



Yale Divinity Student Government

Constitution and Bylaws of the Student Leadership Council of YDS

Yale Divinity Student Government
YALE DIVINITY SCHOOL *Amended May 2022*

CONSTITUTION OF THE YDS Student Government

Article I. Title of Council

i.i. The official name of the organization shall be “Yale Divinity Student Government” (“Student Government” or “YDSG”).

Article II. YDSG Mission

ii.i **The purpose of Student Government shall be the following:**

- To act as the legislative assembly of the student body of Yale Divinity School (the “Divinity School” or “YDS”).
- To serve as the primary representative of the student body before the faculty and administration of the Divinity School.
- To act on behalf of the students and their interests on issues of YDS policy and community concern.
- To advocate for the interests of the Divinity School students within the broader Yale University community.

Article III. YDSG Representatives and Eligibility

iii.i The membership of Student Government shall consist of the Executive Council, GPSS senators, two representatives from each year of each of the school's academic programs (MAR, MDiv, STM), and two representatives from each of the school's affiliated programs (Berkeley, Andover Newton, ISM) These are the "Members" of Student Government.

iii.ii The Officers, along with the Community Life Coordinator(s), shall form the Executive Council of Student Government.

iii.iii All Members shall be elected by the YDS student body.

iii.iv Members of YDSG must be enrolled in a degree program and in good academic standing at the Divinity School during their time of service on Student Government.

iii.v All Members shall be required to serve on at least one committee.

iii.vi Student Government shall enjoy broad authority to address issues pertaining to its membership by any means it deems appropriate and advisable, so long as its actions do not contravene the provisions set forth in this Constitution.

Article IV. YDSG Executive Board

iv.i The Officers of Student Government shall be as follows:

- President
- Vice President
- Secretary
- Treasurer

iv.ii The President, Vice President and Secretary of Student Government shall be elected by the entire student body in the spring semester of each academic year. The Treasurer shall be elected in the fall semester. Officer positions not filled in the spring will be open during fall elections. Any Officer position not filled in both the spring and fall elections will be filled by the administration following fall elections.

Article V. Standing Committees

v.i Student Government has the power to establish Standing Committees and such other committees or working groups as it deems necessary to carry out its responsibilities.

Article VI. Meetings

vi.i All legislative powers of YDSG are vested in meetings of the YDSG where a quorum is present.

vi.ii A quorum shall consist of fifty percent of the Members of Student Government.

vi.iii Each Member shall have one vote. Voting is restricted to Members. There will be no voting by proxy.

vi.iv Student Government shall meet at least once in each calendar month of the fall and spring semesters. Exceptions may be made by the Officers and Office of Student Affairs.

vi.v The President may call meetings in addition to the regularly scheduled meetings of Student Government if the President considers such meetings necessary to conduct YDSG business.

vi.vi All YDS students are welcome to attend any meeting of Student Government. Invited guests (non-YDS students) must be approved by the Officers.

Article VII. Constitution Reviews

vii.i The Constitution of the Student Government shall be declared ratified and in force upon approval by a two-thirds (2/3) majority of the student body in attendance at an advertised meeting, provided that the constitution has been circulated to the student body at least two weeks prior to the vote.

vii.ii A Constitution Review Committee shall be formed every four years and shall consist of Members of Student Government and Faculty approved by a quorum of YDSG members. This committee shall suggest amendments to the Constitution as necessary. It is also responsible for ensuring recommendations to the constitution are in agreement with the bylaws.

vi.iii This Constitution can be amended by a two-thirds vote of the student body of the Divinity School at an advertised meeting, provided that the proposed amendment has been circulated to the student body at least two weeks prior to the vote.

Last Amended: Spring 2019.

