# Disability Studies and Inclusive Writing Pedagogies

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This annotated bibliography aims to provide resources and teaching practices for faculty and others interested in inclusive and accessible teaching in writing across the disciplines. The texts annotated here offer necessary background information on disability and accessibility, and they outline inclusive pedagogical approaches that can be adapted for specific disciplinary contexts.

Many texts draw from disability studies, an interdisciplinary field that examines disability as a cultural phenomenon. These scholars generally understand **disability** through the social model of disability (Bennett; Brueggemann; Meloncon; Nicolas; Walters; Wilson), which views disability as socially constructed, something that emerges from cultural contexts. That is, disability is not inherent in any individual’s body; individuals become disabled when their surroundings are not accessible. Disability is also produced through **ableism**, a form of structural discrimination against disabled people that assumes that certain bodies and ways of being, knowing, doing, and relating in the world are superior to or more “natural” than others (Bennett; Birdwell and Bayley; Nicolas).

Just as disability studies focuses on the ways in which social contexts are disabling and/or enabling, this annotated bibliography emphasizes how faculty can redesign classrooms to be more inclusive and accessible. In line with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), universities are required to give **accommodations** to meet the needs of individual students with documented disabilities (Birdwell and Bayley; Nicolas; Simpkins; Womack; Wyatt). However, rather than focusing on accommodations after a course has been designed, readings in this bibliography argue for the importance of **universal design for learning (UDL)**, which refers to the creation of courses and other learning environments to be accessible to as many students as possible (Dunn and Dunn De Mers; Nicolas; Walters). While UDL centers students with disabilities, it ultimately benefits all students.

The texts below also advocate for engaging students with disability studies and accessibility through course content. In particular, disability studies pedagogy centers **multimodality**, or the combination of more than one modality in a text, which may include written language, audio, video, images, and embodied communication (Butler; Gonzales and Butler; Walters). Inclusive multimodal compositions can not only be more accessible for students, but they can also help students learn how to write accessibly for public and professional audiences.

Practices for including disability studies in writing classrooms, which are detailed in the accompanying handout, include:

* Using approaches like universal design for learning (UDL) to make all aspects of the course as accessible to as many students as possible (Dunn and Dunn De Mers; Hitt; Nicolas; Walters; Womack)
* Centering texts written by disabled people in the curriculum (Bennett; Browning; Walters)
* Encouraging students to consider how course texts and/or disciplinary writing conventions construct “ability” vs. “disability” and make assumptions about what bodies should be able to do (Bennett; Brueggemann; Linton; Meloncon)
* Tasking students with composing multimodal and/or accessible texts for disciplinary and/or public audiences and with considering accessibility and disability in their writing (Butler; Gonzales and Butler; Walters)

The List of Themes below sorts key themes into categories. Readers can do a keyword search of a theme to find resources that address that topic. In addition, the Glossary offers definitions for key terms and phrases used throughout this bibliography.

## **List of Themes**

**Disability studies:** ableism, accessibility, accommodation, ASL, crip time, disability terminology, intersectionality, theory, trigger warnings, universal design for learning (UDL)

**Disabilities:** autism, Deafness, learning disabilities, neurodiversity

**Multimodal and hybrid composition:** captions, code-meshing, dictation, multilingualism, multimodality, speech recognition

**Pedagogy:** assessment, attendance, contract grading, course design, critical pedagogy, inclusive design, online learning, participatory design, peer-to-peer pedagogy, plain language, portfolios, resistance, service learning, syllabus design, transfer, writing process

**Writing in the disciplines:** science writing, STEM, technical and professional communication (TPC)

## **Glossary**

**Ability:** The capacities expected of a “typical” or “normal” person, who may be referred to as able, abled, or able-bodied. Although ability is often seen as the opposite of disability, there is no clear or natural division between ability and disability; rather, what counts as ability vs. disability depends on context.

*Refer to Brueggemann, Brueggemann et al., Walters*

**Ableism:** A structural system of disability-based oppression. Ableism assumes that certain bodies and ways of being, knowing, doing, and relating in the world are superior to or more “natural” than others. Importantly, ableism is not limited to intentional or conscious discrimination; ableist assumptions are often built into institutional policies and course designs.

*Refer to Bennett, Birdwell and Bayley, Nicolas*

**Accommodation:** A change or modification made to a space to make it more accessible to people with disabilities. While accommodation is a positive step toward inclusivity, it often occurs after spaces have already been designed to be exclusive and takes place on an individual, case-by-case basis. As such, most research in this bibliography advocates for inclusive design in addition to individual accommodations.

*Refer to Birdwell and Bayley, Nicolas, Simpkins, Womack*

**Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA):** Legislation passed in the U.S. in 1990 that aims to prevent disability-based discrimination. In educational contexts, the ADA mandates that colleges and universities provide disabled students equal access to education. Faculty are required by law to accommodate students with documented disabilities. However, because many students are unable to receive official accommodations through the ADA, this bibliography supports inclusive pedagogies that improve access for all students regardless of their disability status.

*Refer to Birdwell and Bayley, Wyatt*

**American Sign Language (ASL):** Sign-based language used primarily by members of the Deaf community in the U.S. ASL is a legitimate language separate from American English, and it is an important part of many Deaf individuals’ identity.

*Refer to Rubel and Toscano*

**Autism:** A type of neurodiversity with features that might include difficulty with social interaction, special interests, sensory processing issues, and repetitive movements (called “stims” or “stimming”). Given that autism is a spectrum, there is no one autistic experience. Furthermore, autistic people disagree on whether or not autism is a disability, and not all autistic people identify as disabled; autism is not just a collection of “deficits,” but a different way of experiencing and relating to the world that comes with different strengths and capacities. Autism is included in this bibliography because college classrooms are often disabling for students with autism. Also called Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and previously known as Asperger’s Syndrome (AS).

