The Foundation of Free Speech? John Stuart Mill’s On Liberty Syllabus

Instructor: Adam Rose
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Quarter: September 2023
Start – End Date: Sept. 6 - 20
Session Day/Time: Wednesdays, 9:30 am – 11:00 am CT
Course Code and Section: HUAS80044 23U1

Course Overview

Often cited as one of the most celebrated defenses of free speech ever written, John Stuart Mill’s On Liberty makes its case on the basis of pragmatic utility rather than natural rights. But is Mill’s argument sound? We’ll attempt to find out as we consider his argument in detail. [This course can be taken in conjunction with “George Orwell’s 1984.”]

Note to Students

Please complete the assigned reading for Week 1 before the first class.

Required Texts


Books can be purchased online through the University of Chicago Bookstore.

Course Readings

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<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Reading Assignment</th>
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| Week 1 | Steele | INTRODUCTION
|        |        | On Liberty — Chapter I        |
| Week 2 | Steele | On Liberty — Chapters II-III  |
| Week 3 | Steele | On Liberty — Chapters IV-V    |
|        |        | REVIEW AND SYNTHESIS          |
Accessing Remote Courses

Remote courses are taught through our Canvas platform. Approximately two weeks before your class begins, we will add you to your canvas site using the email address you provided at the time of registration. An invitation will then be sent to that email. Click the “Get Started” button in the email to begin the Canvas login process. For step-by-step instructions, please visit https://grahamschool.uchicago.edu/academic-programs/online/learning-resources/liberal-arts. Once you’ve created your Canvas account, you can access any Graham School canvas course for which you are registered at: https://canvas.uchicago.edu.

Accessibility Information

Student Disability Services (SDS) works to provide resources, support and accommodations for all students with disabilities and works to remove physical and attitudinal barriers, which may prevent their full participation in the University community. Students that would like to request accommodations should contact SDS in advance of the first class session at 773.702.6000 or disabilities@uchicago.edu.

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The University and its faculty are committed to creating a safer and more inclusive learning environment for all students. At the University, all faculty, staff, graduate student instructors, and teaching assistants are considered “Individuals with Reporting Responsibilities” and are required to let the University’s Title IX Coordinator know about any disclosures they receive from students about experiences of sexual misconduct (including sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, stalking, and sexual harassment). This includes disclosures of experiences that happened before their time at the University. This is to ensure that all students who have experienced sexual misconduct receive support, options, and information about their rights and resources. Students are not obligated to respond to this outreach, and this will not generate a report to law enforcement.

For more information, please see this handout for students as well as the University’s Policy on Harassment, Discrimination and Sexual Misconduct and Policy on Title IX Sexual Harassment. You can also reach out directly for services and support from the Office for Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Support by emailing titleix@uchicago.edu.

If you, or another student you know, wishes to speak to a confidential resource who does not have this reporting responsibility, please contact the Sexual Assault Dean on Call through the UChicago Safe App or at 773.834-HELP.

Questions? Contact Zoë Eisenman at zme1@uchicago.edu.