article appears on a website called, *The American Conservative*, which obviously lends some insight into their political ideology. Though *Media Bias/Fact Check*, “the most comprehensive media bias resource on the internet,”¹¹ refers to the publication as “center right,” it describes the source as one that “utilizes loaded words (wording that attempts to influence an audience by using appeal to emotion or stereotypes) to favor conservative causes.”¹² The author of the article, Rod Dreher, has a B.A. from LSU and is the senior editor of *The American Conservative*. His articles have appeared in the Dallas Morning News, the New York Post, the National Review, the Washington Times and others. He has also written for the Wall Street Journal as well as the Los Angeles Times.¹³ Though his publication right leaning, Dreher's essays are firmly within the mainstream of American political thought.

Dreher's brief blogpost announces its rhetorical work in the very title itself. “When Is It OK to Kill Whites?” is clear example of what Media Bias/Fact Check described as the use of “loaded words,”—rhetorical tactics to provoke fear and outrage in the reader. Dreher's title presupposes the acceptability of killing White people in the form of the question itself. Moreover, Dreher's title, though it is never specifically cited as a

quote from Curry, seems to imply that either that Curry asked or was asked this question in the podcast in question.

Dreher employed decontextualized bits of Curry's address to frame the podcast as if it were centered on fantasies of White death. Beyond the title of the essay, Dreher characterizes Curry's original interview as a discussion about, "when it is appropriate to kill white people." Moreover, Dreher chose one brief quote to summarize a lengthy podcast, reporting, "In order to be equal, in order to be liberated, some white people might have to die."¹⁴ Dreher's presentation of Dr. Curry's interview is a series of mischaracterizations through sound bites. One example of the mischaracterization or oversimplification of Dr. Curry's argument was visible in the partial transcription Dreher included in his article:

Curry denounces the "integrationist" model of race relations, and describes the black-white relationship as one of power. "White people don't want to question their physical life and certainly not their own racial existence," he says. "Because that means they would have to accept that death could come for them at any moment, the same way non-white people have to accept that. And they don't want to question their existence, they're not willing to give up their existence. They'll hold on to their white life just as much as a [unclear] will hold on to a crack pipe. They are fundamentally addicted to the purity of what they see whiteness to be."¹⁵

His response to Dr. Curry's comments was, "What does any of this racist bilge mean? To prove his own human worth to Tommy Curry, a white person has to despise himself? Good luck with that, Tommy Curry."¹⁶ His characterization of Dr. Curry's argument as "racist bilge," as well as his employment of strawperson question asking, demonstrates his ignorance to anti-black violence, but also desire to portray Curry's comments in a purely negative light. When Dr. Curry's comments are evaluated through a historical lens that accounts for the history of slavery, and especially the differential between how white and black gun ownership is constructed,¹⁷ a more reasonable retort might be to describe

the point as provocative but historically sound. In addition, Dreher terribly mischaracterizes Curry's argument by establishing a strawperson to stand in for Curry's argument ("Does a white person have to despise themselves to prove their worth to Dr. Curry?"). In so doing, Dreher not only reduces any intellectual soundness of Curry's argument to incoherence, but establishes Curry's views as fundamentally rooted in hatred of White people.

This is not the first time Dreher has engaged in commentary about racism, and his previous writings display how he understands racial thought. In another article "He Doesn't Care If You Call Him Racist," Dreher discussed the rise of white people growing tired being told their views were racist ("Or sexist, or homophobic, or bigoted, or guilty of white privilege – the whole litany."¹⁸) and their negative effects. He responds to a man named "Andrew" about his experience:

I take Andrew's point to mean that the left has accused him and people like him of racism for so many things, no matter how trivial, that the accusation doesn't faze him anymore. I have been saying for some time now that if the alt-right grows in power and influence, it will be because ordinary people get tired of being bullied by these kinds of accusations, and choose to ally with people who *might actually be bona fide racists*, but who aren't bothered by the attacks from the left.¹⁹

Dreher has effectively argued that complaints of racism are "trivial" and it is really starting to bother people who use racist rhetoric. It also presumes that "racists" are people, few in number, who act in overtly discriminatory way, and they should be cast out; rather than understanding racism as an oppressive system informing and strengthened by people's actions. This formulation reduces the struggle against racism to merely "not saying bad words," blames leftists and liberals for an increase in racist violence, due to upset inadvertent acts of racism. This rhetorical construction not only

functions to get people of color to be less “sensitive” and stop causing disruptions with “trivial” matters, but also legitimates racist actions, thoughts, and words. By explaining that Andrew’s view aptly summarizes “the way a lot of people I know feel,”²⁰ Dreher also justifies the larger point made—which was people should not care when told their views are rooted in sexism, racism, homophobia or white privilege. Dreher and his reader, Andrew, have rhetorically constructed themselves as the victims of bullying due to their discomfort regarding their position of privilege and quite possible, their internalized anxiety towards non-white people.

While no one article should stand in for the entirety of a person’s views, Dreher’s earlier essay demonstrates his attitude toward the subject. Dreher’s construction of racism as acts infrequently occurring at the hands of a small number of racists minimizes views that consider race, racism, and interlocking systems of oppression as a better understanding of the world. As such, in Dreher’s attempt to rhetorically construct the boundaries of civility, and what might be said within the academic space, Dr. Curry’s views never really stood a chance of a fair hearing.

Public Response

The controversy at Texas A&M garnered attention from the academic community and the general public. The responses to the controversy were strong and contributed to the rhetorical construction of Dr. Curry as “violent” and “threatening.” As a result, he was constructed as outside Aggie citizenship due to the perceived violation of Aggie core values of mutual respect and non-violence. Additionally, these texts put pressure on President Young by criticizing his response and denigrating the institution.

This section will focus on conservative news sites that picked up Dreher’s story and the comment section of Dr. Curry’s interview.

Rod Dreher’s story about Dr. Curry was picked up by two other conservative news sites, *The Washington Examiner* and *The Gateway Pundit*, and was discussed heavily in the comment sections.²¹ Unfortunately, these news sites and a significant amount of the commenters were convinced by Dreher’s description. This resulted in countless death threats towards Dr. Curry and his family.²² Dreher’s rhetorical construction of Dr. Curry as violent encouraged others to respond to him as a threat and therefore respond with violence.

The Washington Examiner article, written by Ron Meyer, continued the rhetorical construction of Dr. Curry as violent and described Dr. Curry as making “genocidal comments.”²³ The article even criticizes President Young for his lack of disciplinary action, “If Texas A&M truly stands against Curry's comments, they should stop employing him and allowing him to spread his radical beliefs to students.”²⁴ Meyer addressed the argument that Dr. Curry’s speech is protected by the First Amendment:

the First Amendment prohibits the government from regulating speech — but doesn't guarantee employment for those who work for government-funded institutions. Employees still represent their institution, and institutions reserve the right to fire or discipline employees if an employee embarrasses their organization or proves they cannot teach objectively.²⁵

Meyer’s comments mirror the pleas for civility by higher education officials. Both believe that faculty should conduct themselves as an extension of their institution through the use of “civil” rhetoric and adhering to the dominant ideology. This establishes an unreasonable expectation of faculty members to represent the dominant ideology at the expense of their personal beliefs in order to earn citizenship to academic institutions.

The comment section on the YouTube interview was a site of racialized rhetorical constructions. Some of the comments attempted to construct Curry's rhetoric as violent or threatening, thus inciting and legitimating potential violence from the alt right. "Luna Bradson" commented, "If you want white people to turn hitler level alt right, this is how you do it. The fact that you are even a "Professor"/"Doctor" is a joke."²⁶ Another user, "Draussie" commented:

Ignorant fools like you are violent by nature. You failed in life so whitey must be to blame. You are truly sad and when our Lord comes back it will be too late for you to see the error of your ways. Survival is about getting along with one another. Most of those black men that were shot were not exactly role model material. You want a street war this is the way to start one. Let's not forget the highest ownership of guns in US is with white people - do you really want to go down the race war road.²⁷

This comment is exemplary of the criminalization of Black men by White folks. This user makes multiple racist assertions about the "nature" of Black men as violent. They also attempt to frame the murder of black men as justified because they "were not exactly role model material."²⁸ This rhetorical construction of Black men as violent and criminal is actively used to justify murder based on the perception that they are not "role models" or "good citizens" and therefore, their lives are not valued.

