

Disability Studies

It is only by asking our students to think critically about the world around them, and to think creatively and productively about ways to change it, that we have any hope of transforming our future and working against assumptions that constrain the possibilities of what bodies and minds can and should accomplish.

—Ella R. Browning, “Disability Studies in the Composition Classroom”

Many of us “pass” for able-bodied—we appear before you unclearly marked, fuzzily apparent, our disabilities *not* hanging out all over the place. We are sitting next to you. No, we *are* you.

—Brenda Jo Brueggemann, Linda Feldmeier White, Patricia A. Dunn, Barbara A. Heifferon, and Johnson Cheu, “Becoming Visible: Lessons in Disability”

One starting point for understanding how writing classes can focus on disability studies and embrace inclusive and accessible pedagogies and practices in the 21st century is through universal design. A universal design for learning (UDL) framework considers how assignments, materials, assessments, and other classroom practices can be constructed in ways that are most accessible for all students. And while UDL doesn't solve all problems in academic spaces and structures, it does offer ways for writing teachers to consider how design affects learning and meaning-making. UDL provides opportunities for teachers to better understand how activities can be constructed to accommodate a range of students. This approach looks like adding closed captions to videos, having transcripts for audio, incorporating image descriptions, using alt texts, reconsidering

attendance and participation policies, rewriting writing program learning outcomes, reimagining font size and style choices on documents, and redesigning assignments and assessments.

A disability studies approach to teaching writing means problematizing how systems and structures advantage “temporarily able bodies” (Brueggemann et al., 2001, p. 369). It also means interrogating how traditional understandings of literacy privilege individuals based on their *bodies* and *abilities*. Disability studies is interdisciplinary and “disrupts the idea that disabled people should be defined primarily through their disabilities by others, retaining instead the right for disabled people to define their own relationships with disability” (Dolmage, 2017, p. 6). Most research in disability studies confronts ableism—or discrimination in favor of temporarily able-bodied individuals—and critiques how systems privilege movement and how society constructs and talks about disability. Societal constructions of disability are problematic because they often position disability as *abnormal*, *negative*, *wrong*, or something that needs *to be cured*. These “norms” and assumptions about disability are harmful and violent: “These norms have the discursive power to render people visible or invisible, privileging some by pushing Others out of categories of the human” (Cedillo, 2018, p. 11).

There’s been great work over the last several years in rhetoric and composition on disability, including on autism (Yergeau, 2017), crippling time and neutrality (Ho et al., 2020; Wood, 2017), mental disabilities and mental health (Degner et al., 2015; Price, 2011), unbearable pain (Price, 2015), rhetorics of overcoming (Hitt, 2021), and disclosure (Kerschbaum et al., 2017). Taking a disability studies approach to teaching means addressing societal constructions and educational inequities and creating spaces and materials that are more inclusive. It means challenging “normate” assumptions about bodies and movement, and listening to the embodied experiences of disabled people writing about disability justice (Hubrig, 2020). Which for writing classes, this also means incorporating curriculum and conversation on disability. A disability studies approach to composition even disrupts notions of “composition” and what it means to read and write. The CCCC Position Statement on Disability Studies in Composition states that, “Disability enhances

learning and teaching in college composition by helping us to think through and develop inclusive approaches rather than approaches based in deficit” (n.p).

In her 2017 article, Anne-Marie Womack poses strategies for universal design and constructing more accessible curriculum: “Accommodation is the most basic act and the art of teaching. It is not the exception we sometimes make in spite of learning, but rather the adaptations we continually make to promote learning” (p. 494). Teachers drawing on disability studies understand how classroom practices, like peer review and attendance and late work policies, can disadvantage students from participating in learning. Teachers need to reconsider definitions of time and labor. For example, students with processing disabilities are disadvantaged through traditional constructions of peer review that rely on sharing, reading, and responding to students immediately in class. And formatting text on a syllabi with serif font using single spacing with a white background and black text can disadvantage students with visual processing disabilities (e.g., dyslexia). Writing teachers committed to anti-ableism, then, advocate for inclusive practices (e.g., image descriptions, alt texts, captions). *Accessible Syllabus* is one pedagogical resource that encourages teachers to investigate their syllabi through the lens of accommodation, accessibility, and inclusivity.

