

LEARNING  
FREEDOM

# Summer School 2023



# LIVING FREEDOM

Renewing freedom through education and debate. Living Freedom offers opportunities for younger generations to explore ideas and debate ideals as they relate to the past, present, and future of freedom.

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## INTRODUCTION

Organised by the educational charity Ideas Matter, Living Freedom exists to renew freedom through education and debate. This year, our annual summer school brought together 75 young advocates of freedom from around the world – across the UK, Europe and North America – to debate the meaning and ideals of freedom in the twenty-first century.

Every generation faces the challenge of understanding freedom for its own times and of renewing this core value of modern liberal societies. The summer school represents an opportunity to get to grips with the best that has been said and written over the centuries as well as engage with the most important contemporary issues and challenges.

Throughout the school, the lectures, panels, seminars and workshops raised many challenging issues, with the objective of encouraging discussion and debate. Whether freedom of conscience or artificial intelligence, the implications of identity politics or the quest for progress, our expert thinkers explored the value of free speech and other freedoms today.

There are seldom easy or clear-cut answers to any political and cultural issues today. Hence why the school hosted diverse group of critics, commentators and campaigners keen to discuss their views and campaigns. This year we discussed everything from sensitivity readers to the heckler's veto and explored complex moral issues such as the case for reparations and the morality of borders.

This pack contains all information on the programme including sessions, speakers and background reading, as well as a gallery of images from the event and some of the many reflections sent to us after the event by participants and speakers. To get a feel for the atmosphere and discussions, I would urge you to read this [write-up](#) from our Living Freedom project assistant Felice Basbøll. And be sure to check out the videos and podcasts of the talks listed at the back of this pack.

We believe that it is only by critically engaging with ideas that we can start to rise to the challenge of creating the twenty-first century arguments required to reinvigorate freedom. Hearteningly, this event proved a useful starting point.

**Alastair Donald**

convenor, Living Freedom



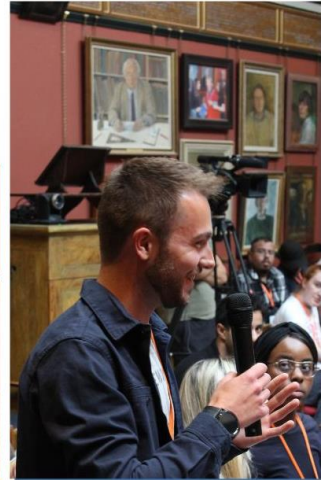
<b>LIVING FREEDOM 2023: OVERVIEW</b>				
<b>DAY 1: THURSDAY 29 JUNE – ART WORKERS’ GUILD</b>				
<b>Time</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Speaker(s)</b>	<b>Chair</b>	<b>Room</b>
17:45 – 18:30	Arrival for registration and coffee			
18:30 – 18:40	<b>Welcome and introductions</b>	Alastair Donald		The Hall
18:40 – 20:00	<b>Freedom of conscience: 21st-century challenges</b>	Professor Frank Furedi	Alastair Donald	The Hall
20:00 – 20:20	<b>Delegate introductions</b>	Alastair Donald		The Hall
20:20	Drinks at the Queens Larder			

<b>DAY 2: FRIDAY 30 JUNE – ART WORKERS’ GUILD</b>				
<b>Time</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Speaker(s)</b>	<b>Chair</b>	<b>Room</b>
09:00 – 10:00	<b>Freedom in the age of identity politics</b>	Dr Joanna Williams	Jacob Reynolds	The Hall
10:00 – 10:30	Coffee break			
10:30 – 11:30 WORKSHOPS Free Speech Dilemmas	<b>OPTION 1. On campus: should we veto the heckler’s veto?</b>	Dr Shereen Benjamin & Dr Julius Grower	Claire Fox	The Hall
	<b>OPTION 2. WhatsAppened to privacy?</b>	Dr Tiffany Jenkins	Jacob Reynolds	Master’s Room
	<b>OPTION 3. What’s wrong with updating old books?</b>	Ella Nixon	Ella Whelan	Gradidge Room
11:30 – 11:45	Break			
11:45 – 12:45	<b>Dystopian or dysfunctional? The 21st-century state</b>	Josie Appleton	Rob Lyons	The Hall
12:45 – 13:45	Lunch			
13:45 – 14:45	<b>WORKSHOPS: What the papers say</b>	Liam Deacon Sonia Gallego Rob Lyons	Kevin Rooney	The Hall
		Sam Armstrong Dave Bowden Poppy Coburn	Austin Williams	Master’s Room
		Marion Calder Harry Howard Charlie Peters	Dr Mo Lovatt	Gradidge Room
14:45 – 15:15	Coffee break			
15:15 – 16:30	<b>The dangers of progress?</b>	Nina Power & Dr Ralph Schoellhammer	Alastair Donald	The Hall
16:30 – 16:45	Break			
16:45 – 17:45 WORKSHOPS	<b>OPTION 1. Surveillance state: the all-seeing eye?</b>	Timandra Harkness & Mark Johnson	Alastair Donald	The Hall

The state and society	<b>OPTION 2. A war on civil society?</b>	Fraser Myers	Jacob Reynolds	Master's Room
	<b>OPTION 3. 15-minute cities: conspiracy versus reality</b>	Alan Miller	Austin Williams	Gradidge Room
17:45 – 18:00	Break			
18:00 – 19:00	<b>In conversation with critics: What is criticism?</b>	JJ Charlesworth Ivan Hewett Dr Tiffany Jenkins	Austin Williams	The Hall

<b>DAY 3: SATURDAY 1 JULY – OCTOBER GALLERY</b>				
<b>Time</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Speaker(s)</b>	<b>Chair</b>	<b>Room</b>
09:30 – 10:30	<b>What does it mean to be human in a world of generative AI?</b>	Sandy Starr	Rob Lyons	Theatre
10:30 – 11:00	Coffee break			
11:00 – 12:00	<b>The 'stolen years': understanding the lockdowns</b>	Dr Jennie Bristow	Kevin Rooney	Theatre
12:00 – 13:00	Lunch			Café
13:00 – 13:30 Talks (Theatre)	<b>OPTION 1. Why literature matters</b>	David James	Talks: Alastair Donald  Seminars: Geoff Kidder Dr Mo Lovatt	Theatre
13:30 – 14:15 Seminars	<b>OPTION 2. Why classical music matters</b>	Professor Ian Pace		Club room
14:15 – 14:45	Coffee break			
14:45 – 15:45	<b>Liberty and gender: how can we talk about trans?</b>	Maya Forstater & Dennis Noel Kavanagh	Claire Fox	Theatre
15:45 – 16:00	Coffee break			
16:00 – 17:00 WORKSHOPS Moral Maze	<b>OPTION 1. Reparations: should Britain make amends for its colonial past?</b>	James Heartfield	Dr Mo Lovatt	Theatre
	<b>OPTION 2. Nation state: the morality and law of borders</b>	Dr Alka Seghal Cuthbert & Steven Barrett	Alastair Donald	Club Room
17:00 – 17:15	Break			
17:15 – 18:30	<b>Online harms to trigger warnings: safetyism versus freedom</b>	Ella Whelan, Felice Basbøll & Ryan Hoey	Claire Fox	Theatre
18:30 – 18.35	<b>Closing Remarks</b>	Alastair Donald		Theatre

# **GALLERY & TESTIMONIALS**



# GALLERY







# PARTICIPANT

## Testimonials



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"Living Freedom is a place where free-spirited individuals can come together to have their ideas debated and strengthened, not cancelled."

**Lavinia Johnson, Oakham**



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"It was so refreshing to have a weekend of discussions where healthy disagreements were not just allowed, but encouraged."

**Reece Coombes, Oxford**



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"Whilst there was opinions I disagreed with there were many that changed mine. Having the ability to talk to people without it brewing into arguments was refreshing."

**Abijeet Sansoy, London**



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"An exciting concept and a damn brilliant summer school."

**Felice Basbøll, Copenhagen**



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"An invaluable opportunity for open debate, networking, learning and enquiry. Living Freedom Summer School is what University should be about."

**Vinay Kapoor, London**



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"I got to make friends from all sorts of backgrounds, yet all aligned in the understanding that good ideas come from free and open discussion."

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**Ana H de la Vega, London**

# SPEAKER

## Testimonials



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"It was a fantastic and valuable event, flattered to have been invited and very much enjoyed the discussions!"

**Dennis Noel Kavanagh,**  
**director, Gay Men's Network**



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"A totally uplifting experience - such open-minded young people, curious and unafraid to say what they think or pose their questions."

**Alka Sehgal Cuthbert,**  
**director, Don't Divide Us**



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"It's easy to be cynical about the state of public debate right now, but Living Freedom shows that there's a younger generation ready to grapple with big issues and open to intellectual challenge."

**JJ Charlesworth, art critic**  
**and editor, ArtReview**



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"There is such an appetite among young people to experience rationality and enlightenment values. Living Freedom offers them that and it is fantastic to see how they rise to its challenge."

**Steven Barrett, barrister**



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"It was fantastic and an inspiration to see the curiosity and hunger for debate present among the attendees."

**Sonia Gallego, journalist**



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"My mind was stretched and my thoughts challenged in the best possible way, leaving me with a sharpened perspective of the most pressing issues of today."

