



Written by [Joe Wolverton, II, J.D.](#) on May 1, 2023

Nearly 700 Professors at UNC Oppose Requiring Study of the Constitution

Should college students be required to study the U.S. Constitution in order to graduate?

A bill pending before the North Carolina state Legislature — [HB 96](#) — would mandate just that. Specifically, students seeking to graduate from the University of North Carolina system would be required to fulfill the following [proposed requirements](#):



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UNC-Chapel Hill

...Earn three credit hours of instruction in American History or American Government in order to graduate from a constituent institution of The University of North Carolina with a baccalaureate degree or from a community college with an associate degree. In order to satisfy this requirement, the course must meet the following requirements:

- Provide a comprehensive overview of the major events and turning points of American history and government.
- Require each student to read at least the following documents in their entirety:
 1. The Constitution of the United States of America.
 2. The Declaration of Independence.
 3. The Emancipation Proclamation.
 4. At least five essays from the Federalist Papers, as determined by the instructor.
 5. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Letter from Birmingham Jail.
 6. The Gettysburg Address.
- Include a cumulative final exam that makes up at least 20% of the total course grade on the principles, author perspectives, and relevant historic contexts of the required documents.

At first blush, most readers would likely agree with the bill's purpose: require college students to study key documents from American history. Support for HB 96 would be spurred — undoubtedly — by surveys revealing the shameful level of familiarity with American History among college graduates.

Recent studies have revealed that college graduates have a shocking lack of knowledge when it comes to U.S. history. In a survey conducted by the American Council of Trustees and Alumni, only 24 percent of college graduates were able to identify correctly one of the foundational principles of the U.S. government, which is the purpose of the Bill of Rights.

The consequences of this lack of historical knowledge are significant. Students who lack a deep understanding of the foundations of the United States may be more susceptible to misinformation and



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propaganda, particularly in the current climate of polarized politics. They may also miss out on the sense of the correct constitutional relationship among the states and the federal government, knowing the source of our rights, and an understanding of the right of the people to alter or abolish governments that have become tyrannical, and ultimately would likely lack an appreciation of the responsibility that comes with understanding the country's history and institutions.

None of that is really debatable and, as I said, might account for the support for the North Carolina bill that would mandate study of the listed documents, as well as an exam to demonstrate familiarity with the content of those documents.

Despite the deplorable state of comprehension of our founding documents and the principles upon which they are founded, there is a group of University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill (UNC) professors who have sent an [open letter](#) to the Tar Heel State's lawmakers urging them *not* to pass HB 96.

The letter opens with the professors' claim that the bill would:

violate the principles of academic freedom and shared governance that undergird higher education in N.C. and the U.S. If enacted, we believe that these measures will further damage the reputation of UNC and the state of North Carolina and will likely bring critical scrutiny from accrediting agencies that know undue interference in university affairs when they see it.

In other words, they worry that their freedom to control what is taught might be (certainly *would be*) reduced, and that UNC might lose its accreditation when the accrediting associations learn of the law's mandates.

Later in their letter, the faculty members opposed to HB 96 insist that "It substitutes ideological force-feeding for the intellectual expertise of faculty."

I find it ironic that a group notorious for ideological force-feeding would oppose some other group's attempt to do so. University professors most certainly don't oppose ideological force-feeding, so perhaps their chief gripe against the bill is that it creates competition for the force-feeding over which they've had monopoly control for so long.

The academic freedom the protesting professors lament the loss of should the bill pass is likely where the rubber hits the road for them.

No one paying any attention to the decline of higher education in the United States would fail to note that this "academic freedom" has led to enslavement to Marxism and "wokeism." In turn, generation after generation of American young adults subjected to this "academic freedom" have been indoctrinated to submit to socialism and to — at least tacitly — contribute to the marginalization of all that once made Western civilization good and great.

A simple perusal of college courses offered by most major American universities would be sufficient to familiarize a person with the pablum and perversion being sold as "liberal education." Rather than study *The Iliad*, college students are more likely to study the sexual proclivities of the ancient Greeks. Rather than study the principles of natural law and individual sovereignty set out in the Declaration of Independence, students are more likely to take a class on Thomas Jefferson's alleged affair with a servant.

The issue, then, isn't whether American young adults should study the Constitution, the Declaration of



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Independence, and other key documents in American History. The issue is whether college — even a college that is forced to teach those things — is the best place to learn the truth about the men and messages that made the United States good and great.



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