

Inclusive Environment Statement

Expectations for Discussions in Lectures, Tutorials, and Seminars

Justice, equity, inclusion, and diversity are core values of Durham University, and the Department of Philosophy is committed to fostering an environment where all members of our community feel welcome. This includes a commitment to building an inclusive learning environment across all aspects of departmental life, and to continuously monitor and improve our culture. Durham University's Equality and Diversity Policy commits to a community where "individuals can utilise their skills and talents to the full without fear of prejudice, bullying and harassment," and where everyone is free from discrimination on the basis of identity and lived experience.

Our goal is respectful, equitable participation in all discussions. Please treat others with dignity and avoid language or behaviour that excludes or harms. Structured interaction and discussion enhance learning, but they rely on shared expectations. Some teachers may facilitate a session on the first day of a module to agree on ground rules collectively, but the following general guidelines apply across the Department. They aim to help everyone participate fully and respectfully.

Checking Our Biases

We all carry implicit biases that can shape how we think, speak, and act. Reflecting on these helps us make discussion more inclusive.

- We might sometimes assume that a philosopher we're reading is a man.
- We might use gendered language unnecessarily (e.g. "male nurse", "woman doctor").
- We might describe similar behaviour differently depending on gender (e.g. "ambitious man" vs "bossy woman").
- We might find ourselves more irritated by or dismissive of some speakers than others, in ways that track gender, ethnicity, class, accent or other characteristics.
- Our "mainstream" or "objective" perspectives might inadvertently marginalise other forms of experience and knowledge.
- If we are more privileged, we should notice whether we are speaking more than listening.

Gender-Neutral Language

In English, words like *man* or *he* have traditionally been used to refer to humanity in general (e.g. "each to his own"), but research shows these terms are not interpreted neutrally. Moreover, using such language can obscure the experiences of those who are not cis-men (that is, men whose gender identity matches their sex assigned at birth).

- Use *person/people* instead of *man/men*, *humanity/humankind* instead of *mankind*.

- Consider plural pronouns: “each to their own,” not “each to his own.”
- Avoid gendered job titles where possible (e.g. use ‘chairperson’; ‘postal worker’).
- Be mindful of gender stereotypes in examples: “when a nurse is on duty, they...” rather than “she”.

Pronouns

- Use each person’s preferred pronouns. You cannot always know these by appearance, so asking or checking respectfully is fine.
- Some people prefer to be referred to only by name, without pronouns.
- If your pronouns or preferred name changes, please let your module or discussion leader know.

Respectful Communication

The Department of Philosophy operates a zero-tolerance approach to discrimination and harassment. Freedom of speech is welcomed and encouraged except where it infringes upon the freedom or human rights of others.

Bullying, harassment, insults, microaggressions, and other unwelcome behaviour are not tolerated. Examples include (but are not limited to):

- Dismissive remarks about the intellectual abilities of particular groups.
- Sexist, racist, homophobic, or transphobic jokes or slurs.
- Hostile questioning or excessive disruption, especially targeting underrepresented groups.
- Personal attacks rather than critique of ideas.
- Unwanted physical contact or sexual comments or gestures.
- Behaviour that incites racial hatred, misogyny, homophobia, ableism, or classism.
- Transphobic behaviour such as refusing someone’s pronoun, asking intrusive questions, or “outing” someone without consent.

Reflecting on Participation

We welcome feedback on how inclusive our discussions feel. You might ask yourself:

- Do all students have equal opportunities to contribute?
- Are feedback and attention distributed equitably (which need not mean equally)?
- Do our greetings, examples, or jokes inadvertently exclude or stereotype?
- Do our examples and thought experiments speak only to certain groups?
- Do we assume everyone is non-disabled, or that disability necessarily implies disadvantage?
- Are we asking similar kinds of questions to all students, rather than challenging some and prompting others differently?