**Ella Nixon, art historian**



# TOPIC GUIDE

## **TOPIC GUIDE: LIVING FREEDOM SUMMER SCHOOL 2023**

The Summer School will help participants get to grips with the best that has been said and written over the centuries and engage with important contemporary issues.

Our expert thinkers and campaigners will help you explore the value of free speech and other freedoms today. The themes to be explored range widely and this Topic Guide provides some background that will help you navigate the themes we will discuss.

### **READINGS**

This Topic Guide contains outlines of all lectures, panels and workshops taking place over the three days of Living Freedom, as well as some recommended readings, videos and podcasts.

These are hyperlinked so you can easily access them by clicking on the links within the pdf. It is not essential to read, watch or listen to all the material provided. But familiarising yourself with the topics covered – especially where they are less familiar to you – will help you get the most out of the school. You also may want to return to this guide at a later date.

For those that wish to explore more widely, some more general background material is included that cover contemporary topics and historical developments.

## **BACKGROUND READING, LISTENING AND VIEWING**

### **READ: [Letters on Liberty](#)**

Various authors, Academy of Ideas, 2020–23

This pamphlet series is dedicated to creating rowdy, good-natured disagreement and stimulating people prepared to experiment with what freedom might mean today. The pamphlets can be downloaded free in PDF format.

### **LISTEN: [Culture wars, then and now](#)**

Episodes 1 to 12, Ideas Matter, 2019

This podcast series from Ideas Matter explores the emergence and evolution of the culture wars. Lecturers examine the intellectual, cultural, social and political ideas that shape the culture wars.

### **WATCH: [Genius of Western Civilisation](#)**

Episodes 1 to 6, The New Culture Forum, 2023

Inspired by TV programmes such as *Civilisation*, Kenneth Clark's 1969 masterpiece, The New Culture Forum's six-part documentary series explores the history, achievements and genius of Western civilisation.

## **THURSDAY 29 JUNE**

18:30 – 20:00 OPENING LECTURE

### **Freedom of conscience: 21st-century challenges**

The idea of conscience first emerged when ancient Greek playwrights had their characters wrestle with their inner voices. Since then, in religious and secular times alike, living in accordance with one's beliefs has thrown up tricky moral dilemmas. Legislators defying a party-political line that conflicts with their ethical beliefs, pacifists objecting to military service and medical professionals asked to provide abortion-related care have all wrestled with how conscience should guide their actions.

The issue of conscience is again in the news. For example, lawyers signed a 'Declaration of Conscience' stating they would not prosecute environmentalist protesters. Others fear that the scope for exercising conscience is now under threat. Critics say politicians holding religious beliefs, such as the SNP's Kate Forbes, are inappropriate choices for high office. Individuals who refuse to 'take the knee', place pronouns in their email signatures or give vaccinations face pressure to conform to new or evolving social mores and policy objectives. And

with institutions and businesses mandating training to eradicate biases and 'problematic' thinking, can freedom to exercise *conscience* survive the quest to control *unconscious* biases?

Why is freedom of conscience important and what are the main threats today? What constitutes the legitimate exercise of conscience? Where practical conflicts arise, for example, with anti-discrimination equality laws or medical service provision, how should we respond? How can we defy pressure to embrace new cultural or political norms and avoid a retreat into one-dimensional thinking?

#### **LECTURER**

**Professor Frank Furedi** sociologist and social commentator; author, *100 Years of Identity Crisis*

#### **CHAIR**

**Alastair Donald** convenor, Living Freedom

#### **READING**

**LISTEN:** [Leaders with faith](#) *Moral Maze*, BBC Radio 4, 4 March 2023

[Moral Conscience through the Ages: Fifth Century BCE to the Present](#) Stephen Darwall, *Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews*, 3 October 2015

[Politicians have the right to strong religious views. But not to be shielded from scrutiny](#) Kenan Malik, *Observer*, 26 February 2023

[Eco-cultist lawyers are undermining the rule of law](#) Matthew Scott, 25 March 2023

[There is nothing wrong with unconscious bias Don't let them control your thoughts!](#) Frank Furedi, *Roots and Wings*, 29 August 2022

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#### **FRIDAY 30 JULY**

09:00 – 10:00 LECTURE

#### **Freedom in the age of identity politics**

Loved or loathed, identity politics is inescapable in contemporary battles over freedom. To some, the political embrace of the personal is a vital tool in the struggle against oppressive institutions and practices. Proclaiming identity, they say, is the means to advance the causes of respect and tolerance for minorities. To others, identitarian politics is a divisive force in society and represents the antithesis of liberal ideals. Many who celebrate diversity and inclusion also seem hostile to those holding different views and seem keen to exclude them.



Some point out that historically progressive political movements fought for individuals to be free to transcend their circumstances rather than being defined by their race, religion, gender or sexuality. But others now worry that we are overly focused on individual freedom, in the process degrading relationships and corroding the intimate links and communitarian instincts of groups with whom we enjoy a natural affinity. In making the case for the free individual, how do we avoid reducing freedom to a lifestyle or consumer choice?

Is the contemporary claim to identity necessarily hostile to more universal political ideals such as freedom and equality? Beyond the culture war of identity politics, how should we seek to construct a sense of ourselves and of freedom today?

#### **LECTURER**

**Dr Joanna Williams** founder and director, Cieo; author, *How Woke Won*

#### **CHAIR**

**Jacob Reynolds** external affairs manager, Ideas Matter

#### **READING**

[How identity politics destroys freedom](#) Roger Scruton, *Acton Institute*, 17 September 2021

[Identity politics isn't hurting liberalism. It's saving it](#) Zack Beauchamp, *Vox*, 20 February 2020

[Focusing on diversity means we miss the big picture. It's class that shapes our lives](#) Kenan Malik, *Observer*, 29 January 2023

[Who's afraid of identity politics?](#) Jonathan Dean, *LSE Blogs*, 9 December 2016

[The reactionary turn against the sexual revolution](#) Joanna Williams, *spiked*, 11 June 2023

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10:30 – 11:30 WORKSHOPS: FREE-SPEECH DILEMMAS

#### **OPTION 1. On campus: should we veto the heckler's veto?**

The right to protest is a crucial part of free speech. But increasingly, events in universities – such as Kathleen Stock's recent appearance at the Oxford Union – are subject to protests that are deliberately designed to disrupt proceedings and to intimidate and silence speakers.

Defenders of these protests say it's better to protest speakers they dislike rather than try to get them cancelled. Noisy, disruptive interventions, they argue, are simply a form of free speech. But where such protests – or the possibility of disorderly

protests – lead to an event being cancelled, abandoned or rendered pointless, they amount to a ‘heckler’s veto’. Opponents argue that the right to protest does not amount to a right to silence others. Given that free expression within universities is vital to developing knowledge, they argue that institutions should not be obliged to support speech that restricts another’s right of expression or academic freedom more widely.

While some allege that some universities can display a failure of leadership when faced with staff and student campaigns against academics, should universities take practical steps to restrict protests? After all, University of Edinburgh recently banned one heckler from attending or being within 200 feet of any protest on any subject on the university’s campus. Is it legitimate to veto the heckler’s veto? Or could this be a slippery slope that may end up constraining and compromising wider hard-won freedoms?

### **SPEAKERS**

**Dr Shereen Benjamin** Academics for Academic Freedom, University of Edinburgh

**Dr Julius Grower** Ann Smart Fellow in Law, University of Oxford

### **CHAIR**

**Claire Fox** director, Academy of Ideas

### **READING**

**[Leader: Helen Joyce has a right to speak, and students have the right to protest it](#)** *Varsity*, 5 November 2022

**[The UK’s Freedom of Speech bill needs an exemption for heckling](#)** James Murray and Alice Sullivan, *Times Higher Education*, 13 November 2022

**[Next steps on protest and free speech](#)** Jenny S. Martinez, Stanford Law School, 22 March 2023

**[University bans Trans and Non-Binary Liberation Officer from protesting on campus](#)** Lucy Jackson 27 February 2023

### **OPTION 2. What’s Happened to privacy?**

Encrypted messaging through WhatsApp is popular amongst those wishing to communicate privately with friends and colleagues. But recent high-profile cases reveal that our messages are not as private as we thought. Last year, two policemen were jailed after sharing highly crude posts on a WhatsApp group, including awful jokes about rape and sexual assault. Then, over 100,000 messages exchanged between the former health secretary, Matt Hancock, and others at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic were leaked – revealing ministers, civil servants and advisers mishandled scientific evidence and mocked dissident voices.

The Communications Act 2003 makes it a crime in the UK to post anything ‘grossly offensive’ on a ‘communications system’. And many worry that, on the grounds of protecting children from abuse, the new Online Safety Bill will be used to outlaw end-to-end encryption, allowing third parties to access private messages. Threat of exposure seems to have spooked the government, which is now taking its own Covid-19 Inquiry to court in order to limit release of private ministerial conversations.

Should there exist a principle that ministers – and everyone else in society – should be able to keep communications private? Some say scrutinising and exposing government secrets is in the public interest, not least where our liberty is under threat through decisions made via WhatsApp. Others say we have a right to privacy, even where the public have an interest in decision-making or vile messages are exchanged.

