Microaggressions: Why are “they” so sensitive?

COLA- 1500

Schedule # 19773

Section # 079

Location:

Tuesdays, 11:00am-12:15pm

Fall semester, 2015

Dr. Beverly Colwell Adams Office: 269C Monroe Hall

###### Association Dean/Assistant Dean, College of Arts and Sciences Office Ph #1: 434-924-3353

Psychology Department Office Ph #2: 434-924-8864

Office Hours: Mondays, 12:00-1:30pm bca5y@virginia.edu

By Appointment, also

Please come to see me in my office whenever you have any questions about the lecture, the readings, the syllabus, or other related aspects of the course. I look forward to meeting with you during office hours to discuss ideas, issues, thoughts, etc. that occur to you during the semester. I will be your Faculty Advisor during your first year and until you declare your major. (You should declare your major by the end of your 4th semester.)

Course Goals and Objectives: At the end of this class, students will have gained:

1. a better understanding of cultural, ethnic, and gender sensitivities relative to language products and processing
2. a better understanding of the academic advising structure and resource systems, unique to the University of Virginia

Instructional Methodology:

I will utilize multiple teaching/learning techniques, lectures, guest lecturers, hands-on experiences, student-pairs, etc.

Course Description

The term, microaggression, was first used in the 1970’s by Harvard psychiatrist, Chester Pierce. It refers to verbal or nonverbal language that is seemingly well-meaning but may be perceived as offensive. For example, when some people hear the following:

*You are so articulate.*

*Those stripes really make you look thin.*

*You know...I am so surprised that you are a black woman. When I heard you on the phone, I thought you were white. (paraphrase of statement by Dr. Beverly Tatum, Spelman College, Emeritus)*

*You are a very pretty girl, even though you wear that (religious) head-wrap.*

*I am so glad that I have an Asian lab partner for Chemistry—now I know that I’m going to get an A.,*

they may become upset and feel offended. The degree to which the recipient may show annoyance or irritation may be very low, and thus the speaker may be unaware that the comments were negatively perceived. Depending upon the target audience’s reference group, these kinds of comments may elicit only a *below-the-service-level* wince of a reaction. I teach the class from the perspective that the speaker’s intention is meant to be complimentary. However, to the recipient(s), these kinds of statements are generally perceived as microaggressive; i.e., microassaulting, microinsulting, or microinvalidative (Sue, 2010). A microaggression is a linguistic expression that may create unconscious friction between/among individuals or groups, and this tension is never addressed. According to Sue (2007, 2010), liberal whites (and sometimes nonwhites) use microaggressions as a way to show their concern and commitment for racial, cultural, and sexual egalitarianism, and are genuinely surprised when told that these kinds of comments may create a wider divide.

My plan for this class is to hold class periods for 1.25 hours (75 minutes) each week during the Fall (2015) semester.

TEXTBOOK:

The main class readings will include Derald Wing Sue’s book, *Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Race, Gender, and Sexual Orientation* (2010). Research articles, utube clips, a play, etc. will supplement the textbook.

Attendance

Attendance at all classes is expected. If you must miss a class, you should contact me by email as soon as you know that there is a problem and find out (from me) what you should do.

Grading

Class Participation -- 25%

Partner Questions & Reaction Papers -- 25%

Individual Questions & Reaction Papers -- 25%

Final Class Project -- 25%

**All assignments are due in COLLAB on Sundays on or before 4:45pm.**

Final Project/Paper

1. Students will take a survey that asks them to rate their reactions to a list of possible microaggressions.
2. Each student will collect a corpus of microaggressions (5 examples) that he/she hears in his/her everyday interactions around Grounds (and the greater community). In your final paper, you will discuss these (real world) statements with regard to self-identity, self-esteem, and (psycho) linguistic ambiguity. Use psychological and sociological (and whatever seems relevant) literature to enforce your points.

Paper length = 3-5 pages

Cell Phones/Electronics

All cell phones and electronic devices must be turned off during class and in the closed position. Laptops/ipads/anything with an on/off switch can be brought to class, but will remain off unless specific instructions are given for their use. You can take notes using your ipad or computer. However, please do not use your laptop or ipad for purposes other than taking class notes, unless otherwise instructed.

The Honor Code

All written paper assignments are pledged work, under The UVA Honor Code. I encourage you to discuss class material and textbook material with your classmates and other students. However, your written work should be YOUR work ALONE. I encourage you to use Spell-check and Grammatik and go the LRC or Writing Lab before you turn in your paper assignments. Spelling errors and grammatical errors are very serious errors in college work! They will not be tolerated. Please ask me about any concerns or questions that may arise that are related to possible Honor Code violations. **Note: The Partner Projects “must” be collaborative work!**

Collab and email should be checked on a regular basis (at least once per day) for possible updates about assignments.

Syllabus at a Glance

August 25, 2015 Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Race, Gender, & Sexual Orientation Sue (2010)

Week 1 Introduction and discussion about microaggressions and language ambiguity

General outline for the class will be presented.

***Complete Microaggression Questionnaire before you begin reading Chapters 1 and 2.***

September 1 Manifestation of Racial, Gender, and Sexual-Orientation Microaggressions Sue (2010)

Week 2 Chapter 1: The Manifestation of Racial, Gender, and Sexual-Orientation Microaggressions

Chapter 2: Taxonomy of Microaggressions

Questions will be found in COLLAB. Submit answers by Sunday, Aug. 30, 2015, before 4:45pm.

What is an Association Dean? (Plan to meet with your Association Dean – week of Oct. 12.)

What is a Faculty Advisor?

