

Article

Promoting Equal Protection and Regulatory Remedies for Balanced Civic Education

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Abstract: This article examines the teaching of civic engagement in academic settings, focusing on its role in generating new knowledge and fostering social and personal action. The article proposes regulatory remedies to ensure a fair and balanced curriculum supporting diverse worldviews and productive discourse, promoting student civic participation. The legal principle of equal protection, enshrined in the Fourteenth Amendment, serves as the foundation. The Fourteenth Amendment emphasizes equal treatment and opportunities for all, including access to a well-rounded education. By incorporating its principles into education, the article highlights the need to promote fair, civic education that empowers all students to participate actively in their communities. I recommend regulatory remedies to solidify education's nature and foster a balanced curriculum. The proposed remedies ensure that various worldviews are embraced, promoting productive and amicable discourse among students. Creating an inclusive learning environment also allows students to engage in critical thinking and develop a deeper understanding of diverse perspectives, ultimately enhancing their civic participation. Furthermore, the article emphasizes the importance of regulatory safeguards against biased or exclusionary educational practices to ensure that all students have equal educational opportunities, regardless of their background or beliefs. By eliminating barriers and promoting a fair educational system, students can develop the necessary knowledge and skills to contribute to their communities actively. By incorporating the legal principle of equal protection with respect to perspectives represented on campus, the article advocates for legal and regulatory remedies to promote a fair and balanced curriculum that supports diverse worldviews.

Keywords: Fourteenth Amendment; Althusser; virtue; civic engagement; regulations; equal protections



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1. Introduction

Below, I consider the problem of enhancing student civic engagement at universities, mainly since they operate in multi-environmental contexts such as virtual, online, and in-person. I advance the body of work through the alignment of Louis Althusser's ideological state apparatuses (discussed below), where various sub-systems serve as a means to disseminate, promote, and strengthen certain worldviews. It is within the various networks and means of information dissemination that this article will highlight why regulations are required to protect various worldviews in the academic setting. Although the protection of worldviews in academic settings fosters civic responsibility, contemporary mores and various national tragedies have created a division between conflicting ideals, suppressing access to equal, fair, and balanced education that promotes civic participation. The constitutional principle that prohibits discrimination and requires equal treatment under the law is the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment of the United States Constitution.

The Equal Protection Clause states that no state shall deny any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws, ensuring that all individuals, regardless of race, color, gender, religion, national origin, or other protected characteristics, receive equal treatment and protection under the law. Since the 1860s, the Fourteenth Amendment has served as pillar of American civil rights, with numerous court decisions bolstering and defining the principles of the Fourteenth Amendment. It prohibits discriminatory practices and policies that treat individuals or groups differently based on these protected characteristics, and it promotes fairness and equity in various aspects of life, including education. In the context of higher education, this principle can ensure that students from all ideological perspectives have an equal opportunity to express their views and engage with diverse worldviews in the curriculum. I will flesh out this part of the argument through discussion of the use by the courts of the Equal Protection Clause to protect free speech and association rights in public universities, as seen in cases such as *Healy v. James*, 408 U.S. 169 (1972), in which the U.S. Supreme Court held that a state university could not deny a student organization recognition based on the group's political beliefs. The ruling underscores the need for fairness and diversity of perspectives in educational settings. Based on this precedent, public universities could be required to adopt clear policies protecting ideological diversity, such as mandating that student groups and academic forums represent a variety of political and philosophical viewpoints.

The Equal Protection Clause, as I will show, is a foundation for fostering unbiased education and eliminating discrimination in educational institutions. Key decisions that have relied on the Fourteenth Amendment's guarantees of due process and equal protection to further civil rights, and on whose implications it is possible to draw here, include *Brown v. Board of Education* 347 U.S. 483 (1954) (which affirmed that racial segregation in education violated the Equal Protection Clause) and *Loving v. Virginia*, 388 U.S. 1 (1967) (which struck down laws that banned intra-racial marriages). The Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 have also supported Fourteenth Amendment principles.

These legal developments solidified the Fourteenth Amendment's role as the cornerstone of civil rights in the United States, reflecting a commitment to ensure equal protection under the law and upholding equality for all citizens. Below, I will argue that the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment also serves as a conceptual and legal foundation for requiring, at public universities, that students receive equal exposure to multiple viewpoints in the contested public square, upheld through federal mandate and implemented by regional accrediting bodies to ensure compliance and consistency across educational institutions. This is especially important in the realm of higher education due to the prominent and influential nature of its position in shaping the civic engagement and discussions of the populace as a whole.

Given that position, ensuring diverse perspectives in the academic setting is not only a legal imperative, but is also essential for fostering a robust and inclusive learning environment. The argument to follow shows that the Fourteenth Amendment can serve as a legal framework to promote fairness in civic education, encouraging universities to develop actionable policies that align with the principles of equal protection. This could involve, among other things, adopting faculty guidelines for ideological balance, transparency in curriculum development, and the creation of channels for students to report ideological bias. These policies would help protect diverse perspectives in academia and ensure that all students are treated equitably, regardless of their views. The fact is that, despite equal protection, political orientation is not considered a protected class, creating environments where discrimination based on political ideology can be tolerated and applauded at certain universities.

First, I will speak to the importance of higher education institutions in the civic engagement literature, which are one of the most prominent factors in shaping the youth of a nation. Not only do universities shape the attitudes of young people, but education also shapes culture, national identity, and transformative attitudes (Dacko et al. 2021; Idris et al. 2012). As education fundamentally shapes a person's understanding and perspective, it is essential to have a well-rounded curriculum to foster active civic engagement in later years (Morrow et al. 2023).

Next, and in the context of this institutional power to influence, I will argue that it is critical to recognize Louis Althusser's concept of ideological state apparatuses. For this French post-Marxist thinker, education and academia play a pivotal role in not just disseminating information (as, together, they reach children and young adults in their formative years, allowing those holding positions of power to influence and sway future leaders), but in maintaining ideological hegemony. I acknowledge the essential correctness of Althusser's insights in this area. My argument will build on his depiction of education as a medium to disseminate information, shape identities and culture, and uphold ideological structures of power, sustaining the social framework as it relates to civic engagement and participation.

Third, I show how Althusser's characterization of academia is especially relevant in a tradition of American constitutional pluralism. Power dynamics have always been a central concern in our republican order, necessitating the need for checks and balances to prevent the centralization of authority and influence. James Madison referred to the underlying reasons for this in the Federalist Paper no. 51, stating "if men were angels, no government would be necessary" (Hamilton et al. 2011, p. 272). For Thomas Jefferson, "eternal vigilance is the price of liberty", suggesting that vigilance and efforts to maintain checks and balances are crucial in both realms to safeguard democratic principles and cultivate an informed citizenry. Madison and Jefferson's sentiment underscores the need for safeguards against power consolidation. One example is the Electoral College, which prevents highly populated areas from dictating all form of laws, ensuring that all regions have a voice in how power is applied. Similarly, the U.S. government's separation of powers reflects the commitment to prevent any single branch of government from dominating the others.

Indeed, when it comes to academia and education, it is important to insist on the application of the same principles. The power wielded by various educational institutions influences values and beliefs, and indeed the shape of society, significantly. Therefore, it is necessary to institute mechanisms to ensure that this power is not misused or abused. By actively promoting diverse perspectives and fostering critical thinking skills among students, academia will undergo pluralization. It will itself serve as a critical check on unchecked authority.

