URGE
Unlearning Racism in Geoscience

Center for Atmosphere Ocean Science at NYU (CAOS-NYU) URGE

Unlearning Racism in Geoscience (URGE; 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[1], (2) use the existing literature, expert opinion, and personal experiences to develop anti-racist policies and strategies[2,3], 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.

Deliverable - Safety Plan

Overview

The purpose of this code of conduct is to ensure that the Center for Atmosphere Ocean Science at the Courant Institute of NYU is a welcoming and fulfilling environment for every member of our community. These guidelines exist to establish some basic ground rules for the respectful behavior within department interactions. Additionally, this document exists as a work in progress, and may be continuously updated.

Please note that this document exists to supplement existing NYU policies, but does not trump these policies. For cases of harassment, students can officially report the incident to their PI, or report their PI through the Office of Equal Opportunity.

In constructing this safety plan, we draw closely upon a few sources, including Christopher Jackson's Code of Conduct, Laure Zanna's Group Guide, and URGe's Week One Deliverable, modified as appropriate to the situation.

Diversity and Inclusion

At CAOS, we are committed to creating a welcoming experience for everyone. This means an environment free from harassment, regardless of gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance, body size, race, age, and/or religion. We ask all members of the community to adhere to the following Code of Conduct:

- Behave professionally.
    - All communication, be it online or in person, should be appropriate for a professional audience, and be considerate of people from different cultural backgrounds.
    - Remember that harassment and sexist, racist, or exclusionary jokes are not appropriate.
    - Sexual language and imagery are not appropriate at any time.
    - Be mindful of microaggressions and open to feedback when you commit them.
    - **Participants asked to stop any harassing behavior are expected to comply immediately.**
- Contribute to discussions with a constructive, respectful approach.
    - Be mindful of talking over others
    - Be willing to hear out the ideas of others.

- Do not be afraid to respectfully challenge one another by asking questions, but refrain from personal attacks -- focus on ideas and problems rather than people.
- Be conscious of body language and nonverbal responses -- they can be as disrespectful as words.

PIs agree to discuss this code of conduct with group members who violate these rules, regardless of that individual's skills, contributions, or role in the community. If inappropriate behaviour persists after this initial discussion, PIs agree to adhere to the guidelines of NYU's Office of Equal Opportunity in escalating a formal complaint. PIs agree to treat communication on issues and complaints as confidential.

What constitutes harassment? What constitutes a microaggression?
Harassment includes:
- Offensive verbal comments related to gender, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance, body size, race, religion
- Sexual images in public spaces
- Deliberate intimidation, stalking, following, harassing photography or recording
- Sustained disruption of discussions
- Inappropriate physical contact
- Unwelcome sexual attention

Microaggressions are defined as **"**brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative attitudes toward stigmatized or culturally marginalized groups." Many microaggressions are not severe enough to warrant an official response, but can nonetheless create a hostile or unwelcoming environment. As such, it is important to be mindful of microaggressions, and to be open and understanding about receiving feedback when we commit them. Examples of microaggressions include:
- Implying someone is only in their academic position due to benefits of their racial or gender identity.
- Condescension (including in the guise of praise) regarding a person's intellectual ability in relation to their racial or gender identity.
- Being dismissive of concerns about race/gender issues in the workplace that are brought up by people who are part of marginalized groups.
- Shoehorning individuals into roles based on their identity.
- Implying that the perspectives, experiences, and cultural norms of one's own group are "neutral" or "normal" while those of a marginalized group are not
- Issues with facial recognition or name recall that are specific to a particular group (e.g. recognizing students of one racial group but not another)

Reporting Issues/Complaints
- To address interpersonal issues within the department which are leading to a potentially hostile atmosphere, including situations involving racial or gender biases, the [inclusivity liaison?] is available for discussion and information on how to proceed. Additionally, cases of harassment can be reported through the Office of Equal Opportunity.
- To address problems outside of the department that are potentially impacting academic performance or mental health (i.e. harassment or safety issues around campus), contact [department chair?, liaison?] to begin working on resolving the issue.

Best Practices

Academic research can be a challenge to one's mental health and well-being. We encourage PhD students to be proactive about taking care of their mental health, and to work together to create a community that is available and supportive. Here are some suggested best practices, which are not required, but may be useful:
- Create a mentor map for support across different areas of your life. This can include individuals within the program as well as those outside.
- Establish guidelines with your PIs regarding how often you meet, expectations for work schedule, vacations and time off, and timeline for graduation
- Regularly attend student seminars and relevant colloquia. The former in particular is an important part of supporting your fellow students.
- Support the safety and well-being of your colleagues, staying mindful of the difference between a collector and an ally[1].

Mental Health and Safety Resources At NYU
- Mental health support is available through NYU's Counseling and Wellness Center. Services include walk-in appointments, an emergency hotline, referrals to off-campus providers, group sessions for specific issues, and more.
- NYU has a Sexual Harassment module required for all students and faculty.
- NYU has a number of training and support resources available. As a department, we can make better use of these, including Action Zone Bystander Intervention Training and various trainings for working towards equity in different areas. We could not find an over-arching anti-discrimination training program.
- NYC has a number of trainings available as well, including a self-defense course through the Center for Anti-Violence Education that includes de-escalation, assertiveness training, and other useful anti-racism skills.

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[1] Martinez-Cola, Marisela. (2020). Collectors, Nightlights, and Allies, Oh My! White Mentors in the Academy. 10. 25-57.