



16 January 2017

Norman Finkelstein



THE RIGHT TO OUTRAGE:

Academic Freedom and the Bertrand Russell Case

The notion of academic freedom captures a trio of distinct claims. *First*, it asserts, that academic peers are best placed to judge scholarly competence and, accordingly, on all such determinations the faculty should be granted professional autonomy. This component of academic freedom is designed to preempt extra-scholarly agendas – whether they be religious, economic, or political – from tainting employment decisions. *Second*, academic freedom asserts that pursuit of Truth, the avowed end of a life in the ivory tower, presupposes, as its necessary means, liberty of speech. Truth, in its wholeness and its parts, on its surface and in its depth, cannot be attained, as every reader of John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty* will know, if either law or public opinion impedes the minds of those perambulating down paths of inquiry less traveled. *Third*, academic freedom denotes that outside the professional setting a scholar should enjoy the ordinary rights of a democratic citizen to speak his mind and (ensuing from this right) that extramural utterances, except in the rarest of instances, should not bear on the assessment of a faculty member's professional competence.

Norman Finkelstein's presentation will focus on the third component of academic freedom. It will examine the extramural rights of a professor through the lens of a little-

known chapter in the life of Bertrand Russell. Russell was hired in 1940 by City College of New York to teach logic, mathematics and philosophy of science. But after a campaign led by the Catholic Church that targeted Russell's herodox opinions on religion and sexuality, his appointment was rescinded. Defending the right to teach in his areas of professional expertise despite his unconventional personal opinions, Russell asserted: "In a democracy it is necessary that people should learn to endure having their sentiments outraged." Finkelstein will argue that the issues posed by Russell's case are more complex than his defense suggested.

Norman G. Finkelstein received his doctorate in 1988 from the Department of Politics at Princeton University. He taught for many years Western political theory and the Israel-Palestine conflict. He is the author of some ten books that have been translated into 50 foreign editions, including *The Holocaust Industry: Reflections on the exploitation of Jewish suffering* and, most recently, *Gaza: An inquest into its martyrdom*.

Lecture | 16 January 2017 | 18:00

Organiser: Department 'Law & Anthropology'

Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology

Main Seminar Room | Advokatenweg 36 | 06114 Halle

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