

International Women's Day 2024

The **8th of March** is International Women's Day – a day to honour women's social, economic, cultural and political achievements, and highlight the work that still needs to be done to accelerate gender equality.

The theme this year is #InspireInclusion, which focusses on broad gender equality and creating a world free of bias, stereotypes and discrimination.

Thinking of the visibility of women's contributions, with an inclusive view of women, the Departments of Archaeology and of Classics and Ancient History have teamed up to consider **everyday sexism**.



INTERNATIONAL
WOMEN'S DAY
MARCH 8

What is 'everyday sexism'?

The **Everyday Sexism Project** was started by journalist Laura Bates, with the aim of collecting experiences of women through a website: <https://everydaysexism.com/> or through Twitter @EverydaySexism.

She started the project to prove wrong “those who tell women that they can’t complain because we are equal. [The Everyday Sexism Project] is a place to record stories of sexism faced on a daily basis, by ordinary women, in ordinary places. To show that sexism exists in abundance in the UK workplace and that it is very far from being a problem we no longer need to discuss.”

The anecdotes she has collected range from the “outrageously offensive” to the “so niggling and normalised that you don’t even feel able to protest.”

"following it will make most women feel oddly saner"
caitlin moran

everyday
sexism...

"comments about my boobs" "obscene gestures" "grab my breast" "unsafe in my body" "uncomfortable" "asking for trouble" "touched me from behind" "like I was an animal" "everyone around pretended nothing was happening" "made me feel dirty" "confused and betrayed" "because I was female" "whistle and make remarks about how sexy I was" "I keep my head down" "try not to make eye contact with groups of males" "humiliating to me" "accepted behaviour by everyone" "I was scared" "I'm still scared" "being honked at and whistled at" "I was told that there was nothing they could do" "it was so common" "he began masturbating" "a lot of people say that it is flattering" "I am mortified and paralysed" "they could get away with it" "disturbing" "all of the male employees were paid 10% more than female employees" "in front of everyone" "repeatedly" "how wrong this is" "dishing out unwanted sexual attention is not okay" "I still regret that I didn't report this" "assume that I cannot provide a solution" "it's frustrating" "accidentally exciting men" "I hide myself under layers of clothes" "I felt so stupid and naive" "deserved to get raped if she was wearing those clothes" "I was too much of a distraction" "very, very slowly dragged his gaze up the entire length of my legs" "still makes me feel bad" "now my daughter is starting to get the same comments" "laughed and took a picture of me walking off" "my mistake was being female" "you have no sense of humour" "it was a horrific experience" "I thought it was my fault" "I don't want to be leered at" "seen rubbing themselves against me" "doesn't see why it's offensive" "that kind of thing is just part of life as a woman" "too scared to tell anyone" "I was so ashamed of myself" "I feel the need to think twice about the outfits I wear" "I thought it was normal" "I never told anyone" "I felt it was unfair" "felt angry at myself for not responding" "it makes me sad" "my friends don't even notice what they're saying" "just the example from this morning" "when I told people about it they said it was my own fault" "I won't be silent"

laura bates

the project that inspired a worldwide movement

Why share 'bad practice'?

We usually want to share best practice, so why highlight the bad?

It is easy to overlook and excuse bad incidences as out of the ordinary. Yet it turns out experiences of sexism are very ordinary, and many instances of sexism are so ordinary that they are hard to recognise. Sharing experiences allows them to be recognised, without which there cannot be change. It is in that spirit that we have put together these slides.

Certainly not all of the acts recounted here were perpetrated within the walls of departments or the university. Some are more blatant than others. Some may have you questioning whether they are sexist at all, but this is what women in our communities responded with when asked if they had experiences of everyday sexism...

*please note that leaving a name was optional for contributors.





“I co-authored an article with a colleague and it got a lot of media attention. In an online social media group it was being discussed, and a (female) colleague noted that they should alert one of my own (male) department colleagues to it, as it was relevant to the great work he is doing at (our) university...”

