

# **Classroom Awareness & Inclusive Teaching Guidelines**

**English Department**

**Chemnitz University of Technology**

December 2025

English Department, Awareness Committee, 2025.

These guidelines were co-authored by staff members and students.

Contact:

Dr. Mandy Beck ([mandy.beck@phil.tu-chemnitz.de](mailto:mandy.beck@phil.tu-chemnitz.de))

Dr. Isabelle van der Bom ([isabelle.vanderbom@phil.tu-chemnitz.de](mailto:isabelle.vanderbom@phil.tu-chemnitz.de))

Dr. Daniel Ziesche ([daniel.ziesche@phil.tu-chemnitz.de](mailto:daniel.ziesche@phil.tu-chemnitz.de))

## Contents

I.	Introduction: We are all biased...	1
II.	Discrimination at university and in the classroom	4
	A) Types of discrimination	4
	B) Available contact points at Chemnitz University of Technology	8
III.	Diversity-sensitive teaching practices	11
	A) Reading the classroom and developing a diversity-sensitive teaching practice	12
	B) Inclusive language	13
	C) Content notes and trigger warnings	16
	D) Diversity-sensitive course material	18
IV.	Links and additional information	21
	A) Recommended reading on discrimination and bias	21
	a. Official guidance	
	b. Racism and white privilege	
	c. Respectful interaction with trans*, inter*, and non-binary people	
	B) Best practice at other universities' guidelines	23
	a. German universities	
	b. Universities in Anglophone countries	
	C) Workshops and self-education	27
	References	29
	Appendix (Content Note Example, Poster Example, Slide Example)	32

## **I. Introduction: We are all biased...**

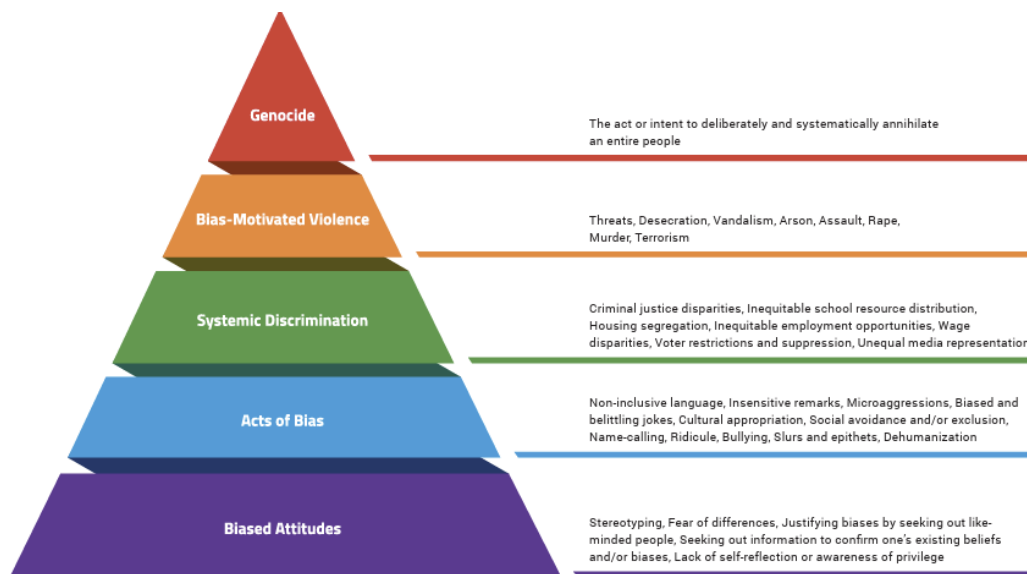
Chemnitz University of Technology (henceforth TUC) has a proud tradition of welcoming international staff and students into its academic fold. Within this tradition, the English Department stands as a microcosm of the university's diversity, bringing together individuals from a wide array of cultural, linguistic, and social backgrounds. This rich diversity not only strengthens our academic environment but also underscores the importance of creating spaces where everyone feels valued and included. Drawing on our varied perspectives and experiences, staff and students from the English Department have come together as a committee and have collaborated to develop these guidelines, which aim to provide actionable strategies and insights for fostering an inclusive, respectful, and discrimination-free environment for all members of our community. We hope that the strategies and tips in these guidelines help you in your everyday interactions with staff and students and allow you to create an inclusive teaching and learning environment.

These guidelines are intended as suggestions and helpful advice if you are looking for new ideas on the creation of an inclusive and non-discriminatory teaching environment in your courses, or if you would like to create an inclusive environment, free of bias, but do not know how to do so. It should be said that all of us are biased in some way; bias is inherent to human nature. We therefore all make mistakes in that regard, and this is something we should not criticise ourselves over. Acknowledging that bias is impossible to avoid is the first step towards counteracting it. Rather, improving our awareness and educating ourselves in methods that reduce bias is a first step in achieving better learning spaces for everyone. This guide serves as a first step in that process. It is a document which will be under constant revision, as both language and society change constantly, and therefore so do our ideas about what constitutes

inclusive language. If you have ideas about what else could be included in these guidelines, please contact us (<https://www.tu-chemnitz.de/phil/english/iaa/awarness.php>). We value your input.

It is important to be aware of bias, because being aware of our biases and trying to counterbalance these also prevents us from escalating biased attitudes into acts of bias or discrimination. In 2018, The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) created a visual representation of how bias can lead to acts of discrimination, violence and beyond. This 'pyramid of hate' shows the steps one can traverse from attitudes of bias to acts of genocide.

Figure 1: Pyramid of Hate, Anti-Defamation League 2021



As is visible in the diagram, discrimination starts with biased attitudes (insensitive remarks, non-inclusive language, seeking out like-minded people) and can escalate to violence and beyond. The behaviour at each level of the pyramid harms individuals and groups, but those higher up have increasingly severe and life-threatening consequences. Similar to a pyramid, however, the higher levels are built upon the lower ones. This is to say that when people or institutions normalise or accept behaviour at the lower levels, it leads to greater acceptance of behaviours at the next level. Such normalisation is something we hope to counteract with these guidelines. For this reason, we would like to draw attention to the bottom level of the pyramid in particular. Biased attitudes may take the form of stereotyping, insensitive comments, fear of difference, non-inclusive language, microaggressions, and the reinforcement of prejudice through echo chambers or the rejection of positive information.