Another user wrote, "Move back to Africa and quit sucking of the tit of White Civilization. Even Muhammad Ali said he was grateful that his ancestors were brought to the USA as slaves."²⁹ This is an explicit move to rhetorically construct Black identity as non-citizen, but additionally it characterizes Black people as parasitic on "White Civilization." The reference to "White Civilization" is a rhetorical move to constitute a notion of citizenship based on an ideology of White Supremacy. Additionally, this user seems to imply that the Transatlantic slave trade is something that Black people should be

grateful for. These comments are just a small sample of the hundreds of comments with similar sentiments.

Placing responsibility on Dr. Curry for the actions of alt right is a form of victim blaming and exacerbates the belief that it is racist for people of color to call someone a racist. This rhetoric serves as a disincentive for people of color to call out instances of racism and protects White people from talking about race. Expectations of civility and mutual respect are imposed on people of color, especially in conversations involving race. They are expected to foster a “safe” and “civil” space. However, as Zeus Leonardo and “Part of color-blindness is to demand that race dialogue takes place in a ‘safe’ environment...“In other words, the higher goal of understanding and fighting racism is exchanged for creating a safe space where whites can avoid publicly ‘looking racist’, which then overwhelms their reasons for participating in racial dialogue.”³⁰

In addition to constructing Dr. Curry as outside of Aggie core values, responses to the controversy also criticized Texas A&M University for their lack of action. Some commenters argue that TAMU has declined. Another suggested Curry’s views do represent what has become of Texas A. & M. but wishes Curry “not be allowed to represent TAMU.”³¹ “Omar T Podunk” echoed this sentiment and wrote, “Mr. Curry needs to be unemployed. Texas A&M should be embarrassed to have him on staff. Watch his YouTube Videos. Do you Alumni think this person should be on staff ?? You should not donate to Texas A&M.”³² This comment is reminiscent of the Steven Salaita case. “George” also discussed the revoking of funds, “This is a government funded school. Those funds need to be cut off if they don’t fire this guy. We need also to end tenure. All it does incentivize extremism and mediocrity. Tenure needs to go.”³³ This comment

demonstrates the desire to restrict speech on the basis of ideology and the danger that increased donor control would pose to higher education. Fortunately, the University has not fired Dr. Curry, but President Michael K. Young's statement continued the rhetorical construction of Dr. Curry as inciting violence and betraying Aggie core values.

President Michael K. Young's Response

In response to the brewing media firestorm, President Young issued a campus-wide statement that referenced the controversy without mentioning Dr. Curry explicitly. "As you may know," he wrote, "a podcast interview by one of our professors that took place approximately four and a half years ago resurfaced this week on social media, seen for the first time by many of us."³⁴ From the outset, President Young absolved himself of responsibility by declaring he did not know it existed.

Young's discussion of the controversy judges Dr. Curry morally, and constructing those views as outside the norms of Aggie civility. When President Young describes the content of Curry's comments, he does so in a way that renders a moral judgment on Dr. Curry to disassociate the professor from the university. He says, "The interview features disturbing comments about race and violence that stand in stark contrast to Aggie core values – most notably those of respect, excellence, leadership and integrity – values that we hold true toward all of humanity."³⁵ Moreover, President Young has explicitly identified Dr. Curry as representing values that are outside the realm of Aggie values, and as such, Aggie citizenship, "Our core values are very much intact, including those for which we stand, and in contrast to that for which we most assuredly do not." President Young felt that Dr. Curry had not performed the values that he deemed necessary, and is therefore outside of his protection. The President had a choice in this matter to choose

to side with a member of his community, specifically a Black professor, or a conservative news outlet.

Dreher's initial depiction is observable in Young's framing of Dr. Curry, as well as in his discursive maintenance of Aggie civility. President Young's description of Dr. Curry's rhetoric as, "disturbing comments about race and violence."³⁶ He further described Dr. Curry's views as "reprehensible." The rhetorical construction of Dr. Curry's beliefs as "disturbing" and "reprehensible" was an attempt to de-legitimize and condemn them.

As the eventual second letter from Young warrants here, Young's castigation of Curry was neither nuanced nor sophisticated. Rather, the statement relied on and reinforced Dreher's strawperson framing ("Curry says white people should die") and announced the President's disapproval and casting out of an obviously racially retrograde understanding. That this framing is rooted in misstatement and removal of context is beside the point. In "The Second Persona," Edwin Black explains the relationship between ideology and morality:

Moral judgments, however balanced, however elaborately qualified, are nonetheless categorical. Once rendered, they shape decisively one's relationship to the object judged. They compel, as forcefully as the mind can be compelled, a manner of apprehending an object. Moral judgments coerce one's perceptions of things.³⁷

Therefore, his judgments surrounding Dr. Curry's rhetoric and beliefs were based on the ideological interpretations of his actions, and must be rejected as they transgressed Aggie norms of civility. Views officially deemed "disturbing" or "reprehensible" make up the excluded worldviews of and "stand in stark contrast to Aggie core values"³⁸ and society.

Freedom of Speech and Civility

As the President of a state school, Young's response, likely prompted in part by calls from angry donors, was necessarily limited by First Amendment protections. In President Young's statement, he referenced the first amendment and its protections of Dr. Curry's speech. "As we know," Young wrote "the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution protects the rights of others to offer their personal views, no matter how reprehensible those views may be."³⁹ Young continued by characterizing his statement as an exercise of his own rights. In his capacity as President of nearly the largest university in America Young proclaimed, "We stand for equality.... We wish no violence or harm even to those who espouse hateful views under the First Amendment, a sentiment that by its very nature is one that they would deny others."⁴⁰ Distinguishing between speech allowed by the first amendment, and speech encouraged within the civil space of the university, Young manages to support the existence of all speech, yet still exclude Curry's from the scope of Aggie civility.

Perhaps Dr. Curry's values are outside of the Aggie values owing to the fact that the Aggie community, and higher education generally, appears more concerned with maintaining fidelity to values such as "civility" rather than the condemnation of racist rhetoric. It is not unreasonable to note that right leaning media sources, and possible complaining alums, appeared to receive substantially more benefit of the doubt than a recently minted full professor. And especially given the long history of Black academics being systematically silenced by universities,⁴¹ it is impossible to ignore the racial component of the controversy.

A&M Philosophy Department

Luckily, not everyone was persuaded by Dreher and President Young. In response to the *American Conservative* article and the President's statement, the Texas A. & M. Philosophy department wrote an open letter. It noted:

We, the undersigned, are writing to convey both our strong support for our colleague, Tommy Curry, and our disappointment at the lack of support from Texas A&M University for a faculty member undergoing widespread vilification on social media, extending to death threats taken seriously enough by law enforcement to warrant police protection.

We work in many different philosophical traditions. Some of us endorse pacifism and non-violence, while others endorse violence in self-defense or as a means to end injustice. But all of us think that there are important debates to be had on the role of violence, and that these are well within the mission of the university.⁴²

The Department of Philosophy explained their interpretation of Dr. Curry's comments, "our society often has imposed a double standard on discussions of violence, which often are deemed acceptable when they concern the founding figures of our nation and state but not when had by minorities in our present society."⁴³The department added, "The death threats he has received, and the anemic support he has been offered by the university, suggest to us, regardless of our individual views on the role of violence, that on the question of this double standard he clearly is correct."⁴⁴

This double standard is indicative of President Young's ideological and racialized interpretation of civility or "Aggie core values," specifically as it relates to discussions about race. While other scholars, including those in the philosophy department, could recognize the legitimacy and context of Dr. Curry's argument, President Young chose to believe the claims of right-wing pundits and donors who pressured him to condemn Dr. Curry's beliefs .

President Young Second Statement

Following his statement condemning Dr. Curry, President Young came under fire from the academic community, nationally, and at Texas A. & M. Quickly afterward, President Young issued a second statement, ostensibly to express the president's regrets, though at best, it was less intolerant towards Dr. Curry.⁴⁵ His reaction was indicative of his internalized feelings about Dr. Curry and more specifically, towards blackness.

