



# UMass Pronoun Policies and Practices for Instructors

Genny Beemyn, Ph.D.

Director, Stonewall Center  
UMass Amherst



My Pronouns: they/them

# Why Pronouns Are Important

- As a society, we commonly assume the gender of others by their appearance and indicate these assumptions by using gendered language, such as she/he, ma'am/sir, Ms./Mr., and ladies/gentlemen.
- This practice results in many individuals, especially trans and gender-nonconforming individuals, being misgendered, which makes them feel marginalized and invisible.
- As an institution that is committed to the inclusion of historically underrepresented groups and ensuring a respectful, safe, and inclusive campus for all members of the community, UMass is working to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to indicate their pronouns and to have their pronouns be respected.

# Pronouns in SPIRE

- As of June 1, 2018, students have been able to go into SPIRE and indicate their pronouns.
- Incoming students are being encouraged to enter their pronouns when they register for classes during NSO.



# Pronouns in SPIRE

## My Pronouns

UMass Amherst strives to create an inclusive and respectful living and learning environment. One way to support this effort is to encourage the usage of the correct pronouns for members of our campus community.

The pronouns you select here will be available to faculty and staff in a number of academic and administrative offices including but not limited to, the Registrar's Office, the Bursar's Office, Financial Aid, UMass Police, and Residential Life. Pronouns will also be listed on class rosters.



The screenshot shows a form titled "Pronouns" with a blue header. Below the header, the text "Please select your pronouns:" is followed by a list of six radio button options: "He/Him", "She/Her", "They/Them", "Ze/Hir", "Name only", and "Choose not to disclose".

Screen shot of  
the pronoun  
page in SPIRE

Because members of our community may not always have immediate access to SPIRE, you are also encouraged to share the pronouns that you use with your instructors, peers, and campus administrators directly. They are not automatically alerted if you change your pronouns here.

Please note that the pronouns you select here may be seen by your parent(s), family members or legal guardian(s), especially if you grant them access to your SPIRE account.

Listing pronouns here and making them available throughout the SPIRE system is meant to facilitate and encourage the usage of correct pronouns for members of the campus community. Additional information on campus efforts in this area is available at the [Stonewall Center website](#).

# Pronoun Options

Subjective	Objective	Possessive	Reflexive	Examples
He	Him	His	Himself	The book is his. He identifies outside a gender binary.
She	Her	Hers	Herself	The book is hers. She identifies outside a gender binary.
They	Them	Theirs	Themselves	The book is theirs. They identify outside a gender binary.
Ze (pronounced “zee”)	Hir (pronounced “here”)	Hirs (pronounced “heres”)	Hirself (pronounced “hereself”)	The book is hirs. Ze identifies outside a gender binary.
Name Only				
Choose Not to Disclose				

- Class Rosters
  - Advisee Lists
  - Student Services Center
  - Other administrative pages in SPIRE
- 
- Pronouns will thus be available to instructors, advisors, academic deans and department administrators, and the staffs of administrative offices, including, but not limited to, the Registrar's Office, the Bursar's Office, Financial Aid, Residential Life, and UMPD.

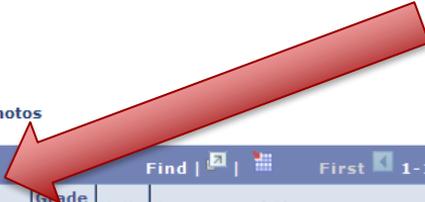
# Pronouns on Class Rosters

Days and Times	Room	Instructor	Dates
We 4:00PM-6:30PM	South College Room E480	Laura Furlan	01/22/2018 - 05/01/2018

\*Enrollment Status

Enrollment Capacity 15      Enrolled 12

Select display option:  Hide Photos    Show Photos



Enrolled Students									
	Notify	Photo	ID	Name	Pronouns	Grade Basis	Units	Program and Plan	Level
1	<input type="checkbox"/>		21000000	<a href="#">Amanda...</a>		GR Letter	3.00	Anthropology - Anthropology (PhD)	Master/Doc
2	<input type="checkbox"/>		31000009	<a href="#">Caitlin...</a>	She/Her	GR Letter	3.00	English - English (PhD)/English (MA)	Master/Doc
3	<input type="checkbox"/>		14000036	<a href="#">Caitlin...</a>		GR Letter	3.00	Sustainability Science - Sustainability Science (MS)	Masters
4	<input type="checkbox"/>		30000003	<a href="#">Caitlin...</a>	Name only	GR Letter	3.00	Communication - Communication (PhD)	Doctorate
5	<input type="checkbox"/>		31000000	<a href="#">Amanda...</a>		GR Letter	3.00	English - English (PhD)	Doctorate
6	<input type="checkbox"/>		31000001	<a href="#">Amanda...</a>		GR Letter	3.00	English - English (PhD)/English (MA)	Master/Doc
7	<input type="checkbox"/>		30000004	<a href="#">Amanda...</a>		GR Letter	3.00	English - English (PhD)/English (MA)	Master/Doc
8	<input type="checkbox"/>		31000003	<a href="#">Amanda...</a>	Name only	GR Letter	3.00	English - English (PhD)/English (MA)	Master/Doc
9	<input type="checkbox"/>		23000001	<a href="#">Amanda...</a>	They/Them	GR Letter	3.00	Afro-American Studies - Afro-American Studies (PhD)	Doctorate
10	<input type="checkbox"/>		21000001	<a href="#">Amanda...</a>		GR Letter	3.00	English - English (MA)	Masters
	<input type="checkbox"/>					GR		English -	

Where pronouns will appear on class rosters in SPIRE

- ❖ If a student has indicated their pronouns on a class roster, respect these pronouns and ask students in the class to respect each other's pronouns.
- ❖ You could have a syllabus policy that asks students to respect each other's pronouns, as well as the names that students use for themselves. A sample policy:
  - **Names and Pronouns:** Everyone has the right to be addressed by the name and pronouns that they use for themselves. Students can indicate their preferred/chosen first name and pronouns on SPIRE, which appear on class rosters. Please let me know what name and pronouns I should use for you if they are not on the roster. A student's chosen name and pronouns are to be respected at all times in the classroom.