Please note that this document and or our advocated use of inclusive language is not about imposing censorship or 'political correctness'. Instead, it is about emphasising the need for ongoing, critical self-reflection on one's own daily interactions as well as one's role in teaching, research, and administration. It is about fostering mutual connections, treating all members of the university with respect, and using non-violent, inclusive language to do so. Please also

note that this version of the guidelines is a work in progress and should currently be seen as first and foremost a suggestion.

This document is divided into five main parts. This introduction constitutes part I and establishes the context and outlines the purpose of the guidelines. It emphasises the necessity of fostering inclusivity within the English Department at Chemnitz University of Technology. Part II examines various forms of discrimination occurring at universities and within classrooms. This section reviews existing mechanisms at TUC for addressing discrimination, assesses their effectiveness, and compares them with practices at other institutions. Part III provides a detailed framework to support educators in creating inclusive classroom environments. Topics include self-reflection, inclusive language, content warnings, and the thoughtful selection of course materials. In the final section IV, called “Links and Additional Information”, we have gathered helpful further resources, offering access to information on bias, examples of best practices at other universities, and opportunities for workshops and self-education.

## **II. Discrimination at University and in the Classroom**

Discrimination at university can take various forms, involve different people, and occur in diverse settings and contexts. While discrimination among students is also a significant concern, this report is primarily focused on discrimination within the classroom and, specifically, between teaching staff and students. In such cases, power dynamics add an additional layer of complexity which makes it more difficult to address issues fairly and without adverse consequences, particularly for students.

This chapter consists of three subsections that are meant to provide an understanding of what discrimination means in this context and what has (or has not) already been done to address it at TUC and beyond. Firstly, we give a definition of discrimination and its manifestations with reference to the German Act on Equal treatment, das *Allgemeines Gleichbehandlungsgesetz* (AGG, 2006, § 1) and list examples of how it takes shape in classrooms at universities. Secondly, we report on the current discrimination-related contact points at TUC and what can be expected when contacting them. Finally, we provide an overview of what other universities are doing to highlight where TUC still falls short.

### **A) Types of Discrimination**

Definitions of discrimination vary, with institutions and lawmakers using different thresholds to determine where it begins and emphasising different aspects of its extent. At its core, discrimination describes the unfair treatment of or prejudice against individuals or groups based on characteristics such as race, gender, religion, age, or sexual orientation.

In many definitions, discrimination is not limited to conscious, wilful acts of unequal treatment. It starts with biased attitudes – stereotyping, insensitive remarks, non-inclusive language, microaggressions – which can build the basis for more extreme acts of bias and systematic and political discrimination (see Anti-Defamation League, 2018).

Grounds, or characteristics, for discrimination are also not uniformly defined. In German law, the General Act on Equal Treatment, *Allgemeines Gleichbehandlungsgesetz* (AGG, 2006, § 1) protects against discrimination on the grounds of six characteristics:

- race or ethnic origin
- gender
- religion or belief
- disability
- age
- sexual orientation

Using this law as a basis, the following table offers definitions for each type of discrimination as well as examples in a university context. Neither the six characteristics nor the examples are a comprehensive list of all possible shapes of discrimination.

Definition		Example
<b>Racial or ethnic origin</b>	<b>Racism</b> is the distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on perceived ethnic origin, race, colour, descent or national origin (Die Antidiskriminierungsstelle des Bundes, n.d.).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· <i>Reproduction of biases and stereotypes.</i></li> <li>· <i>Use of discriminatory language without reflection.</i></li> <li>· <i>Failing to learn or continuing to mispronounce students' names without making an effort to improve, even after they have corrected you.</i></li> <li>· <i>Expressing racially charged political opinions in class assuming that the targets of those opinions do not exist in class.</i></li> </ul>



<b>Gender</b>	<p><b>Gender discrimination and sexism</b> pertain to the disadvantaging, devaluation, violation and oppression of a person or a group of people on the basis of gender or sex. This often includes the idea that one gender is inherently superior to another (e.g. men are worth more than women).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· <i>Expecting male students to generally do better (or worse) at certain tasks.</i></li> <li>· <i>Assigning student tasks or roles that reinforce particular gender roles or don't allow all students flexibility across roles and responses.</i></li> <li>· <i>Using sexist language.</i></li> <li>· <i>Denial of academic accommodations to pregnant students.</i></li> </ul>
	<p><b>Transphobia</b> refers to the rejection of trans identity. This includes misgendering, refusal to acknowledge that trans identity could possibly be real or valid, and the erasure of trans people as a viable group of people.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· <i>Gendering people on the basis of mere assumption.</i></li> <li>· <i>Continuing to misuse pronouns even after a student, transgender or not, indicates their preferred gender pronoun.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Religion or belief</b>	<p><b>Discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief</b> means treating individuals differently because of their religious beliefs or practices, or because of their lack of religious beliefs or practices.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· <i>Being insensitive towards religious practices or beliefs.</i></li> <li>· <i>Scheduling tests and project due dates on religious or cultural holidays.</i></li> <li>· <i>Disregarding religious traditions or their details. (e.g. not taking into</i></li> </ul>

		<i>account the impacts of fasting)</i>
<b>Disability</b>	<b>Ableism</b> contains all practices that discriminate against people with physical, intellectual, or psychiatric disabilities. Such discrimination often stems from a lack of knowledge or understanding of how disabilities impact everyday life.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· <i>Disregard for physical or psychological conditions that impair students' work.</i></li> <li>· <i>Asking people with hidden disabilities to identify themselves in class.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Age</b>	<b>Ageism</b> is based on the assumption that individuals either do not yet, or no longer, possess certain abilities or value due to their age. While it can affect people of all ages, it is most commonly directed towards older adults. Ageism also includes limitations placed on individuals' participation in society and on their ability to lead a self-determined life (Die Antidiskriminierungsstelle des Bundes, n.d.).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· <i>Expecting older students to do better/worse in class.</i></li> <li>· <i>Assuming all students fit the traditional student profile.</i></li> <li>· <i>Presupposing older instructors are out of touch with current research or technology.</i></li> </ul>

<b>Sexual orientation</b>	<b>Homophobia</b> is the open or subtle rejection of homosexuality. It describes a derogatory attitude towards gay, lesbian and bisexual people and is often accompanied by prejudice, discrimination, psychological and physical violence and harassment (Die Antidiskriminierungsstelle des Bundes, n.d.).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· <i>Using heteronormative metaphors or examples in class</i></li> <li>· <i>Involuntary outing.</i></li> </ul>
---------------------------	--	---

Note: The above examples focus primarily on discrimination against students but are equally applicable to others in the higher education context (e.g., instructors, administrative staff, etc.).

