

Teaching spaces

Suggestions for students

We want to provide the best education for everyone in the Philosophy department. To that end, we want to build actively inclusive learning environments; to help all students feel safe and enabled to participate in discussion. Here are some recommendations for how students can help to realize this goal.

Your teaching space should be a safe and friendly space. Reflect on what you can do, to make sure that everyone feels included in a co-operative (rather than competitive) learning environment; indeed, to make sure that we are having fun while studying philosophy! It might help to bear in mind these points:

- “Safe space” covers *well-being*: all students should feel personally comfortable, so that they can think, speak, and learn.
- “Safe space” covers *identity*: there is no place for misogyny; racism; national, religious or cultural discrimination; sexism; homophobia; transphobia; ablism or agism.
- “Safe space” covers *freedom to speak and disagree*: we are free to challenge, argue, and disagree with each other, whilst bearing in mind that our aim is learning and intellectual exploration, not mere altercation.

In small-group teaching, names and pronouns can be very important:

- You should always feel free to clarify what name you would like to use, and to indicate your pronouns when you introduce yourself.
- Familiarize yourself with the names and pronouns of others in your class.

Learning and discussing philosophy well is hard, even before we consider issues related to inclusivity. And mistakes will happen: a student might belittle someone, be unduly aggressive, mis-gender someone, use offensive terminology, or raise a problematic example. When issues arise, it is the instructor’s job—not the job of the other students—to intervene. But here are some things to think about, when things go wrong:

- If someone has hurt or offended you, it might help to bear in mind that issues can arise for all sorts of reasons: because the other student is not operating in their first language; because they are operating with different cultural norms; because they are neurodivergent and have missed a (neurotypical) cue; etc.
- If someone tells you that you have upset them, it is very natural to be defensive, especially if you had no intention to hurt or offend. But try to listen with an open mind, and reflect—perhaps after the seminar—on how you might have done things differently.
- You can always discuss things with your instructor or module leader; but if you would like to speak to someone outside of the course, consider your personal tutor, the Student Adviser, or the Department Tutor.

As students, you are crucial members of our community and department. We are counting on you to join us in building a philosophical community—both in and outside the classroom—where everyone feels welcome and comfortable to do philosophy and be themselves.