

Examples of Microaggressions in the Classroom

Microaggressions: everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, which communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership.

- Derald Wing Sue, Ph.D.

Microaggressions may be based on socioeconomic status, disability, gender, gender expression or identify, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, nationality, or religion. These insults or insensitivities may be exhibited by students or adults within the school community – keep that in mind when considering each example. *As reported and documented by students*, the following are offered as examples for reflection in an effort to raise awareness and sensitivity toward creating more inclusive and supportive classroom and school environments.

- Failing to learn to pronounce or continuing to mispronounce the names of students after they have corrected you.
- Scheduling tests and project due dates on religious or cultural holidays.
- Disregarding religious traditions or their details. (Ex. Impacts of fasting)
- Setting low expectations for students from particular groups, neighborhoods, or feeder patterns.
- Calling on, engaging and validating one gender, class, or race of students while ignoring other students during class.
- Assigning student tasks or roles that reinforce particular gender roles or don't allow all students flexibility across roles and responses.
- Anticipating students' emotional responses based on gender, sexual orientation, race or ethnicity.
- Using inappropriate humor in class that degrades students from different groups.
- Expressing racially charged political opinions in class assuming that the targets of those opinions do not exist in class.
- Using the term "illegals" to reference undocumented students.
- Hosting debates in class that place students from groups who may represent a minority opinion in class in a difficult position.
- Singling students out in class because of their backgrounds.
- Expecting students of any particular group to 'represent' the perspectives of others of their race, gender, etc. in class discussions or debates.
- Denying the experiences of students by questioning the credibility and validity of their stories.
- Assigning class projects or creating classroom or school procedures that are heterosexist, sexist, racist, or promote other oppressions, even inadvertently.
- Using sexist language.
- Using heteronormative metaphors or examples in class.
- Assuming the gender of any student.
- Continuing to misuse pronouns even after a student, transgender or not, indicates their preferred gender pronoun.

- Assigning projects that ignore differences in socioeconomic class status and inadvertently penalize students with fewer financial resources.
- Excluding students from accessing student activities due to high financial costs.
- Assuming all students have access to and are proficient in the use of computers and applications for communications about school activities and academic work.
- Assuming that students of particular ethnicities must speak another language or must not speak English.
- Complimenting non-white students on their use of “good English.”
- Discouraging students from working on projects that explore their own social identities.
- Asking people with hidden disabilities to identify themselves in class.
- Forcing students with non-obvious disabilities to “out” themselves or discuss them publicly.
- Ignoring student-to-student microaggressions, even when the interaction is not course-related.
- Making assumptions about students and their backgrounds.
- Featuring pictures of students of only one ethnicity or gender on the school website.
- Having students engage in required reading where the protagonists are always white.

Most examples taken, with slight adaptations, from [Microaggressions in the Classroom](#) University of Denver, Center for Multicultural Excellence, by former students Joel Portman, Tuyen Trisa Bui and Javier Ogaz; and Dr Jesús Treviño, former Associate Provost for Multicultural Excellence

Additional examples from recommended resource:
[Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Race, Gender, and Sexual Orientation](#), by Derald Wing Sue, Ph.D.