

Syllabus Examples

Trigger Warnings are likely not required at your institution. Speak with your Department Chair or Dean for guidance.

Trigger Warning Example #1

Working with Difficult Content*: As you have no doubt put together after reading through this syllabus, this class works with content and material that can be difficult. Some of the media and/or texts chosen and issues discussed in class are intentionally controversial. Know that though you may find such content sexist, racist, homophobic, or otherwise disagreeable, our intent in this course is not to endorse such attitudes, but to rigorously engage with these issues so that we may demonstrate knowledgeable and reasoned debate. This can make the work we are doing in this class difficult, frustrating, and, at times, upsetting. Because of this, the assignments for this class offer a wider variety of choice than those found in traditional writing courses. I encourage you to push yourself beyond your comfort zone and embrace the uncomfortable, the awkward, and the difficult—this is the space where learning and growth happen. That being said, we all have different limits. Should you find yourself nearing one of your limits or if you see an assignment that pushes you too far, then come and see me during office hours and we can discuss strategies for coping with the assignment or an alternate assignment if possible.

*I call them disturbing content warnings, not trigger warnings, because people have a knee jerk reaction to the term trigger warning. My content warnings also states that I am open to meeting ahead of time to discuss the content and/or discuss an alternate assignment if need be. I usually do a verbal reminder about difficult content a week out from the assignment, so people have time to prepare/think ahead.

Trigger Warning Example #2

Works of Lee and Tarantino contain extreme profanity, nudity, depictions of sex, and hate-speech (i.e., language that may be interpreted as racist, homophobic, misogynistic, or sexist). Their works also include representations, sometimes graphic, of the following: drug use and needles, overdoses, car accidents, insects, vomit, blood, medical procedures, corpses, trauma to a pregnant character, forced captivity, premature burial, torture, gun violence, bullet wounds, physical combat, murder, sexual assault, and rape. Since virtually every work of Lee and Tarantino includes at least 5 of these, I will not disclose specific triggers before every screening. Rather, this section of the syllabus will function as a trigger warning for the entire term. Students who anticipate discomfort while screening these films should research the plot and potential triggers before class, and then sit near an exit so that, when necessary, they may step out of the room for a few minutes. Removing yourself for a moment or two is perfectly fine.

Trigger Warning Example #3

At times this semester we will be discussing historical events that may be disturbing, even traumatizing, to some students. If you are aware of particular course material that may be traumatizing to you, I'd be happy to discuss any concerns you may have with it before it comes up in class. Likewise, if you ever wish to discuss your personal reactions to such material with the class or with me afterwards, I welcome such discussion as an appropriate part of our coursework.

If you ever feel the need to step outside during one of these discussions, either for a short time or for the rest of the class session, you may always do so without academic penalty. You will, however, be responsible for any material you miss. If you do leave the room for a significant time, please make arrangements to get notes from another student or see me individually to discuss the situation.

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Resources on Trauma

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