

Political Correctness

Preparation

- Before reading the following documents, try to define Political Correctness and find some examples.
- Lisez les deux textes et remplissez le tableau ci-dessous :

	Article 1	Article 2
Type		
Date de publication		
Titre		
Auteur		
Contexte géographique		
Contenu - thème(s) commun(s)		
Objectivité (informatif ou polémique)		

Text 1

Mind your language - and know what it means

We should be teaching political correctness in schools, says Philip Beadle

Philip Beadle

The Guardian, Tuesday 16 May 2006

Society has changed greatly since the 80s. Shoulder pads are now viewed as a sign of inadequacy and woe betide the man who rolls the sleeves of his jacket up to the elbows. If you had written in defence of being free with the many contrived moralities of language in those days, you would first have had to nail your PC colours to the mast: "Some of my best friends are black/gay/disabled, but..."

Today, it's the opposite, and this article is written in defence of teaching children about political correctness. Not teaching them that it is right or wrong - it's not a teacher's job to draw the conclusions - but that it exists.

As anyone who has stared unflinchingly into the vacant eyes of "PC gone mad" will tell you, it's as terrifying and as totalitarian as its supposed antithesis. Servicing the needs of social workers in a now infamous social services department of a north London council was a bleak period for me. Once, on a training day, I made the mortal error of being bashful when someone had complimented my handwriting. Blushing, unused to being the recipient of anything like praise in that environment, I said: "Oh, thanks. I think I've got the handwriting of a 17-year-old girl." My colleague found just enough time to turn

purple, before rushing gleefully to submit a written complaint about the many unacceptable "isms" in my innocent expression.

In practice, political correctness became the thing it set out to combat. Its heart, though, may well have been in the right place at some point before it became jealousy with a halo. It sought to protect people, mainly minorities, from the impact of words, be they thoughtless or mindful. Sadly, in doing so, it punished others.

Most dialect versions of English, and often standard English itself, are intrinsically racist. We have a thousand unpleasant slang terms for black people, with just the innocuous "honky" kicking its legs blithely in the air at the other end of the see-saw. The phrase "honest injun", for instance, has been part of my own argot since childhood. I never thought to question its morality. It was just something people from London said to emphasise that they were telling the truth. But in the realms of the politically correct, such dialect forms are outlawed. This leaves us in the paradoxical position of upholding immigrant children's right to use their own language, at the same time as banning indigenous children from using theirs.

Why, then, would anyone be prepared to speak up for teaching political correctness in the classroom? As a small child, I remember being in receipt of another form of idiocy, the brain dead, sing-song naivety of "sticks and stones may break my bones, but names will never hurt me". Given the choice between a whack round the leg with a twig or a mean-spirited comment about my appearance or family, I'd argue that the callous word causes more lasting damage. Words can hurt like hell.

My council colleagues would refer to a thing called "the language of equality". And if you ignore its somewhat clumsy title, I think there's still a place for the ideas behind this outmoded expression. It's useful for kids - day-to-day practitioners of language - to know such a system exists.

Take, for instance, the phrase "Aids victim". During the early 90s, there was a drive to tag people as "living with HIV", as opposed to being "victims" of it. There are few, outside the most militant political group, who would argue with this drive. The word "victim" implies defencelessness and defeat, whereas "living with" suggests the fat lady hasn't even begun tuning up yet, and that the person in question is vital, active, getting on with the task of living, and not the passive recipient of an immediate death sentence. I think children should be given the opportunity to experiment with these ideas; to think about whether being considerate in their expression is a good thing. And it is possible to teach the existence of a more considerate version of expression in a disinterested manner, raising it as a possibility to consider, at the same time as satirising its extremities. Kids love being asked to define their own politically correct expressions, and respond with glee to describing a baldy as being follically challenged and a porker as calorifically enhanced.

Study of this subject causes them to investigate the intrinsic morality of their own language, and to see how this may have changed over the years. It also politicises. A black girl who comes to the realisation that standard English is the language of a white male orthodoxy is a girl who may well be motivated to do something about this in her own life.

So, yes, I admit it. I am in favour of political correctness being taught in schools. But, then I would be. I am a Guardian-reading schoolteacher who has lived in Stoke Newington, had a bottle of extra virgin olive oil out on display next to the cooker and, I am utterly ashamed to say, have not just eaten couscous, but thoroughly enjoyed it.

