

**Comics Studies Society Code of Conduct**  
**Approved by the Executive Board April, 2020**

The Comics Studies Society (CSS) is an interdisciplinary society open to all who share the goals of promoting the critical study of comics, improving comics teaching, and engaging in open and ongoing conversations about the comics world. CSS celebrates and seeks to foster diversity in comics studies, including diversity in scholarly discipline, career position, job niche, and cultural and personal identity. As such, we are committed to providing a harassment-free environment for everyone, regardless of gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance, race, ethnicity, national origin, language proficiency, military service or veteran status, professional status, religion, marital status, genetic predisposition or carrier status, or other group status. Therefore, being a member of CSS, and participating in CSS-sponsored contexts (which include in-person events, virtual spaces like social media platforms, and on the society listserv) entails the following:

- A shared commitment to CSS's overall mission and to creating and maintaining harassment-free environments both in-person and virtually
- Engagement that avoids all forms of harassment.
- Harassment may be understood as any threatening behavior that produces an unsafe environment for the persons or groups listed above, including but not limited to: offensive verbal comments or non-verbal expressions; sensitive or potentially triggering content or images in public spaces without an appropriate content warning and without evident scholarly purpose; deliberate intimidation; stalking; following; unwanted or non-consensual photography or recording; sustained disruption of talks or other events; inappropriate physical contact; and unwelcome sexual attention.
- An understanding and adoption of CSS social media guidelines which include, but are not limited to:
  - Obtaining consent before sharing photos of other members or of their intellectual property; restricting use of CSS hashtags for relevant, collegial, and/or constructive feedback related to comics studies; avoiding all kinds of cyber-bullying and digital harassment; avoiding hostile or passive-aggressive uses of the listserv and social media platforms that do not foster dialogue; respecting varied presentation styles at conferences by avoiding online posts that may attract unwarranted critique from virtual observers; never using the CSS name or digital resources for personal profit without approval from the Executive Board.
- Familiarity with CSS Accessibility Guidelines and compliance with accessibility requests made by conference organizers or by the Executive Board.
- An awareness and acceptance of the Code of Conduct Violations Process, i.e. members should be aware that any behavior which violates any of the above will be handled

according to the procedures outlined below. Behavior which is deemed illegal will be immediately reported to the police.

**Code of Conduct Violations:** If any member of CSS feels as though the Code of Conduct has been violated, or if they feel harassed, unsafe, or at risk in any way, the following steps should be taken:

- Questions, concerns, or comments can be emailed directly to the Executive Board or to the CSS Ombudsperson. At the conference, you may also approach any member of the Organizing Committee or the Ombudsperson directly to make a verbal complaint. Please provide contact information and as much detail about the violation as possible, including the name of the offender. Complete confidentiality cannot be guaranteed (because many members are mandatory reporters under [Clery Act](#) and [Title IX](#), we may be required to follow the policies of host institutions for documenting and reporting instances of harassment that occur in host facilities), however discretion will be used and the privacy of all parties involved will be protected.
  - The CSS Ombudsperson is a member who acts in an impartial capacity and is appointed to help resolve complaints. While the Ombuds is not a member of the Executive Board, they are nominated by the Board, and then confirmed by the broader membership during annual elections. The Ombuds is contactable throughout the year by email and will be onsite for the annual conference.
- If complaints are brought to a member of the Conference Organizing Committee, that member will notify the Ombudsperson of the complaint.
  - If the Ombuds determines that the precipitating incident involves a risk to the safety of the complainant or others, they will notify a member of the Executive Board. If this risk is deemed to be immediate, they will notify event or campus security, or the police. Safety concerns preempt all other procedures.
- If the complaint does not pose an immediate risk, the Ombuds will contact the complainant to get details of the precipitating incident and will document the complainant's statement. The complainant will receive a copy of this documentation.
- After speaking to the complainant, the Ombuds will contact the violator to discuss the violation, and provide a copy of the complaint documentation.
- If warranted, the Ombuds will issue a verbal warning.
- A complainant might choose mediation led by the Ombuds, rather than a formal, written complaint. Such mediation could be anonymous and kept between the Ombuds and the affected parties.
- If the Ombuds determines that the violator does not intend to correct their behavior, or if the Ombuds determines that the safety of any member of the community is at risk, they will notify a member of the Board immediately.
- If an additional violation by any individual is reported by the original complainant or any other member of the community, the Board will be notified by the Ombuds, who will communicate with all parties to determine if further action is required. The Board may

choose to pursue further action depending on the nature of the offence, and the interests of all concerned parties including:

- Moderated conversation to address issues between two individuals,
  - Written admonition detailing the violation, with a copy sent to the violator's immediate supervisor,
  - Ejection from the conference or other event,
  - Permanent disbarment from all CSS events and forums.
- In instances where the safety of any member of the community is considered at risk, the Board will ask the violator to leave the conference or other event and not return. The Board may notify event or campus security if necessary to facilitate this removal. No refunds will be issued if a violator is ejected from the conference. Violations that risk the safety of the community risk permanent barring from the conference community.
  - If an individual is barred from the conference due to egregious or persistent documented violations of the Code of Conduct, they will be notified in writing of the Board's decision, with a copy going to their immediate supervisor or similar authority at their home institution.
  - Violators may appeal any action by the Board in writing within ten business days of the action. Appeals of Board actions will be reviewed by the Ombuds. The Ombuds may also choose to create an ad hoc review committee consisting of at least one person chosen by the violator in order to help review the appeal. The Board will be notified of the results of the appeal review; written notification of the final decision will be given within ten business days of the appeal. Appeal decisions are final.
  - If a violator is barred from CSS membership, they may appeal in writing to the Board for readmittance after two years. This appeal should directly address the nature of the original violation, how they have corrected their conduct to prevent further violations, and why readmittance would be beneficial to them and the community.