

The Gender Critical Movement Is Undermining Academic Freedom

Grace Lavery

University of California, Berkeley

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The following is the text of a lecture delivered at University College, London on Friday, March 18th, 2022. I have left it essentially unchanged for the purposes of preserving the talk for citation. This piece was written for oral delivery, and the prose reflects the fact. I am grateful to QUCL, and Xine Yao and Simon Lock especially, for their invitation to address their community, and for the extraordinary job they did hosting a controversial event in such a manner as to prioritize both the safety of all participants, and breadth of access and engagement.

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The emergence of a liberal ideology of trans rights over the last two decades has precipitated a crisis in higher education. The purpose of my lecture today will be to sketch the contours of that crisis as I see them, and to propose a couple of possible ways forward.

I am of course aware that among the many attendees of this lecture—the largest attendance I’ve ever drawn—is largely composed of people who hold strong convictions on both sides this issue, and I do not delude myself that anything I say will change the mind of such people. But I do delude myself that there is in this room some number—perhaps a sizable number—of people who are perturbed by the growing conflict between certain members of the LGBT community and certain feminist activists and organizations. I hope to offer an account of that conflict that differs from the mainstream account, with which everyone in this room is familiar: that by insisting on the axiom that “trans women are women,” LGBT activists have engendered a set of conflicts between the rights of women and trans rights. In fact, no such conflicts exist, and the widespread attempt to diagnose them, however well-intentioned, has had the effect of weakening the women’s movement throughout the UK.

I do not believe that most of those responsible for this schism are feminists—many are simply reactionary trolls like Milo Yiannopoulos and Graham Linehan; some others are opportunistic centrist journalists like Helen Joyce and Jesse Singal; and still others are conservative ideologues like Toby Young and Rob Liddle. But it would be futile to continue to deny, as many of us have wanted to, that anti-trans activists in the UK are entirely comprised of reactionary entryists. There truly are, at present, feminist authors, scholars, and organizations who have been persuaded by the so-called “gender critical” account of patriarchal oppression, and it’s because of that fact—the fact of feminist thinkers and colleagues like Prof. Kathleen Stock, Prof. Alice Sullivan, and Prof. Holly Lawton-Smith—that this conversation, painful as it is for all of us, must now be had in the seminar rooms, as well as in the streets. We will not resolve every aspect of this broader crisis today:

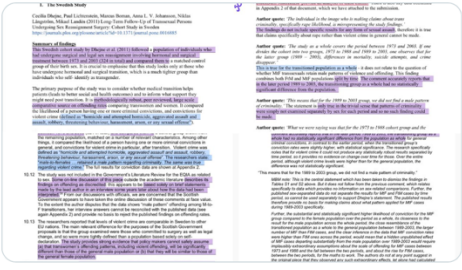
my focus is the mortal threat to academic freedom in the United Kingdom that has been mounted in recent years, and even months, by an alliance composed of the gender critical movement and the managerial class of administrators that govern the UK HE sector.

My argument today is not complex, and it is more or less encapsulated in the title of the lecture. Over the last decade, trans civil rights claims (particularly those of trans women, and especially those of trans women who love women) have become the scapegoat for an increasingly pervasive anxiety: that young people, or social media, or young people on social media, are incapable of rational thought, and their modes of reasoning need to be radically suppressed for the good of their blameless victims, which are sometimes figured as “women,” sometimes as “the university,” sometimes as “children,” and sometimes as “lesbians.” In order to defend this facially rather improbable account of the world, the gender critical movement must maintain a constant state of battle-readiness: always ready to swarm some graduate student on Twitter, to circulate some collection of memes that prove that trans teenagers are more likely to detransition than is widely believed, or to smear anyone who contradicts any of their positions as a rapist, a pedophile, an apologist for rapists or pedophiles, a misogynist, a wife-beater, a homophobe, or all of the above. These interventions, which are daily occurrences, have intensified a climate of mistrust and paranoia in British universities, but what is most striking to me is that they resemble maximally punitive pedagogical interventions: claiming to speak against dogma, and in favor of complexity and independence of thought, a class of teachers aims to intimidate, belittle, humiliate, and silence a class of students, instead of—as might have otherwise been expected of them—doing their job and actually teaching.