Text2
The Rising Hegemony of the Politically Correct
By Richard BERNSTEIN
October 28, 1990

INSTEAD of writing about literary classics and other topics, as they have in the past, freshmen at the University of Texas next fall will base their compositions on a packet of essays on discrimination, affirmative-action and civil-rights cases. The new program, called "Writing on Difference," was voted in by the faculty last month and has been praised by many professors for giving the curriculum more relevance to real-life concerns. But some see it as a stifling example of academic orthodoxy.

"You cannot tell me that students will not be inevitably graded on politically correct thinking in these classes," Alan Gribben, a professor of English, said at the time the change was being discussed.

The term "politically correct," with its suggestion of Stalinist orthodoxy, is spoken more with irony and disapproval than with reverence. But across the country the term p.c., as it is commonly abbreviated, is being heard more and more in debates over what should be taught at the universities. There are even initials -- p.c.p. -- to designate a politically correct person. And though the terms are not used in utter seriousness, even by the p.c.p.'s themselves, there is a large body of belief in academia and elsewhere that a cluster of opinions about race, ecology, feminism, culture and foreign policy defines a kind of "correct" attitude toward the problems of the world, a sort of unofficial ideology of the university. Pressure to Conform

Last weekend, a meeting of the Western Humanities Conference in Berkeley, Calif., was called " 'Political Correctness' and Cultural Studies," and it examined what effect the pressure to conform to currently fashionable ideas is having on scholarship.

Central to p.c.-ness, which has roots in 1960's radicalism, is the view that Western society has for centuries been dominated by what is often called "the white male power structure" or "patriarchal hegemony." A related belief is that everybody but white heterosexual males has suffered some form of repression and been denied a cultural voice or been prevented from celebrating what is commonly called "otherness."

"We, the non-Western-Europeans, have no greatness, no culture, no explanations, no beauty, perhaps no humanity," said Amanda Kemp, a student at Stanford University who was active in the campaign three years ago to eliminate a required course in Western civilization. The view that Western civilization is inherently unfair to minorities, women and homosexuals has been at the center of politically correct thinking on campuses ever since the recent debate over university curriculums began.

Affirmative action is politically correct. So too are women's studies, gay and lesbian studies, and African-American studies, all of which are strongly represented in the scholarly panels at such professional meetings as those of the American Historical Association and the Modern Language Association. Politically correct papers include "Jane Austen and the Masturbating Girl," "Brotherly Love: Nabokov's Homosexual Double" and "A Womb of His Own: Male Renaissance Poets in the Female Body," which were on the program for the M.L.A. conference last year in Washington.

The cluster of politically correct ideas includes a powerful environmentalism and, in foreign policy, support for Palestinian self-determination and sympathy for third world revolutionaries, particularly those in Central America. Biodegradable garbage bags get the p.c. seal of approval. Exxon does not.

But more than an earnest expression of belief, "politically correct" has become a sarcastic jibe used by those, conservatives and classical liberals alike, to describe what they see as a growing intolerance, a closing of debate, a pressure to conform to a radical program or risk being accused of a commonly reiterated trio of thought crimes: sexism, racism and homophobia.

"It's a manifestation of what some are calling liberal fascism," said Roger Kimball, the author of "Tenured Radicals," a critique of what he calls the politicization of the humanities. "Under the name of pluralism and freedom of speech, it is an attempt to enforce a narrow and ideologically motivated view of both the curriculum and what it means to be an educated person, a responsible citizen."

Certain subjects, such as affirmative action and homosexuality, have been removed from civil debate, Mr. Kimball says, so strong is the force to accept the politically correct view. More accurately, perhaps, the figures on campuses opposed to affirmative action, for example, are regarded as radicals of the right.

Some of the intolerance of the p.c. point of view comes from conservatives like Mr. Kimball and Allan Bloom, the author of "The Closing of the American Mind," who complain that there is a hidden radical agenda in university curriculums. The p.c.p.'s respond that they are reacting to an orthodoxy set in place by the traditionalists.

Drawing on the theories of Marxist and deconstructionist literary critics, some even question the very notion that there is such a thing as disinterested, objective scholarship. Some conservatives see a paradox in this.