## B) Available Contact Points at Chemnitz University of Technology

Where can you turn to if you are affected by discrimination and in need of support?

### 1) Awareness Contact and Consultation Point (ACCP) at the English Department

At our department, we have created a low-threshold, anonymous and equal-footing contact point that would first of all listen to grievances and, if wished, offer support in terms of establishing a dialogue and mediate between the involved parties. We recommend that you turn to it first should there be any issue.

Due to the obvious limitations in capacities and qualification, its role beyond these tasks should be to redirect to more suited and better equipped points of contact if situations become more serious and special counselling is required.

Link: <https://www.tu-chemnitz.de/phil/english/iaa/awareness.php>

*Our Awareness-Team:*

Dr. Mandy Beck ([mandy.beck@phil.tu-chemnitz.de](mailto:mandy.beck@phil.tu-chemnitz.de))

Dr. Alice Hofmann ([alice.hofmann@phil.tu-chemnitz.de](mailto:alice.hofmann@phil.tu-chemnitz.de))

## **2) Vertrauensrat (Council of Confidence)**

On their website the Council of Confidence states that “TU Chemnitz is committed to respecting and protecting the personal rights of all members, affiliates and persons related to the TU [...] irrespective of gender, ethnic or social origin, appearance, age, disability, sexual orientation or gender identity, religion or belief” (Chemnitz University of Technology, 2024). The council can be contacted at any time by those affected by harassment or discrimination and is responsible for official complaints. Contact is possible via email to the chair.

<https://www.tu-chemnitz.de/gleichstellung/struktur/vr.html.en#kontakt>

## **3) Gleichstellungsbeauftragte (Equalities officer)**

The Equality Committee consists of equalities officers for each faculty as well as a separate women’s representative and student representatives. The committee’s goal is to reach “equal opportunities in all areas for all members and those belonging to the university” and to “minimise discrimination in all areas of the university as well as to create diversity and promote its acceptance”. On the committee’s webpages there is a strong emphasis on gender equality and the work the committee is doing to achieve it at TUC. .

The Equality Committee consists of one to three equalities officers per faculty. For humanities these equalities officers currently are Dr Maike Lüssenhop and Tino Hellmuth (Deputy). Contact happens via a central email address belonging to the Equality Committee. It is not clear who it is addressed to directly and who is able to read this email. <https://www.tu-chemnitz.de/gleichstellung/struktur/gleichstellungskommission.html.en>

[https://www.tu-chemnitz.de/gleichstellung/struktur/gb\\_fak\\_ze.html](https://www.tu-chemnitz.de/gleichstellung/struktur/gb_fak_ze.html)

## **4) Student\_innenRat: Referat Antidiskriminierung (Student Council: Anti-Discrimination Unit)**

Part of the Student\_innenRat (henceforth StuRa) is a so-called ‘Referat Antidiskriminierung’ which translates as anti-discrimination unit, that serves as a point of contact for incidents of discrimination, harassment, and bullying at TUC. The unit describes itself as a first point of contact and strives to support individuals affected by such experiences, which includes providing assistance, referring to appropriate resources, or directly addressing issues. The scope of action is more limited compared to other contact points, as the unit is a voluntary association (see StuRa — the student council at the TU Chemnitz, n.d.).

There is an online contact form where incidents can be described. Adding contact information is optional.

Next to these TUC-wide contact points there are also different options within the Department of English that, depending on the circumstances, might be preferable:

<https://www.stura.tu-chemnitz.de/en/referat/antidis>

### **5) Student Advisor**

The student advisor is a position within the Department of English tasked with different things from answering study programme related questions to general concerns, mental health issues as well as discrimination. When contacting the advisor students receive direct help or are forwarded to respective resources (Chemnitz University of Technology, 2023).

The current student advisor can be contacted via email, telephone, or in person.

[https://www.tu-chemnitz.de/phil/english/iaa/student\\_advisor.php](https://www.tu-chemnitz.de/phil/english/iaa/student_advisor.php)

### **6) Fachgruppe (Student Support Group)**

The Student Support Group (The University of Chemnitz, 2024) is a voluntary association of students of English Studies that is meant to provide support by students for students. It can also work as a bridge between students and the department, which means it can be contacted with feedback or criticism for classes for which students would rather stay anonymous.

There is an email address to reach the whole group. <https://www.tu-chemnitz.de/phil/english/iaa/stusu.php>

### **7) Teachers/Lecturers themselves**

Ideally, the English Department fosters an atmosphere in which each student feels comfortable enough to talk to teachers directly before contacting any of the other contact points mentioned here. Students should not fear repercussions for criticising (unconscious) bias and making teachers aware of (unintentional) acts of discrimination. Increasing awareness, visibility and sensitivity for this topic could help make this contact option the best choice to address discrimination.

### **III. Diversity-Sensitive Teaching Practices**

One of this committee's initial intentions was to suggest what guidelines for discrimination-critical teaching could look like. This document is intended to help lecturers implement best practice and is aimed directly at them.

The following section first introduces positionality and intersectionality as awareness-raising concepts before moving on to how to develop a diversity-sensitive classroom and teaching experience by discussing (A) how to read the classroom and engage in a reflective teaching practice, (B) how to develop an inclusive language within the classroom, (C) making some propositions towards the inclusion of content notes in classes and (D) offering advice on the selection of course-material.

#### **Positionality**

Positionality refers to how differences in social position shape identities, experiences and access to power (in its various forms) in a society. In a positionality-aware approach, it is crucial to identify first your own degree of privilege and critically determine and acknowledge your own social position. Both in our research as well as in our teaching, positionality should be of a central concern to us. In order to make yourself aware of your positionality, it can be useful to formulate a positionality statement, also called identity or reflexivity statement, where you lay down key aspects of your social position (aka privilege) in terms of race, citizenship, educational attainment, gender, class, ability, etc.). Acknowledging positionality also means acknowledging intersecting social conditions.

## Intersectionality

Intersectionality refers to the fact that discrimination can have different reasons and sources which intersect and (interdependently) reinforce each other. An intersectional paradigm acknowledges that discrimination (and oppression) cannot be reduced to one type but that different types work together in producing multiple layers of discrimination, i.e. race and gender or sexuality and religion.

