

## Glossary of Terms

*Welcome to the CSSW community! Here are 100+ common terms you may see or hear used in class, during discussions, and at your field placements. Of course, there are many beyond those included below, and the vastly complex terms are simplified in definitions for initial digestion with the call for ongoing learning and understanding.*

**Ableism** - A system that places value on people's bodies and minds based on societally constructed ideas of normalcy, intelligence, excellence, and productivity. These constructed ideas are deeply rooted in anti-Blackness, eugenics, colonialism, and capitalism. This form of systemic oppression leads to people and society determining who is valuable and worthy based on a person's appearance and/or their ability to satisfactorily [re]produce, excel, and "behave." You do not have to be disabled to experience ableism. Coined in 2019 by Talila A. Lewis in response to racism, capitalism, and colonization.

- See also: Access, Neurodivergent

**Access** - Equitable acquisition of resources or benefits for people living with disabilities or historically marginalized peoples.

- See also: Power, Privilege

**Affirmative Action** - The process designed to establish equitable access and to remedy prior discrimination of historically marginalized people in employment, education, and housing, and to prevent such discrimination in the future.

- See also: Access, Marginalization

**Agent & Target of oppression** - Members of the dominant social groups privileged by birth or acquisition, who consciously or unconsciously abuse power against the members or targets of oppressed groups.

- See also: Marginalization, Oppression, Power, Privilege

**Agency & Structure** - The power that folx have to think and act for themselves in ways that shape their experiences. In contrast, structures refers to the set of social constructs that shape the thoughts, actions, choices, and experiences of folx.

**Ally** - A term used to describe folx who recognize their privilege and use it to work in solidarity with targets of oppression. "Allyship" is a lifelong process.

- See also: Privilege

**"Antifa"** - A movement to address the rise of perceived fascist movements, using direct action rather than policy reform. Started by various autonomous groups and folx, in response to fascism, Nazis, racism, and the far-right.

**Anti-racism** - Active dismantling of racism.

- See also: Black Lives Matter, Racism

**Anti-racist** - Someone who supports antiracist policies or expresses antiracist ideas through their actions. (Ibram X. Kendi)

**Anti-semitism** - Prejudiced thoughts or discriminatory actions against Jewish folx, based on fear and/or hatred of Judaism and Jewish folx.

- See also: Discrimination, Islamophobia

**Ascription** - Social position assigned at birth that is neither earned nor chosen.

- See also: Positionality, Privilege

**Ashkenormativity** - A system of oppression that favors white Jewish folx, based on the assumption that all Jewish folx are *Ashkenazi*, or from Western Europe.

**Assimilation** - The process in which members of the oppressed group adopt traits of the dominant group, often as part of forced acculturation.

- See also: Cultural Racism, Colonization, Genocide, Marginalization

**Black, Indigenous & People-of-Color (BIPOC)** - A term used to describe non-White folx. Black & Indigenous (BI) are distinguished to address the unique anti-Black & settler colonialist oppression faced by these groups.

- See also: Global Majority, Whiteness

**“Black Lives Matter” Movement** - A movement to address systemic violence against Black folx. Started in 2013 by Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi, in response to the acquittal of George Zimmerman in the murder of Trayvon Martin.

- See also: Anti-racism, Carceral System, Racism, White Privilege

**Capitalism** - A system of economic oppression based on class, private property, competition, and individual profit.

- See also: Carceral System, Class, Inequality, Racism

**Carceral System & Prison-Industrial Complex** - These terms refer to the profit-driven connections between prisons, private companies, and the government that build and manage prisons that are disproportionately filled with people of color, largely due to over-policing in communities of color. Coined in 1998 by Angela Davis.

- See also: Black Lives Matter, Capitalism, Oppression

**Caucus & Affinity Groups** - Spaces for folx to work within their own communities and to reduce onus of racial equity work on BIPOC folx.

