

Academic Freedom and Human Rights: European and International Perspectives

Course Module: Weekly Program and Reading List 2026/2027

Fall Semester:

Location: Department of Sociology, Via Verdi 26 - Room 20 (Aula Andreatta), II Floor

Mondays and Thursdays 18.00 – 19.30.

Start date: Monday 14th September

End date: Monday 30th November

This course was originally funded as a Jean Monnet Module (2022-2024) *European Societies and Academic Freedom* (ESAF). It has been currently reorganised and developed as part of the 2026-2027 StAR Project 101245000 - *Students at Risk* (Erasmus Cooperation Partnership - Partners: ESU, SAIH, GSF, UniTrento and UniPadova) which investigate the role of academic freedom for students and overall of higher education communities and democratic societies. The StAR Project is funded by the European Commission. Information about the Project can be found here: <https://cjm.unitn.it/esaf/overview>. From the Fall 2026 it is also part of the ERASMUS-EDU StAR Project on Students at Risk (2026-2027), funded by the European Commission.

This course develops in parallel with two StAR Events, which upon completion, will assign students additional Credits (CFU):

1. Webinar Series *Student Academic Freedom: Rights, Violations and Mobilisation in Times of Global Crisis* (Dates: Friday 9/10, 23/10, 6/11, 4/12, 11/12 at 12.00 – 1h). Credits: 1CFU. Enrolment is compulsory and must be carried out online at <http://www.sociologia.unitn.it/100/seminari-di-credito> by Friday the 2nd of October (minimum number of enrolled students for activation: 10 – maximum number: 50).
2. Intensive Winter School Student Academic Freedom, Padova 18-22 January 2027. Eight fully funded places for UniTrento students. To apply: see the call uploaded in Moodle, deadline for application 20th October.

Further information on both events will be provided by the course coordinators at the beginning of the course. Kindly note that if registered/selected, attendance is compulsory for both events.



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

Register to the Course Moodle Community here (UniTrento students, including Erasmus): <https://webapps.unitn.it/gestionecorsi/>. After going to the page, click on 'Sei uno studente? (Are you a student?)' in order to see your courses' list. Then enter your UniTrento username and password and click on 'Corsi online ai quali sei iscritto' (Online courses you are enrolled in) and search the course you are interested in. If you do not find that course, click on 'Corsi online ai quali potresti iscriverti' (Online courses you can enrol in) and search the course. Once you have found the course, click on it and enter. If you have problems contact: uff.didatticaonline@unitn.it.

Course codes: 135923 Department of Sociology and Social Research (DSRS), Degree in International Studies (L2); 26114 Faculty of Law (IUS - LM5).

Coordinators: Prof. Ester Gallo (DSRS), ester.gallo@unitn.it; Prof. Simone Penasa (Law Faculty), simone.penasa@unitn.it.

Guest Lecturers: Prof. Donata Borgonovo Re (JUS) donata.borgonovo@unitn.it; Prof. Gabriele D'Ottavio (DSRS) gabriele.dottavio@unitn.it; Prof. Stefano Gattei (DSRS) stefano.gattei@unitn.it; Prof. Luca Pes (JUS) luca.pes@unitn.it; Ms. Monica Tassaduque (DSRS) monica.tassaduque@unitn.it;

Office Hours: Mondays 16.00 – 17.30 DSRS Room 29 (3rd floor)

CFU: 48h with and 8 CFU for DSRS students; 42 hours and 6 CFU for Law students.

GENERAL RULES: The use of mobile phones during classes is strictly prohibited. The use of AI for purposes other than language check is not allowed. Causing noises, disturbance or having disrespectful behaviour during class activities directed to other students, the course assistance or the instructors will lead to disciplinary measurements for both Home, Erasmus and International students. This course deals with sensitive issues and the discussion of live cases. It is therefore not apt for free riders, noisy makers or sleepy presences. For students who take the course as attending students, regular attendance of minimum of 80% classes is required.

For students who are interested in joining Scholars at Risk International Advocacy Community, they can register into the **SAR Discord community**. It's a place to follow updates on SAR cases, connect with students at other schools working on similar scholars, share advocacy projects and campaign progress, and exchange ideas. Discord Link: <https://discord.gg/3ySfJBcCCq>.