This intervention from Prof. Alice Sullivan, for example, speaks volumes: Christa Peterson, a graduate student at USC, had observed that a submission to the UK government by three GC professors—herself, Prof. Stock, and Prof. Rosa Freedman—had been substantially quoted without attribution from a document authored by three different GC writers submitted to the Scottish Parliament. Reasonable people can disagree whether that attribution-without-citation eliminates the value of the UK submission, but it was beyond doubt that Peterson was correct to note that it violated both the letter and the spirit of the published guidelines for submitting written advice to a House of Commons Select Committee:

worms cited @christapeterso · Jan 31, 2021
The expert evidence Rosa Freedman, Kathleen Stock (OBE), and Alice Sullivan submitted to parliament appears to be uh plagiarized

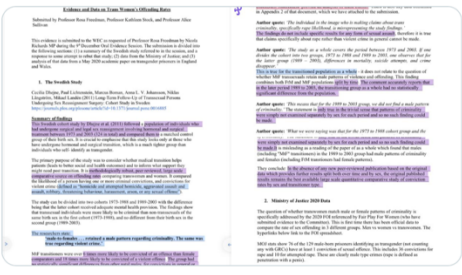


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worms cited @christapeterso · Jan 31, 2021
If a student submitted this we would have to report it! idk maybe being a select committee expert witness is different lol

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worms cited @christapeterso · Jan 31, 2021
the submission
committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidenc...

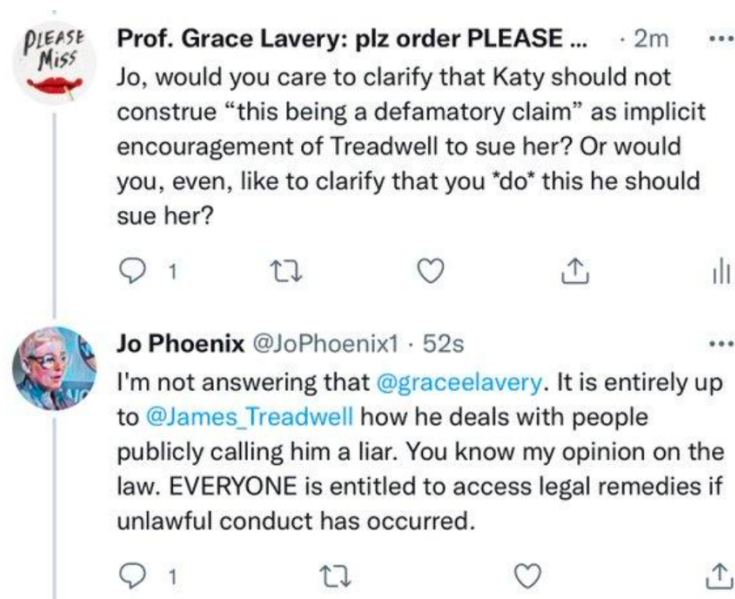


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I wanted to talk about this moment, because it seems to me that, relative to some of the more egregious examples of failure to teach that I'm going to discuss today, the stakes of this interaction are relatively minor. But "loony grad student, best ignored" captures the GC attitude towards students perfectly, combining as it does the indiscreet and unprofessional assessment of a student's mental health, the contemptuous pulling of rank, and the casual confirmation that the best thing to do with students who challenge one's work is to ignore them. I'm not trying to blame Prof. Sullivan for having created this state of affairs—that these words tumble so easily onto her Twitter is no mark against her, but rather a symptom of a profound institutional malaise. Where once, educators saw

disagreeable and rigorous students as a privilege, we are now encouraged to see them as mere loonies, best ignored.

While it will be necessary to talk about a couple more examples of students being misrepresented, threatened with legal action, intimidated, barred from reporting harassment, belittled, silenced, libeled in the British media, etc., this lecture is not going to litigate by example. Partly because although I think it is important to see exactly how our universities are being torn apart and by whom, I simply don't think that most GC academics would contest the examples.



