

## **University of South Carolina: Women's Studies 797**

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### **GUIDELINES FOR CLASSROOM DISCUSSION**

1. Acknowledge that racism, classism, sexism, heterosexism, and other institutionalized forms of oppression exist.
2. Acknowledge that one mechanism of institutionalized racism, classism, sexism, heterosexism, etc., is that we are all systematically taught misinformation about our own group and about members of other groups. This is true for members of privileged and oppressed groups.
3. Agree not to blame ourselves or others for the misinformation we have learned, but to accept responsibility for not repeating misinformation after we have learned otherwise.
4. Assume that people-both the people we study and the members of the class-always do the best they can.
5. Actively pursue information about our own groups and those of others.
6. Share information about our groups with other members of the class and we will never demean, devalue, or in any way "put down" people for their experiences.
7. Agree to combat actively the myths and stereotypes about our own groups and other groups so that we can break down the walls which prohibit group cooperation and group gain.
8. Create a safe atmosphere for open discussion. If members of the class may wish to make comments that they do not want repeated outside the classroom, they can preface their remarks with a request that the class agree not to repeat the remarks.

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Many other institutionalized forms of oppression could be listed here. A more complete list might include age, ethnicity, disability, color, national origin, and physical appearance. Although the major focus is on the four oppressions listed, analogies can fairly easily be made to other forms.

NOTE: These guidelines were developed by Lynn Weber, and published in *Women's Studies Quarterly* 18 (Spring/Summer 1990):126-134. A discussion and revised version was published in "Empowering Students Through Classroom Discussion Guidelines," in Marybeth C. Stalp and Julie Childers, eds., *Teaching Sociological Concepts and the Sociology of Gender*, Washington, D.C.; American Sociological Association Teaching Resources Center, 2000.