

ASSOCIATED STUDENTS OF
WHITMAN COLLEGE
STUDENT SENATE
SESSION 2015 SPRING TERM

IN THE SENATE
RESOLUTION SRS15.3

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A Resolution Requesting Content Warnings on Encounters Syllabi

WHEREAS the Associated Students of Whitman College (ASWC) recognizes that there are Whitman students and community members who may benefit from the use of content or trigger warnings; and

WHEREAS currently, there is no standard for the inclusion of content warnings in Whitman College Encounters syllabi; and

WHEREAS content or trigger warnings may be defined as statements that preface pieces of writing, videos, or any other materials, alerting readers to mentions of instances of violence that may distress them and therefore make it harder for them to productively contribute to class discussion and other work; and

WHEREAS Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is defined as “a serious potentially debilitating condition that can occur in people who have experienced or witnessed a natural disaster, serious accident, terrorist incident, sudden death of a loved one, war, violent personal assault such as rape, or other life-threatening events.”¹ One symptom of the disorder is “re-experiencing the trauma through intrusive distressing recollections of the event, flashbacks, and nightmares”;² and

WHEREAS 7.7 million Americans age 18 and older have PTSD;³ and

WHEREAS the use of content warnings gives those living with PTSD an opportunity to prepare for the material and seek help if needed; and

WHEREAS Sexual Misconduct Advisors at Kenyon College have advocated and vouched for the use of trigger warnings on syllabi to faculty, arguing that “When victims of sexual assault are unexpectedly affronted with triggering material in class, learning becomes a challenge,”⁴ and this is not just limited to sexual assault; and

¹ Anxiety and Depression Association of America’s Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Definition
<http://www.adaa.org/understanding-anxiety/posttraumatic-stress-disorder-ptsd>

² Anxiety and Depression Association of America’s Symptom list
<http://www.adaa.org/understanding-anxiety/posttraumatic-stress-disorder-ptsd/symptoms>

³ Anxiety and Depression Association of America Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Definition
<http://www.adaa.org/understanding-anxiety/posttraumatic-stress-disorder-ptsd>

⁴ The Collegian: Academic Trigger Warnings on the Rise
<http://kenyoncollegian.com/2014/09/18/academic-trigger-warnings-on-the-rise/>

WHEREAS Meredith Raimondo, associate dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at Oberlin College, has said that providing students with content warnings is "responsible pedagogical practice. [...] We have students coming to us with serious issues, and we need to deal with that respectfully and seriously"⁵; and

WHEREAS Whitman College supports the mental health of its students by offering free counseling sessions to all students, whether they are living with a diagnosed disorder or not; and

WHEREAS the Whitman College Counseling Center states that they "strive to create an environment where all people feel welcome and respected from any diverse racial, ethnic and national background, gender and sexual/affectional orientations, mental and physical abilities..."⁶; and

WHEREAS all Whitman College students are required to take the Encounters course, enabling this resolution to have a far reach in the student body; and

WHEREAS since the Encounters course syllabus is consistent amongst all sections, any changes made to the syllabus can be done in an efficient and effective manner; and

WHEREAS including content warnings would facilitate the inclusion of additional challenging or controversial texts to the Encounters curriculum; and

WHEREAS content warnings provide *all* students the opportunity to mentally prepare for any potentially distressing texts.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Associated Students of Whitman College (ASWC) urges the Encounters committee to implement content warnings for sexual assault, physical and gun violence, and suicide and self-harm into the Encounters course syllabus; and be it further

RESOLVED that ASWC encourages Whitman College to further acknowledge that there are students affected by Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and to continue to address the needs of those students; and be it further

RESOLVED that ASWC recommends the Encounters Committee refer to Appendix I for proposed changes to the Encounters Syllabus as it existed in Fall 2014.

Distributed to:

George Bridges, President, Whitman College
Pat Spencer, Provost and Dean of the Faculty
Committee of Division Chairs
Professor David F. Schmitz, Chair of the Faculty
Professor Melissa Clearfield

⁵ Warning: the Literary Canon Could Make Students Squirm, *The New York Times*

<http://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/18/us/warning-the-literary-canon-could-make-students-squirm.html? r=0>

⁶ Whitman College Counseling Center

<http://www.whitman.edu/offices-and-services/counseling-center>

Professor John Cotts

Professor Gaurav Majumdar, Director of Encounters

Professor Keith Farrington, Chair, General Studies Committee

Whitman College Faculty

Whitman College *Pioneer*

Unit I – Origins and Beginnings

See below for content warning key.