In his second statement, President Young responded to allegations he was unsupportive of campus academic freedom:

I want to affirm my career-long, unwavering support for academic freedom, an essential element to enhance understanding and allow us to come to a closer approximation to the truth. Scholars have a responsibility to engage in deep dialogue and ask questions within their areas of expertise; however, through sound bites or social media headlines, profound issues can be oversimplified and distorted.⁴⁶

President Young acknowledged that Dr. Curry's comments were taken out of context and were thus unfairly mischaracterized. "With the resurfacing of this podcast in social media last week, the professor and podcast host alike reiterated to media that comments were in reference to a movie related to the professor's scholarly work."⁴⁷ He also addressed comments accusing him of devaluing Black scholarship:

For those of you who considered my comments disparaging to certain types of scholarly work or in any way impinging upon the centrality of academic freedom at this university, I regret any contributions that I may have made to misunderstandings in this case, including to those whose work is contextualized by understanding the historical perspectives of events that have often been ignored.⁴⁸

In this statement, he seems to be aware of the historical conditions and the tendency to ignore their significance, which means that he should have been attuned to that context when he initially was made aware of the article.

Ultimately, President Young reverts back to his original moral judgment, “I do not promote what some headlines implied and stand firmly behind my comment that it is not within the values of our University to ever promote violence toward a group of people because of their race. Racism in any form is unacceptable.”⁴⁹ This statement reverts back to expectations of civility and universal condemnation with violence, even when it is in response to racialized rhetorical violence.

Dreher Retraction

Following the outcry in response to Dreher’s article and the President’s statement, Dreher wrote “Killing Whites Part II.” He first condemns those who have issued death threats to Dr. Curry in response to his article, “Ridiculous. Anybody who is threatening Dr. Curry ought to be ashamed of themselves, and arrested if possible. I say that as someone who, back in 2001, had to hide out in my apartment for a week after Al Sharpton and other racist demagogues whipped up sentiment against me, resulting in multiple death threats.”

His professed sympathy does not last very long, in the very next paragraph, he reverts back to his original argument:

But I stand by my interpretation of Curry’s remarks. Listen to the entire short interview. He begins by condemning Barack Obama and Martin Luther King for being peaceable in talking about race and racial reconciliation. Then, at around the two minute mark, Curry condemns Black and White liberals who try to dissuade discussion of blacks killing whites as a form of achieving justice...It seems to me that contemporary radical black nationalists like Prof. Curry pretend that they can simply talk about these ideas without consequence. If you’d like to do that, then don’t post your crackpot racial hatred to the Internet. If you’d like to know more about what Tommy Curry believes regarding this stuff, it’s easy to find out on the Internet. He has spoken at length about it.⁵⁰

Dreher is still lacking context for his moral judgment and mischaracterizing Dr. Curry's argument. Dr. Curry's argument is that conversations about self-defense in response to racialized violence are often deemed by White people and Black people as too radical or too violent. This characterization belies the value in having those conversations as a response to the lived reality of Black people in America.

In the next section, I explain how Curry's experience with the construction of civility displays the ideological and racialized tendencies of that expectation, especially in instances where discussions of racism are involved. Additionally, civility is used as a mode of citizenship that demarcates the "civil" citizen from the "uncivil" "Other" in order to justify the exclusion or repression of those that do not adhere to speech codes.

The Rhetorical Construction of Race and Civility as Modes of Citizenship

Dr. Curry was rhetorically constructed as "violent" and "threatening" and therefore in violation of the Aggie value of mutual respect.⁵¹ Although the public and institutional responses did not use the term "civility," the request for mutual respect is based on an expectation for deliberation, in this case, discussions about racism. This section will address the co-constitutive nature of race and civility, the importance of historical context when constructing speech codes, and the rhetorical construction of citizenship.

The ideological nature of civility, including its racial dimensions, informs the rhetorical construction of citizenship. Citizenship is regarded "as constituted in specific acts."⁵² Civility, or in Dr. Curry's case mutual respect, especially in higher education, is an expectation for that citizenship. Based on the premise that higher education maintains civil society by teaching students how to be "good citizens" through the practice of civil

dialogue and democratic deliberation. Therefore, “civility” becomes a tool to construct rhetorical borders in order to establish determine who is “other” or “non-citizen” from those who are “citizen.” One of the ways that citizenship is earned is through the performance of rhetorical civility, therefore those who use “uncivil” rhetoric are marked as “other” an undeserving of citizenship.

Robert Asen advances a discourse theory of citizenship. This discourse theory “conceives of citizenship as a mode of public engagement.”⁵³ He understands “citizenship as a process, a discourse theory recognizes the fluid, multimodal, and quotidian enactments of citizenship in a multiple public sphere.”⁵⁴ In higher education, civility is required for public engagement, Asen continues, “questions of citizenship raise questions of public subjectivity.”⁵⁵ Asen further argues that, “In prescribing particular forms of participation, public fora deny particular subjectivities to people whose identities lie outside ‘universal’ bourgeois norms.”⁵⁶ For Dr. Curry, his refusal to engage in a “civil” or “mutually respectful” manner, was used against him in order to silence his “violent” rhetoric. Civility is constructed to acquiesce to “universal” norms at the expense of those who will be subject to violence as a result of those norms

Civility as a “universal” norm an expectation hinders the ability for the “other” to gain public subjectivity. The expectation of civility as controlling ones emotions ignores that, “The ability to abstract oneself from one’s body is not equally available to all. Instead, a view of the subject as disembodied reflects specific cultural practices.”⁵⁷

Robert L. Scott and Donald Smith believe agree and apply this lack of universality to expectations of civility, “a rhetorical theory suitable for our age must take into account the charge that civility and decorum serve as masks for the preservation of injustice and

that they condemn the dispossessed to non-being.”⁵⁸ In the case of Dr. Curry, his rhetoric was condemned because it was deemed threatening to the dominant ideology of whiteness.

Since civility is rhetorically constructed in accordance with particular ideologies, it also follows that these constructions can be racialized. Dr. Tom Benson argues, “Insofar as incivility is a mode of speech, it nowadays represents itself, implicitly, as an index of identity—of race, class, gender, power, identity, authenticity, region, history, and ideology.”⁵⁹ Therefore, when instances of “uncivil” rhetoric are evaluated, the identity of the rhetor is also evaluated. For Dr. Curry, it is impossible for him not to be marked as a Black man, which influences the way his rhetoric is perceived. However, historical context is invaluable in determining how instances of “civility” or “incivility” ought to be interpreted.

History as Important Context

Dr. Thomas W. Benson argues the importance of context to the understanding of civility. “Because civility is a mode of speech,” Benson explains, “it is always contextual and situational, and understandings of civility change over time.”⁶⁰ There is an incentive for White folks to categorize certain discussions about race as “uncivil” because they felt uncomfortable.⁶¹ The ideological influence in the regulation of civility demonstrates what George Lipsitz refers to as the possessive investment in whiteness, “This possessive investment in whiteness has always been influenced by its origins in the racialized history of the United States—by its legacy of slavery and segregation, of ‘Indian’ extermination and immigrant restriction, of conquest and colonialism.”⁶² In order to understand the

rhetorical construction of civility, we must attune ourselves to the historically racialized nature of civility as a mode of citizenship.

John W. August III wrote an article responding to the Curry controversy and provided an interesting representation of this debate:

We don't have to have a "Han Solo" debate about black violence against whites when we look at the history. White persons have overwhelmingly been the aggressors against black people (and, more generally, non-whites). Further, there has been a long history of white violence against black persons resulting in little to no consequences for those who initiate the violence (and many times such violent acts are/were institutionally supported). Advocates for black violence against whites have rarely (if ever) advocated a shoot-first policy. They have, most often, taken the higher road and advocated self-defense.⁶³

This context should inform the way instances of "incivility" are interpreted and evaluated. There is a difference between pre-emptive violence and reactionary violence. Dr. Curry's discussion of the second amendment was in response to the gratuitous nature of anti-black violence in America.