*Refer to Tomlinson and Newman, Walters*

**Bodymind:** A concept from disability studies that aims to challenge the mind-body split by referring to them as inseparable.

*Refer to* *Bennett*

**Code-meshing:** The practice of mixing different language varieties or languages in the same text. Because ASL is its own language (and not just a signed version of American English), some texts written by Deaf students may be classified as code-meshed.

*Refer to Rubel and Toscano*

**Contract grading:** An alternative system of assessment that gives students grades not on a teacher’s evaluation of the quality of their work, but on how muchwork they do and/or how much they engage with the course. Contract grading can support antiracist pedagogy by preventing all students from being assessed with the same set of standards, but if implemented without attention to accessibility, it may also disadvantage disabled students.

*Refer to Kryger and Zimmerman*

**Crip time:** A disability studies concept that encapsulates the different ways that disabled and neurodivergent people experience and relate to time. For example, disabled students may spend more or less time on certain aspects of the writing process, be unable to write for long periods of time, and fail to meet strict deadlines. “Cripping time” means making writing processes and deadlines more flexible to make success possible for more students.

*Refer to Simpkins, Wood*

**Critical pedagogy:** An umbrella term referring to pedagogies that attempt to challenge dominant systems of power (including ableism). Critical pedagogies engage students in better understanding, or coming to a “critical consciousness” of, systems of power, and working toward social justice through their education. In critical pedagogy, students create knowledge with teachers and bring their personal experiences and interests into the classroom.

*Refer to Walters*

**Disability:** A term referring to physical and/or mental differences that can be understood in two ways: the medical model and the social model. The medical model suggests that disability, or a deviation from the abilities of a “normal” or normative person, is located in the individual. This model views disability as something that should be diagnosed and cured through medicine. In contrast, the social model of disability explains that disability emerges from social environments—for example, an inability to use stairs is only a disability when most buildings use stairs and/or lack ramps. In this way, the social model suggests that disability is not inherent in individuals; individuals are *disabled* by disabling spaces. Most of the readings in this bibliography tend toward the social model.

*Refer to Bennett, Brueggemann, Linton, Meloncon, Nicolas, Walters, Wilson*

**Disability justice:** Efforts to challenge ableism and promote equity and justice for disabled people. Disability justice understands ableism as a system of oppression that intersects with other systems of oppression, like patriarchy and white supremacy, meaning that all systems of oppression must be challenged at once. Disability justice therefore centers disabled people who are marginalized by multiple systems of oppression, not just ableism.

*Refer to Bennett*

**Intersectionality:** A theory originating from Black feminism that understands systems of oppression as intersecting, or interconnected. In the context of disability studies, intersectionality emphasizes that ableism is connected to white supremacy, patriarchy, nationalism, homophobia, transphobia, classism, ageism, and other structures of discrimination. Intersectionality can also refer to connections between people’s identities; for example, a woman who is disabled likely does not experience gender separately from disability, but together.

*Refer to Bennett, Gonzales and Butler, Kryger and Zimmerman*

**Learning disabilities:** A broad term referring to people who may struggle to learn and communicate their learning in the ways expected of them in school, including through reading and writing. Specific learning disabilities may include ADHD, dyslexia, and dysgraphia. The term is sometimes abbreviated as “LD,” and disabilities that fall into this category may also be understood as types of neurodiversity (described below).

*Refer to Brueggemann et al., Corbett, De La Paz, Smith*

**Multilingualism:** The use of one or more languages or language varieties. Writing studies scholars generally prefer the term “multilingual” to describe students who are learning English (as opposed to “English language learner,” “English as a second language,” etc.) because it decenters English and values all languages equally.

*Refer to Gonzales and Butler*

**Multimodality:** Texts that combine more than one modality, which may include written language, audio, video, images, embodiment, etc. Multimodal pedagogies encourage students to compose texts using different modalities. These pedagogies can be more accessible to disabled students and audiences than traditional pedagogies based entirely in written communication.

*Refer to Butler, Gonzales and Butler, Walters*

**Neurodiversity:** An approach to understanding disability and mental health that recognizes differences in human minds and behaviors as a valuable form of diversity, rather than a series of deficits or diseases that must be “cured.” A characteristic, diagnosis, or mental process can be considered “neurodiverse” or “neurodivergent” when it differs from what is recognized as the norm, or what is seen as “neurotypical.” Specific diagnoses include anxiety disorders, autism, ADHD, depression, epilepsy, OCD, PTSD, schizophrenia, and sensory processing disorders.

*Refer to Birdwell and Bayley, Kryger and Zimmerman, Tomlinson and Newman, Walters*

**Normate:** A disability studies term for the idealized, abled body. The normate is a standard that seems “natural” and “neutral” but actually reproduces ableist assumptions about what bodies should be able to do, which disadvantage and discriminate against disabled people.

*Refer to Nicolas*

**Participatory design:** In educational settings, an approach to design in which intended users participate actively in the design of a future course or space. Centering disabled students in participatory design can make courses more accessible.

*Refer to Oswal and Meloncon*

**Person-first language:** An approach to describing disabled people that aims to center personhood and decenter disability, including language like “person with a disability.” While some disabled people may prefer person-first language, others may prefer the opposite. Some autistic people, for example, prefer the term “autistic person” over “person with autism,” because “person with autism” implies that autism is a disability, which some might not agree with. This bibliography uses both person-first language and other descriptors, but it’s best to ask individuals what option they prefer.

*Refer to Linton*

**Transfer:** In education, the process of using skills and knowledge learned in one context in another one. Writing studies research shows that transfer is not automatic; it must be developed through reflection.

*Refer to Simpkins*

**Triggers:** Topics that may elicit negative emotional responses in people with histories of trauma and/or mental health conditions, including anxiety, depression, OCD, and PTSD. Triggering topics depend on individuals but can include reference to oppression, violence, traumatic events, and mental health struggles. Best practice is to include a brief trigger warning before discussing a potentially triggering topic so that students can decide how they want to engage with it.