A disability studies approach incorporates conversations on language, attitudes, knowledge, bodies, health, environments, power, and identity. This shifts the writing classroom and composition studies at large:

Re-thinking composition from a disability studies perspective reminds us that we too often design writing instruction for individuals who type on a keyboard and too easily forget those who use blow tubes, that we have a habit of creating assignments for those who read text with their eyes and a related habit of forgetting those who read through their fingertips, that we too often privilege students who speak up in class and too often forget those who participate most thoughtfully via email. (Selfe & Howes, 2013)

Cynthia L. Selfe and Franny Howes remind teachers that classroom practices are never neutral. Simi Linton (1998) says this

approach requires a complete reorientation of curriculum that “adds a critical dimension to thinking about issues such as autonomy, competence, wholeness, independence/dependence, health, physical appearance, aesthetics, community, and notions of progress and perfection—issues that pervade every aspect of the civic and pedagogic culture” (p. 118).

INTERVIEWS

In this chapter, I talk with Jay Dolmage, Tara Wood, Christina V. Cedillo, and Dev Bose about disability studies and teaching writing. The interviews focus on a range of ideas and concepts, like *crip time* and *ableism*, as well as accessible practices and future directions for disability studies and rhetoric and composition. One of the main themes in these conversations is how teachers can embrace anti-ableist frameworks by rethinking “norms” and implementing inclusive strategies. Dolmage starts by sharing myths about disability, which helps us see how disability is presented in society and what that means for writing teachers and classes. He talks about universal design and reconstructing classroom practices and assessment, like participation policies, in order to create a more inclusive space. Wood provides a definition for *ableism* and commonplace ableist assumptions about writing. She goes on to critique normative conceptions and constructions of time and offers “*crip time*” as an opportunity to resist *ableism*. Cedillo talks about critical embodiment pedagogy and invisible disabilities. Bose concludes by talking about challenges disabled students face in institutions and writing classrooms.

Shane to Jay Dolmage: What are some common myths about disability? [Episode 37: 01:57–05:02]

I think that there’s a lot. I think that disability is like highly mythological . . . for many people, their understanding of disability is shaped by these common cultural narratives we have about disability. Those narratives . . . the most important thing to say is those myths and narratives are not written by disabled people, in general. Disabled people’s lives are not very well represented unless they conform in

a way to the myths that we already have. Those myths are generally about managing the affect, or the emotions or the relationship that temporarily abled-bodied people, or supposedly “able-bodied” people, have to disability.

That’s a pretty problematic place to start because the myths have to conform to the fear that people have of being disabled. They manage those fears rather than reflecting on reality. I’ll try to make this as relevant as I can to what’s happening right now because I think we’re seeing some really powerful myths about disability circulating, and one of the most harmful myths about disability is that it’s a life not worth living. That temporarily able-bodied people or “normate” people assume that if they had a disability, they wouldn’t want to be alive anymore.

That myth, that stereotype, that narrative means that we devalue disabled lives. Calling the myths or stories and tracing them through literature or film is one thing, but seeing how those things condition the actual lived experiences of hundreds of thousands of people is another. They really do come to be all about who lives and dies, who has access to privilege and who doesn’t. The myths and stereotypes ensure the reification or the kind of solidification of social structures and choices, life choices for people. They shape people’s lives. They reach into bodies in a rhetorical sense. The problem is that they come out of bodies that aren’t disabled bodies. People who have no ability to imagine what a disabled life will be like, are the people who are making these dictates, right?

