

JFKI Code of Conduct

The John F. Kennedy Institute is renowned for its innovative interdisciplinary research as well as its rigorous study programs. The six disciplines brought together at the institute, the numerous scholarships and exchange programs which it sponsors in addition to its world class research library create a unique academic environment. Disciplinary diversity and in-depth intellectual inquiry lay the foundation for excellence in research and teaching.

Study and work at the John F. Kennedy Institute for North American Studies presents opportunities for interacting with other members of the Institute community from all over the world with different cultural and religious backgrounds. The Institute's goal is to create a work and study environment where everyone feels safe and accepted. This also means that everyone, including faculty, staff, students, and visitors, is responsible for conducting themselves in a manner that helps improve an environment of learning in which the rights, dignity, worth, and freedom of each member of the academic community are respected.

The Institute affirms its commitment to the core ideals of the Freie Universität with regard to teaching and learning, as set down in the "[Leitbild Studium und Lehre.](#)" [[Guidelines on Teaching and Education](#)]. The Institute recognizes and values the diversity of everyone's experiences and expectations and is committed to treating all members of the institute, both academically and personally, in a fair and transparent manner. All faculty, staff, and students, in return, are required to comply with the guidelines set down in this Code of Conduct, as follows:

- We respect each other and maintain respectful interactions with everyone.
- We take the expertise, opinions and values of all people seriously, regardless of race, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, national origin, age, disability (physical or mental), socioeconomic status or background, physical appearance, or body size, and accept that different opinions and values exist.
- We act against negative stereotypes relating to an individual's or a group's characteristics, declaring ('outing') someone's religion or sexuality, referring to people in a way that misidentifies their gender and/or rejects the validity of their gender identity. We work towards creating a safe environment for everyone identifying as LGBTQI+.
- Teaching faculty and visiting lecturers are required to transparently communicate guidelines regarding language use and sensitive content to their students, e.g. via course syllabi. See the appendix for institute-wide recommendations.
- Intimidating, harassing, abusive, discriminatory, derogatory and demeaning actions and behavior at the Institute will not be tolerated. Offensive language, especially racial slurs, is not accepted. Non-Black instructors and students will not use the N-word in any context.
- Stalking or following, unwelcome physical contact without explicit consent, and unwelcome sexual attention (including invading personal space in a sexual way, or persistent unwelcome questions about someone's sexual preferences or sexual conduct) will not be tolerated.

Anyone asked to stop unacceptable behavior is expected to comply immediately.

Problems in communication and in professional relationships should be addressed promptly in order to improve and foster a healthy atmosphere in the study/workplace. People affected by inappropriate or abusive behavior are encouraged to report to the corresponding contact person (see below). The Institute will ensure that such a report will have no adverse effect on the university career of the person making the claim.

Institute Responsibilities

The Institute will deal with all disciplinary issues in a fair, transparent, and consistent manner. It recognises that, for the students, faculty and staff concerned, involvement in disciplinary procedures can be difficult and stressful. The Institute will therefore ensure that those involved are made aware of available guidance and support and that disciplinary issues are dealt with as quickly as the specific circumstances allow. Considering and implementing disciplinary action at an early stage can prevent more serious offences or issues arising.

In addition, the Institute will:

- a) Make this Code and associated guidance material available to all faculty, staff, and students in a dedicated section of the JFKI website.
- b) Respect the need for confidentiality in relation to disciplinary issues.
- c) Regularly review and streamline processes in accordance with university-wide policies

Procedure for Complaints and Further Guidance

If you face or witness any of the mentioned situations above please get in touch with the [Gender Equality Officer](#) of the Institute, the [Academic Advisement Office](#), or the Head of the Institute.

After official implementation of this Code of Conduct, the Institute Board will monitor and review the guidelines and procedures on a regular basis (at least once a year), inviting feedback from students, staff, and faculty.

Further resources:

If you have experienced sexualized harassment, discrimination, or violence, you can also get confidential support from the FU counseling services:

https://www.fu-berlin.de/en/sites/nein-heisst-nein/NEU_Anlaufstellen/index.html

Counselling services of the General Students' Committee (AStA) FU Berlin:

<https://astafu.de/en/beratungen>

Code of Conduct, version 1

Adopted by the Institute Board of the JFKI on October 27, 2021.

Appendix: Guidelines for Use of Language & Content Warnings in Courses at the JFKI

Anyone teaching a course at the JFKI is required to transparently communicate guidelines regarding language use and sensitive content to their students, e.g. via a special section of the course syllabus. To ensure a safe and productive study environment, these guidelines need to adhere to the standards laid out in the JFKI's Code of Conduct, especially regarding offensive language.

Most courses at the JFKI assume that students are able to engage with material that is challenging in its representations and agendas. In fact, engaging with (political or aesthetic) discomfort is a significant part of an American Studies education and an opportunity for research and learning. However, there are instances where a student may have experienced personal trauma that creates specific triggers for severe emotional distress. Instructors are required to address such concerns in advance.

Content Warnings

- Content warnings need to be given in advance in a session- and content-specific way
- Blanket or non-specific warnings should be avoided
- Students need to be encouraged to reach out in advance for individual requests