Unlearning Racism in Geoscience Pod Community Guidelines

Bayside Ecologists Pod

Based on the SERC Anti-Racist Reading Group Community Agreement as of 02/01/2021. The guidelines below were expanded to meet the needs of the SERC URGE Pod.

Goal

1) To provide a safe place for colleagues to learn together about how individual (including personal) and structural racism frame SERC, the sciences, and society.
2) To understand our personal, institutional, and structural complicity in this.
3) To identify and recommend actions to move ourselves, our labs, and SERC at large toward being actively inclusive and equitable.
4) To work within a greater network of advocates for positive change in STEMM (see URGE’s website for more details: urgeoscience.org)

Community Guidelines

One person speaks at a time.
Respect each other and do not interrupt your colleagues. If you want to speak, raise your hand first.

Together we know a lot.
Many perspectives are valid and encouraged. Embrace our differences and seek unity in these perspectives.

Make space for everyone.
Be aware of the amount of time that you spend talking. If you’re generally more talkative than others, be mindful of this and allow room for others to contribute. If you’re generally quiet, push yourself to share more – your viewpoint is valuable. Once you speak, give others the room to speak.

Speak from your own experience.
Avoid generalizations. Speak from your own experiences; use “I” statements, rather than “we”. And resist urges to verbally challenge others’ experiences, without thinking through your reaction.

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Lean into discomfort. Center growth.
This group will grapple with challenging topics – this is not meant to be comfortable. Lean into the discomfort and aim to grow from what you learn. Additionally, constructive criticism, while sometimes uncomfortable, can be powerful tool for change – don’t shy away from offering constructive critiques of current systems.

Impact is different from intent.
Even if your intention is good, words or actions can still be hurtful to others. Recognize that your impact may be different from your intent and be accountable, not defensive. To help us learn from one another, we set up an anonymous form for URGE members to use to communicate impact. Any submissions will be discussed at the beginning of the next meeting. In submissions to this form, language should foster growth: “This is what I heard. This is how I felt. This is something to consider (how can you grow from it).”

Power dynamics are fraught.
We acknowledge the potential influence on the pod of hierarchical, social, and other power dynamics and commit to structure communications and activities in ways that minimize or, if possible, counteract their negative impacts. We are a community that spans many personal and professional backgrounds as well as positions within the workplace. Power dynamics can crop up in different forms – be mindful of how you use your power and privilege, even subconsciously. If you experience a negative impact of power or privilege within the URGE group, you may share your experience with the group directly or via our anonymous form.

Harassment in all forms is not tolerated.
Bullying, harassment, and discrimination in all forms will not be tolerated in this group. If harassment is observed, tell the offender to stop. Should you feel uncomfortable doing so, you can reach out to organizers, Linsey Haram (haraml@si.edu) and Jeff Blumenthal (blumenthalj@si.edu), who will consult with the victim/observer and harasser separately to reach a solution. Additionally, you can report incidences using our anonymous form. Disciplinary action may include removal from this group. We are part of a workplace, so the SI policy on harassment and discrimination and the reporting mechanisms apply; should a member of this group choose to use the Equal Employment Opportunity Complaint Process or Civil Coordinator report process, they have the right to do so.

Future topics. Next steps.
As topics are discussed, new topics and action items will arise. We will maintain a running list for future topics to address as well as actions to take, which will live in the Anti-Racist Reading Group Tab at the top of the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion channel in the SERC-Discussion Board Team. A goal of this group is to generate action items for SERC and individuals, so participation in this process is key to the group’s success.
This group will not be perfect. We will make mistakes during discussion; but we should acknowledge and actively seek resolutions to those mistakes.

The Community Guidelines document is a living document. This group is a new experience for all of us. As we move forward, our needs as a group may change – we should view the Community Guideline as binding, but flexible; if we do need to make changes, these will come to a vote with the full group.

Maintain confidentiality and privacy of members. Freedom from retaliation. Take actions for change, not private content and experiences, outside of this group. Remember this a professional setting and respect your colleagues’ privacy. Additionally, respect confidentiality by not repeating anything that identifies someone else without their permission. Finally, we discuss sensitive topics and personal experiences in this group – no members of this group should be retaliated against for what they share here. If you experience retaliation, reach out to the SI Ombuds (PaloskyD@si.edu) and/or HaramL@si.edu or use our anonymous form.

URGE is a team effort. Two people will lead each session – one who facilitates conversation and leads discussion, another for moderating the chat. A third person will take notes. These positions will rotate with each meeting.

Core responsibilities of the facilitator are to: initiate the online meeting by the scheduled date and time; call on participants as they virtually raise their hands; facilitate discussion of the material; integrate and balance discussion time between curriculum materials and deliverables.

Core responsibilities of the chat moderator are to read the chat messages and answer questions when appropriate; integrate chat messages into the oral discussion when appropriate; post relevant links to the chat box when needed; (if our virtual platform does not do this automatically) preserve the online chat after the meeting and save it to the Teams URGE pod channel.

Core responsibilities of the note-taker are to take notes on actionable comments and ideas regarding deliverables and other concrete items and copy them to “Meeting Notes” section of the Teams URGE pod channel; [take notes on important topics and points of conversation?]

URGE members can sign up for these positions in our URGE Scheduler spreadsheet. A private channel titled “URGE Pod” within the SERC-Discussion-Board Microsoft Team will be the hub of all documentation, communication, and ongoing work on deliverables. Only members of the URGE Pod will be added to this private channel. Deadlines for deliverables, once communicated by URGE central, will be available in the URGE Scheduler file. Reach out to Linsey Haram (haraml@si.edu) or Jeff Blumenthal (blumenthalj@si.edu) with any questions about our platform.

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Decisions regarding whether or not to adopt deliverables will be made within a consensus framework, as defined and described by the Seeds of Change document, which is saved to the Teams URGE pod Files section. In employing this framework, we seek to make every voice and opinion heard and reflected in the actions we take so that they express the will of all individuals of the group and of the collective.

When casting a vote on a proposal, a pod member may express consent by: (1) agreeing with the proposal as-is, (2) agreeing with reservations, or (3) standing aside. If there are significant reservations, the group may amend or reword the proposal. In the event of a stand-aside vote, the group may accept the stand aside and go ahead. Or the group may work on a new proposal, especially when there are several stand asides. In the event of a block, the group can either look for amendments to overcome the objection or return to the discussion stage to look for a new proposal. If all members of the pod fall into one of these categories of consent, a measure shall pass.

If a member does not consent to a proposal, the member may dissent by casting a blocking vote. In the event of one or more blocking votes, the proposal does not pass. The pod may then either look for amendments to overcome the objection or return to the discussion stage to look for a new proposal.

Consensus in our context means consensus of all who are present in a meeting in addition to allowing time for members who could not attend the meeting the opportunity to voice their ideas and opinions and vote. If no member dissents within a specified time period, the group will have reached consensus.

**Community Agreement Sources**

- Resource Media
- National Equity Project
- Seeds for Change
- AORTA
- Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Working Group
- Seeds of Change - Consensus
- Seeds of Change: Power Dynamics