



Academic
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NETWORK

Conspiracy Pedagogy on Campus: BDS Advocacy and Academic Freedom

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ABOUT AEN

The Academic Engagement Network (AEN) is an organization of faculty members, administrators, and staff members on American college and university campuses across the United States. We are committed to opposing the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement, affirming academic freedom and freedom of expression in the university community, and promoting robust discussion of Israel on campus.

The AEN aims to promote more productive ways of addressing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In place of one-sided sloganeering reinforcing simple binaries, we advocate open debate acknowledging complexity. In place of aggressive, antidemocratic tactics galvanizing deep inter-group suspicions, we advocate respectful exchanges of ideas. We insist that the heckler's veto has no place in the academy—there is no free speech right that permits blocking free speech by others. We are committed as well to addressing antisemitism often found in BDS and anti-Israel narratives.

Network members serve as resources for reasoned discussion about Israel on campuses. They advise campus presidents, provosts, deans and other administrators on Israel, BDS, antisemitism, and related issues; organize faculty forums and public education programs; mentor students in their efforts to advance dialogue about Israel and oppose BDS on campus; encourage universities to forge and enhance U.S.-Israel academic ties, including student and faculty exchanges and research collaborations; and speak, write, participate in discussions, submit essays, and publish op eds.



AEN Pamphlet Series

The Academic Engagement Network (AEN) pamphlet series is an occasional series that addresses the primary concerns of the organization: championing academic freedom on American college and university campuses, opposing the BDS movement, encouraging a robust and sophisticated discussion of topics related to Israel and the Middle East, and combating antisemitism. Authors include AEN members and other noted scholars and thinkers who contribute to the discourse on these subjects. Certain pamphlets may also be accompanied by discussions with the author in the form of recordings or podcasts. For more information on this and any other AEN-sponsored material, please visit our website: academicengagement.org.



CONSPIRACY PEDAGOGY ON CAMPUS: BDS ADVOCACY AND ACADEMIC FREEDOM

Cary Nelson

This pamphlet reprints the keynote presentation by Cary Nelson¹, of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, at the First National Conference of the Academic Engagement Network, a new organization of faculty and staff in American universities and colleges committed to opposing BDS and to helping defend academic freedom and free speech on U.S. campuses.

Introduction

There is now a substantial body of scholarly literature and political commentary explaining why BDS is dangerous. It demonizes, antagonizes, and delegitimizes Israel and uncritically idealizes the Palestinians. Despite some naïve followers of the movement who believe otherwise, BDS misrepresents its goal, which is not to change Israeli government policy but rather to eliminate the Jewish state.² It thus offers no specific steps toward a resolution of the conflict and no detailed peace plan. Moreover, it does not seek to negotiate a Palestinian right of return to the West Bank, but rather to impose a right for all Palestinians to return to Israel within its pre-1967 borders.

BDS falsely claims to imagine a nonviolent route to ending the conflict. But there is no nonviolent way to achieve its goal of eliminating the Jewish state. Indeed, BDS demands an end to all efforts to build mutual empathy and understanding between Israelis and Palestinians. This “anti-normalization” campaign rejects the communication, dialogue, negotiation, and unconditional interchange necessary to achieve a peaceful resolution of the conflict. Finally, in

addition to consistently undermining academic freedom with its boycott agenda and its effort to interrupt and silence pro-Israel speakers, BDS actually offers nothing to the Palestinian people whom it claims to champion. Perhaps that is the single most cruel and deceptive feature of the BDS movement. Its message of hate is a route to war, not peace.

With these general conditions in mind, I want to review the most widely publicized BDS agendas on campus, then move on to this paper's special concern: the increasing anti-Israel politicization of the humanities and soft social science classroom.

On college campuses, BDS initiates divestment resolutions that have no impact on college investment policy even if they succeed. But the resultant battles do turn some students against Israel, and those students become tomorrow's teachers, business people, professionals, religious leaders, and politicians. This presents a long-term risk to US policy and thus a long-term security risk to Israel. BDS often takes over the public spaces on American campuses, but the institutional impact of BDS has been still deeper and more troubling. It has helped turn some entire academic departments and disciplines against Israel and

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some faculty members in the humanities and soft social sciences into anti-Israel fanatics. Anecdotal evidence and the example of representative syllabi now demonstrate that this trend has spread to the classroom itself.³ There the task of responding is infinitely more difficult—infinately, not only because the classroom is not a public space in the same way a professional association or a campus quad is, but also because it is more thoroughly protected by academic freedom.

