

Political correctness

avoid offense or disadvantage
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"Political correctness" (adjectivally **"politically correct"**; commonly abbreviated to **P.C.**) is a term used to describe language,^{[1] [2] [3]} policies,^[4] or measures that are intended to avoid offense or disadvantage to members of particular groups in society.^{[5] [6] [7]} Since the late 1980s, the term has been used to describe a preference for [inclusive language](#) and avoidance of language or behavior that can be seen as [excluding](#), marginalizing, or insulting to groups of people disadvantaged or discriminated against, particularly groups defined by ethnicity, sex, gender, sexual orientation, or disability. In public discourse and the media,^{[4] [8] [9]} the term is generally used as a [pejorative](#) with an implication that these policies are excessive or unwarranted.^{[10] [11]}

The phrase *politically correct* first appeared in the 1930s, when it was used to describe dogmatic adherence

☰ Political correctness

History

Early-to-mid 20th century

1970s

1980s and 1990s

Usage

Education

As a conspiracy theory

Media

Inclusive language

AI TOOLS

🔍 Top Qs

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List the top facts about Political correctness

Summarize this article

What is the single most intriguing fact about Political correctness?

Right-wing political correctness

See also

Russia.^[5] Early usage of the term *politically correct* by **leftists** in the 1970s and 1980s was as self-critical **satire**.^[8] Usage was ironic, rather than a serious **political** ^[12] ^[13] ^[14] It was considered among leftists used to describe those who were too rigid in adherence to political ^[15] The modern pejorative use of the term emerged from **liberal** criticism of the **New Left** in the 20th century, with many using it as a form of **self-criticism**.^[16]

Conservatives on the **political left in the United States** contend that **liberals** use the concept of **political correctness** to downplay and deflect attention from substantively conservative behavior against marginalized groups.^[17] ^[18] ^[19] They argue that the **political right** has its own forms of political correctness to suppress criticism of its constituencies and ^[20] ^[21] ^[22] In the United States, the term has played a major role in the **culture war** between **liberals** and **conservatives**.^[23]

[More questions](#) ▾

▾ History

Early-to-mid 20th century

In the early-to-mid 20th century, the phrase *politically correct* was used to describe strict adherence to a range of ideological orthodoxies within politics. In 1934, *The New York Times*

pure 'Aryans' whose opinions are politically correct".^[5]

The term *political correctness* first appeared in Marxist–Leninist discourse following the Russian Revolution of 1917. At that time, it was used to describe strict adherence to the policies and principles of the [Communist Party of the Soviet Union](#), or [party line](#).^[24] Later in the 1940s, the phrase came to be associated with accusations of [revisionism](#) in debates between communists and socialists. According to the German educator [Herbert Kohl](#), the term was used in debates in New York in the 1940s and early 1950s.

The term "politically correct" was used derogatorily, to refer to someone whose loyalty to the Party line overrode personal passion, and led to dogmatic politics. It was used by socialists against revisionists, and was

meant to separate out Socialists who believed in egalitarian moral ideas from dogmatic Communists who would advocate and defend party positions regardless of their moral substance.

— "Uncommon Differences", *The Lion and the Unicorn*^[4]

1970s

In the 1970s, the American [New Left](#) began using the term *politically correct*.^[12] In the essay *The Black Woman: An Anthology* (1970), [Toni Cade Bambara](#) said that "a man cannot be politically correct and a [\[male\] chauvinist](#), too." [William Safire](#) records this as the first use in the

have been revived by the New Left through familiarity in the West with [Mao's Little Red Book](#), in which [Mao](#) stressed holding to the correct party line. The term rapidly began to be used by the New Left in an ironic or mocking sense.^[26]

