



Loft Participation Agreement

for Loft Teaching Artists, Students, Visiting Artists, and Event, Conference, and Festival Attendees

The Loft's mission is to advance the artistic development of writers, foster a thriving literary community, and inspire a passion for literature. We believe that story, verse, and writing aren't just nice things to put on a shelf, but are core to a full existence. At their best, words help us connect, entertain, mourn, provoke, educate, and empathize.

We are also deeply committed to being an actively anti-racist organization; our plan is to center our antiracism work in everything we're planning for the years ahead, including classes. We will be asking questions of who we are and why we exist—and we expect our answers to link us to our broader community, to the issues of our times, and to integrate our antiracist work into everything we do.

What this means for classes is that we ask all who participate in them - teaching artists and students - to uphold our mission and our values in every aspect of the class experience. We welcome and value students of all races, ethnicities, ages, religions, genders, sexual orientations, socio-economic backgrounds, and abilities. We understand that different and intersecting identities have the ability to bring complexity, joy, and multiple perspectives, and that a class experience is enhanced by these multiple perspectives.

As a Loft class, conference, or events participant, we ask you to acknowledge the following:

- Each individual interacts with privilege and systems of power and dominant culture in different ways based on their unique identities and lived experiences. Be open to examining your relationship to privilege and power - in your life, and in your writing..
- It is okay to ask the class (or event participants) to identify their preferred pronouns, and to model this behavior by providing yours; it is also okay for anyone to decline to state them. Please respect the way(s) in which people choose to express their identities by using requested pronouns.

- Understand that the Loft does not censor writing, but we expect you to ask questions of yourself and others, and to disrupt bias in your own writing, and that of your peers (E.g. Does this story need to be written by me? Why?). We expect you to be open to constructive critique of authorial ethics in your writing.
- Classrooms and event spaces need to be accountable spaces; please model this behavior by holding yourself accountable, as well as your students and fellow event attendees. Loft teaching artists and visiting writers are asked to challenge and question things like bias, stereotypes, and privilege in your writing. Expect to be held accountable to yourself and others and be open to being challenged. Understand that classmates may find submitted work upsetting, and vice versa. We expect that you will be open to a conversation about why, and will respect the boundaries of your classmates just as we expect your boundaries to be respected. It is okay to make mistakes and to learn from them.
- Respect the classroom as a place of privacy and confidentiality; understand the need for respect, trust, and care for the experiences and the writing of others in the classroom environment, whether online, in-person, or through asynchronous (text based) learning environments. Do not share the writing of others or screenshots of classwork on social media. Do not divulge classroom conversations with people not taking the class; take care with emails: if you are the teaching artist, ask permission to share student emails with each other; if you have not yet obtained permission, blind copy (bcc) your class members on a group email before divulging addresses. If class participants have agreed to share email addresses for class communications, students should take care to identify themselves clearly as a classmate, along with the reason for emailing a fellow student; do not forward emails to anyone outside of class. Active and engaged participation is a key factor in the success of Loft classes.
- Seek to educate yourself on what it means to be actively anti-racist; you can start by utilizing suggested Loft resources below. Seek out ways beyond the Loft to learn about anti-racism; books, podcasts, videos, libraries, youtube, TedTalks, are all good places to start. How can you deepen your writing, your relationship to self and others, and your accountability to being actively anti-racist in and out of the Loft classroom? Understand the need for cultural pluralities and global perspectives.

At the Loft, we *want* our classrooms to be **safe spaces**. However, a feeling of safety can never truly be guaranteed for anyone; it is important to understand that a “safe space” is not free from uncomfortable conversations, exposure to triggering or offensive writing or discussion, or

respectful disagreement or critique of work in good faith. Reading and writing, by their nature, include exposure to controversial, challenging, and sometimes offensive language.

And, conversations recently have turned us away from the idea of thinking about the creative writing classroom as a “safe space,” and more toward the idea of the creative writing classroom as a “**brave space; an accountable space.**” Please consider this as you communicate behavior and boundary expectations to your students.

What brave and accountable spaces mean:

Accountability. Be prepared to have your writing, and your biases and perspectives, questioned, even challenged. It’s okay to be uncomfortable, challenged, angry, and confused. That is where the work begins.

Understand that it is not the job of marginalized people to educate you about your own biases or lack of education around issues of power, privilege, race, racism, homophobia, transphobia, and more. Be proactive with your own education and understanding.

Respect for multiple perspectives and lived experiences. Every person has the right to bring the fullness and complexity of their lived experience to the classroom.

Boundaries. Everyone has the right to establish boundaries around their own unique needs and limits, when it comes to reading and listening to challenging material. Advocate for yourself in this area; you know what you need better than anyone, including your teacher.

Engagement. Come to class prepared to engage with others, and their work. Loft classes are participatory in nature.

Guidelines for workshopping (critique of student work, by peers and by teaching artist) should be established, explained, and upheld by the teaching artist. Understand that critique is not about being critical of the lived experience a writer brings to a piece of writing; it is about critique of craft (how effectively the writer is able to communicate the experience.)

Assume **best intentions**, but understand that **intention does not always equal impact**. Seek to understand this dichotomy.

If you’d like further resources for more in-depth education on equity, inclusion, and anti-racism, here are some good places to start:

Reading

Craft in the Real World, by Matthew Salesses

The Anti-Racist Writing Workshop: How to Decolonize the Creative Writing Classroom, by Felicia Rose Chavez (Loft teacher training and support sessions are led by Felicia and are based on this book)

A Good Time for the Truth: Race in Minnesota, edited by Sun Yung Shin (a Loft teaching artist)

Appropriate: A Provocation by Paisley Rekdal

How to Be an Anti-Racist by Ibram X. Kendi

We Are Meant to Rise: Voices for Justice, edited by Carolyn Holbrook and David Mura (Loft teaching artists)

Racism without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in America Fifth Edition, Eduardo Bonilla-Silva

Me and White Supremacy: Combat Racism, Change the World, and Become a Good Ancestor, Layla F. Saad

Online Learning Resources:

For an idea of how the Loft continues to build knowledge and capacity on this, please visit [Team Dynamics.com](#) and [IDIInventory.com](#)

[National SEED Project](#) (Seeking Educational Equity and Diversity)

[ASDICircle.org](#)

The Danger of a Single Story, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie - [TedTalk](#)

[Diversity/Equity/Justice Wordpress](#)

These are just a few of the many resources available on creating an equitable, inclusive, and anti-racist learning environment in your classroom or event; if you are unsure of how to do this, please connect with the Loft's Program Manager of Education at mmanzler@loft.org