



Academic Freedom:

Its Persistent Relevance From Martyrdom to Common Sense

Dr. Peter Boltuc, Professor of Philosophy
Vice Chair, University Senates Conference

University of Illinois Board of Trustees presentation
March 7, 2013



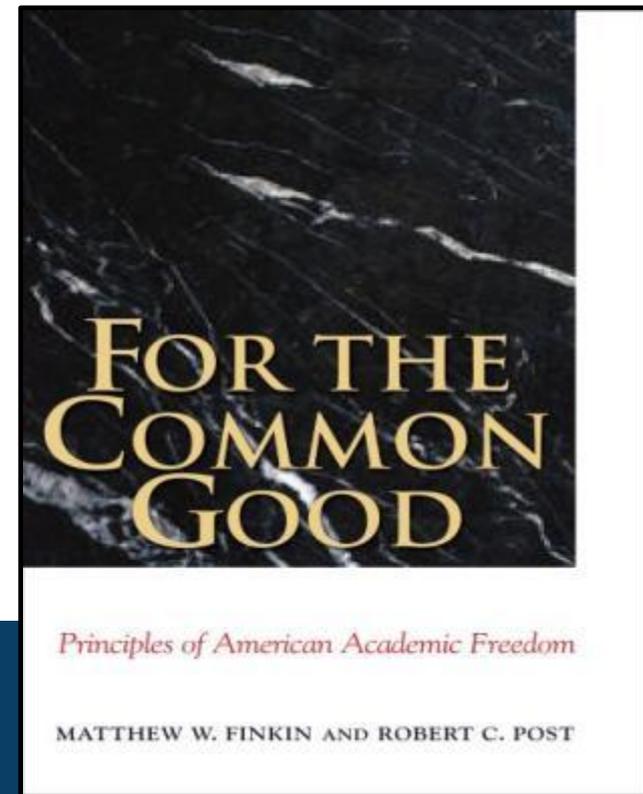
The University of Illinois is a home to some of the nation's leading thinkers on academic freedom, scholars like Larry Golden and Matt Finkin

Larry Golden

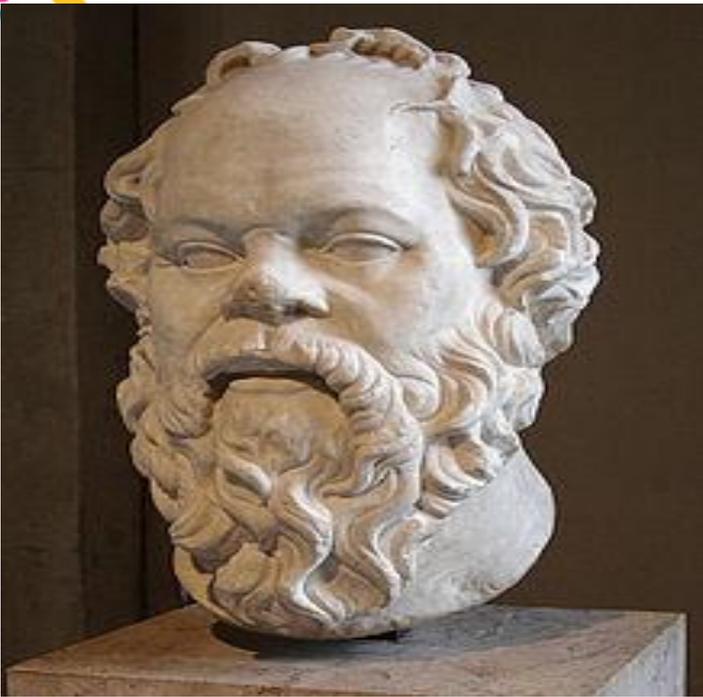
In the famous Skokie case, the ACLU designated Golden to speak in favor of free speech for the Nazis.

