

Welcoming Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming Students in our English Classes

As teachers, we have a responsibility to respect our students' gender identities both in the classroom and as part of a larger campus community. There may be times when our perception of a student's gender is different from how they identify, so all students should have a respectful opportunity to share the pronouns that they use.

In Class Suggestions:

- Do an **online or in-class survey** that asks students questions about themselves, their learning challenges, how you can help them, their major, their pronouns, where they are from etc. We have to get to know our students in order to ensure they experience a positive learning environment.
 - One way to ask students about their pronouns is: “What pronouns do you use? (He/him, she/her, they/them, etc.)” Once you know your students' pronouns, it's important to use those pronouns.
- Model and remind students that the Modern Language Association has affirmed **“they” as an appropriate pronoun** in the singular when you don't know someone's gender. This is also true in academic essays. (It is conjugated in the regular way but is used singularly. “They are going to the store” – can refer to your friend, Simkhe.)
- If you're a cisgender teacher, one way to be an ally is to add your **personal pronoun** to the footer of your professional emails (you can do this to your personal emails too). To make a footer, go to Settings then Options then Email Settings.
- Another great way to learn more about being an ally is to attend the **Safe Zone Ally Training** on campus and then hang the sign on your door that says that your office is a Safe Place and that you are a Trans ally. The next workshop will be in April. Info through Rick Nizzardini, rnizzard@sfsu.edu.
- Know where the **all gender bathrooms** are near your classroom. In the Humanities building, they are right when you walk in, on the first floor. You can also post a map of where the all gender bathrooms are on campus on your course ilearn page. [Map link here.](#)
- Nov. 20 is **Transgender Day of Remembrance and Resistance**. This usually falls during our week off for Thanksgiving, but you can honor the themes of that day in your classroom, as appropriate.

Resources:

- Dr. Lal Zimman, professor of Linguistics at UCSB: Their website provides a lot of good information about using words like “cis” and “trans” to describe your relationship between your identity and your body.
 - A great place to start is the [Trans Pronoun FAQ](#).
- Davey Shlasko's [pamphlet on how to be an ally](#) (\$6-18, sliding scale)