

ASA Officers Issue Statements on Steven Salaita

- ASA Presidents and Secretary express concern about academic freedom and Salaita's non-appointment at the University of Illinois. (page 2 and 3)
- ASA Vice President Elect and Council member support decision not to hire Salaita. (page 4)

Scroll down to see the letters in this PDF document.



September 12, 2014

Phyllis W. Wise
Office of the Chancellor
Swanlund Administration Building
601 E. John Street
Champaign, IL 61820
Via: pmwise@illinois.edu
UIBOT@uillinois.edu

Dear Chancellor Wise and Members of the Board of Trustees*:

We write as elected leaders of the American Sociological Association to express our concern about the possibility that academic freedom has been violated in the decision of the Chancellor not to send Dr. Steven G. Salaita's faculty appointment to the board for approval, and the decision of the Board not to approve his offer. We ask you to reconsider your decision.

The decision appears to abrogate long-established principles of academic freedom of expression to which your university expressly adheres (see art. 10, sec. 2, at <http://www.bot.uillinois.edu/statutes>). It appears that the decision not to approve his appointment after the usual faculty evaluation processes was based on disapproval of some political views he expressed on electronic media or the way in which he stated them. As leaders of a scholarly association, we consider it important that decisions about whom to hire, tenure, or terminate be made based on scholarship, teaching, administration, and service, and not on whether individuals express views that administrators or board members disagree with. We believe that the right to express unpopular views on important issues in various media is critical to the health of our democratic society and to its institutions of higher education.

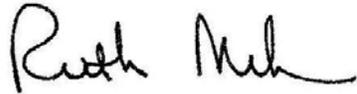
If Dr. Salaita's appointment process was discontinued because of the views he expressed, then, regardless of whether or not we agree with his views, we find the discontinuation deeply disturbing and inconsistent with academic freedom.

We urge you to consider whether important principles have been violated in this case, and if they have, to reconsider your decision.

Sincerely,



Paula England, President
New York University



Ruth Milkman, President-Elect
Graduate Center, City University of New York



Annette Lareau, Immediate Past President
University of Pennsylvania



Mary Romero, Secretary
Arizona State University

*Members of the University of Illinois Board of Trustees:

Christopher Kennedy, Ed McMillan, Pam Strobel, Ricardo Estrada, Karen Hasara,
Patricia Brown Holmes, Patrick Fitzgerald, Timothy Koritz, James Montgomery,
Lucas Frye, Danielle Leibowitz, Hanna Cave



September 16, 2014

601 E. John Street
Champaign, IL 61820
Via: pmwise@illinois.edu
UIBOT@uillinois.edu

Dear Chancellor Wise and Members of the Board of Trustees:

We write as elected leaders of the American Sociological Association to express our support for your decision not to hire Dr. Steven G. Salaita as a faculty member at the University of Illinois. Although some sociologists disagree with your decision, as a previous letter indicated, we wanted you to know that some sociologists, including leaders of the American Sociological Association, support your decision. We personally feel if a job candidate openly disparages an entire minority group it is a good reason not to hire him or her as a new faculty member. Dr. Salaita's public expressions of hatred and his public endorsement of violence have no place in the University of Illinois.

We agree with the other officers of the American Sociological Association that it is terribly important that the University of Illinois not abrogate long-established principles of academic freedom of expression. We trust that tenured faculty members will be free to express themselves openly and without fear. As leaders of a scholarly association, we consider it important that decisions about whom to hire, tenure, or terminate be made based on scholarship, teaching, administration, and service, and not on whether people express shared political views of administrators or board members. But if a candidate's views move beyond the political to the hateful, you have the responsibility to the students to refuse to hire that candidate.

Still, it is important that unpopular views on important issues can be expressed. Freedom of speech, even uncivil speech, is vital to the health of our democratic society and to its institutions of higher education. We trust that vigorous debates will remain a vital part of our university tradition.

Sincerely

Barbara J. Risman, Professor and Head
University of Illinois at Chicago, Sociology
Vice-President Elect, American Sociological Association

Stephanie A. Bohon, Associate Professor
University of Tennessee
Council-Member-At-Large, American Sociological Association