

International Conversation Cafe

Lifestyle Topic: What is Political Correctness?

The term Political Correctness or PC became widely used in the 1990's in the United States. The idea, in the beginning, was that people should not use language that offends certain groups of people, especially in the matter of sex or race. The following are examples of how Americans were encouraged to be more aware in their descriptions.

Formerly expressed...

now becomes

Merry Christmas

Happy Holidays

Postman

letter carrier

Chairman

chairperson

Airline Stewardess and stewards

Flight attendant

Mentally retarded

special needs or intellectually challenged

Blind

vision impaired

Deaf

hearing impaired but not dumb or mute

Juvenile delinquent

children at risk

Does your country have PC sayings? Give an example.

How do you feel about using new wordings?

By the 2000's PC took on another meaning. The controversy seems to be over the word "correct." Who has the authority to say what is correct or not? What started out as a way to become more civil, that is mannerly in our discussions, has left people frustrated, divided and angry. Some people feel that PC has gone too far. Here are some examples of how some people now take the idea of PC.

1. A University language guide stated that the word "American" was "problematic." According to a "Bias-Free Language Guide" that was used by the University of New Hampshire, the word "American" is offensive and should not be used. Why? Because it "fails to recognize South America" and "assumes the U.S. is the only country inside these two continents" of course! It recommends using "resident of the U.S." instead...

Read more at <http://www.nationalreview.com/article/429102/most-pc-moments-college-campuses-2015>

What do you think about the use of the word, America to describe the United States?

How might people from South America or Canada think about the United States claim to be America?

Some say the full title of the USA is "The United States of America," and that America is the shortened version of that description. How do you feel about this?

2. The War on Pronouns 2015 was no doubt a tough year for this part of speech. In October, Kansas University's student senate voted to totally ban gender-specific pronouns such as "his/her" from its Rules and Regulations document because they're "microaggressions" (unintended discrimination) against the students who don't use them. A University of Washington professor tried to create a policy that would punish her students for using the words "male" and "female."

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*What do you feel about the use of gender specific pronouns in writing?
Why do you think some people object to them?*

3. The War on Charity Events in 2015, political correctness was often considered more important than raising money for charitable causes. For example: At Quinnipiac University, a sorority had to cancel a fundraiser for foster children because one student complained that having maracas on the promotional posters was racist. At the University of Kansas, a student protested a sorority raising money for children who were cancer victims saying that the event was more about the sorority than the children they were raising money for.

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*Do you think the students had valid reasons for protesting the fundraising events?
Do you feel political correctness has gone too far?
What does a respectful conversation with people of opposite opinions look like?
How do you think society can encourage civil dialogue, that is, a dialogue that is respectful?*