*Refer to Birdwell and Bayley, Orem and Simpkins*

**Universal design for learning (UDL):** An application of universal design to educational contexts, universal design for learning (UDL) refers to the creation of courses and other learning environments to be accessible to as many students as possible. UDL does not advocate for only individual accommodation after the design process; rather, accessibility is central to design. While UDL centers students with disabilities, it ultimately benefits all students.

*Refer to Dunn and Dunn De Mers, Nicolas, Walters*

**WAC/WID:** Acronym for writing across the curriculum and writing in the disciplines.

Bennett, Kristin C. “Prioritizing Access as a Social Justice Concern: Advocating for

Ableism Studies and Disability Justice in Technical and Professional Communication.” *IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication*, vol. 65, no. 1, 2022, pp. 226-240. <https://ieeexplore-ieee-org.oregonstate.idm.oclc.org/stamp/stamp.jsp?tp=&arnumber=9716849>

**Themes: ableism, course design, disability justice, disability studies, STEM, technical and professional communication (TPC), theory**

**Summary:** Kristin C. Bennett describes a professional writing course that integrates disability studies scholarship and identifies common ableist assumptions students make when engaging with disability. Bennett first provides an overview of ableism studies and disability studies in relation to technical and professional communication (TPC). Ableism studies “reveals socially internalized ableism or the belief that certain bodyminds are more normal or natural than others” (227). Disability studies examines how disability is intersectional and emerges through social relations, “reveal[s] privilege in neutral design,” and “challeng[es] the power of normative structures” in communication (229). Bennett’s course asked students to engage with these concepts by reading about disability and researching a “workplace concern related to disability” (230). However, Bennett explains that students’ work in this course still relied on ableist assumptions. She coded course materials and student work, as well as interviewed students, to study these assumptions. Bennett found four central ableist assumptions that impeded her students’ engagement with disability studies: “warrants of bodymind as able,” or ability as normal and natural (231); “warrants of able as productive and well,” or the assumption that productive and well people are not disabled (233); “warrants of normal as natural,” assuming that dominant, able-bodied experiences are natural (233); and a lack of understanding of disability as intersectional (234). Bennett concludes that faculty can challenge these assumptions with a disability justice framework. Disability justice allows for multiple modes of engagement in coursework, recognizes value beyond productivity, and centers disabled perspectives.

**Implications:** Bennett advocates for the use of a disability studies framework in technical and professional communication (TPC). This means both engaging students with disability studies and using disability studies principles in course design. Bennett offers some specific suggestions for disability justice in course design, including giving students options for participating and completing class work, inviting students to give regular feedback on the course, and using self-assessment. Bennet also advises centering disabled perspectives in TPC through readings and the sources students use for research. Finally, faculty may use the ableist assumptions Bennett identifies as a starting point for giving disability justice-informed feedback on student writing, starting class discussions, and reflecting on their own course materials.

## Birdwell, M. L. N., and Keaton Bayley. “When the Syllabus Is Ableist: Understanding

## How Class Policies Fail Disabled Students.” *Teaching English in the Two-Year College*, vol. 49, no. 3, 2022, pp. 220-237. <https://library-ncte-org.oregonstate.idm.oclc.org/journals/tetyc/issues/v49-3/31803>

## **Themes: ableism, course design, neurodiversity, syllabus design**

**Summary:** M. L. N. Birdwell and Keaton Bayley explain how common syllabus policies discriminate against neurodivergent students. The authors argue that because individual accommodations can be insufficient and because ADA offices are often hard to navigate, courses should be designed for maximum accessibility. Drawing from scholarship on neurodivergence, the authors define neurodiversity as the recognition that human “senses, aptitudes, interests, and processing naturally vary” (223). Neurodivergence encompasses a variety of differences in brain function, including autism, ADHD, learning disabilities, schizophrenia, epilepsy, anxiety, depression, and PTSD, among many others. Neurodivergent students may also have more general conditions that can affect their classroom performance, including executive dysfunction, or poor organization and a reduced ability to follow directions; time blindness, or difficulty with time management; sensory processing issues; rejection sensitive dysphoria, which could lead to intense reactions to feedback and anxiety around groupwork; and stimming, or repetitive, self-soothing motions. Birdwill and Bayley identify a range of syllabus policies that can unfairly harm neurodivergent students due to these conditions. These include strict attendance policies, failure to adhere to ADA accommodations, assessing student engagement based on “stillness and physical regulation” like eye contact (230), preventing students from using technology in the classroom, requiring students to write about potentially triggering topics, and mandating verbal participation and/or group work. The authors suggest that faculty ensure that these policies, on their own and cumulatively, do not cause students to fail.

**Implications:** Birdwell and Bayley’s research identifies common syllabus policies that faculty might consider revising to be more inclusive of neurodivergent students. These include strict attendance policies, expectations of physical regulation (stillness, silence, eye contact) in class, technology bans in the classroom, assignments with potentially triggering topics (especially personal narratives), and participation and groupwork requirements. While the authors do not advise getting rid of all these policies, faculty should ensure that these and other similar policies do not cause students to fail. When faculty do not have power to change these policies, they might advocate for changes with colleagues or do their best to limit harm to neurodivergent students.

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

## *Studies*, vol. 42, no. 2, Fall 2014, pp. 96-117. [www.jstor.org/stable/43501858](http://www.jstor.org/stable/43501858)

**Themes: accessibility, course design, disability studies**

**Summary:** Ella R. Browning explains how faculty can incorporate disability studies into their teaching. Although simply tacking disability onto existing curricula is often unproductive, entirely transforming a course through disability studies would be unfeasible for most faculty. Browning offers a middle ground by explaining how disability studies can inform existing writing courses. After providing an overview of the social model of disability, Browning shows how a disability perspective can be theoretically and practically integrated into writing instruction, using a first-year writing course as an example. Faculty might invite students to consider writing topics through the lens of disability. When students engage with “stakeholder theory,” or who the people invested in their topic are, for example, they can include people with disabilities (107). Faculty might also ask students to read texts by disabled authors and facilitate discussions that aim to challenge stereotypical understandings of disability, as well as move students away from a binary conceptualization of disability and ability. Browning concludes with a list of questions that faculty can ask themselves to reflect on disability and accessibility in their curricula.