But I must open my main topic—the political corruption of the classroom—with a simultaneous warning about the fragility of academic freedom in the contemporary university. In the early 1970s, about two thirds of higher education faculty were eligible for tenure and thus a high degree of job security. In the new millennium, that percentage has declined to one third. Most college teachers are now at-will employees subject to nonrenewal. They lack strong academic freedom protections. In departments with a strong pro-Israel or anti-Israel bias, contingent or adjunct faculty can be at risk of nonrenewal if they refuse to embrace their colleagues' politics in a syllabus. Many adjunct faculty consequently realize they are safer if they avoid controversial course topics. That is a depressing conclusion, but it nonetheless reflects reality. The links

between academic freedom and job security are now widely broken.

That some in the BDS movement are willing to sacrifice the university's principles and its future in the service of their political agenda does not mean that those of us who oppose them should do the same. Political struggles are usually fought by deploying whatever weapons are available. That has never been the best strategy in higher education. My suggestion, then, is that Israel's defenders, including university administrators and Israel's nonacademic allies, show some reticence about using what power and influence they may have in campus conflicts.

War by Other Means: The State of the American Campus

We can recognize the problems at stake in some classroom assignments and in the level of unqualified hostility to Israel that some faculty members express in their public statements on campus and elsewhere. When faculty members say publicly that Israel is a settler-colonialist, genocidal, racist, or apartheid state, we have reason to conclude they believe these are factual statements, not hypotheses to be debated. Some likely present these political opinions as fact in classroom lectures as well.

There is little doubt that students would be better off, that the mission of higher education would be better served, that the reality of Israeli-Palestinian and worldwide politics would be better represented, if these accusations were to be treated as debatable, with students provided access to opposing views. But that is commonly not the case. These accusations are being debated in the public sphere and thus they should be debated in the classroom as well, no matter what political opinions teachers may hold. Because attitudes toward the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are currently inseparable from the competing arguments that shape them, I would like to put these issues into context, offer some examples, and reflect on what this means.

When UC Santa Barbara sociology professor William Robinson sent an e-mail to his 2009 "Sociology of Globalization" course that had photos of the 2008-9 Israeli assault on Gaza set up as parallel to photos of the German occupation of the Warsaw Ghetto during the Second World War, some people urged he be fired.⁴ I deplored his Nazi/Israel comparisons as irresponsible history, but I added that academic freedom protected his right as a tenured faculty member to say such things. Were he a job candidate I would also have defended his right

to say what he pleased, but I would not have hired him either as an adjunct or as a tenure track faculty member had he insisted that Israel and Nazi Germany were comparable states.

Like it or not, we are long past the point where claims that Israel is a settler-colonialist apartheid state are outliers. That means we can and should contest them, but that punitive options—as opposed to careful professional evaluation—are largely off the table. The BDS movement did not initiate these claims, but it has widely promoted them and has helped install them as self-evident truths. And that means some faculty members feel free—indeed responsible—to treat them as truths. Unfortunately, that can intimidate some students and inhibit them from presenting opposing opinions. When entire disciplines are consumed by such views, students who differ can easily be silenced.

We need to better educate the campus about faculty responsibilities and the way they limit academic freedom, a concept that does not free you to intimidate students.

When a boycott resolution came up for debate on a California State University campus in 2015, students reported to me that faculty members used classroom time to advocate that students vote for the resolution. Some faculty members, I was told, refused to let students voice opposing views, a clear violation of academic freedom. Most of the courses in which faculty urged support for the resolution had nothing to do with history or political science, let alone the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Let me remind you here that AAUP policy for more than half a century warned against bringing politically extraneous material into the classroom, but in 1970 the AAUP modified its stand by introducing a standard of persistence. In that light, a home economics or veterinary medicine faculty member could urge students to vote for or against Israel so long as he or she did not do so repeatedly. But any such faculty advocacy must also welcome alternative student views. Although most students and faculty do not realize this, failure to do so could justify disciplinary action. A first offense would produce a warning, but repeated problems could be addressed more formally after proper due process was observed. For a tenured faculty member, consequences could range from denying an annual raise to delaying a promotion decision, but not termination. Needless to say, no sanctions of any kind were applied in the California case. We need to better educate the campus about faculty responsibilities and the way they limit academic freedom, a concept that does not free you to intimidate students.