### A) Reading the classroom and self-reflection and developing a reflective teaching practice

Good teaching is a lifelong commitment in which self-reflection is key. By regularly evaluating your teaching experiences, course materials, and teaching methods, you can better understand what resonates with both you and your students. When done systematically, this reflective process not only highlights effective practices but also reveals areas for growth, helping you to enhance your teaching approach over time.

Over the past 20 years, TU Chemnitz' student body has become more diverse across many dimensions, including culture, ethnicity, geography, language, religion, socioeconomics and gender identity. Observing and reflecting on the diversity within your classroom can help you tailor your teaching to the individual needs of your students.

For an inclusive teaching practice, it is also important to reflect on your own biases. Bias is inherent to our nature and therefore impossible to avoid, and the first step towards counteracting bias is by acknowledging this. Regularly reflecting on your biases and asking yourself questions about how you feel about particular people, will help you mitigate and where possible overcome these biases.

One important aspect of bias to be aware of is implicit bias, also known as implicit prejudice or implicit attitude. This is a negative attitude, of which one is not consciously aware, against a specific social group. Harvard University hosts a series of tests created by the non-profit organisation *Project Implicit* (set up by scientists) where you can test which implicit biases you have: <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html>.

## B) Inclusive language

### **What does inclusivity mean?**

Inclusivity refers to the practice and mindset of actively welcoming, respecting, and valuing all individuals, ensuring they feel accepted and empowered to participate fully within a group, organisation, or community. In other words, it is the intentional effort to create environments where everyone, regardless of their background, identity, or abilities, can feel a sense of belonging and contribute meaningfully. This goes beyond simply acknowledging diversity; inclusion is about actively fostering a sense of belonging and ensuring equitable access to opportunities, resources, and decision-making.

In practical terms, inclusion involves removing barriers, challenging biases, and intentionally designing systems, policies, and practices that allow individuals from all backgrounds to thrive. This can apply across various areas—such as education, workplaces, and communities—and encompasses diverse aspects, including culture, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, disability, and more.

For example, in a classroom setting, inclusion might mean designing curricula that reflect diverse perspectives, using teaching methods that accommodate different learning styles, and promoting open discussions where all students feel their contributions are valued. In a workplace, inclusion can mean fair hiring practices, accessible facilities, employee resource groups, and policies that support work-life balance and respect for all identities.

Ultimately, inclusivity empowers individuals to create environments where differences are not only acknowledged but celebrated, and everyone can reach their potential and contribute meaningfully.

It should be noted that what constitutes an inclusive environment is an ever-evolving dynamic and as these environments change, so do our ideas about inclusivity. The current guidelines are underpinned by the [Allgemeines Gleichbehandlungsgesetz – AGG \(General Equal Treatment Act\)](#), which aims to prevent or stop discrimination on the grounds of race or ethnic origin, gender, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation.

In this section, we focus specifically on inclusive language, as language is powerful; it shapes how we perceive the world and can change attitudes and behaviours. Like inclusivity, language is continuously evolving. The following guidelines should, therefore, not be seen as a list of fixed rules, but as principles to help you adopt an inclusive approach in your daily interactions. We draw on the [inclusive language guidelines from the American Psychological Association \(APA\)](#) and those from the [University of Brighton](#).



General Dos and Don'ts	
<b>Use person-centred language</b>	When referring to individuals or groups, it is important to avoid language that reduces a person to a single characteristic or identity. For instance, instead of referring to people from Germany as "The Germans," it is more respectful to say "German people." Person-centred (also called person-first) language emphasises the individual instead of their condition (e.g., "person with a disability") whilst identity-first language places the condition or identity at the forefront (e.g., "disabled person"). Both approaches are valid, and the choice of which to use should prioritise the individual's preference, as their perspective takes precedence over stylistic conventions. If the preferences are unclear, you should opt for the person-centred approach.
<b>Don't use humour that belittles people and their characteristics.</b>	People sometimes disguise offensive or derogatory remarks as humour or "banter." Humour that centres on someone's personal characteristics can trivialise and reinforce harmful societal systems and, regardless of intent, cause offence. Avoid making jokes—or engaging in "banter"—wherein the subject of the joke is a person's characteristic.
<b>Don't use slurs.</b>	Slurs are offensive words or phrases that are used to demean, insult, or belittle individuals or groups. They are often based on characteristics like race, gender, nationality, religion, sexual orientation, disability, or appearance. Slurs carry historical and social baggage and have been used to reinforce power imbalances, discrimination, and exclusion. They should therefore not be used, not even in reference to historic texts or previous usage.
<b>Don't use language that defines something against norms of 'normalcy' or what is 'normal'.</b>	Be mindful to avoid language that treats one group as a standard in comparison to another, as this suggests a position of neutrality or normalcy.
<b>Avoid generalisations</b>	It's best to avoid making generalisations about a group of people based on a shared characteristic. People are diverse individuals, and generalisations are overly simplistic; they can also reinforce negative stereotypes.

## What if I get it wrong?

Please know that making mistakes is human. Mistakes are an inevitable part of learning, perhaps more so when it comes to (inclusive) language. Language evolves. Society changes. Missteps—whether this relates to using an outdated term, mispronouncing someone’s name, or unintentionally misgendering someone—are natural and provide opportunities for growth. What matters more is how you respond. Acknowledge errors, apologise for them, and make adjustments. Your openness, willingness to listen, and a commitment to do better shows respect and a genuine effort to foster inclusivity.

## Some examples

Problematic term	Inclusive alternative	Explanation
Handicapped	‘Person with a disability’ or ‘Disabled person’ (only if self-identified)	This is an outdated term that can carry negative connotations of being limited or ‘less than’. The inclusive alternative is also person-centred.
slave	Person who is/was enslaved	The inclusive alternative is person-centred. It centres on the individual’s humanity and emphasises that enslavement was a condition imposed on them, <i>not</i> their identity.
the elderly seniors	older adults persons 60 years and older	This avoids generalisation and emphasises that age is just one aspect of their identity, not a defining characteristic.
Policeman Policewoman Chairman, Chairwoman.	Police Officer Chairperson	In English, avoid using gendered language when referring to someone’s occupation or title.
Preferred name, preferred pronoun	What Name, pronoun do you use	Like anyone, a transgender person’s name and pronouns are what they call themselves, not what they prefer to be called. For the same reason. Also avoid “real name”.