Dr. Edwin Black elaborates on the importance of history, "History is a long, long time. Its raw material is an awesome garbage heap of facts, and even the man who aspires to be nothing more than a simple chronicler still must make decisions about perspective."⁶⁴ History is particularly important when discussing racism and the rhetoric surrounding it because of the way slavery historically constituted Black identity. Edwin Black continues with an example:

Let the rhetor, for example, who is talking about school integration use a pejorative term to refer to black people, and then auditor is confronted with more than a decision about school integration. He is confronted with a plexus of attitudes that may not at all be discussed in the discourse or even implied in any way other than the use of the single term. The discourse will exert on him the pull of an ideology. It will move, unless he rejects it, to structure his experience on many subjects besides school integration. And more, if the auditor himself begins using the pejorative term, it will be a fallible sign that he has adopted not just a position on school integration, but ideology.⁶⁵

Despite the fact that Dr. Curry received countless death threats in response to his interview, he is the one who is criminalized, not the commenters who unabashedly used racial slurs and anti-black rhetoric. Evaluating Dr. Curry's interview without historical context allows for him to be perceived as inciting violence, rather than theorizing a reaction to anti-black violence.

As McKerrow, amongst others reminds us, ideology is expressed and transmitted rhetorically.⁶⁶ Civility exists as both a rhetorically constructed value and as a discursive process recreating and maintaining ideology. The use of "civility" as an expectation and a value cannot and should not be distanced from its violent construction of the "other" as "uncivilized" and "savage" in order to justify the establishment of boarding schools and segregated school systems.⁶⁷ Edwin Black agrees, "I propose exploring the hypothesis that is students of communication could more proficiently explicate the saliently human dimensions of a discourse—if we could, in a sense, discover for a complex linguistic formulation a corresponding form of character—we should then be able to subsume that discourse under a moral order and thus satisfy our obligation to history."⁶⁸ Therefore, when "civility" is invoked, its colonial past should inform its evaluation as useful expectation.

This historical relationship informs the rhetorical construction of blackness and the perception of "inferiority" and "incivility." These perceptions inform the way civility is interpreted and thus civility is inherently racialized. Dr. George Yancy explains:

Indeed, before race becomes a self-consciously *philosophical* problem, we are already raced; we are already hurt by race, injured by it, celebrate it, fight because of it, lose our freedoms over it, maintain our privilege because of it, differentiate ourselves from others based on it, enslave others because of it, decimate other

because of it—our perception are already shaped by it, our fears are already formed by it, who we choose to love is already mediated by it.⁶⁹

Yancy continues by describing the way race constitutes the everyday experiences of

Black people:

The Black people are always already raced in relation to the history of the term as a marker of black inferiority. White people are always already raced in relation to the history of the term as a marker of white superiority. The point here is that the conceptual analysis of the scientific or empirical status of race is a second-order process that must not overlook the quotidian reality of race as experienced, as constitutive of interstitial socially lived dynamics.⁷⁰

These lived realities should provide context for the tendency towards “incivility” in conversations about racism. As a result, action taken on the basis of notions informing and informed by civility should better evaluate the conditions that brought about particular performances or perceptions of “uncivil” dialogue. In the case of Dr. Curry, the context of the interview should have provided some clarity for the listeners. The nature of anti-black violence in America is what prompted Dr. Curry’s consideration of self-defense, but he was continually interpreted as inciting violence rather than responding to it. Expectations of civility enable the construction of racialized tropes based on the perceived misbehavior of those who fall outside of civility.

Racialized Tropes and Civility

In the discourses of Dreher and Young, the specter of the trope of the Angry Black Man looms large. While the reasons for President Young’s initial response are ultimately unknowable, it is reasonable to conclude, based on media coverage and comment sections, that alumni likely contacted the President. His quickness to accept Dreher’s rhetorical construction of Dr. Curry as “angry Black man” demonstrates his own tendency towards those racialized tropes.

The A&M controversy was not the first time that the trope of the “angry Black man” has been used against Dr. Curry. He elaborates on his experience as a Black man in academia:

It was an extremely hostile environment where, if you were Black, whites could say anything that they wanted about your intelligence; and they did. If you dared to defend yourself, you automatically became the one at fault. One white woman who taught modern philosophy wrote a five-page letter to me in which she said that I was an ‘angry Black man’ because I talked about the racism in the work of Kant and Hume....Anyway, I was offended by this professor and took her letter to the undergraduate advisor in the department, who responded by telling me that this white professor was trying to help me.⁷¹

The trope of the “angry Black man” was invoked and informed the way the faculty perceived Dr. Curry and his scholarship. Although they did not use the term “uncivil,” characterizing him as an “angry Black man” was sufficient to demonstrate his incivility and divergence from their expectations. While in graduate school at Southern Illinois University Carbondale, Dr. Curry was confronted with faculty members who felt that his work did not fit within their discipline.⁷² Curry explains, “my advisor told me that despite my satisfactory performance in all of my classes—especially my excellent work in post-colonialism and Critical Race Theory—I had to demonstrate to the (white) faculty that I had a passion for “real philosophy.”⁷³ Curry interpreted “real philosophy” to mean “philosophy of the European tradition.”⁷⁴

The philosophy department, and I suspect other departments as well, had a preconceived notion about what constitutes the identity of members of their discipline, i.e., “real philosophy” or the “real philosopher.” The construction of the identity of the “real philosopher” functions as a mode of citizenship for that discipline. This influenced the way that they evaluated Dr. Curry’s work and he was rhetorically constructed as outside of the realm of citizenship due to his desire to study critical race theory. Curry

continues, “I had no such passion; so, I was forced out of the program, despite the fact that the lowest grade that I had received was a sole B+. One faculty member said that they would let me stay in the program if I agreed to not write anything on race for a year and if I demonstrated that I knew ‘real philosophy.’”⁷⁵ Curry’s “failure” to assimilate and perform the desired rhetorical citizenship through his scholarship rendered him non-citizen and resulted in his exclusion. Curry’s experience in his philosophy department is a microcosm for the way identity and citizenship are constituted in higher education. The condemnation and exclusionary rhetoric of Texas A&M and Southern Illinois University demonstrates the way racialized tropes inform the rhetorical construction of citizenship within higher education.

Expectations of Civility in Discussions of Race

The Curry controversy and the responses to it, shed light on the difficult nature of engaging in “civil” discussions about race. Discussions about race and racism often evoke very strong sentiments that are not always articulated in a “civil” manner. As Benson explains, “Where there is disagreement, there is a risk of incivility; in many cases, incivility is itself a tactic in political discourse, employed as an indicator of sincerity, as a marker of the high stakes in a disagreement.”⁷⁶ The tenuous nature of these discussions has caused a conundrum for the future of democracy. Princeton Professor, Dr. Tali Mendelberg describes this concern, “The troubled state of American race relations has been the subject of much hand-wringing for many decades. The color line has changed since W.E.B. Du Bois (1997) wrote about it, but it has not disappeared, and nor have its troubling consequences for democracy.”⁷⁷ In a more contemporary context, “How do Americans think about the role of race in our country’s daily life? News reports,

social media and uncomfortable dinner conversations often point to one conclusion: They disagree. Many white Americans believe that the United States has entered a post-racial phase; many black Americans believe that race is as salient an issue as ever.”⁷⁸

“Civility” has been designated as a necessary component of deliberation, especially in discussions about race.⁷⁹ Medelberg continues:

One remedy to the problem, gaining increasing currency among researchers, policymakers, activists, and political observers, is civil dialogue. Some scholars and practitioners hope that more public discourse, characterized by civility and occurring across lines of race, will contribute to a climate of tolerance—a prerequisite for liberal democracy.”⁸⁰

As a result, “civility” and civil dialogue are perceived as necessary for tolerance. This solution is based on the desire for a particular deliberative model:

Some of these calls are tied to a deliberative model that assumes (or at least hopes) that democracy can be greatly enhanced when people are encouraged to resolve conflicts through reason-based, respectful discourse. Increasingly, a remedy to the age-old problem posed for democracy by racial and ethnic hierarchy is to urge people to discuss the problem, and to do so with mutual respect.”⁸¹

Texas A&M’s insistence on the maintenance of Aggie core values in response to racialized violence is exemplary of their commitment to civility, rather than combatting racialized rhetoric.