Weekly Program and Readings For Students Regularly Attending the Course

The 12 weeks of the course are articulated around three units, which will run parallelly: a **Theoretical Unit (henceforth TU)**, which aims at providing students with an interdisciplinary background on academic freedom. A **Thematic Unit (henceforth THU)** where specific aspects of academic freedom are discussed: (1) displacement in higher education; (2) student activism as/for academic freedom; (3) biolaw and academic freedom. A **Laboratory Unit (LAB)** where students **work in groups of maximum 5-6 people** under the supervision of the course coordinators to develop their case-study research on academic freedom (see the course syllabus for further information) and, when chosen, advocacy. The proposed topics for this year lab are:

- A. Country-case research on academic freedom – with a focus on student
- B. Scholars at Risk Advocacy Cases (maximum 1 group)

Access to groups work requires full, active and constant participations. Students who cannot meet this criteria are invited to take the exam as non-attending students (see the syllabus).

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WEEKLY PROGRAM AT A GLANCE

Please note that the contents might be subject to change

Week 1

Monday 14th September 2026, 18.00 - 19.30 (Gallo and Penasa)

Introduction: academic freedom and student academic freedom through an interdisciplinary lens

Thursday 17th September 2026, 18.00 - 19.30 (Gallo)

Academic freedom and the university community: historical developments.

Week 2

Monday 21st September 2026, 18.00 - 19.30 (Gallo)

Academic Freedom: Mapping Major Challenges in Europe and the US.

Thursday 24th September 2026, 18.00 - 19.30 (Gallo)

De-centering the debate: higher education and academic freedom in developing and postcolonial states.

Week 3

Monday 28th September 18.00 – 19.30 (Borgonovo Re)

Academic freedom, freedom of expressions and human rights

Thursday 1st October, 18.00 - 19.30 (Borgonovo Re)

Academic freedom and its protection in European Law and by European Institutions.

Week 4

Monday 5th October 2026 18.00- 19.30 (Gallo)

Students bring to class and work on concrete cases of limitations/violations affecting students and HE communities

Thursday 8th October 2026 18.00 - 19.30 (Gallo)

Conducting academic freedom research: concepts, methods and related risks. Presentation of SAR cases for Advocacy. Possible connection with SAR Advocacy Team.

Week 5

Monday 12th October 2026, 18.00 - 19.30 (Gallo)

Understanding Censorship and Self-Censorship in Higher Education

Thursday 15th October 18.00 – 19.30 (Gattei)

Vincenzo Viviani and the birth of the 'myth' of Galileo

Week 6

Monday 19th October 2026, 18.00 - 19.30 (D'Ottavio)

The violations of academic freedom in the age of tyrannies

Thursday 22nd October 2026, 18.00 - 19.30

Students and Academic Freedom

IMPORTANT! By this date students communicate to Ester Gallo their choice for the final report (one among the followings) :

- (1) **Country-based Research Report on Academic Freedom: country selection.**
- (2) **Research on Student At-Risk Activism: topic and/or country selection.**
- (3) **If there is an Advocacy group (max.1 allowed).**

Week 7

Monday 26th October, 18.00 - 19.30 Room 3 (Gallo)

Student activism as/for academic freedom: insights from Belarus and Turkey.

Thursday 29th October, 18.00 - 19.30 Room 3 (Pes)

Academic work between freedom and constraint in an African context: life trajectories of some young researchers from Mali

Week 8

Monday 2nd November, 18.00 - 19.30 (Gallo)

Higher Education, Skilled Migration and Displacement: Perspectives from the Global South

Thursday 5th November, 18.00 - 19.30 (Pes)

Students work in group on their selected research and report to class (for those who take the exam as attending students).

Week 9

Monday 9th November, 18.00 - 19.30 (Penasa)

Academic freedom and scientific research: The European and comparative framework

Thursday 12th November, 18.00 - 19.30 (Penasa)

Academic freedom and scientific research: case studies

Week 10

Monday 16th November, 18.00 – 19.30 (Gallo)

Students work in group on their selected research and report to class (for those who take the exam as attending students).

Thursday 19th November, 18.00 - 19.30 (Gallo + Capitani)

Students Organisations in Higher Education and Academic Freedom: European Perspectives

Week 11

Monday 23rd November, 18.00 - 19.30 (Gallo + Tassaduque)

Monica Tassaduque – student and academic freedom in South Asia

Thursday 26th November, 18.00 - 19.30 (Gallo)

Students work in group on their selected research and report to class (for those who take the exam as attending students).

Week 12

Monday 30th November 18.00 - 19.30 (Gallo)

Student presentation of their ongoing Final Reports. Discussion of the Final Exam.

Thursday 3rd December, 18.00 - 19.30

Student presentation of their ongoing Final Reports. Discussion of the Final Exam.

DETAILED WEEKLY PROGRAM AND READINGS

WEEK 1: 14, 17 September 2026

Monday 14th September 2026, 18.00 - 19.30 Room 20 DSRS

Title: *Introduction: academic freedom through an interdisciplinary lens*

Lecturers: Ester Gallo and Simona Penasa, University of Trento

Topic: The first part of the class will introduce students to the course's aims, organisation, contents and assessments, and it will discuss with the students the three components (units), as well as the group work organisations. It will also be presented different international/national organisations operating in the field of at-risk scholars and students' protection such as *Scholars at Risk* (International and Italy).

