The contributors to this volume consider whether it is possible to establish carefully tailored policies for “hate speech” that are cognizant of the varying traditions, histories, and values of different countries. Throughout, there is a strong comparative emphasis, with examples, and authors, drawn from around the world. A recurrent question is whether or when different cultural and historical settings can justify different substantive rules without making cultural relativism an easy excuse for content-based restrictions that would gravely endanger freedom of expression.

Essays address the following questions, among others: Is “hate speech” in fact so dangerous and harmful, particularly to vulnerable minorities or communities, as to justify restricting freedom of speech? What harms and benefits accrue from laws that criminalize “hate speech” in particular contexts? Are there circumstances in which everyone would agree that “hate speech” should be criminally punished? Is incitement that leads to imminent danger a more reliable concept for defining restrictions than “hate speech”? Does the decision whether to restrict “hate speech” necessarily entail choosing between liberty and equality? What lessons can be learned from international law?
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