1 A passionate but jumbled first attempt

Campus speech codes attempt to ignore or paper over genuine cultural problems at colleges and universities today (Bronner 1997:492). There are more effective ways to foster an atmosphere of tolerance and equality than telling people which words they should and should not use. Legal experts question whether speech codes are Constitutional (Bronner 1997:489–490), and it is difficult to ensure that they have only their intended effects (Bronner 1997:490).

2 Stepping back

My first attempt has at least these ideas packed into it:

1. Campus speech codes are superficial attempts to solve deep problems.
2. Campus speech codes might not be Constitutional.
3. Campus speech codes often have undesirable side-effects.
4. There must be a better way!

Each issue is huge. Each should have its own paragraph at least.
3 Reorganization

Campus speech codes attempt to ignore or paper over genuine cultural problems at colleges and universities today (Bronner 1997:492).

There are more effective ways to foster an atmosphere of tolerance and equality than telling people which words they should and should not use.

Legal experts question whether speech codes are Constitutional.

It is difficult to ensure that speech codes have only their intended effects (Bronner 1997:490).

4 Fleshing out the reorganized version

Campus speech codes have been proposed at many universities in the United States. Almost without exception, they have created new problems without solving the ones they were designed to solve.

Liberals and conservatives alike sense a tension between speech codes and the Constitution’s First Amendment, as Bronner (1997:492) reports. Bronner also observes that, “no student speech code that has been challenged in court has survived” (p. 494).

If speech codes were effective, then we might be willing to accept a limited curtailment of our freedom of speech, just as we do with laws against threats, libel, and slander. But, in truth, speech codes have been shown time and again to be ineffective. They attempt to ignore or paper over genuine cultural problems at colleges and universities today (Bronner 1997:492). It is a mistake to think that regulating speech can alter the beliefs and attitudes that fuel hostile, socially unjust environments. It seems wise, then, to seek alternatives to speech codes.

I did not find a way to work in the idea that speech codes often have undesirable side-effects. The idea will have to wait for another occasion.