CONTENT WARNINGS POLICY

This Union notes:

1. That people who experience mental illnesses, belong to minority groups, and/or survivors of trauma can be strongly affected by distressing material covering topics such as rape, death, or violence. People can also 'become mentally distressed due to repeat exposure to things we don't normally consider trauma — like bullying, racism, and everyday expressions of misogyny.'[1] This can cause panic attacks, flashbacks, anxiety, and other symptoms.

2. That content warnings can be used both verbally and in written material to make people aware in advance of viewing or being subject to potentially distressing content.[2]

3. That content warnings are already widely used in media, for example film and video game certification, news reports, television, and some books.

4. That, based on research conducted at Lancaster University, students who have experienced distress because of content encountered at this university would expect this reaction to be lessened by the use of content warnings.[3]

5. That there is a precedent for content warnings being used in academic settings and in students' unions.[4]

6. That there is a movement towards using content warnings at universities, which is supported by both students and academics internationally as well as across our campus.[5]

---

[1] http://everydayfeminism.com/2016/04/content-warnings-spoilers/

[2] http://everydayfeminism.com/2016/11/what-trigger-warnings-are/

[3] One student reported that 'unexpected mentions of rape/assault […] have caused me to have flashbacks. This could probably have been lessened or avoided if I was prepared for this content.' Another student expressed that 'although I am probably in the minority for this it would be nice if there was an occasional content warning just so I can prepare myself.'

[4] https://web.archive.org/web/20131222174936/http:/new.oberlin.edu/office/equity-concerns/sexual-offense-resource-guide/prevention-support-education/support-resources-for-faculty.dot
https://www.qmsu.org/pageassets/policy/Content-Warnings-on-Module-Directories.pdf
https://www.as.ucsb.edu/senate/resolutions/a-resolution-to-mandate-warnings-for-triggering-content-in-academic-settings/
http://dailynexus.com/2014-02-27/a-s-senate-passes-proposal-to-label-trauma-provoking-academic-content
http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/01/05/crucifixion-maybe-distressing-theology-students-warned/
http://www.heraldsun.com.au/leader/east/monash-university-pilots-trigger-warnings-to-give-students-the-heads-up-on-potentially-offensive-material/news-story/bae3d9882cf54bff6fdb8b9a973ec763
http://thetab.com/uk/2016/10/09/lectures-including-trigger-warnings-avoid-upsetting-students-22332

[5] http://eprints.gla.ac.uk/130599/1/130599.pdf
http://www.chronicle.com/article/This-Is-a-Trigger-Warning/147031/
http://dailynexus.com/2014-03-07/a-s-resolution-policy-aims-to-protect-students-from-ptsd-triggers/
http://www.dailytargum.com/article/2014/02/trigger-warnings-needed-in-classroom
http://www.gwhatchet.com/2014/04/16/justin-peligri-why-we-need-trigger-warnings-on-syllabi/

7. That implementing content warnings in LUSU materials increases student accessibility to union resources and activities.

8. That implementing content warnings in LUSU is the first step in lobbying the university for implementation of content warnings on an institutional level.

9. That the following topics merit a content warning when discussed in materials or events.

   - abortion /miscarriages
   - ableism (discrimination against people with disabilities)
   - child abuse/paedophilia
   - drug/alcohol abuse
   - disordered eating
   - domestic abuse
   - homophobia/transphobia
   - racism
   - self harm
   - sexual violence
   - suicide
   - violence, blood/gore

This Union believes:

1. That it is the Union's responsibility to make sure all materials used and meetings or training sessions held are accessible to all students.

2. That the Union should be fighting to ensure that education is accessible to students with mental illnesses and minority groups.

3. That content warnings are a simple and easily-implemented tool to equip students to deal with potentially distressing content and improve accessibility for all students.

4. That content warnings do not impair students who are not at risk of excessive distress in response to certain content, therefore they have no negative impact on any students' experiences.

This Union resolves:

1. To use content warnings in published materials (training materials, campaign materials, agendas, policy, etc.) and verbally (in all meetings, training sessions, etc.) where relevant.

---

http://mancunion.com/2016/10/17/british-universities-increasingly-using-trigger-warnings-help-students-mental-health/

2. To train all current and new staff and officers on how and when to effectively use content warnings, and why they are important.

3. To lobby the University to use content warnings in both academic and administrative settings.