And on the flip side, the so called “positive” stories that we have around disability are all about overcoming, triumph over adversity, cure. Right? Miraculous cure. The ability to work hard or have a positive attitude and overcome the negatives of a disability. Again, you can see how those are really all about managing the emotions, the fears of temporarily able-bodied people, the idea that if I did have a disability, through hard work, I would be able to overcome

it. I think those are the two biggest, unfortunately, forces, both positive and negative, shaping so many of the depictions that we have about disability. They're really difficult to escape and like I said, they reach into real bodies and they rearrange bodies in space, right? They determine access to so much.

Shane to Jay Dolmage: How can we make our pedagogies and practices more accessible in the writing classroom? [Episode 37: 17:04–22:43]

I mean, this is something . . . this is the major thing I think about. In terms of like any future work that I want to do, I think I'm more oriented around this idea of how we can make what we do more accessible to more people and extend that to the teaching that we do so that it reaches more people, and then more people have a genuine opportunity to learn and can contribute to the conversation and shape the future. Because it's not just about us portioning out this privilege. It's that we need more people involved in the conversation that shapes what higher education is going to look like. It sounds just like a magical solution, but universal design . . . it's a lot of work. We're talking about labor. Philosophically it is the idea that we should be planning for the most diverse group of students that we can. While the public paints higher education as this like radical place full of snowflakes and communists, it's a highly, highly conservative space. We keep doing the same things over and over and over, again. Universities claim to be evidence based, but all the good evidence around teaching we ignore for years and years.

People just keep doing . . . almost kind of like levels of hazing that they were put through as students, they put their own students through again. So even something like timed tests and exams. There's no data that shows students learn more. We just keep doing it. We structure entire universities, logistically, around timed tests and exams. They absolutely dominate the mental health of students for periods

of time, and there's no good research. Then, for students to have accommodations, they have to jump through all these medical and legal hoops . . .

So universal design . . . there's three principles. One is that we should teach a variety of ways—the ways that we deliver information and structure conversations—we should just do it in a broad number of ways in terms of the cultural context we bring to the class, in terms of how we deliver it. You know, your podcast having a transcript and an audio version is positive redundancy, right? The more ways we do it, the more access there will be. The other thing is that we structure a variety of forms of assessment or ways for students to show what they know. Then, the final piece is just kind of dynamic ways to actively learn in the classroom.

I'll give you some tangible examples. For me, I will admit this, for like fifteen years, I assigned a participation grade in my classes, sometimes like 20–30%. I had no idea what I was assessing in a writing classroom in terms of participation. It was basically how much did you talk. Students would get good participation grades even if they were kind of like a negative force in the classroom because I was basically telling them, put your hand up all the time, interrupt people, like the more you talk, the better you'll do. That was really a problem. I was like assigning that grade like the day that I assign grades. It's just horrible. So I started thinking, what is the universal design approach to participation? I know there are a lot of valuable ways to participate in class without ever saying a word.

When we move classes online, we understand that some students are not going to have something to say in a 50-minute class. They may have a ton to say three hours later, or a day later, right? Universities are run like factories, like they're really on this kind of timeline as though we only can ever think or produce in these little chunks. Yet nobody comes to your office at like 9 a.m. and says, "I'll be back at 10:30 a.m. I need a publishable article."

Or in an engineering firm . . . people are working on their plans for a bridge and somebody comes in and says, “Okay, stop. Now whatever bridge you had, is a bridge we’re going to build.” But that’s the way we structure classwork and things like participation. I developed this kind of means of saying to students, you tell me some of the valuable ways you’re able to participate. I’ve been able to build this bigger repertoire of valuable ways to participate. Students taking pictures and doing visual descriptions of things that got written on the board. One student took minutes of every class . . . it was so valuable to me. Then, if a student missed, they could read the minutes, so it was valuable to other people than me as well. Right? Creating kind of this community of learning . . .

Opening that participation up to say to students, “You tell me some valuable ways to participate” has really exploded that for me and made it so much more valuable. I’ve landed on something that’s much more equitable and valuable for everybody. That’s a big one. It’s almost like a philosophical explosion, right? Like you’re changing the authority in the classroom, you’re changing how you’re assessing a big chunk of what it is you’re doing, and you’re giving over a lot of control . . . you can take little individual pieces of what we do, and if you think, “What’s the way for me to engage every student in the broadest range of possibles?” . . . doing this, that’s the philosophy behind universal design.