Fourth, I will outline how Althusserian and constitutional pluralist considerations are especially relevant in thinking about contemporary colleges and universities in the United States, given their lack of intellectual diversity. Here, the concept of ideological state apparatuses highlights how institutions, such as academia and all scholastic institutions, can serve to reproduce dominant ideologies and limit alternative perspectives. In the context of higher education, this can manifest as the homogenization of ideas and the suppression of dissenting voices. Althusser explicitly argues that the scholastic apparatus is the most powerful of all institutions due to its ability to solidify a dominant worldview (Althusser 2014, p. 159).

Constitutional pluralism also sheds light on the issue of intellectual diversity within academic institutions. This concept emphasizes the importance of accommodating diverse viewpoints and promoting inclusivity within societal structures. In the case of colleges and

universities, as I will show using updated data, a simple lack of intellectual diversity can itself hinder students' exposure to a wide range of perspectives and limit critical thinking skills. Constitutional pluralism further makes absolutely clear that legitimate authority requires participation, deliberation, argumentation, and justification, and it highlights the necessity for diverse ideological representation, with direct application to higher educational institutions (Avbelj and Komarek 2012, pp. 89, 458). By applying both Althusserian and constitutional pluralist frameworks, it becomes apparent that addressing the lack of intellectual diversity in higher education is crucial to fostering a more inclusive learning environment with fewer civic distortions and a less epistemologically unproductive concentration of power.

But how should one do so, keeping consistent with the importance of the civic engagement literature on universities, Louis Althusser's characterization of academia as an ideological state apparatus, and concerns about an undue concentration of power in the American constitutional republic, reinforced by the one-sidedness of universities? The answer is simple: laws and regulations, mandated at the federal level, implemented and enforced by regional accrediting bodies and their respective states. Therefore, and fifth, I show how the regulation of academia, both at the state and federal levels, is critical. Here, accrediting bodies can play a vital role in ensuring that students are exposed to a diverse range of viewpoints. This is especially true with respect to topics that are highly likely to see contestation in the public square.

2. Civic Participation and Engagement

The term civic engagement covers a diverse array of activities, and its meaning can vary widely depending on the context in which it is used. Broadly defined, civic engagement refers to any individual or collective action designed and implemented to identify and address issues of public concern. At the personal level, civic engagement activities may include anything from volunteering for a community service organization to participating in a local government advisory committee. At the collective level, civic engagement may take the form of organized political efforts, such as working to pass a new law or advocating for a particular cause.

There has long been evidence that institutions of higher learning serve as a foundational instrument for preparing individuals to engage in their civic responsibilities by providing the tools, means, resources, and critical thinking skills to make a difference in their respective communities (Dee 2020; Morrow et al. 2023; Owusu-Agyeman and Fourie-Malherbe 2021). The civic engagement literature identifies academia as the central locus of civic engagement due to its roles in promoting knowledge, literature, critical thinking skills, and the cultivation of social responsibility (Campbell 2019). Despite being the central locus, recent studies have shown that students have a particularly low level of civic knowledge (White et al. 2023). Therefore, universities and colleges should expand and continue to serve as the foundation for preparing citizens who will positively impact society through their actions and leadership (Barrett and Brunton-Smith 2014; Eyster and Giles 1999). As such, civic engagement requires additional components to provide means such as a "belief in the validity and desirability of democratic, pluralistic institutions, and related values such as tolerance and respect", as well as "the requisite cognitive skills and an awareness of current events that make an informed deliberation on complex social and technological issues possible" (Dee 2020, p. 104). With those elements in place, educational systems can better prepare members of society by providing an understanding of democratic processes, societal issues, and rights and responsibilities, empowering citizens to actively participate and contribute to their communities within the broader political landscape.

However, there has been a noticeable trend among educational facilities that subscribe to a narrow view of civic activism and education, where there is only one correct answer related to political science, civic engagement, and social issues such as social and gender justice (Abrams 2018; Morrow et al. 2023). Evidence suggests that, when civic education is framed around a dominant ideological perspective, it can limit the development of students' critical thinking skills and their capacity to engage with opposing viewpoints (Campbell 2019). When students are not exposed to a balanced set of ideas, their civic participation becomes more polarized, with less tolerance for ideological differences. This can stifle broader political engagement and reduce the quality of democratic deliberation. By incorporating balanced civic studies and engagement, institutions can limit the dominance of a single worldview in civic education that undermines the ability to foster informed, critical, and participatory citizens. Indeed, as Morrow et al. (2023) state, the term "late-Rawls-friendly programs" in academia characterizes educational programs or approaches that not only align with the principles of justice and fairness put forth by the philosopher John Rawls, but that accommodate his later openness to some religion in the public square (provided, Rawls says by the mid-eighties, that translation into public reason still happens at some point).

In the context of academia, a late-Rawls-friendly program would seek to create a fair and inclusive learning environment, where all students—regardless of ideological, religious, or worldview leanings—have equal access to educational resources, opportunities, and support. In contrast, in some universities, there is a growing trend of adopting civic education initiatives that promote specific causes aligned with social justice or progressive ideals, such as service-learning projects focused on environmental sustainability, racial equity, or gender justice. While these initiatives serve valuable purposes, their emphasis can sometimes crowd out alternative civic issues, such as economic freedom, national security, or traditional constitutional interpretations. This imbalance can shape how students engage with civic life, often promoting one dominant worldview while failing to present others, thereby narrowing the scope of their civic education (Abrams 2018).

Here, the promotion of one dominant worldview does not coincide with the positive aspects of Rawls' "veil of ignorance", which suggests that in designing a just society, individuals should imagine themselves behind a veil of ignorance, unaware of their implicit biases and characteristics such as race, gender, political ideology, and socioeconomic factor (Rawls 1999, p. 118). From an educational standpoint, Rawls' assertions are valid. Listening, with the intent to understand and without established and conditioned filters, is critical to discourse that provides solutions to today's problems. Building on the work of Morrow et al. (2023), we could say that a late-Rawls-friendly civic education thus aims to deliver a degree of openness to students who engage, at first, without phrasing their positions in the language of public reason, and a level playing field for students from diverse backgrounds. This that ensures everyone has an equal chance of success. It encourages critical thinking, open dialog, and the exploration of various viewpoints, allowing students to engage in intellectual discourse and develop their ideas (Morrow et al. 2023; Rawls 1999; Stolzenberg et al. 2019).

3. Althusser and the Power of Academia as a State Apparatus—Additional Critical Theoretical Insights on Academia as a Culture Industry Extension

Education plays a pivotal role in shaping worldviews, particularly in the context of diverse and integrative learning environments. Educational settings are a foundational platform where students encounter various perspectives which can significantly influence their attitudes and behaviors toward different worldviews. Thus, Åhs et al. emphasize that schools provide a critical context in forming attitudes toward other worldviews, and

specifically in addressing the impacts of religious education as integrated with secular courses, and highlighting the importance of educational heterogeneity to create conditions that enhance worldview diversity and safe spaces to explore various worldviews (Åhs et al. 2019). This is echoed by Moreno-Pino et al., who argue that university education is instrumental in transforming students' worldviews and values (Moreno-Pino et al. 2021). Additionally, Starovoitova et al. assert that targeted pedagogical activities during higher education can significantly enhance students' worldviews, as students are particularly sensitive to developing reflexive abilities and understanding one's place in the world (Starovoitova et al. 2021). Similarly, Hyytinen et al. note that students' interests are closely linked to their worldviews, suggesting that education can modify these perspectives, especially among those with vulnerable or underdeveloped worldviews (Hyytinen et al. 2023).

