

Guidelines for Classroom and Course Conduct and Content

At Youngstown State University, our classrooms are where students encounter ideas, explore differing viewpoints, and develop the intellectual skills needed for lifelong success. This document, **Guidelines for Classroom and Course Conduct and Content**, is designed as a tool to strengthen our academic mission. By following these guidelines, our faculty continue to model civil discourse, critical thinking, and respect for diverse perspectives, creating the ideal learning environment for all students. These guidelines are the interpretation of the Provost at YSU and are in no way a legal document.

Guidelines for Classroom and Course Conduct and Content

| Category | Expected | Inappropriate |
|---|--|---|
| Controversial Topics (Political, Racial, Gender, Religious) | Instructor consistently fosters a respectful environment where all identities and viewpoints are welcome. Materials and discussions are handled with neutrality. | Instructor includes explicit bias or preferential treatment based on political, racial, gender, or religious factors. Student viewpoints are suppressed or ridiculed. |
| Encouragement of Diverse Viewpoints Reflective of Intellectual Diversity | Faculty explicitly invites multiple viewpoints and encourages critical thinking on sensitive topics. Students report that faculty member fosters an environment that made students comfortable sharing diverse opinions. | Faculty member dismisses, discourages, or penalizes students for expressing differing or unpopular views. Only one acceptable view is modeled or rewarded. |
| Indoctrination vs. Academic Inquiry | Faculty member presents all controversial content from a scholarly lens, presenting opposing views with balance. No language of ideological obligation. | Faculty member pressures students to adopt, express, or support specific social, political, or religious views—verbally or through assignments/grades. |
| Course Content | Content is used appropriately in academic context (e.g., analyzing systems, social movements, health disparities), and presented with open inquiry. | Content is used in a prescriptive or moralizing way—requiring students to agree with specific definitions or ideologies as part of success in the course. |
| Student Complaint Response Threshold | Student complaint reflects misunderstanding, disagreement with content, or discomfort with ideas—but no evidence of coercion or bias. May be resolved through informal discussion. | Complaint includes evidence of indoctrination, bias, required ideological expression, or classroom exclusion based on identity or beliefs. Formal review required. |
| Faculty Evaluation Compliance <i>(Based on required questions)</i> | Students consistently report a classroom atmosphere free of bias and affirm that they are encouraged to discuss varying opinions. | Students report a biased environment and suppression of opposing viewpoints. Evaluation indicates recurring concerns with expressions of intellectual diversity. |

Keep in mind our affirmation statements with definitions as provided by the state are as follows:

Definitions.

- (1) “Controversial belief or policy” means any belief or policy that is the subject of political controversy, including issues such as climate policies, electoral politics, foreign policy, diversity, equity and inclusion programs, immigration policy, marriage or abortion.
- (2) “Intellectual diversity” means multiple, divergent and varied perspectives on an extensive range of public policy issues.

YSU Affirmation Statements Per 3345.0217 of the Revised Code:

- (1) Affirms and declares that its primary function is to practice or support the practice, discovery, improvement, transmission and dissemination of knowledge and citizenship education by means of research, teaching, discussion and debate;
- (2) Affirms and declares that to fulfill the function described in the preceding paragraph, Youngstown State University shall ensure the fullest degree of intellectual diversity;
- (3) Affirms and declares that faculty and staff shall allow and encourage students to reach their own conclusions about all controversial beliefs or policies and shall not seek to indoctrinate any social, political or religious point of view;
- (4) Demonstrates intellectual diversity for course approval, approval of courses to satisfy general education requirements, student courses evaluations, common reading programs, annual reviews, strategic goals for each department and student learning outcomes;
 - (a) Paragraphs (D)(1)-(4) above do not apply to the exercise of professional judgment about how to accomplish intellectual diversity within an academic discipline, unless that exercise is misused to constrict intellectual diversity.
- (5) Declares that it will not endorse or oppose, as a university, any controversial belief or policy, except on matters that directly impact the university’s funding or mission of discovery, improvement and dissemination of knowledge. The university may also endorse the congress of the United States when it establishes a state of armed hostility against a foreign power as well as the recognition of national and state holidays, support for the Constitution and laws of the United States or the state of Ohio or the display of the American or Ohio flag;
- (6) Affirms and declares that Youngstown State University will not encourage, discourage, require or forbid students, faculty or administrators to endorse, assent to or publicly express a given ideology, political stance or view of a social policy nor will Youngstown State University require students to do any of those things to obtain an undergraduate or post-graduate degree.

- (a) Paragraphs (D)(5) and (6) do not apply to the exercise of professional judgment about whether to endorse the consensus or foundational beliefs of an academic discipline, unless that exercise is misused to take an action prohibited in (D)(5).
- (7) Prohibits political and ideological litmus tests in all hiring, promotion and admissions decisions, including diversity statement and any other requirement that applicants describe their commitment to any ideology, principle, concept or formulation that requires commitment to any controversial belief or policy;
 - (8) Affirms and declares that no hiring, promotion or admissions process or decision shall encourage, discourage, require or forbid students, faculty or administrators to endorse, assent to or publicly express a given ideology or political stance;
 - (9) Affirms and declares that Youngstown State University will not use a diversity statement or any other assessment of an applicant's political or ideological views in hiring, promotions or admissions process or decision;
 - (10) Affirms and declares that no process or decision regulating conditions of work or study, such as committee assignments, course scheduling or workload adjustment policies, shall encourage, discourage, require or forbid students, faculty or administrators to endorse, assent to or publicly express a given ideology or political stance;
 - (11) Affirms and declares that Youngstown State University will seek out invited speakers who have diverse ideological or political views;
 - (12) Will post prominently on its web site a complete list of all speaker fees, honoraria and other emoluments in excess of five hundred dollars for events that are sponsored by Youngstown State University.
- (a) The website referred to above shall be:
- (i) Accessible from the main page of the university's web site by use of not more than three links;
 - (ii) Searchable by keywords and phrases;
 - (iii) Accessible to the public without requiring user registration of any kind.