



EASTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY

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To: Deans, Associate Deans, Department Chairs, and Program Directors

From: Title IX Coordinator/Deputy Title IX Coordinator

RE: Suggestions for managing sensitive class content

Colleagues,

Some courses may require students to deal with content that is especially sensitive or disturbing and may cause distress to students who have experienced past trauma. The Title IX Office provides the following recommendations regarding classroom materials containing instances of violence related to power, control, or intimidation that may be comparable to students' traumatic experiences. Please note that neither federal regulations nor Eastern Kentucky University require faculty members to alert students to disturbing class content. However, doing so may prevent a single student's reaction to such materials from disrupting the classroom experience for others.

Instructors may wish to notify students on the course syllabus if the course contains any materials that could cause a student to re-live past traumatic experiences or otherwise cause significant distress that would undermine the optimal learning environment. It is expected that students will have to deal with difficult material that will make them uncomfortable and challenge their pre-conceptions as a normal part of the college experience. However, if your course includes unusually violent, sexually explicit, or otherwise potentially disturbing materials, please consider adding a brief statement to your course syllabus alerting the students to the sensitive content.

If the student is unable to manage the sensitive material, faculty may wish to consider alternative assignments, if such assignments would forward the same learning outcomes as the original assignment and allow the student to fully understand the course content. Consider the following in providing/designing accommodations:

- If students believe that they cannot read, view, or discuss a particular assignment or portion of the course material, they should inform the instructor prior to the beginning of the relevant class session/module.
- If the material unexpectedly creates a problem for students that requires them to leave class, they must alert the instructor as soon as possible after class. When a student alerts the instructor to a problem with the content, the appropriate course of action depends upon the centrality of the material to the student learning outcomes for the course, as well as the nature of the work for which the student is being prepared.
- In some instances, the sensitive material may be essential to the field of study and a student who cannot handle such material may need careful advising about the choice of major or required coursework.

Examples of possible syllabus statements include the following:

- Please be aware that this course contains material that has violent or highly graphic sexual content that some

may find disturbing. Please feel free to contact the instructor for more information.

- Students should be aware that this course contains graphic materials depicting explicit violence/sexual acts. Students who feel uncomfortable about reading and discussing these topics in class should contact the instructor for more information.

The Title IX staff is available both to assist faculty in accommodating students when appropriate and to support faculty in advising students; the solution may vary with the situation. Please contact Sara.Zeigler@eku.edu (Title IX Coordinator) for assistance.



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