INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

The University Registrar's Office in collaboration with the Poorvu Center has amended the CourseLeaf Inclusive Language guide to provide you the opportunity to ensure your course descriptions use language that is in keeping with our Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging initiatives. This is merely a guide, with the knowledge that language is a living thing and that these terms especially are evolving constantly. If you feel there is additional terminology that should be added to this list or an inaccurate description, please write to Beth Baumgartel (beth.baumgartel@yale.edu).

The Registrar's Office can run a report highlighting any words in the guide below that appear in the course description of courses offered in a particular term. If you would like a report on the courses offered by your department, contact Beth Baumgartel (beth.baumgartel@yale.edu).

CLASS YEAR

First-year

Consider using the term first-year as a noun and adjective to describe all students entering college. If necessary for clarity, include freshmen in parentheses: a first-year (freshman); first-year students (freshmen). This change is gender-related and has been officially adopted throughout Yale.

Undergraduate Class Names

To avoid unnecessarily gendered language, consider replacing underclassmen with first-years and sophomores and upperclassmen with juniors and seniors. When referring to sophomores, juniors, and seniors, use the term upper-level students.

DISABILITIES

Accessible Parking

Consider using the term accessible rather than disabled or handicapped to refer to parking.

Functional Needs

Avoid the terms special needs or special education unless when using the formal name of an organization or when referring to government or educational programming or legal matters. Instead, aim to be specific about the needs or services you're writing about. If necessary, the term functional needs can be used.

Neurodivergent

The term neurodiverse should not be used to describe an individual: a person can be described as either neurotypical, meaning someone whose brain functions within societal norms in how they learn, behave, socialize and process emotions, or neurodivergent—someone whose brain functions differently.

Nonverbal

Mute and dumb are outdated terms and offensive. Consider using nonverbal instead.

Person with a Disability

Avoid outdated, offensive words such as handicapped. Consider using person with a disability instead.

Wheelchair User

The term wheelchair user is recommended. Avoid wheelchair-bound or confined to a wheelchair.

ENSLAVEMENT

Enslavement

Unless an official title or direct quote from a person or historical document, consider using the terms enslaved person, enslaver, and enslavement instead of slave, slave owner and slavery to acknowledge the humanity of those who were or are enslaved, both past and present.

GENDER AND SEXUALITY

Gender Neutral Attendant

Consider using gender-neutral nouns, such as "Flight Attendant."

Gender Neutral Chair

Consider using gender-neutral nouns, such as "Chair."

Gender Neutral Firefighter

Consider using gender-neutral nouns, such as "Firefighter."

Gender Neutral Humanity

Consider using gender-neutral nouns, such as "Humanity" or "Humankind."

Gender Neutral Police

Use gender-neutral nouns, such as "Police Officer."

Gender Neutral Salesperson

Consider using gender-neutral nouns, such as "Salesperson."

Gender Neutral Spouses

Consider using gender-neutral nouns, such as "Spouses" or "Partners."

Plural Pronouns

They, them, theirs are becoming more widely accepted as gender-neutral singular pronouns. It is permissible to rewrite using a form of they if you cannot rephrase your sentence to be plural rather than singular.

Service Members

Consider using gender-neutral nouns, such as "service member(s)."

Sexuality

Consider using sexuality instead. Sexual preference is considered offensive as it implies a choice.

Survivor

Consider using the term "survivor" to describe those who have lived through gender-based and sexual violence of any kind.

IMMIGRATION STATUS

Undocumented

Illegal should only be used to describe an action, not a person. Consider using undocumented instead and only when a person's citizenship status is relevant.

RACE AND ETHNICITY

Antisemitic

Use antisemitic, not anti-Semitic, as Semitism is a pseudoscientific racial classification.

Black

In general, use Black (capitalized), not black, when referring to people of African descent. When referring to a specific group or individual, use the term they prefer, such as Black, African American, African, Afro-Caribbean, Afro-Latino or other.

Black Groups

Refer to groups as Black students, Black faculty members, etc., not Blacks.

Hispanic or Latino

Hispanic and Latino remain the dominant terms for Latin communities, however, other terms have grown in popularity over the last several years, including Latinx and Latine, gender-neutral versions of the masculine and feminine words for Latino and Latina. Ask for preferred terminology since this group of peoples vary greatly on preferred names.

Indigenous

Capitalize Indigenous when referring to the original inhabitants of an area.

Multiracial

The terms biracial, multiracial, and mixed/mixed-race can be used to describe people with more than one racial heritage. That said, any of them can carry negative connotations, depending on the context. When possible, use the term preferred by the person or people to whom or about whom you are speaking.

National Origins

National origins should not be hyphenated, even if they are used as adjectives. E.g., Irish American, Polish American, Japanese American.

Native American

There are several inclusive and accurate terms to use to refer to those who inhabited land that became the United States (or, previously, territories). These include: Indigenous People(s), Native American, American Indian, Alaska Native, and Hawaiian Native. Other appropriate terms may include: Native People(s), First People(s), First Nations, Tribal Peoples, Tribal Communities. If known, it is best to refer to a specific tribal nation. But if possible, it is always best to use the term preferred by the person or people to whom or about whom you are speaking. Although the term "Indian" generally refers to people from the country India, if you know that the person or people you are speaking about use the term "Indian" to describe themselves, it can be appropriate to use that term.

People Of Color

People of color refers to individuals or groups who do not identify as white. Avoid the term minority when referring to any group that is not in the dominant category, in this case refer instead to people of color, students of color, etc., or underserved or underrepresented populations.

Person of Color

Use a broader term, like people of color, which refers to any person who is not white, especially in the U.S. BIPOC is an emerging acronym that stands for Black, indigenous, people of color. If you are talking about a specific racial or ethnic group, name that specific group rather than generalizing to all people of color. This is especially important when discussing Black people.

RELIGION

Latter-day Saints

People who are members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are Latter-day Saints, not Mormons. Do not use "Mormon church" or "LDS" to describe the church itself.

Muslims

People who follow the Islamic faith are Muslims.

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