Code of Conduct
Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee
Department of Ecology and Evolution, University of Chicago

Our objective in developing this Code of Conduct is to create spaces where we can gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of the diversity of experiences and priorities of department members to advance the DEI mission. This will be an evolving document aimed to achieve respectful discussion of differences of opinion, creative problem-solving and consensus building in a way that feels available and safe to all participants.

Norms and Values

We welcome participation from all department members. However, we ask everyone to be mindful of the inherent power differentials, in and outside of academia, when sharing your opinions so as to not limit other individuals from participating in the conversation. We recognize that the topics we will discuss may be emotional, personal or charged for many people. As scientists, we often turn to hard facts that we can empirically test in order to alter our viewpoints. However, social constructs are often not so easy to test, and our views of them are largely shaped by our personal experiences and biases. You may encounter others’ lived experiences that conflict with your own understanding, but this is not grounds for their invalidation. We also expect participants to follow the guidelines below which offers a guide to express opinions and describe experiences, in a manner that will not interfere with others’ ability to participate.

Participant and Meeting Expectations

1. When you’d like to make a comment or ask a question, use the ‘raise hand’ button to not interrupt the current speaker. The moderator will call on you when it is your turn.
2. Keep your microphone muted when you are not speaking.
3. Participation is welcomed but not necessary. Everyone is welcome to join in and listen.
4. We will create multiple ways for people who want to participate and express their opinions (anonymous Zoom polls and Q&A, Slido).
5. We encourage participants to be comfortable with silence to allow time for reflection.
6. Offering an advance warning of the potential impact on others when discussing traumatic experiences is considerate and thoughtful. (see example 1 below)
7. Critique ideas, not people.
8. Embrace people’s lived experiences. (see example 2 below)
9. It is ok to be unfamiliar with something and ask questions in good faith. To ensure the meeting is comfortable for everyone, we expect questions to be directed towards the group, to avoid putting someone on the spot to share a lived experience. For example, “I’m not sure if I understand X. I thought X was like Y. Could someone clarify?”
10. We encourage everyone to practice empathy with a goal of deeper understanding. This may look like pausing before you react, reflecting on the speaker’s lived experience,
allowing yourself space to experience emotion and being mindful of your power differential when responding. (see example 3 below)

11. This meeting will be a harassment-free environment for everyone, regardless of gender, gender identity and expression, age, sexual orientation, disability, pregnancy status, physical appearance, body size, race, ethnicity, nationality, visa status, or religion (or lack thereof). We do not tolerate harassment of participants in any form. Belittling, trolling, discriminatory, or threatening behavior, speech or imagery will not be tolerated, even when intended as a “joke,” and engaging in this will result in removal from the meeting.

Examples

1. An example that fulfills expectation #6: “I’m going to discuss a traumatic experience (sexual assault, racism, homophobia, transphobia, xenophobia, ableism, suicide etc) for the next few minutes. Please don’t feel the need to listen in if you feel uncomfortable.”
2. An example that fulfills expectation #8: “Thank you for sharing this. That must have been really difficult. I was unaware of X, Y, Z, and I appreciate knowing more.” Try not to say “That doesn’t happen / never happened. Do you have data on this?”
3. An example that fulfills expectation #10: If someone is sharing an experience that is unique to someone’s identity or intersecting identities (race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, visa status, body size, pregnancy status, disability, etc) that you do not share, consider how your words may impact them. People in positions of power and privilege can be very impactful—use this to help and promote others. A common example in academia: if a student is sharing a difficult experience, and you are a professor, reflect on how your response may affect them. “I recognize that you are a student, and I have not been a student for many years, so I may not completely grasp where you are coming from…”

Enforcement

Anyone in the meeting is welcome to bring up the code of conduct. There will be two moderators (one professor, one student/postdoc) on a rotation, so that we do not have the same moderators every meeting. At times, we may bring in outside professionals to moderate DEI meetings (such as Town Hall meetings). If a participant feels someone is violating the DEI Code of Conduct, they may message the moderators and let them know. Every participant is welcome to discuss and bring up an issue with a moderator either during or after the meeting. To report anonymously during the meeting, we will allow for participants to send messages anonymously to the moderators via Zoom. We will also create avenues for anonymous reporting after the meeting (https://www.sli.do).

Depending on the situation, the moderators may do one of the following: 1) reminding everyone of the Code of Conduct and bringing attention to the expectation that has been violated, or 2) talking to the person(s) afterward and discussing it privately. If a Moderator feels someone has violated Rule 11 on harassment (or violates other rules to the point where it becomes harassing), the moderator will remind everyone of our anti-harassment rule, the person will be
muted and notified privately of their violation. If someone continues to violate Rule 11, they will be removed from the meeting.

If a participant feels either one or both of the moderators did not enforce the Code of Conduct fully, please inform one of the DEI committee members either through our anonymous reporting mechanism or via email.

“I tell my students, ‘When you get these jobs that you have been so brilliantly trained for, just remember that your real job is that if you are free, you need to free somebody else. If you have some power, then your job is to empower somebody else. This is not just a grab-bag candy game.’” - Toni Morrison