



## Diversity and Inclusion Terminology in a US American Cultural Context

*This terminology document is intended to serve as an evolving guide of common US American cultural usage of diversity and inclusion terms. It is designed for study abroad colleagues who support the onsite phase of study abroad (those who do not reside in the US and are serving American students while they are abroad). Many of the terms relate to individual identity, both visible and invisible, and it is important to recognize that students and colleagues may have preferred terminology to use about themselves. Even though a person may appear to have a certain identity we must avoid making assumptions and generalizations about individuals and groups.*

### Resources to Provide a General Overview of US Culture

#### [So You're An American: A Guide to Answering Difficult Questions Abroad](#)

This resource from the US State Department is meant as a reference for US Americans that will be spending time in other countries. It has a great overview of the types of questions that US Americans might be asked about US culture and it includes an informative section about American values and understanding your own Identity as a US American which is a good window into US culture.

#### [Understanding the American Education System](#)

This resource was compiled by Study USA as a guide for any international students intending to study in the US. It gives an overview of the stages of education available in the US as well as information regarding classroom dynamics and grading.

### Protected Class/Protected Group in the United States

A **protected group** or **protected class** is a group of people qualified for special protection by a law, policy, or similar authority. In the United States, protected classes are created by both federal and state law. Federal protected classes include the groups/characteristics listed below:

- Race
- Religion
- National origin
- Age
- Sex (including sexual orientation and gender identity)
- Pregnancy
- Citizenship
- Familial status
- Disability status
- Veteran status
- Genetic information

## Facets of Student Identity

- **Citizenship:** To be considered a US Citizen a person must have either been born in the United States or certain territories/outlying possessions, or had a parent or parents who were citizens at the time of birth (if born abroad). To become a citizen after birth a person must apply for citizenship through their US Citizen parents before the age of 18. Alternatively, individuals can go through a naturalization process in which they submit an application showing their linkages to the US and prove their English language ability and take a US Civics test. The United State allows its citizens to hold dual nationality with other countries, although citizens are required to use their US passport when entering or exiting the United States
- **Community College Students:** Students who attend a two-year college. Some students will complete an Associate's Degree (AA) after completing a two year program. Others will transfer to a four year university after completing their first two years at a community college
- **Families:** Students from some diverse backgrounds may have more intricate family relationships or obligations to their families than a traditional study abroad student
- **First-Generation College Student:** A student for whom neither parent or guardian has a four-year college degree
- **First-Generation American:** A native-born or naturalized citizen of a country whose parents are foreign. In the U.S. context, "American" refers to the United States
- **High-Financial Need Students:** A student whose individual or family income or wealth cannot cover the cost of attending college. Also referred to as a 'low-income student,' high-financial need students have less disposable income than a majority of students
- **LGBTQI+:** An acronym for "lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and/or questioning and intersex" further detailed below. Commonly shortened to "LGBT/LGBTQ+"
- **Men:** Men represent approximately 1/3 of students who study abroad and are therefore considered underrepresented. Men make up approximately 50% of students in US colleges
- **Non-Traditional Students:** Students 25 years of age and older as well as parents are considered non-traditional study abroad students. Many of the other categories listed here can be considered "non-traditional" or "underrepresented"
- **Permanent Resident:** A permanent resident is someone who has been granted the right to live in the United States indefinitely, without being US Citizens. A Permanent Resident Permit is a photo ID Card which is sometimes referred to as a "Green Card" because of its historical color. Permanent residents cannot vote in US elections
- **Racial and Ethnic Identities:** The identity an individual possesses regarding their race or ethnicity (described in further detail below)
- **Religious Identities:** Students who practice the principles of any religion may have special needs or need extra support to ensure they can continue their practice abroad
- **Student Athletes:** Because of rigorous year-round training schedules, many student athletes have limited study abroad options. The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), a non-profit which regulates athletes, determines the eligibility rules regarding a students ability to play. These rules can sometimes make it challenging for student athletes to go abroad
- **Students with Disabilities or Special Needs:** A person who may have specific physical or mental restriction or handicaps and may require tailored support. This covers a wide range of needs, such as wheel-chair bound students, students with learning disabilities, students with mental illness, students with special medical needs (prescriptions, dietary restrictions), etc.
- **Transfer Students:** Students who began their university career at a different university or community college from that which they will graduate
- **Underrepresented Majors (including STEM):** Majors which have traditionally been underrepresented in study abroad participation compared to their population on campus, such as science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and education majors. This is often due to very rigid

curriculum requirements and the logistical burden of finding programs which offer classes needed to fulfill degree requirements, in order to avoid delaying plans for graduation

- **Undocumented Students:** Students who do not have the legal right to remain in the United States due to lacking valid immigration paperwork. Many such students were brought here as young children and have no other home. Studying abroad is limited without legal status. Some undocumented students will be recipients of **DACA** (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals.) This program allows undocumented young persons who were brought to the United States before age 16 and who lived continuously in the United States until June 15, 2007 the opportunity to apply to remain in the United States to work or pursue schooling. This program is currently being phased out with the last two year renewal period beginning in 2018
- **International Students:** A foreign national who is enrolled for credit at an accredited higher education institution in the US and is on a student visa. This term can encompass students who are completing full degrees in the United States and those who are temporarily taking classes at the campus, such as exchange students. International students who are pursuing full degrees are often allowed to participate in the study abroad programs offered by their university

## Diversity & Inclusion General Terminology

- **Bias:** A preference for or tendency toward a particular viewpoint or outcome. Bias stems from the internalization and institutionalization of particular values, beliefs, and assumptions
- **Culture\*:** An integrated pattern of human knowledge, belief, and behavior that is both a result of, and integral to, the human capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations
- **Discrimination:** Denotes different treatment. As a term of law, however, it refers specifically to the illegal denial of equal rights and protections based on such characteristics as gender, race, ethnicity, and disability
- **Diversity\*:** Individual differences (e.g., personality, learning styles, and life experiences) and group/social differences (e.g., race/ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, country of origin, and ability as well as cultural, political, religious, or other affiliations)
- **Equity (Student Focus)\*:** The creation of opportunities for historically underrepresented populations to have equal access to and participate in educational programs that are capable of closing the achievement gaps in student success and completion



- **Equity (Employee Focus)\*:** The creation of opportunities for historically underserved and underrepresented populations of employees to have equal access to professional growth opportunities and resource networks that are capable of closing the demographic disparities in leadership roles in all

spheres of institutional functioning

- **Harassment:** Aggressive pressure or intimidation.
  - Sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination in US law (Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964). Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when this conduct explicitly or implicitly affects an individual's employment, unreasonably interferes with an individual's work performance, or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment. Victims are encouraged to inform their harasser directly that the conduct is unwelcome and must stop