By the 1970s, the term was often used as a political [satire](#). Debra L. Shultz said throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the New Left, [feminists](#), and [lesbians](#) used their term 'politically correct' ironically, as a critique of their own orthodoxy in the name of political correctness efforts.^{[[8] [12] [13]} *PC is a* is a comic book *Merton of the* *Seaside*; by [Bobby London](#), which was inspired by the term *ideologically* correct. The comic strips of [Bart Simpson](#)^[27] In her essay "Toward a New Evolution" (1992) [Ellen](#) [Wachs](#) said "In the early eighties, feminists used the term 'politically correctness', it was used to refer ironically to the [anti-homophobic movement's](#) efforts to promote feminist sexuality."^{[[14]}

[Stuart Hall](#) suggests one way in which the original use of the term may have developed into the modern one:

According to one version, political correctness actually began as an in-joke on the left: radical students on American campuses acting out an ironic replay of the Bad Old Days BS (Before the Sixties) when every revolutionary groupuscule had a party line about everything. They would address some glaring examples of sexist or racist behaviour by their fellow students in imitation of the tone of voice of the Red Guards or Cultural Revolution

'politically correct',
Comrade!"^[15]

The term probably entered use in the
use in the United Kingdom
75.^[11] *[clarification needed]*

mid 1990s

William's *The Closing of the
Mind*, a book first published
heralded a debate about
"correctness" in American
education in the 1980s and
90s.^[30] Professor of English
and cultural studies at CMU
David Williams wrote that the
term ... political correctness
emerged through the Reagan
administration's bestsellerdom with
*The Closing of the American
Mind*. According to Z.F. Gamson,
the book "attacked the faculty for
"correctness".^[32] Prof. of
Education at CSU Tony Platt says the
term "against 'political
correctness'" was launched by
the book in 1987.^[33]

An October 1990 *New York Times*
article by Richard Bernstein is
credited with popularizing the
term.^[34] ^[35] ^[36] ^[37] ^[38] At this time, the
term was mainly being used within
academia: "Across the country the
term p.c., as it is commonly
abbreviated, is being heard more and
more in debates over what should be
taught at the universities".^[39] Nexis
citations in "arcnews/curnews" reveal
only seventy total citations in articles
to "political correctness" for 1990; but
one year later, Nexis records 1,532
citations, with a steady increase to
more than 7,000 citations by
1994.^[37] ^[40] In May 1991, *The New
York Times* had a follow-up article,
according to which the term was
increasingly being used in a wider
public arena:

What has come to be
called "political
correctness" a term that

year last fall, has spread in recent months and has become the focus of an y national debate, ly on campuses, but n the larger arenas merican life.

Robert D. cFadden, "Political orrectness: New ias Test?", 1991^[41]

usly obscure far-left term mmon currency in the he conservative social and allenges against e teaching methods and changes in the secondary d universities of the -3] [44] [45] [46] Policies, and speech codes that the the writer regarded as mposition of a liberal were described and is "politically correct".^[17] In at a commencement ceremony for a graduating class of the University of Michigan, then U.S. President [George H. W. Bush](#) used the term in his speech: "The notion of political correctness has ignited controversy across the land. And although the movement arises from the laudable desire to sweep away the debris of racism and sexism and hatred, it replaces old prejudice with new ones. It declares certain topics off-limits, certain expression off-limits, even certain gestures off-limits."^{[47] [48] [49]}

After 1991, its use as a pejorative phrase became widespread amongst conservatives in the US.^[10] It became a key term encapsulating conservative concerns about the left in cultural and political debates extending beyond academia. Two articles on the topic in late 1990 in [Forbes](#) and [Newsweek](#) both used the term "[thought police](#)" in their headlines, exemplifying the tone of the new usage. but it was Dinesh

(1991) which "captured the press's imagination".^[10] Similar critical terminology was used by D'Souza for a range of policies in academia around 1990, supporting structuralism through affirmative actions against anti-minority groups, and revising curricula lists referred to as "canon".^[10] ^[a] ^[failed verification] These policies were at least in part a response to poststructuralism and the rise of postmodernism, with movements such as feminism, gay rights movements, and minority movements. That movement received funding from private foundations and think tanks, such as the John M. Olin Foundation, which funded several of D'Souza's.^[8] ^[17]