Shane to Jay Dolmage: What are some future directions for disability studies and rhetoric and composition? [Episode 37: 22:44–27:36]

I think there’s some natural overlap with rhetoric and composition and disability in terms of their institutional history. You know, rhet/comp has been a sorting space. It’s been a place to help students move ahead, but it’s also been a place to intentionally hold students behind. So we need disability studies and we need an understanding of how disability is used and is attributed to groups to control

access to privilege. There's that kind of disciplinary history that's backwards facing, but it's also never going to go away, right? That is going to continue to be writing studies relationship within the university. It is going to be used as a sorting gate.

I think the reason I got into teaching writing was because . . . like when I began, it was really deep in the process movement. The process movement gave us access to thinking about the labor that students put into the work they do. What does their writing situation look like? How do they think? What is the path from an idea, right? That is illuminating in ways that lots of other disciplines don't have. That much access to when you begin to try to understand the process of writing. It's inevitable that you understand it as a process that includes failure and difficulty, even though we romanticize it as something completely opposite . . . it requires stops and starts and failures.

When you look around, disability is everywhere. Not just in disabled students. It's that communication itself requires us to have some understanding of the incomplete nature of our bodies, and our need for other people, and our need for techniques and prosthetics . . . I mean, that's a pretty high-level philosophical argument to make. I think in a very tangible sense . . . my favorite class to teach, and I keep requesting it, is just first-year writing for students who don't want to take it in their first semester of university.

Because that's where we can begin to structure a relationship with university that is not about being the best all the time, but can be about asking for help, accessing and calling for more resources to support student life, student mental health, understand that we all need accommodations, and that some students are going to need to fight for their legal right to education . . . it connects us with the reality in our classrooms rather than the myth or fantasy that all students are going to find university life easy or even familiar, or welcoming . . .

So we have a responsibility to understand that 20% of those students are going to have disabilities that they're going to need to have accommodations for. And that everybody is going to experience the university as a disabling space that's putting up barriers that don't need to be there.

Shane to Tara Wood: How do you define *ableism*? [Episode 26: 02:04–03:02]

I think it has been useful for me in my own experience and in my own scholarship to think about it as sort of two pronged. It can either be social prejudice: attitudinal kind of prejudice aimed at people with various disabilities; and, it can also be a discriminatory act, something done in a discriminatory way toward people with various psychiatric, cognitive, mental, intellectual, physical disabilities. The flip side of that, or thinking about it in sort of inverted way, is that ableism is a sort of privileging of the able body or an attitude about the premises and ultimate “good” of the able-bodied for all.

Shane to Tara Wood: What are some commonplace ableist assumptions about writing? [Episode 26: 03:03–04:49]

I think the one that I've tackled the most in my own work is the idea that writing takes place in a normative time construct. The idea that people produce at certain intervals that are predictable and “normal.” That has a tendency to enable or foster ableist approaches to teaching, writing or thinking about writing because you make assumptions about what the brain not only does, but should do and what's expected and normal in terms of producing text. Another ableist idea about writing is the labor involved, which of course is related to time, but it's the amount. Our assumptions about the amount of labor that goes into the production of a text, for example.

A really concrete example of this . . . is when a student swaps a paper with another student, which is a very common practice in writing classrooms. One student says,

“Oh, you must have just done this at the last minute. Me too,” when they look at another student’s paper because maybe it’s not fully fleshed out. There’s a lot of error that’s visible to their partner. When in reality, it took that student hours and hours to produce that piece of content. These assumptions that we have about what people can produce and how much labor it takes to produce whatever is being asked of them.