Thursday 17th September 2026, 18.00 - 19.30 Room 20 DSRS

Title: *Academic freedom and the university community: historical developments.*

Lecturer: Ester Gallo, University of Trento

Topic: The first part of the class maps the historical development of the principle of academic freedom in Europe and in the US between the end of the XIXth and beginning of the XXth century, discussing also older roots of the concept. It will trace continuities and differences between the two contexts. It will discuss academic freedom as an individual right as well as a principle intimately linked to an idea of a community of inquiry and learners highlighting its relational dimension. The class delves into different – and often conflicting – interpretations of academic freedom: it will be stressed how the debate mainly generated and developed in the US, and the margins of applicability in the EU and in other contexts.

Suggested Readings:

Fish, S. 2014. *Versions of Academic Freedom. From Professionalism to Revolution*. Chicago: Chicago University Press. Chapter 1 (The Five Schools).

Karran, T. 2009. 'Academic Freedom: In Defence of a Universal Ideal' *Studies in Higher Education* 34(2).

Menand, L. 1996. 'The Limits of Academic Freedom' in *The Future of Academic Freedom* (ed by) L. Menand, 3-20. Chicago: Chicago University Press.

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Week 2: 21, 24 September 2026

Monday 21st September 2026, 18.00 - 19.30 Room 20 DSRS

Title: *Academic Freedom: Mapping Major Challenges in Europe and the US.*

Lecturer: Ester Gallo, University of Trento

This class will outline major challenges against academic freedom in contemporary Europe. It will draw from different empirical cases involving countries – UK, Hungary, Poland and Turkey – and specific instances. In the second part of the class students will be assigned some working cases to debate in groups before reporting to the class.

Suggested Readings:

Bucholc, M. 2022. *Academic Freedom in Poland. University Autonomy Decline*. London: Routledge.

Curaj, A. and Deca, L. (ed) 2018. *European Higher Education Area: The Impact of Past and Future Policies*. Springer.

- Evans, Mary. 2004. *Killing Thinking. The Death of Universities*. Continuum Intl Pub Group.
- Ryden, A. 2022. *The Challenge to Academic Freedom in Hungary. A Case Study in Authoritarianism, Culture War and Resistance*. De Gruyter.
- Vatansever A and Kölemen A (eds) (2023) *Academic Freedom and Precarity in the Global North*. London: Routledge.
- Williams, Joanna. 2016. *Academic freedom in the age of conformity. Confronting the fear of knowledge*. Palgrave MacMillan. Introduction and Part I.

Thursday 24th September 2026, 18.00 - 19.30 Room 20 DSRS

Title: *De-centering the debate: higher education and academic freedom in developing and postcolonial states.*

Lecturer: Ester Gallo, DSRS, University of Trento

Topic: This class will bring the debate on academic freedom in contexts different from the ones where the concept originally developed, that is Europe and the US, with the aim at looking at continuities and differences between different geopolitical areas. The first part of the class will explore if, how and the extent to which academic freedom - in its different dimensions – find place in the development of postcolonial states and nation-building processes, and what colonial legacies might permeate in the present. In the second part of the class, we will discuss the different ways in which conflicts and political violence impact on higher education communities and leads to different typologies of violations.

Suggested Readings:

- Said, E. 1996. 'Identity, Authority and Freedom: The Potentate and the Traveler', in *The Future of Academic Freedom* (ed by) L.Menand, 214-228. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Higgins, J. 2013. *Academic Freedom in a Democratic South Africa*. Wits University Press. Chapter 1 and Chapter 4.
- Akker, J. 2006. 'Academic Freedom in the Middle East, Africa, Asia: Looking Toward the NEAR Future', in Gerstmann, E. and Streb, M. (eds). *Academic Freedom at the Dawn of the Century. How Terrorism, Governments, and Culture Wars Impact Free Speech*, pp. 99-114. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Nauffal, D. and Nader, J. 2021. 'Organisational cultures of higher education institutions operating amid turbulence and an unstable environment: the Lebanese case'. *Higher Education*. Online First at: <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10734-021-00771-y>.
- Murove, M. 2018. 'Academic Freedom and the Problems of Patriotism and Social Responsibility in Post-colonial Africa' *Alternation Special Edition* 23 (2018) 326 – 345: [here](#).
- Oleksiyyenko, A.V. 2020. 'Is academic freedom feasible in the post-Soviet space of higher education?' *Education Philosophy and Theory* 53(11): 1116-1126. [See the full Special Issue for other themes and geopolitical contexts in the same journal here: <https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/rept20/53/11>].