- Listen to the [La Donna episode](#) of This American Life, which charts the pervasive sexual harassment culture of a security company and one woman's journey to fight back
- **Hate crime:** A crime, usually violent in nature, directed against an individual for their membership or perceived membership in a particular identity group, including sexual orientation, gender identity, race, or religious affiliation
- **Implicit Bias\*\*:** Implicit bias refers to the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner. Implicit biases are activated involuntarily, unconsciously, and without one's awareness or intentional control
  - [Example video:](#) *Carlsberg Beer Commercial in which cinema goers are sold the last two tickets to a movie. The seats are in the very center of the theatre, surrounded by hundreds of tough looking men*
- **Inclusion\*:** The active, intentional, and ongoing engagement with diversity—in the curriculum, in the co-curriculum, and in communities (intellectual, social, cultural, geographical) with which individuals might connect—in ways that increase awareness, content knowledge, cognitive sophistication, and empathic understanding of the complex ways individuals interact within systems and institutions
- **Inclusive Excellence** Refers to intentional policies and practices that promote the full participation and sense of belonging of every stakeholder
- **Inclusive Excellence in Higher Education:** The recognition that a community or institution's success is dependent on how well it values, engages and includes the rich diversity of students, staff, faculty, administrators, and alumni constituents
- **Inclusive Excellence in Study Abroad\*\*\*:** Inclusive Excellence reframes how we think about diversity in study abroad. Many of our conversations and efforts focus on access, which is indeed important. We cannot, however, solely focus on participation rates and then expect (or hope?) underserved students will thrive in our existing systems. The IE framework insists that we are deliberate in our efforts to recognize, support, and engage the cultural capital and strengths of marginalized populations to improve the quality of learning and development for all students
- **Micro-aggression:** Indirect, subtle, or unintentional discrimination against members of a marginalized group. Often these occurrences do not feel “micro” to those who experience them
  - Read a [Psychology Today blog](#) about micro-aggressions in everyday life
  - Click through a [photo montage of the micro-aggressions](#) regularly experienced by Fordham University students
- **Minority:** A small group of people within a community or country, differing from the main population in race, religion, language, or political persuasion
- **Privilege:** A special right, advantage, or immunity granted or available only to a particular person or group
  - Watch a YouTube video of a group activity that represents [privilege](#)
- **Safe Space:** A place (such as on a campus or in an individual's office) intended to be free of bias, conflict, criticism, or potentially threatening actions, ideas, or conversations. Sometimes denoted with signage
- **Sexual Assault:** Illegal sexual contact that usually involves force upon a person without consent or is inflicted upon a person who is incapable of giving consent (as because of age or physical or mental incapacity) or who places the assailant (such as a doctor) in a position of trust or authority
- **Stereotype:** A widely held but fixed and oversimplified image or idea of a particular type of person or thing
- **Underrepresentation:** Insufficient or disproportionately low representation of a group of persons that represent one or multiple identities

## Race and Ethnicity Terminology

- **American Indian, Native American, and Alaskan Native:** A person having origins in any of the original indigenous peoples of North and Central and South America, and who maintain tribal affiliation or community attachment
- **Asian:** A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent including, for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam
- **Biracial or Multiracial:** Having parents of more than one race
- **Black or African American:** A person having origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa. The terms “Negro” and “Colored” fell out of common usage in the US after the 1970s and are considered offensive. Some Black or African American individuals may also strongly identify with their ethnic background and prefer terms such as Afro-Caribbean or Haitian
- **Ethnicity:** A social construct that divides people into smaller social groups based on characteristics such as shared sense of group membership, values, behavioral patterns, language, political and economic interests, history and ancestral geographical base
- **Ethnic Group:** A group of people who share a sense of themselves as having a common heritage, ancestry, or shared historical past, which may be tied to identifiable physical, cultural, linguistic, and/or religious characteristics
- **First Nations:** The Indigenous peoples in Canada who live south of the Arctic Circle. Those in the Arctic area are a distinct group of people called the Inuit
- **Heritage Seeker:** A person who decides to study abroad in the country of their ancestral/ethnic or family origin
- **Hispanic:** Generally defined as a person who is from Spanish speaking Latin America, the Caribbean or Spain. A person who is Hispanic may also be Latinx, however a person who is Latinx may not necessarily be Hispanic (example: Brazil). It is important to note that Hispanic can leave out non-Spanish language speaking indigenous populations that live in predominantly Spanish speaking Latin American countries
- **Latinx:** A gender-neutral term for a person of Latin American origin or descent. This term has replaced Latino/a/@ in common usage
- **Miscegenation:** Interracial marriage. Until the 1967 Supreme Court ruling of *Richard and Mildred Loving versus the State of Virginia*, many US states had anti-miscegenation laws prohibiting interracial marriage. Children born to a mixed couple after interracial marriage was legalized are referred to as [The Loving Generation](#)
- **Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander:** A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands
- **People/Person of Color (POC):** The term "person of color" is used primarily in the United States to describe any person who is not of White European heritage. Resources:
  - [The Journey from Colored to Minorities to People of Color:](#) National Public Radio (NPR) story on history of racial terminology in the US
- **Race:** A political construction created to concentrate power with white people and legitimize dominance over non-white people
  - Watch an excerpt of the video: [Race the Power of an Illusion](#)
- **Racial and Ethnic Identity:** An individual's awareness and experience of being a member of a racial and ethnic group; the racial and ethnic categories that an individual chooses to describe him

or herself based on such factors as biological heritage, physical appearance, cultural affiliation, early socialization, and personal experience

- **Racism:** Referring to individual, cultural, institutional and systemic ways by which differential consequences are created for groups historically or currently defined as white being advantaged, and groups historically or currently defined as non-white (African, Asian, Hispanic, Native American, etc.) as disadvantaged. That idea aligns with those who define racism as prejudice plus power, a common phrase in the field. Combining the concepts of prejudice and power points out the mechanisms by which racism leads to different consequences for different groups. The relationship and behavior of these interdependent elements has allowed racism to recreate itself generation after generation, such that systems that perpetuate racial inequity no longer need racist actors or to explicitly promote racial differences in opportunities, outcomes and consequences to maintain those differences
  - Watch an [Understanding Race](#) Video
  - National Geographic Magazine discusses it's [past racist stories](#)
  - View an [infographic](#) that shows how racism impacts black people on a daily basis
  - Listen or read an article about the [high post-partum mortality rate amongst African American mothers](#)
- **White:** A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa
  - Read about the [US Census' plans to redefine whiteness](#)
  - Watch and listen to author Tim Wise discuss [how race was used to hide class](#)
  - Read about [when the Irish became "white"](#)
  - Read an Academic.com article by Gregory Jay that investigates [who invented the concept of white people](#)
  - Read about [when whiteness was expanded to include Jewish People](#)

