ADAPTING TEXT TO ISSUES OF GENDER, RACE, ETHNICITY ETC.

STW UNIT 02

WHY DO WE USE BIAS-FREE LANGUAGE WHEN WE SPEAK ABOUT GENDER, RACE, ETHNICITY, AND DISABILITY?

- Our understanding of gender, race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, disability etc. has evolved in modern times.

- Previously used language for the aforementioned categories was insensitive, hurtful, disrespectful, stereotypical, and inaccurate.

- When your language is accurate and respectful, it is easier for your audience to trust your point of view and agree with your argument.

- So, it is important for us to make informed choices about our language and to take responsibility for those choices by discussing various groups of people respectfully and avoiding stereotypes.

GENDER

- Gender refers to the characteristics of women, men, girls and boys that are socially constructed.

- Gender includes norms, behaviours, and roles associated with being a woman, man, girl or boy, as well as relationships with each other.

- As a social construct, gender varies from society to society, and can change over time.

GENDER BIAS-FREE LANGUAGE

- Avoid male-only terms, pronouns or titles e. g.

  - Human Resource, ~~not manpower~~

  - Chairperson, ~~not chairman~~

  - Firefighter, ~~not fireman~~

  - Police officer, ~~not policeman~~

  - Artificial, ~~not man-made~~

- Avoid stereotypes e. g.

  - Doctor, ~~not Lady doctor~~

  - President, ~~not female president~~

  - Scientist, ~~not woman scientist~~

  - Poet, ~~not woman poet~~

  - Partner/ spouse/ significant other, ~~not wife/ husband~~

GENDER-BIASED	BIAS-FREE
Each student must meet with his professor.	All students must meet with their professors.
Each alumnus was invited.	All alumni were invited.
The applicant should his resume by 01 Nov 2023.	Submit your resume by 01 Nov 2023.
Every child wrote on his paper.	Every child wrote on a paper.
Student actors and actresses will perform *Othello*.	Student actors will perform *Othello*.
She is one of the top comediennes.	She is one of the top comedians.
Each student can choose his/ her major.	All students can choose their majors.
Each alumnus/ alumna gets a vote.	Each alumnus or alumna gets a vote.

RACE

- Race is a categorisation that is based mainly on physical attributes or traits, assigning people to a specific race simply by having similar appearances or skin colour e. g . Black or White.

- The categorisation is rooted in the idea of white supremacy and to prove white biological superiority and maintain white dominance over others.

- Racial identity is common to many people who have been racialised and have shared common experiences of racism.

- Racial identity can be a basis for collective organising and support for racially minoritised individuals.

ETHNICITY

- Ethnicity is a broader category than race.

- Ethnicity refers to long shared cultural experiences, religious practices, traditions, ancestry, language, dialect or national origins e. g. African-Caribbean, Indian, Irish.

- Ethnicity can be seen as a more positive identity than one forged from the shared negative experiences of racism.

BIAS-FREE LANGUAGE ABOUT RACE & ETHNICITY

- The terms "people of colour" and "non-white" are acceptable in some fields and contexts but not in others.

- The labels "Negro" and "coloured" are usually not acceptable nowadays.

- Racial/ ethnic groups, such as Black, Asian, and Native American are capitalized.

- Depending on the context, white may or may not be capitalized.

- Rather than saying "She is Asian," it is better to be specific – Is she Indian? Japanese? Thai? Sri Lankan?

- People of mixed racial heritage do not usually want to be identified by a single racial designation.

USING UMBRELLA TERMS

- Avoid the term "minority" if possible.

- "Minority" is often used to describe groups of people who are not part of the majority, and thus implies inferiority.

- An alternative might be "historically marginalized populations."

- If it is not possible to avoid using "minority," qualify the term with the appropriate specific descriptor e. g. "religious minority" rather than "minority."

DISABILITY

- Disability is the experience of any condition that makes it more difficult for a person to do certain activities or have equitable access within a given society.

- Disability may be cognitive, developmental, intellectual, mental, physical, sensory, or a combination of multiple factors.

- Disability can be present from birth or can be acquired during a person's lifetime.

- Disability may be visible or invisible in nature.

BIAS-FREE LANGUAGE ABOUT DISABILITY

- Use positive language:
  - "uses a wheelchair", ~~not "confined to a wheelchair" or "wheelchair-bound"~~
  - "diagnosed with bipolar disorder", ~~not "suffers from bipolar disorder"~~
  - "person with a physical disability", ~~not "physically challenged"~~
- Do not use victimizing language such as *afflicted, restricted, stricken, suffering,* and *unfortunate.*
- Do not call someone 'brave' or 'heroic' simply for living with a disability.

  NOTE: The term "handicapped" used as a legal term in documents but in social usage, some find it insensitive.

BIAS-FREE LANGUAGE ABOUT DISABILITY

- Do not use disabilities as nouns to refer to people e. g.
  - "people with mental illnesses", not "the mentally ill."
- Avoid using the language of disability as metaphor e. g.
  - *lame* idea, *blind* luck, *paralyzed* with indecision, *deaf* ears, *crazy, insane, moron, crippling, disabling etc.*
- To refer to people without disabilities, use "people without disabilities," or "neurotypical individuals" for mental disabilities.
- The term "able-bodied" may be appropriate in some disciplines.

  NOTE: Do not use terms like "normal" or "healthy" to describe people without disabilities.

BEST PRACTICES 01

- Use "people-first" language i. e. terms that focus on people rather than on the dehumanizing categorization e. g.

  - "people with mental illness", ~~not "mentally ill"~~

  - "people with disabilities", ~~not "disabled people"~~

  - "enslaved peoples", ~~not "slaves"~~

- Do not use adjectives as nouns e. g.

  - "Black people," ~~not "Blacks"~~

BEST PRACTICES 02

- Avoid terms that imply inferiority or superiority and replace them with non-judgmental language e. g.

  - "low socio-economic status", ~~not "lower class"~~

  - "historically marginalized population", ~~not "minority"~~

  - "underprivileged", ~~not "poor"~~

- Be specific and relevant with descriptors e. g.

  - "Dominicans"/ "Cubans"/ "Puerto Ricans", rather than "Hispanics"

  - "wheelchair users", rather than "people with disabilities"

WHEN YOUR SOURCE MATERIAL IS OUTDATED/ BIASED

- Explain that the author or character uses harmful language without stating it verbatim e. g. "The author uses an ableist slur when discussing [context of the quote], indicating that [analysis]."

- Acknowledge its offensive nature in your analysis if you must quote the harmful language verbatim.

- Do not change the quote or omit harmful language like slurs and violent words without acknowledging it.

- Avoid using pronouns like "we" for your race and "they" for any other.

WHEN YOUR SOURCE MATERIAL IS OUTDATED/ BIASED

- If you need to use biased terminology in discussing the subjects in a historical context, continue to use contemporary language in your own discussion and analysis.

- Biased example:

  - With *the simple nobility that **characterizes his people**,* Onondaga *Indian* leader Leon Shenandoah acted as a spiritual and political advocate for the Iroquois Confederacy until his death in 1996.

- Bias-free example:

  - With directness and integrity, Onondaga leader Leon Shenandoah acted as a spiritual and political advocate for the Iroquois Confederacy until his death in 1996.

THE AIM OF
BIAS-FREE LANGUAGE IS
EMPATHY, FAIRNESS AND JUSTICE.

THANK YOU!