Todd denied claims that she was transphobic, telling *Cherwell*: “The claims that I am transphobic or ‘deny’ anyone’s existence are groundless and defamatory. I am very proud to be speaking at the meeting called by A Woman’s Place UK. Woman’s Place UK is not transphobic.

“Oxford stands against transphobia.” *Cherwell News*. 25 Oct 2019.

Prof. Jo Phoenix, who has issued legal threats indiscriminately against students, colleagues, and institutions, has confirmed to me in public and in private that she does not think there is anything unusual or wrong with suing one’s students. Prof. Selina Todd at the University of Oxford has been reported to have issued legal threats against graduate students who have protested her lectures. Merely pointing out that the GC movement sees students as obstacles to be silenced, either directly or by the abuse of legal instruments, would not, I think, move the needle: rather, I want to argue directly that these tactics are a mortal threat to academic freedom on our campuses. Hence the GC movement is not merely a threat to academic freedom, it is the greatest threat in a generation: not only have GC academics created a system whereby one teaches one’s students best when one teaches them at gunpoint, not only have they done so to the great delight of conservative politicians who despise the cultures of learning that have been sustained by the higher education sector, but they have done so while persuading liberal media outlets like the BBC and the Guardian that the students really do need to be put down for the good of the country. As

a result, the previously far-right hatred of learning has migrated into our faculty lounges and needs to be confronted here, in spaces we once had the temerity to think safe.

Before going any further, it will be helpful to define the two terms at the centre of today's discussion, "academic freedom" and "gender critical movement."

The formulation of the principle of academic freedom was one of the twentieth century's characteristically complex formulations of a universal right. [Slide 4: AAUP statement] Here is how it was formulated in the American Association of University Professors 1940 statement, which established the grounds on which the right to academic freedom tends to be asserted:

Academic Freedom

1. Teachers are entitled to full freedom in research and in the publication of the results, subject to the adequate performance of their other academic duties; but research for pecuniary return should be based upon an understanding with the authorities of the institution.
2. Teachers are entitled to freedom in the classroom in discussing their subject, but they should be careful not to introduce into their teaching controversial matter which has no relation to their subject.⁴ 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.⁵
3. 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. As scholars and educational officers, they should remember that the public may judge their profession and their institution by their utterances. Hence they should at all times be accurate, should exercise appropriate restraint, should show respect for the opinions of others, and should make every effort to indicate that they are not speaking for the institution.⁶

So, an unlimited right to “unfettered” research and publication; a more limited right to say what one wants in a classroom; and a special responsibility to speak moderately when speaking extramurally. I’m in no position to lecture anyone about the third of those, I realize, since I’m about as immoderate an extramural speaker as anyone else, and in 1940 the AAUP didn’t have to contend with Twitter. But while clearly the 1940 statement’s definition of “controversial topics” requires refinement and clarification, it is worth nothing that the sensibility so often ascribed to millennial and Gen Z “snowflakes” was alive and well during the Second World War. The point at which the limitations on the right to classroom conduct became not merely defensible, but an indispensable dimension of

academic freedom, was in respect of the controls on sexual harassment introduced into American academia by Title IX, the federal law which prohibited discrimination on the basis of sex in US education (parenthetically, Title IX therefore does not create a “sex-based right,” but rather prohibits the creation of such rights in educational settings). The AAUP has published a number of statements on changes to Title IX in the last decade, emphasizing the importance of academic freedom, but also emphasizing that the sexual harassment of students is, self-evidently, not a protected class of speech.

And yet, no less self-evidently, academics accused of sexual harassment have most frequently turned to the discourse of academic freedom in order to justify their conduct. Consider the case of Rob Latham, whose tenure was revoked and who was fired from UC Riverside for sexual harassment in 2016. Latham had made the following statement to a student: “You’re an intellectual thoroughbred, kiddo, and I’ve mentored very few of those in my career. I have to resist the impulse to ride you too hard too soon. If you’ll forgive the equine metaphor.” In a statement to the UC Regents published on the AAUP blog, Latham’s defense of his position rested on the notion that these words were perfectly reasonable forms of encouragement to a student—that only homophobia could impute a lewd motive to them—and that they therefore fell solidly within the purview of academic freedom. Feminist critics of the situation, like Latham’s Riverside colleague Jennifer Doyle, disagreed, arguing that “[i]t is Latham, and the AAUP, who had forced us onto this forum by publishing this document. For his victims, this forum is on a continuum with the harassment that has characterized the experience of working and studying with him -- just dragged out into the public sphere. We all want that harassment to stop.” Title IX is, of course, the relevant section of US federal law for assessing claims of misgendering or