Wed 9/3	Mary Shelley, <i>Frankenstein</i> , Vol. 1, From Preface to the end of Chapter 4 (pp. 45-88)
Fri 9/5	<i>Frankenstein</i> from Vol. 1, Chapter 5, to Vol. 2, Chapter 3 (pp. 88-127)
Mon 9/8	<i>Frankenstein</i> from Vol. 2, Chapter 4, to Volume 3: Chapter 3 (pp. 127-181)
Wed 9/10	<i>Frankenstein</i> Vol. 3, Chapter 4 to the end of the novel (pp. 181-221)
Fri 9/12	Instructor's Choice
Mon 9/15	<i>Genesis</i> 1-2
Wed 9/17	<i>Genesis</i> 3-11
Fri 9/19	<i>Genesis</i> 12-22
Mon 9/22	<i>Qur'an</i> : Suras 1, 2, 4 and 96:1-5 Plenary Lecture: Professor Michael Sells (Dept. of Comparative Literature, University of Chicago, and University of Chicago Divinity School) ♦

Wed 9/24	<i>Qur'an</i> : Suras 7, 10, 11, 14, 15, and 20
Fri 9/26	<i>Qur'an</i> : Suras 23, 24, 25, 27, 35, 36, 50, 51, 57, 76, 79, 85, 92, and 112
Mon 9/29	Simone de Beauvoir, <i>The Second Sex</i> , pp. 3-17 (Introduction)
Wed 10/1	<i>The Second Sex</i> , pp. 21-48 (Chapter 1)Δ
Fri 10/3	<i>The Second Sex</i> , pp. 279, 283, and Instructor choice in Vol. 2, pt.1 Δ
Mon 10/6	<i>The Second Sex</i> , pp. 753-766 and Instructor choice in Vol. 2, pt. 2 Δ
Wed 10/8	Instructor's Choice

Unit II – Transforming the Self

Fri 10/10	<i>The Bhagavad-Gita</i> 1-2
Mon 10/13	NO CLASS: Fall Break
Wed 10/15	<i>The Bhagavad-Gita</i> 3-6
Fri 10/17	<i>The Bhagavad-Gita</i> 7-12
Mon 10/20	Plato, <i>Symposium</i> , pp. 1-39
Wed 10/22	<i>Symposium</i> , pp. 40-60
Fri 10/24	<i>Symposium</i> , pp. 61-77
Mon 10/27	Christine de Pizan, <i>The Book of the City of Ladies</i> 5-39, 57-59

Wed 10/29

The Book of the City of Ladies
91-110, 128-131, 141-142,
145-152, 169-175, 195-198. ◆△

Fri 10/31

The Book of the City of Ladies
201-240

Mon 11/3

W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, from “The Forethought” through “The Wings of Atlanta” –
**Plenary Lecture: Professor
Walter Wyman (Dept. of
Religion, Whitman College) ◆△**

Wed 11/5

The Souls of Black Folk, from “Of the Training of Black Men” through “Of the Faith of the Fathers”

Fri 11/7

The Souls of Black Folk, from “Of the Passing of the First Born” through “The Afterthought”

Unit III – Conditions of Mutability

Mon 11/10

[The Gospel According to Luke](#),
1-9:50

Wed 11/12

[The Gospel According to Luke](#),
9:51-19:27

Fri 11/14

[The Gospel According to Luke](#),
19:28-24:53

Mon 11/17

Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species*, 1-6, 60-79

Wed 11/19

On the Origin of Species, 171-206

Fri 11/21

On the Origin of Species, 411-458,
480-490

11/24-11/28

THANKSGIVING BREAK

Mon 12/1

John Keats, “La Belle Dame sans
Merci. A Ballad,” (47-48) Sonnet:
‘When I have fears that I may cease
to be,’ (51) Sonnet: ‘Bright Star,
would I were’ (52-53)

Wed 12/3

Keats, “Ode to a Nightingale,”
“Ode on a Grecian Urn,” “Ode to
Psyche,” (34-39) “Ode on
Melancholy,” (45-46) “Ode on
Indolence” (49-50)

Fri 12/5

Pedro Almodóvar, *All About My
Mother* ◆△

**FILM SCREENINGS - 7:00-9:00
pm in Maxey Auditorium on
Wednesday 12/3, Thursday 12/4,
and Sunday 12/7**

Mon 12/8

All About My Mother

Wed 12/10

All About My Mother

Fri 12/12

Instructor's Choice

Fri 12/19

9:00 - 11:00 am – Encounters final
exam block (not all sections will
have a final exam)

Content Warning Key-

△- Descriptions of rape and sexual assault

◆- Descriptions of physical and gun violence

○- Descriptions of suicide and self harm