

Medieval Academy of America Professional Behavior Policy

Why We Have a Professional Behavior Policy

The Medieval Academy of America (MAA) 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. A Medieval Academy in which members behave professionally and ethically is an important component of the continued health of our field in the next scholarly generations. The principles and policy contained in this document apply to all attendees at our Annual Meeting and supplement the MAA's harassment policy for its employees.

Professional Space

The annual meeting is a place 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. Keeping 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.

Respect

Professional respect is an ethical practice. In a professional space, attendees should comport themselves according to the values of nondiscrimination, dignity, and courtesy. Attendees also acknowledge the rights of all MAA members and other scholars to hold diverse values and opinions. 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 Medieval Academy of America 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

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (**link: <https://www.cdc.gov/features/prevent-bullying/index.html>**) consider bullying a serious problem. Bullying includes 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 Medieval Academy is comprised of scholars from all over the world, and is thus a racially and ethnically 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.

In a professional setting, such as within MAA, 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 work spaces are increasingly exposed to cyber bullying, sexual harassment, stalking, threats, and other forms of interpersonal violence. 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.

Microaggressions

Microaggressions (**link: <http://www.microaggressions.com/>**) need not be intentional. 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.

Social Media

The MAA asks that attendees at annual meetings 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 presidents (copyright law may well require this). Speakers reserve all rights to their work and related materials. The MAA Annual Meeting hashtag is a representation of both the academy 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, and misunderstanding. Members participating in online conversations or public forums pertinent to annual meetings should practice respect and collegiality. The MAA considers doxxing, outing, and online harassment or stalking antithetical to its core values.

Violations

The Medieval Academy of America will not take breaches of professional or ethical behavior lightly. Any violations of these policies should be reported to the Executive Director of the Academy, who will speak to the parties involved and take action appropriate to the particular context, in consultation with any members of Council delegated for this task* and in accordance with our status as a membership organization and the policies of the host institution.

* In addition to the Executive Director, the Advocates will consist of one elected Councillor and the Graduate Student Committee Chair. The names of the Advocates will be published in the Annual Meeting Programme and made known in advance.