

Response to Diversity Resolution Department of Sociology

- I. BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the details of the particular inclusion and diversity educational programs within each program, department, or college be submitted for approval to the Graduate School by the Graduate Program Director of a program or department, or its equivalent in a college, and
- II. BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Program of Study for all graduate students show a record of the student's participation in the particular inclusion and diversity educational programs delineated by the student's program, department, or college, as part of the student's graduation requirements.

RESPONSE to RESOLUTION I:

Required Topics:

1. *“The Virginia Tech Principles of Community as they apply to the valuing of human diversity and inclusion” and*
2. *“The impact that personal actions and words have on self, others, and the communities—university, national, and global—in which we live; issues of privilege, bias, power, prejudice, and discrimination; concepts of multiple personal, social, and cultural identities.”*

A.) Policy 20.2 of the Department of Sociology's Graduate Handbook includes the following discussion of our departmental expectations of respect, civility, courtesy, and inclusiveness:

20.2 The American Sociological Association *Code of Ethics* (asanet.org/about/ethics.cfm) links collegiality and respectful treatment of others to our academic work, calling upon sociologists to maintain courtesy in disagreement, respect human subjects of our research, profess within the bounds of our competence, avoid discrimination toward or harassment of diverse groups, and prevent personal animosities from interrupting the training of junior scholars. In its discussion of Professional and Scientific Responsibility, the *Code* observes that “Sociologists understand that they form a community and show respect for other sociologists even when they disagree on theoretical, methodological, or personal approaches to professional activities.”

The Expectations for Graduate Education (graduateschool.vt.edu/academics/expectations) also include principles of academic integrity, civility, and inclusiveness. Along the latter lines, the Department of Sociology specifies courtesy and inclusiveness as ideals of professional conduct:

- **Civility** involves avoidance of coercion, harassment, intimidation, and exploitation, as these inhibit professional accomplishment. One maintains academic civility by maintaining courtesy and inclusiveness.

- **Courtesy** involves mundane deference (gestures of appreciation) toward colleagues regardless of personal differences, and avoiding uninvited attention to nonprofessional aspects of colleagues' activities.
- **Inclusiveness** involves equal courtesy toward all colleagues, and avoids treating personal differences and preferences as bases for professional decisions.

Appended to this current policy in our Graduate Handbook, we will also add the following statement about the *Virginia Tech Principles of Community*:

Our departmental expectations of civility, inclusion, and respect are embedded and reaffirmed by Virginia Tech's Principles of Community (inclusive.vt.edu/initiatives/vtpoc):

Virginia Tech is a public land-grant university, committed to teaching and learning, research, and outreach to the Commonwealth of Virginia, the nation, and the world community. Learning from the experiences that shape Virginia Tech as an institution, we acknowledge those aspects of our legacy that reflected bias and exclusion. Therefore, we adopt and practice the following principles as fundamental to our on-going efforts to increase access and inclusion and to create a community that nurtures learning and growth for all of its members:

- *We affirm* the inherent dignity and value of every person and strive to maintain a climate for work and learning based on mutual respect and understanding.
- *We affirm* the right of each person to express thoughts and opinions freely. We encourage open expression within a climate of civility, sensitivity, and mutual respect.
- *We affirm* the value of human diversity because it enriches our lives and the University. We acknowledge and respect our differences while affirming our common humanity.
- *We reject* all forms of prejudice and discrimination, including those based on age, color, disability, gender, gender identity, gender expression, national origin, political affiliation, race, religion, sexual orientation, and veteran status. We take individual and collective responsibility for helping to eliminate bias and discrimination and for increasing our own understanding of these issues through education, training, and interaction with others.
- *We pledge* our collective commitment to these principles in the spirit of the Virginia Tech motto of *Ut Prosim (That I May Serve)*.

B.) Our Orientation to the Discipline class (SOC 5914), which is a required course for all incoming graduate students, includes a class session devoted to a discussion of the VT *Principles of Community*, the American Sociological Association's *Code of Ethics*, and Sociology Graduate Handbook Policy 20 on professionalism and academic civility (quoted above).

