

Code of Conduct

Department of Sociology
Stony Brook University
September 2023

Introduction

Sociology is the study of society and its patterns and dynamics. Because a crucial part of that study involves the effect of power on social relations and human behavior, we as faculty, staff, and students in the sociology department seek to set an example of how to be mindful of these power relations and how to best demonstrate respect for one another. Likewise, as sociologists we recognize that our department is an organization embedded within a wider professional field, the American Sociological Association (ASA), and is governed by Stony Brook University. Therefore, this code of conduct builds on the [ASA Code of Ethics](#) and [University Policy](#).

Only University Policy holds legal force, and disciplinary procedures are prescribed by the [collective bargaining agreement](#) between United University Professions (UUP) and the State University of New York (SUNY). But we present this code of conduct to affirm and remind all of us of the department's consensus on appropriate behavior with one another, and especially between those in unequal positions. People who have less power and status may fear speaking up or refusing offers or requests from people with higher status. Conversely, people in positions of power may not realize the pressure they exert on others who may be less secure. We hope that the code of conduct will serve as a guide for reflective behavior as we all strive together to make the department a more understanding, open, inviting, equal, fair, and just place for all regardless of their racial or ethnic identity, class, gender, sexual orientation, ability, religion or rank and status within the department.

In what follows, we first provide some specific reminders for behavior, followed by more general expectations for faculty and graduate students. Some are imperatives, while others are strong suggestions and advice. We encourage faculty and students to actively work to uphold the code of conduct, adhere to expectations, and take advice to heart.

Specific Reminders

1. **Students and faculty should create inclusive learning environments.** Diversity of gender, ability, sexual orientation, class, religion, race and ethnicity should be respected in teaching and research activities. Additionally, both faculty and students are human and have their respective strengths and weaknesses. In mentoring and professional relationships, faculty and students should calibrate expectations that take these variations into account.

2. **Students and faculty should actively avoid creating a hostile learning or work environment.** A hostile learning or work environment is created when harassment experienced by an individual is unwelcome; based on a person's race, national origin, sex/gender, or disability; and/or sufficiently severe, pervasive, and persistent so as to interfere with an individual's ability to participate or benefit from school programs or activities. Stony Brook's [Disruptive Behavior Procedure](#), provided by Human Resources, outlines more examples. While it is impossible to define every behavior that may create a hostile learning environment, such behaviors might include either intentional or unintentional interactions in which either faculty or students experience diminution of a marginalized identity they hold. At moments when this is the case and such an experience is recognized, there is a special burden on faculty (because they hold higher status than students). That is, they are expected and encouraged to react in a spirit of collegiality and goodwill.
 - a. If the Chair or Graduate Program Director are made aware of a hostile learning environment in the department, they should consider the desires of the complainant in determining the ways in which the situation is remedied, provided those desires are in line with university policies and [mandated reporting obligations](#). Potential avenues for action include mediation between the two parties by the Chair, Graduate Program Director, or Graduate Grievance Committee, or filing a formal complaint with the Title IX office or other appropriate institutional offices. (See relevant university policies on [Disruptive Behavior](#), [Reporting Discrimination and Sexual Misconduct](#), and the Graduate School's [Grievance and Appeals Procedure](#).)
 - b. Retaliatory behavior against a student who reports discrimination or participates in a university investigation is prohibited. Acts of retaliation may result in disciplinary action. (See university policies on [equal opportunity](#) and [sexual misconduct](#)).
3. Students and faculty have the right to be addressed by the name and pronoun that correspond to their gender identity, upon request. A court-ordered name or gender change is not required. The intentional or persistent refusal to respect a student or faculty's gender identity (for example, intentionally referring to the student or faculty by a name or pronoun that does not correspond to their gender identity) can constitute harassment and is a violation of the Code of Conduct. If you are unsure what pronoun to use, the best course of action is to politely ask the individual how they would like to be addressed.
4. **Faculty members should remember that their power positions can put graduate students in difficult situations.** For example:
 - a. Graduate students may feel uncomfortable **refusing to coauthor** a publication with a faculty member. Asking a graduate student to coauthor is normally a desired part of the professionalization process, but students should be counseled about the pros and cons of doing so, and the choice to do so is theirs. If they choose not to, there should be no retribution, the topic should be dropped, and all parties should move forward. The same respect and clarity should apply if a graduate student or faculty member is unable or does not want