"Those who are critics of objectivity, who reject claims about standards and quality, contradict themselves in believing so powerfully that they are the holders of the only truth," said Leon Botstein, the president of Bard College. Mr. Botstein, a critic of both the p.c.p.'s and their conservative adversaries, feels that the universities are being polarized into two intolerant factions. "The idea of candor and the deeper idea of civil discourse is dead," he said. "The victims are the students."

Professor Gribben, who opposed the curriculum change at the University of Texas, has been denounced in the campus newspaper as a right-winger; a rally was held on campus to harangue him. "I just wanted to question a few features and my world fell apart," he said.

The dubious implications of a politically correct orthodoxy have fallen under some scrutiny by the left, and that is what the conference last weekend at Berkeley was about. In truth, a good deal of the conference was more an illustration of p.c.-ness than an examination of it. There was, for example, a panel discussion of the recently created "American cultures" requirement at Berkeley -- in which students study the contributions that minority groups have made to American society. Though the course is controversial -- it has been called "compulsory chapel" by its detractors -- all four panelists were ardent defenders of the idea. Susan Schweik of the Berkeley English department defended the course, saying, "American culture already works on us as a compulsory chapel of racism." The new course, she argued, "lends itself by definition to complexities, to arguments between and within students, to diversity of voices and stances."

But there were worries expressed in papers and conversations that p.c.-ness has become a rigid concept, a new orthodoxy that does not allow for sufficient complexity in scholarship or even much clarity in thinking. One speaker, Michel Chaouli, a graduate student in comparative literature at Berkeley, said that "politically correct discourse is a kind of fundamentalism," one that gives rise to "pre-fab opinions." Among its features,

he said, are "tenacity, sanctimoniousness, huffiness, a stubborn lack of a sense of humor."

Mr. Chaouli's paper was probably the most frontal assault on p.c.-ness at the conference, most of whose participants were rather gingerly in their criticisms, allowing that, yes, some p.c. ideas needed refinement, but the overall thrust of the p.c. program remained, as it were, correct. There was no challenge to such ideas as unequivocal support for affirmative action or the legitimacy of gay and lesbian studies.

When Mr. Chaouli referred to the belief in an unsympathetic power structure dominating American life as "a fantasm," he was immediately reprimanded and accused of being a "right-winger" by a member of the audience. Mr. Chaouli's critic said his ideas flew in the face of what everybody knew to be true, namely that American society was, of course, hegemonic.

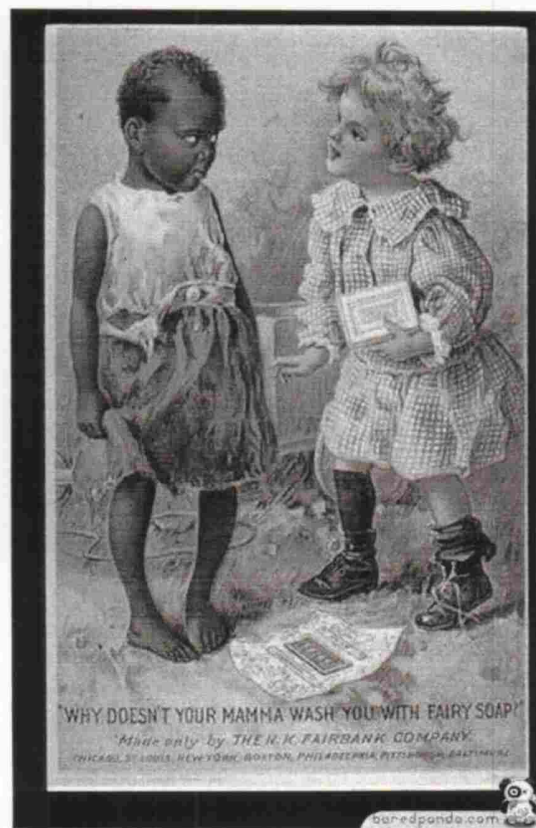
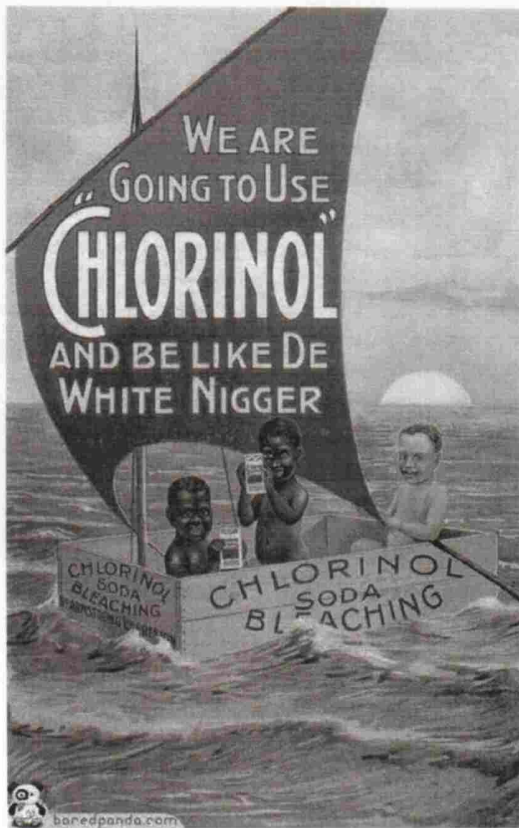
<http://www.nytimes.com/1990/10/28/weekinreview/ideas-trends-the-rising-hegemony-of-the-politically-correct.html?pagewanted=all>

