

Abstract - Slurring terms are pejorative expressions that target individuals on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, nationality, socioeconomic status, occupation, and various other socially important properties. They are tools of subordination and their use a threat to human dignity. What do such expressions mean? And how does their meaning contribute to the fact that uses of slurs are dehumanizing to their targets? Why are some slurs worse than others? What is their relationship to stereotypes of groups and social ideologies? Answering these questions requires understanding the interactions of slurring terms' semantics and pragmatics with their social and psychological functions and effects. This lecture will explore the interplay between slurring terms' meaning, their capacity to dehumanize, and their social functions to forge alliances, create hierarchies, signal and sustain group ideologies and group stereotypes.