deadnaming students and workers, as clarified by Gorsuch for the majority in *Bostock vs. Clayton County, Georgia*; whatever the AAUP's conflict in the case of Latham and others, Joan Wallach Scott, the longtime chair of the AAUP committee on academic freedom, has assured members that on no grounds would academic freedom be a defense for misgendering.

The GC position on academic freedom is rather different, and encapsulated in a 2019 essay published by Kathleen Stock in *Quillette* entitled “Stonewall’s LGBT Guidance Is Limiting the Free Speech of Gender Critical Academics.” Rather confusingly, the essay seems to use the term “academic freedom” interchangeably with “free speech,” when, as we have seen, they have historically borne not merely distinct, but in some sense conflictual, meanings. But for Stock, they are essentially identical: “Where teaching is explicitly informed by research, the dividing line between constraints upon teaching and constraints upon research is paper-thin.” Like Latham’s, Stock’s position is that Universities who impose restrictions on the classroom conduct of teachers who sexually harass students (i.e., who misgender them) are in violation of the principle of academic freedom. They are not, and the notion that one can maintain that position and refer to oneself as a “feminist” is itself evidence that the meaning of words is, in fact, observably plastic.

In a passage I’ll flag now, but will return to at the end of the lecture, Stock also describes the consequences of her “gender critical” commitments:

“In my own case, I’ve experienced student complaints, FOI requests, campus protests, threats to milkshake me, the defacement of my office door, open letters to no-platform me, articles in the local press and student

newspapers claiming I make the campus at my university “unsafe”, defamation by the Student Union Executive, an attempted smear campaign by academics at another institution, and various forms of student and public harassment. Occasionally, critics point to the fact that despite this I still manage to write and publish, suggesting that this gives the lie to any claim that I don’t have the freedom to do so. But I wonder how many gender-critical academics have been deterred from expressing their views by these tactics?”

To summarize: complaints, FOI requests, “the defacement of my office door,” open letters, articles, and “a smear campaign” are all, unpleasant as they doubtless are for the person receiving them (and believe me, I speak from grim experience), self-evidently forms of speech governed by academic freedom. Threats of assault (“to milkshake me”) are not. Yet Stock’s odd refusal to distinguish between vocal criticism from colleagues and students and criminal threats of violent assault indicates a troubling lack of familiarity with the very principles the author is claiming to defend. But more troubling still is the ease with which Stock dismisses the fact that she has, indeed, been free to research and publish however she sees fit. That is the guarantee that academic freedom supplies: that people publishing on hot button topics will always feel comfortable and affirmed in their opinions is not an entitlement, and absolutely should not be.

“Gender critical movement” is, mercifully, rather easier to get to grips with: it refers to an active group of campaigners within and without the university, who defend what they call “sex-based rights,” oppose what they call “gender identity ideology,” and are skeptical

of and hostile towards a group they call “trans rights activists” or “TRAs.” I’m not sure there’s too much doubt about who is and who is not a member of this group, but the term is nonetheless flecked with ironies, because it seems to suggest that some other group—perhaps trans people?—are insufficiently “critical” of something called “gender,” a notion that will surprise even those who have read no more than the title of Judith Butler’s most famous book. “Gender,” as Butler has argued consistently and persuasively, is a notoriously tricky concept to grasp, seeming as it does to draw together questions of syntactical class and aggregation, with socially-produced taxonomies of masculine and feminine; the relationship between these two usages is a difficult question that falls outside the purview of today’s talk, except to say that the matter is not in the least clarified by demanding, as some GCs have started to, that we refer to words like “her” and “his” as “sexed pronouns.”

