

SAFETY CULTURE

"Isn't it good to offer safe spaces and ban offensive speech?"

It sounds nice to protect students from danger, but when you offer protection from things that are not physically dangerous, you actually prevent students from learning and growing.

Young people are not really fragile, they are "antifragile." That means that they need exposure to thousands of challenges in order to become self-sufficient by the time they reach adulthood.

The culture of "safety" ends up banning whatever books, ideas, and speakers bother the most sensitive students on campus, often because they challenge those students' political beliefs. The culture of "safety" teaches students to respond to books, ideas, and speakers with fear and anger, not with counter-arguments. Is that really healthy for anyone?

WHAT IS HETERODOX ACADEMY?

Heterodox Academy is a collaboration of hundreds of professors from across the political spectrum. Our members have come together to discuss ways of improving the academy by enhancing viewpoint diversity and the conditions that encourage free inquiry. We welcome civil debate and disagreement over politically charged topics, in our classrooms and in our universities more broadly.



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VIEWPOINT DIVERSITY

"Why do we need to hear the voices of people who are wrong?"

John Stuart Mill addressed this question in 1859: *"He who knows only his own side of the case knows little of that. His reasons may be good, and no one may have been able to refute them. But if he is equally unable to refute the reasons on the opposite side, if he does not so much as know what they are, he has no ground for preferring either opinion."*

Listening to opposing views makes us think more deeply- even if the other side is wrong. And can you be 100% sure you are right? The other side is just as certain that it is right. Viewpoint diversity allows people and ideas to mix and challenge each other, and if the mixing happens in a collegial environment, all parties can improve their thinking, and their ability to tolerate those who don't share their beliefs- an essential ability for life in a democracy. When people live in a bubble of orthodoxy, they become more intolerant of dissent.

WHAT CAN I DO?

Whatever your politics, do you agree with us that it would be a bad thing if everyone at your school and in your social network shared your politics? If so, then please visit us at HeterodoxAcademy.org. Under "resources" you'll find many ways that you can learn more, including our "college care pack" with videos and other materials relevant to undergraduate life.

In particular, you might consider starting a movement to call for a vote by your fellow students as to whether the majority want to declare your school to be a "Heterodox University," which means that you explicitly endorse freedom of speech and efforts to increase viewpoint diversity.