to complete a joint project after it has begun. If the scope or timeline of a project needs to be changed, or if the project's division of labor requires amendment, these matters should also be subject to direct and candid discussion. Students may feel reluctant to leave a project that is no longer functional or may feel that faculty have "dumped" them if their involvement is more limited than expected. To avoid confusion and difficult working relationships, clear discussion of any changes to the project should be undertaken with the option for either party to withdraw.

- b. When graduate students undertake **original research**, it is theirs to develop and publish as they see fit. If faculty members use any work done by graduate students, they must gain approval from the graduate students. Faculty should similarly avoid putting their names on publications to which they have not substantially or substantively contributed, as stated in the [Research Misconduct Policy](#). It may be appropriate to include graduate students as co-authors or cite their contributions in these cases.
 - c. When graduate students **coauthor** with faculty members, the order of authorship, division of labor, and expectations of both parties should be clearly delineated at the beginning of the project and continually revisited as the project develops.
 - d. Graduate students are not expected to run errands for faculty members that are not related to responsibilities for being a teaching or research assistant. Faculty members should not make such requests from graduate students.
 - e. A student, when serving as a TA, is not expected to lecture in place of a faculty member. If they are asked to do so, it is a graduate student's right to decline to **deliver a lecture** in a class they are TA-ing. Normally, if a student chooses to deliver a lecture, they would do so with a faculty present to provide feedback. However, it is not required that a faculty member is present. If a student declines a request to deliver a lecture, this choice should not be held against the student.
 - f. When graduate students voice their opinions about or critique a faculty member, there should be no retribution taken against the graduate students. Appropriate **respect** should always be shown toward faculty by graduate students, and when a conclusion has been determined by the faculty, students, or a mediating agent, all parties are expected to accept the adjudication of the dispute and move forward positively. The issue should be dropped and further discussions surrounding the issue should cease. It is preferable to deal with any issues appropriately, calmly and quickly when they arise, rather than to let them fester or contribute to an unproductive environment.
 - g. It is never appropriate for faculty or students to display aggression towards others – whether physical, verbal, or emotional. This is inclusive of raising one's voice in an aggressive manner. Please see the University Policy on [Workplace Violence](#) and [Disruptive Behavior](#).
5. **Romantic or sexual relations between faculty and students are expressly forbidden.** University rules explicitly forbid such relationships between [faculty and students](#), as well as between supervisory/instructional and subordinate positions. As sociologists we

support this policy. While mutually-desired social interaction is encouraged as a means to extend professionalization and collegial interactions (inclusive of meetings and socializing off-campus), romantic and sexual relations are impossible to untangle from inherent power dynamics between faculty and graduate students. Additionally, any social interaction that could reasonably be construed as having a sexual valence is strongly discouraged, and if either graduate students or faculty have any doubts, it is always advisable to err on the side of restraint (such as sexual jokes, stories, or comments).

6. In order to proactively address power imbalances, faculty/instructors/mentors should invite ongoing feedback from students and mentees about power balances, ethics and fairness within our professional relationships. If any graduate students are concerned about power imbalances, feel that powers are being abused (in relation to teaching or research), or are generally concerned about a problem, we recommend that they attempt to address their concerns using the following protocol:
 - a. The student or faculty member, if they feel comfortable (and are not worried about retaliation), should address the issue directly with the offending person.
 - b. If a student would like to address a concern with a faculty member, and they would like support in doing so, they may ask a fellow graduate student to accompany and support them.
 - c. If the above is not a possibility, or escalates, then the student or faculty member can speak with either the Graduate Program Director or the Chair of the Department.
 - i. If the issue is related to the graduate program, the graduate student or faculty member should speak with the Graduate Program Director.
 - ii. If the issue does not fall under the purview of the Graduate Program, or if it is impossible or inappropriate for the Graduate Program Director to mediate the dispute, then the student or faculty member should speak with the Chair.
 - d. If a graduate student grievance cannot be resolved through direct mediation, then the Graduate Program Director or Chair will convene a hearing of the Graduate Grievance Committee. According to the Graduate School's [Grievance and Appeals Procedure](#), "The program's grievance committee will receive written documentation of the alleged violation, and the relevant parties will be given the opportunity to respond. After a thorough investigation, the committee's decision on the disposition of the case will be sent to the relevant parties and to the program director or department chair. The committee can also make recommendations concerning penalties for violations but is not required to do so."
 - e. If the relevant parties wish to [appeal](#) the process or the decisions reached by the Grievance Committee, they may contact the Vice Provost of Graduate Education.
 - f. If the student or faculty member is concerned about speaking with the Graduate Program Director and the Chair, then they should consult with a faculty member they feel most comfortable confiding in.