C.) The topics of *privilege, bias, power, prejudice, discrimination, and identities* are core topics within the discipline of sociology and are among the central foci of our two required sociological theory classes (SOC 5104 and SOC 5114). Most of our other substantive

graduate seminars also devote substantial time to these issues. A few examples include SOC 5034 (Inequality); SOC 5234 (Sociological Issues in College Pedagogy), SOC 5414 (Crime, Control, and Inequality); SOC 5614 (Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities); SOC 5624 (Women and Work); as well as many of our Special Topics courses, such as Environmental Inequalities. The Department of Sociology is also home to the Africana Studies Program

and Women’s & Gender Studies Program, disciplines that are built around the study of bias, discrimination, prejudice, power, privilege, and identities. Nearly all of the courses in these programs would cover these issues. A few include WGS 5914 (Feminist Theory), WGS 5924 (Feminist Research Methods); AFST (Africana Studies Theory); and AFST 5324 (Africana Studies Methods). Finally, the Sociology Department also sponsors an average of half a dozen speakers and “Community Conversations” each semester, virtually all of which address such matters.¹

3. “Available avenues of redress and our shared responsibilities as active by-standers.”

A.) Available channels for redress are written into our Graduate Handbook, Policy 20, the relevant portions of which are quoted below. As noted above, this policy is formally discussed in the required *Orientation to the Discipline* graduate class.

20.3 Complaints about professional misconduct (integrity and civility) are concerns of both the targets of those complaints and of the department. As such, they are not appropriate topics of informal discussion alone. Students giving voice to complaints of misconduct should, in a timely fashion, initiate processes in which the department and the targets of the complaints would have opportunities to respond. Students can initiate such processes by sharing complaints with departmental or university authorities, as listed below.

20.4 The Department of Sociology and Virginia Tech have means to address complaints of misconduct. Relevant offices include:

- **Graduate director, Department of Sociology** — discussion of concerns about graduate student integrity and civility within the department, all of which remain in confidence other than sexual harassment/assault, mention of which must result in a phone call to the Human Resources Title IX coordinators, as noted below.
- **Chair, Department of Sociology** — discussion of concerns about faculty conduct, all of which remain in confidence other than sexual harassment/assault, mention of which must result in a phone call to HR Title IX, as noted below.
- [Graduate Student Ombudsperson](#) — discussion of any concerns related to treatment by others, including officials, in the university, all of which remain in confidence other than sexual harassment/assault, mention of which must result in a phone call to ...

¹ our Spring 2018 talks included:

- 1/19, panel discussion of intersectionality featuring doctoral students and faculty members
- 1/22 "Experiencing Blackness in Defiantly White Spaces -- in a Car," talk by Kwame Harrison
- 1/26 "Diversity Regimes in Higher Education," talk by Dr. James Michael Thomas (University of Mississippi)
- 2/15 film showing, *Chavela*, on life of Chavela Vargas, "a trailblazing free spirit whose appetite for tequila and women was as legendary as her soul stirring vocals."
- 2/23 panel discussion "From Civil Rights to BlackLivesMatter: Race and Protests" featuring doctoral students and faculty members
- 3/30 panel discussion "Queer Subjectivities inside and outside the Classroom" featuring doctoral students and faculty members
- 4/7 Seventh Annual Combating Racial Injustice Workshop "*Juvenile (In)Justice*" on racial disparities in juvenile justice nationally and in Virginia
- 4/26 talk on extractive industries and the military assault on Lumad (indigenous) and Moro (Muslim) schools in the southern Philippines by Anthony "Pele" Navarro, of Save Our Schools Network, a network of 215 indigenous community-based schools in Mindanao, southern Philippines.