I am gathering the stories of pro-Israeli grad students and young faculty who decided not to go into Israel studies for fear they would never get a job in departments or academic fields now dominated by BDS. All this is supplemental to the widely reported—but also hotly debated—anti-Jewish atmosphere in public spaces reported on some campuses by undergraduates. Although the intimidation of graduate students and young faculty members is less widely known than the well publicized anti-Semitic incidents on campus, the increasing examples of career intimidation are deeply troubling.

An undergrad can often keep his or her head down or retreat to Hillel to avoid hostile social confrontations over Jewish identity. And an undergrad can move on with his or her life after graduation. A prejudicial classroom, however, is another matter. It can shape the perception of intellectual life long term. So, obviously, do decisions about what kind of work will be the focus of your career. A June 2016 essay on the website *Legal Insurrection* analyzing the close American Anthropological Association vote against a boycott of Israeli universities ends with this statement: “The author is a graduate student who must write under a pseudonym for fear of retribution from pro-BDS faculty.”⁵ Another graduate student writes that his “concern is to get BDS-supporters who have power over me to just stop bothering me, and let me pursue my career in peace”:

Discipline-wide intimidation represents a threat to the character of the academy and to the meaningful exercise of academic freedom.

Because of the success of BDS in North American anthropology departments, doing archaeology in Israel is becoming increasingly difficult for young archaeologists. Most North Americans who do archaeology in Israel via secular universities are Jewish. In effect, BDS is holding my career hostage to the actions of the Israeli government. I am not the only young Jew in academia who is in this situation. In my case, it has gotten to the point where I am considering making Aliyah so that I can pursue my academic career more easily.⁶

Discipline-wide intimidation represents a threat to the character of the academy and to the meaningful exercise of academic freedom.

The preceding examples reflect a broader phenomenon both in the academy and in the public sphere. Not in living memory have we seen a political issue that has divided people so decisively as the debate over the Israeli-Palestinian

conflict. With surprising frequency, people are willing to sever personal relationships over their differences about Israel. Even during the Vietnam War, I did not see such widespread personal bitterness. For some academic disciplines, disputes about Israel are not only politically but also personally decisive.

I believe we have reached a tipping point in the politicization of humanities and soft social science disciplines, not only here but also in Britain and perhaps in some European countries. It's helpful to step back a moment and remember that it is more than 30 years since we had largely completed the disciplinarization of the academy. Instead of thinking of themselves as members of the professoriate as a whole, faculty members think of themselves as members of the engineering, computer science, anthropology, or English professions. Many disciplines present an inadequate, uninformed, or misleading knowledge base on which to judge a complex historical, political, religious, and cultural conflict between Israelis and Palestinians. And yet the ethics of disciplinarity essentially says that you are only bound to teach both sides of an issue when disciplinary consensus does not exist. A biologist does not have to give equal time to those who oppose the theory of evolution. A historian has no reason even to mention Holocaust denial. A sociologist might be expected to cover debates about global warming, but a climate scientist could well choose either to give bare mention of disbelievers or to make it clear that truth resides on only one side of the debate.

In many areas of the academy there is substantial social and professional support for faculty devoted to demonizing the Jewish state. They feel justice and the truth of history reside entirely on one side of the conflict, and they feel quite righteous in teaching that perspective. They may have no awareness whatsoever that they have turned their classrooms into propaganda machines.

What I am suggesting is that some disciplines—without having the requisite expertise—have reached a virtual consensus about the truth of Israel and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. I also believe the number of disciplines and sub-disciplines where the balance has been tipped and consensual anti-Israel truth reigns is increasing. A political scientist might recognize the need to acknowledge both the Israeli and Palestinian narratives and treat them each as possessing validity. In cultural Anthropology, throughout literary studies and ethnic studies, in much of African American studies, Native American studies, and Women's Studies, and of course throughout Mideast studies, that is no longer the case. In many areas of the academy there is substantial social and professional support for faculty devoted to demonizing the Jewish state. They feel justice and the truth of history reside entirely on one side of the conflict,

and they feel quite righteous in teaching that perspective. They may have no awareness whatsoever that they have turned their classrooms into propaganda machines.

