

Master of Library Science Program  
Dept. of Interdisciplinary Professions  
College of Education  
East Carolina University  
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## **LIBS 6828 Seminar on Intellectual Freedom SYLLABUS**

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**Catalog Description:** Intellectual freedom principles in library and information studies. Pressure groups, censorship, and strategies for coping with attempts to limit access to information.

### **Objectives:**

1. Analyze the underlying core philosophical and conceptual theories supporting freedom of speech, as well as the philosophical basis for anti-censorship within the library profession.
2. Compare and contrast the intellectual freedom policies of the profession and the American Library Association standards to daily life and professional practice.
3. Investigate and analyze the key theories of intellectual freedom and trends in censorship as illustrated by major events in the history of censorship, recent controversies, and patterns of book banning.
4. Assess the cases and laws that govern or affect the principles of intellectual freedom in schools and libraries.
5. Compare and contrast the right to privacy of library customers and confidentiality to the needs of society and authorities for public safety and law enforcement.
6. Design a collection development policy that incorporates professional standards and best practices for selection, coping with censorship complaints, developing a reconsideration process, and significant components of ALA recommended ethical principles.

**Textbook:** There is no required textbook for this course.

## Suggested Resources:

- Adams, H. R. (2013). *Protecting Intellectual Freedom and Privacy in Your School Library*. Libraries Unlimited.
- Garnar, M. & Magi, T. J. (Eds) (2021). *Intellectual freedom manual: Compiled by the Office for Intellectual Freedom of the American Library Association*. Tenth Edition (also, 9<sup>th</sup> edition may be more readily available). Chicago: ALA Editions, An imprint of the American Library Association.
- *Intellectual Freedom Issues in School Libraries*. Dawkins, A. M., ed. (2020). Libraries Unlimited
- Jones, B. M. (1999). *Libraries, Access and Intellectual Freedom*. ALA Editions, An imprint of the American Library Association
- Pekoll, K. (2019). *Beyond Banned Books: Defending Intellectual Freedom Throughout Your Library*. ALA Editions, An imprint of the American Library Association

## Welcome and Introduction:

This course is designed to provide a basis for an understanding of the professional responsibilities of librarians and the challenges they face regarding intellectual freedom and censorship. Our basic freedoms, including intellectual freedom, are guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution, and especially through the Bill of Rights. The freedoms of our intellect, our record of expression of our ideas, thoughts and information, are guaranteed by the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. A conceptual framework of freedom plays an important role here. The noted U.S. Civil War historian, Bruce Catton, once said, "If any one word tells what America is, it is the word - Freedom...The secret of the American tradition is freedom - freedom unabridged and unadulterated, freedom that applies to everybody; and at all times and places, *freedom for those with whom we disagree as well as for those with whom we do agree*" (in Downs, R. B. & McCoy, R. E. (1984). *The First Freedom Today*. Chicago, ALA, 1984, p. xiii).

The famous Supreme Court justice, Louis Brandeis spoke as to the concept of "intellect", saying in *Gilbert v. Minnesota* (254 US 325), "...in a democracy every citizen has a right to teach the truth as he sees it." The search for truth is grounded in the capacity to think, reason, and believe. However, "truth" limited only to a factual, unimpeachable statement presents a serious dilemma for humankind. Too often, life requires decisions and actions before facts can be discovered. Furthermore, decisions are often informed ideas and concepts that aren't factual. Many "truths" have sprung from novel ideas, art, literature, some very controversial, and yes, unacceptable at the time they were originally expressed or produced. Eli Oboler, one of the early advocates of intellectual freedom in the library profession, said, "There is a great temptation for any believer in intellectual freedom to equate the belief in and practice of freedom of expression with some kind of perfect state,

perfect world, perfect life. It is a manifestly unattainable ideal, which in no way affects its practical and immediate value as the only way to come even close to that essential of a livable life, truth." (in Oboler, E. M. (1980. *Defending Intellectual Freedom*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, p. 5).

Even more so, the imagination of most humans has been captured by philosophies that form the foundation of most interactions between people. Opinion and philosophy open up the door to differences between individuals, and including violent objections and power struggles over competing ideas. To go beyond "truth" recognizes that more is valuable than what can be proven within the range of human reasoning and that the "truth" is not necessarily absolute. This view, that "truth" is not always absolute, can form the basis of disagreement between people and organizations that support or oppose specific resources in the library. This course will delve into these topics more in depth.

### **Course Design:**

This course has **five components or "modules"**. Each unit is designed to present information on a specific topic germane to intellectual freedom and/or censorship within the context of libraries, especially school library media centers, a frequent target of censorship. The units progress, generally, from the theoretical to the practical. These five units are:

1. Analysis of theory, philosophy and professional standards (**Objective 1 & 2**)
2. Assessment of the legal basis for intellectual freedom, including case law and legislation, and its function within the practice of library service and a brief review of the historical record. (**Objectives 3 and 4**)
3. Compare and contrast the right to privacy and confidentiality of library customers to that of public safety, including required filtering technology . (**Objective 5**)
4. Evaluate intellectual freedom policy within the profession and gauge the efficacy of applying these policies to policy development for libraries (**Objective 2**)
5. Design a response to a censorship challenge based on principle and best practices. (**Objective 1**)

The design of the course requirements is divided into **three essential activities**:

1. Each unit will have a series of readings and/or web sites to read and examine. For each unit, either a reflection or a specific paper (such as case study) will be required.
2. Discussion board topics: Four discussion topics exist to engage the class in real life issues of intellectual freedom and censorship faced by librarians. Each of these discussion topics will be centered around an actual event pertinent to intellectual freedom, censorship, or ethical issues or events. Students will be asked to provide some information from what they have learned from the course readings, philosophies, principles and/or current issues.
3. Online class discussion: An invited speaker will lead the class in a discussion that will be scheduled so that students can discuss topics in real time. This session will be set up so that at least several members of the class will meet together for the discussions.