Why is privacy so important for freedom? Should we be worried by recent trends to invade privacy, or are there times when it’s legitimate for our private messages to become public property? What is the public interest, and does it matter whether those leaking information have a political motive to expose our private conversations?

#### **SPEAKER**

**Dr Tiffany Jenkins** writer and broadcaster

#### **CHAIR**

**Jacob Reynolds** external affairs manager, Ideas Matter

#### **READING**

[\*\*“It’s sort of a private thing”\*\*](#) Tiffany Jenkins, *Strangers and Intimates*, 2 June 2023

[\*\*WhatsApp and Signal unite against Online Safety Bill amid privacy concerns\*\*](#)

Alex Hern, *The Guardian*, 18 April 2023

[\*\*The importance of exposing Matt Hancock’s WhatsApp messages\*\*](#) Fraser Nelson, *Spectator*, 1 March 2023

[\*\*Why Boris’s WhatsApps should stay private\*\*](#) Mick Hume, *spiked*, 2 June 2023

#### **OPTION 3. What’s wrong with updating old books?**

Publishing books has never been so tricky. Sensitivity readers are now regularly commissioned to highlight or ward against offensive character details. And not just new works, but even those by long-dead writers are now subject to rewrites or ‘updates’.

In 2011, the republication of Mark Twain's classic, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, replaced the 'n' word with 'slave'. Plans are afoot to republish Ian Fleming's James Bond series with 'racial slurs toward black people' removed. But even depictions that appear innocuous to many are targeted. Puffin Books made sweeping changes to Roald Dahl's children's books, meaning that Augustus Gloop is no longer fat, Miss Trunchbull's face is not 'horsey' and no children in *Matilda* are 'delinquents' or 'idiots'.

Some say updates protect against modern audiences reacting badly to outdated content – what was normal 100 or even 30 years ago might be inappropriate today. Republishing works intact might insinuate that publishers agree with their content or allow readers to believe 'outdated' views are acceptable. But critics argue that 'edits' militate against books – as historical documents – providing unique insights. Censorship is an affront to artistic freedom – and an insinuation that readers can't take their historical context into account.

Are fears for old books exaggerated, when often minute alterations are inconsequential to the overall plot? Perhaps these changes may even help to ensure the longevity of books by making them continually relevant? Or is there something more at stake for literature, if texts are subject to the whims of contemporary political debate, forever under threat from the red pen?

#### **SPEAKER**

**Ella Nixon** art historian

#### **CHAIR**

**Ella Whelan** co-convenor, Battle of Ideas festival;  
commissioning editor, Letters on Liberty

#### **READING**

**LISTEN:** [What are Sensitivity Readers, and do you need one?](#) Patrice Williams, *Fully Booked: The Hidden Gems Author Podcast*, 6 April 2023

**WATCH:** [Lionel Shriver: Insensitivity Reader – Live at the UnHerd Club](#) *UnHerd*, 16 March 2023

[Roald Dahl publisher Puffin Books is having its cake and eating it, too](#) Erik Kain, *Forbes*, 24 February 2023

[Sensitivity readers: what publishing's most polarising role is really about](#) Lucy Knight, *The Guardian*, 15 March 2023.

[Been there, read that](#) Ben Sixsmith, *The Critic*, 19 December 2021

11:45 – 12:45 LECTURE

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11:45 – 12:45 LECTURE

### **Dystopian or dysfunctional? The 21st-century state**

Concern with authority is as old as human history itself. In the modern world, moral values, science and democratic consent have all played important roles in creating cohesion and conviction amongst those that govern. Certainly, ideological and class divisions remained. Nevertheless, authoritative political leadership helped legitimise power, providing the state and society a sense of direction.

In recent years, however, new elites have appeared directionless and often incompetent. Institutions riven with disputes over cultural values seem unsure of what they stand for. State agencies are often dysfunctional, unable to provide healthcare, housing or transport. Crisis seems to be the word of the year – energy crisis, cost-of-living crisis, climate crisis, housing crisis – meaning a ‘state of emergency’ is now ubiquitous. At the same time, as evident during the pandemic, freedoms and democracy are easily sidelined as heavy-handed and often unaccountable agencies attempt to exert control over public life.

What is distinct about today’s elites and their attempts to exercise authority? How should we understand the relationship between authority and authoritarianism? For those keen to make the case for freedom, what should we be concerned about today and how do we make the case for renewing liberty?

#### **LECTURER**

**Josie Appleton** director, Manifesto Club;  
author, *Officious: Rise of the Busybody State*

#### **CHAIR**

**Rob Lyons** science and technology director, the Academy of Ideas

#### **READING**

**WATCH: [Authority in the 21st Century](#)** Frank Furedi, Leeds Salon, 26 September 2014

**[The emergency addiction](#)** Josie Appleton, *Notes on Freedom*, 21 May 2023

**[Social Division after Representation](#)** Tara McCormack, *Lawyer’s Fees, Beetroot, and Music*, 17 January 2023

**[Keeping Control](#)** Philip Cunliffe, *The Northern Star*, 13 January 2023

**[Response to ASB Action Plan](#)** Manifesto Club, 31 March 2023

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13:45 – 14:45 WORKSHOPS

**What the papers say**

The daily news is awash with stories that raise vital questions about the future of freedom. We have seen galleries cancelling artists or their work; the witch-hunting of non-conformist sports stars; 'safety'-driven online censorship; and royals lording it over the press.

Having spent lunch perusing the papers for newsworthy freedom-related stories, each group – led by guest reviewers from the world of journalism and public relations – will consider the questions posed by the day's news for the future of freedom.

GROUP A

**GUEST REVIEWERS**

**Liam Deacon** consultant, Pagefield

**Sonia Gallego** journalist, senior producer, Al Jazeera English

**Rob Lyons** science and technology director, Academy of Ideas

**HOST**

**Kevin Rooney** teacher; member, Academy of Ideas Education Forum

GROUP B

**GUEST REVIEWERS**

**Sam Armstrong** legislative affairs director, Free Speech Union

**Dave Bowden** associate fellow, Academy of Ideas

**Poppy Coburn** freelance journalist and commentator

**HOST**

**Austin Williams** director, Future Cities Project

GROUP C

**GUEST REVIEWERS**

**Marion Calder** co-director, For Women Scotland

**Harry Howard** correspondent, *MailOnline*

**Charlie Peters** reporter, GB News Investigates

**HOST**

**Dr Mo Lovatt** national coordinator, Debating Matters

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15:15 – 16:30 DEBATE

### **The dangers of progress?**

Historically, the quest for freedom was often understood to be bound up with the ideal of progress. 'Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité', the maxim of the French Revolution, has long been associated with Enlightenment notions of progress and reason.

Today, society seems less certain of the benefits of progress. Key features of modernity such as urbanisation, mobility, secularism and affluence are often deemed counterproductive to liberty. Many worry that centuries of modernisation have sidelined traditional values of family, religion, service and honour to leave us in thrall to consumerism and captured by individualist and materialistic desires. The sexual revolution – once deemed central to women's liberation and increased personal autonomy – is being reassessed as detrimental to women and the family, and even blamed for reduced birth-rates and demographic imbalances. Where technological advances once held the prospect of freeing ourselves from the bonds of nature, today – from food to fashion – the organic is celebrated over the manufactured.

How should we define 'progress' and how do we account for collapsing belief in its benefits? Are progress and tradition necessarily in direct and bloody competition or can we make the case for a creative tension worth celebrating for social benefits? From industry to the internet, cars to contraceptive pills, has progress gone too far and become a threat to contemporary freedoms? Or might the cause of liberty benefit from a new dose of utopian thinking?

### **SPEAKERS**

**Nina Power** writer and philosopher; senior editor, *Compact*

**Ralph Schoellhammer** political theorist, Webster Vienna Private University

### **CHAIR**

**Alastair Donald** convenor, Living Freedom

### **READING**

**LISTEN:** [Progress](#) *In Our Time*, BBC Radio 4, 18 November 1999

**WATCH:** ["I Don't Believe In Progress"](#) Mary Harrington, *Triggernometry*, 14 July 2021

[Modernity is making you sterile](#) Louise Perry, *Spectator*, 7 May 2023

[Progressives Against Progress](#) Fred Siegel, *City Journal*, Summer 2010

["The Industrial Revolution and its consequences have been a disaster for the human race": Theodore John Kaczynski Dead at 81](#) Cassandra MacDonald, *Timecast*, 10 June 2023

[Count me out of this cultural pessimism](#) Brendan O'Neill, *spiked*, 19 March 2023

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16:45 – 17:45 WORKSHOPS: THE STATE AND SOCIETY

**OPTION 1. Surveillance state: the all-seeing eye?**

'It's terribly dangerous to let your thoughts wander when in a public place or within range of a telescreen', warned Winston, protagonist in George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Today, such prophecies seem well-founded. Big Brother Watch reports that a secretive Whitehall-based Counter Disinformation Unit monitors government critics' speech online and that police and private companies are rolling out facial-recognition surveillance cameras. Foreign powers such as China appear to track data via TikTok, while the UK government demands proof of identity to vote in elections and proposes bans on encrypted messaging.

What is driving this seeming descent into a surveillance society? The age-old riposte to defenders of civil liberties is that 'if you've got nothing to hide, you've got nothing to fear'. So why is privacy important and what are the main threats posed by surveillance? Given that many of us voluntarily post our intimate thoughts and personal information on social media and happily use loyalty cards that enable accumulation of wide-ranging personal information, are we all complicit in undermining private life? Are we exhibiting the politics of paranoia or is surveillance threatening the free society?