Yet I have long argued that requiring certain individual colleagues to make an effort to portray both sides of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict fairly, to embody “balance” in the classroom, is pointless. The effort by some organizations to urge universities to compel political balance in individual courses is misguided. Would there be any point to asking Judith Butler, Nadia Abu El Haj, Grover Furr, Neve Gordon, Barbara Harlow, Gil Hochberg, Joy Karega, David Lloyd, Sunaina Maira, Joseph Massad, Bill Mullen, David Palumbo-Liu, Ilan Pappé, Jasbir Puar, Bruce Robbins, Malini Schueller, Steven Salaita, Gayatri Spivak, or Gianni Vattimo to do so? One could list dozens of names of tenured faculty with certainty that they would be incapable of rising to the challenge. Moreover, the list above amounts to a subset of BDS’s intellectual elite; even less presentable acolytes are surely out there. There might be more clarity for students if such tenured faculty simply embodied their unqualified malice in their teaching.

But then there is a great need to make certain that teaching based on mutual empathy is powerfully in evidence in the curriculum as a whole. I don’t believe we can win the day by countering pro-Palestinian fanaticism with pro-Israeli fanaticism. The best that does is strengthen or install ideological war on campus. And in many disciplines we would lose that war; indeed in some quarters it is already lost. There are moral, professional, and tactical reasons to choose another way. The bottom line is this: a university has a responsibility to assure that the curriculum as a whole, not individual courses, displays appropriate balance.

A Representative Anti-Zionist Course

It will be helpful to look in detail at a recent course from Middle Eastern Studies by a well-known scholar at a major university. The required books for Joseph Massad’s 14-week Spring 2016 Columbia University undergraduate course “Palestinian and Israeli Politics and Societies,” a copy of the syllabus for which was sent to me by a Columbia student, make the course’s perspective perfectly clear: Edward Said, *The Question of Palestine*; Rashid Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity*; Joseph Massad, *The Persistence of the Palestinian Question*; Theodor Herzl, *The Jewish State*; Theodor Herzl, *Altneuland*; Shlomo Sand, *The Invention of the Jewish People*; Ghassan Kanafani, *Men in the Sun*; Kanafani,

Returning to Haifa; Sara Roy, *The Gaza Strip: The Political Economy of De-Development*; Neve Gordon, *Israel's Occupation*; Jeroen Gunning, *Hamas in Politics*; Israel Shahak and Norton Mezvinsky, *Jewish Fundamentalism in Israel* (2004 edition); Ali Abunimah, *The Battle for Justice in Palestine*.

The result is a coherent course embodying overall only one point of view, a negative one that excludes any positive commentary on Israel or any recognition of Israel's achievements. Massad's course is designed to show that everything originating in historical and contemporary Zionism is fundamentally deplorable and destructive. Thus the course in no way fulfills Massad's description, which claims comprehensiveness:

This course covers the history of Zionism in the wake of the Haskala in mid nineteenth century Europe and its development at the turn of the century through the current "peace process" and its ramifications between the state of Israel and the Palestinian national movement. The course examines the impact of Zionism on European Jews and on Asian and African Jews on the one hand, and on Palestinian Arabs on the other – in Israel, in the Occupied Territories, and in the diaspora. The course also examines the internal dynamics in Palestinian and Israeli societies, looking at the roles gender and religion play in the politics of Israel and the Palestinian national movement. The purpose of the course is to provide a thorough yet critical historical overview of the Zionist-Palestinian encounter to familiarize undergraduates with the background to the current situation.

The course is about convincing students that Massad's political opinions are correct and in urgent need of adoption. Many would find the books he assigns to offer a curious account of "the impact of Zionism on European Jews," let alone of "the roles gender and religion play in the politics of Israel." The essays and book chapters he adds to various weeks' readings do a good deal to flesh out Palestinian self-representation and the racial and ethnic tensions in Israeli society, but they can hardly be accounted a fair representation of the varieties of Israeli culture or Jewish Israeli self-understanding.

