

Unfair Negative Commentary and Hate Speech – A Resource

Much scholarship in Animal Studies challenges mainstream practices involving the use of animals, and as such this research can draw negative criticism from vested interests. This is particularly the case for intersectional work, which often highlights the interconnection of race, nationalisms, gender, sexuality and ability.

Researchers in Animal Studies may at some stage experience *unfair* negative commentary about their work, sometimes in the form of offensive comments, whether through social media or email. In some cases such commentary might be described as 'hate speech', which is broadly understood to be public speech or expression which is likely to offend, insult, humiliate or intimidate in a discriminatory way, and / or has the capacity to incite or encourage violence. Many legal jurisdictions have laws which prohibit hate speech.

While AASA supports open and informed debate, it condemns hate speech in all its forms.

It can be confronting to experience unfair negative commentary or hate speech, and you have a right not to be exposed to this speech.

If:

- you are a postgraduate student or a staff member working in a University or other formal organisational setting, you should contact your immediate supervisor to discuss concerns you have about comments received, and seek advice and support on the appropriate course of action (if any). In some circumstances you may also consider referring the matter to the police.
- you are not a staff/student at a university then you should seek advice from a scholarly association (such as AASA- see below). In some circumstances you may also consider referring the matter to the police.

In the event that you receive negative comments on social media or in other ways, AASA suggests the following approach:

1. Don't deal with it alone. Discuss it with a work colleague or friend. It may help you decide on how to respond.
2. IGNORE: Generally speaking, random messages from strangers are best ignored. You may choose to 'block' the sender or delete them.
3. DON'T IGNORE IF:
 - They repeatedly send emails/messages.
 - The number of harassers increases.
 - They use threatening language.
 - They send material via regular post.
 - They call or message you on your phone.
 - They harass people close to you.

AASA Advice and Support

If you are an AASA member and are subject to unfair negative commentary and / or hate speech as part of your scholarship, and would like further advice, please contact AASA Chair, [Dr Dinesh Wadiwel](#).