Shane to Tara Wood: In “Crippling Time in the College Composition Classroom,” you write about how when left unexamined these normative conceptions and assumptions privilege specific bodies. Do you mind talking more about the concept of crip time as an alternative pedagogical framework? [Episode 26: 08:05–11:16]

Crip time is a concept that has emerged from disability communities and has since been leveraged by disability theorists to challenge certain ableist ideologies in a wide range of disciplines. I usually draw on Irving Zola’s definition, which is a flexible approach to time. It seems really simple, but it’s the idea that people will do things at different times and that people will approach a given task at different time intervals. It’s just thinking about time in a nonlinear way. Yesterday when I was reading through your questions, I was like, “Oh, I’m going to come up with like a really good metaphor for crip time.” Here’s what I got. I even wrote this one down.

If normative time were like a *thing*, normative time would be like an uncooked spaghetti noodle. It’s straight, it’s firm, it goes from one end to the other. If crip time were a *thing*, it would be like a ball of yarn. Maybe we pull a little bit off, it’s all loose, it’s not never ending necessarily, but it’s definitely not an uncooked spaghetti noodle. That’s the metaphor. I think it gets to that idea of flexibility and even the rigidity of this idea of normative time, which most people can’t deal with. Able or disabled.

There’s an edited collection about bipolar disorder by Norton. There’s a piece in there about labor and tenure

clocks and the production, even now, that graduate students are expected to do. That everything has to happen on this completely unachievable and exhausting spaghetti noodle. It all has to happen like this and that if you can't meet it, what happens? It breaks. Something gets disrupted. You lose traction, whatever. Crip time for me is not only a concept, but it's also a sort of deliberate, theoretical acknowledgement that there are problems with normative constructions of time. If you think back to my comment about the two students swapping papers, one hour of time might mean something really, really different for one person than for another. So it gets a little bit complicated. How can you determine where that bar gets set if you're thinking about it in terms of minutes? Because one minute for one person is so different for another person, particularly for students with disabilities.

Shane to Christina V. Cedillo: In "What Does It Mean to Move?" you write, "Rhetoric privileges movement—emotional, ethical, physical. Hence, composition pedagogy aims to teach students to move others toward particular stances or courses of action. These goals often rely on normate standards of emotional engagement and activity, based in standards of White, Eurowestern able-bodiedness that associate certain kinds of movement with agency and expression . . . I argue that we must strive for critical embodiment pedagogies, or approaches that recognize and foreground bodily diversity so that students learn to compose for accessibility and inclusivity." Your teaching and research focus on affect and embodiment. Can you talk about what this looks like in terms of practices in your writing classroom? [Episode 29: 01:22–05:44]

Some of the things that I do have to do with pedagogy and then some of them have to do with more of the spatial practice. Of course it's all pedagogy in certain ways. So on the one hand, there's the more concrete hands on aspect of teaching writing. Some of the things that I do is that I deliberately center things like affect and embodiment when we're studying writing. One of the things that I'll have students do is, we'll do analysis of texts,

but rather than talk about logical meaning, I'll have them go through and talk about their emotional reactions to specific aspects of the text and what that does for them to either agree or disagree, or pay closer attention or just check out. To get them to understand that that's what rhetoric really is, right?

Because I do agree wholeheartedly when Victor Villanueva talks a lot about how we've denigrated pathos so much in the teaching of writing assuming that it's wrong because it's being used wrong. That's one of the things that I really want to rescue. I always want to remind them that whether it's Cicero or Augustine or even today, that rhetoric always does the three things: to think, feel, and do. We usually do the *think*, but we never really stop to think about what we want people to *feel*. I also talk to them a lot about how the feel part of it is what usually gets people to *do*, right? That's where the teaching of ethics really has to stand out.

I have them do a lot of reflections also—a thing where it's like a shorthand version of speech act theory—where we talk about the different levels of meaning. I'll do some acting in the classroom. For example, even just the idea of saying “good morning,” on the surface level, it's very much about just a greeting, but it's also a statement that enacts authority. Right? Socially it demands a response. Then, it has those psychological effects too, that if you don't respond when your professor says “good morning,” it's like, “Oh no, what's she going to think?” These are a lot of the things that we talk about when students are writing. I'll have them actually write down what they would like people to experience and how well they thought that they did that. That goes a long way towards *thinking* a lot about who the audience is and being *actually inclusive* versus just thinking of them as generic fiction . . .