Richard D. White, in 1992, commented that the use of the term "neoconservative" was "correct" in the early 1990s to describe the Communist Party and, as a result, familiar to the Marxist use of the phrase. He argued that in doing so, they intended "to insinuate that egalitarian democratic ideas are actually authoritarian, orthodox, and Communist-influenced, when they oppose the right of people to be racist, sexist, and homophobic".^[4]

During the 1990s, conservative and right-wing politicians, think tanks, and speakers adopted the phrase as a pejorative descriptor of their ideological enemies, especially in the context of the culture wars about language and the content of public-school curricula. Roger Kimball, in *Tenured Radicals*, endorsed Frederick Crews's view that PC is best described as "Left Eclecticism", a term defined by Kimball as "any of a wide variety of anti-establishment modes of thought from structuralism and poststructuralism, deconstruction, and Lacanian analyst to feminist, homosexual, black, and other patently political forms of criticism".^[52] ^[31]

Liberal commentators have argued that the conservatives and reactionaries who used the term did so in an effort to divert political attention away from the substantive issues of resolving societal problems, such as racial, gender, and legal issues against people whom conservatives do not consider part of the mainstream. ^[8] ^[18] ^[56] Jan Wroblewski wrote that "that phrase was placed between scare-quotes: it was not the operative word in the area so called 'political correctness', steamrolling the foundations of principle for which conservatives were acting..."^[9] In 2001, one such British politician ^[57] ^[58] Polly Toynbee, said "Political correctness is an empty, right-wing slogan designed only to elevate its status." In 2010 she wrote "the 'political correctness' was born to provide cover for all who still want to use words like *spastic*, or *queer*".^[60] The British journalist, Will Hutton ^[62] ^[63] ^[64] wrote in 2001:^[65]

Political correctness is one of the brilliant tools that the American Right developed in the mid-1980s, as part of its demolition of American liberalism.... What the sharpest thinkers on the American Right saw quickly was that by declaring war on the cultural manifestations of liberalism – by levelling the charge of "political correctness" against its exponents – they could discredit the whole political project.

— Will Hutton, "Words Really are Important, Mr Blunkett", 2001

correctness" when power and authority within the academic community is being contested by parties on either side of that issue, is a routine of one's arguments to be "friends" and "enemies". Critics from the left and the right assess whether a writer is "for" or "against them".^[66] Hughes suggested that the term political correctness is whether changing language involves political and social issues with critics viewing it less as solving problems than imposing them, intellectual intimidation, or demonstrating the moral purity of those who practice it. Hughes also suggested that political correctness tends to be led by a minority rather than a majority form of language change.^[67]

Usage

The modern pejorative usage of the term emerged from conservative criticism of the New Left in the late 20th century. This usage was popularized by a number of articles in *The New York Times* and other media throughout the 1990s,^{[34] [35] [36] [39] [41] [68]} and was widely used in the debate surrounding Allan Bloom's 1987 book *The Closing of the American Mind*.^{[8] [28] [29]} The term gained further currency in response to Roger Kimball's *Tenured Radicals* (1990),^{[8] [17] [52]} and conservative author Dinesh D'Souza's 1991 book *Illiberal Education*.^{[8] [10] [17] [69]} Supporters of

pejoratively referred to as the "language police".^[70]

on

Debate on the term was fueled by conservative critiques of [liberal bias in academia](#) and ^[8] and conservatives have framed it as a major line of ideological division. Similarly, a common conservative criticism of higher education in the United States is that [liberal views of teaching staff](#) are more liberal than those of the general public, and that this contributes to a liberal sphere of political discourse.^[71] *[non-primary source needed]* [Resiewicz](#) defines political correctness as an attempt to silence unpopular beliefs and ideas", and that it is largely the result of campus political education, as campus teaching staff are wary of angering donors upon whose fees they depend.^[72] *[non-primary source needed]*