Ironic, too, is the fact that “gender critical,” laughable as it is as a designation of an intellectual position, displaced a term that was, at least in principle, defensible on its merits: trans-exclusionary radical feminism, or “terf.” That term, which is now only spoken on the BBC or in the Guardian in hushed tones and with the proviso that it is apparently “a slur,” identified a strand of radical feminism (not a ubiquitous radfem position, through probably at present the dominant one, at least in the UK) that wants to exclude trans women from the category of “woman,” and therefore to exclude actual trans women from women’s spaces. Yet because that position was easily identified among those that opposed it, those who were hailed as “terfs” demanded to be referred to by another name, and the demand was largely met. The broad censorship of the word “terf” is part of a worrying dimension of contemporary British culture in which the bearers of an idea being criticized are to be deferred to in respect of the language used to designate the position. My invitation onto

Andrew Doyle's GB News program was rescinded after I referred to Ann Coulter as a fascist, an observation that Andrew claimed revealed I was "not serious" about open discussion. But I am relentlessly serious about Ann Coulter's fascism. One might also consider the fate of the term "eugenics," the subject of a powerful recent apology authored by UCL workers: the term "eugenics," inflected by histories of genocide, cannot be heard today except as negatively valued, yet it was not so for the figures who espoused those positions, and must not be abandoned as a term of historical analysis. Anyone who has not yet done so is encouraged to read the website "terf is a slur," to see a number of anonymous Twitter accounts, many of whom seem to be teenagers, and most of which took place several years ago, saying cruel and obnoxious things about terfs. They might also wonder why "Tory" is not a slur, since it is so often followed by the word "scum."

Only one other brief comment on the term "gender critical movement" is necessary before advancing: the group often refers to itself as, simply, "women," as in the hashtag Women Won't Wheesht, or the writer J. K. Rowling's claim that "women are organizing." But this isn't a good name for the movement, because the core advocacy group contains a number of men—Graham Linehan, Jesse Singal, Alan Sokal, Colin Wight, Colin Wright, Milo Yiannopoulos—all of whom are white—and because polls suggests that while, on the whole, UK men are receptive to GC talking points, UK women aren't persuaded by them. These findings have been affirmed in a recent report by the Equalities and Human Rights Commission, even as the EHRC has been increasingly subject to GC capture in the last two years.

I'm now going to work through a few examples. I want to stress before I do that, although I do think that individual GC academics are culpable for attempts to silence and

intimidate students, I'm not trying to attack anyone personally. Most of the censurable conduct I'm about to describe came about because GC academics felt marginalized, and while I do not think that the feeling of marginalization derived from a fact of marginalization, it is hard not to sympathize with the feeling. I think these case studies might be usefully grouped together as unprofessional and unhelpful responses to a feeling of professional exclusion—however much harm has been done, I think it's important to reflect that it doesn't come from malice, but from misplaced fear. Fear of the young, fear of social media, fear of displacement, and yes, fear of trans women (the latter of which we might call an instance of “transphobia”).

Adelaide Kramer—a student at the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee—became the first target of the modern GC pile-on when the UK fascist provocateur Milo Yiannopoulos visited her campus in 2016. Yiannopoulos projected a photograph of her onto the back wall, encouraged the audience to mock her appearance, and delivered the punchline “the way you know he's failing is I'd still bang him.” That line makes the connection between misgendering and sexual harassment punishingly clear, and it was on the grounds of the intimidation of Kramer that grad students at other US universities protested Yiannopoulos's planned “tour,” because he had promised to do the same in his future events:

“If all it takes are a few strong words from me to make trans people leave women in peace in their bathrooms, I'm definitely going to up the ante. Really, if he can't take a joke, how is he going to cope with having his dick cut off?”

