

## Warning Shot

**F**ROM the blog *Everyday Feminism*: “Everyday Feminism definitely believes in giving people a heads up about material that might provoke our reader’s trauma. However, we use the phrase ‘content warning’ instead of ‘trigger warning,’ as the word ‘trigger’ relies on and evokes violent weaponry imagery. This could be re-traumatizing for folks who have suffered military, police, and other forms of violence. So, while warnings are so necessary . . . we strongly encourage the term ‘content warning’ instead of ‘trigger warning.’”

UPDATE from the PEOPLE’S LANGUAGE COMMITTEE, Berkeley Free University of Progress:

It has come to our attention that the term “content warning” is problematic, as it may be construed to mean “content” with the accent on the second syllable. If people believe they are being warned that the material may induce a sense of complacency, well-being, and momentary fulfillment, then the person will suffer confusion and be victimized by uncertainty when the language that follows does not, in fact, lend itself conducive to contentedness.

This should have been clear to all.

In deeming “content warning” problematic, the committee has proposed a series of meetings in which speakers would repeat, en masse, CONtent as often as possible, establishing strong neural pathways for the preferred pronunciation. Remember, if you can’t think of a word, it really doesn’t exist.

We hope this works for everyone. Happy learning!

UPDATE TO THE POLICY:

It has come to our attention that “content” is problematic for two reasons. One: “Con” brings to mind the slang term for someone who identifies as an Incarcerated-American, and given the systemic unfairness, racism, and disparate impact of the criminal-justice system, perpetuating the notion of a “con” underscores the existence of the prison-industrial complex and may cause anxiety for those who have been in prison, know someone in prison, have read a book about a prison, or have observed a bumper sticker that said “I support the police.”

Just as important: The word “content” could be misunderstood as encouraging the state of contentedness. There are many on our campus whose difficulties preclude the possibility of contentedness, and who feel othered by the implication that they should be satisfied. Coming on the heels of a week in which the cafeteria declared itself unable to certify that the coffee came from an Ecuadorian plantation that gave its workers contraceptive coverage, this seemed needlessly insensitive to our ongoing struggles, and we apologize.

Until a new word is found, instructors will use the phrase “Possibly Unnerving String of Phonemes,” or PUSP.

UPDATE: We apologize to the People’s Union of Socialist Polyamorists for usurping their name. Until a replacement term is used, we recommend that all instruction on campus cease, to ensure a safe space.

UPDATE: We are now replacing Trigger/Content/PUSP warning with something I think we all can welcome with a smile:

Tigger warning.

This word refers to a cartoon feline who, while energetic and self-satisfied, is regarded with warm nostalgia by many, and has never been encountered in any physical form, only in soft, cuddly reproductions. People will visualize a happy animal spirit whose enthusiasm and affection for all will blunt the dread of what is next to come.

UPDATE: With great apologies and a deep sense of humiliation, colored with the knowledge that adversity provides boundless opportunities for growth and constructive apologies, we now realize that the last policy was problematic in so many ways it constituted an object lesson in unseen and unknown biases.

To everyone on campus who may have been attacked by a Tiger, or grown up listening to stories about being attacked by a Tiger, or had a relative harmed in any way by the Tamil Tiger movement, or lost a relative who fought for his beliefs in the Tamil Tiger movement, or whose first name and last initial spelled Tami L., we apologize.

We now realize that using Tigger revealed a bias for Western fiction, in particular the work of A. A. Milne, a white man. Leaving aside for a moment the offensive implication of “Christ” in “Christopher Robin,” and acknowledging the hateful record of the Church and its history of heteronormative patriarchy, the idea that only Western stories are a source for innocent childhood characters denies the history of every other culture on earth, each of which has its own “trickster” spirit like Tigger.

We will complete a list of all of these different characters from all representative cultures on campus and pass it out next week; when you consult the list, do not choose one, but name all the various cheerful animal spirits before using the word “warning.” We considered listing them alphabetically, but that would privilege the “Western” or “Latin” ordering system, so each week we will send out the list with the names in random order. If you wish, you may cut up the list and let students choose which order to use. DO NOT COMMIT ABLEISM by putting the names in a bowl and asking the students to pick them up and read them.

Hope this clears things up! Remember, it’s wise to be tigardly when using the Pooh words.

UPDATE: The entire board has been removed for that last update, which contained a word that resembled a word that resembled a word. We are currently considering a flashing red light; since it may cause seizures, it should just glow on and off, slowly, and be carried around by someone ringing a bell while pointing at the door so students know how best to exit the room to avoid hearing something distressing.

Or, professors can just ask the students what they want to talk about today. Your call.

NR

Mr. Lileks blogs at [www.lileks.com](http://www.lileks.com).