



NYU SCHOOL OF LAW

CREATING AN INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM CLIMATE

AUGUST 2020 / NYU LAW OFFICE OF DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

LANGUAGE AND PRONOUNS

- Use contemporary language when referring to marginalized groups.
 - If class materials use outdated language, you should still use contemporary terms when discussing the topic.
 - If a fellow student uses an outdated or offensive term, consider expressing to your peer in the moment or later that their choice of words was not appropriate, and suggest an alternative term.
 - Language is constantly changing, and a word may impact different people in different ways - If you use a term that another student expresses to you is offensive, thank them for the feedback and adapt your language accordingly when speaking with them and beyond.
- Add your pronouns and name pronunciation to Albert and Zoom for remote classes.
 - Professors will receive a list of pronouns and name pronunciations of their students at the beginning of the semester based on what is in Albert, so ensure that yours are included.
 - Ensure that you are always using your classmates' correct pronouns. Misgendering (the act of calling somebody by a name, pronoun, or term not associated with their gender identity) is an act of disrespect and intolerance.
 - Ensure you are learning how to pronounce your classmates' names correctly, even if they are difficult for you at first. This is a basic way to ensure that your peers are respected. Never give someone a nickname or call them by a different name without their express permission to do so.
- When creating hypos during class discussion, remember to read the room and be sensitive to others' experiences. The hypo you are creating as a "worst-case scenario" may well be someone's lived experience.
- Ensure you are remaining respectful to your peers on group chats (GroupMe, WhatsApp, etc.). These can be invaluable resources, but also can be sources of conflict.

How to add your pronouns to Zoom:

- **Click on "Participants."**
- **Find your name and click "Rename"**
- **Add your pronouns in brackets on the end.**

For further resources about language and pronouns, see page 6.



DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES

- A variety of intellectual perspectives and individual experiences is vital to NYU Law’s culture of academic rigor and intellectual curiosity. All students should feel that they are able to share their personal connections to and experiences with academic topics in the classroom.
 - This *does not* mean that anyone should feel that they can express bigoted or hateful points of view without consequence.
- When such conversations arise, particularly around bias in the law, do not lean away from them unless engaging would be detrimental to your mental health and well-being.
 - If you hold a non-marginalized identity relating to the topic (e.g. you are white during a discussion of race, heterosexual during a discussion of LGBTQ+ issues, etc.), lean into the discomfort you may feel. This is where learning and growth happens.
- At the same time, do not expect your peers to be the spokespeople on behalf of the identity groups that they may be a part of.
 - Examine your own reaction when issues of identity and bias come up in the classroom. Who are you looking toward to speak?
- If you are ever uncomfortable with something expressed by one of your peers or professors and do not feel it can be confronted in the moment, please contact the Office of Diversity and Inclusion.

Your D&I Team



Lindsay Kendrick

Assistant Dean for Diversity & Inclusion -lnk4@nyu.edu



Savannah Lynn

Assistant Director of Diversity & Inclusion - sgl318@nyu.edu

WILLINGNESS TO LEARN

- No one person knows everything about the vast diversity of identity groups that exist in our world and our NYU Law community. We are all constantly learning and growing, and our peers are invaluable sources of education and enrichment.
- Acknowledge openly the potential biases in your own perspectives and opinions.
- Consider what you are reading, watching, and playing outside of class. Are diverse identities and perspectives being represented? If not, consider branching out and trying a new television show, video game, or book.
- If you would like additional resources about diversity, equity, and inclusion, reach out to the D&I team at Ink4@nyu.edu and sgl318@nyu.edu.
- It is healthy to question and examine your own personally held beliefs and tenets, and even change them when presented with new information.
 - If someone says something that does not align with your own perspective, take a moment to reflect where the difference might be coming from, and whether it is something you have considered before.

“Learning is the only thing the mind never exhausts, never fears, and never regrets.”

Leonardo
da Vinci



DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

A note on groupchats: if someone says something in a groupchat that you are uncomfortable with, consider taking the conversation offline instead of responding directly to the chat.