A survey of research published in 2020 indicated that students at a large U.S. public university generally felt instructors were open-minded and encouraged free expression of diverse viewpoints; nonetheless, most students worried about the consequences of voicing their political opinions, with "[a]nxieties about expressing political views and self-censorship ... more prevalent among students who identify as conservative".^[73] ^[74]

As a conspiracy theory

Some conservative commentators in the [West](#) argue that "political correctness" and multiculturalism are part of a conspiracy with the ultimate goal of undermining [Judeo-Christian values](#). This theory, which holds that political correctness originates from the [critical theory](#) of the [Frankfurt School](#) as part of a conspiracy that its proponents call "Cultural

"Political Correctness", published in a [Lyndon LaRouche](#) movement journal.^[77] In 2001, conservative commentator [Patrick Buchanan](#) wrote *th of the West* that "political s is cultural Marxism", and ademark is intolerance".^[78]

the term has been widely
oks and journals, but in
usage has been confined
he popular press.^[79] Many
ors and popular-media
rticularly on the right, have
arm to criticize what they
s in the media.^{[9] [17]} William
argues that journalists get
ong or ignore stories worthy
e, because of what
perceives to be their liberal
and their fear of offending
roups.^[80] Robert Novak, in
Political Correctness Has
the Newsroom", used the
me newspapers for
anguage use policies that he
thinks tend to excessively avoid the
appearance of bias. He argued that
political correctness in language not
only destroys meaning but also
demeans the people who are meant to
be protected.^{[81] [82] [83]}

Authors David Sloan and Emily Hoff
claim that in the US, journalists shrug
off concerns about political
correctness in the newsroom,
equating the political correctness
criticisms with the old "liberal media
bias" label.^[84] According to author
John Wilson, left-wing forces of
"political correctness" have been
blamed for unrelated censorship, with
Time citing campaigns against
violence on network television in the
US as contributing to a "mainstream
culture [that] has become cautious,
sanitized, scared of its own shadow"
because of "the watchful eye of the
p.c. police", protests and advertiser
boycotts targeting TV shows are
generally organized by right-wing

violence, sex, and depictions of homosexuality on television.^[85]

Corrective language

Corrective Equity Language is a language style that avoids expressions that opponents perceive as biased; or implying ideas that are biased, or otherwise biased, or insulting to any group of people; and as language intended to promote and fulfill the ideals of political correctness. This language style is also referred to as a kind of "political correctness", either as a description or with negative connotations by its opponents.^[86] At the same time, supporters deny an equivalence between the two. "Political correctness is focused on being correct whereas inclusive language is focused on honoring identities."^[87]

Political use

Political correctness is often satirized, for example in *The PC Manifesto* (1992) by Saul Jerushalmy and Rens Zbigniew X,^[88] and *Politically Correct Bedtime Stories* (1994) by James Finn Garner, which presents fairy tales re-written from an exaggerated politically correct perspective. In 1994, the comedy film *PCU* took a look at political correctness on a college campus. Other examples include the television program *Politically Incorrect*, George Carlin's "Euphemisms" routine,^[citation needed] and *The Politically Correct Scrapbook*.^[89] The popularity of the *South Park* cartoon program led to the creation of the term "*South Park Republican*" by Andrew Sullivan,^[citation needed] and later the book *South Park Conservatives* by Brian C. Anderson.^[90] In its *Season 19* (2015), *South Park* introduced the character *PC Principal*, who embodies the principle, to poke fun at the principle

The Colbert Report's host [Stephen Colbert](#) often talked, satirically, about the "PC Police".^[93] ^[94]

to oppose certain generally
scientific views about
[second-hand tobacco](#)
[DS](#), [global warming](#), [race](#)
politically contentious
matters have used the term
"correctness" to describe
a view as unwarranted
of their perspective on these
in the scientific community that
the world has been corrupted by
these things.^[95]