“I was giving a complementary tour of the city centre for delegates at a conference.

A book came up in conversation. ‘I LOVE (co-author’s name)’s book,’ exclaimed a tourist. ‘It is a great book; he is such an amazing scholar.’

‘I wrote half that book,’ I said.

‘Really? I’ve never heard of you,’ returned the tourist.

Ladies and gentlemen: I am the first author.”



“I belonged last term to a group of 6-8 PhD candidates (not Durham) which was a mixed male/female group. We had many different presentations, and everyone found something to discuss or ask a question about in each session. During my presentation, the male participants simply switched off their cameras. When challenged, they refused to participate in the discussion – saying they ‘had learned more than they ever wanted to know about textiles, thank you very much.’

Then, “On an academic discussion list, a request for help with a possible translation for a Greek weaving term met with a very mixed response from the (initially) exclusively male respondents – ‘why on earth do you think this is important’, ‘who do you think you are to query an accepted translation?’ ‘why does it matter if a weaving term is not correctly translated?’ As soon as female colleagues joined the discussion all the men withdrew. I had a strong sense of ‘Let’s leave the women to talk about this. It’s not of interest to us superior men’.”



"Oh, I wasn't expecting a girl." or "Oh, I was expecting a man, you'll be much nicer to watch work." Two phrases I have heard more times than I care to count when arriving at a site to collect scientific samples for my research.

"Being referred to constantly as a 'receptionist' when that's not my job title. If I was a male I probably wouldn't be referred to as that."

Charlotte Spokes



“Whilst working in retail, female staff members were always expected to do more than the male staff. On one specific occasion, I remember a time when the manager lectured another female colleague and myself about how we needed to do extra cleaning at the end of that shift.

“After we had spent 45 minutes doing said cleaning, we realised that our male coworker had spent the entire time smoking out the back door, in clear view of the manager. Because we were women, it was expected that we’d do all of the cleaning, while the men were able relax and do next to no work and receive praise the female workers wouldn’t even dream of receiving.”



“A couple of years ago I was asked to attend a meeting with some very senior staff members. The reason I was asked to attend was because I knew the data and detail of the topic better than anyone in the room.

“The chair of the meeting hadn't been notified of my attendance and when I entered the room, he did not ask my name or role, just simply if I was there to 'take the minutes'.

“None of the men around me reacted to this comment, or subsequently thought it was sexist, but I cannot believe that if a man had entered the room that the chair did not know, that he would have made the assumption that he was the minute taker. I felt embarrassed and undermined.”



“I was in a group doing a seminar presentation alongside three students who were men. The majority of the class were also men. The presentation was related to your final essay. We received good feedback, and some of the contributions I had made had been highlighted. However, at the end of the session, when asked at the end who would be doing the correlating question and my entire group raised their hands, the lecturer remarked, ‘So the boys who did the presentation today’ [looking at me] ‘Oh, you're doing it too, wonderful’. He seemed to have forgotten I was part of that group; even one of my fellow presenters looked at me, taken aback. I brushed it off, seeing it as fitting the trend established in his lectures that he seemed to forget any contributions I or the other women made in the discussion. He never seemed to notice he was doing it.”





“When joining an online discourse regarding my research topic (I am a PhD student in the Archaeology Department with a focus on testing various surface analysis methodologies), I was told that I must have been let into my programme to ‘check a diversity box’ as I was a woman and couldn't possibly comprehend a man's work in a scientific field. Within this same thread, I was also told I was a poor wife and mother for abandoning my family to work in a field that did not suit my ‘natural talents’.”

“When I was just starting out on my PhD, my (male) supervisor asked me why on earth I'd chosen to work on a topic in political history, 'because usually women don't study this sort of thing'.

“I don't think there was any malice in the question, and he was always very supportive after that point, but it made it clear from the outset that this area of research wasn't really a place where I 'belonged’.”



