

Professor Larry Arnn
Office of the President
president@hillsdale.edu

Hillsdale College
33 East College Street
Hillsdale, Michigan 49242

Saturday, 9 March 2019
Re: Hillsdale College Online Discussion Boards

Dear Professor Arnn,

Please allow me to begin by congratulating you and Hillsdale College for taking the initiative to help the American public and others to rediscover our constitutional roots. Personally I have benefitted enormously from your school's online courses and would very much like to see them succeed far into the future. Indeed, it is for this reason that I am writing to you today. And, it is to this end that I would like to turn your attention to the *technology*, *terms of use*, and *administrative conduct* of the **Discussion Board** that accompanies each lecture series:

TECHNOLOGY

The internet technology that you offer in each Discussion Board is not user friendly, as it requires knowledge of webdesign that most discussion participants do not appear to have, else they would be using it. Further, there are no instructions about how to use the technology, and improper use -- either accidental by someone who is unknowledgeable or purposeful by someone who is knowledgeable -- can paralyze an entire thread.

TERMS OF USE

In order to overcome the aforementioned problem the online hosts have created four Terms of Use that essentially instruct all discussants -- both those who are webdesign literate and those who are not -- to refrain from using the tools that can create the paralysis. Unfortunately, two of these terms forbid the insertion of images and links, two of the primary components of internet communication.

ADMINISTRATIVE CONDUCT

The enforcement of the aforementioned terms is both arbitrary and ruthless, insofar as it only takes place when a complaint is sent to the forum administrator about their use, and all entries of the miscreant are simply eliminated. To make matter's worse, the forum administrator is anonymous and engages in absolutely devastating behavior without prior consultation with the victims of his/her devastation.

Now, we all know the utility of links in providing direct access to an authors' sources. And, we also know well how carefully researched and strategically posted images can bring home an author's point to the reader with a minimum of effort on this latter's part. Further, poorly substantiated claims make for poor dialogue, and links and images

greatly enhance the ability of authors to substantiate their claims and the ability of readers to verify their authenticity.

It appears to me that Hillsdale College is left with several choices:

1. Introduce new or modified technology that retains the ability to employ images and links, but does not have the potential to paralyze existent threads.
2. Provide instruction about the proper use of the existing technology and punish only those who use it improperly.
3. Eliminate the discussion forums altogether.

Leaving the ***Terms of Use*** as they currently stand can only result in further confusion, misunderstanding, and ill-filling and will in the end deter the kind of scholarly dialogue that would enhance knowledge, rather than detract from its pursuit.

Sincerely,

Roddy A. Stegemann, A.B., M.A., M.A.

kiausau@me.com

www.nudge.online

cc: Anonymous Discussion Board Administrator onlinecourses@hillsdale.edu
Donor Services donorservices@hillsdale.edu
Media Relations pr@hillsdale.edu
Graduate School gradschool@hillsdale.edu