## LGBTQ+ and Gender Identity Terminology

- **Asexual people:** Individuals who generally do not experience sexual attraction to others of any gender
  - Read about [the portrayal of asexuality in society](#)
- **Agender People:** Individuals who identify as not having a gender. Some describe themselves as genderless, while others see themselves as gender neutral
- **Ally:** A person who makes a commitment to supporting people of all sexual and gender identities and to confront homophobia, transphobia, biphobia, and heterosexism in themselves and in others for the benefit of all
- **Bi or Bisexual:** Individuals who experience sexual, romantic, and/or emotional attractions to people of more than one gender or people who are attracted to genders similar to their own and to genders different from their own
  - Read about the recent [increase in bisexual characters in US television shows](#)
- **Biological Sex:** The classification of people as male or female. At birth, infants are assigned a sex based on a combination of bodily characteristics including: chromosomes, hormones, internal reproductive organs, and genitals. Not to be confused with gender
- **Cisgender:** A person whose gender identity and biological sex line up
- **Closeted:** Describes a person who is not open about their sexual orientation. Also known as *in the closet*

- **Coming Out:** The process in which a person first acknowledges, accepts and appreciates their sexual orientation or gender identity and begins to share their new understanding of themselves with others
  - Watch [Ellen DeGeneres speak about publicly coming out in the 1990s](#)
- **Gay:** A word describing a man or a woman who is emotionally, romantically, sexually and/or relationally attracted to members of the same sex
- **Gender Identity:** How one thinks about their own gender, whether they think of themselves as a man or a woman, and to what degree they identify with the arbitrary gender roles placed on us by society.
  - Read [The True Story of John/Joan](#)
- **Gender-fluid:** A gender identity which varies over time. A gender-fluid person may at any time identify as male, female, neutral or some combination of identities
- **Genderqueer:** An identity commonly used by people who do not identify or express their gender within the gender binary. Those who identify as genderqueer may identify as neither male nor female, may see themselves as outside of or in between the binary gender boxes, or may simply feel restricted by gender labels
- **Gender neutral or gender inclusive pronoun:** A pronoun which does not associate a gender with the individual who is being discussed. Some languages, such as English, do not have a gender neutral or third gender pronoun available, and this has been criticized, since in many instances, writers, speakers, etc. use “he/his” when referring to a generic individual in the third person. Also, the dichotomy of “he and she” in English does not leave room for other gender identities, which is a source of frustration to the transgender and genderqueer communities
  - There are many variations of gender neutral pronouns. The two most common are listed below

HE/SHE	HIM/HER	HIS/HER	HIS/HERS	HIMSELF/HERSELF
Ze	Hir	hir	hirs	hirsself
They	Them	Their	Theirs	themselves

- **Homophobia:** The fear and hatred of or discomfort with people who love and are sexually attracted to members of the same sex
- **Homosexual:** A clinical term used to refer to people who are sexually attracted to members of their own sex
- **Intersex:** A general term used for a variety of conditions in which a person is born with a reproductive or sexual anatomy that doesn’t seem to fit the typical definitions of female or male. For example, a person might be born appearing to be female on the outside, but having mostly male-typical anatomy on the inside. Previous generations may have used the term "hermaphrodite" to describe people with both male and female reproductive organs but this term is seen as very offensive and should not be used
  - Read [about the proposed California bill to protect intersex people from unnecessary surgeries](#)
- **In the closet:** Refers to a homosexual, bisexual, transperson or intersex person who will not or cannot disclose their sex, sexuality, sexual orientation or gender identity to their friends, family, co-workers, or society. An intersex person may be closeted due to ignorance about their status since standard medical practice is to “correct,” whenever possible, intersex conditions early in childhood and to hide the medical history from the patient. There are varying degrees of being “in

the closet”; for example, a person can be out in their social life, but in the closet at work, or with their family. Also known as ‘Downlow’ or ‘D/L’

- **Lesbian:** Woman who experiences sexual, romantic, and/or emotional attractions to other women
- **LGBTQ+:** An acronym for “lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and/or questioning” which includes a plus sign to indicate there are additional terms
- **Mis-gendering:** Refer to an individual using a word, especially a pronoun or form of address, that does not correctly reflect the gender with which they identify. This is commonly experienced by transgender individuals. Purposefully mis-gendering someone is seen as an intention to do them harm
- **Outing:** Exposing someone’s sexual orientation as being lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender to others, without their permission; in essence “outing” them from the closet. Outing someone can have serious employment/economic/safety/religious repercussions in some situations
- **Pansexual:** A person who is sexually attracted to all or many gender expressions
- **Queer:** An umbrella term to refer to all LGBTQ+ people. It is also a non-binary term used by individuals who see their sexual orientation and/or gender identity as fluid. In the recent past the word Queer was used as a derogatory term in the United States and some people may still find it offensive
- **Sexual orientation:** An inherent or immutable enduring emotional, romantic, sexual and relational attraction to another person; may be a same-sex orientation, opposite-sex orientation or a bisexual orientation. Sexual orientation is independent from gender identity
- **Trans or Transgender People:** Umbrella terms for individuals whose gender identity and/or expression is different from the gender assigned to them at birth. Among individuals who might identify as transgender include trans women and trans men; individuals who cross-dress or go beyond traditional gender categories. Not to be confused with the term “transsexual” which is outdated and often seen as offensive
  - [Review a history of transgender rights in America](#)
- **Trans Men:** Individuals assigned female at birth who identify as male
- **Trans Women:** Individuals assigned male at birth who identify as female

## Religious Identity

- **Abrahamic religions:** Judaism, Christianity, and Islam
- **Agnosticism:** The philosophical position that the existence or non-existence of God or a First Cause is unknowable
- **Atheism:** Disbelief in any deity or supernatural power
- **Buddhism:** The teaching that suffering is inherent to life and that the way to escape suffering and repeated existence is to limit desires and expectations. There are sects with varying beliefs
- **Confucianism:** A system of teachings emphasizing the practice and cultivation of the cardinal virtues of filial piety, kindness, righteousness, propriety, intelligence, and faithfulness
- **Evangelical:** Related to the Christian gospel/New Testament. Also used to describe a Christian belief that emphasizes the inerrancy of scripture and salvation through personal conversion
- **Hinduism:** A body of social, cultural, and religious beliefs and practices found chiefly in India. It includes a belief in reincarnation and transmigration of souls
- **Monotheism:** The doctrine or belief that there is only one God
- **Nihilism:** The viewpoint that all beliefs are unfounded and that human life has no meaning
- **Observant:** Careful in observing rites, laws, or customs of a particular religion
- **Orthodox:** In agreement with the official doctrine of a given religion. The word is from Greek *orthodoxein*, “to have the right opinion”