In an essay I published in 2018 entitled “Grad School as Conversion Therapy,” I drew links between Yiannopoulos’s trolling and the emerging consensus among liberal academics that our students, and especially our trans students, were unable to face robust criticism. I suggested what I think is obvious, that the attack on Kramer was not a criticism but an instance of sexual harassment. But with the benefit of hindsight, two aspects of the Kramer case strike me as more prescient than I realized at the time: first, the strategy of mocking trans women’s appearance is widespread within GC circles (my own faculty profile picture was the subject of a bizarre controversy in 2019 led by the GC intellectual Jane Clare Jones), and second, the deployment of the phrase “having his dick cut off” as a punchline recalls a widely-shared video posted to YouTube earlier in 2016 by the GC YouTuber Magdalen Berns, in which she replies to the trans woman Alex Drummond’s stated anxiety about bottom surgery with the line “of course it terrifies you, Alex, they chop your cock off.” It’s not clear whether Yiannopoulos was adopting his line from Berns, but the similarity is enough to raise the possibility; more to the point, the fact that an identical rhetorical flourish was made by an alt-right Trumpist and a GC might occasion a little self-reflection among the feminists who have allowed the gender critical movement to overtake their organizations.

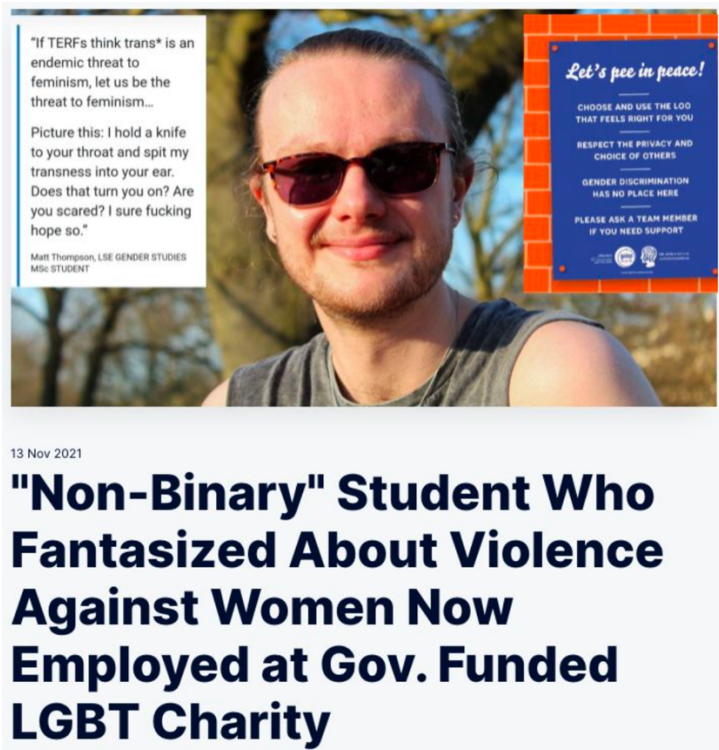
But instead, the 2016 moment presaged a longer era in which speaking in insulting terms to and about trans women could be treated as a laudable kind of frankness. The most self-conscious GC essay I’ve read on this subject is a remarkable, lesser-known, piece of Stock’s entitled “When Bindels Speak,” published in 2018, and a defense of the GC feminist Julie Bindel. Stock quotes Germaine Greer making the same rhetorical move: “just

because you lop off your penis and wear a dress doesn't make you a fucking woman," describing the line as "vividly Rabelaisian" and a similar passage as "refreshing, like a bucket of cold salt water has been chucked over me after days of humid air." From an author who has written that the distinction between restricting publishing and controlling for sexual harassment is "paper thin," this line of argumentation is troubling, and more than enough grounds for concern about the welfare of Stock's trans students.

Alex Wareham was an undergraduate student at the University of Reading when his own teacher, Prof. Rosa Freedman, published a private letter he had sent her asking her to explain her views on trans people in, of all places, the Daily Mail. The sentences that Freedman found offensive were: "I do not intend to get aggressive but rather ask for your opinion before I move forward as I would rather not 'strawman' you. I would recommend you choose your words carefully." Ominous and a bit self-important perhaps, but solidly within the genre of awkward correspondence from teenagers that faculty have been receiving for decades and, I suspect, centuries, without having their names published in right-wing newspapers without their consent. A statement from the University of Reading made no reference to students' reasonable expectation that correspondence with educators might remain confidential. The Daily Mail could barely contain its joy at having forced a professor to incriminate herself: the article refers to Prof. Freedman as "Miss Freedman." Among the many gems in the comments, amidst threats to call the police on the grounds of Wareham's "threat," my favorite is this, from Sergeant Wilson:

“Our universities used to be hotbeds of dissent and debate, where all were welcome to speak and think. This is nothing short of the actions in Germany in the 1930’s, where no one spoke out against the rising tyranny.”

