



# 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.](#)



## *Spreading Silence*

The John Templeton Foundation recently highlighted one of its funded studies that noted college students were increasingly reluctant to engage in conversations about controversial topics in and out of class.

Controversial topics included discussions about politics, religion, and sexuality. The study included responses from over 1,300 students from many college campuses and revealed 62% agreed “the climate on their campus makes students reticent to say what they believe.” This represented a 7% increase of concern as compared to previous years. Needless to say, college used to be the place where students could debate the ideas and principles that would guide their lives.

The cultural silencing of discussion is supported by stories such as a Tennessee Professor who was publicly rebuked and assigned sensitivity training for referencing vocabulary used in a rap album during an Africana Studies course.

Michael Behrent in his 2019 essay about A Tale of Two Arguments about Free Speech, notes the contest of opinion about free speech has broken into a debate between conservatives and progressives. Conservatives seek to protect free speech with the value of testing and disseminating ideas while progressives lean toward restricting speech that might cause harm to previously victimized groups. The new “inclusion” doctrine of progressives seeks to restrict hate speech or speech that offends. A big concern for free speech advocates is defining the new limits on speech.

College students and the US in general have been facing the chilling of free speech with the rise of cancel culture and limits that progressives want to extend to speech on and off college campuses. SEE asks students to consider an ethical analysis of free speech using core values. Is restricting free speech as sought by many progressives an ethical issue? If so, what core values are supported or violated in limiting the free speech rights of others?

## **Supplemental Links**

Study points to debate silencing on post-secondary campuses. John Templeton Foundation, (Accessed 3/24/21) -- [https://www.templeton.org/grant/promoting-open-inquiry-viewpoint-diversity-and-constructive-disagreement-on-american-college-campuses-and-in-the-disciplines?utm\\_source=Receive+News+from+the+John+Templeton+Foundation&utm\\_campaign=eb08f7335b-EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN\\_2021\\_03\\_23\\_02\\_40&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_5bc9c58bd6-eb08f7335b-82373667](https://www.templeton.org/grant/promoting-open-inquiry-viewpoint-diversity-and-constructive-disagreement-on-american-college-campuses-and-in-the-disciplines?utm_source=Receive+News+from+the+John+Templeton+Foundation&utm_campaign=eb08f7335b-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2021_03_23_02_40&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_5bc9c58bd6-eb08f7335b-82373667)

Tennessee Professor assigned corrective lessons for inappropriate use of the N word in ethnic studies course-- <https://www.dailywire.com/news/tennessee-professor-forced-to-undergo-training-for-referencing-tupac-album-with-racial-slur>

A Tale of Two Arguments about Free Speech on Campus, Michael C. Behrent American Association of University Professors, AAUP (Winter, 2019)-- <https://www.aaup.org/article/tale-two-arguments-about-free-speech-campus#.YF5G769KiM8>



Free Speech on College Campuses, Congressional Research Service--

<https://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/LSB10438.pdf>

Supreme Court Supports continued free speech suit by two past students of GA College, (3/8/21)

NBC News-- <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/supreme-court/supreme-court-keeps-ex-students-lawsuit-alive-college-speech-zone-n1260027>

Speech on Campus, ACLU - <https://www.aclu.org/other/speech-campus>