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Henry Reichman. *Understanding Academic Freedom*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2021. 248 pp. ISBN 9781421442150.

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Academic freedom and autonomy have recently become significant topics of scholarly research, with the United States leading in this area. The US has a long-standing tradition of examining academic freedom from legal, sociological, and ethical perspectives. In the past few years, several monographs dedicated to this issue have been published, including works by Joan Wallach Scott (2019b) and Henry Reichman. Reichman's 2019 book, *The Future of Academic Freedom*, addresses various contentious issues related to academic rights and freedoms in the US. In the foreword to the book, Scott notes that Reichman warns of serious dangers threatening academic freedom: "It's an urgent call to stop the destruction" (Scott 2019a:13). Finally, in a recent book, Daniel Gordon (2022) explores the history of the academic freedom in the US since 1915.

Reichman's new book serves as a map outlining the dangers, contradictions, and disputes emerging in American universities. It offers a review and analysis of key issues of academic freedom, divided into seven thematic chapters—"Research," "Teaching," "Citizenship," "Tenure," "Law," "Students," and "Knowledge"—preceded by a historical overview. This work draws on extensive experience and exemplifies how everyday practices, narratives, and conflicts in the American academy support and strengthen the understanding of academic freedom, creating corresponding institutional practices (Sengupta and Blessinger 2020).

In the introduction, Reichman cautions against perceiving academic freedom as a fixed concept: "This book is not a manual for the application of rigid dogma" (p. 3). The "History" chapter explains how the concept of academic freedom developed differently across contexts. Unlike in Europe, universities in the US depended on boards of trustees rather than the state for funding. American professors had fought against these boards to establish academic freedom and self-governance, emphasizing professional standards and freedom from religious or ideological censorship. This struggle led to the formation of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) and its 1915 Declaration of Academic Freedom, which was the first legal document to outline the basic provisions of academic freedom as "freedom of inquiry and research, freedom of teaching within the university or college, and freedom of extramural utterance and action" (Seligman et al. 1915). The declaration was updated in 1940 (AAUP 2006). According to Reichman, changes in the understanding of academic freedom's limits were influenced not only by philosophical debates but also by the real struggles of American professors defending the values outlined in the Declaration. The notion of academic freedom emerged as a reaction to challenges that contradicted scientific ethics and the "common good," particularly restrictions on research and teaching.

The second chapter discusses problems faced by researchers whose academic freedom is violated due to their work. Reichman notes that reactions often focus on the content of research and publications. Unlike teaching—which is partially limited by curriculum and prohibition on indoctrination—freedom of research should be absolute. This freedom assumes the use of scientific methods and presentation of results in a scholarly manner. Standards are set by the scientific community, which makes the question of who determined what constitutes “scientific” research crucial. Interference from those lacking expertise, such as boards of trustees, is inappropriate. Peer review protects academic freedom by preventing plagiarism and intellectual property theft.

Reichman also describes the role of ethics committees, which evaluate proposed research for compliance with ethical standards. However, they are sometimes criticized for expanding the notion of “scientific ethics” to include concerns about institutional reputation when dealing with controversial topics.

A significant indicator of the freedom of academic research is the ability to conduct and publish research without undue limitations from the state or corporations. Issues arise when research is restricted due to secrecy or intellectual property concerns, often related to government or corporate funding in sensitive areas like weapons development. The AAUP has criticized the government’s expanding secrecy requirements, which threaten publications and researchers themselves. Examples include President Donald Trump administration’s bans on academic exchanges with certain countries and suspicions cast on scientists from particular ethnic backgrounds.

Corporate influence poses another serious challenge. Reichman cites AAUP principles stating that “academic freedom does not entitle faculty members to ignore financial conflict of interest . . . and does not guarantee . . . to take money regardless of the conditions attached” (AAUP 2014:29). Politically motivated donors can threaten faculty self-governance and free speech on campuses. The main requirement is not to refuse donations but to ensure their conditions are transparent and to respect academic autonomy and researchers’ rights.

The chapter on teaching highlights that teaching freedom is more limited than research freedom due to curricula developed by the professional community. Students’ freedom in education is characterized as “freedom from indoctrination,” meaning educators should not present unrecognized opinions as scientific facts or suppress student criticism. Teachers are expected to provide balanced information, especially on topics interpreted differently by various scientific schools.

