



NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

Gender and Sexuality Resource Center

Trans @ 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 with the student's legal name and legal gender marker. As an NIU student, you are able to change how your preferred/proper name shows up 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; international students; and transgender students. As a faculty member, I am committed to using your proper name and pronouns. We will 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:

https://www.niu.edu/regrec/preferred_proper_name/index.shtml

https://www.niu.edu/regrec/preferred_proper_name/preferrednamefaq.shtml

More to consider in the classroom:

- Have all students fill in their preferred/proper first name and gender pronouns on the first class 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 not to assume the gender that you perceive in a photo or in person is 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 not to 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 (ies) or the identities of others.

Final note on pronoun usage:

Inviting students to share and using their gender pronouns is a way to create a safer environment for all students. Most languages, including the English language system, use gender pronouns to refer to individuals – ex. He, she, him, her, his, hers. For transgender, genderqueer, gender questioning and/or transitioning students, misuse of pronouns can be impactful and alienating to the student.

Other ways that students might identify beyond traditional binary pronouns (he/she, etc) is by preferring the singular use of the pronoun “they” or by preferring that they are referred to by 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 at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gender-neutral_pronoun.

Compiled by Ben Paul via the University of Colorado at Boulder; updated by the NIU Gender & Sexuality Resource Center and Dr. Z Nicolazzo, Assistant Professor, Adult and Higher Education, 2016.