teaching. Faculty are especially encouraged to review their mandatory periodic refreshers, such as Stony Brook's [ReportIt](#) framework and the ASA's [Code of Ethics](#) (especially Principle D), with particular care.

General Expectations for Faculty

Expectations for Advising:

1. The advisor that is assigned to incoming graduate students in their first year is not the student's permanent advisor. This is only for the first year.
2. Students must formally ask faculty members to become their primary advisor. There should be no assumptions. Students should ask faculty to become primary advisors when they are ready to prepare for the Field Exam and the proposal defense – at the latest.
3. Faculty should meet regularly with their students. Setting up specific times to meet would be useful – for example, twice a semester.
4. Faculty members should discuss trajectories with students to determine whether they sound reasonable.
5. Faculty members should set deadlines for students, and follow-up with them if they miss the deadlines.
6. Faculty members are expected to come to campus for proposal, field exam, and dissertation defenses, unless extenuating circumstances make their physical presence impossible. Faculty members should flexibly negotiate the scheduling of these events with graduate students, while being mindful of required university deadlines. Please refer to the Graduate Handbook for specific deadlines.
7. Faculty members should proactively communicate with each other regarding student committees and student progress.
8. Faculty members should remember to be mindful of power relations and invite open and ongoing dialogue, as well as criticism, regarding ethics and fairness in their conduct with students. Students may experience interactions (or lack of interactions) with faculty differently than faculty intend. Faculty should make space for those conversations, if necessary, and accept a student's point of view. In the process, both parties should find a way to move forward.

Expectations for Teaching Assistantships:

1. Students and faculty are expected to have a conversation at the start of each semester in which they discuss and negotiate specific workload distributions and requirements.
2. Students can only work 15 hours per week. Faculty should be mindful of this and may request students to document their work hours to be certain they do not exceed the limits. This is inclusive of lecture hours.
3. Students may be asked, but are not required, to run a class in a faculty member's exceptional absence. That said, students are not expected or required to formally lecture for faculty members unless they and the faculty member mutually agree. While

they may be asked as part of their pedagogical training, they have the right to decline, and there will be no retribution if they decline.

4. In addition to providing guidelines at the beginning of the semester, faculty should meet with TAs regularly to be certain expectations remain clear and to answer questions.
5. Ultimately, the responsibility for course management falls on the faculty member. With this in mind, faculty members should work closely with TAs to ensure that their tasks are executed accurately.

Expectations for Teaching:

1. In accordance with university policy, a written syllabus that clearly defines the content and requirements of the course should be distributed at the beginning of each course.
2. Instructors must adhere to the university's policy on [minimal instructional responsibilities](#).
3. In dealing with students, professors should be polite, helpful, and fair, taking into account the wide range of factors that can affect learning and attempting to help students overcome any disadvantages.
4. Students are also expected to be respectful and polite to the instructor and other students, as well as adhere to the university's policy on [minimal student responsibilities](#).
5. When these expectations are not being met, students or faculty should consult the Graduate Program Director.

