

ASC GUIDANCE DOCUMENT

Teaching and Intellectual Diversity

Guidelines for Instructors in the College of Arts and Sciences

August 14, 2025

This document was created by the College of Arts and Sciences Ad Hoc Committee on State and Federal Policy established by Dean David Horn in May 2025. Its purpose is to support instructors in the College of Arts and Sciences in upholding our longstanding commitment to academic freedom, academic responsibility, and open intellectual exchange, in alignment with university requirements and guidance.

Relevant University Guidelines

- General requirements and guidance on the implementation of SB 1: [Office of University Compliance and Integrity—Focus Areas—SB 1](#)
- Guidance specific to teaching can be found at [Focus Areas—SB 1 —Intellectual Diversity](#). Below we highlight and elaborate on key points from this guidance as they apply to teaching in the College of Arts and Sciences.

Course Content, Academic Freedom, and Academic Responsibility

- State law does not limit the topics, materials, or subjects that instructors may include in their courses, consistent with the robust academic freedoms and responsibilities articulated in [Faculty Rule 3335-5-01](#). This rule affirms faculty members' freedom to *"discuss in classrooms, in their own manner, any material that is relevant to the subject matter as defined in the course syllabus,"* while also emphasizing the responsibility to *"refrain from persistently introducing matters that have no bearing on the subject matter of the course."*
- As stated in the [university's SB 1 implementation guidance](#): *"These [DEI] prohibitions do not restrict the freedom of faculty to teach, conduct research and publish research findings or to discuss in classrooms, in their own manner, any material that is relevant to the subject matter within an academic discipline as defined in the course syllabus."*
- In courses addressing potentially controversialⁱ issues, a detailed syllabus can demonstrate that such content is being taught in context, with academic intent, and within the bounds of an established body of knowledge. A well-crafted syllabus protects academic freedom and affirms academic responsibility by documenting the course content and demonstrating the relevance and educational purpose of the course topics.

Syllabi

Following are some recommended best practices in syllabus development:

- List all topics covered in the course on the syllabus. Instructors may also wish to include a short sentence linking each course topic to the course's academic goals and learning outcomes.
- List all planned readings in the syllabus prior to the start of term. If new readings or assignments are introduced throughout the term, they may be added to the syllabus posted on Carmen, with a brief explanation of their relevance to course content.

Required Syllabus Statements

- The university's new syllabus statement on intellectual diversity must be included on all syllabi, along with three additional syllabus statements: (1) academic misconduct, (2) disability services (3) religious accommodations. Though university guidance permits the use of a link to syllabus statements rather than full text, the College of Arts and Sciences Curriculum Committee currently requires the full text of these four statements to be included in syllabi, as outlined on the [College of Arts and Sciences Curriculum and Assessment Services](#) website. The site also includes the text of other optional statements that instructors may wish to include in full text or [by linking to the Office of Undergraduate Education's page on syllabus statements](#).
- Required syllabus statement on intellectual diversity: *"Ohio State is committed to fostering a culture of open inquiry and intellectual diversity within the classroom. This course will cover a range of information and may include discussions or debates about controversial issues, beliefs, or policies. Any such discussions and debates are intended to support understanding of the approved curriculum and relevant course objectives rather than promote any specific point of view. Students will be assessed on principles applicable to the field of study and the content covered in the course. Preparing students for citizenship includes helping them develop critical thinking skills that will allow them to reach their own conclusions regarding complex or controversial matters."*
- Instructors may include their pronouns in syllabi.

Classroom Discussion

- Though state law does not restrict what content may be taught, it does require that instruction be delivered in a way that allows for open dialogue and encourages students to arrive at their own conclusions. This expectation aligns with Ohio State's mission of education for citizenship—preparing students to think critically and engage thoughtfully with the world around them.
- Supporting intellectual diversity in the classroom means creating space for students to critically explore key theories and methodologies underlying established disciplinary knowledge.
- Allowing students to express diverse perspectives does not diminish instructors' academic responsibility or authority to define a course's scope and focus. Instructors are the custodians of curriculum—deciding what topics are covered, how they are framed, and which evidence and arguments carry weight within a discipline. Students must be free to hold and express differing viewpoints, but instructors are not required to give equal

time to perspectives outside of the course's defined learning objectives or disciplinary framework. Encouraging open dialogue about course content does not mean relinquishing control over course design, readings, pedagogy, evaluation of student learning, or grading.

