

gender, sex, & sexuality - what's the difference?

- **sex:** a biological category determined by a combination of chromosomes, hormones, secondary sex characteristics, & internal/external sex organs
- **gender identity:** an individual's emotional and psychological sense of gender
- **gender expression:** the way in which someone presents their gender and is perceived by society
- **sexual orientation:** level & type of attraction to others

note: these categories are distinct from one another & are not necessarily deterministic (i.e., an individual assigned a male sex may not necessarily identify as a man or have a masculine gender expression)

how do I talk about gender, sex, & sexuality categories?

- **sex:** sex categories are usually designated as male & female; an individual's sex can also fall outside these categories based on a difference of sex development (DSD) or intersex condition
- **gender identity:** gender identity categories are commonly just called gender categories, and are most appropriately described with words such as man/men & woman/women; some individuals may identify with another gender category, such as being transgender or genderqueer
- **gender expression:** the ways that individuals express their gender are usually referred to using words like masculine, feminine, androgynous, & gender non-conforming
- **sexual orientation:** there are a multitude of categories that individuals may use to identify their sexual orientation; examples may include lesbian, gay, bisexual, heterosexual, asexual, & many others

some helpful terms

- **LGBTQ+:** a term that refers to a broad spectrum of gender identities and sexual orientations, including those who are **lesbian**, **gay**, **bisexual**, **transgender**, **queer**, **questioning**, **intersex**, **asexual**, & **pansexual**; self-identification and self-definition are paramount when discussing these identities, as preferred terms may vary depending on the individual
- **cisgender:** describes someone whose gender identity aligns with societal expectations based on their assigned sex at birth (i.e., an individual assigned a female sex who identifies as a woman)
- **transgender:** a general term to describe a group of people whose gender identity differs from societal expectations based on their assigned sex at birth; examples may include:
 - ◆ **transgender man** (an individual assigned a female sex who identifies as a man)
 - ◆ **transgender woman** (an individual assigned a male sex who identifies as a woman)
 - ◆ **genderqueer** or **gender non-conforming** (an individual who does not identify as a man or as a woman)

why are these distinctions important for my classroom?

Whether you are teaching a course on biology, literature, history, or another topic, gender & sex categories often show up in unexpected ways. It's important to be mindful of these topics regardless of your discipline for several reasons:

- **commitment to inclusion:** Lehigh University is committed to the inclusion of and respect for all individuals regardless of sexuality, gender identity, and/or gender expression; as a member of this community, you have a responsibility to uphold that commitment
- **maximizing student learning:** students learn best when their environment is free of barriers; by using inclusive language and respectful practices, you are creating an environment where learning can occur more effectively for everyone
- **content clarity & precision:** for disciplines that discuss bodies, anatomy, & physiology, it is especially critical that the concepts of gender, sex, & sexuality are discussed with clarity & precision to avoid confusion & to maximize understanding

LEHIGH UNIVERSITY

FACULTY GUIDE TO GENDER, SEX, & SEXUALITY IN THE CLASSROOM

tips for creating an inclusive classroom environment

- **set a tone of respect** on the very first day of class
- **assume** that you have LGBTQ+-identified students in your classroom, and work to create an inclusive environment for them
- **don't assume** that a student identifies as a man or woman based on their appearance, or that your students identify as straight; it's especially important to guard against language that makes assumptions ("this man said __," "she just told us that ___," "if she was married, her husband would ___," etc)
- **take attendance / call role** only after you have given students a chance to state what they prefer to be called, and **allow students to self-identify** their name & pronouns before the first day of your course
 - ◆ a note on pronouns: individuals may go by she/her/hers, he/him/his, gender-neutral pronouns such as they/them/theirs, or an additional set of pronouns; if you are unsure of someone's pronouns, ask
- **avoid gendered groupings** ("men on this side, women on this side") as these may alienate transgender & gender non-conforming students
- **hold other students accountable** if they use exclusive language or refer to another student using incorrect pronouns
- **incorporate content** from LGBTQ+ individuals in your discipline and **highlight the contributions** of LGBTQ+ people to your discipline
- **admit when you've made a mistake**, apologize, correct yourself, and move on

*adapted from [Some Very Basic Tips for Making Higher Education More Accessible to Trans Students and Rethinking How We Talk about Gendered Bodies](#) by Dean Spade (*Radical Teacher*, Number 92, Winter 2011).*



best practices for discussing gender & sex in the classroom

1. Keep your **language precise & consistent** to maximize understanding
2. **Acknowledge gaps in research** & areas where more information is needed
3. **Distinguish between patterns** that emerge based on sex (a biological category) versus gender (a social category), as well as patterns that are impacted by both of these things
4. **Be honest about what you know & do not know**; some patterns & trends may be ambiguous and may require further study in order to accurately determine their biological and/or psychosocial associations
5. **Provide your students with resources** where they can learn more about these topics (visit the Pride Center's website for a comprehensive list)



additional opportunities through the Pride Center

- **learn**
 - ◆ attend an LUally training or request one for your department (opportunities listed at go.lehigh.edu/LUally)
 - ◆ invite an LGBTQ+-identified guest speaker into your classroom to lecture
 - ◆ screen an LGBTQ+-themed film in your classroom
- **engage**
 - ◆ be present at LGBTQ+-related events on campus (find out about these from our newsletter at go.lehigh.edu/pridenews)
 - ◆ co-advise one of the Pride Center's affiliated groups
 - ◆ join the Faculty & Staff Pride Network or Pride Faculty Council
- **act**
 - ◆ prominently display inclusive images / "ally" symbols in your office
 - ◆ don't tolerate exclusive language from students or other faculty members
 - ◆ refer students to the Pride Center as needed