

A Conversation with PETER BERKOWITZ

Senior Fellow at the Hoover Institution, Peter Berkowitz is a leading scholar of political philosophy and American politics. In the conversation, Berkowitz discusses how our universities—due to a combination of political correctness and professional specialization—have neglected their core mission. Berkowitz and Kristol also consider what might be done to educate students where universities fail at the task. Finally, Berkowitz discusses his experience teaching liberal arts and fighting for their preservation on campus.

On political bias on campus, Berkowitz says: [There is a] near total absence on campuses of conservative ideas. I don't for a minute believe that you need to be a conservative to teach sympathetically conservative ideas, just like I don't believe you need to be a puritan to teach puritan ideas. But our universities feel no obligation, no pedagogical obligation, to present the other side of the argument.

On why we need liberal education, Berkowitz says: To understand our freedom is to understand where we've come from, how we got here, the institutions that defend freedom, what the shape of freedom looks like, how it can go wrong, how to use it well. We have this amazing opportunity to study the set of conflicting opinions about what is freedom and how to live with it and how to live well with it.

On “taking offense” and education, Berkowitz says: I want a university president who [would] say to the incoming class: “you have a right to be offended. If a week goes by and you haven't heard an opinion that makes you feel uneasy, I want you to come to me and I'm going to have to encourage more freedom of speech...because if you're not being offended in the give and take of conversation, you're not getting a liberal education.”

On online efforts at education in politics, Berkowitz says: What you're doing is lowering the costs for students to gain access to the history of political philosophy. You can come across the name[s] Burke, Strauss, Mill. Thanks to online programs, students have almost immediate access to [great books]. That's a tremendous development. These books are inherently compelling.

Chapters in PETER BERKOWITZ Conversation

[Our Illiberal Education](#)

[Swarthmore, Jerusalem, and Yale](#)

[Teaching at Harvard](#)

[Political Correctness on Campus](#)

[How to get an Education](#)