NOTE: For a more comprehensive list see <https://www.ohsu.edu/inclusive-language-guide> by the University of Oregon.

### C) Content notes and trigger warnings

Often misrepresented, content notes are intended to prepare students to better engage with distressing material that might make them feel uncomfortable but which they cannot avoid when dealing with course material. Content notes give your students the autonomy to choose when, how and in which environment they wish to engage with distressing and potentially triggering content.

Often used synonymously, trigger warnings are different from content notes in that they are a forewarning of content that is known to cause severe and intense physiological or psychological distress for people with PTSD. Thus, trigger warnings flag out more severe topics that are known to trigger trauma. However, in general practice, “content notes” is used as the more neutral, descriptive term and usually also encompasses typical “triggers”.

Both content notes and trigger warnings are neither intended to censor lecturers or “coddle” students but to provide an inclusionary and sensitive classroom where students can be in charge of how they deal with their personal histories and to what extent. If the implementation is handled in the right way, content notes also do not “spoil” the experience for readers unaffected by such conditions or who do not want to be informed about material. Even for unaffected students, content notes raise awareness both to the diversity of histories present in any learning environment as well as the fact that some of the topics flagged out are real life experiences for their fellow students and not merely “academic”.

The use of content notes in course and material descriptions facilitates a more inclusive and engaging learning environment; research has shown that both affected and non-affected student groups profit from its appliance in terms of academic attainment and wellbeing.

In terms of implementation, a “voluntary reference approach” is recommended here. In such an approach, a list of content notes could be put on OPAL separately from the actual material so that people who feel the need for it can access them and prepare for what might otherwise be stressful for them. For lecturers, it is also useful to closely scan the material they select for such sensitive content in order to prepare themselves for student questions and to critically engage with the material. Alternatively, lecturers could ask students at the beginning of a semester to anonymously state the kind of content they would like to have trigger warnings and/or content notes on.

In the following we have listed sensitive topical areas. These lists are of course not extensive but field the most common kinds. At the same time, each content note can potentially be the source of trauma and, of course, there is always room for “untypical” sensitivities. An open classroom where such issues can be brought forth in an anonymous way can help in addressing and being aware of these dispositions.

**Content Notes could be formulated if the material contains the following:**

- Racism and racial slurs
- Sexism and misogyny
- Homophobia
- Transphobia and transmisogyny
- Hateful language directed at religious groups
- Kidnapping and abduction
- Pregnancy and childbirth
- Mental illness and ableism
- Eating disorders, body hatred, and fatphobia
- Animal cruelty

**Trigger Warnings could be flagged if the material contains the following:**

- Sexual assault
- Abuse
- Child abuse, paedophilia, incest
- Gun violence
- Miscarriages, abortion
- Self-harm and suicide

**Ideas for Implementation:**

*Generally:*

- CNs should be voluntary, both for lecturers and students (this works perhaps best if content notes are published online only: e.g. as a section in OPAL course directory, as a drop-down menu on the website, or include them in an email prior to course/seminar)
- CNs should focus on and include discriminatory, abusive and otherwise violent - mainly but not exclusively physical - acts
- show that you are also continuously learning in that regard

*Personalised warnings:* Content notes could also be discussed in the first session as demand and needs might differ from class to class:

- what do students want content notes for?
- students could state sensitive topics anonymously (e.g. via a forum on OPAL or using other digital tools, i.e. Padlet)
- the actual need for content notes might differ from class to class, though if you decide to include them, you can refer to the list above for "must-haves"

*Blanket warnings:* Alternately, you could use as a general note if most of your course and class material contains sensitive content

Example: *"The content and discussion in this course will necessarily engage with racism every week. Much of it will be emotionally and intellectually challenging to engage with. I will flag especially graphic or intense content that discusses or represents racism and will do my best to make this classroom a space where we can engage bravely, empathetically, and thoughtfully with difficult content every week"* (University Michigan, n.d.).

## D) Diversity-sensitive course material

The course material you use in class, as preparation for a specific topic or further individual research (e.g. for term paper, project work, etc.) is one of the central elements with regard to teaching. In fact, your selection of and method of dissemination of course material can already be discriminatory for some students on various levels. The following three main strategies should therefore enable you to select and work with inclusive, non-discriminatory course material or discuss problematic material in a reflected and critical mode.

### **Diversify course Materials:**

Be aware that the selection of course material can include or exclude specific students, for example, with regard to dominant perspectives that are presented (e.g. male, white, conventional, Eurocentric, etc.). The discussion of a variety of perspectives will likely affect students positively and not limit their own attitude towards a topic.

Use material and content that represents multiple identities and/or communities (i.e. readings from authors/critics of many different identities and backgrounds, representing a variety of experiences in examples and case studies) and that acknowledges the achievement(s) of underrepresented or discriminated groups of people.

Use readings, visual and audio content, as well as examples that communicate and welcome diversity. This sometimes means to update older course material or references, because they are not appropriate or inclusive anymore.

Consider what required knowledge and context needs to be communicated first for students to engage with a task. This step tends to be skipped in class due to, for example, a limited time frame or the focus on the more immediate topic, but it is actually a crucial point for students to view certain texts or authors critically.

Consider how detailed a task should be formulated in order for students to engage with it comprehensively and equally. Some students might need more details or more background information in order to achieve better outcomes. For more information, see The Bok Center Harvard University (2025).

### **Reflection and Transfer:**

Contextualise (problematic) material and/or readings without reproducing discriminatory terms, content or implications (see section IV.B). This might mean that you need to distance yourself from the material's presented standpoint and encourage the students to do so as well, or you may wish to highlight the differences between the material's presented standpoint and the one agreed upon in class.

Discuss examples and case studies without promoting stereotypes (with regard to gender, race, age, sexuality, etc.). Examples and case studies can be exemplary of a certain issue but should not be generalising or impose a certain representation on students.

Encourage students to critically reflect on social clichés, stereotypes and prejudices. Oftentimes they might not be aware of them, especially if it is a very heterogeneous group of students (with regard to their study programme or cultural background).

Enable students to apply their knowledge to multiple contexts without enforcing stereotypes and prejudices and transfer their knowledge to areas outside of university (e.g. in daily life, their potential career prospects).

Consider and respect the different interests and lifestyles of students when choosing certain material for discussion. You might learn about this only throughout the course of teaching the class, so make sure to adapt to new circumstances and to acknowledge new information about students by making changes if necessary (see The Heinrich Heine University of Düsseldorf, 2020).