Exploring diverse worldviews within educational contexts can also foster empathy and understanding among students. Merely increasing diversity in academic settings does not automatically lead to empathy towards different cultures; rather, this requires intentional efforts to cultivate worldview sensitivity among educators (Kuusisto and Lamminmäki-Vartia 2012). This notion is further supported by Halafoff et al., who argue that critical education surrounding diverse worldviews can help mitigate religious vilification and discrimination, promoting social inclusion among young people from various backgrounds (Halafoff et al. 2019). In all these ways, education significantly impacts the development of worldviews by providing a structured environment for exploring diverse perspectives, fostering ecological awareness, and cultivating empathy and ethical values. As such, the power that education and academia yield should warrant caution about hyper-politicization resulting in homogeneous views.

Now, he may not be the first to come to mind in discussions about civic engagement and its legal implications, but Louis Althusser, as I show, provides resources of great relevance. He advanced Marxist theory by introducing the concept of ideological state apparatuses, of which education and academia are one, and which can be understood as specific government or government-related institutions serving as mediums of information dissemination to change and conform the behavior of society. For Althusser, "ideology represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence" (Althusser 1970, p. 6).

Althusser's theory of interpellation highlights eight of these ideological apparatuses or *Appareils Idéologiques d'État*:

- l'AIE religieux (le système des différentes Églises);
- l'AIE scolaire (le système des différentes « Écoles », publiques et privées);
- l'AIE familial;
- l'AIE juridique;
- l'AIE politique (le système politique, dont les différents Partis);
- l'AIE syndical;
- l'AIE de l'information (presse, radio-télé, etc.);
- l'AIE culturel (Lettres, Beaux-Arts, sports, etc.)

(Religion, scholastic, family, legal, political, trade, information, and cultural) (Althusser 1970, p. 8).

Althusser posits that ideology exerts a strong and pervasive impact on individuals, shaping societal views and behaviors. This influence plays a significant role in determining civic engagement and strategies for persuading others. For Althusser, academia serves as an ideological state apparatus with an especially prominent ability to transmit values, beliefs, and norms to students based on the dominant population. Thus, the means of homogenizing political thought using this academic apparatus is the shift towards a 24/7 'college experience' in which "engagement with students is occurring as much—if

not more—in residence halls and student centers as it is in classrooms. Schools have increased their hiring in areas such as residential and student centers, offices of student life and success, and offices of inclusion and engagement” that focus heavily on progressive events, such as “Stay Healthy, Stay Woke”, “Microaggressions”, and “Understanding White Privilege”, without offering any programming that provides a meaningful ideological alternative (Abrams 2018, p. 1). The way in which information is disseminated, especially through social media, and the means of monopolizing its use within the student body and stakeholders create means to not only control the public narrative but to control and cultivate the ideology behind it.

Louis Althusser’s concept of the educational state apparatus, particularly through his distinction between the repressive state apparatus (RSA) and the ideological state apparatus (ISA), provides a further framework for understanding how education can be weaponized or hyper-politicized. The educational system, as an ISA, plays a crucial role in perpetuating the dominant ideology, shaping individuals’ beliefs, and maintaining social order. The academic apparatus can be manipulated to serve specific political agendas, thereby becoming a tool of ideological control. Althusser posits that ISAs, including education, function primarily through ideology rather than direct violence, which is characteristic of RSAs (Patel 2024). In contexts where educational systems are aligned with state interests, they can reinforce existing power structures and social hierarchies. The manipulation of ideology within education allows for the maintenance of social stratification and the marginalization of non-dominant ideological groups.

Moreover, the educational apparatus can be hyper-politicized by implementing specific programs that align with homogenous ideologies. Chadderton’s analysis of the “Troops to Teaching” initiative in England highlights how the militarization of education can serve to reinforce social privilege and oppression, particularly regarding race and class dynamics (Chadderton 2013). This initiative exemplifies how educational policies can be designed to interpellate individuals into specific ideological roles that support the state’s broader objectives, thus weaponizing education as a means of ideological reproduction. The concept of interpellation, as articulated by Althusser, further elucidates how individuals are positioned within ideological frameworks through education. Individuals become subjects of ideology when they respond to the interpellative calls of educational institutions, which often reflect the values and norms of the ruling class (Khan 2018). This process can be seen in various educational strategies that prioritize certain cultural capitals over others, effectively reproducing class distinctions and limiting access to opportunities for marginalized groups (Atli 2023). The educational state apparatus, therefore, not only transmits knowledge, but also enforces compliance with the dominant ideology, thereby facilitating the state’s control over societal narratives. Furthermore, the hyper-politicization of education can manifest in the curriculum and pedagogical practices that prioritize certain ideologies while suppressing dissenting voices. For example, Warmington discusses how educational theories can reflect dystopian social theories that align with capitalist ideologies, thereby shaping the educational landscape to favor the interests of the ruling class (Warmington 2015). This alignment can lead to the exclusion of alternative perspectives and the reinforcement of a singular narrative that serves the state’s ideological goals.

Althusser’s framework provides a critical lens through which to examine the educational state apparatus as a site of ideological struggle. By understanding education as a tool that can be weaponized or hyper-politicized, we can better analyze the ways in which educational policies and practices are employed to maintain social order and reproduce existing power dynamics. The interplay between ideology and education reveals the potential for both oppression and resistance within the educational sphere, highlighting the importance of critically engaging with the ideological underpinnings of educational systems.

But one would be remiss to discuss Althusser's dissemination and shaping of culture without the interplay of Antonio Gramsci's cultural hegemony and power of ideas. Gramsci's hegemonic model incorporates two critical elements that are necessary to support Althusser's later theory. The first critical element discussed is the expected assimilation of thoughts and ideas among individuals of similar classes. Every relationship of "hegemony", writes Gramsci, "is necessarily an educational relationship and occurs not only within a nation, between the various forces of which the nation is composed, but in the international and world-wide field, between complexes of national and continental civilisations" (Gramsci 1999, p. 250). "Next, the second model incorporates the notion that the degree of ideological domination is created by the ruling class. The hegemonic apparatus of social control which 'spontaneously' arises in civil society as the summation of a wide range of educational, religious, and associational institutions is integrated into political society, which has the means of coercion and legal enforcement at its disposal" (Gramsci 1999, p. 247). As such, the symbiotic relationship of Gramsci's cultural hegemony, coupled with Althusser's notion of interpellation with respect to how students are hailed, and thereby become subjects within a social structure, allows us to see the crux of critical theory and Marxism via ideological state apparatuses that can hinder and negatively influence the ability of civic participation in contemporary politics by promoting the "cancellation" or suppression of individuals with opposing views (Clark 2020; Meesala 2020). This logic especially applies on a university campus.

