

## ICA 2017 Theme: **Freedom of Speech – Rights vs. Responsibilities**

The First Amendment of the United States Constitution says, “Congress shall make no law ... abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; ....” While words are merely symbols that reflect individual thought, “Words are singularly the most powerful force available to humanity. We can choose to use this force constructively with words of encouragement, or destructively using words of despair. Words have energy and power with the ability to help, to heal, to hinder, to hurt, to harm, to humiliate and to humble,” (Yehuda Berg). Clearly, freedom of speech cannot be absolute, but what are the limits? In his crescendo press conference in the 1995 movie, “The American President,” President Andrew Shepherd explains the difficult contradiction of the first amendment: “You want free speech? Let's see you acknowledge a man whose words make your blood boil, who's standing center stage and advocating at the top of his lungs that which you would spend a lifetime opposing at the top of yours. You want to claim this land as the land of the free? Then the symbol of your country cannot just be a flag. The symbol also has to be one of its citizens exercising his right to burn that flag in protest. Now show me that, defend that, celebrate that in your classrooms. Then you can stand up and sing about the land of the free.” Below are starter suggestions for panel ideas, and please create your own as well.

- Where does Hate Speech extend beyond freedom of speech?
- What does free speech actually mean?
- Are/Should there be limits to free speech?
- Cyber bullying
- Are sexist and racist words protected by the First Amendment?
- Does freedom of the press include lying to or misleading the public?
- Donald Trump’s suggestions of violence to silence his detractors
- Classroom issues – What to do if students push the boundaries of free speech in class or online discussions
- Campus issues of free speech
  - Issues dealing with free speech and academic freedom
  - campus protests
  - campus signs
  - potential censorship of campus newspapers by college administrators
  - Firing faculty a student-newspaper faculty advisor because a student wrote a story critical of the university president (see Thom Hanrahan, Missouri Southern State University)
- Colin Kaepernick kneeling during the *Star Spangled Banner*
- Should there be legal consequences for inciting “mob mentality”?
  - For example, when the doctored, misrepresentative “baby parts” video went out to damage the image of Planned Parenthood, Robert Dear went to a Planned Parenthood location in Colorado Springs, Colorado and shot three PP employees dead. He muttered “no more baby parts” as he was being arrested. Did the doctored video push Dear over the edge? And should there be consequences for those who disseminated the video, who, perhaps, should have perceived such an outcome as foreseeable?
- Do tag lines such as “I was just kidding,” mitigate hate speech and undo its damage?
- Sexual harassment language
- Freedom of speech and social media
- Is the media actually “liberal”?

We also encourage panel submissions on GIFTS (Great Ideas For Teaching Speech) and on original research in areas outside of the conference theme.