COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS

Be respectful: Recognize and acknowledge each other’s feelings, and our own, and be respectful of all cultures, races, sexual orientations, gender identities, religions, class backgrounds, abilities, and perspectives when speaking.

Be attentive: Listen closely and participate. If you usually don’t talk much, challenge yourself to speak more and press into your speaking skills. If you find yourself talking more than others, speak less and press into your listening skills. This classroom is a forum for dialogue; we are speaking with and responding to each other.

Express your understanding and reflections: You have a unique perspective, informed by your experiences, traditions, beliefs, and life practices. Holding ourselves accountable, speak using “I” language to take ownership of and responsibility for what you say. Don’t tell others what to do or think as if it is a command. While the only person you can truly speak for is yourself, we can learn from each other.

Ask clarifying or open-ended questions: Use questions to further your understanding and to explore assumptions. Challenge your own assumptions while also inviting colleagues to clarify their claims.

Remain engaged: The purpose of dialogue is to come to an understanding of another person’s understanding, not to make judgments about a person or speaker. The goal of dialogue is understanding, not consensus. Controversy and critique are not negative, but instead provide potential opportunities to further insights and understandings – our own and each other’s.

Be constructive: Disagreeing with others must always occur in a respectful and constructive manner. Controversy should be about positions (which can be changed), not personalities (which are much harder to change).

Make space, give space (“One person, one mic”): No interrupting. One person will speak at a time. Raise your hand to contribute, giving yourself and everyone in the room an opportunity to engage and be listened to.

Honor silence and time for reflection: Consider, “Why am I talking?” Notice what wants to be said and what would further the conversation rather than what you want to say.

Stay present – take care of yourself: Lean into moments of discomfort as places of learning. It is OK if you need to take a break, but please excuse yourself respectfully, and do what you can to return to the space and continue engaging.

Honor privacy: If you tell others about stories or ideas from this class, leave the names of participants in the room so that no one’s identity will be revealed. Ask permission before sharing someone else’s innermost thoughts.

Recognize our own and others’ privilege: When entering a space and speaking, being aware of privilege based on race, age, experience, sex, gender, abilities, class, etc. – without operating on the basis of assumptions about race, age, experience, sex, gender, abilities, class, etc. – is important.

Suspend status: Everyone is an equal partner in a mutual quest for insight and clarity. You are each an expert in your own life and that’s what you bring to the dialogue process.

Be curious: Ask yourself, “What can I learn?” “How can I contribute?” Consider ways to participate in and engage with the various opportunities being offered, including texts, exercises, assignments, etc. This classroom is an invitation.

Limit mobile phone use, including texting, Internet browsing, etc., to breaks: We are here to engage with each other. If you have an emergency or need to stay aware of your phone for any reason, inform your instructor before class and be respectful of ongoing discussion.