Civility as a prerequisite for deliberation and thus, for tolerance, is troublesome. “Civil” dialogue should not be required in order to address racism. However, “there is a clear equation between a display of emotion and the existence of an individualized self. The suppression of emotions is seen as a condition for creating a ‘civil self,’ one that bears rights and duties, and takes only those initiatives that are appropriate to that status.”⁸² Benson adds, “Civility does not require us to erase our individuality, but it does demand that we discipline our emotions.” However, racism is not just something that

exists in the abstract, it is a lived reality for non-white populations. Dr. Curry should not have to set aside his personal experiences with racism in order to have a discussion about racism. This puts the onus on victims of racism to articulate their grievances in a “civil,” and “calm” manner that is palatable to the deliberators in order for deliberation to occur.

The Rise of “Reverse Racism” and the Rhetoric of Whiteness

The response to Dr. Curry’s interview is indicative of a perceived rise in “reverse racism” or anti-white sentiment. The perception of the “other” as the source of “unfreedom” for whiteness, is particularly salient in debates about freedom of speech. People who make inflammatory racialized comments feels like they are being censored by the “other” who is the subject of their racialized rhetorical violence. This has fueled feelings of “anti-white” sentiment. A recent study conducted by Michael I. Norton and Samuel R. Sommers indicates, “Despite the rush in some quarters to anoint contemporary American society as ‘postracial’ in the wake of Barack Obama’s election as president, a flurry of legal and cultural disputes over the past decade has revealed a new race-related controversy gaining traction: an emerging belief in anti-White prejudice.”⁸³ However, this belief in “anti-white” sentiment belies the structural privilege of whiteness and the historical context of racialized violence.

Thomas K. Nakayama and Robert L. Krizek discuss whiteness as a strategic rhetoric. They contend that “‘White’ is a relatively uncharted territory that has remained invisible as it continue to influence the identity of those both within and without its domain. It affects the everyday fabric of our lives but resists, sometimes violently, any extensive characterization that would allow for the mapping of its contours.”⁸⁴ In

response, they utilize nominalist rhetoric, “that is, by naming whiteness, we displace its centrality and reveal its invisible position.”⁸⁵

Whiteness is presumed as “citizen,” and “civil” and everything outside of that is suspect and thus presumed to be outside of the realm of citizenship, “the social location of ‘whiteness’ is perceived as if it had normative essence...thus, the experiences and communication patterns of whites are taken as the norm from which Others are marked.”⁸⁶ Civility is categorized as the normative communication pattern due to its tie to whiteness. Nakayama and Krizek apply this to the study of rhetoric, “the study of communication has followed a focus on the center. Plato and Aristotle, from a privileged class, were not interested in theorizing or empowering ways that women, slaves, or other culturally marginalized people might speak. The rhetor was always already assumed to be a member of the center.”⁸⁷

Dr. George Martinot explains white identity in relation to that which is deemed “other,” “White identity loses its freedom through its identity-dependency on the other. But this dependence is then disguised by means of a standard inversion. The ethics of whiteness and white supremacy determines that it is the other (a black person, for instance) who is perceived as the source of one’s felt unfreedom.” However, this ignores the power and investment in whiteness.

The power relationship innate in whiteness can be explained by Michel Foucault, “power-relations ‘are not localized’ at any given moment. They constitute a strategy, an exercise of the non-stratified, and these ‘anonymous strategies’...evade all stable forms of the visible and the articulable.”⁸⁸ Robert L. Scott and Donald K. Smith argue:

Those who rule and take the fruit of the system as their due create an equation that identifies themselves with the force of good (order, civilization, progress) which

struggles with evil (chaos, the primitive, retrogression). In such a circumstance, established authority often crusades to eliminate the vessels of evil by direct action; but often its leaders work benignly and energetically to transform the others into worthy copies of themselves.⁸⁹

Whiteness both possesses the power and “rule” to impose particular expectations, such as civility, on those who they identify as “evil,” “uncivil,” or “other.” It also has the ability to make moral judgments on certain discourses that they find to be oppositional to the values that prop up whiteness and give it its power.

The designation of particular individuals as possessing “reprehensible” beliefs or using “uncivil” and “violent” rhetoric, is an attempt to render a moral judgment of those actions. President Young’s moral judgment upon Dr. Curry as possessing “reprehensible” beliefs was a move to mark him as “threatening” or “criminal” and therefore identify him as “non-citizen” or “uncivilized.”

The criminalization of particular people, acts, etc., is a disciplinary mechanism in order to maintain civil society and thus the smooth functioning of the education system as a site for producing “good citizens.” Civility, as an expectation, is invoked to prevent the breaking of norms. Dr. Dexter B. Gordon explains the usage of statistics to inform and fuel particular tropes of criminality based on race, “For the most part, the statistics are used by whites to construct a picture of the violent and dangerous criminal element in the United States. Such a criminal element is presented to and accepted by Americans as a menace that threatens the very fabric of American society. The general consensus seems to be that American society (read Anglo-American society) needs to protect itself against this foreboding element by putting the members of this group in prison.”⁹⁰

This is a rhetorical strategy that is incentivized by a strategic investment in “whiteness.” These statistics are used to fuel the belief that tropes of blackness as

“criminal” or “violent” are an accurate depiction. This results in a self-fulfilling prophecy where these tropes incentivize racial profiling and thus higher arrests of Black men.⁹¹

Gordon continues, the white-dominated media presented African American men as dangerous, drug-pushing gangsters who refused to work and African American women as welfare dependents who continue to bear too many fatherless children. In this media presentation, both men and women were portrayed as refusing to carry their share of responsibilities as American citizens.”⁹² Their identity is constructed as non-citizen due to the tropes of Black men and women as parasitic on white civil society. This trope was used by one of the commenters on Dr. Curry’s video interview,

This rhetoric is mirrored in President Donald Trump’s campaign rhetoric regarding undocumented migrants.⁹³ He misinterpreted statistics about undocumented migrant crime rates to justify conservative immigration policy.⁹⁴ This rhetorical construction of migrants as criminal was extremely persuasive to voters and had them chanting “Build a Wall.”⁹⁵ The rhetorical construction of borders or differences between citizens and undocumented migrants, allowed for the proposal of a very real and physical border between the U.S. and Mexico. These examples of criminalization sustain the legitimacy of civility as an expectation.

Dana Cloud explains that the “the idea of civility functions credibly only if the ruling class has achieved political and cultural hegemony such that its ideological meaning frames, such as “civility,” are secure. In other words, widespread investment in civility can happen only when an elite has more or less convinced a nation’s people that they share the economic and political interests of their rulers.”⁹⁶ The perception of shared values, such as the maintenance of civil society or “mutual respect” is required for a

sense of community and therefore a conception of citizenship to that community. She continues, “we should explore modes of resistance to the fantasy of democratic national citizenship an belonging.”⁹⁷

Effects on Higher Education

Expectations of civility as inherently ideological and racialized, has implication on its application to higher education. The expectation for faculty and students to express their experiences with violence in “civil” manner puts them in an impossible position. They are held to a higher standard and thus have to distance themselves of anything that can be perceived as “uncivilized” and “other.” Victims of “uncivil” racial rhetorical violence are expected to respond with “civility.” Even though Dr. Curry was wronged by the President of A&M, any retaliation would be used against him and he would continually be categorized as “uncivil” and “violent” and perhaps at risk of losing his job. This impossible standard of civility can result in a chilling effect on the production of scholarship or discourse that challenges the dominant ideology of the institutions, as has been seen in the case of Dr. Steven Salaita and Dr. Tommy Curry.⁹⁸ This can also result in self-policing, code switching and loss of culture in order to distance themselves from that which makes them “other” or “non-citizen.”

The ideological and racialized nature of civility as a mode of citizenship, requires context. Historical context is necessary in order to evaluate whether or not an act is uncivil. This context can also expose the power relationships that invest in whiteness and criminalize blackness. This understanding of power can provide a lens to evaluate claims of “anti-white” sentiment and reverse racism. Civility is constructed as a mode of citizenship in order to stifle dissent if it threatens the well-being of the institution.