Reichman addresses the controversial issue of the “hostile learning environment,” which involves implementing language prohibitions on potentially offensive statements. While discriminatory or derogatory remarks are seen as violations of academic ethics, some view these restrictions as attacks on freedom of speech. This tension can lead to conflicts within the academic community, including public denunciations. Another contentious topic is limiting classroom discussions to the subject matter and avoiding controversial issues outside the curriculum. Reichman emphasizes the importance of academic freedom in allowing educators to address relevant topics while maintaining professional standards.

In the “Citizenship” chapter, Reichman explores academics’ rights to express opinions on matters related to their expertise, referring to the AAUP’s Declaration of Academic Freedom. He discusses complex cases involving “freedom of expression as citizens,” noting the significant role of social media in blurring the lines between personal and professional speech. Unlike other workplaces, universities do not impose corporate obligations that restrict personal expression. Academics are not required to adhere to specific policies, including governmental ones. Reichman cites historical instances, such as the dismissal of alleged Communist Party members from colleges in the 1950s, which the AAUP opposed.

The “Tenure” chapter examines how tenure relates to academic freedom by providing job security that enables scholars to pursue innovative or controversial work. Reichman quotes Ralph S. Brown and Jordan E. Kurland, a former AAUP president and a long-time AAUP staff member, respectively, who in 1990 wrote that “the best protection for those without tenure is colleagues with such contracts” (p. 120). Financial challenges, exacerbated by events like the COVID-19 pandemic, threaten the tenure system. Reichman argues that to preserve academic freedom beyond mere rhetoric, the tenure system must be restored and protected—that is, American universities need to stop eliminating tenured positions and return to offering tenure-track jobs to young scholars.

In the “Law” chapter, Reichman summarizes key US court decisions affecting academic freedom, starting with *Trustees of Dartmouth College v. Woodward* (1819), which protected colleges from state interference. He reviews cases that shaped the legal basis of academic freedom and its connection to free speech. Notably, *Sweezy v. New Hampshire* (1957) defended the university community’s rights against government intrusion. In *Keyishian v. Board of Regents* (1967), the Supreme Court emphasized that the nation’s future depends on educating leaders in an environment that fosters diverse ideas rather than authoritarianism. The AAUP has played a pivotal role in these legal developments, often participating directly through amicus briefs and investigations, effectively establishing a “common law” for academic freedom in the US.

The chapter on “Students” highlights that historically students had limited academic freedom. Strict regulations governed campus life, including gender-segregated housing. Reichman underscores that real rights were secured through student activism, particularly during the protests of the late 1960s, which challenged segregation and demanded freedom of speech and representation in university governance. The AAUP supported these demands in the Joint Statement on Rights and Freedoms of Students issued in 1967. Students engaged in research and teaching are acknowledged to fully possess academic rights and freedoms. The university’s paternalistic approach, often invoking *in loco parentis*, continues to provoke student resistance as they seek greater participation in shaping educational and research agendas.

The final chapter, “Knowledge,” addresses contemporary threats to academic freedom, such as political interference associated with the Trump presidency. These threats particularly affect the humanities and social sciences. Additional challenges include significant reductions in funding for higher education and science, the rise

of anti-intellectualism, and misinterpretations of postmodernism as denying the existence of truth. Reichman stresses that the academy must balance pursuing scientific truth with educating democratic citizens. To defend academic freedom, he calls for strengthening democracy within universities and society. The current threats are comparable to the McCarthy era, and a steadfast commitment to academic freedom's values is essential. Scholars, students, and all who uphold these values must continue the path set by their predecessors since the adoption of the AAUP principles of academic freedom in 1940.

In conclusion, Reichman's monograph serves as a comprehensive overview of the complexities and challenges facing academic freedom in the United States, illustrated through specific cases and numerous examples of internal conflicts within the academy. While the book focuses exclusively on the US academia, the issues it discusses are universally relevant. The threats to academic freedom are widespread, and the concept's development through continuous defense against external and internal adversaries is a universal phenomenon.

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