- **Pagan:** Believer in polytheistic religion. Nowadays there are religious groups that identify themselves as Pagans. Modern paganism is earth-centered and can include polytheistic beliefs.
- **Polytheism:** Belief in more than one God
- **Religion:** A system of beliefs, usually spiritual in nature, and often in terms of a formal, organized denomination
- **Religious:** Believing in God or gods and following the practices of a *religion*
- **Secular:** Worldly, not religiously observant. Secular refers to anything that is not specifically religious

Resources:

<https://www.dailywritingtips.com/30-religious-terms-you-should-know/>

[https://www.uml.edu/docs/Glossary\\_tcm18-55041.pdf](https://www.uml.edu/docs/Glossary_tcm18-55041.pdf)

## Universities Serving Specific Identities

- **Military University/School:** The U.S. military operates many types of schools, from military academies that train future officers, to a medical school. Examples of Military Universities and Schools include the Army War College, The Air Force Institute of Technology and The Uniformed Services and The University of the Health Sciences. There is also a category of Senior Military Colleges which are civilian intuitions that offer military instruction in addition to their other curriculum. Students at senior military colleges participate in the ROTC program and may become commissioned officers after graduating. Some Senior Military Colleges include Texas A&M University, The Citadel and Virginia Tech
  - Read about [US military colleges and service academies](#)
- **Men's Colleges:** Men's colleges in the United States are generally defined as undergraduate degree granting institutions that admit only men. There are currently three in the US: Wabash College (Indiana); Hampden-Sydney College (Virginia); and Morehouse College (Georgia). Some seminary/theology schools are also men's only
  - [Read a NY Times article about the success of all male colleges](#)
- **Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs):** MSIs are institutions of higher education that serve minority populations. They are primarily organized into these four categories:
  - **Historically Black Serving Institutions (HBCUs):** HBCUs were established for the primary purpose of educating African-Americans. HBCUs comprise 3% of America's institutions of higher education, yet enroll 16% of all African-American students in higher education and award 24% of all baccalaureate degrees earned by African-Americans nationwide. There are currently 101 HBCUs in the United States. Examples of HBCUs include Spellman College (Georgia), Morehouse College (Georgia); Howard University (Washington DC); Xavier University of Louisiana; Florida A&M University
    - Watch a [CNN video about Attending an HBCU](#)
  - **Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs):** HSIs are accredited, post-secondary, higher educational institutions with at least 25% total full-time enrollment of Hispanic undergraduate students. HSIs enroll 40% of all Hispanic-American students of higher education
  - **Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs):** These institutions provide a response to the higher education needs of American Indians, and generally serve geographically-isolated populations that have no other means of accessing education beyond the high school level. Currently, 35 institutions exist across the United States

- **Asian American and Pacific Islander Serving Institutions (AAPISIs):** An institution is categorized as an AAPISI if at least 10 percent of its students are Asian-American or Pacific Islanders, and if at least 50 percent of its entire student body has demonstrated financial need, measured by participation in federal financial aid programs
- **Predominantly Black Institutions:** The US Department of Education defines PBIs as institutions where the student population consists of at least 40% African American students. Some, but not all Predominantly Black Institutions are HBCUs. Examples include Atlanta Technical College; Community College of Philadelphia; University of West Alabama
- **Women’s Colleges and Universities:** Often Liberal Arts Schools, these institutions admit and grant degrees to women only. There are 35 active Women’s Colleges and Universities in the United States. Examples include Barnard College (New York); Smith College (Massachusetts); Bryn Mawr College (Pennsylvania); Spelman College (Georgia); Mills College (California)
  - Review the current [list of Women’s Colleges in the United States](#)

### Campus Military Service Terminology

- **National Guard:** A unique reserve element of the US military that serves both local community (non-combat, humanitarian) and national/global missions (combat, non-combat, and humanitarian). This is a part-time service, and the National Guard is organized by state, allowing them to be deployed by both the President of the United States as well as their state governor for more local emergencies. A National Guard serviceperson (sometimes referred to as “guardsman”) typically has a civilian career or is a full-time student and completes their military training obligation on weekends. No prior military service is required to become part of the National Guard, and there are two major branches: Army National Guard and Air National Guard
- **National Reservists:** There is a “reservist” element for every branch of the US military: Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, and Coast Guard. These can loosely be considered a “backup” to active duty operations and consist of both fulltime and part-time service people. Typically the reservists are recently separated or retired active duty military, who can continue to accrue their health, educational, and pension benefits through non-active duty service. This requires 40 training weekends per year in addition to two full weeks with a reserve unit. Reservists are often mobilized for global combat and humanitarian deployment abroad as a supplement to active duty operations
- **Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC):** A college-based (postsecondary) program for training future commissioned officers of the US Armed Forces. Students attend college with ROTC Scholarship funding and receive basic military and officer training for their chosen branch of service. These students are known as “cadets” and participate in regular drills throughout the year and summer training activities. After graduation there is a military service requirement of 4-8 years depending on officer assignment and branch of military. ROTC is sometimes pronounced “Rot-C”
- **Veterans:** A person who served as active duty (full-time) in the US military, including military, naval or air service. Sometimes Coast Guard active duty is included in this definition. National Guard and Reservists would be considered “veterans” if they have ever deployed overseas, which is full-time active duty. “Veteran” connotes masculine, feminine, and non-binary genders; “servicemen” and “servicewomen” is also widely used, though more gender conforming

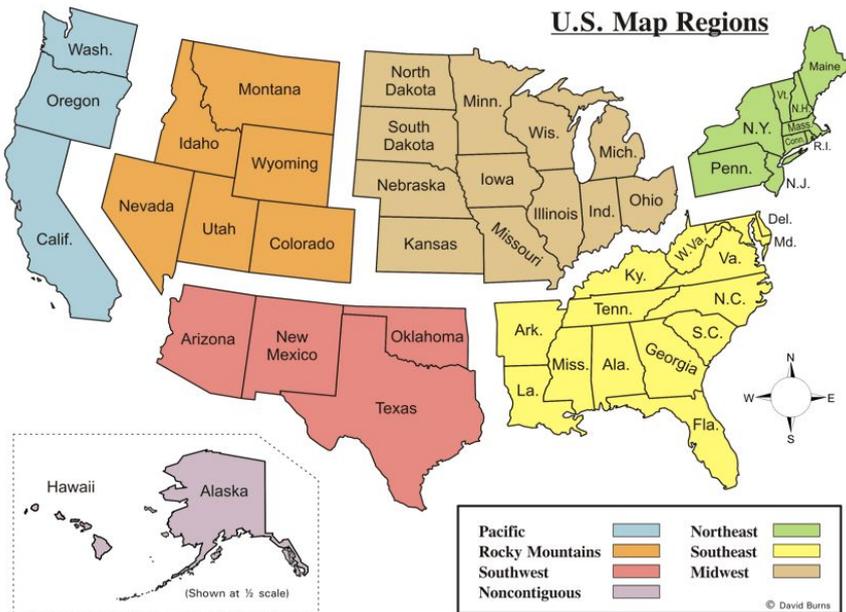
### US Financial Aid

Financial aid is money to help pay for university or technical college tuition, fees and living expenses. It can be awarded to students from many sources: the institution attended by the student; the state where they reside; the US government; and nonprofit or private organizations. It can consist of grants which do not require repayment as well as loans which do need to be repaid. All US Citizens can apply for financial aid;

however, the Federal government will not offer grants or loans to individuals with a criminal record. Additionally, students who have been convicted of any drug offense, a misdemeanor or a felony, are not eligible to receive financial aid at all