# Pronouns on Class Rosters

- ❖ Do not assume that students who do not indicate their pronouns on class rosters use “she/her” or “he/him” for themselves.
- ❖ Recognize that the pronouns that someone uses for themselves may change over time, and that students may forget to update them on SPIRE. If a student indicates that their pronouns are different than what is on the roster, simply correct your roster manually and remind students of the option to let you know of their pronouns in SPIRE.



# Asking Pronouns in Classes

If few students have their pronouns on the roster, you can ask them to provide their pronouns, if they wish.

In **small-sized classes**, you can:

- Have the students introduce themselves, including their pronouns.
- Pass out cardstock and have the students write down their names and, if desired, their pronouns to place on the desk or table in front of them. You could also use name tags for the first few class sessions.
- Ask the students to write down their names and pronouns on an index card for you to collect (this is a less useful strategy because you learn students' pronouns, but the students do not learn each other's pronouns).

# Asking Pronouns in Classes

In **large-sized classes**, you should avoid gendering students unless you know how they identify their gender.

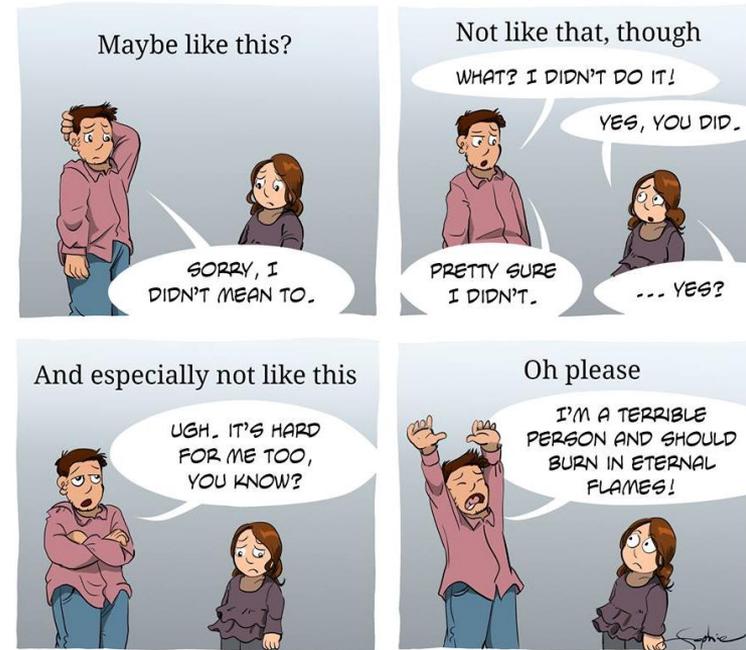
Suggestions for how to call on students without gendering them:

- Gesture to the person you are calling on and say something like, “as you pointed out” or “as they pointed out.”
- Instead of saying something like, “the gentleman in the back, what is your question?” you can say, “the person in the back in the purple sweater, what is your question?”

# What If I Mistakenly Use the Wrong Pronouns for Someone?

- ❑ The best thing to do if you use the wrong pronoun for someone is to say something right away, such as “Sorry, I meant they.” Fix it, but do not call special attention to the error in the moment. If you realize your mistake after the fact, apologize in private and move on.
- ❑ It can be tempting to go on and on about how bad you feel that you messed up or how hard it is for you to get it right. But please, don't. It is inappropriate and makes the person who was misgendered feel awkward and responsible for comforting you, which is not their job. It is your job to remember people's pronouns.

How to react  
when you misgender a trans person



Sophie Labelle, Assigned Male Comics

# What If Someone Else Mistakenly Uses the Wrong Pronouns for a Person?

- ❑ In most cases, the best thing to do if you hear someone misgender another person is to gently correct them without further embarrassing the individual who has been misgendered. You can say something, such as “Actually, Xena uses she/her pronouns for herself,” and then move on. If a person refuses to use the appropriate pronouns for someone, do not ignore it. It is important that the harassment of others not be tolerated. It may be appropriate to speak to the student in private to correct the misgendering behavior.
- ❑ It may also be appropriate to check-in with the person who has been misgendered and say something, such as “I noticed that you were being referred to by the wrong pronouns earlier, and I know that this can be really hurtful. Would you be okay with me taking the person aside and reminding them about your appropriate pronouns? I want to make sure that this space is safe for you.” Follow up if necessary, but take your cues from the comfort level of the person who has been misgendered.

# Keep in Mind

- ❖ Say “the pronouns someone uses” or “their personal pronouns,” rather than “their preferred pronouns,” because the pronouns someone uses are not a preference.
- ❖ Not everyone feels comfortable indicating their pronouns in every setting and they should not feel forced to do so. If you ask students to indicate their pronouns when they indicate their names, say something like, “please say your name and, if you want, please provide the pronouns you use for yourself.” You can set an example by stating your pronouns first or including your pronouns on your syllabus.
- ❖ There is more information about pronouns on the UMass Amherst Pronoun FAQ on the front page of the Stonewall Center’s website under the icon at right.



# Questions?

Feel free to email me:

[genny@umass.edu](mailto:genny@umass.edu)