Pedagogy of Exploitation, Long Covid, and Disability in Academia[1]

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Link to this Handout: https://tinyurl.com/pagan-bfj

Key definitions

1. **A pedagogy of exploitation.** While faculty, especially faculty with intersectionally marginalized identities, invest more and more effort into invisible care work that is time consuming and emotionally taxing, we usually do not have other commitments reduced to ensure a manageable work-life balance, and we are not compensated proportionately (if at all) for this labor (McKittrick-Sweitzer 2024). This creates what Iliana Pagán-Teitelbaum calls a **pedagogy of exploitation** in academia, where faculty are taught to, expected to, and coerced into exploiting their own time and energy for the wellbeing and advancement of others, until they burnout, get sick, become disabled, must leave their job, lose their job, or until they die prematurely.

2. **Burdened virtues.** According to Lisa Tessman (2005), **burdened virtues** are virtues that "fail to enable their bearers to flourish."

3. **Oppressive double bind**. According to Sukaina Hirji (2021), an **oppressive double bind** is a situation when "a member of an oppressed group is forced to choose between cooperating with and resisting some oppressive norm, and in which whatever the agent does, they end up reinforcing to some degree the oppressive structures in place."

4. **Cultural taxation.** In the book *Stories from the Front of the Room: How Higher Education Faculty of Color Overcome Challenges and Thrive in the Academy* (2017), Michelle Harris et. al discuss the cultural taxation that faculty of color endure from administration, student demands, and the stress of toxic workplace environments. **Cultural taxation** is the extra work that faculty of color are expected to do to represent their ethnicity, identity, and culture in a university setting, but without proper compensation or recognition. These faculty can also be used by nonwhite faculty to attract benefits to their departments through funding or diversity initiatives. Marginalized faculty negotiate the unrealistic expectation that they represent their racial, ethnic, or identity group through "**above-average performance** in teaching, research, and service" while facing a "**deficit of credibility**" due to "racism, sexism, and other forms of discrimination" (Harris et. al 2017).

[1] **Breathing for Justice! Virtual Webinar** sponsored by the American Association of People with Disabilities and Illinois Humanities and in collaboration with Listening for the Long Haul and Strategies for High Impact/Long Covid Justice at the. 4th Annual Symposium for Disability and Accessibility at Yale, April 23, 2025. The webinar is titled Breathing for Justice and explores the experiences of Long Haulers in connection with movements for disability justice. This panel is on disability, Covid-19, and higher education to highlight the ways in which these intersections emerge in academia.

Poems by Iliana Pagán-Teitelbaum

Time for Me

-iliana pagán-teitelbaum (2025)
after January Gill O'Neill and Byung-Chul Han

Time for me
This time for me is not
brought to you with the support of
the respect of my university job for
the need of female professors to rest nor by
the understanding of my little family that
mom needs alone time
to recharge energies and spirit nor by
the concern of community organizations
like the school council of parents or the
Latinx social justice collective
for caring for their members to avoid
burnout in this society of exhaustion nor by
the request that my doctor denied me
to take a partial leave of absence to recover from the
harm done to my bodymind by
five years of workplace harassment

How ironic
This time for me
is brought to you with the dangerous patronage
of the Sars CoV-2 virus
so persistent in its second super-contagious
strain world renowned since 2019
belonging to the calamitous clade of the
phylogenetic tree of the
ferocious family of the Coronaviridae of the
genocidal genus Betacoronavirus of the
surgent subgenus Sarbecoronavirus of the
spiny species of the SARS virus or
"SRAS!" by its Spanish acronym

This time for me
brought viciously to my being
by way of a disabling stroke of luck
that brought me life in the time of disability
crip time
time in bedspace
an ironic time
deprived of roles, work, outings
time of essence
breathing
sleeping
healing
for
1,036
days
and
counting
What does this time for me
mean now?

Flag of Resistance
-iliana pagán teitelbaum (2025)

For disabled comrades across the world,
especially those with long covid and ME/CFS.

I continued to live
despite the hurt of it all
The pandemic that never ended
The illness that never healed
The friends that never spoke to me again
The society that never accommodated me
The world that I never saw in person again
when I became disabled

Fine then,
I'll leave it
Like a tree who, uprooted by
a hurricane wind, keeps
growing as it lays flat on its side,
or like half the
population of my island Puerto Rico
forced off our beloved lands
eternally dreaming of an impossible return

I'll leave it all
and embark on a new yearning
a greening of my soul
a sprouting of my self love
a flowering of my courage
a wilting of regrets
a nourishing of my roots
a love of my disabled bodymind
unfurling like a
flag of resistance
in spring

Link Tree

Webpage:
https://ilianapagan.com

Socials: @paganteitelbaum
https://www.instagram.com/paganteitelbaum
https://www.facebook.com/paganteitelbaum

Pillow Writers en Español:
https://tinyurl.com/pillows-espanol

***Mulberry Tree* Film Screening with English captions and Q&A on Sunday, 4/27:**
https://bit.ly/MulberryTreeFilm

Thunder and Lightning Disabled BIPOC/Queer Poetry Collective
@ thunderlightningpoetry
https://www.instagram.com/thunderlightningpoetry

***Mulberry Tree* (short film- 8 min.) at LANAFF 2025 streaming on demand with Spanish subtitles until Sunday, 4/27:**

https://thelatinonativeamericanfilmfestivallanaff.ottchannel.com/media/mulberry-tree-645062