BYLAWS OF THE YDS Student Government

Article I. Membership

i. Composition

The membership of Yale Divinity Student Government (also called YDSG) will consist of the following students:

- Student Body President, Vice-President, Secretary, and Treasurer
- Community Life Coordinator(s)
- Two Representatives from each class of each YDS program (6 MDiv, 6 MAR, 2 STM)
- Two Representatives from the Institute of Sacred Music
- Two Representatives from Berkeley Seminary at Yale
- Two Representatives from Andover Newton Seminary at Yale
- One Representative from each class year chosen as the official YDSG Representatives for the Yale Graduate & Professional Student Senate
- One at-large student representative to the faculty

ii. Attendance

- a. All members of YDSG are expected to regularly attend scheduled meetings.
- b. Any member of YDSG who is selected to represent Student Government to a committee who has two unexcused absences from two regular meetings with their committee will automatically be removed from said committee at the discretion of the committee chair. A member in jeopardy of losing membership will receive a written notification after one absence (e-mail is acceptable).
- c. Any member of YDSG who has two unexcused absences from regular meetings of Student Government shall automatically be removed from YDSG. A member in jeopardy of losing membership will be so notified in writing after one absence (e-mail is acceptable). The Executive Council shall hold a special election to fill the vacant seat before the next regular meeting of YDSG.

iii. Responsibilities

- a. All members of YDSG shall:
 - i. Be familiar with the Bylaws and Constitution of Student Government.
 - ii. Communicate the business of YDSG in a timely manner to their respective constituencies.
 - iii. Be reasonably available to their respective constituencies.
 - iv. Represent their respective constituencies diligently.
 - v. Consider and promote the well-being of all YDS students.
 - vi. Serve on at least one committee (standing, ad hoc, or faculty), to be joined at the first meeting of YDSG for the academic year.

iv. Removal from Office

- a. If, in the opinion of Student Government, a YDSG officer or representative fails to perform the duties of the office, then YDSG may act to remove that person from office based upon the procedures set forth in these Bylaws.

- b.** A member of the Student Government must bring an accusation stating the offense to the President, or to the Vice President if the President is being accused. The notified officer (President or Vice President) shall inform the accused and shall call a special meeting of YDSG to consider the accusation.
- c.** The accused shall have the right to respond to the charge(s) before Student Government either in writing or in person.
- d.** After hearing the accusation and the response, all members of YDSG shall debate a motion to remove the accused from office. The vote to remove an officer will be by a secret, written ballot. A 2/3 majority of all members of Student Government will be required to approve a motion for removal from office.

Article II: Food Pantry Representatives

- i. The YDSG Food Pantry is a student-led initiative established in November 2021 to help address food insecurity within the student-body.**

- ii. The Food Pantry Representatives shall:**
 - a.** Be two students elected by the student body in the Fall Election
 - b.** Facilitate one food drive event per semester
 - c.** Maintain general upkeep of the pantry, including monthly inventory of goods
 - d.** Communicate any needs or ideas regarding the pantry to the Executive Council

- iii. Full membership of the Food Pantry Representatives will be considered during the YDSG Constitutional Review, scheduled for 2024.**

Article III. Officers

i. Duties

a. The President shall:

- i. Establish the agenda and preside at all meetings of the Executive Council.
- ii. Serve as the official representative of YDSG to the faculty, administration, and student body of YDS.
- iii. Serve as an advocate for the student body, and act as its representative at particular functions within Yale University.
- iv. Attend a meeting with the Dean of Students every other week.
- v. Recommend student representatives to various committees of YDS as requested by the Dean, including, but not limited to, standing faculty search, and faculty review committees.
- vi. The President will manage Dear Theo.
 1. Dear Theo is a YDS-supported platform for students to write letters to the immediate YDS Community about any issues, hopes, or concerns they wish to present for open dialogue within the community. As YDSG opposes the praxis of censorship, every letter received in the Dear Theo account will be shared unless it espouses egregious hate speech (i.e. racist, homophobic, transphobic, ableist, etc. rhetoric) or incites physical, mental, or emotional harm towards any individual or group of people.
 2. Due to its expressed purpose of encouraging open dialogue within the community, YDS will not publish letters submitted anonymously through official YDS communication channels. Where the benefits of anonymity outweigh those of exposure, anonymous letters, in consultation with the President and/or Executive Council, may be distributed by other means including: YaleConnect and hardcopy distribution
 3. Since YDS has made the decision to move away from DivMail as much as possible, as of Spring 2022, Dear Theo letters will be officially distributed at YDS through YaleConnect using the YDSG organization email address to current YDS students, staff, and faculty.
 4. Dear Theo letters will, therefore, be distributed to the YDS community in a hybrid manner through hard copies on campus and emails through YaleConnect from the YDSG organization email.
- vii. Serve as the student representative to the YDS
- viii. Disciplinary Committee and to the Yale University Tribunal.
- ix. Preside over meetings when the Vice-President and Secretary are absent.
- x. Enforce the Bylaws and Constitution of Student Government.
- xi. Appoint committee members as necessary (standing, ad hoc, and faculty).

