



## Unlearning Racism in Geoscience

*Unlearning Racism in Geoscience (URGE; [www.urgeoscience.org](http://www.urgeoscience.org)) is a community-wide journal-reading and policy-design curriculum to help Geoscientists unlearn racism and improve accessibility, justice, equity, and inclusion (AJEDI) in our discipline. URGE's primary objectives are to (1) deepen the community's knowledge of the effects of racism on the participation and retention of black, brown, and indigenous people in Geoscience<sup>1</sup>, (2) use the existing literature, expert opinion, and personal experiences to develop anti-racist policies and strategies<sup>2,3</sup>, and (3) share, discuss, and modify anti-racist policies and strategies within a dynamic community network and on a national stage. By meeting these objectives, we hope that Geoscience departments and societies will be able to implement a well-researched crowdsourced group of anti-racist policies.*

---



## Department of Geosciences

### **Penn State Geosciences URGE Pod Guidelines**

Education is essential but action is also imperative for achieving the objectives of URGE. To facilitate open, respectful, and productive communication, Pod participants agree to the following guidelines for URGE activities. Violation of these guidelines could result in removal from the URGE Pod.

#### **1. Ground Rules for Discussion and Communication**

- Our URGE discussions are separate from our normal workplace operations; here we have no rank or hierarchy. We acknowledge that inherent power dynamics in the workplace can make open and honest discussions difficult. We will ensure the equality of all URGE Pod participants by recognizing and articulating when power dynamics might be a concern and holding each other accountable for ensuring that URGE Pod discussions are separate from and will have no impact on supervisor-supervisee relationships in the workplace.
- We will listen actively and respect others when they are talking.
- We will speak from our own experience instead of generalizing ("I" instead of "they," "we," "you").
- We will not be afraid to respectfully challenge one another by asking questions but will refrain from personal attacks; we will focus on ideas and problems rather than people.
- We will participate to the fullest of our ability -- community growth depends on the inclusion of every individual voice; vulnerability is a precious and powerful force for connection and change.
- To help make space for all participants' perspectives, we will begin each discussion/breakout hearing from each person in the group what they are most interested in discussing and use that inventory to allocate time to different topics.
- We will maintain confidentiality. All stories shared in this space stay in this space unless explicit permission is given by the person sharing the story that it can be shared in another setting.

- We will share our own stories and experiences instead of invalidating somebody else's story with our own spin or perspective on their experience.
- Our goal is not to always agree -- it is to gain a deeper understanding.
- We will be conscious of body language and nonverbal responses -- they can be as disrespectful as words (even over Zoom).
- We will assume everyone's good intentions but also acknowledge the impact of saying something that hurts someone else, even if it is unintended.
- We may indicate discomfort with something another member says verbally or through Zoom responses; we will use the gray arrow for "slower", to suggest "think about what you are about to say", or the red x "no", for "stop, you may not realize it, but you are hurting me".
- We strive for all participants to feel comfortable and welcome speaking out, but in a circumstance where someone may not feel comfortable or would like to provide private feedback outside of regular pod interactions, we can contact any of the pod leaders to discuss an issue.
- Discussion facilitators will take notes to aid development of deliverables and provide records for participants' reflection; notes will be generalized (i.e. no specific identifying details of personal stories) and shared with participants after each meeting.
- Any member may request at any time for a personal story or anecdote to be strictly "off the record" and not included or referenced in any pod notes.
- All deliverables and communication outside the Pod will be posted for comment among pod members prior to broader distribution.
- URGE materials, Pod meeting notes, working documents, and deliverables will be shared via the Pod's Teams group.
- Pod Discussion and Communication Ground Rules apply to live (Zoom) discussions as well as message-board-style posting on Teams.
- Participation is expected throughout the URGE experience. We will participate in live Zoom discussions as much as possible (note that live video/audio during these sessions is welcome but not required; Zoom meetings will not be recorded). If we cannot join a live discussion, we will contribute thoughts and feedback via Teams or email.
- An important goal for our Pod is broadening awareness of anti-racist policies, strategies, and resources among our broader departmental community. We will aim to distribute brief updates to the department listerv after every two URGE sessions.
- Note that many of us are Penn State Mandated Reporters and are required to share information about incidents of sex-based discrimination and harassment (discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, dating violence, domestic violence, stalking, and retaliation) with Penn State's Title IX coordinator or deputy coordinators, and to report any reasonable suspicion of child abuse in accordance with the Pennsylvania Child Protective Services Law. <https://policy.psu.edu/policies/ad67>

## **2. Making decisions as a group**

Our Pod will make decisions via consensus following the guidelines outlined here: <https://www.seedsforchange.org.uk/shortconsensus> . All group members will participate in the development of deliverables and will have the opportunity to comment on and contribute to drafts and working documents.

### **3. Pod member roles and responsibilities**

Pod leaders are the main points of contact between URGE and the pods. Pod leaders will submit files and deliverables to the URGE website. Liz Hajek will be the designated submitter, with Chris Boxe and Maureen Feineman as alternates.

We will distribute the job of facilitating Zoom meetings, moderating discussions, and preparing deliverables by having three different participants serve as leaders for each URGE Session. This signup will be accomplished by a shared document posted on Teams. Roles each week will be:

1. Schedule meetings
2. Take attendance (important for accountability)
3. Take notes as needed, especially in discussions of deliverables
4. Upload deliverables to the URGE website
5. Schedule meetings with organization/institution leadership
6. Read supplemental articles / materials for deliverables as needed (for example, the asset mapping deliverable will be accompanied by a short paper about the purpose of creating community asset maps and how to generate your own.)
7. Draft deliverables and share with pod for review/edits/discussion at the pod meetings.