

Academic Freedom, Critical Inquiry, and Participation in the Society of Biblical Literature

*This statement pertains to the disciplinary standards and exercise of academic freedom in the meetings and official activities of the Society of Biblical Literature.*¹

The Society of Biblical Literature supports academic freedom for scholars in their research, publication, and the broader communication of that research in an international context. This includes the freedom to choose topics and methods and to arrive at controversial results. SBL's [institutional purpose](#) to foster biblical studies is defined by scholarship devoted to the critical investigation of the Bible from a variety of academic disciplines. This mission is carried out by advancing academic study of biblical texts and their contexts as well as of the traditions and contexts of biblical interpretation, and by facilitating broad and open discussion from a variety of scholarly perspectives.²

Members participating in meetings of the Society of Biblical Literature contribute to the intellectual community of SBL, and thereby agree to engage in an open academic discussion guided by disciplinary norms and in scholarly discourse characterized by critical inquiry and investigation. SBL expects all members to be responsible for the quality of this scholarly community when participating in its programs and forums. SBL's rules of discourse and engagement are consistent with other learned societies in the humanities and social sciences. SBL embraces the opportunity to expose individuals, institutions, and communities to SBL's institutional mission, intellectual methods, and humanistic values. As a learned society, its role is also to encourage the expression of opposing viewpoints and to provide a safe space for discussion in which everyone is encouraged to put forward their reasoned opinions while being offered respect and collegiality.

SBL's policy on academic freedom is held alongside its [Professional Conduct Policy](#). The Society holds members, [affiliated organizations](#), and institutional hosts to these standards during all SBL-sanctioned activities (including regional, annual, and international meetings, sponsored events and programmatic activities, and committee and editorial board meetings). The use of facilities by the Society does not constitute an endorsement of institutions, other associations, or corporations. The selection of institutional or corporate hosts is guided by SBL's [Guidelines for Selecting Host Institutions](#) and its meeting [Memorandum of Understanding](#).

¹Academic freedom is not equivalent to the legal principle of freedom of speech, as variously defined by different constituencies.

² SBL's formulation of academic freedom is rooted in the AAUP's [1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure](#).