



Guidelines for free and safe discourse

December 2023

In the aftermath of the murderous attack by Hamas terrorists on October 7th and the ensuing war, we find ourselves navigating through terrible times. Each of us grapples with loss and grief, with friends called for reserve duty and our once-secure sense of safety now shaken. Social conflicts are amplified, and we confront feelings of shock, frustration, and pain. In these days of uncertainty, we are faced with the task of maintaining our diverse faculty community as a safe space open for discourse. Our commitment extends to fostering freedom of expression for all members, regardless of their background – Jewish or Arab, right-wing or left-wing voters. We take pride in our shared life in the faculty, embracing liberalism and freedom of opinion as the foundation of creative and critical academic thought. Clearly, these values reject acts of violence, celebration of the deaths of innocents, support for terrorism, incitement of violence, racism, as well as any harm or shame inflicted upon the community's members. Violators will face consequences according to the law and university regulations. We firmly reject the propagation of hate, fake news, and vigilantism within our community and will not tolerate such behavior.

In order to form a tolerant and pluralist policy, while upholding respectful conduct within our diverse faculty community – comprising academic, administrative, and clinical staff, as well as all students – we embarked on a collaborative dialogue process over the past few weeks. Guided by an organizational counselor, these discussions were open to all community members. Through these discussions, we identified the necessity to move beyond standard disciplinary measures, prompting the creation of thorough instructions and guidelines. The principles articulated in this document reflect the insights gathered from meetings that included active participation from students and the entire spectrum of faculty members in both the Faculty of Law and the School of Criminology. We emphasize that the collective responsibility for cultivating a respectful environment and discourse rests upon us all, both as a community and as individuals.



The aim of these guidelines is to foster an atmosphere of mutual respect and empathy. The collaborative process behind their creation underscores the shared responsibility of all faculty members in upholding this environment. It's crucial for all of us to communicate respectfully and moderately, double-checking the information we receive, and responding thoughtfully. In our faculty, we're dedicated to strengthening our ability to live together harmoniously as a community—a skill we value and actively work to maintain.

Principles of safe discourse at the faculty:

1. The faculty encourages open and critical discussions on matters related to the war, as well as political and social issues, both inside and outside the classrooms.
2. Discussions on current events may naturally come up in class in the direct context of their topic, but it is best to avoid initiating such discussions during lectures when they are not related to the topic at hand.
3. The faculty will follow the “aChord” center’s Traffic-Lights Model:
 - a. The Red Zone: Any expressions involving violent discourse, racist or stereotypical statements, the inciting of violence, racism or terror (“the country should be purged of Arabs”; “Jews should be kicked out of here”; any sentence beginning in “death to...” or including threats of violence) will be promptly stopped, and disciplinary actions will be taken.
 - b. The Orange Zone: Expressions where the content is legitimate, but the tone or manner in which they are said are scornful or hurtful to members of the community (“why the hell should I care what happens to children in Gaza \ why the hell should I care about fallen IDF soldiers \ the abducted Israeli citizens?”) will be corrected by the staff and redirected towards the green zone, either directly or through a process of mediation.

c. The Green Zone: Legitimate discourse that is not necessarily neutral, calm, or factual (“the IDF’s response is justified \ unjustified”; “the Israelis \ Palestinians don’t care about human life”). While the content of the expressions may be controversial, the manner of speaking must be respectful of differing perspectives, as well as empathetic to the emotions of others. During discussions, it is crucial to remember that the faculty contains staff and students of different groups, with different opinions and worldviews, as well as varying levels of sensitivity. It is advisable to use few exclamation points and more questions marks.

4. When discussions are mediated during classes, there will be ample room for diverse opinions. It’s essential to clarify that the students’ political views won’t influence their evaluation.

5. The principles of discourse in the faculty extend to non-verbal expressions, such as Zoom backgrounds, writings on clothes, and so forth.

6. The implementation of the Traffic-Light model will be applied uniformly.

7. The principles of discourse in the faculty also extend to public expression outside classrooms, including discussions in WhatsApp groups directly related to academic activities at the university. We expect members of the faculty to adhere to the “green zone” both in the academic spaces and as a guideline to collaborative social life.

However, in cases where the expressions occur in contexts and on platforms distant from the core of academic activities within the faculty, the enforcement levels decrease. The faculty does not intend to apply these guidelines on platforms distant from its central activities, and we strongly advise all community members against initiating such “hunts”. That being said, the closer the expressions are to the core of the “red zone”, the greater the interest we will have to intervene.

Guidelines for addressing offensive discourse:

8. The faculty encourages all community members who are affected by offensive discourse to follow these guidelines:

a. It’s advisable to initiate the resolution of a complaint by directly addressing the students, faculty, or staff members. This approach promotes a direct and honest resolution.

It is important to remember that expressions online are often taken out of context, and direct and respectful communication is instrumental in resolving issues arising from mutual misunderstanding.



b. In cases where a direct approach is impractical or unhelpful, seeking mediation from Mariela Buchnik Yavetz is an option. Alternatively, recourse can be taken to the authorities of the faculty of law or the school of criminology to assess the need for formal enforcement. It's important to emphasize that the faculty encourages exhausting internal communication before formal enforcement measures.

c. After the exhaustion of internal communication within the faculty, one may turn to the university authorities in accordance with the rules and the existing regulations of the university.

9. The boundaries between the orange and red zones and between the green and orange zones may not be precise and can be a matter of debate. To facilitate resolution in such cases, the university has engaged Mariela Buchnik Yavetz for mediation, when disputes cannot be resolved directly.

Drastic measures should only be taken in extreme situations. If a concrete decision on the boundaries of free speech at the faculty, beyond university regulations, becomes necessary, the dean, in consultation with the involved faculty members and students, will make such decisions.

10. It is crucial to refrain from responding to offenses with shaming, be it online, on WhatsApp groups, or other platforms. Such methods often perpetuate a cycle of revenge, where the offended party reacts with their own offense. However, due to the dynamic nature of online discourse, predicting or controlling the extent of counter-offense is challenging.

These hard times we find ourselves in require openness and sensitivity. Please remember that the impact of the ongoing war affects each of us differently. Before expressing your thoughts, consider how they may be received by those who hear them. Reflect also on your responsibility as a listener and interpreter of the spoken words. Sometimes, choosing not to respond is the most effective reaction. This advice is not meant to discourage the expression of opinion, a crucial condition for any academic process, particularly at our faculty. However, with this in mind, we appeal to you, on behalf of the community of faculty and students: please join us in upholding the spirit of our community, the rule of law, Israeli solidarity, and, above all, the human and respectful environment among us.