I am not suggesting that all of these reading assignments are inappropriate. I too would want students in a course on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to read Rashid Khalidi and Edward Said. The fundamental problem is that Massad uses a course claiming comprehensiveness as part of a biased anti-Israel political campaign. The coercive social, political, and intellectual force of the assigned readings and lectures, moreover, would make it extremely difficult for a student

to voice an alternative perspective and equally difficult to gain a hearing for one; there are, after all, no assigned readings on which to ground a different historical narrative. Massad is perfectly within his rights to teach the course this way, as a pro-Palestinian and anti-Israel polemic, but a university needs other points of view if it is to mount a responsible curriculum.⁷ A department dominated by courses like Massad's has effectively chosen to be a political, rather than an academic, enterprise. Massad's academic freedom to teach the course the way he wants does not, however, protect him from other faculty faulting his course. Just as publications are open to criticism and debate, so too are courses and their syllabi.⁸

Conspiracy Pedagogy

We are at least to some degree accustomed to helping people improve their teaching. We can also channel people into the kinds of teaching they do best. But we have no model of how to address political fanaticism, let alone ideological fanaticism endorsed by a community of faculty believers. The goal has always been good teaching across the institution. Now we are left with borrowing the compensatory and corrective model from scholarship: to counter bad teaching with good teaching.

That can only take place in an environment in which we combine forthright condemnation of the demonization of Israel with firm criticism of Israeli government policy when it is merited. Again, faculty can voice their political opinions in class, but they must welcome open debate from their students. If they repress, ridicule, or disparage opposing student opinion they should risk exposure and sanction. And persistently using a class on an entirely unrelated topic as a vehicle for promoting pro-Israeli or anti-Israeli views is unacceptable.

Again, faculty can voice their political opinions in class, but they must welcome open debate from their students. If they repress, ridicule, or disparage opposing student opinion they should risk exposure and sanction. And persistently using a class on an entirely unrelated topic as a vehicle for promoting pro-Israeli or anti-Israeli views is unacceptable.

We must remember that many faculty members with strong views on the subject teach in fields with no connection to the conflict, and it is fair to assume most of those faculty never deal with it in class. Many faculty members keep their

A faculty bias against sharing their political views also still carries a good deal of weight in the academy, but anti-Israel passion is seriously eroding that tradition in some fields. If you believe Israel is the root of all evil in the world, as some on the hard left do, then that conviction can trump all the restraints on propagandizing that have sustained the profession for so long.

some fields. If you believe Israel is the root of all evil in the world, as some on the hard left do, then that conviction can trump all the restraints on propagandizing that have sustained the profession for so long.

Unfortunately, the evidence suggests the tide has begun to turn on the system of values and restraints that have long shaped the ethics of teaching. And I believe the prevalence of vicious anti-Israel classroom proselytizing is increasing and will continue to increase. As an example, we can look to former Oberlin College assistant professor Joy Karega's online syllabus for her fall 2015 rhetoric course on "Writing for Social Justice" (<https://new.oberlin.edu/dotAsset/04cd95b3-51a0-4807-b1b9-5e8c24f86209.pdf>), which includes a section on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The rationale for the course is interesting; it has its own trigger warning:

You may not always feel comfortable in this classroom. Social justice work is not generally geared towards making people feel comfortable. Social justice work attempts to enact social change, and that can be quite threatening and uncomfortable on many fronts. Also, polemical and agitation rhetorics are strategies that some social justice writers employ. As such, I will not discourage their usage in your own writing. We will also examine in this course several iterations of these kinds of rhetorics at work in the writings of social justice activists.

The readings include Rania Khalek's "How Today's Liberal Zionists Echo Apartheid South Africa's Defenders" and Bruce Dixon's "Cowardly, Hypocritical, Subservient Congressional Black Caucus Endorses Israeli Apartheid and Current War Crimes in Gaza," along with a long combined reading on intersectionality. There are no readings listed that are sympathetic to Israel, but then this is a training course in writing for social justice, and

social justice, as the BDS movement tells us, is embodied in only one side of the conflict. Most of the course is focused on US-based activism on racial issues, but antagonism toward Israel is integral to the course's concept of social activism and apparently to classroom discussions. It is not a course that simply studies the topic. It trains you to participate.

