

AAUP-KSU Statement and Call for Action re: HB 322 & HB 327 (legislative attempts to curtail academic freedom and prohibit the teaching and learning of critical race theory)

Recently, anti-academic freedom legislation has been introduced in state governments across the country, including Ohio. The primary purpose of these bills is to **prohibit “critical race theory”** from being taught in primary, secondary, and even higher education. Critical race theory is an academic concept that has existed for more than 40 years with its main thought being that racism is a systemic social construct and not “merely the product of individual bias or prejudice, but also is embedded in laws and policies” (OCAAUP, 2021, para. 2).

Such bills **infringe on the right of faculty to teach, suppress student learning, and curtail intellectual exploration**. Furthermore, these legislative efforts “seek to substitute political mandates for the considered judgement of professional educators, hindering students’ ability to learn and engage in critical thinking across differences and disagreements” (Mulvey, 2021, para. 3).

Over the summer, lawmakers introduced [Ohio House Bill 322](#) and [Ohio House Bill 327](#) which would restrict the teaching of particular concepts and topics.

HB 322 is primarily aimed at public schools and state agencies; however, the Ohio Department of Higher Education would be included under the definition of state agency. It would prohibit public entities from mandating the discussion of current events as well as prohibiting the teaching of a range of topics related to race, sex, slavery, and bias. Furthermore, it focuses on history and civics courses and dissuades the discussion of current events, controversial issues, and/or activities that involve social or policy advocacy (OCAAUP, 2021).

HB 327 specifically targets higher education in that it prohibits public schools, state agencies, colleges, and universities from “offering teaching, instruction, or training on ‘divisive concepts’ or accepting private funding to promote such concepts” (OCAAUP, 2021, para. 10). Violations would result in the funding to school districts or State Share of Instruction to colleges and universities being withheld. Additionally, a substitute bill to HB 327 was introduced that contains many changes which are specifically aimed at institutes of higher education.

The Ohio House will be reconvening in September. **Please consider reaching out to your State Representative and the representatives on the State and Local Government Committee to express opposition to these bills!**

Email your State Representative and the representatives on the State and Local Government Committee through [The Action Network](#)

OR

Find your State Representative by accessing this [link](#)

OCAAUP (2021, June 23). HB 322 & 327 threaten faculty, higher ed. <http://ocaaup.org/news/hb-322-327-threaten-faculty-higher-ed/>
Mulvey, I. (2021). Joint statement on legislative efforts to restrict education about racism and American history. https://www.aaup.org/sites/default/files/Statement-Efforts-Restrict-Teaching-Race-Final_0.pdf

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