This chapter analyzed the rhetoric surrounding Dr. Curry's experience with Texas A&M University. This controversy demonstrated that civility is rhetorically constructed and informed by ideology and race. The construction of the "civil" scholar establishes a notion of citizenship that is racialized and excludes those who are perceived as a priori uncivil based on the repetition of racialized tropes. In Dr. Curry's instance, he was interpreted as an "uncivil angry Black man" because he expressed beliefs that fell outside of the dominant expectation of citizenship. This understanding of civility as dissent from the dominant modes of citizenship places an extremely high burden on marginalized populations to perform "civil" dissent in order to ensure their safety. This sets a dangerous precedent for higher education and the possibility for dissent from violent dominant ideologies.

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CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion

Civility as an ideal, like most concepts, has evolved over time. From its early interpretation as manners to the “civilizing mission” of boarding schools, civility has had different purposes and consequences.¹ The historical tracing of civility demonstrates the ideological and racialized structures that inform the rhetorical construction of civility. Cases like Dr. Salaita and Dr. Curry’s are continuing to pile up and Universities continue to plea for civility. The current political climate is the source of many controversial debates in the classroom and expectations of civility are not always the appropriate response. Invoking civility is often an ideological tactic that constrains speech that dissents from the dominant ideology.

At the same time, forces of white supremacy and white liberal intransigence over matters related to oppression, though especially matters related to race, have recently expanded the scope of their targets. Though academics have long been targets for various forces opposed to intellectual discovery, recent threats of physical violence raise “fresh concerns” over academic freedom and campus safety.² Recent cases include Bret Weinstein, a biology professor at Evergreen State College who was warned in May to stay off of campus for safety reasons, following his questioning of student requests on issues of protest and race.³ Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, an assistant professor of African American studies, was forced to cancel planned public talks at Princeton in June of this year after she received death threats for criticizing President Trump.⁴ Sarah Bond, an a

assistant professor in the classics department at the University of Iowa, has been online harassment and death threats following her suggestion that classicists do more to explain that marble statues were not white, but only appear that way after thousands of years passage of time.⁵

Though these professors faced more than simple requests for civility, the relationship between notions of civility and death threats against academics is not a tenuous one. Academics whose scholarship runs afoul of the university administration, and is hence chided to comport themselves more professionally, or adhere to more appropriate notions of civility face the within the university the domesticated version of death threats they might receive outside the university. For example, in August of 2014, as the ice bucket challenge fad was still filling our collect Facebook feed with wet participants, the President of Ohio University challenged the student senate president to partake. Student senate President Megan Marzec agreed in part, but decided to instead film herself pouring a bucket of blood over her head to protest the Israeli occupation.⁶ From within the University, the President distanced himself from her act and urged civility, while from outside the university, Megan received hate mail and death threats.⁷ In short, the call for civility is often an internal effort to regulate unpopular academic speech without the explicit call to violence employed by anonymous internet trolls and vigilantes.

Civility is not always regulated with malicious intent, but the number of cases involving faculty of color cannot be discounted. Surveying the recent increase in death threats toward faculty members, Collen Flaherty notes that in most of the recent cases, the threatened academic “focus on issues of race.”⁸ In order to mitigate the ideological

and racialized tendencies of civility, there needs to be a renegotiation of how civility is interpreted and regulated in higher education. Moreover, “struggles against censure, self-censorship, and institutional silencing are connected to longer genealogies in which the alliance between the academy and state power is abundantly clear.”⁹

Mutual respect is important, but the cases seem to indicate that the expectation of respect or civility is not reciprocal. If a scholar speaking out against white-supremacy can be condemned by his institution for disrespecting the views of the KKK, how is that respect mutual?¹⁰ If someone is using rhetoric that is racialized, they have violated that respect and have not earned to receive respect in return. Moreover, it should not be deemed “disrespectful” to speak out against racism. This exposes the strategic ideological investment in whiteness and the moving goalpost of civility.¹¹

In this thesis, I have sought to engage rhetorical critique and close-textual analysis of the ways in which civility has operated historically. In what follows, I briefly summarize the work of this thesis, before turning to some concluding thoughts about the racialized and ideological nature of civility, especially as practiced on the university space today.

Synopsis of the Thesis

In chapter two I traced the historical origins of, noted important alterations to, and explained policies implemented ostensibly to further the goals of civility. Starting with the ancients, I drew on notions that underwrote civility’s origins from the democracy of Greece and the Republic of Rome who understood civility as “normative behavior” that was rooted in civil society, to the contemporary understandings of civility in higher education as “mutual respect.” Additionally, I analyzed historical attempts to teach

civility in the classroom, most notably in indigenous boarding schools. This example is particularly useful because it was an attempt to eliminate incivility, which included indigenous cultural practices and language in favor of assimilation. This chapter also examined the benefits of expectations of civility in the classroom as a necessary expectation to ensure a safe learning environment. Lastly, I interrogated the contemporary moves to establish “civility” or “collegiality” as a criteria for hiring and firing in higher education.

In chapter three, I engaged in a rhetorical-historical analysis of Dr. Steven Salaita’s unhiring by the University of Illinois-Urbana Champaign on the basis of “incivility.” This chapter investigated the role of ideology in the rhetorical construction and evaluation of “incivility. More specifically, I analyzed the particularly tenuous nature of academic freedom when discussing the Israel and Palestine conflict in higher education. Finally, I explained the potential effects on higher education, such as the corporatization of higher education due to the increasing influence of donors, as was seen in the Salaita case. It can also result in a “chilling effect” on scholarship that dissents from the dominant ideology.

In chapter four, I charted the discourse surrounding the recent controversy over a nearly five year old podcast and the youngest full professor in the history of Texas A. & M.’s philosophy department. This case demonstrated the ideological and racialized underpinnings of expectations of civility and mutual respect, specifically as it relates to conversations about race and racism. I argued that civility is rhetorically constructed in relation to identity and contributes to the creation of racialized rhetorical tropes, such as the trope of the “angry Black man” that is marked as “violent” and “criminal.” These

constructions assisted in legitimizing the condemnation of Dr. Curry by President Michael K. Young and the conservative websites that circulated his interview. Furthermore, racialized expectations of civility are used to stifle discussions of race that are deemed as threatening to the ideological investment in whiteness.

The Price of Dissent

Although civility has been deemed an important value that higher education is willing to regulate, it does not come without consequences. As the cases discussed in this thesis illustrate, those who disagree with the wrong people can find their future in jeopardy. In *The Imperial University*, Piya Chatterjee and Sunaina Maira address the effects on those who are marked as too “uncivil” for higher education:

For far too many colleagues who confront the most taboo of topics, such as indigenous critiques of genocide and settler colonialism or especially the question of Palestine, the price paid has been extraordinarily high. It has included the denial of promotion to tenure, being de-tenured, not having employment contracts renewed, or never being hired and being blacklisted, as this book poignantly illustrates. Coupled with the loss of livelihood or exile from the U.S. academy, many scholars have been stigmatized, harassed, and penalized in overt and covert ways.¹²

The cost of dissent is not small. Civility is used to criminalize those that dissent from the dominant ideology of the institution. Farah Godrej explains the way that privatization of higher education in California has enabled further criminalization of dissent:

...the deliberate and systematic privatization of one of the nation’s greatest public education systems engenders—and in fact *requires*— a militarized enforcement strategy that relies on criminalizing those who dissent and on being able to engage in legitimized violence against such dissenters as and when necessary.¹³

This looming threat can result in self-policing in order to avoid being perceived as “uncivil.” Hans-Joerg Tiede, a senior program officer in the Department of Academic Freedom, Tenure, and Governance at the AAUP, explained professors “probably do

cancel themselves" in response to efforts designed to silence them.¹⁴ Dissenters are forced to disagree quietly, if at all, in order to be tolerated in higher education.

