

TRIGGER WARNINGS

Trigger warnings should be considered textual or verbal signs designed to warn those who have psychological trauma of content which may lead to a psychotic, delusional, or harmful reaction.

What is a trigger?

- Something that sets off a memory which takes the person back to a traumatic/extremely disturbing event
- The "Survival Brain" (the amygdala) hijacks the "Thinking Brain" (the prefrontal cortex)
- The amygdala reacts 80 to 100 times faster than the rational brain

What happens when someone gets triggered?

- Being "triggered" destabilizes an individual; creates an overwhelming sense of anxiety, depression or panic
- Thinking is overpowered by emotion
- Little or no ability to rely on rational reasoning

A trigger is NOT simply being uncomfortable or challenged by content.

Why provide a warning?

- Forewarning can alleviate/eliminate experiencing sudden shock or trauma that pulls a student out of context
- Shock can lead to a student being unable to process course content from an academic perspective
- Helps to ensure transparency in the classroom
- Fosters authentic discourse and nurtures a space where students can be heard
- Dialogue and discussion may occur only after individuals perceive trust and respect

What are potential triggers in an academic setting?

- Sexual violence
- Relationship violence
- Racism and racial violence
- Trauma (physical or psychological)
- Ableism
- Bullying
- Violence against LGBTQ+ communities or individuals
- Genocide
- Experiences of oppression
- Sensory sensitivities (e.g., gun fire, flashing lights)

Examples of Trigger Warnings

- "During this course/program we will be discussing historical events that may be disturbing, even traumatizing, to some students. 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.)."
- "If you ever wish to discuss your personal reactions to this material, either with the class or with me afterwards, I welcome such discussion as an appropriate part of our coursework."
- "As a reminder, next class we will be discussing _____. Because of the topic, this material could be disturbing. Please come to class prepared to engage in this content. If you have any concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me before or after class."
- "The video we are about to watch has episodes of violence which include gun fire and flashing lights. If you need to step outside of the room, please rejoin us after 10 minutes."

Additional Resources

- To help a student with accommodations regarding work, attendance or materials:
 - Disability Support Services
 - Call (410) 617-2062 or visit Newman Towers, West 107
- To help a student with reporting or seeking additional support:
 - Title IX Coordinator, Assistant Vice President for Student Development
 - Call (410) 617-5646 or visit Jenkins Hall 110
 - Counseling Center
 - Call (410) 617-2273 or visit Humanities 150
 - Dean of Undergraduate and Graduate Students
 - Call (410) 617-5547 or visit Maryland Hall 147
- Faculty Guide to Supporting and Referring Students
 - <https://www.loyola.edu/departments/counseling-center/faculty-staff/distress/reference>