Regarding Expectations for Service, Faculty Should:

1. Make every effort to attend all faculty meetings and proactively communicate with the chair in the case of an unavoidable absence.
2. Strive to regularly attend department talks – both invited and in-house.
3. Be active on the committees they are assigned to and serve on, as outlined below. Make every effort to attend meetings that are called.
 - a. Graduate Committee: Advise the Graduate Program Director, deliberate policy changes related to the graduate program, read applications, and assist with recruitment of new graduate students.
 - b. Graduate Grievance Committee: Resolve graduate student grievances in cases where the Graduate Program Director or Chair are unable to resolve the matter through direct mediation, as outlined in the [Graduate Bulletin](#).
 - c. Undergraduate Committee: Advise the Undergraduate Program Director, deliberate policy changes related to the undergraduate program.
 - d. Track Paper Editorial Board: Serve as secondary readers on track paper paper committees.
 - e. Library Committee: Act as a liaison between the Department and the Library.
 - f. Communications Committee: Run the website and listservs.
 - g. Colloquia and Brown Bag Committee: Find speakers and organize colloquia and brown bag events.

- h. Executive Committee: Mediate grievances between faculty members and the Chair using the principles of [nonviolent communication](#).
4. Actively communicate with faculty colleagues on committees they are assigned to lead.
5. Be actively engaged with students. As mentors, faculty should meet regularly with students, help guide them to successfully complete the program, and answer any questions they have. Faculty should attend talks given by graduate students and provide constructive feedback. If possible, faculty should provide research opportunities for students.

General Expectations for the Graduate Program Director and the Graduate Committee

Responsibilities of the Graduate Program Director (GPD) include oversight of the graduate program, with support from the Graduate Committee. This includes, but is not limited to, the admissions process, orientation for incoming students, the pro-seminar in the first year, the Teaching Practicum, progress reports of students, and general guidance and support of graduate students.

At the beginning of each semester, the GPD will check in with the Graduate Committee to determine if there are concerns to address. As concerns about the Graduate Program arise during the semester, the GPD will consult the Graduate Committee to address them.

In Consideration of the Appointment of a New Graduate Program Director:

1. When the GPD must be replaced, the responsibility of GPD appointment lies with the Chair. However, before the appointment takes place, the Chair will solicit suggestions from the faculty. The Chair will confer with the outgoing GPD, and a minimum of two tenured colleagues before making an informed decision.
2. When the transition between the outgoing and incoming GPD takes place, transfer of knowledge and information will take place.

General Expectations for Graduate Students

Graduate Students should:

1. Review the [Graduate Student Wiki](#), contribute as appropriate, and familiarize themselves with its guidance. The Wiki offers many resources to graduate students: graduate preparation, graduate student organizations, research, teaching, mental health and general health resources, negotiating insurance hurdles, etc. Only Graduate Students and 2 faculty members (as Site Owners) have access to this site.
2. Attend and become involved with the Graduate Student Forum.

3. Recognize that the course of graduate education is much more self-directed than an undergraduate curriculum. Students thus need to take the lead in determining their timelines, meeting with faculty about research projects, applying for conferences, etc. If, however, students are having a difficult time meeting these deadlines, they should meet with their assigned or primary advisor (or another faculty member) to troubleshoot how to manage and address their concerns. Students should remember that the goal of faculty is to train and prepare them for a job, and the challenges they may face at that job, post-graduation.
4. Try to respond to e-mails from faculty within 24-48 hours during the work week – unless you have established a working relationship with a faculty member wherein a different time-frame is understood.
5. Attend as many departmental talks as possible. These include invited talks, as well as talks given by our faculty members and graduate students. We want to maintain a strong supportive departmental culture, which requires participation.
6. Appropriately follow up on professional suggestions provided by faculty.
7. Familiarize themselves with University and discipline definitions of plagiarism and abide by them. Information regarding plagiarism at SBU can be found [here](#).
8. Know that if there are extended patterns of failing to meet program requirements and professional obligations, this will raise red flags for faculty. In such cases, students and their mentors should try to address underlying problems and, if no solution is found, explore whether the program is a good fit for the student and discuss possible alternatives (e.g. a leave of absence, or exiting the program).