### **Accessibility:**

Design course material which is easily accessible by using different media forms (e.g. printed handouts, online databases, audio recordings, etc.) and allow for students to use a variety of devices, with which they are familiar with or work with efficiently. This is even more essential when you use online material or teach online (also see Technische Universität Graz & Convelop Cooperative Knowledge Design GmbH, 2017).

Enable students to engage with course material in more diverse ways by using multisensory material, which addresses seeing, hearing and/or touching simultaneously (e.g. by using subtitles for images or videos). This will encourage comprehension on several levels and support different learning types (see The University of Applied Sciences Osnabrück, 2023).

## IV. Links and Further Reading

### A) Recommended reading on discrimination and bias

#### a) Official guidance

Official guidance can be found on the webpages of the [Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency](#) as well as in [The General Act on Equal Treatment](#) and the [Sächsisches Hochschulgesetz §5\(5\)](#). We particularly recommend the Federal Anti-Discrimination Agencies [Bausteine für einen systematischen Diskriminierungsschutz an Hochschulen](#). These modules are meant to contribute to the protection against and prevention of discrimination at universities. They are:

1. Identification of discrimination risks, surveys, and monitoring;
2. Networking and institutionalization;
3. Raising awareness, empowerment and public relations;
4. Initial and referral counselling as well as anti-discrimination advice;
5. Guidelines for discrimination protection and complaint procedures according to § 13 AGG;
6. Positive measures.

For official guidance in English see also the DC Office of Human Rights' [Guide to Inclusive Language: Race and Ethnicity](#).



## **b) Further reading on racism and white privilege**

- [Exit Racism](#) by Tupoka Ogette (2017)
  - A handbook on the origins, structures, and mechanisms of racism in Germany.
- *Was weiße Menschen nicht über Rassismus hören wollen aber wissen sollten* by Alice Hasters (2019)
  - A book about how fighting racism has to start with confronting one's own racism. Hasters describes how racism shapes her everyday life as a Black woman in Germany, and that it is not only a problem on the far right of society.
  - [Interview](#) with Alice Hasters
- *Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People About Race* by Reni Eddo-Lodge (2018)
  - About how racism is not solely defined by far-right violence and how "more insidious kind of prejudice can be found where many least expect it – at the heart of respectable society"
  - [Guardian Long Read](#) essay by Eddo-Lodge
- [White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack](#) by Peggy McIntosh (1989)
  - Essay on examples of hidden privileges for white people.
- *What White People Can Do Next* by Emma Dabiri (2021)
  - Collection of essays on the historical contexts of racism and what needs to happen for change.
- [Racial Justice Reading List Disparities in Higher Education](#) by Harvard Business School
  - A list of recommended reading on racial justice in higher education.

## **c) Further reading on respectful interactions with trans\*, inter\*, and non-binary people**

- [T\\*I\\*N-klusive Hochschule](#): Koordinationstelle Chancengleichheit Sachsen
  - Offers support for advisors and teachers to create a more trans\*, inter\* and non-binary inclusive atmosphere at universities.
  - Includes definitions and guidelines for universities and links to further resources.

- [Benachteiligung von Trans\\*Personen, insbesondere im Arbeitsleben:](#)  
Antidiskriminierungsstelle des Bundes
  - Definitions and report on the state of research on trans\* and discrimination at work and beyond as well as research gaps.
  - Brief overview of the legal situation, including relevant case law.

#### **d) Further reading on inclusion of students with disabilities**

- [Vielfalt leben - Inklusion von Menschen mit Autismus-Spektrum-Störungen](#) by Nicole Schuster and Ute Schuster (2022)
  - Practical advice for the inclusion of people on the autism spectrum in daycare, school, education, work, and leisure activities.
- [Fachliteratur zum Thema "Studium und Behinderung"](#) by Deutsches Studentenwerk (2021)
  - List of recommended literature on the topic.
- [Behinderungsarten und ihre Auswirkungen](#) by Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft der Integrationsämter und Hauptfürsorgestellen
  - Lists different types of disabilities and how they affect life.

## **B) Best practice examples**

### **a) Guides to inclusive teaching – German universities**

- Universität zu Köln: [Orientierungshilfe zu diskriminierungssensibler Sprache](#) (2023)
  - Focus on self-reflection, constructive feedback culture, contextualizing/changing language choices and content warnings
- Universität Rostock: [Checkliste diversitätssensible Lehre](#) (2017)
  - Checklist for teaching (context, content, teacher, students, methods)
- Heinrich-Heine-Universität Düsseldorf: [Handreichung für diversitysensible Lehre](#) (2020)
  - Checklist as well as practical advice focusing on different diversity dimensions

- Universität Göttingen: [Handreichung für Lehrende zum Umgang mit Diskriminierung in der Sprache, Selbst- und Fremdbezeichnungen](#) (2022)
  - Description of terms that should be avoided
- Technische Universität Graz: [Leitfaden Diversität in der Lehre](#) (2017)
  - Guideline for teaching (context, content, teacher, students, methods)
- Universität Stuttgart: [Diversity in der Lehre, Leitfaden für Lehrende](#) (2021)
  - What does diversity sensitive teaching mean? What can teachers do to achieve it?
- Hochschule Osnabrück: [Leitfaden Diversitätsorientierte Lehre](#) (2023)
  - What does diversity sensitive teaching mean? What can teachers do to achieve it?
- Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin: [Diversitätssensible Lehre](#) (2021)
  - Collection of resources on inclusive teaching
- Carl von Ossietzky Universität Oldenburg: [Lehre gender- und diversitätssensibel gestalten](#) (2024)
  - Why is it important?
  - Focuses on different dimensions of diversity, also including social background
- Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg: [Gleichstellung, Diversität und akademische Personalentwicklung - Leitfäden/Lernmodule](#)
  - Sections on Anti-discrimination, counseling and support, curriculum development, diversity-sensitive language, internationalization, examination/Inclusive assessment, studying with disabilities/Accessibility, exercises
- Fachhochschule Kiel: [Leitfäden & Checklisten für gender- & diversitysensible Sprache und Lehre](#) (2021)
  - Focus on gender and language
- Handreichung für eine diversitätssensible digitale Lehre Goethe University Frankfurt/Main: [Handreichung für eine diversitätssensible digitale Lehre](#) (2020)
  - Focus on digital teaching
- Freie Universität Berlin: [Heterogenität und Lehre. Praxishandreichung für eine diversitätssensible Lernsituation und Diskriminierungsschutz](#) (2020)

