

CENTER FOR PRACTICAL AND PROFESSIONAL ETHICS LECTURE SERIES

HOW TO CHALLENGE PREJUDICIAL LANGUAGE

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11am-12:30pm Foothill Suite, University Union



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What are our responsibilities in responding to prejudicial language? And how do we discharge these responsibilities? Generic generalizations (or 'generics') about social groups such as 'Poor people are lazy' or 'New Yorkers are rude' spread prejudice and appear resistant to direct denial. There have been several competing proposals for how speakers should best respond to such language, many of which are based on evidence that these generics can transmit essentialist beliefs. Some have argued, based on this evidence, that we should revise the way we use language, perhaps by even giving up using labels for social groups in the hope of reducing the spread of these faulty beliefs. I argue that our approach should instead focus on select cognitive features of generics rather than their tendency to promote essentialist thinking and provide an alternative that focuses on the negotiation of their inferential role.

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