

*LIS Pedagogy Chat is a discussion series for library and information science instructors. Our goal is to provide an informal space to ask questions and share ideas about online pedagogy, and to build a community of practice. Each session focuses on a different topic and features a short presentation on best practices followed by a facilitated discussion and a collaborative document of ideas to share. Slides and notes from each session are available in a shared folder. For more information, see <https://www.lispedagogychat.org/>*

## Inclusive Teaching for Neurodivergent Students

January 26, 2024

Moderator: Abigail Phillips

Link to [Presentation Slides](#)

### Presentation Notes

- Overview of disability
  - 15% of world's population are disabled
  - Models of Disability
    - Medical model - focuses on disability as an impairment in a body system or function, goal is to return system to as "normal" as possible (focus on individual)
    - Social model - sees disability as society's failure to take into account the needs of individuals, goal is to improve society to make it more accessible and inclusive
  - Language - person-first or identify-first
    - Has changed over time, people have different preferences (doesn't hurt to ask)
  - Formal accommodations
    - Not all neurodivergent students seek formal accommodations (can be invasive, may not know accommodations are available)
- Neurodiversity
  - See slides for definitions
  - A lot of cross-over between neurodiversity and ADHD
  - Many people first self-diagnose, can be barriers to get a medical diagnosis (time, cost, perceived stigma)
- Research

- See slides for titles of some publications on LIS students / college students and mental health
- Instructional Strategies
  - Honest about own neurodiversity and mental health
  - Has syllabus statement about support for student mental health and uploads PDF of local and national resources related to mental health; has periodic reminders in course re: reaching out if students need help
  - Accessibility - making entire course inclusive and welcoming (versus accommodations which focus on a specific students' needs)
  - Compassionate Pedagogy
    - Being welcoming, meeting students where they are, creating sense of belonging and safety in classroom

## Discussion Notes

- Recommendation for work Cate Denial and pedagogy of kindness
- How can we empower neurodivergent students to advocate for themselves?
  - Part of teaching larger skill set around self-advocacy in their careers
  - Modeling language and approaches students can use
  - Research on social emotional learning also relevant/helpful here
  - Using gentle language in documents
  - Telling students how to get accommodations, that IEPs do not automatically roll over
  - Giving choice in the classroom - offering students flexibility in activities and learning
  - Academic Ableism - <https://press.umich.edu/Books/A/Academic-Ableism2>
  - Acevedo et al. (2023). Visioning Alternatives to Segregated Education: A Disability Justice and Access-Centered Pedagogy Approach. Critical Sociology.
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- How do we build welcoming and empathetic classrooms online and in-person?
  - Offering flexibility that respects students as busy professionals and as individuals who bring experience to the classroom
  - "I have a "Tips for Navigating Graduate School Online" section in my syllabus where I talk about self-care. Also, I team with another instructor to do a first semester seminar Webex session where we talk with students about taking care of themselves (remembering to eat, staying hydrated, sleeping) to promote self-care."

- Inviting students to share information about their needs/concerns at start of semester (e.g., an exit ticket after first class)
- I do something similar! I have students do a syllabus critique & self-reflection that invites students to share any academic/presentation/writing anxieties they may have (if they feel comfortable) and also asks if they have any outside family, caregiving, or job responsibilities that they are juggling that might impact their classroom work that they want to share. These are totally optional for students to respond to
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- <https://journals.ala.org/index.php/rusq/article/view/3968/4455>
- There is a great podcast about library services and UDL  
<https://thinkudl.org/episodes/accessible-library-and-information-science-with-rachel-combs>
- Normalizing the challenges of research and writing and that people approach it in different ways
- What can we learn from our neurodivergent students to make learning more accessible for neurodivergent students?
  - Reverse planning/backward design (Intro to Backward Design - <https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/understanding-by-design/>)
  - Creating weekly workloads (Hogan and Sathy) has really helped me move from covering content to uncovering content.
  - Moving slower and diving deeper
  - UDL
  - Making expectations clear - not assuming everyone shares same ideas for classroom discussions, professional norms
  - I've learned not to give TOO much flexibility. When I say, "Whatever you want", many students panic. I need to give basic boundaries within which they can explore.
  - Deadlines are important for some students
  - Code Switch episode of self care - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j--PoKT6BG4>

## Examples of syllabus statements:

In my syllabus: **My objectives**

1. To be patient and kind with ourselves and with each other.
  2. To embrace the opportunity to learn in new ways and grow as students and citizens.
  3. To communicate openly and clearly about our expectations, concerns, and goals. Tell me what you need, I'll tell you how I can help.
  4. To be flexible. We continue in strange times. We're all still a bit anxious. Circumstances may change over the course of the term. Let's work together to make this the best class possible.
- Posted by Mikki Brock in Pandemic Pedagogy, August 2020

***STUDENT EMOTIONAL AND MENTAL HEALTH:*** It is important to me that you succeed in this course. If there are any circumstances that occur during the semester (e.g. personal issues, anxiety, depression, hospitalization, etc.), please let me know. You do not need to go into detail, but I want you to know that I understand and support you. There are many resources available to you nationally and locally (wherever you live). Please email me/reach out to me if you would like to discuss these resources or anything that will impact your success in this course or at UWM. I have uploaded a PDF of resources on mental health, sexual assault, abuse, and others available to you on our Canvas course site. You are not alone.