Wilson seems not to have noticed that the student in question is being penalized precisely for dissenting from his teacher, who reported him to the *Daily Mail* rather than bother to debate her position with him. (Nor does the *Daily Mail* reflect on the fact that, during the 1930s, the unspeakable truth that the paper championed was, of course, the position of the Nazi Party.)



An attempt to criminalize students' work got rather further in the case of Matt Thompson, a trans masculine graduate student at the London School of Economics, who delivered a paper at a student conference entitled "Trans Endemics: Embodying Viral and Monstrous Threat in Times of Pandemic." As the title suggests, the paper consisted of an imaginative attempt to perform the role of "viral and monstrous threat" ascribed to trans people in online spaces. Whether opportunistically or not, gender critical activists treated Thompson's paper as though it were, literally, a threat, and led a Twitter campaign to criminalize them not merely for dissent but, in fact, "terrorism." Thompson's personal details, including place of work, were published online by GC websites as recently as November.

And then lastly there is the case of Prof. Kathleen Stock herself, surely the most prolific and notorious of the GC censors. Since I have written on this topic before, and since Prof. Stock has a habit of describing her critics as "stalkers," I'll refer people to my essay "The UK Media Has Seriously Bungled the Kathleen Stock Case," which is available on my website. But as a list:



Prof. Stock successfully prevented a student journalist named Katie Tobin from reporting that students felt “harmed” by her activism by threatening legal action against her and the paper; she later claimed not to know that Tobin was a student. Stock then led a Twitter pile-on of Tobin in which the nineteen-year-old was called a “homophobe” and a “misogynist,” in comments Prof. Stock liked. Tobin complained to Sussex about this, detailing the mental anguish that the pile-on had caused, in the process disclosing (as reporters of sexual harassment generally do) sensitive personal and medical information.

From: Complaints Email
Sent: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Level 2 Complaint outcome [REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED] Kathleen

Following [REDACTED] complaint received on [REDACTED] I now attach a letter with the outcome of the Level 2 investigation. I am sending this email to you both simultaneously for the purposes of transparency and equity.

As this matter concerns the publishing of online information by both parties, I have taken the decision to send the letter to both of you to ensure there is no misunderstanding about the findings or the reasons behind them. I am also sending this to both of you confidentially, and I am asking each of you to respect the confidentiality of the other and not reveal the contents. If either of you decides to breach that confidentiality and make any partial public disclosure of the contents of the letter, in the interest of fairness to both of you, the University reserves the right to publish the whole decision letter (which would only be done after consultation with the party who had abided by the confidentiality requirement).

I hope this is clear, but if either of you have any questions, or require any further information, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Best wishes
[REDACTED]

The University not only found in favor of Prof. Stock, they effectively gagged Tobin by threatening to publish the report, medical details and all, if Tobin ever again discussed the matter in public. Since I initially reported on this issue, Prof. Stock responded that she too was bound by the same gag order—which is true, but irrelevant, since the report contained pages of sensitive information about Tobin, and mentioned Stock only in respect of matters of public record.



Prof. Stock took issue with a substantial (not personal) criticism of her work made by a student philosopher named Nathan Oseroff-Spicer; Stock once again threatened legal action, publicly told the student to “fuck off you complete and utter dickhead,” and then pressured the blog where Oseroff-Spicer was employed to fire him.

Hi Nathan,

Ok - thanks. Let's do it. Be prepared for the apology not to be accepted, but regardless, this is the right thing to do for the Blog.

Something along the lines of the following would work:

I have seen many comments shared online, even in the philosophy community, that I have found objectionable because I believe they targeted the trans community in the weeks leading up to the Gender Recognition Act consultation. I responded to these comments in ways that singled out individuals that shared these messages. I can understand how hurtful my comments are to receive. I deeply regret the way I responded and will not do it again. I apologize to Professor Stock and others who may have been hurt by my comments.