Moreover, concepts like Marxism, socialism, and communism have appealed to the younger generation as they challenge the existing civic participation model. Post-Marxist approaches seek to highlight disparities in wealth and power by focusing or prioritizing the needs of marginalized groups based on identity politics. Therefore, Althusser, along with other prominent post-Marxists, theorizes the educational medium as promoting the prominent ideological components of society. Educational institutions can still challenge the existing civic participation model (Althusser 1970; Davis 1981; Fernández-Morera 1996). But to do so, the only way to transform the belief structure of a population is to seize an apparatus, such as academia, and create a condition of new ideas that challenge the existing order, as described in Gramsci's *A Modern Prince* (1959), which was found in his prison notebook collection (Gramsci 1999). The medium necessary to disseminate new ideas to challenge the existing social order and civic participation model is the educational state apparatus.

In Althusser's *On the Reproduction of Capitalism* (2014), the author devotes an entire section to education, of which the title is, "There is one dominant ideological state apparatus—Today, the school system" (p. 142).

From nursery school on, the school takes children from all social classes and, from nursery school on and for years thereafter, the years when children are most 'vulnerable', stuck fast as they are between the scholastic and familial Ideological State Apparatuses, pumps them full, with old methods and new, of certain kinds of 'know-how' (French, arithmetic, natural history, science, literature) packaged in the dominant ideology, or, simply, of the dominant ideology in the pure state (ethics, civics, philosophy). (Althusser 2014, p. 145)

It is here that Althusser acknowledges the power of academia and the scholastic apparatus while holding specifically that there is an intellectual battle that occurs at universities (Althusser 2014, p. 179). For Althusser, the power of education trumps that of religion and of family due to the overall immersion in the system, which he writes "[education] has a captive audience of all the children of the capitalist and social formation at its beck and call (and-that is the least it can do-at no cost to them) for as many years as schools do, eight hours a day, six days out of seven" (pp. 145–46). While actual classroom time may

be limited, the homework or other assignments given to various students often leach into family, social, or religious time, further promoting the scholastic apparatus.

Specifically, as it relates to higher education, [Althusser \(2008\)](#) argues in *On Ideology* that the political ISA relies on the scholastic ISA, especially universities, because universities do not otherwise educate potential voters to improve democracy but rather create conditions of ideological domination ([Althusser 2008](#), p. 26). Althusser sees universities as a means to create four conditions within a capitalistic society: 1—students, or as he says, the “exploited”, who only seek wage labor, 2—the “agent of exploitation”, or rather managers and supervisors to extract surplus value of the “exploited”, 3—“agents of repression” who seek to enforce the will of the majority by creating politicians, judges, police, military, or other “repressive” apparatus occupations, (p. 240) and 4—the “professional ideologist” who creates conditions to disseminate the prominent ideology under any guise of the dominating class ([Althusser 2008](#), pp. 29–30). Ultimately, Althusser’s theory of interpellation and the power of the scholastic apparatus serves as a crucial site for shaping the most influential components of civic engagement due to its specific ability to produce ideologically aligned, informed, and active members of a society. Through their role in education and socialization, universities have the unique power to mold individuals’ identities and beliefs, ultimately guiding their participation in and contributions to the civic and political spheres.

To better understand the broader implications of a trend that has seen universities become ideologically monolithic, critical theory provides invaluable insight into how one-sided academia functions, not only as an institutional state apparatus, but also an extension of the culture industry. This dynamic negatively influences civic engagement by curtailing the exchange of diverse ideas, which is essential for genuine engagement. As [Marcuse and Kellner \(1991\)](#) argue, the culture industry fosters a “false consciousness” of social reality, where alternative forms of social organization and consciousness are either excluded or marginalized (p. 59). For example, television programs and films often depict capitalist societies as natural and inevitable. At the same time, alternative forms of social organization, such as socialism or communism, are portrayed as unrealistic or undesirable. Through this “false mirroring”, the culture industry discourages individuals from imagining or pursuing alternatives to the existing social order, and convinces them that it is the only possible one.

More importantly, as explained by Marcuse, this false mirroring is reinforced by the educational system, which promotes the same values, beliefs, and norms as the culture industry ([Althusser 2014](#); [Gramsci 1999](#); [Marcuse and Kellner 1991](#)). For example, schools often teach students to be obedient, competitive, and individualistic, which is necessary for a capitalist society’s functionality. The educational system promotes and perpetuates these values by reproducing the existing social order ([Marcuse and Kellner 1991](#), p. 47). Consistent with the writings of Antonio Gramsci, the purpose of cultural and intellectual hegemony supposes that the power of the people relies on “thoughts and ideas”. As such, prominent ideas and concepts gather the masses. The greater the idea, the greater the following. Therefore, introducing ideas in the education landscape can and will function as a powerful filter for children as they turn into adults that can be used to expand and promote Marxist ideology if instances such as critical theory exist and are perpetuated as doctrine ([Fernández-Morera 1996](#)). Admittedly, Marcuse performed this analysis in a way that seemed especially relevant at the time to the Left in its resistance to corporate hegemony. But given the contemporary dynamics of culture in America and the West, generally, one can see how the framework would apply today to institutions that are perceived, by those in the center and on the right, as making possible a different kind of hegemony, excluding not liberal but conservative voices, although supported by corporate hegemony (in its support of neoliberalism) nevertheless.

In addition to Marcuse, other scholars and thinkers have examined American society's manipulation of education and culture. Drawing upon Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony, the communist goals emphasize the importance of controlling education, media, and culture to influence the beliefs and values of future generations, a similar tactic provided by Maoism in China. By infiltrating schools, student newspapers, and the press, the Marxist agenda seeks to reshape the narrative and discredit American culture, such as the 1619 Project, the National Education Association, Black Lives Matter, the American Association of University Professors, and removing historical names and monuments in the name of equality via a cultural and racial "revolution" (Barna 2021). The methods consistent with non-violent revolution rely on rhetoric such as censorship, cancel culture, rhetoric, 'wokeism', propaganda, and the introduction of post-Marxist ideas in education to shift power dynamics in society by leveraging mob rule through social media platforms (Clark 2020, p. 91). Again, although the hegemony in question may be aligned not against the Left (as in Marcuse's day) but the Right, it remains a corporate or corporately influenced concentration of power, and as such of interest not only to disgruntled conservatives but those in the Gramscian and Althusserian traditions concerned with the excessive influence of corporations.

Furthermore, as noted in contemporary times, especially in academia, we see the manifestation of identity politics, where those deemed part of an oppressive class are not allowed to have differing opinions from those who support diversity and inclusion programs (Chasmar 2021; Mitchell 2020). In other words, having an ideology not consistent with all forms of social justice initiatives and "inclusion" or "welfare" policies has become the oppressive class requiring cancellation. Such cancellation eliminates the whole purpose of education to challenge what exists to create and foster new growth. Both American Marxists Frederic Jameson (1991) and Angela Davis (1981) both support this notion, where education can be seen as a means to force the acquiescence of ideals or be used to oppress dissenting thoughts (Davis 1981; Jameson 1991).

