**Critical Pedagogy Access Worksheet**

“‘Able-bodied people all have things that they fall short with, skills or tasks that they will never master. But when disabled folks say, ‘These are the things I need in order to do my very best,’ it is labeled as an ‘accommodation.’ [(Daniel Freeman, n.p.)] …  Accommodation is thought of as something that always needs to be created, something that has a cost. This underlines the inherent inaccessibility of nearly all of society: seemingly, nothing is ever designed to be accessible in the first place.”

Jay Dolmage, *Academic Ableism*, pg. 53

**Become the Learner.** Disability justice is a liberation framework that calls for leadership of the most impacted; it is not an “academic issue” to be abstracted.

**Key Terms**

**Accessibility.** Not simply being invited to the table, but having the table built to include you.

**Disability Justice.** A framework centering “the lives, needs, and organizing strategies of disabled queer and trans and/or Black and brown people marginalized from mainstream disability rights organizing’s white-dominated, single-issue focus” as well as the inaccessibility of disability studies in academia (Piepzna-Samarasinha 15).

**Liberatory Pedagogy.** Critical educational practice centered on principles for social change, consciousness-raising and transformation through engagement with oppressive forces.

**Inventory**

☐ I believe disabled students and teachers are equal, valued participants in the classroom, and accessibility is not in contradiction with effective teaching and learning.

☐ I believe access is for everyone.

☐ I believe that students are experts on their own experiences, and my teaching can and should involve dialog and flexibility as it encounters students’ need.

**Guiding Questions**

**Accessibility is in Every Classroom**. In the past, how have you successfully supported your students by modifying your lesson plans or teaching style? What do you already do to make your classroom accessible to students?

What is an instance where you did not create an accessible space in your classroom? How have you reevaluated your classroom in the past, and what changes have you made to be more inclusive? Can you create a teaching community to practice accountability and accessibility?

**Moving Beyond Accommodations.** Think back on accommodation letters you have received, or consider what kinds of accommodations you’re already familiar with. While the institutional support granted by the Disability Resource Center (DRC) on campus is valuable for disabled students, how might relying on these letters prevent you from fully engaging with disability-centered teaching practices?

How does the framework of “default” accommodations or accommodation “menus” limit the possibilities of accommodation as a dialogue and responsive teaching style? What are some ways you can develop accessible classroom practices that don’t rely on, or move beyond, the DRC letter?

**Considering Your Students’ Input.** What role can your students play in creating accessible classrooms? How might inviting your students to share their expertise and knowledge enrich the classroom experience, for teachers and students?

**Tools & Activities**

**Syllabus development.** As you develop your syllabi, break down for yourself what the University policies communicate to students. Try rewriting or developing new policies that explicitly affirm and support disabled students. You can also try organizing your policies so that your personal policies are separate from the University-mandated policies, and invite your students into conversation about these policies and what they mean.

**Grading practices**. In what ways could you adapt your rubric to respond to the needs of your students? As a class, ask your students what they think they need to be assessed on to grow as writers, and use their input to develop your rubric. Allow students the opportunity to give feedback on rubrics, either in class or out of class during office hours.

**Rethinking punishment models of teaching.** Take some time to reflect on what unconscious biases you bring to the classroom--what kinds of behavior do you consider “good” or “bad” and how might they be connected to social signifiers like race, gender, class, and/or disability? Behaviors like not making eye contact, fidgeting, yawning, volume modulation and code switching or use of informal language, and the use of note taking or assistive technologies including laptops--none of which harm others or impede student learning--can be misconstrued as disrespectful.
How can you support different social presentations and learning styles in your classroom? Students with disabilities, especially students of color, face higher rates of punishment than their nondisabled peers. As you teach, pay attention to how you interact with students, and where you find yourself relying on punishment to enforce “good” behavior in the classroom. What can you do instead to foster a productive and open learning environment? (For example, peer to peer discussion and community accountability are transformative justice strategies.)

**Reading Guide**

Jay Dolmage, *Academic Ableism: Disability and Higher Education*. 2017.

Jay Dolmage, Melissa Helquist, and Tara Wood, “Praxis: Connecting Writing Programs and Faculty with Disability Services.” 2017.

Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, *Care Work: Dreaming Disability Justice*. 2018.

Mia Mingus, *Leaving Evidence* (blog). [leavingevidence.wordpress.com/](https://leavingevidence.wordpress.com/)

ed. Liat Ben-Moshe, Ken Sagendorf, Mia Feldbaum, Rebecca C. Cory, *Building Pedagogical Curb Cuts: Incorporating Disability in the University Classroom and Curriculum*

bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*.1994.

Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. 1968.

Accessible Syllabus website, [www.accessiblesyllabus.com/](https://www.accessiblesyllabus.com/)

Aparna Nair, “Unessay assignment.” [twitter.com/DisabilityStor1/status/1204204915339472898](https://twitter.com/DisabilityStor1/status/1204204915339472898)

Incite! Women, Gender Non-Conforming, and Trans people of Color Against Violence. [incite-national.org/](https://incite-national.org/)

Sins Invalid, “Access Suggestions for a Public Event.” [www.sinsinvalid.org/blog/access-suggestions-for-a-public-event](https://www.sinsinvalid.org/blog/access-suggestions-for-a-public-event)

*This handout was inspired by Museums as Sites for Social Action (MASS Action)’s 2017* Toolkit*, available at* [*https://www.museumaction.org/resources*](https://www.museumaction.org/resources)

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