There is no evidence that the course included the lunatic topics Karega pursues on social media, even if the two are related by her core convictions. And you might say that she employs “polemical and social agitation rhetorics” in her public persona. She did assign four chapters from Christian Fuchs' book *Social Media*, but whether Karega's course points to her own use of social media I cannot say with any certainty, though it's easy to imagine that Karega's own uses of social media would come up for discussion. Would students struggle with her advocacy? Not if they are self-selected in sympathy with her anti-Israel hostility. In any case, the syllabus is perfectly rational, arguably more troubling because of that, because it's a course that could easily be emulated. Just how rational her classroom discussion of Israel would be is another matter.

The contrast between the delusional character of Karega's facebook posts—“ISIS is not a jihadist, Islamic terrorist organization. It's a CIA and Mossad operation” (November 17, 2015); “it seems obvious that the same people behind the massacre in Gaza are behind the shooting down [Malaysia flight] MA-17” (January 10, 2015)—and the rational but politically charged character of the syllabus gives us a pretty good guide to how faculty who are basically unhinged opponents of Israel can make themselves academically respectable.⁹

But the Facebook posts are still part of her public persona, and they were part of Oberlin's public profile. The academic profession has yet to deal with the reality that faculty members can establish a public presence through social media that completely outstrips anything they could typically achieve through teaching and research. The AAUP has, in my view unwisely, taken the position that faculty statements on social media are not part of their professional profile, even if the arguments and subject matter clearly overlap with their teaching and research. Those legislators who have reacted with hysteria to faculty members who make a couple of intemperate remarks on Facebook or Twitter are clearly out of line, but we need to think seriously about those faculty who make persistent use of social media in the same areas in which they teach or do research.¹⁰ In such cases, faculty members, I believe, are responsible for what they say.

The relationship between Karega's teaching and her social media activism, however, is still deeper, because she was effectively training students to emulate

her. Not all of us would consider a for-credit tutorial on how to participate in extremist activism an appropriate college course, but many departments now would. There is yet another issue that student support for Karega suggests may be embedded in her course—a call to bind identity with a perceived social justice issue. That, however, is how the academy has evolved in recent history. Its roots go back decades, having now produced consequences we hardly imagined.

BDS thus did not invent this problem. It reflects the degradation of some disciplines over decades, but BDS influence is intensifying and advancing the problem. And unfortunately BDS's lunatic fringe is increasingly in evidence in some disciplines. What still counts as unquestioned lunacy—like Karega's Facebook posts—meanwhile helps make somewhat less rabid opposition to Israel seem reasonable. Responsible faculty can employ the fundamental practice of intellectual critique. But the call to counter defective speech with better speech does not cover all our responsibilities.

We don't argue that it's fine to hire or tenure an idiot so long as we compensate by hiring or tenuring someone smart. Based on her dissertation, there were clearly reasons to question the wisdom of hiring Karega. Her reliance on interviews with her father as her primary source is a viable strategy for a personal book, but not necessarily for a doctoral research project. Karega of course was untenured, which means that there were two built-in occasions when the adequacy of her teaching and research would have been reviewed—first in her third year and then in her sixth. Calls for her summary dismissal reflected a failure to understand and honor the standards for due process necessary to preserve academic freedom. Oberlin apparently did follow due process in deciding to terminate her appointment in 2016.

If faculty members decide that a tenured professor promotes delusional standards of evidence in the classroom, there is not much they can do save to assign him or her courses where those convictions will not be in play or compensate with better courses taught by others. Karega, notably, taught the basic rhetoric course. That meant faculty across campus had a vested interest in whether she supported or undermined generally accepted academic standards in her teaching. Faculty members in hers or other cases could file a complaint separately from the two formal reviews, and that could produce action at any time. Whether the result would be reassignment or something more serious is impossible to say in advance. In any case full due process would apply. Given that Karega's responses to public events appear not to be rational, it is also possible that problems could recur.