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Week 3: 28 September, 1st October 2026

Monday 28th September 18.00 – 19.30 Room 20 DSRS

Title: *Academic freedom, freedom of expressions and human rights*

Lecturer: Donata Borgonovo Re, University of Trento

Topic: This class discusses the relation between academic freedom, freedom of expression and human rights, by drawing from Human Rights Declaration, the European Convention on Human Rights (1950), the European Charter on Fundamental Rights (2000) and the Italian Constitution. The analysis will focus specifically on the 1997 UNESCO Recommendation, which represents a ground for the codification of academic freedom and the related principle of institutional autonomy.

Suggested readings:

Vrieliink, J.- Lemmens, P.- Parmentier, S. and the LERU working group on Human Rights (2011), *Academic Freedom as a Fundamental Right in Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 13, 117- 141 (open access);

Hofmeister, H. (2022), *The protection of Scientific Freedom under the European Charter of Fundamental Rights: a critical analysis* in De Gennaro, I.- Hofmeister, H.- Lufter, R. (ed. by), *Academic Freedom in the European Context*, 289-322 (open access);

Rossi, E.- Addis, P.-Biondi Dal Monte, F. (2016), *La libertà di insegnamento e il diritto all'istruzione nella Costituzione italiana* in Rivista AIC-Associazione italiana costituzionalisti, Osservatorio costituzionale, 1-17;

Quinn, Robert. and Levine, Jese. 2014. 'Intellectual-HRDs and claims for academic freedom under human rights law' in *The International Journal of Human Rights* 18(7-8): 898-920.

International Documents:

Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher-education Teaching personnel (1997), UNESCO General Conference, Paris 21 October- 12 November: [Here](#).

V-Dem Institute, *Academic Freedom Index - Update 2023*: https://academic-freedom-index.net/research/Academic_Freedom_Index_Update.pdf

Thursday 1st October, 18.00 - 19.30 Room 20 DSRS

Title: *Academic freedom and its protection in European Law and by European Institutions.*

Lecturer: Donata Borgonovo Re, University of Trento

Topic: The lecture wants to explore how European institutions are engaged in the protection and the promotion of Academic Freedom. As the COE (Council of Europe) Parliamentary Assembly of the European said: "Academic freedom and institutional autonomy of higher education institutions are not only crucial for the quality of education and research; they are essential components of democratic societies. Yet these values are facing multiple threats today, ranging from the criminalisation of researchers, scholars and students to the commodification of higher education and commercialisation of knowledge, which are increasingly damaging the quality of education and research and distancing higher education from wider civic, democratic and societal purposes". Students will have the opportunity to examine rules, standards, political commitments and also some judgments of the Court (Lombardi Vallauri case, 2009; Sorgu case, 2009) to better understand what is the effective implementation of the Academic freedom and which are risks and challenges -also in our Democracies- against this Fundamental right.

Suggested Readings: De Gennaro, I.- Hofmeister, H. and Lufter, R. (ed. by)(2022), *Academic Freedom in the European Context. Legal, Philosophical and Institutional Perspectives*, Palgrave-Macmillan (open access);

Beiter, K.D.- Karran, T. and Appiagyei-Atua, K. (2016), *Academic Freedom and Its Protection in the Law of European States* Koninklijke Brill-Leiden. Available online [here](#).

Karran, T. (2007), *Academic Freedom in Europe: A Preliminary Comparative Analysis in Higher Education Policy* Vol. 20, No. 3, p.289– 313. Is available online [here](#).

European Official Documents:

2018 European Parliament Recommendation on Academic Freedom:

https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-8-2018-0483_EN.html

2020 Bonn Declaration on Freedom of Scientific Research: [Here](#).

2020 Parliamentary Assembly, European Council, Brenner Report:

<https://academicrightswatch.se/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/5.3-15167-Brenner-Report-to-PACE-18-10-2020.pdf>

2020 Parliamentary Assembly, European Council, Resolution 2352:

<https://pace.coe.int/en/files/28881/html>

2020 Rome Ministerial Communiqué adopted by the Ministers of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA): http://www.ehea.info/Upload/Rome_Ministerial_Communique.pdf

2023 European Parliamentary Research Service, “State of Academic Freedom in EU Member States”:

[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2023/740231/EPRS_STU\(2023\)740231_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2023/740231/EPRS_STU(2023)740231_EN.pdf)

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Week 4: 5, 8 October 2026

Monday 6th October 18.00- 19.30 Room 20 DSRS

Title: *Students and Academic Freedom*

Lecturer: Ester Gallo, University of Trento

The class will discuss students and academic freedom. Students’ freedom to study and to express their opinion within and beyond university spaces is a key component of the broader principle of academic freedom. Both the dimension of liberty – *freedom from* discrimination or marginalisation and *freedom to* pursue educational aims – reveal to be important and yet understudied. There is indeed very limited knowledge about the way in which students conceptualise, experience and engage with the principle of academic freedom within specific contexts and across them. In this lecture we will explore questions such as: what rights do student have? Are they free to choose their subject or to study in their own language? How can student better enhance and defend academic freedom in contemporary higher education system?