## Requirements:

Unit Name	Percent of Grade
Unit 1: Theory, philosophy, standards	20%
Unit 2: Legal basis of intellectual freedom; historical events	20%
Unit 3: Privacy, Confidentiality, IF in the electronic age	20%
Unit 4: Policy and policy development	20%
Unit 5: Coping with a challenge	20%

**Submitting written assignments:** All submissions should be in MS Word. If you do not have access to MS Word, please save your document in rich text format and submit as a rich text document.

## Final Grades will be based on the following scale:

### Maximum of 100 pts

- ✓ 93.00 - 100.00 total points: "A" Student meets and exceeds course requirements
- ✓ 85.00 – 92.99 total points: "B" Student has some deficiencies in meeting course requirements
- ✓ 77.00 – 84.99 total points: "C" Student has some deficiencies in meeting course requirements
- ✓ - 76.00 total points: "F" Student does not meet course requirements

**I= Incomplete: Incompletes** may be considered, but only as a result of serious and unexpected health and life situations; **a late penalty may be applied** in fairness to students who complete work on time; incompletes must be made up **promptly** upon schedule made by instructor. Students who consistently are unable to complete assignments when due are expected to **withdraw** from the course.

## Class Policies:

1. **Late Submission Policy:** Some flexibility in submitting assignments has been provided for in this course.
  - a. If an occasional assignment is late by up to the due date of the next unit, students will not lose points for being late.
  - b. If late submissions occur often, then a loss of one course letter grade will be imposed at the end of the course.
2. **If you miss a class discussion, credit for the discussion will not be awarded**
3. **Correct spelling and grammar in written assignments is required.**

## Guidance, Counseling and Other Student Support

### 1. Faculty Guidance

East Carolina University's Department of Library Science provides its students with a wealth of guidance, counseling, and placement services. All faculty members provide advice and guidance regarding coursework and professional matters while teaching their classes. This is done during office hours, by phone, and by appointment for face-to-face

consultation. Each instructor devotes at least four hours each week to being available for consultation out of class. Online consultation is also available by Skype.

## **2. Center for Counseling and Student Development**

The Library Science program recognizes that students sometimes require counseling of a more personal nature than that provided for curricular and professional matters. To meet these needs, East Carolina University offers all of its students the services of the Center for Counseling and Student Development, located on the first floor of Umstead Hall. (See <https://counselingcenter.ecu.edu/>) Individual counseling is provided for the student who wishes to discuss particular issues relative to her/his personal life. Sessions usually last about forty-five minutes and may be scheduled on a weekly or bi-weekly basis. The number of sessions varies depending on the issues involved. If a student is in need of long-term psychotherapy, referral information can be provided. Emergency and crisis counseling is also offered.

## **3. Career Center**

Career services are provided by the university's Career Center located on the corner of Jarvis and 5<sup>th</sup> Streets (See <https://career.ecu.edu/>) The Career Center is a department within the division of Academic Affairs at East Carolina University. Its primary purpose is to assist and guide students and alumni in their career quest. To do so, it cultivates employers as partners by initiating and facilitating opportunities in the public, private, governmental, and corporate sectors. The Career Center provides workshops, programs, and opportunities for students that aid in career exploration, practical work experience, and professional development. Comprehensive technology and available resources enable the Center to increase quality service delivery to students and alumni.

## **4. Technical Support**

The College of Education provides technology support through the COE Technology Center (2<sup>nd</sup> Floor – Speight) (<https://coehelp.ecu.edu/helpdesk/WebObjects/Helpdesk.woa>). East Carolina University provides yet another layer of technical support through its Information Technology and Computing Services (ITCS. See <http://www.ecu.edu/cs-itcs/>). ITCS manages many of the information systems made available to all students such as university email, the university centralized information system (“onestop”), and related technical support. The ITCS helpdesk has its own Web site located at <https://ecu.teamdynamix.com/TDClient/1409/Portal/Home/>

## **5. ECU Writing Center**

East Carolina University maintains a Writing Center (See <https://writing.ecu.edu/uwc/>) which helps all of ECU's students to further develop their writing skills. The Writing Center also has an Online Writing Lab (OWL). Students have the opportunity to consult with a trained writing center consultant via email as well as in person.

## **6. Joyner Library**

All ECU students benefit from the services of Joyner Library (see <http://www.ecu.edu/lib/>).

A. An online Faculty Reserve readings service is provided by the Library. However, if there are faculty reserve readings, they are embedded into the Canvas course. You do not need to go to a separate Faculty Reserves section of the Joyner Web page. Books on reserves are available in the Library.

B. The Joyner Library provides access to Interlibrary Loan for all students and

faculty. This valuable service provides relatively quick delivery of journal articles and most are delivered online directly to your ILL account. Check out their ILL page at: <https://library.ecu.edu/services/interlibrary-loan-borrowing/>

### **7. Teaching Resources Center**

One of the great resources made available to ECU's students is the Teaching Resources Center located in the University's Joyner Library (2<sup>nd</sup> Floor). This facility, the largest of its type in North Carolina, provides a wide range of pedagogical resources for the use of students in Education and practicing teachers in eastern North Carolina. It also serves as a model school library, informing the students' educational experience and aiding the practicing teachers in their work. Staff from the Teaching Resources Center provide various outreach services to classrooms and school libraries in the region and work closely with LS faculty on a number of research and service projects, including lending of materials to schools, teachers and school library media specialists. (See <http://www.ecu.edu/lib/trc/> )