Because of the risks to academic freedom and the potential for unwarranted criticism, we need to tread very carefully in examining the pedagogical practices of individual faculty. We certainly have no comprehensive evidence to present, not even broad access to appropriate syllabi, but we have enough evidence to know that the problem exists. Some of what I have cited here is anecdotal. But developments at public meetings in academic associations, the character of numerous events on campus, and the evidence of key course syllabi are sufficient to demonstrate we have a problem we need to consider how to confront. On campus the public sphere and the classroom are only partly discontinuous spaces. At the very least they interact and overlap. Competing accounts of the campus climate for Jews, however, remind us that students can proceed on separate tracks, with some who become involved in campus governance or devote themselves to more politicized disciplines encountering considerable stress and antagonism and others who concentrate on their engineering major or socialize at Chabad finding the campus mostly hospitable.

Perhaps our responsibility begins with broader forms of disciplinary critique. We need to take responsibility for the state of our own academic disciplines and subject them to serious scholarly critique. That means producing well-supported and thoughtful analyses. And it means mixing the critique of individual faculty with disciplinary contextualization.

There is too much evidence of the political corruption of academic disciplines, however, to treat pedagogy as sacrosanct. To ignore the issue, moreover, will be to watch the problem rapidly get worse. How often we confront anything so simple and unidirectional as indoctrination—especially given the complex pluralism of much campus life—is very much open to question, though Massad’s syllabus is clearly an effort to persuade and perhaps to indoctrinate. But there is no question that the campus devotion to civil discussion and debate is frequently under assault and that in many local settings the campus has become inhospitable to presentable intellectual activity. Some disciplines no longer promote self-critical intellectual reflection. The time to confront these trends is now.

Perhaps our responsibility begins with broader forms of disciplinary critique. We need to take responsibility for the state of our own academic disciplines and subject them to serious scholarly critique. That means producing well-supported and thoughtful analyses. And it means mixing the critique of individual faculty with disciplinary contextualization. Tempting though it is, just going after problematic faculty members without interrogating the cultural and professional

developments that have made them possible is inadequate. But it is equally unacceptable to cower before the BDS intimidation campaign claim that criticizing someone's work constitutes a violation of academic freedom and a suppression of free speech rights. That message disavows the core purpose of academic research and debate, eviscerating the educational mission.

We will need multidisciplinary critique that draws on the resources of the academy as a whole if our educational institutions are to be insulated from the political conformity that BDS allied faculty too often seek to impose on their students.

For now, we can say with some certainty that in many quarters things are going to get worse, and that there is no evidence they will get better. It will unfortunately take real courage for people within the more degraded disciplines to do the kind of informed analyses we need. And it is unrealistic to anticipate that some pervasively biased disciplines will reform themselves any time soon. Instead some departments will choose

new colleagues as part of an effort to impose a single anti-Israel political perspective on what is actually a complex, unresolved issue. It then becomes necessary for colleges and universities to approve hires in such a way that students are likely to be exposed to multiple perspectives. Some departmental propaganda machines may need to be mothballed, denied hiring rights until they can be reformed or their members retire. But that should not be a unilateral administrative decision; the faculty senate needs to be involved in a thorough program review and a resulting decision, not only to preserve academic shared governance, but also because the campus as a whole will not learn anything from an administration decision that can be discounted on procedural, rather than substantive, grounds. We will need multidisciplinary critique that draws on the resources of the academy as a whole if our educational institutions are to be insulated from the political conformity that BDS allied faculty too often seek to impose on their students.

Endnotes

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Cary Nelson is Jubilee Professor of Liberal Arts & Sciences and Professor of English at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and an Affiliated Professor at the University of Haifa. He is the author or editor of over 30 books and the author of 300 essays. His books include several on the politics and economics of higher education, among them *No University is An Island: Saving Academic Freedom*. His most recent books are *The Case Against Academic Boycotts of Israel and Dreams Deferred: A Concise Guide to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict and the Movement to Boycott Israel*. He has lectured widely in Israel and the US about BDS and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. He was national president of the American Association of University Professors from 2006-2012. He is presently organizing a new website, *Israel and the Academy*, on behalf of the Faculty Action Network. The present essay will appear in an expanded form in Andrew Pessin and Doron Ben-Atar, eds., *Poisoning the Well: Anti-Zionism and the Assault on Free Speech*. My thanks to Sharon Musher, Kenneth Stern, and Kenneth Waltzer for comments on a draft.