b. The Vice-President shall:

- i. Preside over meetings of the Executive Council when the President is absent.
- ii. Establish the agenda and preside at all general student-body meetings of YDSG.
- iii. Compile and maintain the list of current members.
- iv. Assist the President to serve as liaison with other YDS and Yale University committees and organizations.
- v. Serve as Chair of the Communications Committee.
- vi. In the event of the President's incapacity, removal from office, or withdrawal from school, assume all duties of the President.

c. The Treasurer shall:

- i. Shall be held for an incoming first-year student in the fall elections.
- ii. Create and maintain a budget for all YDSG finances to be approved by the Executive Council.
- iii. Direct fundraising efforts on behalf of the Student Government.
- iv. Monitor the spending of Student Government Committees.
- v. Preside over meetings of YDSG when the Vice-President and Secretary are absent.

d. The Secretary shall:

- i. Keep the official record of the proceedings of the Student Government and enter such minutes in a permanent electronic file (i.e., Google Drive). Prepare and distribute the minutes from each meeting of the Student Government prior to its next scheduled meeting.
- ii. Keep all attendance records, notify members of YDSG of any changes in the membership, and notify in writing or by e-mail those who have not attended regular meetings of YDSG that their continued membership on YDSG is in jeopardy.
- iii. Collect and maintain a record of all Standing and Ad Hoc Council committee meeting minutes and enter such minutes in a permanent electronic file.
- iv. Cooperate with the President in preparing and sending all correspondence pertaining to YDSG.
- v. Preside over general student-body meetings of YDSG when the Vice-President is absent.
- vi. Preside over meetings of the Executive Council when the President and Vice-President are absent.
- vii. Maintain current copies of the Bylaws and Constitution.

Article IV. Elections

i. Student Government Policy

- a. Nominations and elections for all YDSG members shall follow the Yale Divinity Student Government Elections Policy.
- b. The YDSG Executive Council is responsible for facilitating all Student Government elections in partnership with the OSA.
- c. Except for positions held by first-year students and 3rd year MAR reps, elections of executive officers and representatives of YDSG shall be held during the Spring semester prior to the academic year of office that the elected persons will serve. The election of 3rd year MAR reps will occur in the fall semester to accommodate students who extend their MAR program in the spring semester and are typically given until April 15th to formally accept the continuation of their extended program. The election process shall begin approximately five weeks prior to the end of the Spring semester, as determined by the academic calendar maintained by the YDS Registrar. The election shall be managed by the Executive Council, including the graduating Officers. Officers who are candidates in the current election cycle will not be allowed to participate in the management of the election. In the case that there is no graduating officer or officer who is not seeking candidacy, the Associate Dean of Student Affairs will appoint a committee of qualified members, including graduating members of YDSG.

ii. Nominations

- a. Any student, including graduating students, may nominate eligible students for election.
- b. The Executive Council shall electronically distribute an electronic nomination form for all available elected positions for YDSG.
- c. Nominees for Officer positions who accept nomination shall submit written platform statements to the Executive Council based upon the specifications set forth by the Executive Council.
- d. Nominations for Student Representative positions will also be invited to make a short, written platform based upon the specifications set forth by the Executive Council.
- e. The Executive Council shall make these statements widely available to the YDS community.
- f. Nominees for President, Vice-President, Secretary, and Treasurer shall present their platforms in a short video recording and written platform to be submitted to the Executive Council that will be compiled and distributed to the student body. The specifications of the short video and written platform are to be set forth by the Executive Council.