Educating Students about Fundamental Principles of Academic Inquiry

- Instructors interested in supplementing the university syllabus statement on intellectual diversity may wish to inform and periodically remind students of longstanding fundamental principles of academic inquiry, including their inherent prohibitions against indoctrination. The following sample language may be adapted to suit the course topics and learning objectives:
 - This course engages with the key theories, debates, and empirical findings that are central to understanding the state of the scholarship in <course topic>. My role is not to promote any political, social, or religious belief, but to facilitate your engagement with the ideas that shape this area of study. You are encouraged — and expected — to think critically, ask questions, and form your own evidence-based conclusions, while also learning how to understand and evaluate the full range of perspectives that exist within this scholarly conversation.
 - University-level learning begins with the assumption that no idea is beyond question and that even long-standing or widely accepted beliefs — including those held within academic disciplines — are open to scrutiny, debate, and revision on the basis of new arguments and evidence. This approach reflects the nature of scholarly inquiry, which evolves through critical engagement and not by passive agreement. A central purpose of a university education is to encounter and evaluate ideas that are new, challenging, or even sharply in tension with one's own personal, political, social, or religious beliefs. Developing the ability to analyze and engage with such ideas through reasoned and respectful dialogue is essential to responsible citizenship in a healthy democracy.
 - Student learning will be assessed by evaluating mastery of the course content assigned and/or presented by the instructor. Though students are free to express a range of viewpoints in class discussions, they are expected to demonstrate mastery of course content in assignments, exams, and related forms of evaluation.
- Instructors of courses with learning objectives that require course materials or discussion that might be interpreted as related to diversity, equity, and/or inclusion or topics described as “controversial beliefs or policies” may wish (but are not required) to inform and periodically remind students of the centrality of these issues to course learning objectives and/or their relevance to the body of scholarship that is the focus of the course.
- Instructors may also wish to preface class discussions with a brief discussion of bias. The following concepts and definitions may be useful:
 - Disagreements and intellectual differences are central to academic life and are not evidence of bias or oppression. Bias is prejudice in favor of or against an ideology, person, or group compared with another, usually in a way considered to be unfair. In scholarly debates/discussions, participants question and test the evidence, the logic of the argument/interpretation, the applicability of the model or theory, presenting evidence truthfully/accurately and in a respectful manner. Scholarly consensus refers to the widespread agreement among experts in a particular field on a specific topic or interpretation of evidence. It is neither static nor monolithic, but rather a dynamic and evolving understanding within an academic community. This consensus is built through various forms of

- scholarly communication and debate, including conferences, publications, peer review, and replication of results.
- *Bias in teaching* refers to the undue promotion of personal beliefs, ideological perspectives, or favored theories in ways that *misrepresent opposing views in an academic discipline or discourage open academic inquiry*. It can occur when instruction lacks critical engagement with the breadth of established disciplinary perspectives or presents ideas that are contested within an academic discipline as settled without sufficient justification.
 - Bias is distinct from *teaching the scholarly consensus*, which involves presenting ideas, evidence, and interpretations that are *widely accepted within a field based on rigorous peer-reviewed research and disciplinary standards*. It does not preclude the discussion of minority viewpoints but requires framing them within the context of the discipline's standards of evidence and debate.

General Education Curriculum:

- SB 1 will not result in revisions to the current General Education curriculum or removal of any required GE courses or categories. All currently approved GE courses can and will be taught. Moreover, no changes are required to currently approved GE courses.
- An American civics course requirement will be added to the GE curriculum. Any course that meets this requirement must be approved as a GE Foundations course.
- GE or other courses that cover research related to diversity, inclusion, and equity are not affected by the new state law.

Complaints, Reporting, and Sanctions

- Students who have concerns or questions regarding course content are encouraged to consult with their instructor or relevant administrators (including chairs and deans as may be applicable) as an initial step, and [additional complaint and grievance options](#) related to specific issues are available.
- SB 1 requires the university to have a process to address complaints regarding violations of the [Campus Free Speech Policy](#) and to inform students and employees of its protections. The university's current process already fulfills the requirements for a process to investigate complaints about alleged intellectual diversity violations. The university will amend the [Campus Free Speech Policy's Complaint Investigation, Hearing, and Resolution Process](#) to reference the rights SB 1 affords to members of our community and describe how they can file a complaint.
- If the Office of University Compliance and Integrity initiates an investigation of a complaint that they believe is credible and find that the campus free speech policy was violated, any sanctions will be determined through the following processes:
 - Any sanctions against a faculty member, as defined under Faculty Rule 3335-5-19 (tenure-track, clinical/teaching/professional practice, research, associated including lecturers and adjuncts, and emeritus) must follow the process governed by [Faculty Rule 3335-5-04](#) and more specifically **3335-5-04.1 Procedures for complaints of failure to meet academic responsibilities**. The College Investigation and Sanctioning Committee, made up of college faculty, will evaluate the case and recommend appropriate sanctions to the dean. If the dean recommends sanctions more severe than a

reprimand or mandatory counseling or training, the decision may be appealed to the provost. Some severe sanctions (see rule for details) may be further appealed to the Faculty Hearing Committee, with the final decision in such cases made by the university president.

- Any sanctions against all other faculty, as defined under [Ohio Revised Code Section 3345.0215](#) (e.g., graduate student instructors), will be decided by the executive vice president and provost or their designee in accordance with university policy.
 - Any other non-faculty university employee will be sanctioned by the senior vice president for talent, culture and human resources or their designee in accordance with university policy or collective bargaining agreements.
- Questions about the complaint, reporting, and sanctioning process may be directed to the [Office of University Compliance and Integrity](#) and/or the [Office of Ombuds Services](#).

Questions

- Faculty with questions about this document may contact ASC Faculty Affairs at ascfacultyaffairs@osu.edu. Graduate student instructors should direct any questions about this document to their appointing unit.
- Instructors (including faculty, staff and graduate students serving in instructional roles) should direct detailed questions concerning course design or materials within their field to their chair or director or their designee. Graduate students are strongly encouraged to meet with their faculty advisor and/or course director with specific questions about their courses and may also contact the Graduate School for additional support. Graduate and professional students may likewise consult the [Graduate and Professional Student Ombudsperson](#) regarding other concerns.
- For other questions concerning SB 1, please consult the university's dedicated [SB 1 compliance site](#), which contains information on a range of issues related to SB 1. For SB 1 questions not addressed on that site, contact legislativequestions@osu.edu.

ⁱ As defined in state law, "controversial belief or policy" means any belief or policy that is the subject of political controversy, including issues such as climate policies, electoral politics, foreign policy, diversity, equity, and inclusion programs, immigration policy, marriage, or abortion.