

Perilous Inquiry

An International Symposium on the Shrinking Space of Academic Freedom

Karlstad University, Sweden
4 – 5 June, 2025

Threats to free inquiry and scholarly independence appear to be multiplying. Whether from university administrations, academic colleagues, external funders, or—increasingly—illiberal governments and media, researchers face mounting challenges to their efforts to gain insights about the world.

We convene this symposium to examine these challenges more closely. Recognizing that threats to inquiry have various political agendas and technical mechanisms, we have called for a diverse range of scholarly analyses. Papers centre on limited case studies or broader structural phenomena; they investigate the research process holistically or highlight one of its component stages (developing projects, collecting data, and communicating results); they focus on a scholar's personal experience or they rely on observation; and we have welcomed, too, projects that critically explore the ideological underpinnings of scholarly independence. We intend for this exchange to help support scholarly activity and to uncover the roles that scholars can play in building open and more informed societies.

Programme

4 June 2025

10:00 – 10:15 Welcome and introduction of keynote speaker, by Andreas Nyström, Head of Department of Language, Literature and Intercultural Studies, Karlstad University
Venue: Fryxellsalen, House 1

10:15 – 11:45 Keynote Lecture by Benjamin Teitelbaum, Associate Professor of Ethnomusicology and International Affairs, University of Colorado Boulder, and Guest Researcher, Karlstad University

**Technopolitical Theology
and the New Dreams of Postliberalism**

4 June 2025

11:45 – 13:00 Lunch

Panel 1.

13:00 – 15:00 Chair, Ekatherina Zhukova, Associate Professor, Department of Language, Literature and Intercultural Studies, Karlstad University
Venue: Humlan, House 12

13:00 – 13:40 Liora Halperin, Professor of International Studies and History, and Distinguished Endowed Chair in Jewish Studies, University of Washington, Seattle

Teaching Israel/Palestine in Trump's America

13:40 – 14:20 Sindre Bangstad, Research Professor, Institute for Church, Religion and Worldview Research, Oslo

Academic Freedom, the Neoliberal University, the Transatlantic Far-right, and the 'Palestine Exception'

14:20 – 15:00 Matthew McManus, Lecturer, LSA Political Science, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor

Why the Right Would Execute Socrates

15:00 – 15:20 Coffee, House 12

Panel 2.

15:20 – 17:00 Chair, Staffan Löfving, Associate Professor, Department of Language, Literature and Intercultural Studies, Karlstad University, and Visiting Associate Professor with the SARChI Chair in South African Art and Visual Culture, University of Johannesburg
Venue: Humlan, House 12

15:20 – 16:00 Anye-Nkwenti Nyamnjoh, Senior Research Officer, Department of Medicine, University of Cape Town, and Thierry Luescher, Director, Postgraduate Studies and Researcher Development of the University of Cape Town

Academic Freedom, Students and the Decolonial Turn in South Africa

16:00 – 16:40 Mónica Almanza, Visiting Researcher, Universidad de los Andes, Bogotá

Academic Freedom in Colombian Universities

16:40 – 17:00 Concluding discussion, day 1.

18:00 Dinner

5 June 2025

09:30 – 10:00 Coffee, Aventinen, House 12

Panel 3.

10:00 – 12:00 Chair, Annika Malmsten, Lecturer, Department of Language, Literature and Intercultural Studies, Karlstad University, and Phd Candidate in Intercultural Studies, University of Helsinki
Venue: Minerva, House 12

10:00 – 10:40 Tobias Hübinette, Associate Professor, Department of Language, Literature and Intercultural Studies, Karlstad University, and Catrin Lundström, Senior Associate Professor, Department of Culture and Society, Linköping University

The Political Threats to Academic Freedom in Sweden From Reactionaries to Progressives

10:40 – 11:20 Maria Moberg Stephenson, Lecturer, Department of Social and Psychological Studies, Karlstad University

Shrinking the Space from Within

11:20 – 12:00 Rúna Baianstovu, Lecturer, School of Behavioural, Social and Legal Sciences, Örebro University

Typologies of Honour and Violence

12:00 – 13:00 Lunch, Aventinen, House 12

Panel 4.

13:00 – 14:20 Chair, Maria Moberg Stephenson, Lecturer, Department of Social and Psychological Studies, Karlstad University
Venue: Minerva, House 12

13:00 – 13:40 Sophia Zervas, Phd Candidate in Ethnomusicology, Harvard University

National Identity, Islamic Decoloniality, and Music Education in Erdoğan's Turkey

13:40 – 14:20 Staffan Löfving, Associate Professor, Department of Language, Literature and Intercultural Studies, Karlstad University, and Visiting Associate Professor with the SARChI Chair in South African Art and Visual Culture, University of Johannesburg

Interculturality in Class, or, The Perils of Diversity

14:20 – 14:40 Coffee, Aventinen, House 12

5 June 2025

14:40 – 16:20 Chair, Tobias Hübinette, Associate Professor, Department of Language, Literature and Intercultural Studies, Karlstad University

Venue: Minerva, House 12

Panel 5.

14:40 – 15:20 Gulnaz Sibgatullina, Assistant Professor for Illiberal Regimes in the Department of History, European Studies, and Religious Studies, University of Amsterdam

Ethics Committees Whose Safety is Being Protected?

15:20 – 16:00 Benjamin Teitelbaum, Associate Professor of Ethnomusicology and International Affairs, University of Colorado Boulder, and Guest Researcher, Karlstad University

Against Institutions On the Technocratic Threat to Universities

16:00 – 16:20 Concluding discussion, day 2

This symposium is funded by the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
Karlstad University