iii. Spring Semester Election Procedure

- a.** Positions for which no candidates have been nominated shall remain open until the Fall election.
- b.** Electronic ballots shall be circulated to the entire student body and voting will take place over a three-day period.
- c.** Each YDS student may vote no more than once for any positions for which there are nominees. All votes shall be cast anonymously.
- d.** All nominees shall be notified of the election results by the Executive Council. If any nominee declines election, the runner-up shall be elected. If there are no other candidates for the office, the position shall remain open until the Fall Elections.
- e.** If two or more candidates for a given office receive the same number of votes, the Executive Council shall facilitate a runoff election via an online ballot.
- f.** Election results shall be published by the Executive Council.
- g.** YDSG members elected in regular Spring elections shall assume the privileges and duties of membership upon the adjournment of the last regular meeting of the outgoing Government.

iv. Fall Elections/Election of First Year YDSG Members

- a.** Elections for Open and First Year student positions shall be held during the first month of the Fall semester.
- b.** The nominations and election procedures shall be the same as for Spring elections.
- c.** YDSG members elected during Fall elections shall assume the privileges and duties of membership immediately upon accepting election to office.

Article V. Committees

i. Executive Council

- a.** The Executive Council shall coordinate the work of Student Government and shall be empowered to act on behalf of YDSG in matters so urgent as to preclude engagement by the full membership, as well as in matters which arise when YDS is not in session.

ii. Standing Committees of YDSG

- a.** The Standing Committees of YDSG are the Elections, Communications and Events Committees.
- b.** YDSG may create additional Standing Committees to address particular aspects of its substantive or procedural responsibilities. A motion to form such committees must be approved by a 2/3 majority.
- c.** Standing Committees shall have a minimum of three members, appointed by the President. Each committee shall select a chairperson at its first meeting. The chairpersons of each Committee shall appoint a Committee member to keep and submit Committee minutes to the Secretary following each Committee meeting.
- d.** YDSG may terminate any Standing Committee. A motion to terminate the committee must be approved by a 2/3 majority.

iii. Ad Hoc Committees

- a.** YDSG may create ad hoc committees as the need arises. These committees shall be given specific mandates and they shall be terminated when that mandate is fulfilled.
- b.** A motion to form such committees may be made at any meeting of Student Government, or at the discretion of the Executive Council. Such motions shall be approved by a simple majority.

iv. Faculty Standing Committees

- a.** Each member of YDSG shall serve on a faculty committee.
- b.** The Faculty Committees are: Professional Studies, Diversity, Spiritual Formation, Ministerial Studies, and Curriculum Committee.
- c.** Each committee has three student seats, as determined by the Dean's Office.
- d.** Student seats must be filled by participating members of YDSG, with one member of the three acting as its official representative. The official representative of each faculty committee must be present at each YDSG meeting to provide a report.
- e.** Members shall be assigned to committees by the Executive Council at the beginning of the academic year. If any faculty committees remain unstaffed, the representatives shall be appointed by the Executive Council.

v. Constitutional Review Committee

- a. Per the constitution, this committee shall be convened by the President every four years (2020, 2024, 2028, etc.) to review the Student Government Constitution and make any necessary recommendations.
- b. The Committee shall consist of the Executive Council and three faculty members.
- c. These representatives shall be recommended by the Executive Council and approved by the full membership.
- d. Any recommendations submitted by the committee shall be discussed by YDSG and, if agreed upon, submitted to the Student Body for approval per the procedures for constitutional revisions.

Article VI. Amending the Bylaws

- i. Bylaw review and amendments may be undertaken at the discretion of the Executive Council, in conversation with the Office of Student Affairs.
- ii. An amendment can be approved by a 2/3 majority vote of a quorum, as described in Article VI.II of the Constitution, of YDSG membership.
- iii. All voting shall be carried out as described in Article VI.III in the Constitution.

Last Amended: April 2022