

Instruction

Controversial Issues

The historic principle of academic freedom grants and protects the teacher's right to raise and reasonably treat controversial issues in the carrying out of approved school system curricular policies. However, no statute or court decision has approved of teacher actions or statements which substantially interfere with the reasonable requirements of school discipline or established curriculum. The guarantees of free speech or the doctrine of academic freedom have never been recognized by the courts as vehicles to allow teachers to violate an established and reasonably well-defined curriculum or to create or modify curriculum programs according to his/her beliefs.

Amity students have the right to discuss controversial issues as an essential part of their education. Amity teachers, as beneficiaries of the legal rights established in the historic principle of academic freedom, have the right to teach students in ways that best utilize their professional knowledge, interests, and competencies. To these ends, the Board of Education recognizes the place of controversial issues in the educational experience of its students, provided that such issues are studied under competent instruction in an atmosphere free from bias and prejudice; that they are relevant to the course of study in which they are studied; that they are appropriate learning objectives for the academic level and maturity of the students; and that all sides of the issue in question are taught objectively, equitably, and accurately, as far as possible.

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes

31-51q Liability of employer for discipline or discharge of employee on account of employee's exercise of certain constitutional rights.

Keyishian v. Board of Regents 395 U.S. 589, 603 (1967)

Academic Freedom Policy (adopted by Connecticut State Board of Education, 9/9/81)

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Woodbridge, Connecticut