- **Cost of Attendance (COA):** The total amount it costs a student to attend college/university. COA includes tuition and fees; room and board (or a housing and food allowance); and allowances for books, supplies, transportation, loan fees, and dependent care. It also includes miscellaneous and personal expenses, including an allowance for the rental or purchase of a personal computer; costs related to a disability; and reasonable costs for eligible study-abroad programs. Many schools will consider the study abroad program fee and cost of living abroad in calculating a new COA estimate for a student who will be abroad
- **EFC:** Expected Family Contribution. The financial contribution a family is expected to be able to pay towards a student's educational cost. This amount is determined by the Federal Government and based on the information reported on the FAFSA. The EFC is calculated based on the financial contribution (reported income and savings) of the student and their parents (pending student's dependency status) and taking in consideration the applicants family size, the number of family members who are in college as well as nontaxable and taxable income and reported assets
- **FAFSA:** Free Application for Federal Student Aid. This application is open to students who are US Citizens. Some students with permanent residence or who hold other special immigration status may also be eligible. The information reported on the FAFSA is used to calculate Federal Financial Aid and State Aid as well as institutional access to scholarships and grants
- **Financial Need:** For financial aid purposes, Financial Need is the difference between the cost of attendance (COA) at a school and a family's Expected Family Contribution (EFC)
- **Independent Student:** For US Federal Financial Aid Purposes an independent student is one of the following: at least 24 years old, married, a graduate or professional student, a veteran, a member of the armed forces, an orphan, a ward of the court, or someone with legal dependents other than a spouse, an emancipated minor or someone who is homeless or at risk of becoming homeless
- **Pell Grant:** A federal grant for undergraduate students with financial need as determined by the FAFSA
- **PLUS Loans:** PLUS loans are federal loans that parents of dependent undergraduate students can use to help pay for college expenses not covered by other financial aid. The US Department of Education is the lender and the parent must apply and be deemed financially eligible in order for this funding to be accessible to the student
- **Student Loan Crisis:** US Graduates owe a total of 1.4 Trillion dollars in student debt which is the highest debt category after housing. High monthly student loan payment requirements ripple through the economy in that recent graduates often cannot afford to pay rent or transportation expenses in addition to making their loan payments. Students who fail to pay will be found in default and eventually have their wages garnished
  - Watch a [PBS Newshour report on why student debt is 'a crisis' for some borrowers](#)
- **Student Loan Repayment:** Within 6 months of graduating, lending agencies expect an individual to start paying back their student loans. Generally the monthly loan payment amount is not determined by the monthly income earned by the individual
  - Listen to [Podcasts where people share their student loan stories](#).

## United States Regions



- **Flyover States/Flyover Country:** A slang phrase, sometimes pejorative, to refer to many of the Midwest/Heartland states that people fly over between the major cities on the East and West Coast

## Socio Economic Terminology

- **US Income Levels:** There is no federal definition of income levels in the United States to determine who is seen as middle income, upper income or lower income. However, various governmental and non-governmental organizations calculate the median income which should represent the middle of the range of reported incomes. The US Census Bureau reported that the 2016 Median Income level in the United States was \$59,039. When investigating income levels it is important to consider that the cost of living varies widely amongst states. For example, someone making the US median income in California

may struggle to pay their bills while someone making the US median income in South Dakota might have no problem paying bills and saving funds

- The 99% and 1%: We are the 99% is a phrase reflecting that the majority of wealth in the United States is in the hands of 1% of the population. It was often touted during the [Occupy Wall Street](#) movement in 2011. A more accurate breakdown is that 9.9% of the population control the majority of America's wealth
- **The Socioeconomic Classes:** Like with income stratification, there is no federal definition of socioeconomic classes in the United States. Researchers tend to look at income levels and accumulated wealth levels, as well as education attainment and home ownership when differentiating social classes. Broadly, the classes are organized into the following stratifications: Upper, Middle-Upper, Middle, Working, Lower. Historically, most Americans self-identify as Middle Class. Those in the Middle-Upper and Upper classes are seen to have more influence on society through their purchasing power and ability to make donations to political, educational and cultural institutions
  - Read about [What Determines How Americans Perceive their Social Class?](#)
  - Watch a [Frontline PBS Video Why the Middle Class Matters](#)
  - Watch at [PBS NewsHour video on how the upper middle class keeps everyone else out](#)
  - Are you considered part of the American Middle class? Use the [Pew Research Center Middle Class Income Calculator](#)
  - Listen to the [Opportunity Costs: Money and Class in America](#) Podcasts
  - Read about [US Income Levels in the 2016 US Census Bureau Report](#)
  - Watch a video explaining that [The 99% is a Myth](#)
  - Watch a BuzzFeed video showing what a [\\$75K Salary Gets You in Six Different Cities in the US](#)
- **Federal Poverty Level (FPL):** The US Department of Health and Human Services evaluates and sets a new Poverty level each January to establish eligibility criteria for subsidies and aid programs. The 2018 poverty level is approximately \$25,000/year for a family of four or approximately \$12,000 for an individual. The States of Alaska and Hawaii have different poverty levels to reflect the higher cost of living in those states. It is estimated to approximately 42 Million Americans currently live at or below the poverty line
  - Resource:
    - <https://www.healthcare.gov/glossary/federal-poverty-level-FPL/>
    - <https://www.thebalance.com/federal-poverty-level-definition-guidelines-chart-3305843>
    - <https://poverty.ucdavis.edu/faq/what-current-poverty-rate-united-states>
- **Food insecurity:** The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines food insecurity as a lack of consistent access to enough food for an active, healthy life. Food insecurity differs from Hunger as it refers specifically to the absence of financial resources to secure household food
  - [Read and watch a video about the impacts of food insecurity on various American populations](#)
  - [Read about the level of food insecurity amongst US College Students](#)
- **Low Income students (college):** Low-income students are defined as those who qualify for Pell Grants (federal aid awarded to students from families with household incomes of \$50,000 or less)
  - Read an [article about the increasing college enrollment of low-income students](#)