“When editing collections of essays, I have repeatedly been asked by senior male academics to do the work of a research assistant--construct bibliographical references out of a casual note like ‘There's a piece by Blogsworthy I think in TAPA somewhere,’ find lines in primary sources (‘Cassandra's reference to the nightingale in Agamemnon’; ‘that inscription from Rhodes about Athena’).

They always say they're too busy even when they're retired. Women have never done this to me.

Edith



“Convening a conference jointly with a male colleague who just leaves at the end for the pub with delegates when the table is covered with dirty tea cups, paper plates, bottles that need to be put in recycling, heavy tea urns that need to be returned to kitchens... He just assumed that there would be some servant to clear the detritus.”



“Giving a paper on the invitation of a senior academic at the Scuola Normale in Pisa who says he can't take you to dinner because ‘someone important’ is also at the institution who needs taken for dinner...”



“Being told at a job interview that you are unlikely to get the job because ‘a really distinguished researcher’ has applied, and would you be interested in a smaller role?”



“I’ve witnessed several instances of male faculty talking over their female colleagues in meetings, even calling them by the wrong name. She was chairing the committee meeting!

“From my own experience, I’ve had other PhD students (male) say hello and then immediately turn to the man who I brought with me who had no knowledge of said area and talk at him about my subject area. He didn’t talk to me at all or even look at me.

“I’ve experienced several instances of male PhD students or staff who have interrupted me or dismissed what I was saying and then ignored me.”



“I once told a friend and potential research partner that it was important to me that a project I was thinking of was co-owned and controlled by researchers in the host country, ‘because after all, it is their land.’

The response was: ‘That is a very patriarchal attitude, young lady.’

You can't make it up.”



“My husband, a professor, told me that I should be spending more time cleaning the house and less time working on my professional doctorate...”



“In a career that's involved overseas, UK and commercial archaeology I've encountered numerous issues from being told 'women can't dig ditch sections' alluding to apparent physical incapability, to having rest cabins with page 3 pin-ups, and having reports submitted heavily edited and returned with my name crossed out and a male name put first. Mercifully there has been considerable progress in the last couple of decades, but I think within the world of field archaeology even today one still encounters issues such as disbelief at a female site director, or side of the trench mansplaining.

“There's more we can do to profile women in the profession in labs, classrooms, museums but also critically in the field.

“I'd end also by saying I've had my fair share of positive supportive experiences too, actually sometimes directly in relation to a moment of everyday sexism. Bystander support from colleagues, especially male colleagues is critical in turning situations around and that goes for the field and in HE generally.”



In the interests of space and reader time, we were not able to include all entries submitted, but we thank each and every one of our contributors.

We stress that this intervention was not mounted to call out specific perpetrators or stimulate persecution, but to recognise the subtle and invidious nature of sexism. Everyday sexism need not be obvious, and results from deeply ingrained conceptual frameworks, enacted without awareness by people of all genders.

Resources on the following pages have been designed to aid in recognising this unconscious bias and support people in calling it out as it happens.



Resources

In Durham

Any unacceptable behaviour such as bullying, harassment and discrimination against members of our community can be reported using the **Report + Support** tool.

Online training links:

[An introduction to unconscious bias](#)

[The effective bystander](#)

[Understanding and tackling gender bias at work](#)

[Understanding and confronting sexual harassment](#)

Students and staff with concerns for personal safety while in Durham can use the **Safe Zone app**.

External Resources

The Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) has online [training events](#) for members

[BAJR Respect Guide](#) and [online course](#) (25 mins)

[Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development - diversity and inclusion resources](#)

[Trowelblazers – pioneering women in Archaeology](#)

[The Women's Classical Caucus \(WCC\)](#)

[List of Women Classicists on Wikipedia](#) (needs updating!)

[Aurora Leadership Development for Women](#)

[International Women's Day site resources](#)

There are numerous resources for inclusive leadership online as well