

The Myth of the Myth of Indoctrination

by [G. Tod Slone](#) (October 2023)



Group VI, Evolution No. 13, Hilma af Klint, 1908

Information ethics becomes greatly restricted—bordering on the unethical and Orwellian Newspeak—when undesirable information and debate is cancelled, usually under the guise of disinfo/misinformation. To proclaim indoctrination to be nothing but a myth is a ploy to help strengthen the latter. Indoctrination is also strengthened by excluding viewpoints that counter the favored viewpoint, even when those viewpoints

are based on facts and reason. Indoctrinating, as in teaching students to accept certain beliefs in the absence of reason, can be effective when such ideology and ideological conformity are endorsed by leaders of higher education. As an egregious example, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion regulations actually force (indoctrinate) the ideology on students ... and faculty in many, if not most, colleges and universities. In a recent lawsuit against California with that regard, the Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression [argues](#) that

These regulations are a totalitarian triple-whammy. The government is forcing professors to teach and preach a politicized viewpoint they do not share, imposing incomprehensible guidelines, and threatening to punish professors when they cross an arbitrary, indiscernible line. [...] America's colleges and universities exist to advance knowledge through critical thinking and academic experimentation, not indoctrinate students with the government's preferred viewpoints.

However, in "[The Myth of Academic Indoctrination](#)," H. Holden Thorp, editor/blogger, *Science*, argues, although not with regards to the California lawsuit, that

When teaching conflicts with particular religions or ideologies, cries of indoctrination by conservatives can ensue even when the material in question has stood up to scrutiny and is based on evidence. These individual accusations are then presented as evidence of systemic indoctrination.

Yet what happens when teaching's goal constitutes the veritable spreading of an ideology? Critical Race Theory (DEI), for example, seems to have become the most widespread "systemic" ideology in academe today, a veritable force of indoctrination, which includes not just courses on the subject, but also deans, programs, and college degrees, including, for example, Senior Associate Dean for DEI at University of North Carolina, the Center for Critical Race Studies in Education at UCLA, a B.A. in Critical Race and Ethnic Studies at Miami University, and an M.A. in Critical Ethnic Studies at DePaul University. Many other, if not most, academic institutions possess such positions and degrees to the extent that DEI has been successfully embedded, like a metastasizing cancer on reason, in higher education today. That ideology certainly does not stand up "to scrutiny" and is not "based on evidence." It is so faulty that diversity has come to mean unity/conformity of opinion; equity, inequality of treatment; and inclusion, exclusion of certain races and ideas. It incapsulates the two wrongs make a right fallacy. How that can be characterized as scientific, Thorp fails to mention. Indeed, dare criticize DEI and be prepared to be demonized as a "conservative." Thorp concludes that

If politicians can paint academics as master indoctrinators around Black history and political rhetoric, then they can do the same thing with issues such as climate change, evolution, and public health topics spanning COVID-19 to gender-affirming care, abortion, and gun control.

But the inherent fault intrinsic in the minds of ideologues is the knee-jerk rejection of any facts and reason countering the favored narrative. The slavery narrative, for example, tends to ignore the facts that blacks sold blacks in Africa, that blacks held slaves in America (e.g., in Louisiana), that

whites eventually fought against slavery, that Democrats were the pro-slavery and KKK party, and that slavery still exists in Africa where slaveholders are NOT white (e.g., Mauritania).

When science becomes an ideology, it is no longer science, which has become problematic, for example, with global warming aka “global boiling” (UN secretary general, António Guterres’ new term) aka climate change. Consider the unscientific/political predictions of those like Al Gore and AOC. Not teaching or hiding uncomfortable facts is part of the indoctrination process, as is the cancelling of alt-viewpoint speakers. By arguing indoctrination to be a myth, Thorp reveals himself to be an ideological political proponent in the very business of ... indoctrination. In another attempt to undermine the indoctrination problem, Dan Mahony published in *Inside Higher Ed*, “[The Myth of Indoctrination](#),” clearly written in support of the DEI-indoctrination machine. Mahony is one of the latter’s many cogs and touts himself to be “a leader in higher education,” as “president of Southern Illinois University System and a professor with expertise in college sports and athletics administration.”

Inside Higher Ed is evidently also part of the DEI-indoctrination machine, which is why it has not been willing to publish any of the alt-viewpoints I’ve sent it over the past several decades. *IHE* will publish mind-numbing “backslappery,” like Joshua Kim’s “[8 Things I Learned From Scott Jaschik](#),” but certainly not the opposite—such as the essays and cartoons I sent over the years [regarding Jaschik](#), its retiring co-editor and co-editor Doug Lederman. To help bolster the indoctrination machine and kill undesirable criticism and debate, *IHE* actually eliminated its comments sections several years ago (see [here](#) and [here](#)). Now, why didn’t Kim include that as one of the key things he learned from Jaschik? Well, for one thing, like Jaschik, Kim is a leader, the “Director of Online Programs and Strategy at Dartmouth College and a Senior Fellow for Academic

Transformation, Learning, and Design at the Center for New Designs in Learning & Scholarship (CNDLS) at Georgetown University.”