✓ Right-wing political correctness

"Political correctness" is a label typically used to describe liberal or left-wing terms and actions but rarely used for analogous attempts to mold language and behavior on the right.^[96] In 2012, economist [Paul Krugman](#) wrote that "the big threat to our discourse is right-wing political correctness, which – unlike the liberal version – has lots of power and money behind it. And the goal is very much the kind of thing [Orwell](#) tried to convey with his notion of [Newspeak](#): to make it impossible to talk, and possibly even think, about ideas that challenge the established order."^[22] ^[97] [Alex](#)
[Newspaper of the Cato Institute](#)

political correctness as "patriotic correctness".^[98]

See also

[Age portal](#)

[:s portal](#)

[Setting theory](#) – Ability of mass media to influence the agenda of a society

[Setting curriculum](#) – Educational movement to reduce perceived gender and sexism in education

- [Binnen-I](#) – Style for gender-neutral written German
- [Campaign Against Political Correctness](#) – Defunct minor British lobby group
- [Cancel culture](#) – Modern form of ostracism
- [Christmas controversies](#) – Christmas ideological, political and religious disputes
- [Common sense](#) – Sound practical judgement in everyday matters
- [Conventional wisdom](#) – Ideas generally accepted by experts or the public
- [Cultural Bolshevism](#) – Nazi slogan opposing modernist and progressive cultural movements
- [Cultural Marxism](#) – Far-right antisemitic conspiracy theory
- [Distancing language](#) – Phrasing technique which disassociates speaker from subject

- **Framing (social sciences)** – Effect of how information is presented on perception
 - **framing effect** – Psychological phenomenon that occurs within a group of people
 - sch** – Pejorative German term for a sanctimonious do-gooder
 - hara-kiri** – Japanese term for ritualistic speech
 - Chomsky's theory of linguistic relativity** – Hypothesis of how language influences thought
 - cracy** – Form of government by the masses
 - insult** – Term for verbal or physical slights
 - pidgin** – Fictional language in the novel "Nineteen Eighty-Four"
 - conformity** – Pejorative term for social conformism
 - diagnosis first** – Putting the diagnosis before the diagnosis
 - 1984 and the English Language** – Essay by George Orwell
 - ad hominem** – Discrediting an opponent's argument by accusing them of being a radical leftist
- **Reverse discrimination** – Discrimination against members of a dominant or majority group
- **Self-censorship** – Act of censoring or classifying one's own discourse
- **Snowflake (slang)** – Pejoratively, an easily offended person
- **Social justice warrior** – Pejorative term for a progressive person
- **Speech code** – Non-statutory restriction on word choice
- **Sprachregelung** – German term for prescribed form of official communication
- **Toe the line** - meaning either to conform to a rule or standard, or to stand in formation along a line
- **Trigger warnings** – Warnings that a work may cause distress
- **Truthiness** – Quality of preferring

- [Woke](#) – Political slang term

tes

The New York Times

Newspaper article "The Rising Hegemony of the Politically Correct", the reporter [Richard Bernstein](#) said:


The term "politically correct", with its suggestion of Stalinist orthodoxy, is spoken more with irony and disapproval than with reverence. But, across the country the term "P.C.", as it is commonly abbreviated, is being heard more and more in debates over what should be taught at the universities.


– The Rising Hegemony of the Politically Correct, *The New York Times*, 28 October 1990^[50]


a meeting of the Western Humanities Conference in Berkeley, California, on the subject of "Political correctness and Cultural Studies that examined "what effect the pressure to conform to currently fashionable ideas has on scholarship".^[51]

ferences

- ∨ **Further reading**
- ∨ **External links**

 [Edit in Wikipedia](#)

 [Revision history](#)

 [Read in Wikipedia](#)

Feminazi

Pejorative term for feminists

Tory

Conservative political philosophy

Democrat Party (epithet)

Political epithet used to insult the Democratic Party (United States)



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