Matthew W. Finkin

Co-authored an important book on academic freedom



Pre-history of academic freedom: martyrdom

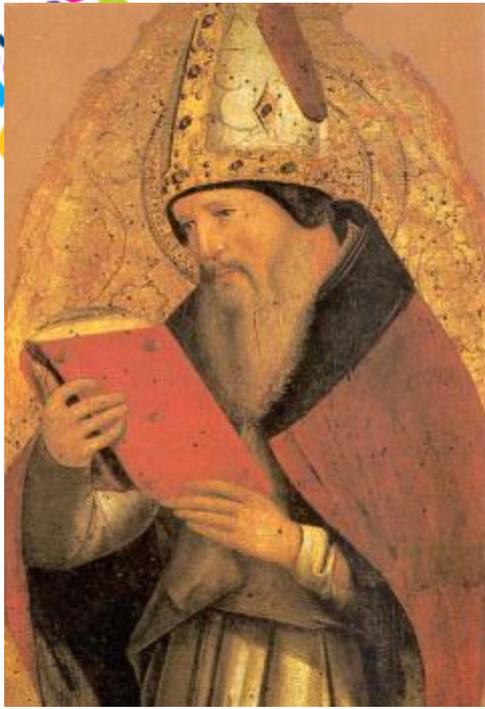


Socrates

Giordano
Bruno



Respect for reason as prerequisite

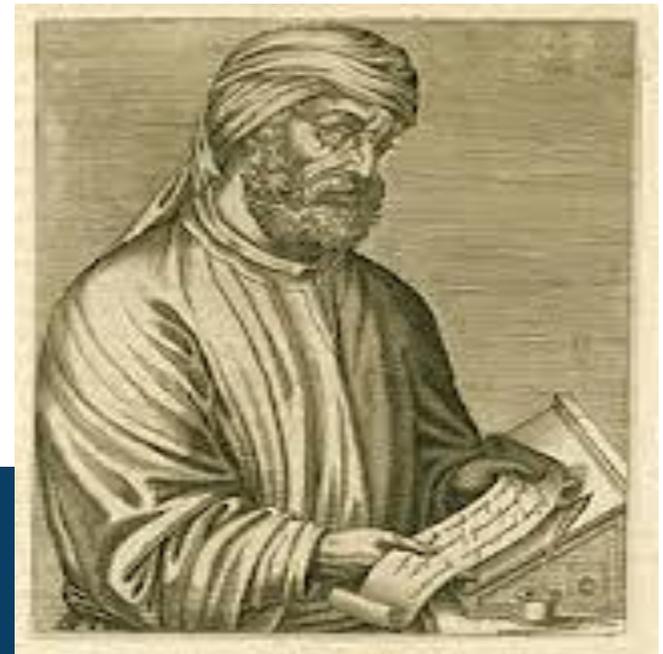


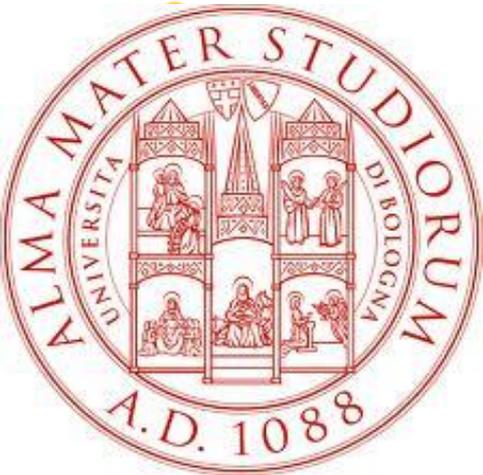
Augustine
respect for reason

Tertullian

‘Athens’ of philosophy
were corrupting the
‘Jerusalem’ of faith.

“When I inquired how I could make judgments (since I did, in fact, make them), I realized that I had found the unchangeable and true eternity of truth above my changeable mind.”
(Confessions 7:17)





Beginnings of academic freedom

Holy Roman Emperor Frederick Barbarossa (1158 A.D.)

“We will that the students, and above all, the professors of divine and sacred laws, may be able to establish themselves and dwell in entire security in the cities where the study of letters is practiced. It is fitting that we should shelter them from all harm.”





Barbarossa

3 possible reasons for his support of freedom

1. To impose his might over the city of Bologna (and create the precedent)
2. To support studies of law, and in particular, recently discovered Justinian codes.
3. To establish the independent court of reason. The independent university became the voice of reason largely above and beyond the appointees of the King or the Pope, beyond the powers of politics or faith, respectively.





Academic
freedom
came
before
freedom
of speech



Locke



Mill



Academic freedom today

Beyond political right and left

Beyond disciplinary
boundaries: quantum physics,
music, biology ...



AAUP

Academic freedom . . . applies to both teaching and research.

Freedom in **research** is fundamental to the advancement of truth. Academic freedom in its **teaching** aspect is fundamental for the protection of the rights of the **teacher** in teaching and of the **student** to freedom in learning.



Jacques Derrida

The university “should remain
an ultimate place of critical resistance –
and more than critical – to all powers
of dogmatic and unjust appropriation.”

Derrida, Jacques, *University Without Condition*, in *Without Alibi*.
Trans. Peggy Kamuf. Stanford:
Stanford UP, 2002. 202-237



Haller et al. (1986)

Academic freedom is the view that if teachers and scholars are to promote the growth of knowledge, they require the freedom to teach and conduct inquiry without fear of sanction or reprisals should they express an unpopular or controversial idea.

Haller, Emil J. & Strike, Kenneth A. (1986) An Introduction to Educational Administration: Social, Legal, and Ethical Perspectives. Cornell: Longman



Academic freedom

Academic freedom is the principle that we need to allow the widest possible range of expression and debate within universities, because we never know which ideas or hypotheses will ultimately prove to be invaluable.

Nick Burbules, Chair, USC



University Senates Conference

All three campuses adopted recommendation of an update to the UI statutes and endorsed a statement on academic freedom

"Academic freedom is the freedom to teach, both in and outside the classroom, to conduct research and to publish the results of those investigations, and to address any matter of institutional policy or action whether or not as a member of an agency of institutional governance. Academic staff members have the freedom to speak to any matter of political, economic, or other interest to the larger community, subject to applicable academic standards of conduct." ST-72



UNIVERSITY OF
ILLINOIS
SPRINGFIELD



President Bob Easter



“Carl Woese was simply courageous /.../
Initially he was a subject of derision and
criticism. But thanks to the principle of
academic freedom protected scrupulously
by our university and others around the
world, Carl was allowed to continue to
question and to search for the very origin
of life /.../ to the point that his findings
could no longer be ignored or in fact
argued against.”

UIUC
the late Professor
Carl Woese

