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Responding to Microaggressions in the Classroom/Learning space: Some Options
When a student's words or behaviors devalue, marginalize, or tokenize others

Strategies to consider	*What specific language might you use if you pursued this strategy?*	*What are some potential challenges and benefits of using this approach?*
Directly respond to comments as problematic (e.g., identify specific words or phrases and then explain why you found them disrespectful or someone else might).		
Where appropriate, invite the student to clarify or further explain.		
Open up a critical conversation with the whole class.		
Follow up with specific students after class.		
Follow up with all students (via email, or in next class).		
Other strategy?		

Some language that might be helpful
These ideas come from conversations with U-M faculty about responding to student comments in class that might exclude, devalue, or marginalize other students or perspectives. Depending on what you're responding to, as well as how much time you want to spend, steps could include:

- *Clarify:* "I heard you say/suggest _____. Did I understand that correctly?"

- *Validate the useful elements of a contribution*: "Thank you for raising a common perspective…" "I can hear you're really grappling with this complex idea…" "You've raised an idea that's important for all of us to consider, and we'll do that — but first I briefly want to …"

- *Give the benefit of the doubt* where appropriate*:* "I doubt this is what you intended, but..." "You may not realize how this sounded…" "I hear that you're primarily making a joke, and yet…"

- *Explain potential impacts of specific language choices*: "The word X is a label that's often objected to by those it's used to describe because …" "I could easily imagine that your use of that metaphor would feel like an insult to people who …" "When I hear the phrase/word 'X,' it distracts me from the other points you're trying to make…"

- *Acknowledge a range of possible perspectives and experiences in the room*: "Let's remember we may be talking about classmates when we say …" "Not all of you will share this response, but there are good reasons that some people find it hard to keep listening after a classmate uses language like…" "I worry about the impact of those words on students who have an experience of …"

- *Refer to the class discussion guidelines*: "This is a good occasion to remind everyone to be careful how we use the word 'we.'" "Remember we talked in our guidelines discussion about taking care when generalizing about groups of people."

- *Engage classmates:* Use discussion ("Does anyone have a different way of explaining this?" "What questions or concerns do others want to share?") or writing ("I want to understand better the range of perspectives about this in the class; please take out a page and write a couple of sentences about ...").

- *Create a path forward:* "As we continue on this topic, let's all remember not to generalize only from our particular experience…" "I want to pause from our plan for 5 minutes to think a bit about the other issues that have been raised." "Keeping those commitments in mind, let's get back to the main topic at hand here."

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Responding to In-Class Behaviors: Individual Reflection

1. *Choose an example* of a student-student microaggression that did or might occur in one of your classes/sessions.

2. *Reflect in writing*: What are some **goals** you'd have in responding to the student behavior (in terms of student learning, class dynamics, your credibility in the classroom, etc.)? What **factors might you want to consider** as you choose how to respond (e.g., pros and cons of various choices, or potential consequences of saying certain things -- for you or for various students)?