Let me know when it goes up.

Best,
Skye

The blog's editor, Skye Cleary, sent Oseroff-Spicer a scripted apology that he would have to deliver (without revealing he hadn't written it) as a condition of maintaining his employment. Oseroff-Spicer delivered the apology as requested, and was fired anyway. Skye Cleary hadn't responded to my inquiry about the authorship of the apology, but the email she sent to Oseroff-Spicer reveals that the draft had been shared between multiple parties. Nathan Oseroff-Spicer has left academia.



Kathleen Stock @Docstockk · 17 Std.

Woke philosophers, pay attention. This right here 🙄 is a normal sane person's reaction. This is what you too would have said, had your brains not been turned to mush by blocking anyone who doesn't share your moral views, combined with the desire to impress Jason Stanley.

Grazieta @Grazieta1987

Antwort an @BrianLeiter

Jesus fucking christ!

Christa Peterson is obsessed with @Docstockk.

What's wrong with her???



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Christa Peterson, a grad student at USC, to whom Prof. Sullivan referred as a “loony,” has been subject to a barrage of personal abuse by Prof. Stock, much of which—including the accusation that she is a “stalker”—seems sexually charged.

After Amelia Jones, a Sussex graduate student, accurately reported on the BBC that Stock had signed the “women’s declaration of sex-based rights,” a document that calls for the “elimination” of trans women as a class in law, Prof. Stock quite rightly demanded a right of reply, saying that she does not want to eliminate actual trans women, but then falsely characterized that reply as a “correction,” leading the Daily Express to brand Jones “a liar.”

At least one Sussex student, whom I’m not going to name here but whose name I’ve published elsewhere, was discouraged from filing a harassment complaint against Prof. Stock by Sussex administrative staff.

When students and workers at Sussex protested their routine silencing by Prof. Stock and the Sussex admin, they published—a key word, if we think back to the AAUP’s

demand for “unfettered” academic freedom—criticisms of Prof. Stock on posters and leaflets. The Sussex administration treated this act as though it were itself criminal, with Prof. Stock seeking police protection, and eventually resigning despite the Sussex Vice-Chancellor, Adam Tickell, issuing utterly unprecedented attacks on student protesters through official school organs.



Any of these would be, I think, unprecedented. A broad movement, cheered on by scholars, to label students as terrorists and send them off to prison; the establishment of a litigious culture in which student dissent—including student reports of harassment—is treated by universities as actionable libel; attempts to shame students seeking debate in the right-wing press.

So what do we do? I’m hoping you all can tell me. But I do have one thought, which I hope might be heard even by those who came here today to mock me. It is this: *why don’t*

we try teaching our students? It is our responsibility, *and not theirs*, to ensure that the complexity of our ideas is communicated; our responsibility, *not theirs*, to create spaces in which errors can be corrected and dissent can be fostered. With this in mind, I'm going to end by reading out the ten principles of Academic Freedom for All, an organization that I started with comrades, colleagues, and students in response to the ongoing crisis in higher education.

1. We believe that everyone has the right to research and publish without interference of any kind.
2. We do not believe that assent is the goal of scholarly endeavor, and we value all modes of productive disagreement.
3. We particularly affirm and champion the rights of students, independent scholars, contingent faculty, and all insecurely-employed researchers to research and publish work that challenges the orthodoxies of those with security of employment.
4. We believe that the right to protest is a fundamental aspect of academic freedom.
5. We condemn all uses of vexatious suits, baseless legal threats, and all forms of intimidation designed to suppress scholarly exchange.
6. We call for legal and institutional protections for insecurely-employed scholars against such threats.
7. We believe that an inclusive and diverse working environment is a prerequisite of academic freedom, not a threat to it.

8. We affirm that securely employed scholars owe a duty of care to their students, which should prevent them from (for example) engaging in retaliatory conduct designed to silence them.

9. We demand adequate financial and institutional research support for all college and university workers who seek it.

10. Academic freedom is a general condition, not an individual entitlement: unless all workers are free to research and publish, that condition does not exist.

And if anybody present would like to sign up to these principles, you can add your signature through the AFA website.