Expectations for Courses:

1. Attend and participate in all classes. Come prepared to engage with the material and your colleagues. The only excuse should be illness, or other extenuating circumstances.
2. Inform the faculty member as soon as students know they can't attend a particular course meeting. If known weeks in advance, faculty should be informed then and reminded just before the session in question.
3. Complete all required coursework.
4. Inform faculty of an extenuating circumstance interfering with coursework as soon as it becomes known.
5. Meet with faculty as soon as any problems with a course emerge. Students should be sure to:
 - a. Explain the situation
 - b. Troubleshoot the situation with the faculty member
 - c. Make sure both faculty and student are on the same page at the end of the meeting
 - d. Remember that faculty members have the authority to determine the outcomes

Expectations in Relation to Primary Advisors:

1. Faculty advisors assigned in the first year are NOT primary advisors for dissertation work. They are simply assigned to help guide graduate students in their first year. Graduate students may continue to seek counsel from them in their second year, but they will not be considered a primary advisor for dissertation work until formally asked. Assigned faculty technically stop being advisors after the first year.
2. Graduate students should begin thinking early-on about who their primary advisor will be, when they begin to think about their dissertation proposal. Some things to think about in deciding on a primary advisor:
 - a. What is the specialty of the faculty member?
 - i. Substantive Topic
 - ii. Theoretical approach
 - iii. Methods
 - b. What is the mentoring style of the faculty member?
 - c. What do graduate students hope to learn from the faculty member?
3. Before graduate students approach a faculty member to be a primary advisor, or to serve on their dissertation committee, they should do their homework first:
 - a. Understand what research the faculty member does
 - b. Read their work and consider how their research fits into the department's areas of expertise
 - c. Speak with them about their research
 - d. Establish a professional relationship with them
 - e. Remember: Graduate students should be proactive about this. Show interest and engage (such as through email and meeting).
4. When graduate students decide on their primary advisor, they MUST ask a faculty member if they are willing to serve in this capacity. The faculty member MUST then agree or decline within a reasonable amount of time, in conversation with the student. If an advising relationship is successfully established, students should speak with their primary advisor about additional possible dissertation committee members – these decisions should be made together. Graduate students will then need to formally ask other faculty members to join their dissertation committee.

Expectations for TAing:

1. The TA workload is up to 15 hours per week. Some weeks may require less work, and some faculty may not require 15 hours each week. Nonetheless, as this is a work contract, students are expected to work 15 hours a week if requested. If the workload is more than 15 hours per week, then the students should alert the respective faculty member they are working for. If the faculty members do not respond, the students should speak with the Graduate Program Director. If neither of the faculty members respond appropriately, then the violation should be reported to the Graduate Student Employees Union.

2. TAs are obligated to meet the expectations of their TA assignments. As faculty are accountable to undergraduates, they are dependent on TAs to correctly complete their TA assignments. TAs should take their time to complete their assignments correctly – whether that involved coding the key to an exam, alphabetizing papers, etc. TAs should also not inform Professors that they will complete their assignments the following week, if they have not fulfilled their 15 hour obligations.
3. If TAs are uncertain about TA duties, such as grading assignments, they should ask the respective professor for guidance.
4. Inform faculty of an extenuating circumstance interfering with TA duties as soon as it becomes known.

Expectations in Relation to Track Papers:

1. Remember to adhere to the deadlines for track paper proposals and final papers.
2. Graduate students must fill out a track paper proposal and submit it by the first deadline. This entails the following:
 - a. Get the proposal form from the Graduate Program Coordinator.
 - b. Speak with a faculty member to be the main advisor (first reader) on the paper. Graduate students get to decide who their first reader will be, but they must ask faculty if they will serve in this capacity. The faculty member can agree or decline.
 - c. Write an abstract of the proposed paper.
 - d. Work with the main advisor to approve the abstract and sign the proposal form.
 - e. Give the proposal form and abstract to the Chair of the Track Paper Editorial Board (TPEB).
 - f. The Chair of the TPEB will choose someone from the TPEB to serve as the second reader. The second reader will be notified of their assignment, and the Chair of the TPEB will inform students who the second reader will be. The second reader, as part of their service on the TBEP, is expected to accept requests up to the five paper limit per year.
 - g. The proposal form and abstract should be given to the GPD to sign last.
 - h. Graduate students will work with both faculty members to complete their track paper. Make sure to work closely with both members as the paper is developed.
 - i. Discuss the topic and organization of the paper with the primary faculty member and get approval from the second faculty member before beginning the writing process.
 - ii. Create deadlines with the faculty members for draft submission and revisions in order to complete papers by formal deadlines. Depending on the paper, several revisions may be necessary. It is recommended that the primary faculty give their assessment of how many ‘back and forth’ revisions are expected. Of course, it is difficult to gauge an accurate timeline; however, effort should still be made to let the student know how they are progressing and how close they believe they are to meeting the standards.