**SPEAKERS**

**Mark Johnson** legal and policy officer, Big Brother Watch

**Timandra Harkness** journalist, writer and broadcaster

**CHAIR**

**Alastair Donald** convenor, Living Freedom

**READING**

**WATCH:** [Revealed: the government's secretive political surveillance program](#)

*Triggernometry*, 1 February 2023

[The Government Censorship Unit you've never heard of](#) Mark Johnson, *UnHerd*, 6 September 2021

[Planes, Trains And E-Scooters: Surveillance State And The End Of Freedom Of Movement](#) Gaspard Koenig, *Worldcrunch*, 1 May 2023

[Coronation surveillance is a step towards a dark future](#) Timandra Harkness, *UnHerd*, 5 May 2023



## **OPTION 2. A war on civil society?**

Civil society thrives upon the free flow of information and ideas, and the scrutiny and debate this underpins. Whether information letters produced by early traders and merchants, newspapers and radical pamphlets discussed in nineteenth-century coffee shops and salons, or more recently, blogs and Substacks posted on the world wide web and debated in forums and chatrooms, society has benefited from expansion of free communication. Private individuals came together to form a public, in turn requiring public authority to justify itself before public opinion.

Recently however, escalating top-down controls threaten to disrupt and even stigmatise peer-to-peer interaction. Draconian hate-speech controls in Ireland threaten to make private possession of offensive material a crime – meaning you could be jailed without saying or writing a single ‘hateful’ word. Other initiatives go further than bans. The war on misinformation leads to shadow bans on social-media accounts and ensures access only to ‘trusted’ sources – for example, on health or climate – while promoting officially approved influencers and fact-checkers to give ‘correct’ information. Online-safety regulations shield us from posts or websites deemed harmful, with services sending us to ‘approved’ charities and helplines instead.

Why has communications across civil society come to raise such concerns now? Cyberbullying, revenge pornography or encouraging self-harm can be deeply unpleasant and even dangerous. But does ease of online accessibility justify the new strict regulations and penalties? How concerned should we be about conspiracy theories and misinformation – and is the spread of such ideas a problem of private companies more interested in profitable clicks than verifiable truth, or something broader? How should we balance concerns about these issues with protecting free expression?

### **SPEAKER**

**Fraser Myers** deputy editor, *spiked*

### **CHAIR**

**Jacob Reynolds** external affairs manager, Ideas Matter

### **READING**

**DEBATING MATTERS TOPIC GUIDE:** ['Tech companies should act to stop online misinformation'](#)

**LISTEN:** [Marianna in Conspiracyland](#) BBC Sounds, 1 June 2023

[Facebook is all power with no transparency – and ministers are happy to silence dissent](#) Fraser Nelson, *Telegraph*, 2 June 2023

[The truth about the BBC's war on 'disinformation'](#) Fraser Myers, *spiked*, 23 May 2023

[A curious plea for a disinterested public](#) Dolan Cummings, *spiked*, 29 January 2011

### **OPTION 3. 15-minute cities: conspiracy versus reality**

The idea of a '15-minute city' is highly fashionable. For supporters, the concept is simple enough: placing essential services within 15 minutes' walk will ensure that we ditch our cars and walk more, improving health and the environment.

Local services, fewer cars and cleaner streets seem like a good idea. But there are plenty of critics. What about people who work, shop or go to school further afield? Or more specialised services who rely on customers from the wider city and beyond, from niche bookshops to major hospitals? And what about the freedom to travel? With councils such as Oxford proposing dividing the city into zones and placing limits on how often people from neighbouring zones can drive through them, critics say that authoritarian policies akin to lockdown restrictions are being expanded into new areas of our lives.

Are enforced restrictions against 'unnecessary journeys' illiberal, even authoritarian? Or is the reaction to 15-minute cities – that they are part of a grand plan to restrict our freedoms on the pretext of saving the planet – overblown? If restrictions boost health and the environment, is there anything wrong with the state taking the initiative and individuals making sacrifices? What is a city for and who should decide how we live and travel?

#### **SPEAKER**

**Alan Miller** co-founder, #together

#### **CHAIR**

**Austin Williams** director, Future Cities Project

#### **READING**

**LISTEN:** [Thou Shalt Not Drive](#) Future Cities Podcast, 29 January 2023

[Free Our Streets](#) #together, 7 January 2023

[What are 15-minute cities and why are antivaxers so angry about them?](#) Max Kendix, *The Times*, 22 February 2023

[In defence of the 15-minute city](#) Liz Rowlinson, *Spectator*, 28 March 2023

[Fifteen-minute cities are not a socialist plot](#) Nicholas Boys Smith, *Conservative Home*, 3 March 2023

[The authoritarian crusade against the car](#) Austin Williams, *spiked*, 30 March 2023

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18:00 – 19:00 IN CONVERSATION WITH CRITICS

### **What is criticism?**

Critics used to be respected and even feared for their ability to make definitive judgements on everything from artistic works to catwalk fashions. But nowadays, terms such as ‘judgement’ and ‘discrimination’ are often deemed purely negative phrases. In an era when everybody’s opinions or work must be ‘respected’, to criticise risks being labelled ‘judgemental’. In universities, critiquing the work of students has become contentious lest it damages their self-esteem. And with many endorsing ‘non-judgementalism’ as a positive value, critics exercising judgement can be assumed to be arrogant, closed-minded, lacking in empathy or suffering from unconscious bias. To be discriminatory is even worse, often taken to imply intolerance.

Why are the tasks of critiquing, judging and discriminating seen negatively today? How can we regain our critical faculties – to see ourselves as helpful, not toxic – and overcome hostility to making fundamental critical judgement calls? At a time when artistic or literary quality is often deemed to be a question of personal taste or political outlook, what should be the grounds for exercising judgement? In an age that values celebrity endorsements and below-the-line commentators, what is a critic, what is their role and why should we listen?

**Austin Williams** director, Future Cities Project

### **IN CONVERSATION WITH**

**JJ Charlesworth** art critic and editor, *ArtReview*

**Ivan Hewett** classical music critic, *Telegraph*

**Dr Tiffany Jenkins** writer and broadcaster

### **READING**

**[Five Critical Essays on The Crit](#)** Machine Books, Spring 2023

**[What did the critics who trashed Georgia O’Keeffe have in common? See if you can guess](#)** Katy Hessel, *Guardian*, 1 May 2023

**[The importance of being moral](#)** Angus Kennedy, *Policy*, Vol. 30 No. 3, Spring 2014

**[Why don’t critics make judgments anymore?](#)** Raphael Rubenstein, *Art in America*, 25 January 2023

**[I’m an art critic. will AI steal my job?](#)** Martin Herbert, *Art Review*, 30 January 2023

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## SATURDAY 2 JULY

09:30 – 10:30 LECTURE

### **What does it mean to be human in a world of generative AI?**

People are fascinated, amused and alarmed – often all three at once – by the recent popularity of generative AI tools. Such tools take prompts in natural human language and respond by generating remarkably sophisticated text (chatbots like ChatGPT and Bard), images (Midjourney, Stable Diffusion, DALL-E) or other outputs (moving images, speech, music, programming code). Some people welcome the new possibilities that these tools seem to offer for human creativity and flourishing. Others fear the consequences – from students getting AI to write their homework, to artists and journalists losing their livelihood to AI, to reputations being ruined and public discourse polluted by AI-generated scams and 'deepfakes'.

What 20th-century events and philosophies originally shaped the invention of AI? What 21st-century phenomena are shaping the way we understand AI now? Will generative AI add to, or detract from, the meaning in our lives?

### **LECTURER**

**Sandy Starr** deputy director, Progress Educational Trust

### **CHAIR**

**Rob Lyons** science and technology director, the Academy of Ideas

### **READING**

**LISTEN:** [Living Freedom: Artificial Intelligence and implications for freedom](#)

Sandy Starr, Ideas Matter, 19 April 2023

**Letter on Liberty:** [AI: Separating Man from Machine](#) Sandy Starr, Academy of Ideas

[Computing machinery and intelligence](#) Alan Turing, *Mind*, Volume LIX, Issue 236, October 1950, Pages 433–460

[There's more to AI than 'killing all humans'](#) Matthew Feeney, *CapX*, 8 June 2023

[Noam Chomsky: The false promise of ChatGPT](#) Ian Roberts, Noam Chomsky, Jeffrey Watumull, *New York Times*, 8 March 2023

[The cynical hysteria around AI](#) Timandra Harkness, *UnHerd*, 2 June 2023

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11:00 – 12:00 LECTURE

### **The 'stolen years': understanding the lockdowns**

The Covid-19 Inquiry commissioned by the UK government is barely underway, but it has already descended into farce. Yet with many young people still enraged over lockdowns and furious as to their devastating impact on growing up, we urgently need to account for the 'stolen years' and their impact.

It's not surprising lockdown was experienced as an era of loneliness, anxiety and fear. The purgatory of Zoom replaced the lecture theatre. Hopes of building networks and relationships were dashed as the interactive seminars, student societies and social life more generally were sacrificed for confinement to student halls and flats. Recent problems of socialisation and solidarity are regularly laid at the door of the depression and fraught relationships created during Covid.