Shane to Christina V. Cedillo: You also write about your experiences as a Chicana living with several invisible disabilities. Do you think you could talk about how writing and rhetoric becomes

oppressive or is oppressive for teacher-scholars and students with invisible disabilities? [Episode 29 08:34–11:33]

That right there is the reason why I wrote this article in the first place. You hit the nail on the head. So one of the things that is a big discussion within disability rhetorics is the way in which nondisabled audiences tend to really think about disability in a specular way where people expect to see certain characteristics, or else you can't possibly be disabled. For example, when it comes to invisible disabilities, I recently had a conversation with somebody who's really close to me, who tends to be really thoughtful conversation, about "Well, you're not really disabled, why are you calling yourself disabled?" "Well, I have disabilities, they're mental disabilities I have to deal with. I have neurodivergence and it affects the way that I see the world. It's a very different experience from the normate."

It became this thing about, "Well, you're only disabled because you say you are, if you didn't see yourself that way you could do all these other things." I'm like, "I never said disability was *wrong* or *bad*." I actually appreciate my disabilities because they give me very useful perspectives. They inform the way that you read yourself and others and I think in certain ways, they also make me more attuned to read people generously and from a relational standpoint, right? Like understanding, "Oh, well they might not understand things in this particular way."

One of the things that I wanted to write about was the fact that if we really think about it, invisible disabilities aren't really that *invisible*. Because people tend to think that the material prosthesis looks a particular way, like there's a wheelchair or there's other technology that we need to use. But if we think about it, when I have to take my medication, that's a different kind of prosthesis, right? The thing about it is that the invisible isn't so invisible when you're sitting in class and people start thinking like, "Oh, that behavior is odd or why can't they understand this? Or why

are you writing like this?” Thinking about writing and rhetoric as normative proxies can be really oppressive.

Shane to Dev Bose: How do you define (in)visible disabilities, and do you mind talking about rhetorical conceptions to (in)visible disabilities? [Episode 45: 06:17–08:58]

(In)visible disabilities are those which are not immediately detectable, so to speak. My current research, I’ve actually been interested in caregivers and caregiving as a rhetorical construct. Now, I argue that disability does carry a sense of rhetorical presence . . . I’m relying on terms like agency, authority, delivery, identification, invention, and memory. I borrow just a bit from Kenneth Burke’s *A Rhetoric of Motives* for making the case that disability can be identified internally and externally. You might even say, using Burkean terms, that a disability is “consubstantial” with shared interests between those who are disabled and those who are designing for the institution as a whole.

So . . . accommodations are an external factor for students to succeed in the classroom. More importantly, this is a motive for postsecondary institutions to improve upon themselves by delivering education that is universally accessible while keeping in mind the ways that marginalized groups operate within their boundary even to the extent of recognizing disability while erasing it. Stephanie Kerschbaum’s recent article, “Signs of Disability,” makes a case for how disability is shaped by a collective understanding of meanings which contribute to how we notice and erase it. I’m actually a big fan of Kerschbaum’s writing. That particular argument speaks really well to what I want to think of in terms of (in)visible disability. In a nutshell, if one doesn’t see a disability, it still exists but may not be likely to be reported. I’m particularly interested in scholars like Margaret Price. She’s doing some writing on disabled faculty.

My own hypothesis is that (in)visibly disabled people might not be receiving as many accommodations due to

the burden of proof being a challenge. You have to always kind of show something. I think going back to the rhetorical constructs that I was thinking about earlier, one can identify that a disability exists, and is therefore in need of accommodations if it's more visible, right? But if it's not seen, or if it's not immediately obvious I should say, some more challenges are there.