- 2 This is a contentious issue, since the BDS website does not make this explicit. But every major BDS spokesperson across the world has been clear in lectures and in print that this is their aim. As I write in the introduction to *Dreams Deferred: A Concise Guide to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict and the Movement to Boycott Israel* (Bloomington: MLA Members for Scholars' Rights / Indiana University Press, 2016),

BDS founder Omar Barghouti has argued, "accepting Israel as a 'Jewish state' on our land is impossible." California State University political scientist As'ad AbuKhalil, among many other BDS leaders, echoes those sentiments: "Justice and freedom for the Palestinians are incompatible with the existence of the state of Israel." In *The Battle for Justice in Palestine* Ali Abunimah, the Chicago-based cofounder of *The Electronic Intifada*, confidently concludes that "Israel's 'right to exist as a Jewish state' is one with no proper legal or moral remedy and one whose enforcement necessitates perpetuating terrible wrongs. Therefore it is no right at all" (44). Bay Area BDS activist Laura Kiswani, executive director of the Arab Resource and Organizing Center, offered a still more hyperbolic plea at a November 2014 Berkeley panel: "Bringing down Israel will really benefit everyone in the world and everyone in society, particularly workers." As I detail in an extended essay on her work, Berkeley literary theorist Judith Butler aims to have Israelis abandon their commitment to a Jewish state and a homeland of their own. In 2010 Palestinian-American activist and author Ahmed Moor wrote that BDS has one ultimate aim: "Ending the occupation doesn't mean anything if it doesn't mean upending the Jewish state itself." Although the rhetoric employed in each of these examples varies, the end result, as Barghouti has put it, is the same: "euthanasia" for the Jewish state.

- 3 In 2012 a controversy erupted after University of Pennsylvania English professor Amy Kaplan suggested that faculty might well look for opportunities to insert anti-Israel material into courses that offer a potential thematic link with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. She used the examples of a general course on prison culture and politics that could be enhanced with a section on Israeli treatment of Palestinian prisoners, or a general literature survey that could include a section on Palestinian literature. See "University of PA responds about Amy Kaplan's politicizing of her courses," *Elder of Zion* (February 10, 2012), available online at <http://elderofzion.blogspot.com/2012/02/university-of-pa-responds-about-amy.html>.
- 4 See Scott Jaschik, "Crossing a Line," *Inside Higher Education* (April 23, 2009), available online at <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2009/04/23/ucsb>.

- 5 See “Anti-Israel boycott resolution fails at American Anthropology Association,” *Legal Insurrection* (June 7, 2016), available online at http://legalinsurrection.com/2016/06/anti-israel-boycott-resolution-fails-at-american-anthropology-association/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+LegalInsurrection+%28Legal+In+sur+rec+tion%29.
- 6 See “What Israel’s Nightmare Trajectory May Mean on Campus,” *The Third Narrative* (March 20, 2016), available online at <http://thirdnarrative.org/bds-does-not-equal-peace-articles/what-israels-nightmare-trajectory-may-mean-on-campus/>.
- 7 The Faculty Action Network has a website, *Israel and the Academy* (www.israelandtheacademy.org) that will be online by September 2016 that includes, amongst its 400 syllabi in Israel studies and Jewish studies, a significant number that aim to teach the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in a way that represents both sides fairly. Donna Divine’s essay “The Arab-Israeli Conflict: How to Teach All Sides Without Taking Sides” is also on the site.
- 8 My own university requires that each department keep copies of all current course syllabi publicly available. For some campuses, especially private institutions that do not observe similar practices, absent permission to reproduce a syllabus in its entirety, our best practice is to describe a syllabus carefully.
- 9 Screen shots of Karega’s Facebook posts are reproduced in David Gerstman, “Oberlin Professor Claims Israel Was Behind 9/11, ISIS, Charlie Hebdo Attack,” *The Tower* (February 25, 2016), available online at <http://www.thetower.org/3012-oberlin-professor-claims-israel-was-behind-911-isis-charlie-hebdo-attack/>.
- 10 On the relevance of social media to a faculty member’s professional profile, see Don Enron, “Professor Salaita’s Intramural Speech” and Cary Nelson, “Steven Salaita’s Scholarly Record and the Problem of his Appointment,” both in *The AAUP Journal of Academic Freedom* No. 6 (2015), available online at <https://www.aaup.org/reports-publications/journal-academic-freedom/volume-6>.

