

LIT/HR 218: Free Speech

Spring 2007

Thomas Keenan

Mon Wed 12:00 pm - 1:20 pm, Olin 204

Office hours: Weds 2:00-4:00, Ottaway Gatehouse, 3rd floor, keenan@bard.edu, x7387

Description

An introduction to the intersections between literature and human rights, from the Greeks to the French Revolution, Salman Rushdie, hate speech and torture. The course will examine the ways in which rights, language, and public space have been linked together in ideas about democracy. What is 'freedom of speech'? Is there a right to say anything? We will investigate who has had this right, where it has come from, and what it has had to do with literature. Why have poetry and fiction always been privileged examples of freedom and its defense? What powers does speech have, who has the power to speak, and for what? Is an encounter with the fact of language, which belongs to no one and can be appropriated by anyone, at the heart of democracy? In asking about the status of the speaking human subject, we will ask about the ways in which the subject of rights, and indeed the thought of human rights itself, derives from a 'literary' experience. These questions will be examined, if not answered, across a variety of literary, philosophical, legal and political texts, including case studies and readings in contemporary critical and legal theory (Foucault, Derrida, Butler, Spivak, Fish, Agamben). A core course in the Human Rights Program.

BooksGiorgio Agamben, Remnants of AuschwitzJudith Butler, Excitable SpeechStanley Fish, There's No Such Thing As Free SpeechMichel Foucault, Fearless SpeechMichel Foucault, The History of Sexuality vol. 1Christopher Hitchens, Letters to a Young ContrarianSalman Rushdie, The Satanic Verses

All other readings online or at ReserverWeb.

Requirements

1. Read all of the assigned readings in advance of seminar and more than once if possible. Come to class prepared for intensive discussion and debate. Exercise your right to speak!
2. Write two papers: the first, ca. 7 pages, due at midterm, should analyze one of the core texts from the first half of the semester; the second, 12 pages and due at the end of the semester, involves research and analysis of a particular case or conceptual problem (you will choose from a list).

Schedule of readings

31 Jan Introduction

5/7 Feb Human rights and free speech

Lee Bollinger and Geoffrey R. Stone, "Dialogue," Eternally Vigilant 1-31 (RW)
Alan Dershowitz, "Introduction: A Preference for Rights," Shouting Fire, 3-62 (RW)

12/14 Feb Dissent and the challenge to (all) authority

Christopher Hitchens, Letters to a Young Contrarian

19/21 Feb Debates about freedom

Isiah Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty" (RW)

26 Feb Speech as the basis of rights

Claude Lefort, "The Question of Democracy" and "Human Rights and the Welfare State" in Democracy and Political Theory (RW)

28 Feb Reading and discussion with Nuruddin Farah on Knots

5/7 Mar Parrhesia and the genealogy of speaking freely

Michel Foucault, Fearless Speech

12/14 Mar Free speech as a fiction

Stanley Fish, There's No Such Thing As Free Speech, chs. 1, 8-9
interview at <http://www.lib.latrobe.edu.au/AHR/archive/Issue-February-1998/fish.html>

19 Mar Presentations on: free speech and the war in Iraq

21 Mar Midterm paper proposals due and discussed in class

26/28 Mar The Danish cartoon debate

"Questions and Answers on the Danish Cartoons and Freedom of Expression When Speech Offends, Human Rights Watch, 24 Feb 2006
<http://hrw.org/english/docs/2006/02/15/denmar12676.htm>

"The Jyllands-Posten cartoons: Redefining the free expression debate," Index on Censorship (March 2006)
<http://www.indexonline.org/en/specialreports/the-jyllands-posten-cartoons-redefining-the-.shtml>

"Muslims and Europe: a cartoon confrontation," openDemocracy, 6 Feb 2006
<http://www.opendemocracy.net/debates/article.jsp?id=5&debateId=124&articleId=3244>

Tewfik Allal and the Association du Manifeste des Libertes, "For Freedom of Expression," Dissent, Spring 2006
<http://www.dissentmagazine.org/article/?article=423>

Full text: Writers' statement on cartoons, BBC News, 1 Mar 2006
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/4764730.stm>

Slavoj Zizek, "Defenders of the Faith," New York Times, 12 March 2006
<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/03/12/opinion/12zizek.html?>

Ibn Warraq, "Democracy in a Cartoon," Der Spiegel, 2 Mar 2006
<http://www.spiegel.de/international/0,1518,398853,00.html>

