

Practices of Resilience for Underrepresented Graduate Students

ENTOM 875 // Special Topics Seminar (1 credit)

Th 3:00-4:30 PM // Fall 2019 // Location TBD

Instructors: Taylor Tai (tmtai@wisc.edu) // Dr. Claudio Gratton (cgratton@wisc.edu)

Overview

This graduate seminar is offered by Community, a campus organization for and by underrepresented graduate students in STEM fields. Through the course, students will discuss issues of identity as they relate to graduate life in STEM, learn vocabulary for understanding and describing their experiences as minoritized students on campus, and collaboratively build a toolkit for remaining resilient in environments that fall short of embracing non-dominant voices. Course content and weekly topics will draw from a variety of social justice movements, scholarship on diversity and inclusion in academia, and students' own interests and experiences.

Structure

This is a graduate-led seminar facilitated by Taylor Tai, with Dr. Claudio Gratton serving as a course sponsor and faculty advisor. We will follow a discussion-based format in which students take turns to choose readings and facilitate activities and discussion. Once a month, class will include a larger event (e.g., panel, workshop, or invited speaker) that aligns with course themes and is open to all of Community's membership.

Eligibility

Underrepresentation applies to a wide range of backgrounds and identities. These include gender, sexuality, income, ability, race, ethnicity, nationality, family status, religion, and many more. This course is intended for graduate students in STEM who identify as underrepresented, but others may contact Taylor Tai (tmtai@wisc.edu) and Claudio Gratton (cgratton@wisc.edu) to learn whether it may be a good fit for them.

Grading

This course is graded on a Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory (S/U) basis. Students will receive credit for attending and participating in class, leading a discussion, and contributing to the final project. For the final project, students will collaborate to compile their "Practices of Resilience¹," or strategies for thriving at UW, into a webpage, zine, or other source for future graduate students. One unexcused absence is permitted during the semester.

Credit Hours

This class meets for 1.5 hours each week in the fall semester. Students are expected to work on course activities (reading, discussion prep, etc.) for ~1.5 hours outside of class each week.

Learning Outcomes (additional outcomes TBD by participating students)

1. Students will be able to **list and describe recommended practices of resilience** for navigating graduate school as someone with a minoritized identity (e.g., finding a social support network, seeking out a sympathetic mentor, reading about role models). These may come from the literature in science and education and/or from group discussions and lived experiences.
2. Students will read literature related to graduate school recruitment and retention, science identity, and other topics relevant to being an underrepresented student in STEM and **identify the ways that this literature applies** to their own experiences and challenges in graduate school.
3. Students will draw on class conversations and readings to **generate a bank of practices of resilience that work well for them**, which they can use as a resource throughout the challenges they face in graduate school.
4. Students will **feel empowered to name their experiences in graduate school** (e.g., “stereotype threat”, “double burden”, etc.) using terms and language that allows them to be understood by others within and outside of their community.

Diversity Statement

Underrepresented students can feel unable to fully engage in their research or academic activities due to the time and energy spent coping with identity-based tension (e.g., microaggressions, lack of representation, and requests for educating/mentoring others). This course seeks to uplift those from non-dominant backgrounds and equip students with strategies for thriving in academic institutions despite these challenges. Furthermore, as per federal and state law, we will not discriminate based on race, color, creed, religion, sex, gender, national origin or ancestry, age, disability, sexual orientation, arrest or conviction record, marital status, pregnancy, parental status, military status, or veteran status in this course.

Disability / Other Accommodations

If there are circumstances that may affect your performance in class, please let an instructor know how we can adapt assignments and activities with your needs in mind. The McBurney Disability Resource Center provides assistance for students with disabilities, but we will work with you to make the course accessible regardless of whether you have official documentation.

Office Hours

Taylor is available to meet after the class period ends, or by appointment scheduled via email. Students may also meet with Claudio as needed by scheduling an appointment via email.

¹Trans* in College: Transgender Students' Strategies for Navigating Campus Life and the Institutional Politics of Inclusion. 2016. Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing.

Draft Course Schedule

Week 1 (9/5). Introductions & establishing group norms.

Week 2 (9/12). Defining community. Large group workshop led by Patty Monari.

Week 3 (9/19). Cultivating community outside of your department. Led by Taylor Tai.

Week 4 (9/26). Healthy stress management. Led by student facilitator.

Week 5 (5/3). Impostor syndrome & confidence. Led by student facilitator.

Week 6 (10/10). Seeking out mentors & role models. Led by student facilitator.

Week 7 (10/17). Campus climate & conflict resolution. Led by student facilitator.

Week 8 (10/24). Power dynamics & conflict. Large group workshop led by Gabe Javier.

Week 9 (10/31). Self care in academia. Led by student facilitator pair.

Week 10 (11/7). Advocating for departmental change. Led by student facilitator pair.

Week 11 (11/14). Advocating for change. Large group workshop led by Taylor Tai.

Week 12 (11/21). Final project planning, organizing, and writing session.

Week 13 (11/28). No class.

Week 14 (12/5). Final project work party and celebration!