## US Political Terminology

Resources:

[Political Ideology as defined by the Saylor Foundation](#)

Pew Research Center article, [Political Typology Reveals Deep Fissures on the Right and Left](#)

- **Conservative:** The Merriam-Webster learnersdictionary.com defines conservative as, "a person who believes in the value of established and traditional practices in politics and society"
  - **Social Conservative:** Is a right-wing political ideology that opposes social progressivism. The political agenda of social conservatism aligns closely with fundamentalist Christianity, though not all social conservatives are fundamentalist Christians. Important issues to social conservatives include banning abortion, gay marriage, protecting the Second Amendment (right to bear arms), opposing illegal immigration, limiting welfare spending, lifting the ban on school prayer, and maintaining a strong national defense
  - **Fiscal Conservative:** Is a right-wing political ideology that embraces small government, low taxes and fiscal conservatism, without necessarily embracing the social, religious or moral beliefs of social conservatives. Libertarians are an example of a type of fiscal conservative
  - Resource: <https://www.conservativeusa.org/issues>
  - <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2017/12/conservatism-without-bigotry/544128/>
- **Liberal:** The Merriam-Webster learnersdictionary.com defines liberal as, "believing that government should be active in supporting social and political change"
- **Moderate:** The Merriam-Webster learnersdictionary.com defines moderate as, "having or expressing political beliefs that are neither very liberal nor very conservative"
  - Review a [website devoted to curating news for moderate voters](#)
  - [Read a New York Times article expressing the beliefs of moderates](#)
- **Left wing:** As defined by the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, Left Wing refers to, "the part of a political group that consists of people who support liberal or socialist ideas and policies"
- **Right wing:** As defined by the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, Right wing refers to, "the part of a political group that consists of people who support conservative or traditional ideas and policies"
- **Tea Party Movement:** A conservative movement primarily within the Republican Party which is focused on reducing the US National Debt and cutting US taxes and spending. The name is taken from the Boston Tea Party, an event in 1773 in which colonists threw a shipment of British Tea into Boston Harbor to protest "no taxation without representation"

Resources:

- Learn about the [Economic Platform of the Tea Party](#)
- Review a 2010 article about [The Tea Party movement and Libertarians](#)
- **Working Families Party/organization:** The WFP was founded in 1998 and advocates for affordable housing, investments in public services and public schools, accessible and affordable health care and well-paying jobs. Depending on State Law, they will either run their own Working Families Party candidate or endorse a candidate from the other major parties. Most recently they have come out in support of raising the national minimum wage to \$15/hour  
<http://workingfamilies.org/>

## Frequently Referenced Political Parties in the United States

- [Democratic Party](#)

Symbol: Donkey

Color: Blue

Recognized as an official political party by the [US Federal Election Commission](#)

- [The Constitution Party](#)

Symbol: Bald Eagle

Colors: Red, White and Blue; Purple

Recognized as an official political party by the US Federal Election Commission

- [The Green Party USA](#)

Symbol: Earthflower (Earth with petals and a stem)

Color: Green

Recognized as an official political party by the US Federal Election Commission

- [Libertarian Party](#)

Symbol: Statue of Liberty/Torch/Porcupine

Color: Gold

Recognized as an official political party by the US Federal Election Commission

- [Republican Party/The Grand Old Party \(GOP\)](#)

Symbol: Elephant

Color: Red

Recognized as an official political party by the US Federal Election Commission

- [Socialist Party USA](#)

Symbol: black and white hands clasped over a globe

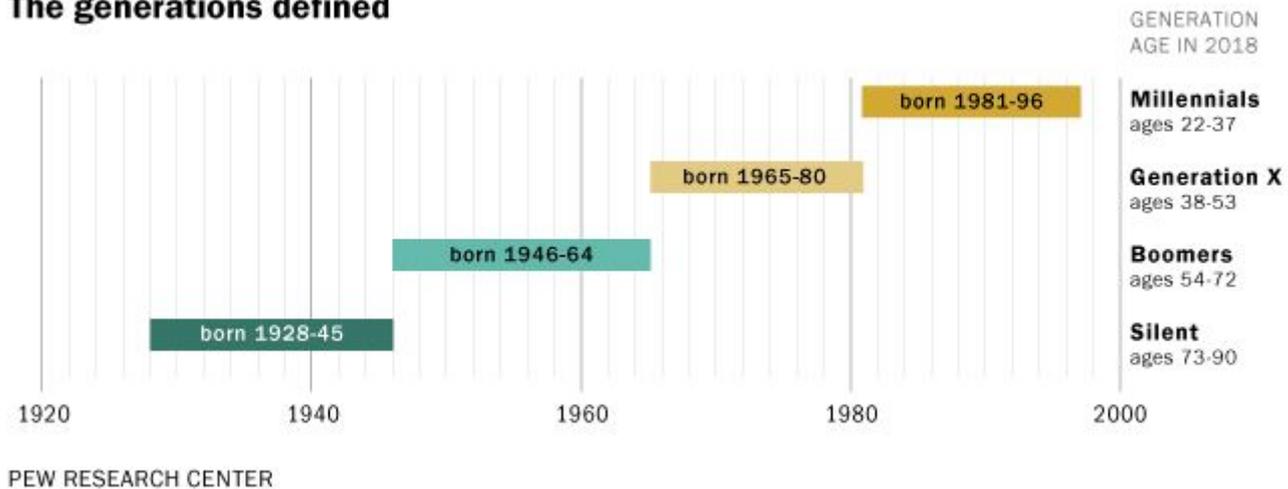
Color: Red

Not recognized as an official political party by the US Federal Election Commission

## Generations

- **Generation Z/iGen:** Those born after 1995. This year was chosen by researchers because that was when the Internet became commonly available
- **Millennial:** Someone born between 1981 and 1996. Millennials are defined as someone who reached adulthood in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century and are often labelled as entitled narcissists who avoid the work they do not like and complain to the CEO instead of their direct supervisor if they are not happy
- **Cusper/Xennial:** Someone born between 1977 and 1983, during the cusp of the generational shift from Generation X to Millennials. They are notable because of sharing traits with both groups
- **Generation X:** Someone born between 1965 and 1980, this generation is also referred to as the "latchkey generation" as they were the first generation to come home to an empty house after school due to both parents being at work. They are also sometimes called the "MTV Generation" as music videos hit their prime during Generation X adolescence. Generation X are often labelled as aimless and lazy
- **Boomer/Baby Boomer:** Called baby boomers because of the increased birthrate after the second World War, this generation was born between 1946 and 1964. Boomers grew up during a time of vast social change, from seeing and participating in the Civil Rights movement to fighting in Vietnam. They saw economic growth in the United States and went from being free love hippies in the 1960s to money making yuppies in the 1980s
- **Silent Generation:** Born from 1928 to 1945 the "silents" got their name from conforming to social norms as well as their focus on careers instead of activism. Many felt that it was dangerous to be an activist after living through the [McCarthy Era](#)

