



NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

Gender and Sexuality Resource Center

Trans at NIU Resource Guide

For Faculty and Instructors: Navigating Gender Identity in the Classroom

Recommended Syllabus Statement

Class rosters and university data systems are provided to faculty that contains either your legal name or your preferred/proper name. As an NIU student, you're able to change how your preferred/proper name appears on class rosters. This option is helpful for various student populations including but not limited to students who abbreviate their first name, students who use their middle name, and transgender students. As a faculty member, I'm committed to using your proper name and pronouns. We'll take time during our first class together to do introductions, at which point you can share with all members of our learning community what name and pronouns you use as you are comfortable. Additionally, if these change at any point during the semester, please let me know and we can develop a plan to share this information with others in a way that is safe for you.

Should you want to update your preferred/proper name, you can do so by looking at the following [guidelines](#) and [frequently asked questions](#):

More to Consider in the Classroom

- Have all students fill in their preferred/proper first name and pronouns during the first class meeting on a blank roster. Do not use the class roster to read off names. This may unintentionally "out" a transgender, genderqueer and/or transitioning student.
- Be careful to not assume the gender that you perceive in a photo or in person as how the student identifies.
- Avoid projecting a class roster, class photos or other related forms that may unintentionally list a student's legal name to the entire class on a screen, etc.
- Be careful to not assume that a person's gender identity equates to their sexual orientation or sex assigned at birth.
- Consider information that a student shares about their gender identity (or other social identities) as confidential. Do not tokenize or expect that student to educate you or the class about their identity/identities or the identities of others.

Final Note on Pronoun Usage

Inviting students to share and use their pronouns is a way to create a safer environment for all. Most languages, including English, use pronouns to refer to individuals (e.g., he / him / his; she / her / hers; they / them / theirs). For transgender, genderqueer, gender-questioning and/or transitioning students, misuse of pronouns can be impactful and alienating.

Other ways that students might identify beyond binary pronouns (he / him / his; she / her / hers) is by using “they” as a singular pronoun or by using name only (not with a pronoun) or by use of gender neutral pronouns (hir, ze, etc.). More information on gender-neutral pronouns can be found on the following [webpage](#).

More information on gender and sexuality terms may be found at the GSRC’s [terminology list](#).

Compiled by Molly B. Holmes, director, NIU Gender and Sexuality Resource Center, and Katy Jaekel, Ph.D., associate professor and director of the Center for the Study of Women, Gender and Sexuality, 2023.