In class

1. Reading/writing:

- Quel pourrait être selon vous le fil conducteur d'une synthèse des textes 1 et 2?
- Quels sont les points communs et les différences entre les deux textes ?
- Essayez de trouver les grandes orientations de votre synthèse qui pourrait vous servir à rédiger un plan détaillé.

2. Speaking :



SO THE HARDER A WIFE WORKS, THE CUTER SHE LOOKS!

GOSH, HONEY, YOU SEEM TO THRIVE ON COOKING, CLEANING AND DUSTING - AND I'M ALL TUCKERED OUT BY CLOSING TIME. WHAT'S THE ANSWER?

VITAMINS, DARLING! I ALWAYS GET MY VITAMINS

Kellogg's PEP
CEREAL
WTS. 10.5 OZ. 298.5 G.

It's nice to have a girl around the house.

Though she adds a tiger's tail, our hero didn't leave us long a shot to look her. After she took all in Mr. Leggs' stockings, she was ready to have him with all over her. That's why right now you'll find the longest length of just of like your own skin for.

Dacron
4 Leggs
The longest a new pair of

Production Company: 1960-1961
boredpanda.com

Which picture(s) do you find most offensive? Why?
Do you find them funny or downright insulting?
Do you think these ads are very different from contemporary ones?

Follow-up Work

Listening/watching:

"Why Don't Boys Play with Dolls?"

Before watching the video, make a list of games/toys associated with boys and girls.

Watch the following video on Youtube about gender stereotype and answer the questions below:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GbLuldzDudw&feature=fvvr>

- Dr. Lise Eliot says that parents think gender differences are "hard-wired" into the brain. What does she mean?
- Tick the names of the toys mentioned in the video:

- | | | | |
|--|--|---|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pink tea set | <input type="checkbox"/> Power Rangers | <input type="checkbox"/> Barbie dolls | <input type="checkbox"/> Tanker Truck |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Winnie the Pooh | <input type="checkbox"/> Dolls | <input type="checkbox"/> Garbage trucks | <input type="checkbox"/> Lego games |

- When do children start picking "gender-appropriate" toys?
- What happens with children who are under three?
- Why do children under three like dolls (regardless of their gender)?
- What happens when children get older (when they are "aged two")?
- What is the one thing that parents react to (even egalitarian parents)?
- Are boys and girls treated on an "egalitarian" basis when it comes to toys?

Homework:

1. Read the following PC Lexicon and the new version of "Little Red Riding Hood".

Text 1: PC LEXICON

"Insensitive Term"

"Preferred Term"

ETHNICITY (PC people do not recognize the term "race" as valid)	
Black	African-American (Note: does not include Libyans, Egyptians, white Africans. Does include people with dark skin regardless of where they are from or where they live.)
Oriental	Asian-American (Note: not considered "real" minorities since they tend to do well.)
Indian	Native American, Indigenous Peoples of the North American continent (Note: the following teams are not PC: Atlanta Braves, Cleveland Indians, Washington Redskins. Avoid these cities!)
Chicano	Hispanic (Note: the following terms are not PC: Cheech and Chong, Chico and the Man, the Cisco Kid, Rosarita Salsa, Speedy Gonzales.)
White Trash	PC Unaware, Rustically Inclined
WASP (white male)	Insensitive Cultural Oppressor

