

## Conventions of Classroom Discourse

From the syllabus for this course, you might have noticed that we are and will be discussing controversial and sometimes sensitive topics/texts. This document intends to foreground student-led discussion by laying the foundation for generative and compassionate exchanges.

While I might not announce that certain texts contain sensitive or potentially trauma-inducing language/imagery every time we read such a text, please take this as notice that some of the material we discuss may contain such language/imagery. If you are uncomfortable at any time with what we'll be, or we are, discussing/viewing on a given day, please feel free to leave the room when you need to. If you need to leave the room for more than 15 minutes in any given class due to such material, please let me know on that day.

### Encouraged/Discourage Terminology

Below is a list of terms that you are encouraged or discouraged from using in describing certain identities in our classroom. I provide this list not to impinge on anyone's free speech, but to facilitate a **sensitive space** for productive discussion. If you choose to use discouraged terms, you do so at the risk of being responsible for creating a violent classroom atmosphere.

Encouraged terms: "queer people"; "gay person/s"; "LGBT people/folk"; "lesbian"

Discouraged terms: "a queer"; "a homosexual"; "the gays"

Notes: It's generally best to use these terms as adjectives rather than nouns with articles. Saying "he is a queer" is very different from saying he is a queer person.

Encouraged terms: "gender non-conforming"; "trans"

Discouraged terms: "transgendered"; "tranny"; "transsexual"

Notes: Being trans is not a condition; please do not make it out to be one.

Encouraged terms: "disabled person/people" "people with disabilities," "neurodivergent"

Discouraged terms: "dumb", "crazy", "retarded", "crippled", "challenged", "idiot", "handicapped"

Notes: As with the notes above, using terms as adjectives and nouns varies their rhetorical value. Additionally, many of the discouraged terms have been used historically to oppress and pathologize people with disabilities.

Encouraged terms: "person/people of colour"

Discouraged terms: "coloured people"

Notes: The latter adjective has been historically used to oppress people of color.

Encouraged terms: "blacks"; "black people"; "black-identified people"

Discouraged terms: "Negros"; "the blacks"

Notes: terms like "African-American" are acceptable but make the assumption that all black people in a US-context are American citizens and classes blacks as different from the term "American".

**Important:** if you are not Black, please do not use the word "nigga". Please do not quote the word aloud if it is in a text we read. You may quote the word in writing, but the spoken usage of the term by whites can prompt trauma. **No one** should use the term "n\*gger". Don't say it. Don't write it. Please, I beg you.

Encouraged terms: Profanity not directed at individuals or identity categories "shit"; "ass"; "dope" etc.

Discouraged terms: Profanity directed at individuals or identity categories "slut"; "hoe"; "fuck you"

Notes: Some of the texts we read will contain profanity. Please do not use that as an excuse to attack anyone or any category of person in our classroom.