

## Lehigh University TA Guide to Gender, Sex, & Sexuality in the Classroom

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

- **sex:** a socially constructed “biological” category determined by a combination of chromosomes, hormones, secondary sex characteristics, and 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 & not necessarily deterministic*

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### 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 trait
  - **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 non-binary
  - **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)
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### 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, as preferred terms may vary
  - **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 a **transgender man** (an individual assigned a female sex who identifies as a man), a **transgender woman** (an individual assigned a male sex who identifies as a woman), or someone who is **non-binary** (does not identify as a man or a woman)
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### why are these distinctions important for my classroom?

- **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 any disciplines that discuss trends & data having to do with humans, it is especially critical that the concepts of gender, sex, & sexuality are discussed with clarity & precision to avoid confusion & to maximize understanding
- **eliminating disparities:** LGBTQ+ people are one of many groups underrepresented in several disciplines, including STEM & business; by becoming more inclusive practitioners, we can begin to explore ways to improve the pipeline and eliminate these disparities

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*Created by the Pride Center*

## tips for creating an inclusive classroom environment

- **set a tone of respect** on the very first day of class
  - ◆ the **Principles of our Equitable Community** and the **VISIONS Guidelines for Effective Dialogue** are great tools to assist with this
- **assume** that you have LGBTQ+-identified students in your classroom, and work to create an inclusive environment for them
  - ◆ about **17%** of Lehigh's student population identifies as LGBTQ+
- **don't assume** that a student identifies as a man or a 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.)
  - ◆ only **25%** of Lehigh's LGBTQ+ population are widely open/out about their identities
- **take attendance / call roll** only after you have given students a chance to state what they prefer to be called, and **allow students to self-identify** their chosen 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 & non-binary students
  - ◆ the number of non-binary students on Lehigh's campus **grows increasingly** each year
- **hold other students accountable** if they use exclusive language or refer to another student using incorrect pronouns
  - ◆ LGBTQ+ Lehigh students frequently experience **harassment & marginalization from their peers**, and this often occurs within the classroom setting
- **incorporate content** from LGBTQ+ individuals in your discipline and **highlight the contributions** of LGBTQ+ people to your discipline
  - ◆ if your discipline also uses word problems or case studies/scenarios, you might also consider incorporating **representation of LGBTQ+ people** into these elements
- **admit when you've made a mistake**, apologize, correct yourself, and move on
  - ◆ **perfection is not an expectation**, but a commitment to the process of inclusivity is

*adapted from Some Very Basic Tips for Making Higher Education More Accessible to Trans Students by Dean Spade (Radical Teacher, Number 92, Winter 2011)*

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## opportunities through the Pride Center

- **learn**
  - ◆ attend an **LUally training** or request one for your department (visit [go.lehigh.edu/LUally](http://go.lehigh.edu/LUally) to see upcoming sessions)
  - ◆ invite an **LGBTQ+-identified guest speaker** into your classroom to lecture or 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](http://go.lehigh.edu/pridenews))
  - ◆ join **Prism**, the Pride Center's student organization for LGBTQ+ and allied graduate students
- **act**
  - ◆ **prominently display** inclusive images, like the LUally sticker, in your office
  - ◆ **refer** students to the Pride Center as needed