## The generations defined



*The Generations Defined:*

<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/03/01/defining-generations-where-millennials-end-and-post-millennials-begin/>

Read the [Huffington Post Article Eight Key Differences between Millennials and Gen Z](#)

Watch a YouTube that expresses [How Generation Z Will Change the World According to Experts](#)

## Terms from the Zeitgeist

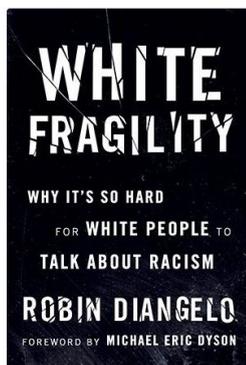
- **All Lives Matter:** Coined in response to the BLM movement, but unlike BLM it is not a movement or call to action. It ignores the message of BLM in favor of a view that “we’re all human” and that no lives are more important than others. Some people feel that the statement of “All Lives Matter” is meant to disenfranchise the Black Lives Matter social movement and minimize the deaths of people of color
- **"Alt Right" (Alternative Right):** The [Southern Poverty Law Center](#) defines the Alt Right as "a set of far-right ideologies, groups and individuals whose core belief is that “white identity” is under attack by multicultural forces using “political correctness” and “social justice” to undermine white people and “their” civilization”
  - Watch a [Washington Post Video that explains the Alt Right](#)
- **Antifa:** Antifa is short for Antifacist. The [Anti-Defamation League](#) defines Antifa as, " a loose collection of groups, networks and individuals who believe in active, aggressive opposition to far right-wing movements. Their ideology is rooted in the assumption that the Nazi party would never have been able to come to power in Germany if people had more aggressively fought them in the streets in the 1920s and 30s"
- **Black Lives Matter (BLM):** Can refer to a hashtag, a slogan, a social movement, or a loose confederation of groups advocating for racial justice. The term first came into use in 2014, with the use of the hashtag following the acquittal George Zimmerman in the death of African American teenager Trayvon Martin. In the summer of 2014, BLM came onto the national stage for the protests and demonstrations following the deaths of Michael Brown, in Ferguson, MO, and Eric Garner in New York City, at the hands of police. It is a decentralized national network of more than 30 local chapters [Black Lives Matter Website](#)

- **Black Tax/The Black Tax:** Black Tax refers to the financial implications associated with being black in America. It can be used in reference to higher insurance premiums being charged, mortgage loans being denied or approved at higher than standard interest rates, or a feeling that a black person must do twice the work of a non-person of color in order to achieve equal recognition or a promotion. Additionally, it can reference the financial burden associated with having to travel significant distances to stores and businesses that have left urban or low-income neighborhoods where many people of color may reside
- **Blue Lives Matter:** A pro-police officer movement; started after the killings of American police officers. The annual average of police deaths from 2006-2015 was 50 per year
- **Driving While Black (DWB):** A phrase used in reference to the fact that people of color are pulled over by police for traffic violations at a higher rate than white drivers due to racial profiling
  - Read the [American Civil Liberties Report on Racial Profiling of US Motorists](#)
- **Free Speech Zone:** A dedicated area in a public place, or at a public event, that is specifically for political protest. Sometimes called First Amendment Zones, Protest Cages or Protest Zones, the purpose of these areas was to protect the protestors and/or counter-demonstrators. Many universities designate Free Speech zones in campus areas where teaching or student accommodation will not be negatively impacted by protest gatherings and originally these locations were created in response to Vietnam war protests in the 1960s and 1970s. However, some states have recently ruled that these dedicated zones limit free speech because they require pre-booking and have size limitations and are sometimes located far from the events that people are protesting
  - Read an [insidehighered.com article on the ongoing abolishment of free speech zones](#)
- **Incel: (this is an online community)** Short for "Involuntarily Celibate", the term was coined by a queer science professor who created an online community for adults who were not sexually active, but not by their choice. Over the years, the community devolved into a violently misogynistic community that came into the news when a man from the community drove a truck into traffic in Toronto, killing 10 people. Listen to a [podcast with the founder of the original group](#) on Reply All, a podcast about the internet
- **Jim Crow/The New Jim Crow:** "Jim Crow" refers to laws that enforced a racial caste system in the US after Reconstruction (the period following the US Civil War). Jim Crow laws were largely enacted at the state or local level primarily in states where race-based slavery had been the main driver of commerce prior to the War. Jim Crow was not confined to the southern states, however, and the laws were enforced well into the 1960s across the US. "The New Jim Crow" refers to current policies and disparities that undermine the progress of the Civil Rights Movement, such as mass incarceration and income inequality. Resources:
  - [Jim Crow Museum of Racist Memorabilia](#)
  - [Sundown Towns: Midwest confronts its complicated racial legacy \(article\)](#)
  - [Jim Crow Still Exists in America](#) (article/audio)
- **"Me too" Movement:** Coined by activist Tarana Burke, the phrase "Me Too" was originally used in solidarity building amongst young victims of sexual assault and in response to anti-Black and racial discrimination. Actor Alyssa Milano tweeted it on October 15<sup>th</sup>, 2017, and the phrase went viral on Twitter and Facebook, leading to a national conversation about sexual assault and harassment in entertainment, media, politics and more. The side-lining of Tarana Burke's role in coining the phrase has become its own part of the conversation about the marginalization of black activists in favor of white voices [Me Too Movement Website](#)
- **Men's Rights Movement:** A group focused on combating issues of perceived discrimination and inequalities faced by men. It can sometimes be labelled as anti-feminist or misogynist in nature



depending on the action of members of the movement. Others feel that this movement was founded in the 1970s to compete with toxic masculinity