Suggested Readings:

Bowden, R.G., (2010). Students’ Rights: A conceptual framework for postsecondary student academic freedom. *Academy of Educational Leadership Journal*, 14(1), 27-36.

Dirk Moses, A. (1991) “Academic freedom today: a student's perspective” *Bulletin of the Australian Society of Legal Philosophy*, 16, 71-90.

Goldman, Alvin L., (1966) “The University and the Liberty of its Students - A Fiduciary Theory”, *Kentucky Law Journal*, 54(4):643-682.

Macfarlane, B., (2011). Re-framing students’ academic freedom: a capability perspective. *Higher Education*, 63, 719-732.

Macfarlane, B., (2017) *Freedom to Learn: The Threat to Student Academic Freedom and Why it needs to be Reclaimed*, Abingdon: Routledge/SRHE

- Magsino, R. F. (1978) "Students' academic freedom and the changing student/university relationship" In K. A. Strike, K. Egan (Ed.), *Ethics and Education* (pp. 36-57). London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Monypenny, P., (1963) "Towards a standard for students' academic freedom," *Law and Contemporary Problems*, 28(3): 625-635.
- Nordal, E., (2016) *Students' academic freedom in Europe: A means to an end or an end in itself?* Master of Philosophy Thesis in Higher Education University Of Oslo
- Williamson, E., (1964) "Do students have academic freedom?" *College and University*, 3: 466-487

Thursday 8th October 18.00 - 19.30 Room 20 DSRS

Conducting academic freedom research: concepts, methods and related risks; Conducting advocacy research and campaign. Possible connection with SAR International.

Facilitator: Ester Gallo

Topic: In the first part of this class the lecturer will provide students with guidelines on how to conduct research on a country-case study on the three different options they have for the final report: (a) Country-based reports on academic freedom and its violations; (b) Report on At risk Students and Activism; (c) Advocacy Reports. We will discuss what sources can be used, and how it should be structured. In the second part of the class the lecturer will briefly outline the ethics, values and planning of advocacy and will discuss with students a grid of questions/activities they are invited to use and shape according to their orientations. If possible, former's year students will share their experiences.

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Week 5: 12, 15 October 2026

Monday 13th October, 18.00 - 19.30 Room 20 DSRS

Understanding Censorship and Self-Censorship in Higher Education

Self-censorship is broadly understood as an instance of censorship. Yet, its distinctive feature lies on the fact that information, ideas or opinions are withheld from others in the absence of formal and external restrictions. This formal definition opens up for numerous questions on where the authorship of self-censorship is located, on its public/private as well as individual/collective dimensions, as well as on the degree of autonomy and awareness that underpin acts of self-censorship. While the withholding of information might to a certain extent be justifiable under specific circumstances (i.e. national security or protection of vulnerable minorities) there is a general recognition that its protraction or diffusion represents a problem for the development of democratic societies insofar as it constitutes a limitation of negative liberties (freedom from) and positive ones (freedom to). The first part of the class will discuss censorship and self-censorship in higher education and the impact this has on academic freedom. In the second part students will debate an assigned readings which they have to read before coming to class. The reading will be uploaded on Moodle.

Compulsory reading for the class debate:

Nets-Zehngut, R. and Fuxman, S. 2017. 'Self-Censorship of Narratives of Political Violence in Academia' in D. Bar-Tal, R. Nets-Zehngut and K. Sharvit. (eds). *Self-Censorship in Context of Conflict. Theory and Research*, 175-205. Cham: Springer.

Suggested readings:

- Bhattacharya, K. and Atay, A. 2022. 'The Impossibility of Finding Home in Academia: Personal Narratives of Transnationally Minoritized Scholars in Higher Education' *Qualitative Inquiry* 28(1): 3-6.
- Schubotz, D. (2005). 'Beyond the Orange and the Green. The diversification of the qualitative social research landscape in Northern Ireland'. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 6, 3.
- Suny, R. G. (2009). Truth in telling: Reconciling realities in the genocide of the Ottoman Armenians. *The American Historical Review*, 114(4), 930–946.