- See also: BIPOC, Whiteness

**Cisgender & Cis-folx** - A term used to describe folx whose gender identity aligns with their sex assigned at birth.

- See also: Gender, Transgender, Sex Assigned At Birth

**Class** - A system that divides folx into categories based on perceived social or economic status.

- See also: Access, Capitalism

**Cognitive Dissonance** - Tension between conflicting attitudes and beliefs with behaviors, that results in mental discomfort and dissonance-reduction responses. Coined in 1957 by Leon Festinger, in response to the psychology of inner harmony.

- See also: Color-blindness, Implicit Bias, Internalization, "Model Minority"

**Colonization** - A system of oppression based on invasion and control that results in institutionalized inequality between the colonizer and the colonized.

- See also: Eurocentric, Genocide, Indigeneity, Oppression

**Color-blindness** - Disregard of racial differences based on the belief that racial inequality no longer exists.

- See also: Microaggression, White Privilege

**Colorism** - Prejudiced thoughts or discriminatory actions against dark-skinned People-of-Color, based on light-skinned favoritism.

- See also: Cultural Racism, Passing, Whiteness

**Criminalization** - The process of oppressing folx experiencing poverty, houselessness, and/or intimate partner violence, by making an action or status such as sleeping in public parks or self-defense, "illegal."

**Cultural Appropriation** - Theft and ignorant use of knowledge, traditions, or practices for self-benefit, objectification, and commodification.

- See also: Assimilation, Stereotype

**Cultural Racism** - Prejudiced representation in narratives, based on the belief that the traits of Whiteness are "better" or more "normal" than that of POC folx.

- See also: Internalization, Racialization, White Supremacy

**Difference** - A spectrum of experience or characteristics that can be complementary or conflicting. Often involves inequality of status and power.

**Discrimination** - The unequal treatment of members of various groups based on conscious or unconscious prejudice.

- See also: Inequality, Marginalization, Prejudice

**Eurocentrism** - A worldview based on the preservation of Western cultural supremacy.

- See also: Colonization, White Supremacy

**Exotification & Fetishism** - A form of microaggression by excessively fixating on specific traits of a person that are different from those of oneself.

- See also: Eurocentrism, Cultural Racism, Microaggression

**Fascism** - A system of oppression based on the preservation of authoritarian nationalism using dictatorship and suppression of opposition.

**Gaslighting** - A form of psychological abuse by shaming, casting self-doubt, and/or altering the perception of truth.

- See also: Tone-policing, Power

**Gender** - A system based on socially constructed traits, that classifies folx as being feminine, masculine, androgynous, etc.

- Cis-gender, Transgender, Gender Identity, Gender Expression

**Gender Binary** - A system of oppression that divides folx into two perceived distinct opposite identities, based on the belief that there are only two genders.

**Gender Expansive** - A term used to describe folx whose gender identity is beyond the socially constructed gender norms.

- See also: Genderqueer

**Gender Expression** - External appearance of gender identity--hair, behavior, clothes, voice, etc.

**Gender Identity** - Individual or internal sense of gender.

- See also: Transgender

**Gender Non-Conforming (GNC)** - A term used to describe folx whose gender expression is different from the gender binary social construct.

**Genderqueer** - A term used to describe folx whose gender identity and/or expression is fluid and/or different from the gender binary social construct.

**Genocide** - The process of extermination of a social group by using direct

and/or cultural violence.

- See also: Assimilation, Colonization, Oppression, Xenophobia

**Gentrification** - The process by which high/mid-socioeconomic status or racially privileged folx shift the economics or demographics of neighborhoods, that results in displacement of low-socioeconomic or racially oppressed folx.

- See also: Access, Colonization, Class, Institutional Racism

**Global Majority** - A term used to describe BIPOC folx, who make up 80% of the world's population.

- See also: BIPOC, Minority

**Heteronormativity** - A system of oppression that favors heterosexuality, based on the assumption that everyone is or should be straight.

**Homophobia** - Prejudiced thoughts or discriminatory actions against homosexuality and/or Queer folx.

- See also: Transphobia, Queer

**Implicit Bias** - Unconscious beliefs or stereotypes about a social group.

- See also: Normalization, Prejudice, Stereotype

**Impostor Syndrome** - Inability to internalize or accept success. Coined in 1978 by Pauline Clance and Suzanne Imes, in response to sexist psychological impacts.