According to Marcuse, the culture industry creates a false consciousness among the proletariat by presenting them with a distorted and limited view of the world. This false consciousness results from producing and disseminating cultural commodities, such as music, film, television, and advertising, controlled and dominated by the capitalist class. Similarly, other scholars and thinkers argue that the educational system in American society reproduces the existing social order and ensures its perpetuation. They state that schools teach students to be obedient, competitive, and individualistic, which is necessary for a capitalist society's functioning. By promoting these values, the educational system discourages critical thinking and social change and encourages conformity and acceptance of the status quo. As such, leveraging a pragmatic Marxist approach, namely Althusser's institutional state apparatuses and Gramsci's hegemony, the key to controlling the narrative or dissemination of information to transform culture requires the infiltration and subversion of such apparatuses due to monopoly education holds over groups (Althusser 1970, p. 73; Hook 2002, p. 254; Pearson 2014, p. 13). It is through the concept of power, through academia, that whatever worldview controls academia would ultimately control civic engagement through attrition.

Thus, due to the influence of the educational state apparatus potentially serving as a hegemonic power, the necessity arises for legal remedies, as described in Section 6. These will inhibit a one-sided worldview that can jeopardize social capital, civic participation, and competing worldviews. They will restore the older understanding of a "university", as geared towards civic dialog that includes the reasoned discussion of positions with which we disagree. And they will sustain a flourishing and free society.

4. Madison, Constitutional Pluralism, and Checks and Balances

In light of the hegemonic power of an ideological state apparatus such as higher education, reflected in Althusser's paradigm, I now build on the argument to explore the importance of civic engagement and participation, leveraging the concepts of constitutional pluralism and the necessity of checks and balances, as argued by the Founding Fathers. By examining the *Federalist Papers*, we can highlight the necessity of constitutional pluralism and a system of checks and balances as essential to a democratic society. Ultimately, having considered James Madison's intellectual genealogy, we may conclude that the thought of St. Augustine also finds unexpected relevance in our prescriptions for pluralism.

Thus, civic engagement, understood in a different sense from the various ideas covered above in Section 2, is a vital support of liberty in the United States. Madison extensively discussed it in the *Federalist Papers*, particularly in articles no. 10 and no. 51. The purpose of civic participation is not only to protect the majority from the powerful few, but also to prevent tyranny and maintain the checks and balances of our constitutional republic. Federalist no. 10 underscores this importance of controlling factions and protecting the public interest in a constitutional republic by creating a well-constructed union to mitigate the dangers of factionalism. The negative impact of factional interests is diffused as they are nevertheless pursued by a multiplicity of groups. Civic engagement and education are vital in this context to promote the knowledge and skills needed to participate actively in the civic process and to potentially moderate one's desires and appetites.

Madison argues that an immense republic with a representation system will better protect against the dangers of factions and special interests, encouraging citizens to be actively involved in the political process by electing representatives who will work for the common good (Hamilton et al. 2011). In Federalist no. 10, Madison argues, "Enlightened statesmen will not always be at the helm: Nor, in many cases, can such an adjustment be made at all, without taking into view indirect and remote considerations, which will rarely prevail over the immediate interest which one party may find in disregarding the rights of another, or the good of the whole" (Hamilton et al. 2011, p. 80). Here, Madison acknowledges that wise and virtuous leaders will not always stay in power, and achieving fair solutions often requires long-term effects, which are complex and not immediately apparent. Immediate interests frequently take precedence, leading individuals and factions to prioritize their own benefits over the rights of others or the common good. Essentially, Madison argues for civic engagement to guard against tyranny or factions, by ensuring the participation of different groups in the populace who keep tabs on their elected officials. This resembles checks and balances, avoiding a concentration of power by a few.

In Federalist no. 51, Madison says, "It may be a reflection of human nature, that such devices [checks and balances] should be necessary to control the abuses of government" (p. 83). Regardless of who holds power, the system of checks and balances is essential to the safeguarding of both majority and minority rights. These mechanisms are a reflection of human nature, acknowledging that no one group or individual should have unchecked authority. By distributing power across different branches of government, checks and balances help prevent abuses or a lack of virtue to ensure a more just and equitable society. This resembles, in turn, the kind of checking brought about by groups single-mindedly pursuing their agendas all at times.

Considering academia as an ideological state apparatus, in the context of this older understanding of pluralistic liberty and checks and balances in the United States, is essential. Madison argues that an immense republic with a representation system will better protect against the dangers of factions and special interests, encouraging citizens to be actively involved in the political process by electing representatives whose work results in the common good (Hamilton et al. 2011). In this article, in keeping both with Althusserian

insights into the power of universities as a state apparatus, and the Madisonian calculus of dispersing influence, I argue for effectively extending a spirit of pluralism to a still monolithic academia in new and creative ways.

The importance of doing so is further supported by St. Augustine's emphasis on the moral development of individuals and communities, underscoring the importance of integrating ethical (i.e., loving and truth-seeking) education that encourages respect for divergent ideas as an expression of genuine care for others to seek the common good through inclusive discussions in academic institutions (St. Augustine 2001, p. 379; 2018, p. 678). St. Augustine supports our analysis above with reference to the doctrine of original sin, validating concerns about the implications for freedom (spiritual or political) of a hegemonic institutional state apparatus, and bolstering the case for pluralism within the body of teachers who shape young minds.

Because of original sin, St. Augustine of Hippo did not place much faith in temporal government in his work *City of God*. St. Augustine acknowledged that human politics was necessary for security and safety, even as it should not pursue higher, Theodosian aims. Yet despite the lack of faith in human government or a "low" view of government's purpose, St. Augustine did not advocate for a complete withdrawal from civic participation, which is especially evident in book 19, chapter 17 (he did not counsel withdrawal even as he expressed skepticism about the ultimate efficacy of earthly politics to maintain peace (St. Augustine 2018, pp. 678–79). Instead, he saw the role of the Christian citizen as participating in earthly affairs with a sense of detachment, recognizing the limitations of earthly endeavors while striving to live according to the values of the City of God (St. Augustine 2018).

At universities, the same logic applies: if original sin is present, why should we allow one group or represented political culture to always have their way? Here, how is it possible to countenance an academia that is so heavily one-sided? Of course, there is no question of securing a utopian ideological balance. Augustinian thought cuts just as incisively against utopias as it does against a concentration of authority that, according to Althusser, makes it possible to understand academia as an institutional state apparatus. But the point is that Augustinian thought does, also, mediate against an ideological concentration of power.

At the end of the day, St. Augustine reinforces Madisonian considerations of the inadvisability of the concentration of power and the importance of checks and balances through an underlying focus on the doctrine of the ongoing effects of the Fall. Madison may have imbibed these ideas, as others have pointed out, from his Reformed and Augustinian teacher, John Witherspoon, at the City College of New Jersey. Regardless, robustly applying the concept of constitutional pluralism in the academic landscape, as prescribed by Madison and reinforced by St. Augustine, provides a mechanism to spur critical thinking and discourse to improve civic engagement and participation.

5. Imbalance of Academia—Negative Repercussions

In light of the Althusserian identification of the power of higher education as an institutional state apparatus, and given the concerns in the American constitutional pluralist tradition with the balance of power, the role of academia in shaping civic engagement becomes crucial. It is especially disheartening to see the exclusive ideological tilt of colleges and universities in their current configuration, as this imbalance potentially undermines the very possibility of civic and critical thought that educational institutions understood themselves to uphold even in the ancient world.