Yet accounting for this period is difficult. For example, teachers and academics have long been praised for a commitment to the young, so why did they and their institutions give up on their educational mission? And why wasn't there more outrage and activism? Despite mounting evidence proving pandemic mismanagement, even a majority of the young still support lockdown restrictions, with more than half of 18- to 24-year-olds believing official measures imposed were not strict enough.

By 2020, commentators were already pushing the idea of 'Generation Covid'. But should the Covid era define us? While many point to mental-health challenges, do they underestimate our ability to bounce back from even the toughest times? Some say we are seeing a permanent shift in the experience of growing up. But to what extent has Covid given rise to a distinct generational outlook? Have habits of fraternity and solidarity been damaged irreparably or can we rescue the idea of freedom from widespread fatalism?

#### **LECTUER**

**Dr Jennie Bristow** sociologist; co-author, *The Corona Generation*

#### **CHAIR**

**Kevin Rooney** teacher; member, Academy of Ideas Education Forum

#### **READING**

**'Broken and defeated': UK university students on the impact of Covid rules** Molly Blackall and Sasha Mistlin, *Guardian*, 11 January 2021

**[How the Covid shock has radicalised generation Z](#)** Paul Mason, *Guardian*, 2 June 2021

[Why do young people still support lockdowns?](#) Max Mitchell, *UnHerd*, 25 March 2023

[Generation CUB – how the events of Covid, Ukraine and Brexit will shape our teenagers' lives forever](#) Jennie Bristow, *Telegraph*, 10 March 2022

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13:00–13:30 TWO LECTURES ON THE CLASSICS

13:30–14:15 FOLLOW-ON SEMINARS

### **Why literature matters**

The study of English Literature appears to be in terminal decline. 'Pale, male and stale' is the term often used to criticise curricula that predominantly feature traditional writers like Shakespeare, Milton and Aristotle. Some people say that in the fast-moving world of the internet and satellite television, the concept of so-called Great Books is arcane and irrelevant. For many young people, English Literature is deemed a subject too preoccupied with societies and individuals they no longer recognise. Consequently, even literature teachers are often defensive, resorting to justifying teaching texts simply as the means to aid the process of social change, while students are encouraged to see the subject through a political lens, rather than something of innate value and beauty.

As illustrated by the plummeting popularity of English literature in both schools and universities, clearly current ideas on English literature are failing to inspire a new generation of readers. So how have we arrived at this point? And more importantly, why does literature matter? What are the arguments we need to make the case anew for literature and inspire the readers of tomorrow?

### **SPEAKER**

**David James** independent school deputy head and writer

### **CHAIR**

**Geoff Kidder** chief executive, Ideas Matter

### **READING**

[Politics and the decline of English Literature: why a vital subject is on the slide](#)

David James, *CapX*, 15 May 2023

[Black kids should study Larkin](#), Tomiwa Owolade, *UnHerd*, 29 June 2022

[The literary canon is exhilarating and disturbing and we need to read it](#)

Camilla Nelson, *The Conversation*, 31 March 2016

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## Why classical music matters

'This is a desperate moment. The entire art form is threatened', said the renowned music director of the London Symphony Orchestra, Simon Rattle, earlier this year. Both English National Opera and BBC Singers – a world-renowned chamber choir – are facing financial struggles to survive. There are regular rows over programming the Proms. University curricula have been rewritten to 'decolonise the ear'. As a result, one critic says, 'we are seeing a flight from the great musical achievements of European culture'; another suggests that 'classical music is disappearing from cultural settings where it used to be common – community events, adverts, sports coverage.'

At one time, classical music was rigorously defended – certainly by the sector itself, but also within wider society. But today, many in the classical world feel embattled. The genre is decried for being elitist – including by voices within the cultural sector who see it as being out of touch with the social mores of the 21st-century.

Who defends classical music today – and should it be defended? Is it time to shake up the genre, make it more accessible? How can the case be made that classical music matters today and for the future?

### SPEAKER

**Ian Pace** professor of music, City, University of London

### CHAIR

**Dr Mo Lovatt**, national coordinator, Debating Matters

### READING

[\*\*How the culture wars are killing Western classical music\*\*](#) Ian Pace, *Spectator*, 9 October 2021

[\*\*Simon Rattle: 'This is a desperate moment. The entire art form is threatened'\*\*](#)

Richard Morrison, *The Times*, 20 April 2023

[\*\*Bach in town\*\*](#) Niall Gooch, *The Critic*, 4 August 2022

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14:45 – 15:45 LECTURE WITH RESPONDENTS

### **Liberty and gender: how can we talk about trans?**

Such is the toxicity around debates on transgender ideology, many despair that productive discussion has become impossible. So how can we ensure disagreements can be aired and that everyone, regardless of gender outlook, has the ability to freely choose how to live?

Those that are gender critical see some red lines. For example, many people argue that the biological sex is immutable, regardless of feelings about gender. Yet such arguments are often met with accusations of 'transphobia', which can lead to both people and events being cancelled. The claim that 'trans-women are women' is often more than simply a rhetorical posture; it leads to the effective abolition of single-sex spaces, women's health care, women's sports and can distort valuable statistical data.

Nonetheless, there are also grey areas, or at least some complicating factors and moral dilemmas to discuss.

For example, for those who are concerned about men having access to women's single-sex spaces, do their concerns extend to those who have fully medically transitioned or just to those who simply self-identify as a different gender? Or take the adults who choosing to change gender but who do not insist on using single-sex spaces. Should they really be denied the freedom to dress and live as they wish? Perhaps they might be valuable allies to those fighting for freedom?

In the culture wars around transgender, the enforced use of gender-based pronouns militates against conscience-based freedoms. But should we always insist on using the pronouns associated with biological sex – or can it be polite and reasonable to use someone's chosen pronouns?

And what about the battles over drag queens? It may be right to worry about age-appropriate materials in schools and the integration of Drag Queen Story Hour to sex and gender education. But is there a danger that drag queens, whose audience is mostly adults, risk being rejected per se and face intolerance that goes against living freely?

Often there are issues of regulations and law. Take safeguarding. Affirmation of gender dysphoria for pubescent teenagers and children, often behind their parents' backs, cuts to the heart of safeguarding and family privacy. But how do we avoid creating a general panic about predators? Elsewhere, there are attempts to clarify that the "sex" in the Equality Act means sex – whether someone



is biologically male or female – and not whether they have a Gender Recognition Certificate. But is there a danger that being a woman becomes dependent on emphasising sex as a protected characteristic?

Fighting for liberty requires maximising constructive debate. So how should we talk about trans?

#### **SPEAKER**

**Claire Fox** director, Academy of Ideas

#### **RESPONDENTS**

**Maya Forstater** executive director, Sex Matters

**Dennis Noel Kavanagh** director, Gay Men's Network

#### **READING**

**WATCH: [Gender Wars](#)** Channel 4, 30 May 2023

**[The meaninglessness of moderation](#)** Josephine Bartosch, 3 June 2023

**[Today's Common debate on sex, gender and the Equality Act. The Government must clear up this mess](#)** Maya Forstater, *Conservative Home*, 12 June 2023

**[Sleight of words – Why the function of language matters](#)** Dennis Noel Kavanagh, Kavanagh's Substack, 29 November 2022

**[The Oxford kids are alright](#)** Kathleen Stock, *UnHerd*, 1 June 2023

16:00– 17:00 MORAL MAZE

#### **OPTION 1. Reparations: should Britain make amends for its colonial past?**

Some kind of slavery has been around throughout much of human history. But the Atlantic slave trade between 1440 and 1863 was easily the most vicious case. Many long-standing institutions and organisations can trace some link back to the slave trade. Universities, banks, the *Guardian* and the British monarchy have shown extensive personal wealth or inheritances drawn from slavery and the slave trade. But, what, if anything, should we do about this history?

Today, our government acknowledges and has apologised for numerous atrocities of colonialism, as have some members of the royal family. The tearing down of the statue of slave trader Edward Colston in Bristol shows at least some in the public have sympathy. But opinions are divided on the question of whether enough has already been done. Some argue Britain must pay its former colonies to achieve equity in the world, while others argue that today's Britons ought not to be punished for the mistakes of history.

Are we responsible for the actions and beliefs of people who lived and died hundreds of years before us? Are claims of inherited discrimination a reality that needs to be rectified, or is there a danger that a 'victim narrative' about the impacts of colonialism is patronising to people of African heritage? The French Afro-Caribbean political philosopher, Frantz Fanon, once wrote: 'I am not a prisoner of history. I should not seek there for the meaning of my destiny.' Should Britain make amends for its colonial past? And, if so, are reparations the way to do it?