- Sections on self-reflection, practical recommendations for teaching, counseling, legal foundations
- Universität Leipzig: [Leitfaden für barrierefreie, diversitätssensible und familienfreundliche Veranstaltungsplanung](#) (2020)
  - Concerned with accessibility and strongly focused on how to plan accessible events
- Universität Bielefeld: [TIN\\*Diskriminierungs -sensible Lehre: Eine Handreichung für Lehrende](#)
  - Guideline for teaching staff.
  - Lists specific tips on what can be done to create T\*I\*N\* sensitive atmosphere at university.
- Kunstuniversität Graz: [Empfehlungen zum wertschätzenden Umgang mit trans, inter\\* und nicht-binären Personen](#)
  - Definitions and advice on inclusive language use at university and in emails.
- WWU Münster: [Leitfaden Hochschullehre geschlechtersensibel gestalten - Forschungsnetzwerk Gender am Mittelbau der WWU](#)
  - Focussed on gender
  - Asks questions for self-reflection on how to structure/fill/give classes
- Landeskonferenz der Gleichstellungsbeauftragten an den wissenschaftlichen Hochschulen Baden-Württembergs: [Gendersensible Lehre – eine Handreichung der AG „Gender in die Lehre“](#) (2022)
  - Definitions and recommendations for preparing, designing, conducting, and reviewing courses.

#### **b) Guides to inclusive teaching – Universities in English-speaking countries**

- University of Oxford: [IncludED: A guide to inclusive teaching](#)
  - What can teachers do to make teaching more inclusive?
- University of Cambridge: [Inclusive teaching practices](#)
  - Strategies for inclusive teaching
- Harvard University: [Equitable & Inclusive Teaching](#)
  - Focussed on course design, mental health, navigating difficult moments in the classroom

- University of York: [Equality and Diversity Policy for Students](#) (2018)
  - Overview of what kinds of diversity exist, what the university does and where to turn for help
- University of Illinois: [Inclusive Teaching Toolkit](#)
  - Different checklists, self-checks and quick-guides on inclusivity and accessibility
- Oregon Health & Science University: [Inclusive Language Guide](#)
  - Which labels to avoid
- Yale Poorvu Center for Teaching and Learning: [Inclusive Teaching Strategies](#)
  - List of recommendations for inclusive teaching
- University of Sheffield: [Inclusion at Sheffield](#)
  - Overview of how the university is improving inclusion
- University of Cambridge: [Inclusive education](#) (2020)
  - What are inclusive education practices? How can teachers make use of them?
- The University of Newcastle, Australia: [Inclusive Teaching and Learning Guidelines](#)
  - Guidelines in the form of paragraphs staff is committed to (purpose, aims, outcomes)
- The University of Queensland: [Inclusive practice](#)
  - Tips on inclusive teaching and assessment
  - How to work with diversity
  - Principles of Universal Design for Learning
- Simon Fraser University, Canada: [Inclusive teaching](#)
  - Definition of inclusive teaching
  - List of resources
- University of Ottawa: [Introduction to Inclusive Teaching Practices](#) (2013)
  - Strategies and tools for inclusive teaching
- University of Waterloo: [Tip Sheets: Inclusive Teaching and Learning](#)
  - Checklists and other resources for accessibility, communication, content warnings, inclusive course design

- DePaul University, Chicago: [Inclusive teaching](#)
  - Using teaching and learning frameworks to design accessible courses
- Michigan University: [An Introduction to Content Warnings and Trigger Warnings](#) (2021)
  - Differences between types of warnings
  - Where to place warnings
  - Examples
- Dartmouth College: [Inclusive Teaching toolkit](#)
  - Examples for inclusive teaching

### C) Workshops and self-education

- [Koordinierungsstelle Chancengleichheit Sachsen](#)
  - Specifically for universities
  - Contact point for equal opportunities and inclusion at universities
  - Focussed on gender equality and inclusion of people with disabilities and chronic illnesses
- [Hochschuldidaktik Sachsen](#)
  - Offers (free) workshops for employees of universities in Saxony.
  - Subject area „Vielfalt, Chancengleichheit & Internationales (VCI)“
  - Offers job-relevant certification
- [Bündnis Gegen Rassismus](#)
  - List of workshops on anti-racism in Saxony sorted by topic and provider.
- [Antidiskriminierungsbüro Sachsen e.V.](#)
  - Offers seminars, workshops, and lectures on various topics related to discrimination and anti-discrimination.
- [Landesarbeitsgemeinschaft politisch-kulturelle Bildung Sachsen e.V.](#)

- Offer training within Saxony on topics related to anti-racism, empowerment, democracy, discrimination, and migration pedagogy. (very expensive)

## References

AGG. (2006). *Allgemeines Gleichbehandlungsgesetz*. Bundesministerium der Justiz.

<https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/agg/>

Anti-Defamation League. (2018). *Pyramid of*

*hate*. <https://www.adl.org/sites/default/files/documents/pyramid-of-hate.pdf>

Antidiskriminierungsstelle des Bundes. (2024). *Bausteine für einen Diskriminierungsschutz an Hochschulen* [Brochure].

[https://www.antidiskriminierungsstelle.de/SharedDocs/downloads/DE/publikationen/Expertisen/bausteine\\_f\\_e\\_systematischen\\_diskrimschutz\\_an\\_hochschulen.pdf?\\_\\_blob=publicationFile&v=6](https://www.antidiskriminierungsstelle.de/SharedDocs/downloads/DE/publikationen/Expertisen/bausteine_f_e_systematischen_diskrimschutz_an_hochschulen.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=6)

Centre for University Teaching Teaching & Learning Support Service, University of Ottawa.

(2013). *Introduction to Inclusive Teaching Practices* (2nd ed.) [Brochure].

