

# Harassment in Academia: A Discussion

Monday June 4 | PHYS 308 | 5pm - 6:30pm

## Learning Outcomes

- Understand definitions and statistics of harassment in academia
- Know resources available on campus
- Be able to use structural analysis and examples to explain situation of harassment in academia
- Engage with current responses and discuss improved responses

## Timeline

Definitions	5:00 - 5:10
Statistics	5:10 - 5:20
University Resources	5:20 - 5:40
Break	5:40 - 5:45
Specific case in Physics	5:45 - 6:00
Improved responses	6:00 - 6:30

## Content

Land acknowledgement and Introductions | 5 min

FemPhys acknowledges that we live and work on the traditional territory of the Attawandaron (Neutral), Anishinaabeg and Haudenosaunee peoples. The University of Waterloo is situated on the Haldimand Tract, the land promised to the Six Nations that includes ten kilometers on each side of the Grand River. We recognize that violence and sexual violence against Indigenous women is prevalent and that is seen in the high numbers of missing and murdered Indigenous women in Canada. Indigeneity and harassment in all its forms in academia and beyond is an important issue. It is important to talk explicitly how harassment affects Indigenous people more than and in different ways than non-Indigenous folk.

Definitions | 10 min

What is harassment? The Canadian Human Rights Commission defines harassment as a form of discrimination. It involves any unwanted physical or verbal behaviour that offends or humiliates you. What is sexual harassment? A range of actions involving the harassment of a person due to his/her sex. What is a poisoned work environment? Creating or allowing a poisoned environment means that certain people face terms and conditions of employment, tenancy, education, *etc.* that are quite different from those experienced by people who are not subjected to the comments or conduct. This leads to

a denial of equality under the *Code*. What is sexual assault? Any unwanted sexual act done by one person to another.

#### Statistics | 10 min

21% of all undergraduates have experienced sexual violence during their time at university. 33% of undergraduates identifying as women and 39% of undergraduates belonging to gender minorities. Women and gender minorities experience 4-5x more sexual violence than men and leave academia at much higher rates. Academia is an extremely hierarchical field. Professors with tenure have immense power, with the ability to determine the fate of graduate students and more junior faculty.

#### University Resources | 20 min

UW has several policies pertaining to prevention and response to sexual violence. Policy 33 - Ethical Behaviour and Policy 42- Prevention and Response to Sexual Violence establishes the University's commitment to the awareness and prevention of Sexual Violence and to a process for addressing complaints of Sexual Violence. Reporting an incident can look like contacting the UW Sexual Violence Response Coordinator, Amanda Cook who can provide guidance about the reporting process, as well as help and support to survivors. She can be contacted at [amanda.cook@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:amanda.cook@uwaterloo.ca)

#### Break | 5 min

#### Geoffrey Marcy Case | 15 min

In October of 2015, one of the biggest names in astronomy resigned his professorship at the University of California at Berkeley over the fallout from a critical investigation into his conduct with female students. Many faculty and students were outraged to learn that the professor faced no other disciplinary action. A vigorous peer pressure campaign launched, upon news of the investigation and sent a strong message to academic science: even if your institution doesn't reject you for harassing students, your colleagues will. Discuss structural analysis issues within academia: Why does harassment happen?

#### Improved Responses and Restorative Justice Discussion | 30 min

When responding to a friend who has told you they have been sexually harassed or assaulted, first, would be to just listen without judgement or blame. Saying things like "I'm so sorry this happened, I can't make this better for you and I am here for you," can help a lot more because it validates the survivor, acknowledges their pain and expresses support for them. One approach to trauma is a process that puts an emphasis on the victim's needs from the community in order to help the individual and community to heal together: it's a system called "restorative justice" that has strong potential to benefit all parties involved in sexually violent crimes.