

Ableism (see also Disability)

Ableism is the systemic discrimination against and exclusion of people who have physical, mental, and/or emotional disabilities. It is a way to devalue and disregard people with disabilities. It is a set of normative assumptions about how bodies work (many work differently) that is codified in law, architecture, education, and virtually every other sphere of life based on often arbitrary values with regard to physical well-being. It is a form of oppression that, when combined with sexism and racism, for example, assures that women and people of color who are disabled will suffer disproportionately. Many institutions have offices and/or officers who handle these matters.

Academic freedom

Academic freedom is a time-honored dimension of life in the academy. It typically refers to the respect accorded to each one for her/his work and to the expectation that one can articulate possibly unpopular ideas and beliefs in the classroom. What is not always clear is what it means, how far it goes, to whom and how it applies. In fact, the irony is that many of the people who most need **tenure** for the protection of their rights often do not get it.

Academic freedom is especially tricky when religious matters are involved since the “freedom” to contradict a religious tradition’s beliefs may well result in problems on the job in religiously affiliated institutions, though problems with academic freedom are not limited to such institutions. Good advice is to learn the local landscape in this regard early in one’s term at an institution, and make choices accordingly, weighing risks and benefits. Still better advice, if sometimes costly, is to keep your banner high even in religious institutions, since they risk the loss of their reputations when they abrogate a basic tenet of academic life. Academic freedom is for all or none of us.