

# Texas university systems attack freedom of speech, limit discussion on gender

Chase Lawrence  
15 October 2025

Two of Texas' largest university systems, the Texas State University System (TSUS) and the University of Texas System (UT), have ordered "audits" of gender courses under the direction of the state Republicans, as part of their fascistic campaign against so-called "LGBTQ ideology."

The audit at the UT System, announced at the end of last month, follows the passage of Senate Bill 37, which went into effect on September 1. This bill allows the restructuring of higher education, and in particular the shifting of curriculum review and approval from faculty senates to unaccountable governing boards that are political in character.

The UT system abolished faculty councils and senates in August on the basis of SB 37 and in preparation for the implementation of its very unpopular and anti-democratic policies. The nine universities subject to these changes, dictated by President Trump, include the University of Texas at Austin, which is part of the University of Texas System.

The implementation of SB 37 at the TSUS came less than a week after Texas State, the flagship university of the TSUS, removed an LGBTQ+ communications course and fired history professor Tom Alter for speaking at an off-campus socialism conference, where he made remarks critical of US capitalism and imperialism.

The Texas Tech System (TTS) moved to limit discussion on gender identity over the last month, telling teaching doctors to remove words like "transgender" from their curricula, threatening medical training on transgender patients, as well as limiting the use of other terms such as "DEI" and "affirmative action."

According to a health sciences professor, administrators advised faculty in person that while DEI terms were permitted, "transgender" and related language was prohibited in the classroom but still acceptable in clinical care. Many faculty have self-censored as a result.

In its reasoning, the TTS pointed to the anti-trans Texas House Bill 229, which enshrines an explicitly Christian conception of gender, and a statement by Republican Governor Greg Abbott directing state agencies to "reject

woke gender ideologies." The university administration is effectively working as a state agency loyal to a political party. It is taking its marching orders directly from the tweets of a political leader, rather than conducting itself as an independent academic institution.

This has far-reaching implications beyond the immediate issue, essentially giving the Texas government the power to decide what can and can't be discussed at Texas universities in violation of the First amendment as well as basic academic traditions. Instead of universities being centers for thought and discussion, they are to be turned into centers for indoctrination, where anything that goes against the present whims of the political establishment can be deemed "wrong-think" and banished.

This follows similar events last month. At Texas A&M, a professor was fired for discussing gender identity in class, and the head of the university resigned following a campaign involving the highest levels of the state government. Texas Republican Attorney General Ken Paxton called for the firing of the professor as well as Texas A&M leaders in a video published on X following the publishing of a video by a far-right activist which showed a course on children's literature discussing gender studies. Following the removal of a dean and department head in response to his video, Texas Governor Greg Abbott wrote on X on September 9, "Good. Now, fire the professor who acted contrary to Texas law."

The above listed university systems comprise all of the major public universities in Texas, which encompasses over a third of the 1.45 million university students in the state, which ranks second in the country according to the number of university students.

The United States, which has carried out one war after another under the pretext of defending human rights, already has censorship laws on the books on gay and transgender issues. Six US states have explicit laws limiting instruction on LGBTQ issues. To date, however, the bans have largely avoided the targeting of higher education. The sweeping attack in Texas on discussion of gender is the most

widespread attack to date by a state ruling party in the US on freedom of speech in higher education.

The targeting of LGBTQ studies, as well as the hounding of academics for “wrong-think,” has definite historical roots of which the Republican Party leadership is no doubt aware.

On May 6, 1933, the Institute of Sexology, the first research center in the world dedicated to the scientific study of sex, including transgender people and gays, was broken into by the Nazis, who proceeded to burn all of the research at the institute in Berlin’s Bebelplatz Square, along with 20,000 other books. The aim of the book burning was to incite the most backward layers of German society against the working class and its leadership, utilizing the dog-whistle of homophobia and anti-trans bigotry.

As the poet Heinrich Heine put it a century before the burning, “*Where they burn books, they will ultimately burn people too.*” And so they did.

The socialist movement in Germany was crushed the same year. The socialists and communists were sent to concentration camps, never to be seen again. Trump and the Republican Party do not have a mass fascist movement like Hitler, but that doesn’t change the fact that their aims are the same as those of the Nazis.

The campaign at the universities is plagiarized from the Nazis’ playbook. The Nazis carried out a campaign called “*Gleichschaltung*,” German for “bringing into line,” to rid the universities of any elements viewed to be insufficiently loyal to the regime. Jews, socialists, gays and others were ejected from universities and the universities were put under the direct control of political hacks loyal to the Nazi Party.

As the *World Socialist Web Site* reported in a recent article, the Trump administration is carrying this out through threats to withhold funding if universities don’t submit to the administration’s demands, which include prohibiting “support for entities designated by the US government as terrorist organizations.”

Trump has designated the “left” and especially “antifa,” i.e., anyone who holds anti-fascist ideas, as “terrorists” and declared “war” on them. He has threatened to invoke the Insurrection Act, in practice suspending the Constitution, and has already deployed the military to US cities. This is tantamount to a ban on political opposition from the left.

Texas Attorney General Paxton announced undercover investigations of “leftist terror cells” on October 8, a week after the announcement of the audit by the TSUS. In an official statement, Paxton launched into a fascist rant, saying:

Leftist political terrorism is a clear and present danger. Corrupted ideologies like transgenderism and

antifa are a cancer on our culture and have unleashed their deranged and drugged-up foot soldiers on the American people.

Paxton said that

the martyrdom of Charlie Kirk marks a turning point in America. There can be no compromise with those who want us dead. To that end, I have directed my office to continue its efforts to identify, investigate, and infiltrate these leftist terror cells. To those demented souls who seek to kill, steal, and destroy our country, know this: you cannot hide, you cannot escape, and justice is coming.

In keeping with the Democrats’ role nationally, which is to downplay Trump and the Republicans’ drive to dictatorship, the Texas Democrats have done nothing to oppose the fascistic campaign against LGBTQ studies and freedom of speech. The Texas State Employee Union (TSEU), which covers 10,000 state employees and retirees, has done nothing to mobilize its membership against victimization, nor has its parent union, the Communication Workers of America, which has 750,000 members across the country. Leading Texas Democrats such as US representatives from Texas Greg Casar and Joaquin Castro have said nothing.



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