GAPS gesellschaft für anglophone postkoloniale studien
association for anglophone postcolonial studies

Code of Conduct

1. Introductory Remarks

The primary aim of the Association for Anglophone Postcolonial Studies (GAPS) is to promote the study of global Anglophone and postcolonial literatures and cultures, encourage critical debate, and foster knowledge through conferences, readings, training programs, and events. This involves cooperations between scholars of all career stages, between private and public institutions, and between university-internal and -external groups. Moreover, the association particularly focuses on supporting young and emerging academics (for more information on the aims of GAPS, see the full statutes on our website). In light of these aims, this Code of Conduct represents GAPS's commitment to fostering an open, safe space to cultivate productive and constructive academic exchange in a respectful manner.

This document constitutes the first version of the Code of Conduct. The GAPS board and members may make adjustments in the future depending on the needs of the association and experiences of members. The Code of Conduct applies both to GAPS events and more generally to interactions between GAPS members.

2. Academic Practice and Personal Integrity

In order to ensure the productive, collaborative atmosphere needed to achieve its aims, GAPS does not tolerate any discriminatory behavior, offensive conduct, abuse of power, intolerance, and injury of academic or personal integrity (see Section 3, "Prohibited Activities").

Interactions between members of all career paths and stages should be guided by principles of mutual appreciation and respect. Conflicts should be addressed in a constructive, solution-oriented and fair manner (see Section 4, "Implementation, Complaints, and Conflict Resolution").

It is expected that all participants of GAPS events create and maintain a welcoming environment for others (as guests or participants) at all GAPS conferences and events. We encourage everyone to report and address any prohibited behaviors they observe or experience during these occasions. If a member feels disrespected or mistreated, they can contact the ombudsgroup (see Section 5, "Ombudsgroup"). Offenders will be held accountable (see Section 4, "Implementation, Complaints, and Conflict Resolution"), as membership in GAPS and attendance at its events means you agree to follow the Code of Conduct to the best of your ability.

3. Prohibited Activities

The following activities, whether written or verbal, in-person or online, are not tolerated in any form or manner:

- Acts of physical, psychological or emotional violence/abuse
- Discrimination based on personal characteristics, including sex, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, pregnancy, marital or parental status, age, disability, neurodiversity, physical appearance, race, ethnicity, nationality, citizenship, socio-economic background, religion, or criminal history, or exclusion from academic participation on these grounds
- Sexual harassment (for example, through unsolicited sexual advances, coercion, or sexually suggestive or derogatory language)
- Abuse of authority
- Misconduct within the academic community (bullying, deliberate harm to careers, defamation)
- Publication-related violations (including data fabrication, falsification, or plagiarism; unjustified authorship claims)
- Data protection violations (e.g. nonconsensual recording of people or presentations, or sharing said materials online)
- Other unethical academic behavior (such as unethical trades or favors, intimidation, intentional social or professional isolation, or fostering toxic or hostile environments)

This list is not exhaustive. Participants of GAPS events are encouraged to seek mediation in the case of any other activities that they deem inappropriate.

4. Implementation, Complaints, and Conflict Resolution

Each participant is expected to contribute to the collaborative and productive space created at GAPS. If a member has an issue or conflict with another GAPS member which cannot be resolved in mutual discussion and self-managed conflict resolution, members can seek to call on other members for informal mediation. Members are encouraged to suggest mediation and offer support if any prohibited behaviors are observed.

GAPS members also have the option to approach the ombudsgroup, which serves to facilitate open communication between all GAPS members (see Section 5, “Ombudsgroup”). Depending on the context of the raised issue, the ombudsgroup will aim to mediate the conflict or provide other forms of support. In extreme cases, and only with the consent of the complainant, the ombudsgroup may choose to raise the issue with the GAPS board.

Any GAPS members who are directly or indirectly involved in the conflict are reminded of the need for discretion, particularly if an individual’s integrity is at stake. Ombudspersons and board members are bound by confidentiality. In responding to conflict and violence, we emphasize care and support for those impacted, aiming to foster accountability and repair rather than focusing solely on punishment or isolation.

5. Ombudsgroup: Definition, Function, and Role

5.1. Constellation:

The ombudsgroup consists of 2–3 persons connected to GAPS in some form (membership or familiarity). One member of the ombudsgroup must be tenured; depending on availability, the remaining members reflect other career levels. Ideally, the ombudsgroup reflects gender and ethnic diversity. Each ombudsperson serves for up to two years, with the possibility for extension. All members of the Ombud Group have equal standing.

5.2. Function and Role of the Ombudsgroup:

- The ombudsgroup mediates conflicts among GAPS members, organizes and assists discussions, helps GAPS members find constructive solutions and makes recommendations.
- Since the ombudsgroup is not a judge, it cannot make any decisions but can bring issues to the GAPS board if necessary.
- The ombudsgroup is guided by the principle of confidentiality and consent. Issues reported will only be acted upon with the express consent of the complainant.
- The ombudsgroup keeps a record of reported issues. This document is confidential and only to be seen by the board and/or future ombudspersons. The report becomes relevant in the case of repeat offences, in which case the ombudsgroup may raise the issue with the GAPS board. Complainants will remain anonymous unless they consent to go on record.
- Any ombudsperson who faces a conflict of interest (e.g. personal relationship with participants in a conflict) must report this conflict to the complainant and the group and may withdraw and/or delegate (with the complainant's consent) to other members of the ombudsgroup.
- The ombudsgroup reserves the right to drop issues without resolution, for example if mediation is not possible despite best efforts, or if the group has plausible suspicion of dishonest testimonies.

5.3. Contacting the Ombudsgroup:

Members are welcome to email the ombudsgroup directly at the ombudsgroup email address (which will be specified once the first ombudsgroup has been elected). Alternatively, they can approach any of the ombudspersons individually via email. Ombudspersons can also be approached at the conference. Ombudspersons will be identifiable at conferences in some form (specific lanyard, marking on the name tag) and will be mentioned at conference openings.

6. Acknowledgements

The GAPS board acknowledges the Codes of Conduct of the University of Vienna and Science and Technology Studies in and through Germany (stsing e.V.), on which the present Code of Conduct is based. The list “Prohibited Activities” has been adapted from the Code of Conduct of stsing e.V.