<https://www.uottawa.ca/about-us/sites/g/files/bhrs-kd336/files/2022-09/accessibility-inclusion-guide-2013-10-30.pdf>

Centre for Teaching and Learning, University of Oxford. (n.d.). *IncludED: A guide to inclusive*

*teaching*. University of Oxford. <https://wwwctl.ox.ac.uk/included-a-guide-to-inclusive-teaching>

Chemnitz University of Technology. (2023, October 27). *Student Advisor*. [https://www.tu-chemnitz.de/phil/english/iaa/student\\_advisor.php](https://www.tu-chemnitz.de/phil/english/iaa/student_advisor.php)

Chemnitz University of Technology. (2024, August 09). *Council of Confidence of Chemnitz*

*University of Technology*. <https://www.tu-chemnitz.de/gleichstellung/struktur/vr.html.en>

Chemnitz University of Technology. (2024, October 04). *Student Support Group / Department*

*of English Studies*. <https://www.tu-chemnitz.de/phil/english/iaa/stusu.php>

Chemnitz University of Technology. (2025, April 17). *The Equality Commission of the TU*

*Chemnitz*. <https://www.tu-chemnitz.de/gleichstellung/struktur/gleichstellungskommission.html.en>

Die Antidiskriminierungsstelle des Bundes. (n.d.). *Ethnische Herkunft / Rassismus und*

*Antisemitismus*. <https://www.antidiskriminierungsstelle.de/DE/ueber-diskriminierung/diskriminierungsmerkmale/ethnische-herkunft-rassismus/ethnische-herkunft-rassismus-node.html>

Die Antidiskriminierungsstelle des Bundes. (n.d.). *Alter*.

<https://www.antidiskriminierungsstelle.de/DE/ueber-diskriminierung/diskriminierungsmerkmale/alter/alter-node.html>



Die Antidiskriminierungsstelle des Bundes. (n.d.). *Sexuelle Identität*.

<https://www.antidiskriminierungsstelle.de/DE/ueber-diskriminierung/diskriminierungsmerkmale/sexuelle-identitaet/sexuelle-identitaet-node.html>

Menzel, D. (2024, Oktober 01). *Barrierefreie Hochschuldidaktik und inklusive Lehre*. Chemnitz University of Technology. <https://www.tu-chemnitz.de/tu/inklusion/lehre.html>

Oregon Health & Science University. (n.d.). *Inclusive Language Guide*.

<https://www.ohsu.edu/inclusive-language-guide>

Saxon Higher Education Act of May 31, 2023, Saxon Law and Ordinance Gazette (SächsGVBl.), No. 12, p. 329, last amended by Article 2 of the Act of January 31, 2024, SächsGVBl., p. 83.

<https://www.revosax.sachsen.de/vorschrift/19986-Saechsisches-Hochschulgesetz>

Stabsstelle Chancengleichheit und Diversität, The University of Göttingen. (2022, November 30). Handreichung für Lehrende zum Umgang mit Diskriminierung in der Sprache, Selbst- und Fremdbezeichnungen. [https://www.uni-goettingen.de/de/document/download/b6d2ed260303e232587bd8a8f127ae93.pdf/Handreichung\\_Diskr-Sprache-Selbst-Fremdbez\\_2022\\_11\\_30.pdf](https://www.uni-goettingen.de/de/document/download/b6d2ed260303e232587bd8a8f127ae93.pdf/Handreichung_Diskr-Sprache-Selbst-Fremdbez_2022_11_30.pdf)

StuRa — the student council at the TU Chemnitz (n.d.). *Referat Antidiskriminierung*.

<https://www.stura.tu-chemnitz.de/en/referat/antidis>

StuRa — the student council at the TU Chemnitz (n.d.). *Referat Antidiskriminierung*.

<https://www.stura.tu-chemnitz.de/en/referat/antidis>

Technische Universität Graz & convelop cooperative knowledge design gmbh. (2017).

*Checkliste für diversitäts- und gendersensible Lehre* [Brochure].

[https://philosophie.univie.ac.at/fileadmin/user\\_upload/i\\_philosophie/Initiativen/Diversitaet/Diversitaet\\_Lehre\\_Checkliste\\_170420.pdf](https://philosophie.univie.ac.at/fileadmin/user_upload/i_philosophie/Initiativen/Diversitaet/Diversitaet_Lehre_Checkliste_170420.pdf)

The Bok Center, Harvard University. (2025). *Inclusive course design*.

<https://bokcenter.harvard.edu/inclusive-course-design>

The Heinrich Heine University of Düsseldorf. (2020, May). Vielfalt Leben, Zukunft Gestalten: Handreichung für diversitysensible Lehre.

[https://www.diversity.hhu.de/fileadmin/redaktion/Oeffentliche\\_Medien/Diversity\\_Portal/Dokumente/Handreichung\\_HHU\\_KoDi\\_Anhang.pdf](https://www.diversity.hhu.de/fileadmin/redaktion/Oeffentliche_Medien/Diversity_Portal/Dokumente/Handreichung_HHU_KoDi_Anhang.pdf)

The University of Applied Sciences Osnabrück. (2023). *Leitfaden diversitätsorientierte Lehre: Anregungen für Lehrende zur Förderung einer diversitätssensiblen Lehr-Lernkultur* (2nd ed.) [Brochure].

[https://www.hs-osnabrueck.de/fileadmin/HSOS/Homepages/LearningCenter/Dateien/HSOS\\_Diversitaetsorientierte\\_Lehre\\_Januar\\_2023\\_Web\\_oA\\_final.pdf](https://www.hs-osnabrueck.de/fileadmin/HSOS/Homepages/LearningCenter/Dateien/HSOS_Diversitaetsorientierte_Lehre_Januar_2023_Web_oA_final.pdf)

Universität Leipzig, Stabsstelle für Chancengleichheit, Diversität und Familie. (2022). *Eine Hochschule für Alle braucht Alle: Leitfaden für barrierefreie, diversitätssensible und familienfreundliche Veranstaltungsplanung* [Brochure]. [https://www.uni-leipzig.de/fileadmin/ul/CDF/Dokumente/230125\\_GSB\\_Uni\\_fuer\\_Alle\\_Broschu%CC%88re\\_DE\\_web.pdf](https://www.uni-leipzig.de/fileadmin/ul/CDF/Dokumente/230125_GSB_Uni_fuer_Alle_Broschu%CC%88re_DE_web.pdf)

University Michigan. (n.d.). *Equitable Teaching: An Introduction to Content Warnings and Trigger Warnings* [Brochure]. <https://sites.lsa.umich.edu/equitable-teaching/wp-content/uploads/sites/853/2020/09/An-Introduction-to-Content-Warnings-and-Trigger-Warnings-PDF.pdf>

University of Queensland. (n.d.). *Written style guide: inclusive language*. <https://marketing-communication.uq.edu.au/written-style-guide#inclusive-language>

## Appendix