Cripping Pandemic Learning in Higher Education: An Explanation

August 1 2021 Update

It is now over a year since we began working on this resource, and 50 weeks since we first released it out into the world. Since then we have added countless additional resources, and this document has been accessed by thousands of people. Regardless of whether your classes will be face-to-face, hybrid, or virtual, we hope that what we have collated gets you to consider accessibility from the beginning. We would still greatly appreciate your adding resources of any sort, as well as sharing the document widely.

May 28th 2021 Update

Ten-and-a-half months later and most Canadian institutions are still teaching the majority of their courses online. Many have announced that the Fall 2021 term will have as much in-person delivery as (safely) possible. We shall see...

December 8th 2020 Update

It's been nearly four months since we launched these resources, and the pandemic is still ongoing (and in many jurisdictions, much worse). In Canadian institutions at least, online learning will be the primary mode of instruction for the Winter 2021 term.

If you're new here, hi!

We've been adding to these resources since August, and encourage folks to share what they've found useful and/or helpful over the past four months.

Purpose

As we approach the Fall 2021 ~~Spring/Summer 2021 Winter 2021~~ ~~Fall 2020~~ semester, many institutions are predominantly using online teaching as a means of keeping students and faculty safer during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The approach that faculty, instructors, and teaching assistants take to online teaching and online pedagogy should, in many ways, be very different from the crisis teaching that occurred starting in

March of 2020 (and earlier in other parts of the world). More simply, moving face-to-face learning to an online medium is not the same as teaching online; indeed, online learning uses very different pedagogies (e.g., Coker, 2018; Parker, Maor, & Herrington, 2013; Picciano, 2006; Su, 2019). With the needs of disabled students in many ways forgotten during the Winter/Spring 2020 crisis term, we want to ensure that their/our needs are better understood and met given that the Fall 2020 term still requires teaching and learning during a pandemic.

Context

This document emerges from a group of graduate students and early-career academics who expressed concern over the lack of resources for supporting disabled students in the coming year. There is often an assumption that online learning is automatically more accessible for disabled learning, but that is not the case.

Disability activists have long advocated for distance learning as vital to remaking the academy into an accessible space, but nondisabled imaginings of the digital academy lack input from disabled bodyminds (Campbell, 2020; Lazenby, 2020). Accessibility appears as an addendum or afterthought at the end of production. Disabled people know, however, it is easier to *build in accessibility from the beginning* than to rely on the ad hoc system of individual accommodation that is likely to emerge from existing disability services designed for in-person learning.

Goals

Our goals are two-fold. **First**, we want to encourage those that are teaching this term to recognize that teaching online can pose issues for disabled students that face-to-face teaching may not. Similarly, many accommodations for disabled students are based in physical spaces and may not immediately transfer to online learning environments. In contrast, online learning may also be better for some disabled students.

Second, we want this resource to be a community-driven partnership that exists between pedagoges and disabled students as well as disabled pedagoges and non-disabled students. Disabled students usually know what their/our limitations are,

so we can guide those who may not know in a way that can be helpful to other students as well as ourselves. Our methods of survival in academic spaces are often based in informal networks of care and collaboration that we have formed in the face of the inadequacy of institutional accommodation(s). In the midst of this pandemic, many of us are realizing there will be no "return to normal," but the status quo was one that actively excluded disabled, BIPOC, LGBTQ2IA+, and other marginalized students from an academy that was/is complicit in producing justifications for that marginalization. Now is the time to refuse a return to that status quo.

Who We Are

Danielle and Hannah are both white cisgender disabled and chronically ill women living on occupied land as settlers (and graduate students). Hannah is fat and queer living on occupied, unceded xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam) land, and Danielle lives in amiskwaciwâskahikan, or what is currently called Edmonton. We are direct beneficiaries of white supremacy and other systems of oppression built on stolen Black labour and stolen Indigenous land.

We defer to the authority of BIPOC disabled people who embody imbricated identities that cannot be neatly parsed or separated, creating experiences with disability that cannot be overlaid with our white experiences. We ask users of this resource to consider the ways students will experience hybrid marginalities that existing institutional resources may not address and to respond by meeting students where they are (e.g., What should a Black disabled student do when experiencing anti-Blackness in their disability services office but ableism in the multicultural student affairs office?). Having disabled learning built into your syllabi/us will make responding to these needs and institutional failures easier.

Community Collaboration in Four Parts

There are four components to our asynchronous community collaboration. The **first** is Twitter, or more specifically, the hashtag we are using to connect folks to the resources

we have been developing. Our hope is that #PandemicSyllabiCJDS will continue to be an ongoing resource that folks can use to continue cripping their syllabi in future.

The **second** element is a [Pre-Course Learner Analysis](#) document that we hope you use in the development of your syllabi. Like other syllabus planning tools, instructors can use this document to consider the people who will be in their class, and in particular, how they are considering the needs of disabled students while planning their course.

The **third** piece is a [list of non-academic resources](#) that people can contribute to. This resource is a collation of links, blog posts, and other Google Docs that may be of use when thinking about teaching and learning more broadly. We especially welcome pedagogical tools you may have already developed or encountered in the course of your career.

The **fourth** and final part is a [collaborative Google Doc](#) where we hope folks will leave short (~50-100 word) annotations on academically refereed writing that intersect with the topics of universal design, online learning, online assessment, disabled students in higher education, and disabled faculty members, to name a few possibilities.

Concluding Thoughts

We do not claim to have all of the answers, nor should we be tasked with providing them. These documents are meant to be a starting point for faculty, instructors, and teaching assistants in their journeys to being more accommodating and knowledgeable of the needs of disabled students. That said, we openly encourage folks to contribute to the lists that we have begun to generate, and to participate and interact with the hashtag (#PandemicSyllabiCJDS), and both of us on Twitter (@hannahnthewolf and @daniellelorenz).

With sincerity,
Hannah (hannah.facknitz@gmail.com) & Danielle (danielle.lorenz@gmail.com)

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