The regulation and enforcement of civility in higher education has become reminiscent of the Wild West. Institutions are not the only enforcement officers of civility there are also vigilantes that take matters into their own hands. This is demonstrated both by the anonymous death threats I mention earlier, but also by the creation of sites like the "Professor Watchlist" website. The website was created by a non-profit organization called Turning Point USA to, "expose and document college professors who discriminate against conservative students and advance leftist propaganda in the classroom."¹⁵ The mission of this organization is, "to identify, educate, train, and organize students to promote the principles of freedom, free markets, and limited government."¹⁶ Turning Point USA pre-empts the academic freedom argument by including, TPUSA will continue to fight for free speech and the right for professors to say whatever they wish; however students, parents, and alumni deserve to know the specific incidents and names of professors that advance a radical agenda in lecture halls."¹⁷

This website is an attempt to publicly mark professors who differ in ideology. This website and the UIUC donor's have a similar fear—that liberal professors will teach their students. Dr. Tommy Curry is currently on the front page with other "Featured Professors." Others among the list are: George Yancy, Dana Cloud, and Jasbir Puar. It is telling that some of the scholars cited in this thesis are on this website. This website contributes to the rhetorical construction of scholars as "criminal," "non-citizen," and "savage" and therefore a threat to civil society. Each professor has a profile that includes a narrative explaining why they have been placed on the list. Dr. Curry's profile includes,

“Curry discussed situations where it is acceptable to kill white people.”¹⁸ This demarcation legitimizes taking disciplinary action against them because they are rhetorically constituted as outside the protection of citizenship. This tool assists the institution and its donors in identifying perceived threats.

Moves toward state austerity for higher education only increases the already oversized role for donors to the university. “Administrators often become less courageous and more beholden to deep-pocketed donors,” argue Daniels and Stein in their recent call for institutions to increase protections for its faculty.¹⁹ As I mentioned in chapter two, reduced funds from the state and federal government forces colleges and universities to rely more on tuition dollars and alumni donors to maintain the budget sheet. As such, parents and alumni donors, who are now contributing a larger portion of the university’s budget, possess a stronger voice with the administration.

The tendency of higher education administrators to capitulate to donor extortion expands corporate control and transforms higher education for the worse. Henry A.

Giroux writes:

In the absence of a democratic vision of schooling, it is not surprising that some colleges and universities are increasingly opening their classrooms to corporate interests, standardizing the curriculum, instituting top-down governing structures that mimic corporate culture and generating courses that promote entrepreneurial values unfettered by social concerns or ethical consequences.²⁰

The corporatization of higher education can be seen in exploitative employment conditions and the move to get rid of tenure. Moreover, these alterations result a faculty that is more compliant and self-censoring, courses that challenge students already held beliefs less, and scholarship that more closely hues to the official interests of the existant university. Moreover, the net effect of these conservatizing moves is to instill and

strengthen the neoliberal ideological impulse of the university, which only further ensures its replication throughout our society.

The Role of the Critical Intellectual

Not so long ago, intellectuals publicly defended against intrusions in privacy, railed against imperial conquest, shouted against war, and constantly reminded society of its legacy of colonialism, slavery, and oppression.²¹ These public critical intellectuals were leaders denouncing actions that threatened the common good, and inspired the people to fight for peace and justice.²² Here and abroad, there remains “enormous challenges that can be effectively addressed only if faculty members assume roles as public intellectuals and collaborate with communities.”²³ In short, the forces of neoliberalism, conservative ideology, and white supremacy would like nothing better than to silence potential allies in the fight for justice and equality. It is for these reasons that critical intellectuals are so vital, and why calls to civility so threaten their existence.

The increase in backlash towards “incivility” severely limits the role of the critical intellectual. It puts critical activist scholars in an impossible position regarding their scholarship and their employment. If they hold a belief that is contradiction with the institution, they are at risk of termination. The threat of charges of “incivility” may prove too risky for many scholars. Ultimately, people need to secure a livelihood. This conundrum is exemplary of the coercive, ideological, and racialized nature of expectations of civility.

Critical education is an invaluable component of higher education. If the true goal of higher education is to create “good citizens” then it is counterintuitive to quash critical thinking and critical education. However, there may be a difference between “smart”

citizens and “good” citizens. The pleas for rhetorical civility seem demonstrative of a desire to produce “good” citizens that follow the rules, not “smart” or critical citizens that question authority in an “uncivil” manner. Fred Moten explains, “Because critical education is precisely there to tell professional education to rethink its relationship to its opposite—by which critical education means both itself and the unregulated, against which professional education is deployed.”²⁴ Expectations of civility threaten the existence of the critical intellectual by rhetorically constructing them as “uncivil” and therefore outside of the realm of citizenship.

The continual rhetorical construction of civility constitutes a rhetorical border that differentiates the “citizen” from “non-citizen” or “other.” As Cisneros argues, borders are “figurative spaces of identity, culture and community.”²⁵ Identifying scholars as in opposition to the core values of the institution, marks them as threatening or a betrayal of that citizenry. Members of academic institutions are interpreted as an extension of their institution and thus their ideology. Therefore, the members of the institution are expected to rhetorically demonstrate their loyalty to the dominant ideology to be granted citizenship and the institutional protections that accompany it. Dr. Salaita and Dr. Curry were perceived as betraying Scholars that actively dissent from that ideology are seen as potential threats and therefore rendered disposable.

As demonstrated in the etymological tracing of “civility,” there is an inherent investment in the maintenance of civil society and democracy. The continual focus on democratic deliberation as the cornerstone of higher education is not without ideological goals, “Democracy places civic demands upon its citizens, and such demands point to the necessity of an education that is broad-based, critical and supportive of meaningful civic

values, participation in self-governance and democratic leadership.”²⁶ As discussed in chapter four, the state of race relations is thought to be a threat to the future of democracy.²⁷ It would seem to follow that discussions of race should be encouraged rather than silenced, in order to respond to the “conundrum” it presents for democracy.

Higher education needs to be understood and protected as a public good, “in order to reclaim its egalitarian and democratic impulses.”²⁸ Education should be a right and should be protected as such. Giroux argues that, “Higher education should be harnessed neither to the demands of the warfare state nor the instrumental needs of corporations.”²⁹ Unfortunately, higher education has lost sight of, “their sense of public mission, just as leadership in higher education is being stripped of any viable democratic vision.”³⁰ Higher education is being funded by particular ideologies and thus acts in the best interest of those ideologies at the expense of those who are targeted and victimized for disagreeing. The strategic investment ideology, particularly racist ideology, undermines the possibility of higher education and places minority members in jeopardy.

Relevance

Discussions about expectations of civility in higher education are necessary to understand the rhetorical construction of civility and its implications. Examining the historical context of civility allows for an interrogation of the ideology that constructs civility thus revealing its function in higher education. It is also important to recognize the conditions that trigger increased regulation of civility in higher education. Racial rhetorical criticism is also an invaluable contribution to the discipline. The racialized tendencies of civility can be analyzed.

Expectations of civility effect the classroom, specifically the classroom pedagogy. The expectation of civility and mutual respect in the classroom is beneficial until it isn't. Mutual respect and civility are invoked in order to maintain a comfortable space for "civil" dialogue. The fear of incivility in dialogue may be attributed to the fear of discomfort. Giroux explains:

What was once condemned as uncivil now is criticized as causing mass trauma—hence legitimating the move from a reactionary cultural capital that celebrates conformity to one that trades in fear while claiming to be part a fight against injustice. In the end such discourses are not only anti-intellectual, depoliticizing, and essentialist, but also fuel the ability of the right wing to use their massive cultural apparatuses to point to progressives as authoritarians who are against any viable notion of free speech.³¹

Not all discussions are comfortable. This is not to say that all "uncomfortable" or "uncivil" dialogue is good, but rather to acknowledge the tendency of white members of higher education to avoid discussions of racism because it makes them uncomfortable.³² The discomfort of white guilt should not be used as a weapon to shut down these discussions. The current Presidential administration will ensure that there is no shortage of political polarization, which will continue prompt people to deploy "civility" or "civil dialogue" in order to shut down conversations that dissent from the dominant ideology.

