



## Lukianoff Authors Lead Essay for ‘Cato Unbound’ Debate on Campus Free Speech

Katie Barrows

January 4, 2016

Today, the Cato Institute published FIRE President and CEO Greg Lukianoff’s lead essay for the organization’s monthly *Cato Unbound* debate series. Each month, *Cato Unbound* publishes an essay on “a big-picture topic by an important thinker.” This month’s topic is campus speech, and Greg’s essay, “Free Speech on Campus Has Been in Trouble for a Long Time,” looks at the history of speech codes and proposes a cultural solution to the problem of campus censorship.

Throughout the month, other leading thinkers will respond with their own essays on the topic. Their responses may be supportive or critical of the month’s lead essay, or to other follow-up essays—as the Cato Institute puts it, “[t]he idea is to create a hub for wide-ranging, open-ended conversation, where ideas will be advanced, challenged, and refined in public view.” The “Free Speech on College Campuses” series will feature responses penned by Eric Posner, professor at the University of Chicago Law School, and Catherine J. Ross, professor at George Washington University Law School.

In his essay, Greg argues that speech codes and calls for censorship on college campuses are nothing new. Many speech codes were created during the heyday of political correctness in the 1980s and 1990s, and were never fully eliminated after their defeats in the court of law and the court of public opinion in the mid-’90s.

Over the years, FIRE has worked tirelessly to eliminate policies that restrict students’ and faculty members’ right to speak freely on college campuses. In the last eight years, the percentage of colleges we surveyed that maintain speech codes that clearly and substantially restrict student rights has dropped from 75 percent to 49 percent. But, as Greg warns, this may be only temporary. Recent behavior by students and moves by the federal government indicate the desire for more speech codes.

Greg’s suggestions for fighting back against the forces that seek to limit free expression on campus include litigation, new laws, and calls for alumni to stop donating their alma maters that restrict speech. The ultimate solution, though, is cultural change:

How do we teach a generation about the value of free expression when speech is too often presented as a problem to be overcome, rather than part of the solution to many social ills? This is our great challenge, and it must be faced with both determination and creativity if the always-fragile right of freedom of speech is to endure.

Check out Greg's full essay over at [Cato Unbound](#), and check back at *The Torch* throughout the rest of January for updates and responses from the series.