

McGill University EPS Pod Group Norms

These pod norms draw substantially from norms developed in antiracist discussion groups at the UC Davis Earth and Planetary Sciences Department, a private reading group, and those of the URGE initiative.

- **Take space, make space:** If you are a more comfortable sharer, consider being in listening mode; consider speaking up if you tend to be more reluctant!
- **Brave space:** Challenge yourself to be open.
- **Embrace silence:** Allow for reflection and participation from quieter members by letting silence rest.
- **Practice active listening:** Take the opportunity to listen and learn.
- **Confidentiality:** Conversations should continue outside of the group, but consider the comments of individuals during the reading group to be anonymous.
- **No representatives:** Remember that participants are individuals and do not act as representatives or spokespeople for entire communities.
- **Assume best intentions:** We come from a variety of backgrounds, and challenging topics will arise. Work to name and talk through things as they come up.
- **Correct gently, but do correct:** If a problematic or incorrect comment is made, be sure to politely voice your concern in order to preserve the safety of the space and allow for frank and open discussions.
- **Find an appropriate place for feelings and emotions:** Reflecting outside of the group is useful. Explore options for dealing with complicated emotions that won't unduly burden other group members, including smaller group conversations, professional mental health support (we are not trained specialists, after all!), and/or private journaling and self-reflection. If you feel it is appropriate, bring reflections back to the larger group, but try not to treat meetings as an 'airing of grievances.'
- **Decenter whiteness:** Strive to create an inclusive and equitable space for all participants. We hope to discuss topics that reflect perspectives and embody the interests of historically marginalized and minoritized communities. In doing so, we must address norms and practices that reflect ideology associated with white culture and privilege, which is the foundation of marginalization.
- **Be conscious of body language:** Even in Zoom meetings!
- **Extend flexibility:** It's worth keeping in mind that we're in the midst of a global pandemic and major societal upheaval, while also trying to keep ourselves and (those who rely on us) on track. While attendance will be taken for accountability, let's keep a flexible mindset with attendance and assume that if others can't make it, there's likely a reason for this. The pod leader is responsible for sending minutes and updates to keep those who can't make meetings in the loop.
- **Take care of yourself:** Be respectful of others' need for space and check in with your own capacity to take on heavy topics that will come up.
- **The goal is not to always agree -- it is to gain a deeper understanding.**