#### **SPEAKER**

**James Heartfield** author, *Britain's Empires: A History, 1600-2020*

#### **CHAIR**

**Dr Mo Lovatt** national coordinator, Debating Matters

#### **READING**

**LETTER ON LIBERTY:** [Against Reparations](#) James Heartfield, Academy of Ideas, June 2023

**LISTEN:** [How should Britain make amends for its colonial past?](#) Moral Maze, BBC Radio 4, 21 June 2023

[Nikole Hannah-Jones makes a case for reparations with 'The 1619 Project' series](#) Candice Williams, NBC News, 26 January 2023

[Should America pay reparations for slavery? Ta-Nehisi Coates v Coleman Hughes](#) Ta-Nehisi Coates and Coleman Hughes, *Guardian*, 19 June 2019

[Returning the Benin Bronzes](#) Ralph Leonard, *Areo*, 11 June 2021

#### **OPTION 2. Nation state: the morality and law of borders**

In a world of free trade and easy international travel, many believe national borders are outdated. Policies like deporting migrants to relatively underdeveloped countries such as Rwanda strengthen sentiment that borders are illiberal and even authoritarian. Instead, many believe that today's cosmopolitan, open societies are more consistent with transnational governance and post-border forms of global citizenship.

While critics of borders believe they are callous for setting people apart, others argue that animosity towards borders reflects a failure to understand the value of national sovereignty. Whether due to the legal status that defines citizenship and a right to vote, or for preservation of cultural traditions and national identity, defenders of borders argue that it's entirely legitimate for a community to be selective of its members. More broadly, some argue, the turn against borders

reflects a wider discomfort in enforcing boundaries and the trend to celebrate the transgressive over advocating clear values and exercising judgement.

Are borders now past their sell-by date? To what extent do transnational law and institutions threaten the stability and integrity of a bordered nation state? Is enforcing borders really the only way to preserve a cultural identity? And anyway, in an age of the 'digital nomad', doesn't solidarity stretch way beyond one's national community?

#### **SPEAKERS**

**Dr Alka Sehgal Cuthbert** director, Don't Divide Us

**Steven Barrett** barrister, Radcliffe Chambers; writer on law, *Spectator*

#### **CHAIR**

**Alastair Donald** convenor, Living Freedom

#### **READING**

**LISTEN: [Sovereignty](#)** *In Our Time*, BBC Radio 4, 30 June 2016

**LISTEN: [The Morality of Borders](#)**, Moral Maze, BBC Radio 4, 21 June 2023

**[Why borders matter](#)** Theodore Dalrymple, *Spectator*, 1 September 2012

**[Here's why a border-free world would be better than hostile immigration policies](#)** Luke de Noronha and Gracie Mae Bradley, *Guardian*, 26 July 2022

**[The EU rule of law crisis](#)** Steven Barrett, *The Critic*, 5 February, 2023

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17:15 – 18:30 CLOSING LECTURE WITH RESPONDENTS

#### **Online harms to trigger warnings: safetyism versus freedom**

Trigger warnings and microaggression policies have become increasingly familiar on campus. But the latest idea is welfare rooms equipped with ear plugs to shelter from 'controversial' speakers. Is the transformation of universities into 'safe spaces' now complete? While we can snigger at 'de-stressing parties' with colouring books, are students any different from the rest of society? After all, many people believe we face an unprecedented range of threats. Anxiety allied to yearning for safety is evident in warnings over formula milk and processed foods, panics over drink-spiking and catcalling, and paranoid parenting that is creating a generation of 'cotton wool' kids.

As evident during the pandemic, dedication to safety necessitates significant trade-offs in freedom. Take online safety. In the name of protecting us from often ill-defined and expansive notions of harm – ranging from encouraging self-harm and suicide to ‘psychologically harmful’ online misogyny or trolling – we stand on the cusp of empowering (indeed, forcing) Big Tech to censor what we can see and watch.

The nineteenth-century liberal thinker JS Mill coined the idea of the ‘harm principle’. Under this quintessential defence of personal autonomy, we must be free to make private choices unless they cause harm to others. Today, when practically all aspects of life are deemed risky, the principle of *potential* ‘harm’ is the means to argue for restrictions on freedom.

What happened to resilience and how do we explain our existential insecurity? What is the balance between safety and freedom, and how do we successfully argue for taking risks? In the face of society-wide preoccupation with safety, what are the arguments we need today to renew the case for liberty?

#### **SPEAKER**

**Ella Whelan** co-convenor, Battle of Ideas festival;  
commissioning editor, Letters on Liberty

#### **RESPONDENTS**

**FELICE BASBØLL** project assistant, Living Freedom; student, Trinity College Dublin

**RYAN HOEY** politics graduate, Queens University Belfast; Trustee, The Literific

#### **CHAIR**

**Claire Fox**, director, Academy of Ideas

#### **READING**

**Letter on Liberty:** [The case for women’s freedom](#) Ella Whelan, Academy of Ideas, July 2022

**Letter on Liberty:** [Beyond the Harm Principle](#) Rob Lyons, Academy of Ideas

[The danger of safetyism](#) Matthew Crawford, *UnHerd*, 15 May 2021

**SPEAKERS**

**JOSIE APPLETON director, Manifesto Club;  
author, *Officious: Rise of the Busybody State***

Josie coordinates Manifesto Club campaigns for freedom in everyday civic life – including campaigns against vetting, on-the-spot fines, booze bans and photo bans – and writes many of the club’s reports and documents. As a journalist and essayist, she comments frequently on contemporary freedom issues, from the French burqa ban to smoking bans, from free speech to Common Law liberties. She writes about the history and philosophy of freedom on the Substack *Notes on Freedom*. Josie is author of *Officious: Rise of the Busybody State*.

**SAM ARMSTRONG journalist and commentator;  
legislative affairs director, Free Speech Union**

Sam is a political consultant, journalist, and commentator. He is the legislative affairs director for the Free Speech Union, where he campaigns to ensure that legislation enhances rather than diminishes free-speech rights in the UK. He is a contributor at TalkTV and has written as a freelance journalist for various publications, including the *Spectator*.

**FELICE BASBØLL project assistant, Living Freedom; student, Trinity College  
Dublin**

Felice is a Living Freedom project assistant for Ideas Matter. She is a history student at Trinity College Dublin and has written articles for The New Taboo and writes on Substack at First Room of My Own.

**STEVEN BARRETT barrister, Radcliffe Chambers; writer on law, *Spectator***

Steven is a lawyer who loves law. He is an experienced commercial barrister in big-money cases in court and arbitration in London and around the world. That made him uniquely placed to become a writer on law for the *Spectator*. He is a passionate scholar of UK constitutional law and writes on the intersection between law and politics, and British and international law.

**DR SHEREEN BENJAMIN Academics for Academic Freedom,  
University of Edinburgh**

Shereen is a senior lecturer in primary education at the University of Edinburgh. She started her career in primary-school teaching. She is interested in the sociology of schooling, and the use of feminist and critical theories to understand unequal outcomes. She’s been active in peace and justice movements since the 1980s, and campaigns for academic freedom.

**DAVID BOWDEN associate fellow, Academy of Ideas**

David is associate fellow at the Academy of Ideas, having acted as its associate director until July 2016. He has written and commented for a range of media on issues around politics, lifestyle and culture, including *spiked*, *Independent*, *City AM*,

Sky News and BBC World Service. He has extensive experience of global PR and communications for organisations including DACS, ACCA and Bpas.

**DR JENNIE BRISTOW senior lecturer, Canterbury Christ Church University**

Jennie is senior lecturer in sociology at Canterbury Christ Church University and an associate of the Centre for Parenting Culture Studies. She is author of several books about generational relations and conflict, including *The Corona Generation: coming of age in a crisis* which she wrote with her daughter, Emma Gilland, during the first Lockdown, and *Stop Mugging Grandma: the 'generation wars' and why Boomer-blaming won't solve anything*. Jennie is on the editorial board of *Collateral Global*, a publication dedicated to analysing the global impact of Covid-19 restrictions.

**MARION CALDER co-director, For Women Scotland**

Marion is co-director of For Women Scotland, a campaign group founded in response to and opposing the Scottish Government's plans to reform the Gender Recognition Act to allow for self-declaration of sex. The organisation raises awareness of ordinary women's socio-economic issues, promotes greater access to health and social services, and campaigns on equality and human-rights issues.

**JJ CHARLESWORTH art critic and editor, ArtReview**

JJ is a writer and art critic. He studied art at London's Goldsmiths College and his reviews, articles and commentaries have appeared in publications including *Art Monthly*, *Time Out*, the *Telegraph* and the *Spectator*. Since 2006, he has worked on the editorial staff of the international art magazine *ArtReview*, where he is now editor. He has a PhD in art history from the Royal College of Art, and his book on British art criticism in the 1970s will be published by Routledge in 2023.

**POPPY COBURN freelance journalist and commentator**

Poppy is a freelance writer for various publications including the *Daily Telegraph*, *The Critic* and the *Express*. She has been a producer for GB News and previously worked as an editorial trainee at *UnHerd*. Poppy has a bachelor's degree in history and politics from the University of Cambridge.

**DR ALKA SEHGAL CUTHBERT director, Don't Divide Us**

Alka is an educator, academic and author, and the director of Don't Divide Us. She has previously taught English Literature in inner-city London and went on to become a member of the Ofsted Advisory Panel on English and teach with the Civitas Education Charity supplementary schools project. In 2019, she stood for the Brexit Party in the European Parliament elections.

**LIAM DEACON consultant, Pagefield**

Liam is a communications specialist and journalist. He's a former producer at GB

News and has helped lead the press operation for a major political party during a general election and for a Tory leadership campaign. He's written for various publications including the *Telegraph* and *Vice News*.