In keeping with these ideas, in Book VIII of *Politics*, Aristotle (1905) emphasized the importance of education in shaping citizens for their roles within government. Aristotle writes, "everyone will admit that education is the chief business of the legislator; and that

he has to adapt his citizens to the form of government under which they live" (p. 124). The philosopher further argued that all citizens should be trained in virtue through a public and standardized education system, as each individual is integral to the state. They must be all trained in virtue; and the training should not be individual or private, but public and the same for all" (Aristotle 1905). If the foundation of Aristotle's academy was to 'challenge everything we think we know,' education for citizens within the city makes sense based on the understanding of human beings as reasoning creatures. Reasoning well must include the opportunity to provide an account of one's own views or disagree in a civil manner with those who do not hold them; the ideological hegemony that, arguably, has been the order of the day in institutions of higher learning, depriving students and faculty of the possibility to confront and compassionately engage with viewpoints with which they disagree, thus risks undermining a key feature of any educational institution that sees itself, even remotely, as oriented towards the goal of citizenship and civil dialog.

Alarming, then, despite the need for ideological and worldview diversity, 82.46% of Harvard's faculty hold a worldview consistent with liberal or very liberal; contrarily, there are only 1.46% of faculty who identify as conservative, with none reporting as "very conservative" compared to 45.03% of the 82.46% who identified as "very liberal" (Xu 2022). It is not necessarily problematic for professors to all lean one way or the other politically, as long as they are committed to free and open inquiry. Problems arise, however, when academics obfuscate and deny the reality surrounding the political ideologies of university faculty. It is now a clear empirical fact that since the early 2000s, trends in faculty political identification have moved sharply leftward, yielding a 15 percentage point shift in as many years" (Magness and Waugh 2022, p. 366).

A study performed by Professor Samuel Abrams further found that liberal administrators significantly outnumber their conservative counterparts—by a ratio of 12 to 1—across the surveyed institutions. While this does not mean that every institution of higher education uniformly promotes a dominant liberal worldview, it raises a red flag. The study highlights trends in political ideology among administrators. The overwhelming one-sidedness of the trends does not conclusively demonstrate that all faculty, students, or programs conform to the same ideological alignment, but especially in light of the Madisonian–Augustinian connections explored in the previous section, should we not be concerned? If something within human beings seeks to dominate others, do associated risks not increase if we see ideological one-sidedness at the 90% or higher level?

A related question that arises is: "is the potential for truly free civic and critical thought in danger, given the ideological imbalance caused by having such an extensive political bias in faculty?" The short answer is, "yes". The HERI survey reveals a significant ideological shift among college faculty over the past few decades, with a growing leaning toward the left. In 1989–1990, 42% of faculty identified as liberal, while 18% were conservative, resulting in a 2.3:1 liberal-to-conservative ratio. By 2016–2017, this ratio had more than doubled to 5:1, with 60% of faculty identifying as liberal and only 12% as conservative. In contrast, the U.S. population has shown only minor shifts in political alignment, maintaining a near-even liberal-to-conservative ratio over the same period. This suggests that while the general population remained relatively balanced, academia shifted sharply to the left. And the overrepresentation of liberal faculty creates conditions where conservatives do not feel comfortable openly expressing their views (Abrams and Khalid 2020; Carl 2015).

These survey results align with former Stanford Provost John Etchemendy's speech to the university's trustees, where he discussed the threats to academia, both external and internal:

But I'm actually more worried about the threat from within. Over the years, I have watched a growing intolerance at universities in this country—not intolerance

along racial or ethnic or gender lines—there, we have made laudable progress. Rather, a kind of intellectual intolerance, a political one-sidedness, that is the antithesis of what universities should stand for. It manifests itself in many ways: in the intellectual monocultures that have taken over certain disciplines; in the demands to disinvite speakers and outlaw groups whose views we find offensive; in constant calls for the university itself to take political stands. We decry certain news outlets as echo chambers, while we fail to notice the echo chamber we've built around ourselves. (Etchmendy 2017)

This growing intellectual intolerance undermines the core mission of universities in free societies, which is to foster open inquiry and diverse civic perspectives. When academic environments become echo chambers, they stifle critical thinking and civic engagement and limit the exchange of ideas that drives intellectual progress and sustains civic friendship.

And recent research does, clearly, indicate that a lack of political diversity among faculty can lead to an environment where conservative viewpoints are marginalized, potentially impacting the educational experience of conservative students. One prominent study by Inbar and Lammers (2012) highlights the overwhelming liberal bias in social and personality psychology, suggesting that this ideological homogeneity can lead to the selective interpretation of research and discrimination against conservative students and faculty (Inbar and Lammers 2012). This bias may manifest in classroom discussions, where conservative students might feel pressured to conform to the prevailing liberal ideology or remain silent, thereby stifling their contributions and engagement. Furthermore, the study emphasizes that the political beliefs of researchers can significantly influence the selection of research questions and the interpretation of findings, which may further alienate conservative students who do not see their perspectives represented in the curriculum (Inbar and Lammers 2012). More importantly, “conservatives fear negative consequences of revealing their political beliefs to their colleagues. Finally, they are right to do so: In decisions ranging from paper reviews to hiring, many social and personality psychologists said that they would discriminate against openly conservative colleagues” (Inbar and Lammers 2012, p. 496).¹

6. Legal Remedies

To address fair and balanced education issues considering all of the above considerations, universities and other regulatory bodies should ensure that diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives do not alienate different sociopolitical groups, but foster opportunities for genuine dialog and disagreement among the populace, creating forums for meaningful and politically significant speech. One remedy is to ensure that students actually receive a balanced education, requiring them to study different economic theories, such as Keynesian economics and laissez-faire economics, as well as diverse population and religious perspectives to enhance global knowledge for understanding. This can be

¹ Apart from the negative psychological impact on students who find themselves in a hegemonically one-sided learning environment, the distorting effects on worldview formation are also clear: Zhang (2023) argues that working on ideological and political culture construction supports the notion that the ideological environment within educational institutions can shape students' psychological quality and personality development (Zhang 2023). The ideological education provided in universities often reflects the dominant political views of the faculty, which can lead to a homogenized political culture that may not accommodate conservative viewpoints. This lack of ideological diversity can create a sense of alienation among conservative students, who may feel their beliefs are undervalued or dismissed (Zhang 2023). Likewise, empirical investigations into the political biases in academic research reveal that conservative perspectives are often portrayed negatively compared to their liberal counterparts. Eitan et al. conducted systematic tests showing that conservative viewpoints are more likely to be the focus of negative explanations within social psychology research, further entrenching the perception of bias against conservative students (Eitan et al. 2018). This systemic bias can contribute to a hostile academic environment for students who identify with conservative ideologies, potentially affecting their academic performance and overall well-being. The implications of such political homogeneity extend beyond individual classrooms.

achieved through specific laws and regulations. Although that may seem inimical to the academic enterprise, laws and regulations that structure both the content and purposes of pedagogy are not uncommon in higher education through the use of the Fourteenth Amendment and various supreme court rulings.

