The Canadian Society of Medievalists

Professional Behaviour Policy

Adapted from the Medieval Academy of America’s Professional Behavior Policy[[1]](#footnote-1)

The Canadian Society of Medievalists (CSM) is committed to protecting all members of our community, especially those in vulnerable positions. Mutual respect is expected; neither harassment nor bullying will be tolerated. The continued health of medieval studies in Canada relies upon the professional and ethical behaviour of the CSM’s members. The principles and policy contained in this document apply to all members of our society. This professional behaviour policy outlines the types of actions that promote collegial and supportive relationships among colleagues and further strengthens our community.

**Professional Space**

CSM-sponsored events, including the annual conference at Congress, are places where people come to exchange ideas and build intellectual and professional networks. All interactive venues of the annual meeting—in person, through email and other electronic forms of communication, or on social media, and whether formal or informal—are shared professional spaces. Attendees should assume that all of their interactions during the meeting are professional, not personal. Bearing in mind that consent may look different to someone in a less secure position, the best practice is for all parties to agree freely and explicitly when interactions shift away from the strictly professional. Indeed, in situations where there are significant disparities in power—such as between a professor and graduate student or between a senior scholar and earlier career academic, for example—the possibility for “free” and “unpressured” consent is significantly reduced.

# Respect

Professional respect is an ethical practice. Attendees at CSM events should comport themselves according to the values of nondiscrimination, dignity, and courtesy. Attendees also acknowledge the rights of all CSM members and other scholars to hold diverse values and opinions; however, these opinions do not extend to hate speech or anything that implies other people are of lesser humanity or worth. The practice of mutual respect fosters a sustainable environment for freedom of expression and open inquiry. When a culture of mutual respect is not maintained, our profession suffers by the voices we lose and the diminished reach of the voices that remain.

**Harassment**

The Canadian Society of Medievalists views harassment as a form of discrimination and misconduct by which the harasser asserts a relationship of power over the harassed through behavior that causes feelings of fear or distress. Harassment implies that an individual is not worthy of respect and that the views and person of that individual hold little or no value. Harassment may be overt or subtle, public or private, in-person or online, sexual or otherwise. All forms of harassment hurt the individual, the organization, and the profession in far-reaching and long-standing ways.

Harassment includes demeaning, humiliating, and threatening actions, comments, jokes, other forms of verbal and/or written communication, body language, and physical contact, based on sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, race, ethnicity, age, religion, physical and mental ability, or any other legally protected characteristic, and intersections thereof.

Sexual harassment includes but is not limited to unwanted sexual advances; requests for sexual favors; other verbal and physical conduct of a sexual nature; offensive or suggestive jokes or remarks; inappropriate personal questions or conversations; unwelcome or nonconsensual physical contact, such as patting, hugging, or touching; display of sexually explicit, offensive, or demeaning images except for scholarly analysis; leering or ogling; sexual remarks about someone’s clothing or body; repeated requests for dates after having been told no; and retaliatory behavior.

# Bullying

Bullying includes any of the following: 1) intentional aggression, physical, verbal, or social in nature, direct or indirect; 2) a power imbalance between aggressor and victim, distinguishing bullying from other forms of peer aggression; and 3) either a single serious incident or repeated incidents.

Bullying is often a result of envy and resentment of what is perceived as special treatment. The CSM is comprised of scholars from across Canada and indeed all over the world; as such our society is a culturally diverse group. We should take special care to use our meetings to welcome and come to understand in more depth the richness that this diversity brings to our organization.

Bullying may include refusal to recognize diverse cultural meanings and personal constructions of work, work environments, and interpersonal relationships based on race, ethnicity, sexuality, gender expression, nationality, language, religion, career stage, and other dimensions and intersections of difference. The CSM considers doxing, outing, and online harassment or stalking antithetical to its core values. In a professional setting, such as at CSM-sponsored events, bullying of any sort can be considered workplace violence. In academia, the workplace includes the expanded space of conferences, digital communication, publication forums, and the like. New, virtual workspaces are increasingly exposed to cyber bullying, sexual harassment, stalking, threats, and other forms of interpersonal violence.

**Microaggressions**

Microaggressions need not be intentional.[[2]](#footnote-2) They are seemingly casual behavioral acts that denigrate members of traditionally marginalized groups. They may seem minor to the one who commits them, but the target may be on the receiving end of a constant barrage. In a professional space, microaggressions undermine mutual respect and equitable exchange of ideas.

Scholarly organizations in Canada, including the CSM, have histories that have resulted in some scholars being better represented than others. We should take special care to use our meetings to welcome and come to understand in more depth the richness that diversity brings to our organization. In a professional space, microaggressions undermine mutual respect and equitable exchange of ideas; all members should strive for self-awareness so as to avoid such behaviour.

**Social Media**

The CSM asks that attendees of CSM-sponsored events observe the principles of consent and respect when using social media. Express permission to post or tweet conference speakers’ work, images, and audio or video recordings must be secured in advance through session organizers or presiders. Speakers reserve all rights to their work and related materials; *unauthorized reproduction on social media or elsewhere is a form of plagiarism*. The CSM Annual Conference hashtag is a representation of both the CSM and members using it; as such, the virtual medium is an extension of the professional space. Due to its immediacy and brevity, live-tweeting or blogging must strive for accuracy and avoid misrepresentation, misappropriation, harassment, and misunderstanding. Members participating in online conversations or public forums pertinent to annual meetings should practice respect and collegiality.

1. <https://www.medievalacademy.org/resource/resmgr/pdfs/professional_behavior_policy.pdf>, n.d., accessed 7 November 2020. Adaptation by permission of the Medieval Academy of America.  [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. See <http://www.microaggressions.com>. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)