

Inclusion

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My attitude on inclusion

1. I intend for my classes to be places where all people feel included, are treated with respect by me and classmates, and are treated fairly by me. Feeling included is a prerequisite to effective learning in a group environment, such as a class.
2. Paradoxically, in order to include all people, we must exclude some behaviors. Note that we are excluding behaviors and not the people who behave harmfully, although people who behave harmfully may need to be excluded temporarily.

What are our ground rules for behavior?

1. Treat others with respect.
2. Treat others as you would like to be treated.
3. Speak your mind. Don't hold back.
4. Be open to the possibility that things you say or do, even if well-intentioned, might hurt others. In this case, serious discernment might be needed to weigh the importance of what you think is important to say or do against the damage it might cause to others. This can be difficult terrain. Navigating this terrain is part of what education is about. I will endeavor to be open to the possibility that things I say or do might hurt others. It is my intention to do no harm to anyone in this class.

What are our ground rules for behavior?

5. It is often helpful to treat a person as an individual, and not as the representative of any group. Many of us are members of groups that might partially, but not completely, define us. Some of these groups we choose, and some of these groups choose us. We can talk about how it is to be a member of a group, but we are at our best when we refrain from making assumptions about what group membership means, difficult as that is.
6. Since physics is the science that is furthest from people, many of these issues are unlikely to come up explicitly in the subject matter of the course. Nevertheless, we are constantly communicating, with and without words, through our behavior, actions, and reactions.

Ground Rules

7. It's OK not to know things. It can be embarrassing to feel that you don't know something that you "should know", or that I might expect you to know. It is not my intention to embarrass anyone, but it can occur. If you feel this sort of embarrassment, please try not to interpret it as a sign that you don't belong here. You do belong here. As long as you can say "I would like to learn a little physics", you belong here. If the truth becomes that you do not want to learn physics, then you and I should talk about whether this class is the best place for you to be.
8. If you believe that an intention or action of mine runs against the spirit of inclusiveness, please talk to me, or Dr. Pitonyak (Chair of the Department of Physics), or Dr. Eldred (Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education). I can make mistakes, and I want to keep learning about ways to foster inclusion.

Ground Rules

9. If you have hurt someone, an apology can be a healthy thing to offer. It's usually not easy. There is an art and a skill to apologizing well. The skill includes deciding if, when, and how to make the apology. Good apologies can make you into a better person.
10. Be aware that it is part of the human condition that feeling included often seems to require excluding others. What good are teammates without an opponent? It is common to define who we are by saying who we are not. This is a deep psychological issue that goes beyond my knowledge. In my classes, I intend to be universally inclusive. I find it very difficult to be universally inclusive in my broader life.