Applying the Fourteenth Amendment's Equal Protection Clause in educational settings is crucial for fostering intellectual and political diversity. This legal framework is a foundation for ensuring that all students, regardless of their background, have equal access to educational opportunities. The historical context of the Fourteenth Amendment, particularly through landmark cases such as *Brown v. Board of Education* 347 U.S. 483 (1954), illustrates its role in dismantling segregation and promoting equality in education. The Supreme Court's ruling in *Brown* established that educational institutions must provide equal opportunities to all students, thereby reinforcing the principle that education is a right that should be accessible to everyone on equal terms (Bon 2012; Viteritti 2011). Additionally, the implications of the Fourteenth Amendment extend beyond racial equality to encompass broader aspects of diversity, including political and intellectual diversity. The Supreme Court's decisions in *Grutter v. Bollinger*, 539 U.S. 306 (2003) and *Gratz v. Bollinger*, 539 U.S. 244 (2003) recognized diversity as a compelling governmental interest, justifying affirmative action policies in higher education (Robinson et al. 2007). This precedent creates avenues to explore to promote legal remedies and policies that promote a diverse curriculum and encourage a range of viewpoints, thus protecting students' rights to engage with different political and intellectual perspectives.

Furthermore, the historical analysis of cases such as *Mendez v. Westminster School District*, 161 F.2d 774 (9th Cir.) (1947) demonstrates the ongoing struggle for equal educational opportunities for marginalized groups, including Mexican American students. The ruling in *Mendez* highlighted the violation of student's rights under the Equal Protection Clause, paving the way for future legal challenges against segregation and discrimination in education (Valencia 2005). This historical precedent can inform contemporary efforts to ensure that educational policies actively promote diversity and inclusion, enriching the learning environment for all students. In the current educational landscape, the challenge remains to balance the pursuit of diversity with the political realities that often influence school board policies. Research indicates that political pressures can dilute diversity initiatives, as seen in various school districts where the commitment to diversity has been undermined by shifting political sentiments (Diem and Frankenberg 2013; Frankenberg et al. 2015). Thus, intellectual and political diversity advocates must leverage the Equal Protection Clause to counteract these pressures and ensure that educational institutions remain committed to fostering a truly inclusive environment, where "inclusion" also refers to political persuasion.

The evolving interpretation of the Fourteenth Amendment necessitates a proactive approach to safeguarding this kind of authentic diversity in education. As noted by scholars, the political and legal uncertainties surrounding diversity policies require a robust defense of the principles enshrined in the Fourteenth Amendment (Diem and Frankenberg 2013; Frankenberg et al. 2015). This involves legal advocacy and community engagement to ensure that diverse voices are heard and represented in educational decision-making processes. Supreme Court cases like *Grutter v. Bollinger* and *Gratz v. Bollinger* underscore the importance of fostering diversity in education as a compelling state interest, highlighting that a diverse student body enhances the exchange of ideas and prepares students for a pluralistic society. These rulings bridge the historical gap between segregation and discrimination by affirming that inclusion enriches education while limiting practices that rigidly prioritize specific identities over others. Expanding this principle, courts and policymakers could apply similar frameworks to address political belief discrimination, ensuring that educational institutions promote balanced, open environments where ideological diversity

is valued alongside other forms of diversity. This approach would help create a more comprehensive educational worldview, preparing students for respectful discourse and problem-solving collaborations.

One critical regulation is accreditation, as a result of which universities must comply with specific frameworks to receive federal funding or recognition of the degrees. Accreditation serves as a framework to ensure quality control and assurance of various programs (Romanowski and Karkouti 2024). As per the U.S. Department of Education, the mission statement for accreditation is “to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access” (Department of Education 2024). The key aspect of the aforementioned statement is to prepare students for “global competitiveness”, which inherently implies participation in contested public squares, ultimately requiring civic participation and engagement through intellectual discourse and understanding. Within the auspices of accreditation programs also find themselves implementation institutional review boards. It is important to note, there are no official or professional organizations that accredit political science programs in the United States. For something as critical as civic participation, how is this a reality in 2024?

The specific regulatory remedies for higher education could be designed to protect and foster diverse worldviews, particularly in alignment with the concern about the power of unchecked Althusserian ideological state apparatuses. One concrete remedy would be the creation of institutional review boards (IRBs) focused on curriculum diversity. While the current utilization of IRBs is to ensure ethical research, they could also be used to ensure ethical teaching.

For example, Grady highlights that the current regulations for those sitting on an institutional review board require a minimum of five individuals with various and diverse backgrounds, including both sexes and experts in the relative field (Grady 2015). Utilizing the same requirements, university IRBs could be used to audit or approve changes to curricula to ensure the protection of various worldviews in teaching contexts. These boards would regularly audit courses to ensure that multiple perspectives are represented, preventing ideological dominance in key areas such as sociology, political science, and history. The utilization of IRBs for accreditation, with respect not just to research but also to teaching, would still provide university and faculty autonomy as long as diverse worldviews are protected.

The educational outcome for accreditation should create environments for meaningful discourse, ensuring students obtain equal access to different worldviews to meet a minimal prescribed standard within the respective political science fields. “Accreditation, an instrument of quality assurance, is used to assess the national system of higher education. Accreditation is thus considered a quality stamp, which ensures that an accredited institution/programme (sic) has undergone a rigorous process of external peer evaluation based on predefined standards and principles and complies with the minimum requirements” (Kumar et al. 2020, p. 151). As such, specific programs that aim to improve civic participation would require a political science accreditation that ensures the equal representation of political theory and ideology.

There is immense value when it comes to opening an academic program up for accreditation. “Accreditation requires that you open your program and your work to scrutiny by representatives of an outside agency, a potentially threatening prospect” (Edwards 2016, p. 99). However, improvement only comes when one is challenged to meet specific ever-changing criteria. How are we to prove our education meets the needs of students and accurately represents various worldviews if we are not willing to be subject to accreditation? Without this, programs simply go unchecked.

Specifically, there is an accrediting body known as the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration (NASPAA) that is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) membership association with over 300 institutional member schools globally. The focus of the NASPAA is to “ensure excellence in education and training for public service and to promote the ideal of public service” (NASPAA 2024). What should be more disturbing, is that per educationusa.state.gov, there is “no professional or programmatic accrediting organization for academic programs in political science/international relations” (2024). In the United States, there are approximately 60 recognized programmatic accrediting organizations, with 44,000 programs covered. As important as political science and civic engagement are, how is the discipline so unrepresented compared to various other programs?

If programmatic accreditation bodies focus specifically on assessing specific programs, institutional accreditation focuses on higher educational credibility, the ability to transfer credits between institutions, and federal financial aid. Typically, most accreditation bodies review programs and institutions every seven to ten years ([Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation 2024](#)). While incorporating the legal remedy of accreditation may seem a mundane solution, the crucial aspect for specific fields is that such regulation requires accreditation from either a non-partisan or a bilateral partisan review body every three to five years, aligning with federal election cycles. This measure would ensure that diverse worldviews are equally considered amidst political transitions and periods of heightened civic involvement.

A supplementary measure to meet accreditation requirements would involve the introduction of specific topics for discussion within academic circles, fostering a diverse and equitable perspective that encourages constructive dialog in search of viable solutions to contemporary challenges.

