In addition to the CSM Inclusive Language and Images Operating Standard, here is some guidance on using content warnings.

Content warnings are notices to students/audiences that upcoming lecture discussion, readings, or content may be distressing. These warnings are not about avoiding discomfort when discussing controversial topics, but rather demonstrate empathy for students/audiences who have experienced trauma or abuse. These warnings allow students/audiences to prepare for potentially traumatic content and avoids surprising students/audiences with topics or memories.

Some topics that would warrant a content warning include:

• Sexual abuse, including rape, child abuse, harassment, and/or incest.

• Harassment and discrimination, including use or reference to slurs and/or racism.

• Pregnancy loss, miscarriage, stillbirth, abortion, and infertility.

• Eating disorders and/or fatphobia, including 'jokes' about purging

• Homophobia and/or transphobia.

Content warnings allow participants to choose how to engage with the material based on their own history. Many students have their own strategies for coping with distressing material, and content warnings allow students to prepare to use these strategies. For example, students may choose to watch lectures alone rather than in-person when there is potentially harmful content. They may plan with a therapist how and when to engage, or they may choose to skip the portions of the material that are too harmful for them.

Content warnings can occur at the beginning of a course, with specific lecture dates and/or textbook pages that contain the sensitive material, or at the beginning of a lecture that deals with sensitive material. Content warnings can be delivered verbally in real time, in writing as part of a presentation or notes set, or via e-mail in advance.

Examples include:

"This lecture discusses stillbirth and miscarriage. These topics are sad and if you need a break or to step away, that is welcome and ok."

"This week we will be discussing race and racism on Wednesday's lecture. Some of this discussion will include examples of violence and details the horrific abuse experienced by Black enslaved people. It will be difficult to discuss. Please feel free to watch this lecture on your own time if you anticipate this will be challenging for you".

"After this break, we will be discussion pedophilia and child abuse. This discussion will last for the rest of the day."

Faculty at the Cumming School of Medicine are expected to role model sensitivity, empathy, and professionalism. Using content warning to flag materials for the audience is part of this job.

Additional Resources:

University of Michigan Introduction to Content Warnings and Trigger Warnings <https://sites.lsa.umich.edu/inclusive-teaching-sandbox/wp-content/uploads/sites/853/2021/02/An-Introduction-to-Content-Warnings-and-Trigger-Warnings-Draft.pdf>.

Conestoga College Content Warnings in Teaching

<https://tlconestoga.ca/content-warnings-in-teaching/>

Robillard, Amy E. “Confronting the Real: The Trigger Warning Debate and the Rhetorical Space of the Classroom.” Pedagogy : Critical Approaches to Teaching Literature, Language, Culture, and Composition, vol. 20, no. 2, 2020, pp. 327–47, <https://doi.org/10.1215/15314200-8091937>.

K. Cebula, G. Macleod, K. Stone & S.W.Y. Chan (2022) Student experiences of learning about potentially emotionally sensitive topics: trigger warnings are not the whole story, Journal of Further and Higher Education, 46:8, 1120-1134, DOI: 10.1080/0309877X.2022.2055449