If you find yourself having an extreme emotional reaction during a difficult conversation, ask yourself a few questions:

- **How would you describe how you are feeling?**
- **Why are you feeling that way?**
- **Which of your buttons have been pushed?**
- **What do you need in this moment?**

- It can be extremely nerve-wracking to be on the initiating or receiving end of a difficult conversation, particularly around charged topics. However, it comes easier with practice
- If you are initiating the conversation:
 - Ask yourself what goals you have for the conversation. What are you trying to achieve? What would be an ideal outcome? Why are you trying to achieve this?
 - Consider what format you wish to have the conversation in. In person? Via email? Over the phone?
- If you are on the receiving end of a difficult conversation:
 - Keep in mind that your conversation partner clearly thinks you are worth investing time in, and that you can use this as an opportunity to learn and grow even if it is uncomfortable.
 - If it truly is not a good time or if your emotional state does not allow for the conversation, you can politely say “This sounds like a really important thing to talk about, and I want to make sure that I can give it my full attention, and I don’t think I am able to do that right now. Can we visit this again on [time]?”
- For all parties:
 - Consider: What assumptions have you made about the person you are speaking with? What assumptions do you feel that they have made about you?
 - Speak honestly and from the “I” perspective. Ask clarifying questions of your conversation partner, and welcome clarifying questions that they wish to ask you.
 - Ask questions about why someone feels the way they do and listen to the answer.
 - Acknowledge their statement and ask clarifying questions. Acknowledgement does not mean agreement—you can *acknowledge* that someone feels something without agreeing.



THE ART OF THE APOLOGY

- Mistakes will happen and are a healthy part of the learning process. Though you may feel ashamed, defensive, or upset in the moment, it is important to engage with your mistake and apologize, to minimize damage to your relationship with your peer.
 - If someone expresses to you that something you said is offensive or harmful, they are, in a way, giving you an opportunity to grow. If you respond defensively or with anger, then people may not be willing to help you learn in the future.
- The three parts of a humble, healthy apology:
 - **Acknowledgement:** Comes from the “I” perspective. “I’m sorry that I used a term offensive to you.” “I apologize for using an incorrect pronoun.” “I am very sorry I spoke over you in class.”
 - **Remorse and empathy:** Expressing understanding that what you did or said was hurtful or incorrect. “I know that it hurt you deeply, and I regret that my mistake harmed you.” “This was a lack of education on my part, and I hate that I hurt you because of it.” “I know that this was not okay for me to do.”
 - Do not deflect with statements like “I’m sorry you were hurt” or “I’m sorry you were offended.” These statements do not take accountability for your actions, and instead place the onus on the other person for being upset.
 - **Restitution:** Resolving to do better in the future. “I will be reflecting on my behavior and will be more conscious when I speak in the future.” “I clearly need to do some more reading about the issue so I can avoid causing harm like this again.”
 - The secret fourth and fifth parts: Don’t expect immediate forgiveness (you’re apologizing not to receive absolution, but because it’s the right thing to do), and do the work that you have resolved to do!

FURTHER RESOURCES

Glossary of language around LGBTQ+ identities:

<https://www.glaad.org/reference>

Glossary of language around race and racial equity:

<https://www.racialequitytools.org/glossary>

Glossary of language around immigration:

https://www.raceforward.org/sites/default/files/DTIW_Stylebook.pdf

Glossary of language around disability:

<https://ncdj.org/style-guide/>

[Robert M. Gordon: The power of the apology](#) via YouTube

NYU Law Office of Student Affairs:

law.studentaffairs@nyu.edu
(212) 998-6658

NYU Law Dean of Students:

lindsay.kendrick@nyu.edu

**NYU Law Center for Diversity, Inclusion, and
Belonging:**

<https://www.law.nyu.edu/centers/belonging>

NYU Law Center for Race, Inequality, and the Law:

<https://www.law.nyu.edu/centers/race-inequality-law>