**Implications:** Browning’s research shows how a disability studies approach can be implemented into already existing writing courses, and she offers several suggestions for doing so. First, faculty can have students consider their writing topics from the lens of disability—how does the issue they are writing about affect disabled people? How does their topic relate to and/or construct the idea of disability? Second, faculty can assign readings by disabled people. When possible, students and faculty can discuss the social model of disability. Finally, faculty may use the list of reflection questions Browning provides on page 112 to identify how they can make their individual curricula more accessible.

## Brueggemann, Brenda Jo. “An Enabling Pedagogy: Mediations on Writing and

## Disability.” *JAC*, vol. 21, no. 4, 2001, pp. 791-820. [www.jstor.org/stable/20866446](http://www.jstor.org/stable/20866446)

**Themes: course design, disability studies, resistance**

**Summary:** Brenda Jo Brueggemann reflects on her experiences as a disabled writing teacher and on the tensions that emerge when disability is centered in the classroom. She focuses on issues of representation, noting that her position as a disabled teacher unsettles “the erasure of disabled subjects from the public sphere” and conflicts with stereotypical representations of disability in popular culture (792). This leads her to argue for disability as “an enabling pedagogy,” as it “enables insight—critical, experiential, cognitive, sensory, and pedagogical insight” (795). Brueggemann describes enabling pedagogy in three courses: a writing course on disability and literacy, a literature course on disability in film and literature, and a first-year composition course centered on disability. She illustrates how multiple, conflicting representations of disability and discussions of different types of disability can help students generate new knowledge. Brueggemann acknowledges that she faces microaggressions and resistance for asking students to consider disability, but argues that it takes time for students to change their perspectives, and that bringing disability into the classroom opens up new ways of writing and thinking for all students.

**Implications:** Brueggemann supports incorporating disability studies into writing courses, even and especially when those courses do not focus on disability. Practices for doing so include having students consider the needs of disabled readers/audiences when composing, assigning texts with a range of perspectives on disability, encouraging students to write about disability, and inviting guest speakers to class to talk about disability. Brueggemann also advises working with students to accommodate their needs beyond what might be provided by campus disability services.

## Brueggemann, Brenda Jo, et al. “Becoming Visible: Lessons in Disability.” *College*

## *Composition and Communication*, vol. 52, no. 3, Feb. 2001, pp. 368-398. [www.jstor.org/stable/358624](http://www.jstor.org/stable/358624)

**Themes: disability studies, multimodality, learning disabilities**

**Summary:** Brenda Jo Brueggemann argues that a disability studies perspective allows faculty to challenge the invisibility of disability, while also problematizing the dichotomy of “abled” vs. “disabled.” Each remaining author provides different strategies for incorporating disability studies into the writing classroom. Linda White discusses the label of “learning disability” and argues that faculty must resist stereotyping students with learning disabilities. Focusing on language-related learning disabilities, Patricia Dunn suggests that requiring students to represent knowledge only in writing may prevent some students with learning disabilities from succeeding. She suggests that faculty allow students to compose in different mediums, like speech and art. Barbara Heifferon asserts that faculty should bring disability-related texts into the classroom to “make disability visible” and encourage students to challenge their assumptions about disability (382). Finally, Johnson Cheu shows that students can come to new ways of understanding disability by relating it to their own experiences and locating disability in larger cultural contexts.

**Implications:** Contributors to this piece offer suggestions for integrating a disability studies approach into the teaching of writing. Dunn suggests broadening what counts as “writing” to encompass multiple modalities. For example, students may complete journals by writing or by recording themselves speak, or draw an outline. Heifferon advises assigning texts about disability written by disabled people and having students respond to them. As suggested by Cheu, faculty might also ask students to write about disability (in ways that challenge a simple abled vs. disabled binary) and relate it to their own personal and cultural experiences.

## Butler, Janine. “Embodied Captions in Multimodal Pedagogies.” *Composition Forum*,

## vol. 39, 2018. <https://compositionforum.com/issue/39/captions.php>

**Themes: captions, Deafness, multimodality**

**Summary:** Janine Butler shares how she assigns captioned videos as a form of accessible, multimodal pedagogy. While many students enter her class with the assumption that captions are added after videos are made to accommodate Deaf people, Butler encourages students to use captions while making videos. Integrating captions into videos allows the captions to make meaning in the video and makes sure that the video is accessible for a wider range of viewers, especially Deaf viewers. After providing a short theoretical background for this assignment, Butler discusses how students responded to it in a first-year composition course. Her students succeeded in including captions as central design elements, and their reflections on the assignment reveal that they developed visual rhetorical skills by making captions that embodied sound and tone. Butler concludes that the assignment complemented a visual rhetorical analysis assignment by giving students direct experience with visual design.

**Implications:** Butler supports assigning students to make captioned videos as a way to both promote accessibility and help students develop visual design skills. Rather than having students add captions to videos that already exist, faculty might ask students to creatively embed captions while making videos and use captions to embody meaning (for example, by playing with the size, font, color, and movement of captions).

