

A draft op-ed is provided by AAUP.

Sample Op-Ed: Reject Educational Gag Orders

You can modify this op-ed to reflect what's happening in your state. Here's another terrific op-ed that was published in Ohio: [Cincinnati.com. Political agendas attack our academic freedom in Ohio](#). By John McNay, chair of the AAUP's Committee on Government Relations and professor of history at the University of Cincinnati-Blue Ash.

In 2021, several states introduced legislation that has been commonly referred to as “anti-CRT.” Despite the fact that few, if any, of these bills are actually about critical race theory, they are gaining steam as part of a cynical right-wing attempt to scare white Americans into prohibiting the accurate teaching of race, racism, and civil rights in American history. This legislation is an attempt to impose an educational gag order on the factual teaching of history in our nation's classrooms. It is censorship, pure and simple.

When Wisconsin State Representative Chuck Wichgers submitted three pages of terms that would be banned if that state's legislation was signed into law, his list of prohibited words or phrases included “anti-racism,” “diversity training,” “equity,” “marginalized,” “racial justice,” “social justice,” and, perhaps most tellingly, “woke.”^[1]

I am both disappointed and concerned that some in [state's] legislature have chosen to jump on this bandwagon, by supporting [bill].

Efforts to ban these so-called “divisive concepts” are brazen attempts at classroom censorship, and part of a coordinated effort to push back against the growing awareness of racial inequity and systemic racism in America. Some politicians, and the dark money donors who fund them, would rather censor faculty and ban books than have a truly informed populace that understands and works to address long standing issues of racial inequality and discrimination in the United States. Once the government begins to manufacture a view of history and society, it is no longer history or the truth, but simply political propaganda.

Many of these bills go so far as to prohibit faculty from teaching or discussing topics that could cause a student to feel uncomfortable. Glaringly, these bills seem only to be concerned with the potential “discomfort” of white students. Where is the concern for how omission of teachings on slavery, Jim Crow, and the legacy of systemic racism might cause discomfort to Black students? College students should not be treated like fragile snowflakes in need of protection from uncomfortable subjects. Among the fundamental purposes of higher education is the open and honest confrontation of ethical problems in our society and the promotion of robust debate on new and old ideas in hopes of expanding students' horizons so as to become more informed and responsible citizens.

Higher education is meant to serve the common good by promoting open inquiry and advancing human knowledge while preparing students to compete on a global stage. The authors of this legislation say they're simply trying to protect us from “ideological indoctrination.” But teaching unpleasant facts about US history is not indoctrination. Suppressing them is. Censorship, and the dark money funding these efforts, have no place in higher education.

[1] https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/misc/lc/hearing_testimony_and_materials/2021/ab411/ab0411_2021_08_11.pdf