


## Academic WARNED Not to Research Extreme ISLAMISM – Dr. Daniel Allington

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Subscribe to The Daily Heretic for fearless conversations about truth, power, and the ideas institutions are increasingly afraid to confront.  / [@hereticsclips](#) What happens when an academic is quietly warned not to pursue a line of research — not because it's wrong, but because it's politically dangerous? In this episode of Heretics, I'm joined by Dr Daniel Allington, a scholar and commentator who explains why researching extreme Islamism and antisemitism has become one of the most sensitive — and professionally risky — areas in modern academia.

Dr Allington lays out how certain topics have effectively become off-limits within universities, even when the data is robust and the methodology sound. He explains that antisemitism does not always appear where institutions expect or prefer it to appear, and why research that challenges comfortable assumptions can trigger resistance, reputational attacks, or quiet pressure to stop altogether. This conversation isn't about attacking religion or communities. It's about academic freedom — and what happens when ideological boundaries replace open inquiry.

Dr Allington describes how research into political Islam, extremist networks, and antisemitic attitudes is often treated as inherently suspect, regardless of evidence, while other forms of extremism receive far less institutional pushback. We explore the mechanics of academic gatekeeping: how funding decisions, peer review, internal complaints, and informal warnings shape what scholars feel safe researching. Dr Allington explains why many academics self-censor long before publishing anything controversial — and why those who don't risk stalled careers, public smears, or professional isolation.

The discussion widens to the cultural implications. What does it mean for society when entire areas of inquiry are effectively closed? How does this distort public understanding of extremism, prejudice, and radicalisation? And why do institutions often prioritise reputational safety over intellectual honesty? Crucially, this episode avoids sensationalism. It doesn't make sweeping claims or offer easy villains. Instead, it shows how institutional incentives quietly shape knowledge itself — and why uncomfortable research is often the first casualty when politics enters the academy. You don't have to agree with every conclusion Dr Allington draws to find this conversation essential.

Its value lies in understanding how research becomes taboo, why some evidence is treated as dangerous, and what that means for universities that claim to value truth above all else. If you

care about free inquiry, evidence-led debate, and the cost of challenging dominant narratives, this episode offers a rare, inside look at the pressures shaping modern scholarship. Watch the full podcast here: <https://open.spotify.com/episode/3rmx...> #DanielAllington #AcademicFreedom #IslamismDebate #FreeSpeechUK #HereticsPodcast #UniversityCulture #Censorship #AntisemitismResearch

### The broadcast discussion

Andrew: Daniel Allington, welcome to the show.

Daniel: Thanks for having me on.

Andrew: Tell me a little bit about the work that you do.

Daniel: I've been researching anti-semitism for a few years, and one of the things that I have gradually come to realize is that anti-semitism is not mostly to be found where I thought it was. I started off with the idea that I guess most people do that anti-semitism is a characteristic of the far right and that's that's where it will be. That these are the people who hate Jews. And of course there are people there who hate Jews.

Um but I've gradually come to understand that this is not how things really work now. Um I did a lot of work on um on uh the anti-semitism of the left. Um, and then for the last but for the last few years, I've been looking at the way that anti-semitism is promoted by Islamists and the way that is that anti-semitism is actually a core component of Islamist ideology, which is something that most people don't want to talk about.

Andrew: Um, which is why I'm really grateful that you've had me on. Oh, good. Well, yeah. I mean, as an academic, it's a very lefty area, isn't it? Is it as lefty as people that say it is?

Daniel: Oh, yeah. Yeah, it is. Um it's um I it's it's funny the way that it's got like that. I think actually when I when I went into to academia, I was quite strongly on the left. Um and I felt at home there. Um and it's it was as I as I gradually came to to question various parts of the left-wing orthodoxy, I started to realize that it's actually um quite in many ways quite an inhospitable environment for um for other perspectives.

Andrew: Have you had push back?

Daniel: I'll give you an example of of which which I think illustrates how things work there. Well, two two examples actually. I was giving a lecture. It was the first lecture of a course on research methods that I do. And in the course of that I was talking about scientific theories and how we test and you know what what is a scientific theory, how we test them etc. Um and as part of that I gave KL Pupa's you know famous discussion of of why Karl

Marx's theories were scientific theories but the sort of postmarxists have used them in a non-scientific way. Um and essentially KL Marx predicted that certain things would happen and then they didn't happen and his followers continued believing in the in the theories that that was an example of sort of an unscientific way of behaving.

Um, and after the lecture, uh, one of the students came up to me, a student who'd been studying for three years in a, you know, fairly elite British institution, he said to me, "Thank you. You're the first person here who has ever said that Marx was wrong."