Al-Jazeera Cartoonist Shujaat Ali: "Professional Cartoonists Wouldn't Do This," Der Spiegel, 2 Mar 2006
<http://www.spiegel.de/international/0,1518,398792,00.html>

Robert Fisk, "Don't Be Fooled: This Isn't an Issue of Islam versus Secularism"
<http://www.counterpunch.org/fisk02062006.html>

Flemming Rose, "Why I Published Those Cartoons," Washington Post, 19 Feb 2006, B01
<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/02/17/AR2006021702499.html>

Pernille Ammitzboll and Lorenzo Vidino, "After the Danish Cartoon Controversy," Middle East Quarterly, Winter 2007
<http://www.meforum.org/article/1437>

2/4 Apr Spring break

9/11 Apr Blasphemy

Salman Rushdie, The Satanic Verses

16/18 Apr Blasphemy continued

Satanic Verses continued

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Reading the Satanic Verses," Outside in the Teaching Machine, 217-241

Lisa Appignanesi and Sara Maitland, eds., Chronology; The Author and the Book; The Mounting Protest; The Khomeni Fatwa; Reflections, in The Rushdie File, xiii-xiv, 1-76, 194-6, 236-8, 254-6.

Steve MacDonogh, ed., "Letters to Salman Rushdie from Fahimeh Farsaie, Jose Saramago; comment by Tom Stoppard; reply by Salman Rushdie, in The Rushdie Letters

25 Apr New strategies for dissent (Turkey)

Sanar Yurdatapan and the Initiative for Freedom of Expression's website:
<http://www.antenna-tr.org>

Human Rights Watch on Sanar Yurdatapan:
<http://www.hrw.org/press/2002/11/hrdefender-turkey1112.htm>
<http://www.hrw.org/iff/images/Sanar.doc>

Ian Fisher, " How an Atheist Helps Protect Islamists in Turkey, New York Times, 26 Nov 2002
http://www.theturkishtimes.com/archive/02/12_01/op_fisher.html

Democracy Now interview:
<http://www.democracynow.org/article.pl?sid=03/04/07/0252238>
<http://play.rbn.com/?url=demnow/demnow/demand/old/dn20020214.ra&start=47:50.9>

Sanar Yurdatapan presentation and Power-Point:
<http://www.newtactics.org/main.php/WK312>
optional: watch this conference presentation:
<http://www.freemuse.org/sw15756.asp>

27 Apr New strategies for incitement (Rwanda)

Human Rights Watch report on Rwandan genocide, section on "Propaganda and Practice"

<http://www.hrw.org/reports/1999/rwanda/Geno1-3-10.htm>

Documents from the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda:

<http://69.94.11.53/default.htm>

read BIKINDI, Simon (ICTR-01-72): Indictment and browse the trial transcripts

Hirondelle News Agency reports on the Bikindi trial:

http://www.hirondellenews.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=category§ionid=6&id=40&Itemid=142

Rwanda's "Michael Jackson" on Trial for Genocide

<http://www.opiniojuris.org/posts/1160125218.shtml>

"Rwanda singer on genocide charges," BBC News, 18 Sept 2006

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/5357062.stm>

Jeff Jacoby, "Words that can kill," Boston Globe, 20 Dec 2006

http://www.boston.com/news/globe/editorial_opinion/oped/articles/2006/12/20/words_that_can_kill/

"War crimes trial feared to legitimise new repression of musicians elsewhere," FreeMuse, 14 Nov 2006

<http://www.freemuse.org/sw15535.asp>

Stephanie Nieuwoudt, "Arusha Trial Raises Freedom of Speech Questions," IWPR Africa Report 82, 9 Nov 2006

http://www.iwpr.net/?p=acr&s=f&o=325218&apc_state=henpacr

Donald G. Mcneil Jr., "Killer Songs," New York Times Magazine, 17 Mar 2002

<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9A04E7DA1739F934A25750C0A9649C8B63&sec=&spon=&pagewanted=all>

mp3 downloads of three Bikindi songs here:

<http://www.andrecorp.se/links/indilimbo.asp>

30 Apr/2 May The obligation to say everything

Michel Foucault, The History of Sexuality vol. 1

7/9 May "moderation week" no class

14/16 May Words that can do things, and when words can't

Judith Butler, Excitable Speech (intro + ch 2 and 4)

Giorgio Agamben, Remnants of Auschwitz (preface and first two chapters)

21 May wrap up

28 May Final papers due by email