- i. Both faculty members must agree that the paper is strong enough as a track paper to both sign off on it. The final product is not required to be the final product of the publication stage, but it should be significantly stronger than a typical course paper.
3. Graduate students cannot submit a course paper as a track paper. They CAN expand on and further develop a course paper into a track paper, with permission of the course faculty member and the Chair of the TPEB.
 - a. Be sure to receive permission from the course instructor before moving forward to complete the track paper. Discuss what could or should be done to turn it into a track paper.
 - b. Be clear about what additions and changes will be made to transform it into a track paper.

Expectations for Conferences:

1. In the first year, graduate students should try and attend (not necessarily participate in) at least one conference to get a sense of their organization. The Eastern Sociology Society (ESS) and the American Sociological Association (ASA) or other smaller sociological associations, such as Sociologists for Women in Society (SWS), the Association of Black Sociologists (ABS), the Social Science History Association (SSHA) and other regional sociology sections (like the Southern Sociological Association), are good choices to start.
2. If students are coming in with an MA, and the MA thesis is well developed and has not yet been presented at a meeting, they may consider submitting it for presentation at the ASA, ESS, or smaller sociological conferences.
3. In the second year, if graduate students have a well-written empirical paper, and a faculty member believes it is developed enough for a conference, then they should submit a paper for presentation at a conference. It is highly recommended that students get approval from a faculty member for their first conference submission, as faculty can provide feedback and guidance.
4. By the third year, graduate students should present and attend conferences regularly. However, students should be mindful of their choices, as attendance and participation can be cost prohibitive (but also note that specialized conferences sometimes provide travel funding specifically for graduate students whose work is accepted for presentation). Funding resources for presentations can be found on the Wiki, with particular reference given to the Graduate Student Organization's Resource Access Project and Professional Development fund.
5. Conferences are good places to network, which helps graduate students when they are on the market.
 - a. Smaller conferences allow for better networking opportunities.
 - b. Focus on specific section opportunities at larger conferences like the ASA.
 - c. Formally join sections related to your research.
 - d. Being actively engaged in an ASA section is also advantageous for consideration in publication award competitions.

Expectations for Publications:

1. If graduate students haven't already done so, they should begin thinking about publications towards the end of their second year.
2. Discuss ideas with advisors and fellow graduate students.
3. After graduate students have a draft, they should have fellow graduate students, along with their primary advisor, read and critique it. They may further develop their track paper(s) to be considered for publication and receive suggestions for journal options.
4. Before sending it for review, seek input, if possible, from a faculty member. Faculty members have vast experience in this area, and they can better help guide you toward publication.
5. Faculty members can also be a good resource for publications. By forging professional relationships with faculty members, students may gain the opportunity to co-author publications with them.

Things to Remember:

1. Faculty members are busy.
 - a. If they do not respond to an e-mail in one week, send a gentle follow-up reminder.
 - b. Most do not intentionally ignore students. They are simply busy.
2. Each faculty member is different.
 - a. Everyone has a different mentoring style. Please keep this in mind.
 - b. Not everyone will be similarly organized, knowledgeable, available, efficient, etc.
3. If graduate students get stuck – with writing, research topics, what courses to take, or are facing other difficulties – they should reach out to the Graduate Program Director and/or their primary advisor and/or other faculty members.
 - a. Faculty members cannot help students if they do not know they need help.
 - b. Faculty members were once graduate students, and most understand the challenges that graduate students face. If students feel comfortable with a faculty member, they should seek them out for advice.
 - c. Graduate students who are more advanced in the program can also be valuable sources of information to supplement faculty support.
4. Students should be proactive in maintaining effective student-faculty relationships to complete the program.