GENDER

Woman	Womyn, Vaginal-American
Girl	Pre-Womyn
Housewife	Domestic Engineer

Fireman	Fire Fighter
Stewardess	Flight Attendant
Meter Maid	Parking Enforcement Officer
Postman	Postperson
Mailman	Mailperson
Policeman (cop, pig)	Law Enforcement Officer, Baton Boy, California Clubber
Prostitute	Sex Surrogate (Teen Victim, see Broken Home)
Mankind, human, person	Earth Children

PEOPLE (subgroups)

Handicapped	Differently Abled, Handicapable (Blind: optically darker; Deaf: visually oriented)
Poor	Economically Unprepared
Bum	Homeless Person, Displaced Homeowner, Philosophy Major
Hunter	Animal Assassin, Meat Mercenary, Bambi Butcher
Commercial Fisherman	Flipper Whipper
Whaler	Blubber Lover
Old Person, Elderly	Senior Citizens, Time-extended Gerontologically Advanced
Conservative	Right Wing Extremist, Fascist Pig
Drug Addict	Chemically Challenged
Bald	Comb-free
Vegetable	Noble Unconscious Hero
Bisexual	Sexually Nonpreferential
Midget, Dwarf	Little People, Vertically Challenged
Insane	Selectively Perceptive, Mental Explorer
Tree-hugger	Environmental Activist
Logger	Wood Weasel, Paper Pirate, Treeslayer
Obese, Fat	Differently Weighted, People of Mass, Gravitationally Challenged

ACADEMIC

Far East	Asia
Censorship	Selective Speech
BC	BCE
Older Students	Non-traditional Students
	New-traditional Students
Learning Disability	Self-paced Cognitive Ability
Cheating	Academic Dishonesty
Library	Information Center
Used book	Recycled book
Dorm	Residence Hall
Berkeley	Mecca

MISCELLANEOUS

Broken Home	Dysfunctional Family
Mercy Killing	Euthanasia, Putting down
Cattle Ranch	Cattle Concentration Camp
	"Moo-shwitz"
Ghetto Barrio	Ethnically Homogeneous Area
	Pre-integrated Pre-Nirvana
Hamburger	Seared, Mutilated Animal Flesh
Cheeseburger	Adding Insult to Injury
Tree	Oxygen Exchange Unit

Gang
Pimpmobile, Low-rider
Drunk, Trashed, Wasted
Slum
China
Delicatessen

Youth Group
Culturally Responsive Transportation
Spatially Perplexed
Economic Oppression Zone
Porcelain
Corpse Farm

Text 2:

"Little Red Riding Hood"

from *Politically Correct Bedtime Stories* by James Finn Garner. 1994. Published by Macmillan Publishing USA.

There once was a young person named Red Riding Hood who lived with her mother on the edge of a large wood. One day her mother asked her to take a basket of fresh fruit and mineral water to her grandmother's house--not because this was womyn's work, mind you, but because the deed was generous and helped engender a feeling of community. Furthermore, her grandmother was not sick, but rather was in full physical and mental health and was fully capable of taking care of herself as a mature adult.

So Red Riding Hood set off with her basket through the woods. Many people believed that the forest was a foreboding and dangerous place and never set foot in it. Red Riding Hood, however, was confident enough in her own budding sexuality that such obvious Freudian imagery did not intimidate her.

On the way to Grandma's house, Red Riding Hood was accosted by a wolf who asked her what was in her basket. She replied, "Some healthful snacks for my grandmother, who is certainly capable of taking care of herself as a mature adult."

The wolf said, "You know, my dear, it isn't safe for a little girl to walk through these woods alone."

Red Riding Hood said, "I find your sexist remark offensive in the extreme, but I will ignore it because of your traditional status as an outcast from society, the stress of which has caused you to develop your own, entirely valid, worldview. Now, if you'll excuse me, I must be on my way."

Red Riding Hood walked on along the main path. But, because his status outside society had freed him from slavish adherence to linear, Western-style thought, the wolf knew a quicker route to Grandma's house. He burst into the house and ate Grandma, an entirely valid course of action for a carnivore such as himself. Then, unhampered by rigid, traditionalist notions of what was masculine or feminine, he put on Grandma's nightclothes and crawled into bed.

2. Write the end of this politically correct "Little Red Riding Hood" or write your own PC bedtime story.