## Corbett, Steven J. “Toward Inclusive and Multi-Method Writing Assessment for College

## Students with Learning Disabilities: The (Universal) Story of Max.” *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, vol. 40, no. 3, 2017, pp. 23-38. <https://oregonstate.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eue&AN=125160667&site=ehost-live>

**Themes: assessment, learning disabilities, peer-to-peer pedagogy, portfolios, universal design for learning (UDL)**

**Summary:** Steven J. Corbett puts forth methods for making writing assessment more inclusive of students with learning disabilities. Using a first-year “developmental” writing course as his case study, Corbett explains how applying universal design for learning (UDL) to writing assessment can benefit all students (25). After situating this case study in existing research in composition, Corbett identifies two existing pedagogical strategies that can promote “universal learning assessment”: collaborative pedagogies and portfolios (27). Collaborative pedagogies, or those involving peer-to-peer work, he suggests, can assist students in coming to a nuanced understanding of themselves as writers. Portfolios offer students models to learn from and encourage them to explicitly engage with learning goals. Corbett uses his case study to argue that collaborative pedagogy and portfolios together allow all students “to experience learning to write and writing-to-learn at an optimal level” (33). He concludes with four principles for inclusive assessment: it must involve student input, focus on the labor students put in rather than their final products, include multiple tools/methods of evaluation (including student self-assessment), and center students with learning disabilities.

**Implications:** Corbett suggests using portfolios and/or peer-to-peer, collaborative pedagogies to make assessment more equitable for students with learning disabilities. Faculty might ask students to compile their writing, including rough drafts and final drafts, and their reflections on their work throughout the term into a portfolio for assessment. Peer-to-peer pedagogies include peer review, groupwork, and potentially peer tutoring. Corbett also advises that assessment use multiple methods, including self-assessment; involve students with learning disabilities’ input in designing those methods; and focus on evaluating students’ labor over the products of that labor.

## De La Paz, Susan. “Composing via Dictation and Speech Recognition Systems:

## Compensatory Technology for Students with Learning Disabilities.” *Learning Disability Quarterly*, vol. 22, 1999, pp. 173-182. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.2307/1511284>

**Themes: dictation, learning disabilities, speech recognition, writing process**

**Summary:** Susan De La Paz argues for allowing students to use speech recognition technology to compose their academic work orally. The first part of the article explains why students, especially students with learning disabilities, may benefit from using speech recognition technologies. Difficulty with the mechanics of writing, including handwriting, typing, and/or spelling, can prevent writers with learning disabilities from writing fast enough to keep up with their thoughts. De La Paz notes that dictation allows writers to “focus on high-level concerns, such as planning and content generation, rather than on the mechanics of writing” (174). Indeed, existing research demonstrates that speech recognition helps writers with learning disabilities produce higher quality texts. However, De La Paz emphasizes that dictation is not always successful, as when students are not taught how to use speech recognition technology and the technology is of poor quality. She concludes that both teachers and students should be trained in using speech recognition technology, and that students should learn how to revise texts produced via dictation.

**Implications:** De La Paz supports encouraging students with learning disabilities to use speech recognition technology to compose written work. Writers who have trouble with typing, handwriting, spelling, or mechanics may benefit from using dictation. Faculty and students can learn how to use speech recognition technology, which is more readily available today than when De La Paz published this article. In addition, faculty can encourage students who use dictation to revise their texts after dictating them.

## Dreher, Kira. “Engaging Plain Language in the Technical Communication Classroom.”

## *Effective Teaching of Technical Communication: Theory, Practice, and Application*, edited by Michael J. Klein, The WAC Clearinghouse and University Press of Colorado, 2021, pp. 45-66. <https://wac.colostate.edu/docs/books/effective/teaching.pdf#page=53>

**Themes: course design, plain language, STEM, technical and professional communication (TPC)**

**Summary:** Kira Dreher explains how faculty can implement plain-language strategies into technical and professional communication (TPC) courses to make them more inclusive and socially just. She first describes the history and current state of plain language, which “prioritize[s] users’ needs through effective content, style, and design, and by involving users themselves” (45). Dreher notes that plain language is often used in “government and law, business and finance, health-related fields, and the sciences” (50). Plain language recognizes that “clear” and “plain” language is not universal; different language will be “plain” or “clear” for different communities in different contexts. As such, Dreher argues that plain language can advance social justice by empowering marginalized audiences and users. She then explains how faculty may link plain language to existing rhetorical aspects of the teaching of technical writing, including a focus on plain style in scientific writing, the relationship between audience and text, and plain language as persuasive. Dreher goes on to provide five examples of plain language in TPC courses. First, faculty may ask students to apply plain-language strategies to sample texts. Second, faculty can have students read about and discuss plain language, its connections to other fields, and its marketability. Third, faculty can have students research plain language in their own fields or future careers. Fourth, faculty can ask students to research plain-language strategies in other countries. Fifth, students can discuss how concepts like “plain” and “clear” are related to power structures and how plain language can advance social justice.

**Implications:** Dreher supports using plain language in technical and professional communication (TPC) courses. She advises that faculty engage plain language when discussing scientific writing, the connections between audience and text, and persuasion. She also provides five example assignments (both written assignments and discussion prompts) that faculty can adapt to their own courses. These examples include having students practice revising texts according to plain language; researching plain language in TPC, other fields, and other countries; and discussing how TPC connects to social justice.

## Dunn, Patricia A., and Kathleen Dunn De Mers. “Reversing Notions of Disability and

## Accommodation: Embracing Universal Design in Writing Pedagogy and Web Space.” *Kairos*, vol. 7., no. 1, 2002. <https://kairos.technorhetoric.net/7.1/binder2.html?coverweb/dunn_demers/index.html>

**Themes: accessibility, multimodality, online learning, speech recognition, universal design for learning (UDL), writing process**

**Summary:** Using a universal design for learning (UDL) framework, Patricia A. Dunn and Kathleen Dunn De Mers explain how technology can support accessible pedagogy. Rather than accommodating individual students after constructing courses and assignments, a UDL framework requires designing courses to be as inclusive as possible. Dunn and Dunn De Mers argue that “a writing pedagogy based on universal design concepts would offer more flexible, multi-modal choices” for writing in addition to written text, such as visual, audio, and embodied compositions. After defining UDL and explaining its importance for students with disabilities, the authors discuss UDL in web accessibility and writing pedagogy. They promote multi-modal reading logs, in which students may combine text, audio files, conversations, presentations, and images to respond to texts. “Sketching-to-Learn,” or drawing visual representations of texts and ideas, may be a useful addition or alternative to writing to learn. The authors encourage faculty to make students aware of technologies like speech recognition programs that can help them write. In addition, they suggest that faculty use resources like the [Web Accessibility Initiative](https://www.w3.org/WAI/) to make sure that their online content is accessible for all students.