**ALASTAIR DONALD convenor, Living Freedom**

Alastair is the convenor of Living Freedom and secretary of the educational charity Ideas Matter. As associate director of the Academy of Ideas, he coordinates planning and programming across projects, and is co-convenor of the Battle of Ideas festival. Alastair is an experienced cultural programmer having worked in the UK and internationally to develop festivals, exhibitions and curated programmes. He is co-editor of *The Lure of the City: from slums to suburbs*.

**MAYA FORSTATER executive director, Sex Matters**

Maya is co-founder of Sex Matters, a new human-rights organisation campaigning for clarity about sex in law, policy and language. She is the claimant in a landmark test case on belief discrimination, which has so far established that the Equality Act protects people with gender-critical beliefs (and lack of belief) against discrimination and harassment.

**CLAIRE FOX director, Academy of Ideas; member of the House of Lords**

Claire Fox is the director of the Academy of Ideas, which she established to create a public space where ideas can be contested without constraint. She founded the yearly Battle of Ideas festival, and co-founded a residential summer school, The Academy. In May 2019, she was elected as an MEP for the North-West England constituency in the European Parliament elections. In September 2020, Claire became a member of the House of Lords as Baroness Fox of Buckley.

**PROFESSOR FRANK FUREDI sociologist and social commentator;  
author, *On Tolerance: a defence of moral independence*.**

Frank is executive director of MCC Brussels and emeritus professor at the University of Kent in Canterbury. He is author of over 20 full-length books, including most recently *The Road to Ukraine: How the West Lost its Way* and *100 Years of Identity Crisis: culture war over socialisation*. His key works reflecting on themes of freedom include *What's Happened to the University?* and *On Tolerance: a defence of moral independence*. He frequently comments on radio and television.

**SONIA GALLEGRO journalist; senior producer, Al Jazeera English**

Sonia is a journalist and senior producer at Al Jazeera English. She was previously a reporter at ABC News and has over 20 years of experience in journalism



including broadcasting, breaking news, and television covering politics and culture.

**JULIUS GROWER associate law professor, University of Oxford**

Julius is an equity lawyer and Ann Smart Fellow in Law at the University of Oxford. He is a writer about academic freedom and adviser on the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act and contributed to the *Telegraph* on the Higher Education Bill. He received his BA from the University of Oxford and his LLM and PhD from UCL.

**TIMANDRA HARKNESS writer and presenter; author, *Big Data: does size matter?***

Timandra is a writer, broadcaster and presenter. She is the author of *Big Data: does size matter?* She is currently writing her second non-fiction book for Harper Collins. Timandra is a regular on BBC Radio, writing and presenting BBC Radio 4's *FutureProofing* and other series, including *How to Disagree*. She has written for numerous publications including the *Telegraph*, *Guardian*, *UnHerd*, *The Sunday Times*, *Men's Health* and *Significance*.

**JAMES HEARTFIELD lecturer; author, *Britain's Empires: A History, 1600–2020***

James writes and lectures on British history and politics. He is author of many books, including *The British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society and The Equal Opportunities Revolution*. He is a frequent writer for *spiked*, and the *Academy of Ideas* has just published his *Letter on Liberty, Against Reparations*.

**IVAN HEWETT classical music critic, *Telegraph***

Ivan is a writer on music for the *Telegraph*, broadcaster on BBC Radio 3, and teacher at the Royal College of Music. He studied music at Oxford University and went on to study composition at the Royal College of Music. Through the Eighties and Nineties, he was a regular contributor to *the Musical Times*, *Prospect* and other magazines. In 2003, he published a very personal view of twentieth-century music, entitled *Music: Healing the Rift*.

**RYAN HOEY politics graduate, Queens University Belfast; trustee, The Literific**

Ryan is a politics graduate from Queens University Belfast and serves as a trustee for the Literific. He was an attendee at Living Freedom 2023.

**HARRY HOWARD journalist; correspondent, *MailOnline***

Harry is a writer and journalist with an interest in history and politics. He is *MailOnline*'s history correspondent and has contributed to various publications including the *Daily Mail*. He has a master's degree in journalism from the University of Kent.

**DAVID JAMES deputy head at a London independent school; author, *Schools of Thought*; former teacher-in-residence, Department for Education**

David has taught English in independent schools for over 20 years. He has been an examiner for GCSE English Language, a school inspector, a teacher-in-residence at the Department for Education and is now a deputy head at a leading independent school. He is also a columnist for the *Times Educational Supplement*, and contributes to the *Critic*, *CapX* and *The Times*. He has written two books on education, and his latest, *Schools of Thought*, will be published by Bloomsbury next summer.

**DR TIFFANY JENKINS writer and broadcaster;  
author, *Strangers and Intimates: the rise and fall of private life***

Tiffany is a writer, author and broadcaster. Her next book, *Strangers and Intimates: the rise and fall of private life*, will be published in 2024 by Picador. Her last book, *Keeping Their Marbles: how treasures of the past ended up in museums and why they should stay there*, was published to critical acclaim. Tiffany is an honorary fellow in Art History at the University of Edinburgh and host of the podcast *Behind the Scenes at the Museum*, in which she talks to key figures about the big ideas rocking the cultural world. She has written and presented several programmes for BBC Radio 4, including the series *A Narrative History of Secrecy*.

**MARK JOHNSON advocacy manager, Big Brother Watch**

Mark is the advocacy manager at Big Brother Watch, with a focus on freedom of expression and policing and technologies. He has long been an advocate for civil liberties and democracy and has worked in parliament, party politics and public affairs. Previously, Mark has worked as a senior public-affairs executive at the Advertising Association. He was also a parliamentary assistant, working on domestic and international human rights.

**DENNIS NOEL KAVANAGH director, Gay Men's Network**

Dennis is the director of Gay Men's Network. He's a legal commentator and has contributed to various publications and appeared on TV. He trained as a barrister in 2003 and practised criminal law for 15 years. He writes about law, society and LGBT issues through his newsletter, *Kavanagh's Substack*.

**GEOFF KIDDER chief executive, Ideas Matter**

Geoff is chief executive of the educational charity Ideas Matter and director of membership and events at the Academy of Ideas. He supervises administration and event management, including the Battle of Ideas festival, runs the associate member scheme and convenes the Academy of Ideas Book Club. Geoff is also the Academy's resident expert in all sporting matters.

**DR MO LOVATT national coordinator, Debating Matters;  
radio and TV commentator**

Mo is the national coordinator for Debating Matters, a debating competition for sixth-form students run by Ideas Matter. She is also a programme coordinator for the Academy of Ideas. Mo recently completed a PhD exploring the sustainability of arts and culture programmes in areas of economic deprivation. She reviews the newspapers and is a guest panellist for Sky News, Times Radio, GB News and BBC Five Live.

**ROB LYONS science and technology director, Academy of Ideas**

Rob is science and technology director at the Academy of Ideas. As a journalist, he has written for a wide range of publications, most notably *spiked*. He takes a particular interest in issues around the economy, environment, food, energy and risk. He is also convenor of the Aol Economy Forum. Rob is author of *Panic on a Plate: How society developed an eating disorder* and has written the recent Letter on Liberty, *Beyond the Harm Principle*. He is a frequent commentator on TV and radio. From time to time, he stands up in front of audiences and tells jokes.

**ALAN MILLER co-founder, #Together**

Alan is co-founder of campaigning organisation #Together, which was set up to oppose attacks on civil liberties during the Covid pandemic. Alan has spent his life launching projects that many say are not possible – from Acid House parties, to co-creating London’s business cultural centre The Old Truman Brewery, to launching the Night Time Industries Association and campaigning for Open for All and Together. Alan has enjoyed a career of creative collaborations, pushing boundaries, striving entrepreneurially and lobbying locally, nationally and internationally.

**FRASER MYERS deputy editor, *spiked*; host, *the spiked podcast***

Fraser is deputy editor for the online magazine *spiked* and host of *the spiked podcast*. He campaigns for democracy and free speech. He also appears frequently in the media, including the BBC, Sky News, ITV and GB News.

**ELLA NIXON, writer and art historian**

Ella is an art historian, curator, and writer based in Cambridge. Her research pertains to the transformative power of art, freedom of expression, twentieth-century female artists, and the role of the regional art gallery. She is Arts Officer for the Free Speech Union and has written for various publications including *The Critic Magazine*, *The European Conservative*, and *The New Taboo*. Her PhD is a Collaborative Doctoral Award at Northumbria University, in collaboration with the Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

**IAN PACE pianist; professor of music, City, University of London**

Ian is a pianist, writer and musicologist focusing on issues of performance, music and society and the avant-garde. Based in London since 1993, he has pursued an active international career, performing throughout Britain, Europe and the US. He has published widely in the *Spectator*, *The Musical Times*, *Tempo* and *Contemporary Music Review* among many others.

**CHARLIE PETERS reporter, GB News Investigates**

Charlie is the reporter and presenter for GB News Investigates, the broadcaster's investigative wing, producing investigations and documentaries. He joined GB News after working in print and broadcast journalism throughout Britain and the Middle East. Interested in conservatism, education, security and architecture, Charlie has written for the *Telegraph*, *National Review*, *spiked*, *Quillette* and *CapX*.

**NINA POWER philosopher and writer; senior editor, Compact Magazine**

Nina is a writer and philosopher. She is senior editor for *Compact Magazine*, and teaches at multiple institutions, including the Mary Ward Centre, GCAS and IndieThinkers. She is author of *What Do Men Want? Masculinity and its discontents*.

