



MEMORANDUM, DCD #7, 2021-22

To: Faculty, University of Toronto Scarborough
From: Professor Katherine R. Larson, Vice-Dean Teaching, Learning & Undergraduate Programs
Date: 2 September 2021
Re: **Teaching Sensitive Materials**
Note: For broad distribution

Dear colleagues,

[Teaching Sensitive Materials](https://uoft.me/AcademicResources) is a resource that we hope will be helpful for you as you finalize your courses for the Fall term and look ahead to future course planning. The resource is bookmarked on the Centre for Teaching & Learning's (CTL) Academic Resources site: <https://uoft.me/AcademicResources>

This document revises a resource on trigger warnings that was circulated to instructors from the Office of the Vice-Principal Academic & Dean and CTL in November 2020 following student concerns. In response to feedback from faculty and the ongoing work of the campus-wide curriculum review, the revision aims:

- to recognize and better reflect the diverse experiences and knowledges that instructors and students bring to teaching and learning at U of T Scarborough;
- to support the work of instructors whose courses focus on sensitive topics, and thus engage regularly with sensitive content, and whose work contributes directly to the necessarily difficult work of systemic change, particularly in areas related to equity, accessibility, anti-racism, anti-colonialism, and anti-oppression; and
- to encourage classroom environments that can facilitate productive conversations around sensitive topics and course materials, combining a trauma-informed and compassionate approach with recognition of the importance of engaging with challenging course content and of the difficult discussions that are generated as a result.

While additional research is needed to confirm the effectiveness of issuing content or trigger warnings in an educational context, they are discussed here as one of many strategies instructors may consider when planning courses with proactive attention to the diverse experiences and knowledges of students at U of T Scarborough, particularly those from historically and systemically marginalized communities.

This resource concludes with some questions that instructors may consider as they are planning and preparing to teach a course.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Katherine R. Larson".

Katherine R. Larson
Vice-Dean Teaching, Learning & Undergraduate Programs