- [Human Resources, Title IX](#) — reports of sexual harassment/assault, which reports result in HR officer outreach to alleged victims, who then choose whether to authorize continued investigation.
- [Student Conduct](#), in the [Dean of Students Office](#) — reports of concerns about student conduct, including disruption, threats, incivility, and harassment.
- [Graduate Honor System](#) — reports of violations of academic integrity.

For **confidential** discussions of issues of civility, you may contact:

- [The Women’s Center’s Counseling staff](#) (concerns about gendered conduct, sexual assault, sexual harassment)
- [Cook Counseling Center](#)

20.5 Though students reported to have violated policies related to integrity, sexual harassment/assault, or threatening/disruptive conduct are subject to investigation by offices outside the department, students found in violation of policies or general lack of professionalism are also subject to a **remediation process** within it, which may occur while official investigations by other offices are pending.

In a remediation process, the graduate director assigns two faculty mentors, who do not serve on the Graduate Committee, to mentor a student through a semester. Goals for that term include avoidance of any violation of these policies, high standards of professionalism in general, and full reintegration into the normal operation of the department. At the end of that semester, mentors issue a report on the student’s progress toward these goals. The Graduate Committee then takes that report as partial basis for a review of the student’s standing in the department’s graduate program. On the basis of that review, the graduate director makes a recommendation to the Graduate School regarding the student’s continued enrollment. The goal of a remediation process is reintegration, continued enrollment, and continued funding for students who have been employed within the department.

B.) *Our shared responsibilities as active by-standers* is a topic that will be discussed in the Orientation to the Discipline class on the same day that the Principles of Community are covered. As part of the reading assignment for this day, students will be asked to review the Virginia Tech Graduate School’s “Disrupting Academic Bullying” overview (https://graduate.ombudsman/disrupting_academic_bullying.html). In addition, we will add the following text to Policy 20 of the Graduate Handbook:

20.6 The Virginia Tech Graduate School and Department of Sociology encourage graduate students to be active bystanders and to report academic bullying when they witness it. [As former Graduate Dean Karen DePauw states,](#)

Academic bullying manifests itself in many different ways and can include intimidation, humiliation, belittlement, embarrassment and undermining one’s authority. Academic bullying also includes behaviors or comments that indicate disregard of one’s concerns, ignoring contributions, minimize one’s efforts in the eyes of colleagues, and other means of exclusion or withholding information...Academic bullying occurs throughout the academic or professional space; in the classroom, in meetings, at conferences, in the laboratory setting, in face-to-face interactions, and of course through email and social media.

Through the *Disrupting Academic Bullying* Initiative, (graduate.ombudsman.vt.edu/disrupting_academic_bullying) the Graduate School has created resources to help members of the VT community identify academic bullying and to report it through the [Disrupting Academic Bullying Reporting Form](#).

4. *The process of individual introspection required both to understand one's own forms of implicit or unconscious bias and to create inclusive environments.*

A.) *The process of individual introspection required both to understand one's own forms of implicit and unconscious bias is a topic covered in the Graduate Teaching Assistant Workshop (GRAD 5004) provided by the Graduate School. All of our graduate students are required to take this one-credit course, regardless of whether they have a Graduate Teaching Assistantship. This topic is also covered by the Diversity.edu training that is required of all incoming students (<https://www.dsa.vt.edu/onlineprograms/diversityedu.php>).*

B.) *The process of individual introspection required...to create inclusive environments is a topic covered in SOC 5234 (Sociological Issues in College Pedagogy). Before they are able to teach their own class, graduate students must either take this course or another pedagogy course approved by the Graduate Committee.*

Additional Topics/Focus Areas (as appropriate to the particular academic unit):

1. *Inclusion and Diversity in a global context; institutional and governmental policies affecting immigration, accessibility, affordability, and related matters*

A.) *These topics are part of many of the seminar classes that are offered in our department. Some courses that focus on these topics include our two required sociological theory classes (SOC 5104 and SOC 5114), SOC 5654 (Global Division of Labor); SOC 5324 (Theorizing the African Diaspora); SOC 5624 (Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities); AFST (Africana Studies Theory), Special Topics courses, such as Environmental Inequalities.*