**Implications:** This article supports a universal design for learning (UDL) approach to course design. The authors suggest that faculty give students multiple options and modes with which to complete course assignments—in addition to writing, students may use audio and visuals. Faculty can also invite students to use technology, like speech recognition, to help with the writing process. Finally, the authors advise that faculty ensure that online course materials meet standards for web accessibility. They provide resources for doing so at the end of the article.

## Gonzales, Laura, and Janine Butler. “Working Toward Social Justice through

## Multilingualism, Multimodality, and Accessibility in Writing Classrooms.” *Composition Forum*, vol. 44, 2020. <https://compositionforum.com/issue/44/multilingualism.php>

**Themes: accessibility, intersectionality, multilingualism, multimodality, service learning**

**Summary:** Laura Gonzales and Janine Butler explain how writing teachers can enact an intersectional approach to accessibility by considering disability and multilingualism together. They first explain how both disability-informed pedagogies and multilingual pedagogies promote multimodality by encouraging students to compose in multiple languages and/or forms. The authors argue for an intersectional approach to accessibility, one that recognizes how differences like disability and language diversity are connected; many students, for example, may be both multilingual and disabled, and these positions together shape how they use language. Disability and language diversity are also connected through multimodality, Gonzales explains, as many multilingual people “use different modalities, such as gestures, visuals, and/or digital technologies to communicate when common words are unavailable or even unnecessary in multilingual interactions.” Further, multimodal pedagogies that focus only on language difference may not be accessible to all disabled people, and vice versa. Gonzales and Butler demonstrate how they enact a multimodal pedagogy that considers both disability and multilingualism in their writing classrooms. Specific practices for doing so include having students design intersectionally accessible media, “translate” projects across languages and modalities for different audiences, and “reflect on the significance of multiple and different ways of communication.” Gonzales and Butler conclude with four recommendations for faculty: invite students to compose in multiple languages and/or modalities, encourage students to “engage with public audiences,” allow students to intervene in social justice issues, and “promote intersectional accessibility as a social justice issue relevant to writers and designers.”

**Implications:** Gonzales and Butler support engaging students in intersectional accessibility, which considers both multilingualism and disability, in the writing classroom. They offer guiding principles for doing so: invite multimodal and multilingual compositions, encourage students to write for public audiences and intervene in public issues, and teach students about intersectional accessibility “as a social justice issue.” The authors also provide many pedagogical examples of intersectional accessibility in practice. Faculty might assign students to analyze and make accessibility recommendations for public websites; craft intersectionally accessible, multimodal projects; reflect on their own multiple modes of communicating; and interview disabled and/or multilingual writers. When possible, faculty can link these projects to service-learning initiatives so that students’ work supports local social justice efforts.

## Hitt, Allison. “Foregrounding Accessibility Through (Inclusive) Universal Design in

## Professional Communication Curricula.” *Business and Professional Communication Quarterly*, vol. 81, no. 1, 2018. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2329490617739884>

**Themes: accessibility, course design, STEM, technical and professional communication (TPC), universal design for learning (UDL)**

**Summary:** Allison Hitt details the rationale for and design of a professional communication course that centers universal design and accessibility. Universal design can not only help faculty develop courses designed to be accessible to all students, but also encourage students to create accessible communications for a diverse audience. As such, Hitt’s course utilizes universal design “both as a topic of discussion and as a pedagogical approach.” Hitt cites existing research demonstrating that universal design pedagogies invite students to engage in “ethical and inclusive professional communication practices” and think about disability as a social construct. She then describes how universal design informs the assignments in her information design, professional writing class. Hitt asks students to “challenge their assumptions about user experiences” by researching the needs of users with disabilities. Then, students read about and create “a set of usability and accessibility protocols” for professional writers, which Hitt uses to evaluate students’ later assignments. One of these assignments asks students to apply their usability and accessibility protocols to a professional website and “write a recommendation report for changes.” Finally, students made accessible videos for a campus organization. Hitt concludes that a universal design approach can make any writing class more accessible.

**Implications:** Hitt’s research supports the use of universal design in technical and professional writing courses. Specific strategies for engaging students in universal design include asking them to research the needs of readers and users with disabilities, create a set of accessibility protocols for inclusive technical and professional communication, and compose assignments according to those protocols. Hitt provides detailed descriptions of these and other assignments, which faculty can adapt to their own writing courses.

## Kryger, Kathleen, and Griffin X. Zimmerman. “Neurodivergence and Intersectionality in

## Labor-Based Grading Contracts.” *Journal of Writing Assessment*, vol. 13, no. 2, 2020. <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/0934x4rm>

**Themes: assessment, contract grading, intersectionality, neurodiversity**

**Summary:** This article considers how contact grading affects neurodivergent students. Kathleen Kryger and Griffin X. Zimmerman understand neurodivergence as “any biological or trauma-induced condition that manifests in differences in cognitive function, processing, sensory processing, or stimulus response from the cognitively normative (or neurotypical) population” (2). Neurodivergence is not always visible, and it often affects already marginalized groups. The authors focus on neurodivergent experiences of labor-based grading through two frameworks: academic performance, which refers to the “observable or quantifiable products of student participation,” and labor, which refers to the time and effort students spend on academic performance (5). While grading contracts aim to measure labor, they often end up measuring academic performance, leaving some labor invisible. Neurodivergent students may need to do more labor, or labor in different ways, to complete assigned tasks, which contract grading does not take into account. In addition, taking away traditional grades means taking away students’ understanding of their performance, which can produce anxiety for neurodivergent students. The authors ultimately suggest that inclusive contract grading requires challenging dominant assumptions about labor and emphasizing flexibility.

