Academic Freedom

Peter van Beek
AF&T Committee member, FAUW
FAUW & AF&T

• Faculty Association of the University of Waterloo (FAUW)
  – official representative of all regular faculty

• Academic Freedom & Tenure Committee (AF&T)
  – committee of FAUW
  – assist with any employment related problem
  – approximately 10–15 members representing all faculties
  – contacts:
    • Christopher Small, cgsmall@uwaterloo.ca, x35541
    • Katie Damphouse, mcdampho@uwaterloo.ca, x32352
Role of AF&T

- Provide assistance informally and formally
- Ensure fair treatment and accordance with policy
- All communications strictly confidential
- Help only to the extent a faculty member wants help
Role of AF&T

• Areas in which AF&T provides assistance to faculty include:
  – renewal of appointments
  – tenure and promotion applications
  – academic misconduct & research ethics concerns
  – annual evaluation concerns
  – discipline & letters of reprimand
  – governance
  – harassment
  – intellectual property
  – member-member disputes
  – sabbatical, medical, parental and other leaves
  – salary anomalies
  – accommodation—the legal duty to accommodate disabilities, where disabilities is in the broadest sense
Academic Freedom

• Four main components:
  1. freedom in research and publication
     • also, freedom to produce and perform creative work
  2. freedom to teach and discuss
  3. freedom of extramural expression
     • freedom to critique culture, religion, society, government
  4. freedom of intramural expression
     • freedom to criticize faculty association, university, administration
Case studies: Freedom in research and publication

- **University of Waterloo, 2014**
  - faculty member posted working paper critical of powerful business interests in Ontario
  - received cease-and-desist letter from lawyers
  - in the end, university backed faculty member unequivocally

- **David Healy, University of Toronto / CAMH, 2001**
  - job offer revoked shortly after Healy's observation in a conference lecture that Prozac can lead to an increased rate of suicide.
  - Prozac's manufacturer, Eli Lilly, one of the principal donors to CAMH

- **Philippe Rushton, University of Western Ontario, 1985-2010**
  - research on race and intelligence, race and crime
  - called a racist by many including Ontario's premier David Peterson
Case studies: Freedom to teach and discuss

- University of Waterloo, 2014
  - teaching methods and content covered under academic freedom
  - what about faculty not following curriculum as given in calendar?

- Stanley Lipshitz, University of Waterloo, 2000
  - Dean of Math altered final grades of Lipshitz’s calculus course
  - excellent instructor, no criticism of how the course was presented
  - arbitration ruling: grades can be changed but must be annotated has having been assigned by the institution, not the professor

- Ken Westhues, University of Waterloo, 1996
  - Sociology professor Westhues accused by student of making racist arguments
  - internal ethics committee found against Westhues
  - exonerated by external adjudicator
Case studies:
Freedom of extramural expression

- **Anthony Hall, University of Lethbridge, 2016**
  - author of “Earth into Property” (McGill/Queens University Press, 2010) describing the disastrous effects of capitalism on indigenous peoples
  - accused of promoting conspiracy theories, Holocaust denial on social media
  - suspended without pay pending investigation
  - suspension not based on published scholarship, complaints of students

- **Ward Churchill, University of Colorado at Boulder, 2001**
  - victims of the 9/11 World Trade Center attacks were “Little Eichmanns”
  - later fired for “research misconduct”
  - jury found alleged misconduct would not have led to Churchill's firing

- **Bertrand Russell, Trinity College, Cambridge, 1916**
  - dismissed for anti-war activities and public criticism of the government
Case studies:
Freedom of intramural expression

- University of Waterloo, 2008
  - Senators challenged university administration on plan to open a satellite campus in a country with a questionable human rights record
  - reluctance by administration to put on Senate agenda

- Robert Buckingham, U. of Saskatchewan, 2014
  - Dean of Public Health fired for publicly criticizing administration
  - defiance gag order on speaking against plans to cut staff, cancel programs

- Harry Crowe, United College (now U. of Winnipeg), 1958
  - dismissed for his criticism of organized religion and the university administration