



# Reasoning with Ethics

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A Project of The School for Ethical Education | [www.ethicsed.org](http://www.ethicsed.org)

*Ethics in action creates character.*

Use this blog to:

1. Lead class discussions in social studies, civics, ethics or advisory classes.
2. Teach students skills to analyze cases with core ethical values.
3. Recognize skills in support of SEE's Tri-Factor Model of ethical functioning.

[Visit the online Ethics Blog.](#)



## ***Ethics and Free Speech***

Freedom of speech requires the respect of liberty and the political courage to defend as a right of citizens. One of the first things tyrants do is limit the speech rights of opponents. The evolution of free speech occurred in the US as one of our first rights identified in the US Constitution which states, "Congress shall make no law ...abridging the freedom of speech..."

It is thought that freedom of speech is one of the important foundations that sustains a democratic republic form of government. Civil respect for the freedom of speech of others, particularly those we disagree with, is essential for the dialogue and interaction of ideas in a democracy.

That is why the rise of "cancel culture" and the strategy of "doxing" and sometimes violent attacks on political or philosophical opponents becomes a vital concern for those who seek to protect a civil culture and democratic governance. While private agencies can legally regulate speech (the First Amendment refers only to the government's powers), the principle of free speech is still the object of important protections in the public square. Currently, there are those on college campuses arguing that freedom of speech should have greater limits, such as prohibiting hate speech and micro aggressions, while others argue these limitations are impossible to adequately define.

Is freedom of speech supported by ethical principles? Students are asked to consider what core values defend free speech in the public arena? If free speech is considered an ethical good, what social skills are required to protect it in the age of cancel culture?

### Supplemental Links

Students and teachers are invited to read and consider signing the Philadelphia Statement as an act of support for Free Speech-- <https://thephillystatement.org/read/>

CBS News- Alice Johnson verbally attacked after speech-- <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/trump-alice-johnson-rnc-speech-pardon-vote-november/>

CBS News- Free Speech in market place-- <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/censorship-social-media-conservative-liberal-cbsn-originals/>

CBS News- Ivanka Trump calls out "cancel culture" after her commencement speech is canceled-- <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/ivanka-trump-calls-out-cancel-culture-after-her-commencement-speech-is-canceled-wsu-tech/>

CBS News- Senate staffer arrested for doxing -- <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/jackson-cosko-arrested-today-maggie-hassan-former-staffer-capitol-police-2018-10-03/>



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What core values support freedom of speech?