2. *Historical perspectives on diversity and the impact of traditions of privilege on the development of the discipline represented by the particular academic unit; inclusive pedagogy.*

A.) *Historical perspectives on diversity and the impact of traditions of privilege on the development of the discipline figures prominently in our required theory courses, SOC 5104 and SOC 5114.*

B.) *Inclusive Pedagogy is covered in our Pedagogy course (SOC 5234).*

3. *Effective strategies for inter- or intrapersonal conflict resolution; pathways to individual reconciliation of unconscious or implicit bias.*

A.) *This is covered in Policy 20 of our Graduate Handbook and is also discussed in our Orientation to the Discipline Class. Please see discussion above.*

RESPONSE TO RESOLUTION II:

The Department of Sociology will include a check box on our two Plan of Study forms indicating that graduate students have received training in the inclusion and diversity educational programs discussed above.

APPENDIX TO CGS&P RESOLUTION 2017-18A

The guidelines offered in this Appendix seek to clarify the intent of the Resolution and to make specific recommendations regarding its implementation. It is the aim of the Resolution to serve the needs of all graduate students, while acknowledging the distinctiveness of those needs across the range of departments, programs, and colleges (hereafter referred to as “academic units”). To comply with the terms of the Resolution, academic units are encouraged to make use of existing strategies and efforts to instill in their students a lasting awareness of the benefits of a diverse and inclusive environment and to instruct their students in this regard. Should measures existing in the academic units be insufficient, new measures will be put in place to satisfy the requirements set forth in the Resolution. The Office of Recruitment and Diversity Initiatives (ORDI) in the Graduate School and the Office for Inclusion and Diversity will be available to offer assistance with the identification of suitable instructional resources and formulation of these plans as needed and/or requested. Additional possible resources include the college diversity committee members and InclusiveVT representatives.

Satisfactory plans may, among other possibilities, take the form of specialized workshops, stand-alone courses, or follow-up substantive discussion/ reflections on required diversity related pre-enrollment module, or other modules incorporated into existing courses or incoming student orientation sessions. Possibilities include GRAD 5214 Diversity and Inclusion in a Global Society, existing courses offered by departments, workshops to be developed in conjunction with NLI, integration into existing departmental seminars, guest speakers and more. The plans will be individualized, designed and tailored to the academic units and could include a variety of options. The Graduate School will work specifically with each academic unit to develop the plans. Professional development opportunities for faculty seeking best practices and strategies for managing these discussions will be provided through NLI.

In all cases, the appropriate academic unit will submit for approval to the Graduate School the manner and method by which the requirement will be satisfied. Once the academic unit’s plan is approved, the completion of the requirement for any given student will be verified through that student’s Plan of Study. With regard to the extent of topics to be covered, again recognizing the range of appropriate emphases across different academic units, four topics have been identified as appropriate for all students and must be included. Other topics should be addressed, as identified by the individual academic units and appropriate to specific disciplinary needs. Lists of required topics and potential additional focus areas appear below:

Required Topics:

5. The Virginia Tech Principles of Community as they apply to the valuing of human diversity and inclusion.
6. The impact that personal actions and words have on self, others, and the communities—university,

national, and global—in which we live; issues of privilege, bias, power, prejudice, and discrimination; concepts of multiple personal, social, and cultural identities.

7. Available avenues of redress and our shared responsibilities as active by-standers.
8. The process of individual introspection required both to understand one's own forms of implicit or unconscious bias and to create inclusive environments.

Additional Topics/Focus Areas (as appropriate to the particular academic unit):

4. Inclusion and Diversity in a global context; institutional and governmental policies affecting immigration, accessibility, affordability, and related matters.
5. Historical perspectives on diversity and the impact of traditions of privilege on the development of the discipline represented by the particular academic unit; inclusive pedagogy.
6. Effective strategies for inter- or intrapersonal conflict resolution; pathways to individual reconciliation of unconscious or implicit bias.