Resisting Civility

The continual pleas for civility by institutions seems to imply that cases such as Salaita and Curry's were not sufficient to unsettle the ideological nature of civility. Despite the risk of backlash by institutions, Henry A. Giroux calls for educators to resist domination, "As educators we need to recognize that the most important forms of domination are not only economic, but also intellectual and pedagogical, and lie on the

side of belief and persuasion. This suggests that educators bear an enormous responsibility for challenging this form of domination.”³³

Dr. George Yancy discusses the value in “unsafe” classrooms. Expectations of civility result in a tendency to avoid topics that might be too uncomfortable for some members of higher education. Yancy believes that avoiding discussions of race due to white discomfort would be a disservice to his students. Zeus Leonardo and Ronald K. Porter agree, adding, “We want to suggest that the reason why safe-space discussions partly break down in practice, if not at least in theory, is that they assume that, by virtue of formal and procedural guidelines, safety has been designated for both white people and people of color.” The discussion of “procedural guidelines” is applicable to expectations of civility and its assumed neutrality. They also address the perceived “anti-white violence” that is present in discussions of race, “Authentic race discussions are violent to whites for the very reason that such discussions would expose their investment in race, their full endorsement of, rather than, flippant regard for it.”³⁴

Amongst other scholars, bell hooks calls for an “engaged pedagogy”³⁵ to best help transgress white supremacist capitalist patriarchy. This seems particularly apt in response to civility. This pedagogy actively opposes the mind/body split that has become expected in higher education. The expectation of civility has been weaponized to reinforce that split, forcing scholars to separate their personal and scholarly values for that of the institution. hooks argues that the “most radical space of possibility in the academy” is the classroom.³⁶ She emphasizes the value in empowering her students to challenge dominant ideologies rather than teach them how to appeal to them. Her call remains as instructive and inspiring today as it was more than 20 years ago.

In a nearly prescient warning given the recent death threats against her, Dana Cloud also encourages resistance and explicitly warn against the danger of faculty appeals to civility,

“When well-meaning scholars appeal to civility in our departments and academic communities, we are essentially disciplining ourselves and fostering the illusion of a satisfactory status quo in which behaving according to the rules serves the interests of everyone alike.”³⁷

In response to expectations of civility, they call for an “uncivil tongue” that responds to the way that civility “has been proven to leave those already disempowered in a continued state of conformity, punishment, and/or silence.”³⁸

Resistance strategies may serve as a coping mechanism for scholars that are experiencing repression. However, it is important to acknowledge that resistance is not an option for all members in higher education. For some, the price of dissent is too high. Job loss might also mean loss of health care, benefits, and a means of making a living itself. Therefore, what is needed is not any one particular response to civility, but an interrogation of the rhetorical construction of civility in order to examine its ideological and racialized underpinnings. In order for civility to be a useful rhetorical expectation, it must be continually examined, questioned, refined, and altered in a manner that does not acquiesce to the demands of white supremacy. The task before us is not an easy one, especially given the long history of the word’s meaning and power. But the historical alterations to the rhetorical meaning of the term mean change is possible. And the stakes before us as a nation, and as part of the international community, are too high not to risk the possibility of failure.

Notes

¹ Patrick M. Scanlon, "Halting Academic Incivility (That's the Nice Word for It)," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, March 13, 2016, <http://www.chronicle.com/article/Halting-Academic-Incivility/235680>; David Wallace Adams, *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875-1928* (University Press of Kansas, 1995).

² Colleen Flaherty, "Old Criticisms, New Threats," *Inside Higher Ed*, June 26, 2017, <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2017/06/26/professors-are-often-political-lightning-rods-now-are-facing-new-threats-over-their>.

³ Flaherty, "Old Criticisms, New Threats."

⁴ Flaherty, "Old Criticisms, New Threats."

⁵ Flaherty, "Old Criticisms, New Threats."

⁶ "Ohio University: Student President Receives Death Threats," *Palestine Legal*, Mar. 10, 2015, <http://palestinelegal.org/case-studies/2015/3/4/ohio-university-student-senate-president-received-death-threats-after-pro-bds-video>.

⁷ Palestine Legal, "Ohio University: Student President Receives Death Threats."

⁸ Flaherty, "Old Criticisms, New Threats."

⁹ Piya Chatterjee and Sunaina Maira, eds., *The Imperial University: Academic Repression and Scholarly Dissent* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 10–11.

¹⁰ David Moshman and Frank Edler, "Civility and Academic Freedom after Salaita | AAUP," *AAUP Journal of Academic Freedom* 6 (2015): 1–13.

¹¹ Thomas K. Nakayama and Robert L. Krizek, "Whiteness: A Strategic Rhetoric," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 81, no. 3 (August 1995): 291–309, doi:10.1080/00335639509384117.

¹² Chatterjee and Maira, *The Imperial University*, 11.

¹³ Farah Godrej, "Neoliberalism, Militarization, and the Price of Dissent: Policing Protest at the University of California," in *The Imperial University, Academic Repression and Scholarly Dissent* (University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 125–44, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5749/j.ctt6wr7wn.7>.

¹⁴ Flaherty, "Old Criticisms, New Threats."

¹⁵ Turning Point USA, “Home,” *Professor Watchlist*, 2016, <http://professorwatchlist.org/>.

¹⁶ Paul Romanowski, “About Turning Point USA,” *Turning Point USA*, 2017, <http://tpusa.com/aboutus/>.

¹⁷ Turning Point USA, “Home.”

¹⁸ Turning Point USA, “Home.”

¹⁹ Jessie Daniels and Arlene Stein, “Protect Scholars Against Attacks from the Right,” *Inside Higher Ed*, June 26, 2017, <https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2017/06/26/why-institutions-should-shield-academics-who-are-being-attacked-conservative-groups#.WVEQdOJ8bFQ.facebook>.

²⁰ Henry A. Giroux, “Higher Education and the Politics of Disruption,” *Truthout*, March 17, 2015, <http://www.truth-out.org/news/item/29693-higher-education-and-the-politics-of-disruption>.

²¹ C J Polychroniou, “Whatever happened to critical intellectuals?” *Al Jazeera*, Sept. 4, 2015, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2015/08/happened-critical-intellectuals-refugees-150831065656343.html>.

²² C J Polychroniou, “Whatever happened to critical intellectuals?”

²³ Nicholas Behm, Sherry Rankins-Robertson, and Duane Roen, “The Case for Academics as Public Intellectuals,” *American Association of University Professors*, Jan/Feb 2014, <https://www.aaup.org/article/case-academics-public-intellectuals#.WVFojvnyupo>.

²⁴ Fred Moten and Stefano Harney, “The University and the Undercommons,” *Duke University Press*, *Social Text* 79, 22, no. 2 (Summer 2004): 32.

²⁵ Josue David Cisneros, *The Border Crossed Us : Rhetorics of Borders, Citizenship, and Latina/o Identity (4th Edition)* (Tuscaloosa, AL, USA: University Alabama Press, 2014), 4, <http://site.ebrary.com/lib/alltitles/docDetail.action?docID=10839567>.

²⁶ Giroux, “Higher Education and the Politics of Disruption.”

²⁷ Tali Mendelberg, “Deliberation, Incivility, and Race,” in *Democratization in America: A Comparative-Historical Analysis* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009).

²⁸ Giroux, “Higher Education and the Politics of Disruption.”

²⁹ Giroux, “Higher Education and the Politics of Disruption.”

- ³⁰ Giroux, “Higher Education and the Politics of Disruption.”
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- ³² George Yancy, *Look, A White!: Philosophical Essays on Whiteness* (Temple University Press, 2012), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt14bt3s1>.
- ³³ Giroux, “Higher Education and the Politics of Disruption.”
- ³⁴ Zeus Leonardo and Ronald K. Porter, “Pedagogy of Fear: Toward a Fanonian Theory of ‘safety’ in Race Dialogue,” *Race Ethnicity and Education* 13, no. 2 (July 1, 2010): 150, doi:10.1080/13613324.2010.482898.
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- ³⁶ bell hooks, *Teaching To Transgress*, 12.
- ³⁷ Dana L. Cloud, “‘Civility’ as a Threat to Academic Freedom,” *First Amendment Studies* 49, no. 1 (January 2, 2015): 13–17, doi:10.1080/21689725.2015.1016359; Nina M. Lozano-Reich and Dana L. Cloud, “The Uncivil Tongue: Invitational Rhetoric and the Problem of Inequality,” *Western Journal of Communication* 73, no. 2 (May 5, 2009): 220–26, doi:10.1080/10570310902856105.
- ³⁸ Lozano-Reich and Cloud, “The Uncivil Tongue,” 224.

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