- See also: Assimilation, Implicit Bias, Internalization

**Inequality** - Unjustified, hierarchical differences.

- See also: Access, Difference

**Indigenous** - A term used to describe folx with immemorial relationships with the land, by ancestry, language, and place-based knowledge.

- See also: Colonization, Cultural Racism, Genocide

**Institutional Power** - Authority over access to resources and institutions, and the ability to control and influence.

- See also: Access, Power

**Institutional Racism** - A system of oppression based on the preservation of White supremacy, using policies and practices.

**Internalization** - The process by which targets of oppression believe and uphold prejudiced thoughts against target groups.

- See also: Assimilation, Impostor Syndrome, "Minority," Stereotype

**Intersectionality** - A lens through which one can see where power comes and collides, where it interlocks and intersects with social identities, particularly around race, class, and gender. Coined in 1989 by Kimberlé Crenshaw, in response to White feminism.

**Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)** - Physical, sexual, and/or psychological violence caused by a current or former partner.

- See also: Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault

**Islamophobia** - Prejudiced thoughts or discriminatory actions against Muslim folk, based on the hate and/or fear of Islam and Muslim folk.

- See also: Anti-semitism, Discrimination

**Jim Crow** - Laws that legalized racial segregation, further disenfranchising Black Americans.

**Legal Fiction** - Assumed fact created by legal structures to decide on or enforce a rule.

**LGBTQ+ or 2SLGBTQIA+** - A term used to describe the acronym for the Two-Spirit/Third-Gender, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, and Asexual communities.

- See also: Heteronormativity, Queer, Transgender

**“Mansplaining” & “Whitesplaining”** - A silencing tactic used by expressing privilege while explaining to members of the target group in a condescending manner.

- See also: Gaslighting, Power, Tone-policing

**Marginalization** - The process of oppression by which target groups are excluded from participation in society.

- See also: Discrimination, Oppression

**“Me Too” Movement** - A movement to address sexual violence. Started in 2006 by Tarana Burke and Christy Haubegger, it became widespread following the exposure of the sexual abuse allegations against Harvey Weinstein.

- See also: Misogyny, Patriarchy, Rape, Sexism

**Microaggression** - Prejudiced thoughts or discriminatory actions in indirect, subtle, or unintentional forms.

**Militarization** - The process by which the military institution encroaches upon various social structures.

- See also: Carceral System, Colonization

**“Minority”** - A term used to describe folx who experience discrimination from the dominant social group.

- See also: Global Majority, “Model Minority”, Targets of Oppression

**Misogyny** - Prejudiced thoughts and discriminatory actions against womxn, based on the hatred of womxn.

- See also: Patriarchy, Sexism

**“Model Minority”** - A term used to describe minority groups perceived to have socioeconomic success or proximity to Whiteness, the myth of which wedges racial gaps and perpetuates and silences anti-Black racism.

- See also: Assimilation, Cognitive Dissonance

**Nativism** - A system of oppression perpetuating discriminatory actions against migrants, based on native-born favoritism.

- See also: Xenophobia

**Neurodivergent** - A term used to describe folx whose brains function differently from the perception of what is typical (often used to describe people who fall on the autism spectrum).

- See also: Ableism

**Normalization** - The process by which actions or ideas that were previously problematic become commonplace and unquestioned.

- See also: Internalization

**“Occupy” Movement & The “One Percent”** - A movement to address social and economic inequality, and corporate influence on politics. Started in 2011, it became global as a response against the increasing concentration of wealth in the top 1% of the population.

- See also: Capitalism, Class

**Oppression** - A system of control based on prejudice, using power at the personal, interpersonal, institutional, and cultural levels by one social group on another.