It should be no surprise that higher ed leadership simply mirrors political-hack leadership, where accountability and honesty tend to be rare ... and backslapping and self-congratulating tend to constitute the general modus operandi, always highlighted in college and university PR magazines. *IHE* mirrors the mainstream media, tending overwhelmingly to support, not critics, facts, and reason, but rather desired leaders. By the way, Lederman, to his credit, has now and then responded to essays and cartoons I sent, however, briefly and inane and not to the criticisms presented, for example:

George—thanks, as always, for bringing a ray of sunshine into our days.

Doug

Leaders like Mahony (and Lederman/Jaschik) tend to scorn debate because it will inevitably reveal their faults and upset their business models. My experiences with such leaders certainly supports that reality (see my [Curriculum Mortae](#)). Because I favored and favor open debate, not self-censorship, I was actually [fired](#) from my last job in academe by American Public University. Higher ed leaders form the corps personnel of the business of higher education, which does not focus on real higher education, but rather on PR, fund-raising, and careers. They are the problem, not the solution, at least not until rare truth tellers, as opposed to team-playing careerist ladder climbers, actually become leaders.

By stating that indoctrination is a myth, Mahony inevitably sides with the indoctrinators—the trans, DEI, critical-race theory ideologues, who seek to limit free expression and

debate. I sketched a satirical cartoon featuring Mahony, "[The Leaders ... of Higher Education](#)," and sent it to him and *IHE*. Mahony did not respond. *IHE* responded (see above) or sort of. Mahony argues that "Compelling students to believe something is simply impossible for universities to do." Yet how can he know that, if he cannot enter student minds, but can only witness student behavior. Yet even that is not assured, for how can he know when a student opts to self-censor in line with reigning academic ideology like DEI? And is it not also a reality that constant self-censoring might actually lead to belief in that which one dares not opine against—not always, but certainly sometimes? Mahony [states](#):

I must admit that I am lost on how we could "compel" anyone to believe anything. Even if we could somehow force a person to say they believe something, or even if a student might say something for a grade, that does not mean they really believe it.

That argument is specious, superficially plausible, but wrong. After all, one could also easily state that "they" might believe it. It is true that one cannot really know what precisely is in the mind of another person, but one can certainly know how another person behaves and reacts. Indoctrination and ideology tend to run counter to reason because they are inevitably flawed. Leaders also tend to run counter to reason. Mahony, however, argues that "surveys [have found](#) most students change their core beliefs very little, if at all, during their time in college." Yet surveys are like political polls, not to be relied upon. In the same article, Mahony states

While many of us would argue faculty do not actually have

the goal of indoctrinating students, even if you believe university faculty are trying to do this, it would be extremely difficult.

Yet many faculty especially in the humanities do have indoctrination in mind. Why, for example, do some (perhaps most) college and university faculty force students (and professors) to take courses in DEI? Ideology is pushed because pushing it works, not because pushing it doesn't work. The need to belong, to team-play, is very strong in many if not most humans, which is why it works. Indoctrination works. Cornell University, according to Legal Insurrection, for example:

[“announced](#) a series of actions to respond to advocates of critical race theory. A for-credit, university-wide graduation requirement covering ‘systemic racism, colonialism, bias and inequity’ is under development. Additionally, the university announced the creation of an ‘anti-racism’ research center, as well as possible reform of its police department.”

Interestingly, Mahony seems to contradict his point when he states “In fact, societies that have been effective in using educational systems to indoctrinate people have had to significantly limit or completely eliminate access to these other sources of information.” Try getting a critical essay or cartoon regarding a dean or president published in a college or university magazine or newspaper. That is almost not possible and constitutes a concrete example of “eliminating access.” Faculty and especially leaders like Mahony tend not at all to be open to criticism. Again, that has been my personal experience criticizing faculty and leaders across the

country for more than several decades. Ideologues tend to be indoctrinators, whether they realize it or not. The Sixties was remarkable as an example of intense group pressure to conform in colleges and universities. Such pressure does and can lead to successful indoctrination. Only rare staunch individuals will resist.

Finally, it really doesn't matter what one believes, but rather what one says, writes, and does.

Fear to express an opinion or belief is magnified in authoritarian countries and systems. Higher ed organizations can be and are often authoritarian systems with leaders behaving as autocrats and their staff as obedient apparatchiks. That is the reality of the business of higher education, certainly the one I personally witnessed as a professor at a number of higher ed institutions. This essay was sent to *IHE*. Its *editors* chose not to respond.

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G. Tod Slone, PhD, lives on Cape Cod, where he was permanently banned in 2012 without warning or due process from Sturgis Library, one of the very oldest in the country. His civil rights were being denied because he was not permitted to attend any cultural or political events held at his neighborhood library. The only stated reason for the banning was "for the safety of the staff and public," yet he has no criminal record and has never made a threat. His real crime was that he challenged, in writing, the library's "collection development" mission that stated "libraries should provide materials and information presenting all points of view." His point of view was somehow not part of "all points of view." In November 2022, he requested the library [rescind its banning decree](#), which it finally did. He is a dissident

poet/writer/cartoonist and editor of [*The American Dissident*](#).

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