- [Meeting the Enemy](#): A feminist comes to terms with the Men's Rights movement (TED Talk)
- [Mad Men: Inside the Men's Rights Movement](#)—and the Army of Misogynists and Trolls It Spawned (Article)
- [I Was an Angry Men's Rights Activist. Now I'm a Fierce Feminist](#) (Essay)
- **Neocolonialism**: Merriam-Webster dictionary defines neocolonialism as the economic and political policies by which a great power indirectly maintains or extends its influence over other areas or people. Neocolonialism builds off of colonialism which is the policy or practice of acquiring full or partial political control over another country, occupying it with settlers, and exploiting it economically
- **Pepe the Frog**: Pepe the Frog was a cartoon character invented in 2005 which was co-opted as a symbol and meme by racists and bigots. It is listed a general hate symbol by the Anti-Defamation League. Pepe's original creator did not grant permission to hate groups to use the frog as symbol as in 2017 he "killed" the character. However, this has done little to stop it's use as a symbol of white nationalism.
  - Hate Symbols - [Pepe the Frog](#)
  - [Article](#): Pepe the Frog creator kills off internet meme co-opted by white supremacists.
- **Police Shootings**: In 2017, 987 people were shot and killed by the police. Several national newspapers have started to track police shootings because inadequate data was available through other sources.
  - [Washington Post Database](#)
  - This American Life series: [Part 1](#) (podcast)
  - This American Life series: [Part 2](#) (podcast)
- **Snowflake**: A satirical political term, used pejoratively by the right wing of the US to describe the left (and now used to self-identify – i.e. a Facebook group may be called “Snowflakes Unite”). The term is drawn from the use of the metaphor of snowflakes to describe uniqueness or individuality, and mocks the liberal/leftist values of individualism, sensitivity and self-expression
- **Toxic Masculinity**: Toxic Masculinity refers to socially-constructed descriptions of the US masculine gender role as being un-emotional, prone to violence, sexually aggressive, and focused on status in society. The ideals of manliness surround strength- represented both by physical and societal dominance and lack of emotional vulnerability
  - [The Difference Between Toxic Masculinity and Being a Man](#) (essay)
  - [What We Mean When We Say Toxic Masculinity](#) (article)



- **White fragility**: A term to describe a white person's reaction to learning about injustice or inequality by centering their emotions over those of the marginalized or oppressed group – by shifting blame (“My ancestors didn't own slaves”, “Not all men..”), making it about them (“I feel so guilty”), or shutting down if someone criticizes them (“I'm not racist.” “Why are you attacking me?”)
- **White Nationalism**: The Southern Poverty Law center explains that white nationalism is a belief that, "white identity should be the organizing principle of the countries that make up Western civilization. White nationalists advocate for policies to reverse changing demographics and the loss of an absolute, white majority”. Essentially, white nationalism = white nations
  - Southern Poverty Law Center's [White Nationalist Page](#)
  - The Daily Transcript's [Interview](#) with Former White Nationalist Derek Black (podcast)

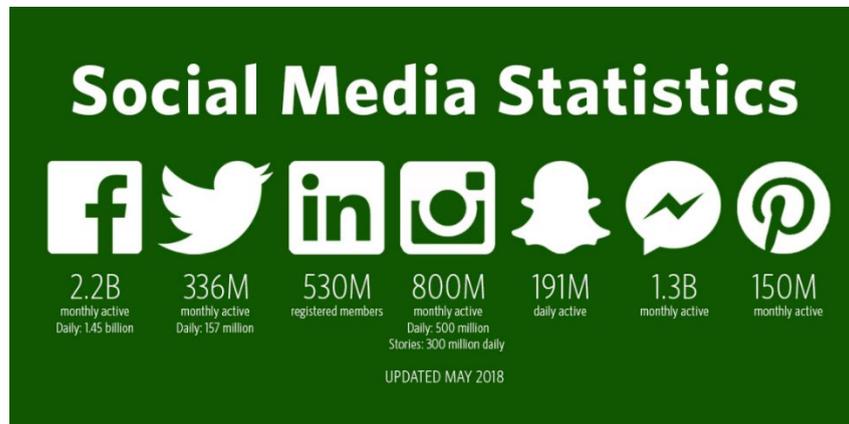
- **White Supremacy:** Merriam-Webster dictionary defines white supremacy as a believe that the white race is inherently superior to other races and that white people should have control over people of other races
- **Woke:** US slang (in the Merriam Webster Dictionary) which means to be aware of and actively attentive to important facts and issues (especially issues of racial and social justice)



## Social Media our Students Are Using

Social Media use statistics as of May 2018:

<https://chrisniderdesign.com/blog/resources/social-media-statistics/>



- **Instagram:** Often called "Insta", this is a photo and video-sharing social media platform. It is owned by Facebook. Individuals between the ages of 18 and 24 make up the biggest Instagram users
- **Finstagram:** Often called "Finsta" this is a second or fake Instagram account in which people post photos and videos of more private or negative aspects of their lives compared with a curated public persona on Instagram
- **Reddit:** An online news and information aggregator. The homepage is formatted like a list and the content at the top of the list is in that position because it has been voted there by other readers  
Youtube video: [What is Reddit?](#)
- **Facebook:** A free social networking website where people can post content and keep in touch. In 2018 the majority of Facebook users are above the age of 25
- **Twitter:** Twitter is a social media network in which people make very brief written updates regarding what is going on in their lives. These updates are a form of "micro blogging". Individuals can "follow" a person on twitter and see their updates. If they find the statement compelling and want to share it or respond, they can "re-tweet" the original posting and add their response
  - [What is Twitter and Why is it so Popular](#)
- **Groupme:** a free text messaging app that allows group text messages (including photos, videos and GIFS) from a computer or phone to up to 50 contacts
  - [What is the Group Me app and is it safe?](#)
- **Slack:** An online system that works as a combination of email, chat and instant messaging. Primarily used by teams or groups sharing a similar hobby, it allows for real-time topical communication that can be organized into channels
  - [What is Slack?](#)

**Have a question about a term or a suggestion of something new to add? Email Lillian Read:  
[lread@ifsa-butler.org](mailto:lread@ifsa-butler.org).**

Original Sources:

SAGE – reference (<http://sk.sagepub.com/reference/diversityineducation/n209.xml>)

Race Equality Toolkit (<http://www.universities-scotland.ac.uk/raceequalitytoolkit/terminology.htm>)

Human Rights Campaign (<http://www.hrc.org/resources/entry/glossary-of-terms>)

Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (<http://www.glaad.org/reference/lgb>)

Oxford English Dictionary <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/>

Trans Student Educational Resources <http://www.transstudent.org/definitions/>

Minority Serving Institutions Program <https://www.doi.gov/pmb/eeo/doi-minority-serving-institutions-program>

A Glossary of Political Economy Terms <http://www.auburn.edu/~johnspm/gloss/>

VA.org <https://va.org/what-is-a-veteran-the-legal-definition/>

Military.com <https://www.military.com/join-armed-forces/guard-and-reserve-faqs.html>

Glossary of Financial Aid Terms [https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/glossary#Financial\\_Need](https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/glossary#Financial_Need)

\*This sample definition has been adapted from the published works on the Association of American Colleges and Universities, University of Southern California Center for Urban Education and the Merriam-Webster's Dictionary.

\*\*Statts, C., 2014, State of the Science: Implicit Bias Review 2014, Page 73 – The Ohio State University, Kirwan Institute. Full report available at <http://kirwaninstitute.osu.edu/2017-state-of-the-science-implicit-bias-review/>

\*\*\*Source: - Dr. Karyn Sweeney, October 2015 Volume 2 Issue 1 edition of The Forum Focus

Updated September 2018