- See also: Prejudice, Privilege, Power

**Patriarchy** - A system of oppression based on perceived male supremacy.

- See also: Misogyny, Sexism

**Passing** - Perceived membership of a dominant social group that results in privilege for target group members.

- See also: Colorism, Privilege

**Positionality** - The social identities and powers that shape identity and biases worldviews.

- See also: Ascription, Intersectionality

**Power** - Access to resources and institutions, and the ability to control and influence.

- See also: Access, Oppression

**Prejudice** - The unjustified, preconceived beliefs about a social group.

- See also: Discrimination, Implicit Bias, Stereotype

**Privilege** - The unquestioned and unearned advantages, entitlements, and choices by members of dominant social groups.

- See also: White Privilege

**Pronouns** - Words used to describe folx in respect to their gender identity and/or gender expression, rather than their names.

**Queer** - Originally a derogatory slur, it is a reclaimed inclusive term used to describe those within the LGBTQ community, often to emphasize fluidity of sexual attraction and gender identity.

- See also: Genderqueer, LGBTTQQA+, Transgender

**Race** - A social construct that divides folx into categories based on perceived differences and White supremacy. Racism precedes race.

- See also: Racism, White Supremacy

**Racial Equality** - Everyone is given the same resources regardless of circumstances.

**Racial Equity** - Providing resources to marginalized groups to allow them access to fair and impartial opportunities.

- See also: Anti-racism

**Racialization** - The process of ascribing racial meaning to previously unclassified concept, group, or practice.

- See also: Race

**Racism** - A system of oppression based on the preservation of White supremacy.

- See also: Capitalism, Whiteness, White Supremacy

**Restorative Justice** - The process of achieving justice rooted in Indigenous



practices, using inclusion, harm repair, amends, and community reintegration.

- See also: Indigenous

**Salient/-cy** - The traits of a group identity that an individual is more conscious of and more impacted by, depending on the social context.

**Senior Citizens** - A term used to describe folx with socially constructed traits of being “Elderly”, “Old Age”, “Ages 60-65+”, “Retired.”

**Sex Assigned At Birth** - A term used to describe a socially determined “biological sex” based on external genitalia.

- See also: Gender Binary

**Sexism** - A system of oppression based on the preservation of Patriarchy.

- See also: Misogyny, Patriarchy

**Solidarity** - The process in which folx actively support targets of oppression in anti-oppressive work.

- See also: Ally, Anti-racism

**Stereotype** - Prejudicial thoughts that are normalized against a social group.

- See also: Implicit Bias, Normalization, Prejudice

**System** - A combination of laws, norms, narratives, and actions that shape and preserve social structures.

- See also: Oppression, Structure

**Transgender or Trans-folx** - A term used to describe folx whose gender identity and/or expression differs from their sex assigned at birth.

- See also: Transition/-ing

**Transition/-ing** - The myriad of actions folx may take to connect with the gender with which they identify.

**Transphobia** - Prejudiced thoughts or discriminatory actions against Trans folx, based on hatred and/or fear of transgender identity or folx.

**Tone-policing** - A silencing and derailing tactic used by focusing on the delivery rather than the truth of the narrative.

- See also: Microaggression

**Undocumented** - A term used to describe folx engaged in asylum-seeking and/or DACA process who are not yet provided guaranteed citizenship.

**White Privilege** - The unquestioned and unearned advantages, entitlements, and choices for White folx.

**White Supremacy** - Prejudiced thoughts or discriminatory actions based on the belief that White folx are superior to Black, Indigenous & People-of-Color.

**Whiteness** - A term used to describe the perceived American “norm”, created by upper-class colonialists in order to distinguish themselves from servant and enslaved peoples.

**White Fragility & Sensitivity** - Weaponized defensiveness and intolerance against information regarding racial inequality or White supremacy.

**Xenophobia** - Prejudiced thoughts and discriminatory actions against folx who are different from oneself, based on fear or hatred of strangers.

### **Sources**

*The definitions were formulated using multiple sources, including--Columbia University Office of Multicultural Affairs Safety Zone Training Guide, University of Washington-Tacoma Diversity & Social Justice Glossary, [Racialequitytools.org](http://Racialequitytools.org), [Teaching Tolerance](#) & numerous BIPOC leaders and activists.*