September 8 Chapter 3: Psych Dilemmas and Dynamics of Microaggressions (partners) Sue (2010)

Week 3 ***It’s not easy being green…Kermit The Frog***

Is “green” a metaphor? (Substitute the word(s) a Native American, black, gay, Latino, a woman, an Asian American, a Muslin, overweight, etc. etc.) Reactions?

View 1st

It’s not easy being green (Kermit the Frog and Lena Horne)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mPvZR6DTbq8>

View 2nd

It’s not easy being green

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hpiIWMWWVco>

**Last Day to ADD a class - Tuesday, September 8, 2015**

**Last Day to DROP a class - Wednesday, September 9, 2015**

September 15 Chapter 4: Microaggression Process Model (individual) Sue (2010)

Week 4 Library Orientation – We will meet in Clemmons Library

September 22 Chapter 5: Microaggressive Stress (partners) Sue (2010)

Week 5 **Writing Center – guest speaker** <http://www.engl.virginia.edu/undergraduate/writing/center>

September 29 Chapter 6: Microaggressive Perpetrators and Oppression (individual) Sue (2010)

Week 6 We will play the “MAJORS” game!

What is a major? What are the possible majors at UVA?

Siy, J.O., Cheryan, & S. (2013). When Compliments fail to flatter: American individualism and responses to positive stereotypes*. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 104*, 87-102. (individual)

(We will assign parts for The Play.)

**Reading Days are October 3-6, 2015**

October 6 Fall Break

Week 7

October 13 Chapter 7: Racial/Ethnic Microaggressions and Racism (partners) Sue (2010)

Week 8 **The PLAY (We will perform in class.)**

Mercer, S.H., Zeigler-Hill, V., & Wallace, M. (2011). Development and initial validation of the inventory of microaggressions against black individuals. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 58,* 457-469.

Plan to meet with your Association Dean during this week!

October 20 Chapter 8: Gender Microaggressions and Sexism Sue (2010)

Week 9 **Please view the utubes with your partner.**

**Sh\*t Girls Say**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u-yLGIH7W9Y&feature=context-cha>

#1, #2, #3

**Sh\*t White Girls Say...to Black Girls**

(<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ylPUzxpIBe0>)?

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lDN0BI1mgjw&src_vid=ylPUzxpIBe0&annotation_id=annotation_426331>

Donovan, R.A.., Galban, D.J., Grace, R.K., Bennett, J. K., & Felicie’, S.Z. (2012). Impact of racial macro- and microaggressions in black women’s lives: A preliminary analysis. *Journal of Black Psychology, 39,* 185-196.

**Last Day to withdraw from a class: Tuesday, October 20, 2015**

October 27 Chapter 9: Sexual Orientation: Microaggressions and Heterosexist (individual) Sue (2010)

Week 10 **South Park: Trapped in the Closet (21 minutes)** (partners)

<http://www.southparkstudios.com/full-episodes/s09e12-trapped-in-the-closet>

**Friday, October 23 – Sunday, October 25, 2015 Family Weekend**

November 3 Chapter 11: Microaggressive Impact on Education and Teaching (individual) Sue (2012)

Week 11 Boysen, G.A. (2012). Teacher and student perceptions of microaggressions in college classrooms. *College Teaching, 60*, 122-129.

November 10 **Career Services - We will meet at Bryant Hall (in the UCS library)**

Week 12Chapter 10: Microaggressions in the Workplace/Employment (partners) Sue (2012)

November 17 Chapter 12: Microaggressive Impact on Mental Health Practice (partners) Sue (2010)

Week 13 Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) – Student Health (Mr. Leonard Carter)

Student Disabilities Access Center (SDAC) – Student Health

November 24 No Class

Week 14 Thanksgiving Holiday

December 1 Class Wrap-Up

Week 15 Minikel-Lacocque, J. (2013). Racism, College, and the power of words: Racial micoaggressions reconsidered. *American Educational Research Journal, 50*, 432-46.

**Final Project/Paper is due!**

***Complete Microaggression Questionnaire by December 6, 2015.***

December 6 **Final Paper (corpus of microaggressions) will be accepted without penalty: 11:55pm; 12/06/2013**

***Complete Microaggression Questionnaire by December 6, 2015.***

J-term (January term, 2016) – courses begin January 4 - 15, 2016

Spring semester begins Monday, January 20, 2016

References

September 8 – Week 3

View 1st It’s not easy being green (Kermit the Frog and Lena Horne)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mPvZR6DTbq8>

View 2nd It’s not easy being green

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hpiIWMWWVco>

September 29 – Week 6

October 13 – Week 8

The Play

October 20 – Week 8

Sh\*t White Girls Say...to Black Girls

(<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ylPUzxpIBe0>)?

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lDN0BI1mgjw&src_vid=ylPUzxpIBe0&annotation_id=annotation_426331>

Sh\*t Girls Say

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u-yLGIH7W9Y&feature=context-cha>

South Park: Trapped in the Closet (21 minutes)

<http://www.southparkstudios.com/full-episodes/s09e12-trapped-in-the-closet>

Boysen, G.A. (2012). Teacher and student perceptions of microaggressions in college classrooms. *College Teaching, 60*, 122-129.

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Siy, J.O., Cheryan, & S. (2013). When Compliments fail to flatter: American individualism and responses to positive stereotypes*. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 104*, 87-102.

Textbook: **Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Race, Gender, and Sexual Orientation** Written by bestselling author Derald Wing Sue, Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Race, Gender, and Sexual Orientation is a first-of-its-kind guide on the subject of microaggressions. This book insightfully looks at the various kinds of microaggressions and their

psychological effects on both perpetrators and their targets.

