

**The International T. S. Eliot Society**  
**Statement on discrimination and harassment**

We offer the following guidelines in the interests of ensuring that our annual meeting and its social events remain a welcoming environment, free from discrimination and harassment for all of its members and guests, regardless of their scholarly status, age, gender, race, ethnicity, religion, physical appearance, or sexual or gender identity or expression.

In adopting a code of conduct, the Society is not seeking to regulate the consensual relations of its members but to remind them of the misunderstandings and abuses that can occur when power relations are unequal. Our Society includes individuals from different nations, cultures, institutions, and walks of life, as well as scholars at different places in their careers. We hope to ensure that all who attend feel safe to pursue their love for Eliot, poetry, and intellectual inquiry.

We understand **sexual harassment** to be unwanted conduct of a sexual nature that is severe, persistent, or pervasive; it occurs often (but not exclusively) when one person has actual or perceived power or authority over another. The term “sexual harassment” may sound extreme enough that it seems far removed from anything that might actually take place within the framework of this Society’s gatherings. But misbehavior and violations in a disturbingly wide variety of institutions and forums over these past few years have shown us that nowhere is unequivocally safe or necessarily protected from abusive practices.

Our collective sense of scale, too, has changed: more behaviors register today as sexual harassment than would have counted as such a decade or more ago. Troubling and injurious behavior that, in the past, might have been ignored, laughed off, overlooked, downplayed, or simply endured now falls squarely into the category of sexual

harassment. This includes bullying, coercive, sexually aggressive, or patently disrespectful behavior under any circumstances towards any member of our Society, especially in circumstances where such behavior exploits an existing power differential. It also includes unwanted, persistent social pursuit of another person (again, often taking place in cases where there is a difference of power between the two people) that fails to respect social, conversational, physical boundaries between those people. This pursuit may be physical, but it can also take forms that may seem more benign, less obviously aggressive.

**Gender harassment**, sometimes also called “**gender hostility**,” is any behavior that expresses insulting, degrading, or contemptuous attitudes concerning others’ gender identities. It is understood in the research literature to be an expression primarily of gendered systems of power, rather than attraction or desire, and to be the most widespread form of sexual harassment. Our Society embraces an understanding of “sexual harassment” that also encompasses “gender harassment” or “gender hostility.”

Our Society is fortunate to enjoy a fundamentally congenial, good-spirited, supportive community. But the stakes attending potential violations of that community are high: the effects of sexual harassment can include long-lasting emotional distress and trauma, a loss of educational opportunities, and alienation from disciplines and careers. At every conference, an Ombudsman or woman will be announced to receive any reports, concerns, complaints, or suggestions in confidence and to take appropriate action. We hope that giving some thoughtful attention to these matters collectively will go far toward keeping our Society healthy in the years to come.

(This document has been based not only on discussions among members of this Society, but also on the MLA document concerning “[Appropriate Conduct](#)”; materials pertaining to the James Joyce Society’s [recent engagement with this issue](#); and the University of Michigan’s “[Sexual Harassment FAQ](#).”)