**Implications:** Kryger and Zimmerman demonstrate the importance of reflecting on how contract grading affects neurodivergent students. Asking all students to labor in the same way, for example by assigning labor logs, may disadvantage neurodivergent students. The same is often true for contracts that conflate academic performance, or the measurable outcomes of labor, and student labor itself. Kryger and Zimmerman suggest that faculty who use contract grading discuss with students how the contract does and/or does not account for all of the labor they do in the course. Faculty and students can together negotiate what kinds of labor and academic performances the contract should require. Faculty can also consider implementing flexible deadlines and “weekly check-ins” with students about their progress.

## Linton, Simi. “From Reassigning Meaning.” *Disability and the Teaching of Writing: A*

## *Critical Sourcebook*, edited by Cynthia Lewiecki-Wilson, Brenda Jo Brueggemann, and Jay Dolmage, Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2008, pp. 174-182.

**Themes: disability studies, disability terminology**

**Summary:** In this excerpt from her book, *Reassigning Meaning*, Simi Linton explains the meaning of and ideologies embedded in various disability terms. Linton notes that “nice words,” like “physically challenged” and “special,” used to describe disabled people may be well meaning but are ultimately “paternalistic” (175). She explains that some terms are harmful when used by nondisabled people, but they have been reclaimed by people with disabilities, giving them “a transgressive potential” (177). Linton goes on to discuss the problematic nature of narratives about “overcoming” a disability or “passing” as nondisabled, as these ideas attach a negative connotation to disability and suggest that it is disabled individuals’ responsibility to break through barriers constructed by society (178). Similarly, the terms “normal” and “abnormal” stigmatize disability and marks disabled people as “other” (180). Linton argues for narratives that represent disabled people not as victims, but as agents of their own lives. The excerpt concludes with a list of suggested pedagogical applications, including asking students to analyze the language they use to discuss disability, critique metaphors of disability, and research respectful terms.

**Implications:** Simi Linton’s chapter gives faculty a starting point for understanding disability terminology and having discussions about it with students. Linton explains which terms non-disabled people should likely not use when describing disability (see pages 175-177 and 179-181). The pedagogical implications section at the end of the chapter suggests teaching practices building from Linton’s work. Most importantly, faculty can “think critically” about the language they use to describe disability and encourage students to do the same (181). Faculty may also assign students to research the context of disability terminology and reflect in writing on their language choices. Finally, because Simi Linton critiques popular narratives of “overcoming” disability, faculty can be mindful about the disability-related texts they assign in class and/or engage students in identifying and problematizing these narratives when they arise.

Meloncon, Lisa. “Orienting Access in Our Business and Professional Communication

Classrooms.” *Business and Professional Communication Quarterly*, vol. 81, no. 1, 2018, pp. 34-51. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/2329490617739885>

**Themes: accessibility, disability studies, syllabus design, technical and professional communication (TPC), theory**

**Summary:** Lisa Meloncon proposes a theory called “orienting access” that informs both accessible pedagogies and accessibility as a topic of study in business and professional communication. After reviewing existing research in both disability studies (including the medial vs. social model of disability) and technical and professional communication (TPC), Meloncon explains what she means by “orienting access.” This theory combines feminist theorist Sara Ahmed’s understanding of orientation as the framework through which we approach and attend to certain people and ideas, and the disability studies concept of “access” as a call for inclusivity. The concept of “orienting access,” then, views access as both “a starting point” and an “ongoing, iterative process” involving both students and teachers (41). Through orienting access, Meloncon encourages faculty to remain open to reconsidering what access means and what access might look like in the TPC classroom. She then offers some pedagogical suggestions for orienting access. These include writing syllabus accessibility statements, offering all course materials in multiple modalities, inviting students to complete assignments in the modality/modalities of their choice, and encouraging students to give regular feedback on access in the course. Meloncon concludes that faculty should engage in orienting access beyond the classroom and support efforts for institutional change that recognize disability as part of diversity.

**Implications:** Meloncon’s research supports technical and professional communication (TPC) pedagogies that both increase accessibility for students and engage students with the concept of accessibility. Although she provides specific practices for an “orienting access” pedagogy, Meloncon advises that faculty remain flexible and open to continually changing how they enact accessibility based on feedback from students. Faculty can begin with accessibility when (re)designing courses. Meloncon suggests accessibility statements paired with an accessible syllabus document available in multiple forms and an in-class conversation about accessibility. Faculty might ask students what they “think inclusion and access mean” and then relate that to accessibility in their course (43). With student input, faculty may give students multiple options/modalities for completing assignments, class participation, and groupwork. Finally, Meloncon suggests that faculty seek frequent student feedback on access in their course through mid-term evaluations or focus groups.

## Nicolas, Melissa. “Ma(r)king a Difference: Challenging Ableist Assumptions in Writing

## Program Policies.” *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, vol. 40, no. 3, 2017, pp. 10-22. <https://oregonstate.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eue&AN=125160666&site=ehost-live>

**Themes: ableism, attendance, syllabus design, universal design for learning (UDL)**

**Summary:** Melissa Nicolas demonstrates how mandatory attendance policies reproduce ableism by making assumptions about “normal” student bodies, and she advocates for universal design for learning (UDL) in course policies. Although Nicolas writes to an audience of writing program administrators (WPAs), this article will be relevant to all faculty who have attendance policies. Nicolas begins by outlining two models of disability: the biomedical model, which locates disability in individuals, and the social model, which locates disability in society. Attendance policies reproduce ableism because they assume a “normate,” or able-bodied, student, who should always be able to attend class (15). Individual accommodations also uphold this imagined ideal of the able-bodied student, and many disabled students may not be able to receive ADA accommodations. Nicolas argues that faculty should keep some form of attendance policy to ensure equity, but that these policies need to become more “fluid” (18). She turns to UDL to find possibilities for such fluid policymaking. Recognizing that students do not have “normate” bodies, Nicolas contends that we need to reconceptualize attendance as “an honest and open negotiation among stakeholders” (19). Rather than making exceptions for individual students, in other words, faculty can collaborate with all students to create an attendance policy that works for everyone.