Thursday 15th October 18.00 – 19.30 Room 20 DSRS

Censorship and Images in Galileo's Times

Topic: The publication of Galileo's *Sidereus nuncius* in March 1610 marked a turning point in the debate over the Copernican hypothesis. The introduction of the telescope and the astonishing discoveries documented in this slim volume profoundly shook the foundations of Aristotelian physics and cosmology, making the heliocentric theory more "concrete" and plausible than the geocentric one. Until that point, it could reasonably be argued that Copernicus had merely intended to present a model, or a computational device, capable of "saving the phenomena" more effectively than the models previously developed—above all, Ptolemy's. Galileo's telescopic discoveries, however, radically altered the terms of the debate. Published in 1543 and largely ignored until then, *De revolutionibus* was thus brought to the attention of the Inquisition, which would place it on the Index of Prohibited Books in 1616. In the years that followed, at least in Italy, proponents of the new cosmology were forced to operate in the shadows and with extreme caution. Unable to advocate, defend, or teach the Copernican theory openly, they resorted to a new language: they turned to images in order to "say" what could no longer be expressed directly in words. Thus, for several decades—from 1616 until Galileo's trial in 1632 and his death in 1642—many authors assigned a new role to the engravings that adorned the frontispieces and half-title pages of books on optics and astronomy, transforming them from mere embellishments, replete with literary references, into indispensable complements to the written word. The lecture will present and discuss several examples of these images, showing how scholars sought through them to circumvent the prohibition imposed by the Inquisition—in other words, how, through an ingenious recourse to art, astronomers and natural philosophers continued to struggle for truth and for the freedom of scientific inquiry.

Suggested readings:

- William B. Ashworth, "Divine Reflections and Profane Refractions: Images of a Scientific Impasse in Seventeenth-Century Italy", in Irving Lavin (ed.), *Gianlorenzo Bernini: New Aspects of His Art and Thought*, University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1985, pp. 179-188.
- Stefano Gattei, "On Tycho's Shoulders, with Vesalius' Eyes: Speaking Images in the Engraved Frontispiece of Kepler's *Tabulae Rudolphinae*", in Andrea Albrecht, Giovanna Cordibella, Volker Remmert (eds.), *Tintenfass und Teleskop: Galileo Galilei im Schnittpunkt wissenschaftlicher, literarischer und visueller Kulturen im 17. Jahrhundert*, Berlin-Boston: Walter De Gruyter, 2014, pp. 337-368.
- Inga E. Söderlund, *Taking Possession of Astronomy: Frontispieces and Illustrated Title Pages in 17th-Century Books on Astronomy*, Stockholm: The Center for History of Science at the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, 2010.

Week 6: 19, 22 October 2026

Monday 19th October 2026, 18.00 - 19.30 (D'Ottavio) Room 20 DSRS

The violations of academic freedom in the age of tyrannies

Lecturer: Gabriele D'Ottavio, University of Trento

Topic: This class will provide students with a background knowledge on the relationship between universities and dictatorial regimes throughout the XXth century. The discussion will delve into the major legislative measures that have marked the history of violation of academic freedom XXth century Europe. The lecturer will discuss specific case studies, with the aim to identify the role of universities and of academic communities in differently complying or opposing Nazi-Fascist and Communist regimes. The class will finally discuss different forms of exile or forced migration involving university communities due to political and/or racial reasons. This lecture will set the ground for a comparative analysis of present forms of violations of academic freedom in dictatorial or authoritarian regimes, and it is in dialogue with the cycle of public seminars 'Histories of Missed Freedom'.

Lecturer: Gabriele D'Ottavio

Suggested Reading:

Connelly, J. and Grüttner, M. (eds), *Universities under Dictatorship*, State College, Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005

Thursday 23rd October 2026, 18.00 - 19.30 Room 20 DSRS

Students bring to class and work on concrete cases of limitations/violations

For today's class students should search for a media article/news related to a limitation of violation of academic freedom worldwide and involving students, scholars, entire higher education communities, institutional autonomy. They can search individually or in small groups freely formed. They should bring the printed news in the class or use their PC to share the news link. We will use the class time to discuss what you have found and your reflections, which should address the following questions: (1) What kind of limitation /violation I am dealing with? (2) What is the source of the violation and what the subjects violated; (3) What are the impact on higher education?; (4) What are my reflections/questions for the class?

IMPORTANT! By this date students communicate to Ester Gallo their choice for the final report (one among the followings) :

- (4) **Country-based Research Report on Academic Freedom: country selection.**
- (5) **Research on Student At-Risk Activism: topic and/or country selection.**
- (6) **If there is an Advocacy group (max.1 allowed).**

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Week 7: 26, 29 October 2026

Monday 26th October, 18.00 - 19.30 Room 20 DSRS (Gallo)

Student activism as/for academic freedom: insights from Belarus and Turkey.