Andrew: Wow. After three years presumably doing what what was their degree?

Daniel: I'm not sociology. It was it was I think he was studying something like digital cultures or something like that. But it's it's you know so there is so there is I mean I that will have depended on which modules he picked and whatever. I'm not saying that everybody you know it will have depended on choices he made of what to study.

So I'm not saying that like everybody is sort of pushing Marxist ideology there. But the thing is that there's a there are relatively few people in academia who are actually willing to push back on on points of of leftwing orthodoxy. And there's a lot of reasons for that. The other example I wanted to give was when I I first wanted to start looking at um anti-semitism within the Muslim community or well Muslim communities I should say and I was provided with some data which we might get to talk about later and I was doing an analysis of this.

And I discussed it with a with a friend who said "...let let me let me seek some advice on on your behalf..." and she went off and and mentioned to to a senior colleague of hers that that she knew someone who was was looking at this and the advice that came back was you know "...tell your friend to stay well away from this..." and who said to stay away from it then one one of her colle senior colleagues who said you know tell "...tell your friend that this is a bad idea...".

So I don't know whether that was in in the sense of um you know uh your your friend will be a bad person if he does this or bad consequences will happen to your friend if he does this I I don't know which way it was but definitely I was strongly advised via via a friend um to stay away from this area that [clears throat] um that I I shouldn't touch it.

There's a lot there's a lot of sort of social pressure not to look at things which will challenge the consensus and actually a couple of years ago I did a report for the um commission for countering extremism which sadly no longer exists. Um looking at what I called the uh national research environment for the study of extremism in the UK and I did a couple of things.

One was I looked at what people had received funding to study. I I also did a lot of interviews with with people who are working in the area and that was a thing that I I heard from a lot of them was um you know there there is a sort of social pressure not to look at certain things that

might uh be seen as right-wing or that might help the right um and that exists not just in academia but also in in the uh the NGO world um the sort of counter-extremism think tank kind of world not all by no means all counter extremism and think tanks come to that.

But there is a lot of pressure within within that that world to to stay away from certain topics because they're seen as as being dangerous. And one of the things I I found when I was looking at what people were being funded to study was that um you have a lot of uh funded projects that were looking at extremism in general and not actually looking at any specific form of extremism.

And I think this is because um you kind of stay away from controversy. You talk about extreme extremism in general, you're talking about a problem. People can agree it's a problem and as long as you don't say where the problem is or or who's or who's doing it, then um you stay out of trouble. Then you have the sort of the second largest group which we're looking at um the far right.

But the the number of projects that were actually being funded to to look at Islamism, which is unquestionably the the greatest terror threat in the UK, and I would also argue by far the greatest extremist threat, leaving terrorism aside, also in the UK, this is a far smaller number of of projects funded to look at that.

And I think that's a product of a lot of things. People are worried that their colleagues will see them as racist if they look at uh at Islamism. they are aware that if they write about this or if they they apply for funding to study this then their applications or their papers are likely to be shot down by peer reviewers because if you're reviewed by three people four people.

There is a fairly high chance that one of them um one of them at least will be on the left and may see this as as a as a threat and and want to stop it and then I think when people do try to study thing these things they often do get shot down at that stage um somebody will will take it upon themselves to make sure that this dangerous research doesn't happen. [ Flest fólk eru raggeitur sem þora ekki að hugsa og skrifa um sannleika máls. Slíkir aular eru hræddir við að verða jaðarsettir af vinum og ættingjum. ]

It's very difficult to push push anything in this uh this sphere.

Andrew: How how might they do that? Put that pressure on.

Daniel: When I'm talking about pressure, I'm talking about the sort of social pressure that you know that if you look at certain things, then people will suspect that you're a racist, that you're an Islamophobe, whatever. Because otherwise, why would you be why would you be looking at this? You know, why are you giving ammunition to the far right?

Um, but then there's there's a sort of quieter way that things get get shut down, which is through peer review. Even when I haven't been writing about Islamism, when I've just been writing about anti-semitism, um I've often found that um peer reviewer there there will be, you know, a paper may get sent out to three peer reviewers and quite often one of them will be immensely hostile to the idea of of of studying anti-semitism because that's in itself regarded as quite dangerous unless you're very very clearly focusing only on the anti-semitism of the far right.

Andrew:       Okay?

Daniel:       And then you're in the position where um you know you you have to argue with with the you have to have a conversation with the editor and try and persuade them that this peer reviewer is wrong and they may side with you or they may side with the editor. Either way, it's a it's a big headache that you wouldn't have if you just stayed away from controversial areas.