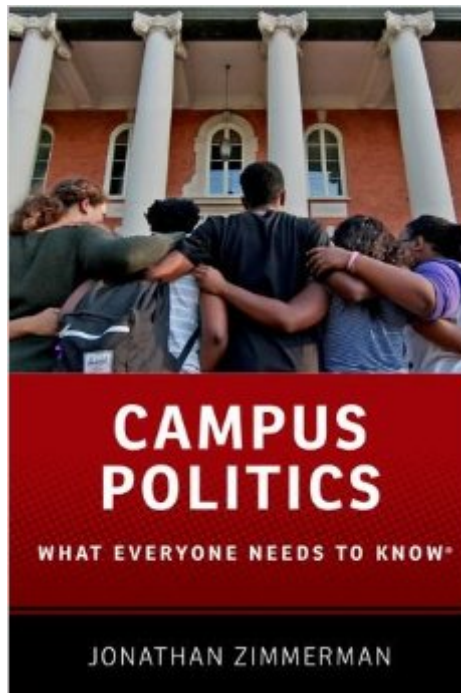


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Campus Politics: What Everyone Needs To Know®



Synopsis

Universities are usually considered bastions of the free exchange of ideas, but a recent tide of demonstrations across college campuses has called this belief into question, and with serious consequences. Such a wave of protests hasn't been seen since the campus free speech demonstrations of the 1960s, yet this time it is the political Left, rather than the political Right, calling for restrictions on campus speech and freedom. And, as Jonathan Zimmerman suggests, recent campus controversies have pitted free speech against social justice ideals. The language of trauma--and, more generally, of psychology--has come to dominate campus politics, marking another important departure from prior eras. This trend reflects an increased awareness of mental health in American society writ large. But it has also tended to dampen exchange and discussion on our campuses, where faculty and students self-censor for fear of insulting or offending someone else. Or they attack each other in periodic bursts of invective, which run counter to the "civility" promised by new speech and conduct codes. In *Campus Politics: What Everyone Needs to Know*, Jonathan Zimmerman breaks down the dynamics of what is actually driving this recent wave of discontent. After setting recent events in the context of the last half-century of free speech campus movements, Zimmerman looks at the political beliefs of the US professorate and students. He follows this with chapters on political correctness; debates over the contested curriculum; admissions, faculty hires, and affirmative action; policing students; academic freedom and censorship; in loco parentis administration; and the psychology behind demands for "trigger warnings" and "safe spaces." He concludes with the question of how to best balance the goals of social and racial justice with the commitment to free speech.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is an very well written book for the general public about what is going on at colleges these days; particularly in regards to students demanding college administrators make everything on campus how they want everything to be. It's the new type of authoritarianism. One could laugh about the matter if it wasn't for the fact administrators are giving the students what they want, at times when they should not; and therefore are often trampling on free speech and thought; as well as allowing some students to wrap themselves in bubble wrap, never being exposed to anything whatsoever that might disturb or frighten them. Of course, two of the major reasons administrators are doing such a thing are: 1) Students are paying racketeering prices for their education. 2) Many professors spend precious few hours actually teaching students, and they want that sorry situation to continue. Jonathan Zimmerman is neither anti-student nor does he disregard what students are trying to accomplish with their demands. Instead, he seems to be trying to paint an honest picture that is fair to both sides. For example, while, on one hand, he says many students do not actually want to discuss matters, possibly due to never having learned to verbally communicate well; on the other hand, he also states many students have no problem carrying on robust discussions about personal and political matters. Yes, he does attribute that verbal communication shyness to things like texting, where conversations can be controlled, but he definitely does not rant against cell phones or the internet. Dr. Zimmerman further acknowledges students are right in wanting to make campuses less racist, but goes on to say there's no proof whatsoever that all those expensive, mandatory sensitivity classes have any positive effect on most students. Surprise, surprise. You can't demand others think and feel like you do. And anyone who thinks colleges can easily undo 18 years of thoughts and experiences is an extremely optimistic person, not to mention an extremely naive one. In addition, the author explores the campus rape problems, but does not provide very good reasons as to why all cases of rape should not be turned over to the police. The Catholic Church obviously cannot deal with sexual abuse on their own, and it appears much of the time neither can colleges. Although justice does not always prevail with the police, judges and juries, it's still their jobs to reach just decisions. College administrators should not be policing, judging and "sentencing" rapists. That's not their job. At the end of the book, Dr. Zimmerman tells students to stop thinking administrators are the ones who need to change everything; like helicopter parents,

one guesses; and to make changes themselves. Yet he almost sounds condescending there, when he suggests things students can do on their own. Moreover, he told his readers in the beginning of the book that the vast majority of college students are only concerned with having fun and/or getting a good job after they graduate. In other words, they are not involved at all in campus politics. By the end of the book, one is somewhat glad to know that. Because, once that diploma is in hand, all the bubbles on the bubble wrap are going to be burst, and there's the real insensitive world out there to deal with . . . a world where demanding others think and feel like you do will quite possibly get you laughed at, shouted at, arrested or injured. For people who are not making thousands and thousands of dollars off of you may care precious little about your wishes, sensitivities or happiness. (Note: I received a free e-copy of this book from NetGalley and the author or publisher in exchange for an honest review.)

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