Shane to Dev Bose: Can you talk more about the challenges students face at the institutional level and in the writing classroom when it comes to accommodations? [Episode 45: 02:16–06:16]

Reasonable accommodations are essentially just adjustments made in the system after the individual has proven that their request is fair. However, accommodations often require expensive medical proof. Right? Which draws both a financial burden, but I also argue that that delineates privilege of sorts in terms. That's kind of the big answer for the university as a whole. Relatively easier, I think for a lot of students that ask for or think of the accommodations that one might need in a classroom that doesn't focus on writing or learning to compose it in written context, as it's like primary discourse or mode of assessment. However, I think for writing classrooms, students may not know necessarily what kind of accommodations to ask for, right? In my experience, for example, in working with writing instructors, this is a good thing, writing instructors often-times won't rely on quizzes or timed assessments. Timed assessments are often things that aren't really going to work very well for many people, right? Regardless of disability status. Having that clock on you as you're trying to complete your writing or finish your writing can be stressful. It can cause a lot of anxiety for someone who has anxiety or depression or OCD.

I kind of identify with all those things as well. Oftentimes timed writing assessments can just really be disastrous. Many writing instructors say that they don't use those things, but that's not to say though that there's not room

for a crip time pedagogy. Tara Wood, of course, has that amazing article where she talks a lot about that. Essentially, the need for crip time, I argue, goes beyond just timed assessments because writing instructors will often say, “Well, I don’t use timed assessment. I’ve already kind of passed that inaccessibility hurdle,” but I think that there are still avenues for injustice to occur . . . I’m actually a big fan of portfolio assessment because I think that that’s super helpful. If it’s done right, that is, it’s helpful for students to kind of identify their own path of success and provide evidence for that path of success through the various writing artifacts that they’ve put together in the classroom compiled in a portfolio.

When I was thinking about your question, I immediately thought of students coming in to self-advocate for themselves. First-year writing classrooms are often themed as being the threshold or the gateway for entering the college or the university. In fact, I tell this to a lot of grad students I work with, “Your class is more than likely going to be your students’ first college class ever.” So to me, I think that holds a lot of rhetorical agency for the instructor being able to be open to their students’ needs. In addition to students hopefully being able to, if it’s possible, advocate for themselves.

DENOUEMENT

A disability studies approach to teaching writing is activism—it demands us to resist inequitable systems. Disabled students have historically been and continue to be marginalized in academia (Dolmage, 2018). Accessible and inclusive pedagogies and practices help to deconstruct power and privilege. This work extends beyond the classroom, too. Stephanie Kerschbaum, Laura T. Eisenman, and James M. Jones (2017) argue that issues related to disability “have far-reaching consequences across higher education and beyond” (p. 2). Diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusivity should be valued and centered in academic and public policies and structures. In the writing classroom, teachers can adopt frameworks, such as

universal design for learning or crip time pedagogies, to help create more flexible learning environments and assignments. Teachers and students together can problematize how colleges uphold and maintain inaccessible spaces that privilege temporarily able-bodied people. And teachers and students can think intentionally about what it means to design and create curriculum that centers disability justice. In sum, a disability studies approach to teaching writing focuses on all student bodies and all possible paths for learning and engaging in the writing classroom.

I offer the following questions as an opportunity to think more about disability studies and teaching writing:

- What are some assumptions we make about students?
- How can writing teachers ensure classroom practices are accessible and inclusive? How can we make connections between language and disability studies?
- How are we designing curriculum with invisible disabilities in mind?
- What are some institutional constraints affecting students in your local context? How do students seek accommodations? What are some issues with that process?
- In what ways are cultural norms on knowledge, labor, time, and participation influencing writing assessment, and thus disadvantaging disabled students?
- How is the act of teaching writing connected to bodies, and what does it look like to facilitate conversations with students about the ways in which bodies move?
- How should undergraduate and graduate programs be reconfigured through disability studies? How can classes and institutions (and other infrastructures) build anti-ableist policies and practices? What outcomes and objectives need reconsidered and rewritten?