Today we will develop further our discussion on how can student be active subjects within higher education in defending academic freedom. WE will draw from empirical research conducted by Cristina Mazzero and Ester Gallo, respectively on the cases of Belarus and Turkey.

Suggested readings:

Altbach, P.G. (2006). Student politics: Activism and culture. In J.F. Forest, & P.G. Altbach (Eds.), *International Handbook of Higher Education* (pp. 329–45). Dordrecht: Springer.

- Dounaev, V. (2007). The Belarusian University in Exile. *Peace Review*, 19(4), 499-505.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10402650701681053>
- Faragol, F., Swadener, B.B., Richter, J., Eversman, K.A., & Roca-Servat, D. (2018). Local to Global Justice: Roles of Student Activism in Higher Education, Leadership Development, and Community Engagement. *Alberta Journal of Educational Research*, Vol. 64.2, 154-172.
<https://journalhosting.ucalgary.ca/index.php/ajer/article/view/56382>.
- Kimizoğlu, I. and Vespa, M. 2023. *Academic Freedom, Institutional Autonomy and Academic Integrity from a Student Perspective*. Brussels: ESU Publications.
- Klemenčič, M. (2015). What is student agency? An ontological exploration in the context of research on student engagement. In M. Klemenčič, S. Bergan, & R. Primožič (Eds.), *Student engagement in Europe: society, higher education, and student governance*. Council of Europe Higher Education Series No. 20. Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing.
- Klemenčič, M. 2024. 'The key concepts in the study of politics and representation in higher education', in *The Bloomsbury Handbook of student politics and representation in higher education* (ed by) M. Klemenčič, pp. 7-32. Dublin: Bloomsbury Academic.

Thursday 29th October, 18.00 - 19.30 Room 20 DSRS (Pes)

Academic work between freedom and constraint in an African context: life trajectories of some young researchers from Mali

Lecturer: Luca Pes, Faculty of Law, University of Trento

The seminar reflects on academic freedom in Africa through the biographies of four researchers at a relatively early stage of their career. Aged from 30 to 50, two males and two females, two working in Mali in the field of economics and two abroad in anthropology. The four interviews will aim at unpacking the notion of academic freedom by reflecting on topics such as the material constraints of academic work, the institutional environment of academia, the boundary between academic and consultancy work. The hypothesis underlying the analysis is that, in the eyes of these African researchers, academic freedom looks less as an aspect of a basic, universal human right connected to democratic participation and freedom of speech. Rather, it must be seen in the context of current and more complex dynamics in African societies. The lecture might host a testimony from a scholar from Mali through zoom connection.

Suggested Readings:

- Appiagyei-Atua, K., Beiter, K.D., Karran, T. (2015). "The composite theory: an African contribution to the academic freedom discourse," *South African Journal on Human Rights*, 31(2).
- Appiagyei-Atua, K., Beiter, K., and Karran, T. (2016). "A review of academic freedom in Africa through the prism of the UNESCO's 1997 recommendation," *JHEA/RESA*, 14(1): 85-117.
- Arowosegbe, J.O. 2023. 'African universities and the challenge of postcolonial development' *Africa* 93: 591 – 614.
- Arowosegbe, J.O. 2024. 'Universities and the Right to Think in Africa' *Australian Journal of Politics and History*
- Dlamini, CRM (2002). "University autonomy and academic freedom in Africa: ex Africa semper aliquid novi?," *The Comparative and International Law Journal of Southern Africa*, 35(1): 77-98.
- Kerr, D. and Mapanje, J. (2002). "Academic freedom and the University of Malawi," *African Studies Review* 45(2): 73-91.
- Kratou, H. and Laakso, L. (2021). "The impact of academic freedom on democracy in Africa," *The Journal of Development Studies* 58(4): 809-826.

- Mama, A. (2011). "The challenges of feminism: gender, ethics, and responsible academic freedom in African universities," *JHEA/RESA* 9(1&2): 1-23.
- Sawyerr, A. (2004). "Challenges facing African universities: selected issues," *African Studies Review* 47(1): 1-59.
- Tamale, S. and Oloka-Onyango, J. (1997). "Bitches at the academy: gender and academic freedom at the African university," *Africa Development* 22(1): 13-37.