**JACOB REYNOLDS convenor, The Academy;  
external affairs manager, Ideas Matter**

Jacob is partnerships manager at the Academy of Ideas. He is head of policy for a new think tank in Brussels, MCC Brussels, which is dedicated to providing a home for genuine debate about the future of Europe. He read the BPhil in philosophy at St Cross College, Oxford, developing an interest in political and continental philosophy, especially the work of Hannah Arendt. Before that, Jacob read politics and philosophy at the University of Sheffield and co-ran the Sheffield Salon, modelled on the salons of Enlightenment Europe.

**KEVIN ROONEY member, Academy of Ideas Education Forum;  
editor, irishborderpoll.com**

Kevin is a teacher in London and a member of the Academy of Ideas Education Forum. He speaks regularly in panel debates and has contributed articles to a range of publications on education, politics, Irish current affairs, civil liberties and football. Kevin is co-author of *Who Is Afraid of the Easter Rising* and *The Blood-Stained Poppy* and he established IrishBorderPoll.com to advocate for, and promote, debate and discussion about Ireland's future and the reunification of Ireland.

**RALPH SCHOELLHAMMER assistant professor, Webster University Vienna;  
writer and podcaster**

Ralph is an assistant professor in economics and political science at Webster University Vienna. His research focuses mainly on cultural factors of identity formation. He is a frequent contributor to the public debate on issues such as Europe's energy crisis. Ralph is host of the podcast *The 1020* and writes for outlets including the *Jerusalem Post*, the *Washington Examiner*, *spiked* and *UnHerd*.

**SANDY STARR deputy director, Progress Educational Trust**

Sandy Starr is deputy director of the Progress Educational Trust (PET), a charity which improves choices for people affected by infertility and genetic conditions. PET advances public understanding of science, law and ethics in the fields of human genetics, human reproduction, embryology and stem-cell research. He has written the Letter on Liberty, *AI: Separating Man from Machine*.

**ELLA WHELAN journalist and commentator; co-convenor, Battle of Ideas festival**

Ella is co-convenor of the Battle of Ideas festival. She is a freelance journalist, regular commentator on cultural issues for the *Telegraph* and author of *What Women Want: Fun, freedom and an end to feminism*. She was formerly assistant editor at *spiked* and host of the *spiked* podcast. She frequently appears on the BBC, ITV and Sky News, and has written for *Conscience*, the *Spectator* and others. Her interviews - including Slavoj Žižek, Fiona Shaw, Camille Paglia and Lionel Shriver - are published in the *spiked* review.

**AUSTIN WILLIAMS lecturer, critic and commentator;  
director, Future Cities Project**

Austin is an architect and director of the Future Cities Project. He is the author of *China's Urban Revolution: understanding Chinese eco-cities* and co-founder of *mantownhuman: Manifesto - Towards a New Humanism*, which featured in *Penguin Classics' 100 Artists Manifestos*. Other books include *Enemies of Progress*, *The Future of Community* and *The Lure of the City*. Austin convenes the Bookshop Barnies.

**DR JOANNA WILLIAMS director, Cieo; columnist, spiked; author, How Woke Won**

Joanna is the founder and director of Cieo. Joanna is a weekly columnist for the online magazine *spiked* and writes frequently for numerous other publications, including *The Times*, *Spectator*, *Telegraph* and *Daily Mail*. Joanna taught at the University of Kent for over 10 years and has worked as head of education and culture at Policy Exchange. Joanna's latest book, *How Woke Won*, was published in 2022 and she is also author of other books, including *Academic Freedom in an Age of Conformity* and *Women vs Feminism: why we all need liberating from the gender wars*.



# **VIDEOS & PODCASTS**



The Ideas Matter podcast and the Ideas Matter YouTube channel feature talks from leading contemporary thinkers on the most important ideas and political and cultural trends of our times.

Visit to find lectures and talks from our events including Living Freedom and The Academy as well as interviews and commentary by the Ideas Matter team.





## **LIVING FREEDOM SUMMER SCHOOL 2023: VIDEOS & PODCASTS**

The following lectures and talks recorded at Living Freedom Summer School 2023 can be found on the Ideas Matter YouTube channel and Ideas Matter podcast.

Click links to access through your preferred feed.

### **Freedom of conscience: 21<sup>st</sup> century challenges**

[YouTube](#) | [Spotify](#) | [Apple Podcasts](#)

### **Freedom in the age of identity politics**

[YouTube](#) | [Spotify](#) | [Apple Podcasts](#) | [Substack](#)

### **Dystopian or dysfunctional? The 21<sup>st</sup> century state**

[YouTube](#) | [Spotify](#) | [Apple Podcasts](#)

### **The dangers of progress?**

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### **What does it mean to be human in a world of generative AI**

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### **The 'stolen years': understanding the lockdowns**

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### **Online harms to trigger warnings: safetyism vs freedom**

[YouTube](#) | [Spotify](#) | [Apple Podcasts](#)



**PARTICIPANTS**

## **PARTICIPANTS**

Tyler Robinson, Oldham; **Gabriele Sartoris, Zurich**; Ashby Neterer, Oxford; **Andrea Seaman, Fribourg**; Johnny Pupic, Durham; **Jack Barwell, Exeter**; Luca Johnson, Earlsfield; **Emma Cabezaolias, Durham**; Shiven Chudasama, Coventry; **Omar Loubak Mohamed, London**; Reece Coombes, Weston-super-Mare; **Abijeet Sansoy, London**; Mathilda Martin, Oakham; **Jasper Robbins, Country Down**; Maisie Jack, Egham; **Brad Strotten, London**; Madhumithra Subburaj, London; **Andrew Trovalusci, Kingston Upon Thames**; Alfie McNicol, London; **Elliot Bewick, Hove**; Noah Jarvis, York, Canada; **Jose Morales, Calle Castilla**; Katie Batch, Westcliff; **Callum Smiles, Salisbury**; Harvey Stevens, Durham; **Vinay Kapoor, London**; Angelica Toy, Alberta, Canada; **Hugo Okada, Hove**; Efrain Flores Monsanto, Ontario, Canada; **Amy Sheppard, Bristol**; Jack Rumsey, Southfields; **Jonathan Nathan, Heidelberg**; Samuel Rubinstein, London-Paris; **Lavinia Martin, Oakham**; Lincoln Jay, Mississauga, Canada; **Yasemin Gurdal, London**; Alexander Marshall, London; **John Fawcett, Oxford**; Karl Emil Koch, Frederiksberg; **Anandita Pelia, London**; Hugh Boyd-Isherwood, Exeter; **Alana Assis, London**; Gabrielle Cottingham, Independence, USA; **Margo Martin, Abertawe**; Emi Yamasita Grey, Lancaster; **Maddie Benderschi, London**; Sydney Fizzard, Calgary, Canada; **Mina Eghbal, London**; Natalya Heath, Moray; **Harry Fitzpatrick, Gloucester**; Chloe Dobbs, London; **Oliver Cray, Thames Ditton**; Elliot Leupolz, New Malden; **Stani Huepfl, Oxfordshire**; Ben Daunter, Headley, Hampshire; **Ryan Hoey, Belfast**; Zoe Lambert, London; **Eryk Swieszek, Canterbury**; Carter Cooper, Nashville, USA; **Georgina Mumford, Dereham**; Mayur Gupta, London; **Harry Ball, Doncaster**; Hugh Pickering-Carter, Chelmsford; **Max Marsden-Price, Manchester**; Ana de la Vega, London; **Emma Gilland, Birmingham**; Tom Collyer, Bushey; **Felice Basbøll, Dublin**; Ella Nixon, Cambridge; **Ethan Green, Southend**; Samuel Barrett, Canterbury; **Rush Hariba, London**; Daniel Stainton, Leamington Spa.

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# LETTERS on LIBERTY



Drawing on the tradition of radical pamphlets from the seventeenth century onwards – designed to be argued over in the pub as much as parliament – Letters on Liberty promises to make you think twice. Each Letter stakes a claim for how to forge a freer society in the here and now.

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# LIVING FREEDOM

## About Living Freedom

Living Freedom is a project of the educational charity Ideas Matter. It was founded in 2017 with the aims of cultivating free inquiry and resuscitating the spirit of freedom through enthusing a new generation.

## Living Freedom Summer School 2023

Living Freedom Summer School is devised and produced by Ideas Matter. We are grateful to a small volunteer team who assisted with programming and developing content:

Samuel Barrett, Felice Basbøll, Emma Gilland, Ethan Green, Rushabh Haria and Ella Nixon.

The 2023 summer school is supported by Alumni for Free Speech and the Ian Mactaggart Programme with Free Speech Union.



Ideas Matter advances education and good citizenship through the promotion of ideas of tolerance, open debate and participation in democracy.

IAN MACTAGGART  
PROGRAMME



The Ian Mactaggart Trust was established in 1984. It supports suitable charities in the United Kingdom and abroad.

The Free Speech Union is a non-partisan, mass-membership public interest body that stands up for the speech rights of its members.

*Alumni for*  
**FREE SPEECH**

Alumni for Free Speech encourages universities to achieve policies and practices in relation to freedom of speech which comply with the law and best practice.