Universities need to achieve the goal of meeting the needs of all of their students, regardless of political ideology or worldview, and create avenues within accreditation would also open the doors for quality assurance programs to maintain standards. One avenue that could materialize is the review of the promotion of non-partisan approved rubrics, lesson plans, and events. Introducing diverse worldview lesson plans into core curricula surrounding civic participation would serve as a legal remedy to address the ideological homogeneity that is prevalent in higher education institutions. By mandating that educational institutions incorporate a range of perspectives in their civic education programs via accreditation standards, policymakers can ensure that students are exposed to a variety of political ideologies and cultural viewpoints. This diversity in educational content then fosters critical thinking, promotes intellectual diversity, and equips students with a comprehensive understanding of civic engagement. Such an approach not only aligns with constitutional principles of pluralism and balanced power, but also prepares students to participate more thoughtfully and effectively in democratic processes. Ensuring that curricula reflect diverse political and cultural worldviews can also help mitigate the risks of ideological conformity, enhancing the overall quality of civic engagement.

Multiple avenues exist in which to achieve the goal of equitable introductions to various worldviews for critical thinking and analysis. For example, accreditation could require universities to obtain agreements from various 501c3 organizations or think tanks to sponsor events such as a professional debate stage regarding topics of interest at the time, or creating venues to have individuals from the political spectrums as guest professors to serve as a means to create support for various courses and development of special topics. Supporting venues where the purpose is to provide insight into various worldviews is necessary, as it protects the First Amendment. Indeed, the protection of the First Amendment is critical and mandatory for accreditation and regulatory purposes; universities should be unwavering in their commitment to protect that inalienable right. Thus, to rectify the

issue, any cancelations of events due to protests should require placing their accreditation status and federal financial aid on probation for violation for being out of compliance with mandatory show-cause orders. While it is imperative to ensure the safety of all students, faculty, and visitors, the key component is ensuring safety and clearly supporting First Amendment protections. While there is a historical context of student protests for certain events, the key aspect of promoting and protecting First Amendment rights is that the vast majority of student protests are actually peaceful in nature (Ustyuzhanin et al. 2023).

In the current era, social media has seamlessly eroded any sense of decorum or etiquette in discussion, making it nearly impossible to have civil debate in social media or online forums (Anderson and Huntington 2017). Therefore, reviving public discourse on civic and political matters is critical for fostering an environment where differing opinions can peacefully coexist and sharpen each other. It is imperative that higher education institutions create environments that allow individuals to learn to agree to disagree respectfully. By embracing the aforementioned approach, we can ultimately forge an environment where engagement in respectful debates allows for productive conversations. Instead of creating an environment that forces only one viewpoint and suppressing dissent, the key is to develop an inclusive environment, promoting discussion rather than isolation and discrimination based on political affiliation, ideology, or public policy (see Bejan 2019).

Continuing with this focus, one could pursue and/or amend regulations and legislation to move political and religious ideology as a protected class within academia, consistent with the addition of Title IX after the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The purpose of such legislation would be to continue to ensure equal treatment for gender, race, religion, disabilities, and ideological bends. Unfortunately, regulations and legislation do not correctly provide equal protections for political ideology, even though students self-identify as such (e.g., conservative, liberal, socialist, etc.). In fact, to be precise, there needs to be equal protections for political ideology, consistent with other protections such as religion, gender, sex, and race. Joshua Mitchell (2020) discusses this phenomenon in *American Awakening*, where he describes cancel culture and identity politics as an illness infecting the United States (Mitchell 2020).

Further building on this kind of remedy, one could entertain the idea of increasing new faculty hires who support various worldviews to encompass a more significant breadth of learning, rather than professors or instructors who “fit the mold”. Aristotle believed that the purpose of an educational institution in his time was to enhance knowledge through the pursuit of truth and wisdom (Aristotle 1905). He emphasized the importance of education in developing one’s intellectual faculties and virtues, viewing it as essential for cultivating a well-rounded individual who could contribute positively to society. Aristotle’s ideas on education focused on developing critical thinking, reasoning, and ethical character, all of which he believed were essential for the pursuit of knowledge and the flourishing of individuals within a community. In his academy, Aristotle encouraged his students to question everything and engage in critical thinking, a concept that has been eroded in contemporary times in favor of a “cancel culture” of opposing views and the anachronism of history (Clark 2020; Meesala 2020).

To improve upon and support various civic engagements, we draw on principles, tenets, and the power of academia as an institutional state apparatus. Civic engagement is enacted and facilitated through a broader set of interconnected systems. These engagement systems encompass families, parents, government, schools, and teachers and operate at the individual, group, and societal levels across different settings where students learn, grow, and develop at multiple points in time and through shared activities (Van Riper et al. 2018). As such, academia and education serve as a medium to transfer information. Aristotle, St. Augustine of Hippo, and our founding fathers discussed the importance of an educated,

virtuous, and engaged populace. However, the power of academia in various contexts is at times both thoughtful and malicious, raising the question of how universities should undergo regulation or respond to mandates to provide equal access to education.

In other words, regulations should be put in place to govern the teaching of civic participation and how individuals can actively engage in it. While some may argue against excessive regulation, ensuring true diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) within civic involvement at universities requires clear guidelines. Otherwise, maintaining current DEI policies is nothing more than critical theory in action, supporting an agenda requiring the seizure of the educational state apparatus, as posited by various Marxist thinkers (Pidluzny 2023). Therefore, true DEI would require and mandate protections of the range of political ideologies fairly and equitably, as supported by scholarly research and philosophical principles. Enforcing regulations for education on civic engagement and the promotion of inclusive representation of diverse political perspectives is essential for fostering true DEI within higher education institutions.

7. Conclusions

Regardless of the specific activities included under the civic engagement “umbrella”, they share a common goal of promoting the public good, improving the well-being of reasoning individuals and communities oriented toward human flourishing and civil conversations with those on the other side. As such, civic engagement is also closely linked to the notion of individual and collective social responsibility, which is based on the belief that community members are responsible to and for each other. According to the theory of social capital, civic engagement is critical for the healthy and effective functioning of democratic societies. Social capital refers to the resources and advantages that are created, maintained, and shared by communal relationships and community-specific actions. Social capital is seen as a critically important antecedent to successful community reform efforts. As such, civic engagement activities represent one of the primary avenues through which social capital is generated and maintained within a community (Putnam 1973, 2000).

Legal remedies such as regulations are, in fact, necessary to protect students with various worldviews and political preferences. Accreditation and quality assurance programs with non-partisan or bilateral partisan groups can help foster guidelines that support diversity of thought and worldview. Additionally, political ideology should be a protected class, similar to religion, gender, and sex. Discrimination is discrimination regardless of cause. As such, institutions should establish inclusive guidelines that prioritize diversity and balance to create a more equitable and diverse civic engagement curriculum. In doing so, universities can foster both sides of the political spectrum and encourage appropriate discourse. They could also create various special topics that allow different games, setting up think tanks or political 501c3 programs with the ability to create and teach courses as an option. These guidelines should encourage critical thinking and the exploration of diverse perspectives, achieved through readings, discussions, and guest speakers.

In these and other ways, it is important to create safe spaces for open, respectful, and reasoned discourse where faculty can facilitate discussions and promote understanding among students with different views. Ongoing training for faculty and staff in preparing for these discussions, managing conflicts, and creating an inclusive environment is crucial. Regular curriculum reviews with feedback should also provide a boost. Finally, supporting student-led initiatives and organizations that promote civic engagement and dialog further enhances the university’s commitment to fostering a diverse, reasonable, and respectful learning environment.

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