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Week 8: 2, 5 November 2026

Monday 2nd November, 18.00 - 19.30 Room 20 DSRS (Gallo)

Higher Education, Skilled Migration and Displacement: Perspectives from the Global South

Lecturer: Ester Gallo, DSRS, University of Trento

The mobility of scholars and university students is often conceived in terms of a deliberate and relatively unrestrained forms of migration and taken as an expression sign of cosmopolitan citizenship among middle-classes. Nonetheless, new waves of political violence related to civil wars, state repression and inter-communal conflicts have hit higher education communities in different countries that have traditionally represented basins of emigration towards the 'Global North'. This has led to a growing number of university professors and researchers who flee from their countries to seek new opportunities, not only within Europe or the US but also in African and Middle Eastern States. The dimensions, contents and outcomes of scholars' mobility under condition of persistent persecution have received limited attention within migration studies, particularly in recent decades, and they require further analysis. Drawing from an ongoing research with former university members from Central/Western African, Middle-Eastern and South Asian, this article explores three interrelated dimensions of the category 'refugee scholars' - the policy, the relational and the subjective ones – and highlight how each of this dimension encompasses different pathways of mobility where skilled migration may co-exist with temporary subjugation to trafficking, refugee-like situations or unskilled labour.

Suggested readings:

- Akkad, A. Displaced academics' mobility and translocational positionalities: 'academic poverty', 'academic death', and 'academic re-existence'. *High Educ* (2026). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-025-01440-0>
- Gallo E., 2024 «Academic Displacement and the Multi-Dimensional Life of Migration Categories: Insights from Global South Migration», in *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 59(7): 2186-2201.
- Guarnieri P., 2023 *Intellectuals Displaced from Fascist Italy*, Firenze, Firenze University Press.
- Kmak M., Farzamfar M., 2022 «Personal and academic narratives of exiled and displaced scholars», in M. Kmak, H. Björklund (eds.), *Refugees and Knowledge Production*, London, Routledge: 109–127.
- Mazzero, C. Higher education in displacement: empowering pathway or double-edged institution? Insights from Belarusian students' experiences, *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 2026;, feaf014, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/feaf014>
- Vatansever A., 2020 *At the Margins of Academia*, Leiden, Brill.
- Yarar B., 2023 «At-risk scholars in Europe: 'academic humanitarianism' in the name of science 'here' as opposed to the risk 'there'», in *The International Journal of Human Rights*, 28(1): 24-44.

Thursday 5th November, 18.00 - 19.30 Room 20 DSRS (Gallo)

Students work in group on their selected research and report to class (for those who take the exam as attending students).

Today students will fully focus on their Final report Work. They will work within their group for the first 55' and then in the rest of the class they will report back about their progress, aims and challenges.

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Week 9: 9, 12 November 2026

Monday 10th November, 18.00 - 19.30 Room 20 DSRS (Penasa)

Title: *Academic freedom and scientific research: The European and comparative framework*

Lecturer: Simone Penasa, University of Trento

Topic: The seminar provides students with knowledge about national and supranational frameworks that guarantees freedom of scientific research in the specific context of biomedical research. Students will engage with the discussion of concrete cases with the aim of understanding through which juridical means freedom of scientific research might come to be fostered or limited to protect other constitutional rights.

Suggested readings:

Tomasi, Marta; Penasa, Simone; Cozzi, Alessia-Ottavia; Mascalzoni, Deborah, "Law, Genetics and Genomics: An Unfolding Relationship" in BIOLAW JOURNAL, v. 2021, n. S1 (2021), p. 1-5
Penasa, Simone; Busatta, Lucia, "Biotechnologies, Birth and the Right to Know One's Genetic Origins" in BIOLAW JOURNAL, v. 2021, n. 1 (2021), p. 187-208. - URL:
<https://www.biodiritto.org/>

Thursday 12th November, 18.00 – 19.30 Room 20 DSRS (Penasa)

Title: *Academic freedom and scientific research: case studies*

Lecturer: Simone Penasa, University of Trento

Students will work on assigned case studies.

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Week 10: 16, 29 November 2026

Monday 16th November, 18.00 – 19.30 Room 20 DSRS (Gallo)

Students work in group on their selected research and report to class (for those who take the exam as attending students).

Thursday 19th November, 18.00 - 19.30 Room 20 DSRS (Gallo + Capitani)

Students Organisation in Higher Education and Academic Freedom: European Perspectives.

Abstract to be shared.

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Week 11: 23, 26 November 2026

Monday 23rd November, 18.00 - 19.30 Room 20 DSRS (Gallo + Tassaduque)

Students and academic freedom in South Asia

Thursday 27th November, 18.00 - 19.30 CTE 2 (Gallo)

Students work in group on their selected research and report to class (for those who take the exam as attending students).

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Week 12: 30/11, 3/12 December 2026

Monday 30th November, 18.00 - 19.30 Room 20 DSRS (Gallo)

Student presentation of their ongoing Final Reports. Discussion of the Final Exam.

Thursday 3rd December, 18.00 - 19.30 Room 20 DSRS (Gallo)

Student presentation of their ongoing Final Reports. Discussion of the Final Exam.