**Implications:** Nicolas’s research supports using UDL to create flexible attendance policies with student input. Faculty can work with students to create an attendance policy that works for all of them. Nicolas also advises that faculty accommodate students who do not have official ADA accommodations.

## Orem, Sarah, and Neil Simpkins. “Weepy Rhetoric, Trigger Warnings, and the Work of

## Making Mental Illness Visible in the Writing Classroom.” *Enculturation*, 2015. <https://www.enculturation.net/weepy-rhetoric>

**Themes: accessibility, neurodivergence, trigger warnings**

**Summary:** Sarah Orem and Neil Simpkins argue that trigger warnings work to “reclai[m] damaging assumptions about the mentally ill” and that they are a useful classroom practice. They first explain how trigger warnings represent an outpouring of emotion that makes visible the “pain” that people with mental illnesses can experience. While this association with excess emotion does perhaps reinforce negative stereotypes about mental illness, Orem and Simpkins suggest that trigger warnings can also raise awareness and help people with mental illnesses “find a way to navigate the world around them.” The authors (who both identify as having mental illnesses) then share their own experiences with trigger warnings. Orem explains that being exposed to triggering subjects in class without a trigger warning has prevented her from being fully engaged in class discussion. In contrast, when students are prepared for challenging conversations ahead of time through trigger warnings, they are often able to better control how they respond and participate. Simpkins shares that trigger warnings allow him to write more openly and freely. The authors conclude with example trigger warnings for readings, discussions, and writing assignments.

**Implications:** Orem and Simpkins support the use of trigger warnings in writing classrooms. Faculty might work with students to discuss when and for what content the class should use trigger warnings. Orem and Simpkins include a sample trigger warning syllabus statement written by Tekla Hawkins, which faculty may use as a starting point or adapt for their own courses. The authors also suggest giving students multiple topic choices for assignments that require engagement with potentially triggering material, like racism and misogyny.

## Oswal, Sushil K., and Lisa Meloncon. “Saying No to the Checklist: Shifting from an

## Ideology of Normalcy to and Ideology of Inclusion in Online Writing Instruction.” *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, vol. 40, no. 3, 2017, pp. 61-77. <https://oregonstate.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eue&AN=125160669&site=ehost-live>

**Themes: course design, online learning, participatory design**

**Summary:** Sushil K. Oswal and Lisa Meloncon advocate for the use of participatory design in creating inclusive online writing courses as a way to move beyond accessibility checklists. The authors critique the fact that checklists often serve as “both the starting and ending place for accessible course design” and absolve faculty of their responsibility to continually work on accessibility (63). They identify the limitations of three such checklists: Quality Matters, the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, and universal design for learning (UDL). These guidelines are often general and operate on the assumption that all students with disabilities can be included in one set of changes. Oswal and Meloncon argue that faculty must instead use participatory design, in which “all stakeholders play an active role in the development of a product, service, or information to ensure that all users’ needs are met” (69). The authors provide a list of what this might look like in practice, including asking students for feedback on accessibility and testing different course designs with students. To make online courses as widely accessible as possible, participatory design should center disabled students but include all students.

**Implications:** Oswal and Meloncon support the use of participatory design to make online courses accessible. Checklists for accessibility can be a good starting place, but faculty can go beyond these lists by engaging with student input on access. Faculty may implement mid-term evaluations or focus groups asking students about their experience with accessibility in the course. Online courses can include “multiple assignments” and offer students choice in how they complete those assignments (70). When possible, faculty or units may work with instructional designers to ensure that the structure of online courses are accessible for students with a wide range of disabilities.

## Rubel, Linda, and Rose Marie Toscano. “I Am My Language: Representing and

## Misrepresenting Deaf Writers.” *Open Words: Access and English Studies*, vol. 5, no. 1, 2011, pp. 61-72. <https://wac.colostate.edu/docs/openwords/v5/rubel.pdf>

**Themes: ASL, code-meshing, Deafness**

**Summary:** Linda Rubel and Rose Marie Toscano discuss Deaf students’ perceptions of writing and provide tips for responding to Deaf students’ writing. They begin by noting the close connection between ASL and the “identity politics” of the Deaf community, with many Deaf people feeling proud of ASL (62). Despite this pride and the widespread acceptance of ASL as a legitimate language, Deaf students still face harmful assumptions about their writing abilities; one of the authors’ students, for example, has been questioned by professors who believe she should not be able to write as well as she does. The authors note that Deaf writers can also face discrimination because of their use of both ASL and English, as Deaf writers often “demonstrate a written English that contains elements of sign and elements of Standard Written English, sometimes following the syntax of ASL, other times following the English word order” (65). While many teachers and researchers may approach Deaf students’ writing with a “deficit model,” seeing only error and deviation, Rubel and Toscano argue that faculty should view Deaf students’ knowledge of ASL as a resource, not a barrier, to success (67). Specifically, they advise teachers to help Deaf students make conscious choices about code-meshing: the strategic blending of both ASL and written English.

**Implications:** Rubel and Toscano’s research demonstrates the importance of viewing Deaf students’ knowledge and use of ASL in their writing as a resource for success, rather than a potential cause of “error.” Faculty should challenge any assumptions they may hold about Deaf students’ in/ability to produce quality written work. When faculty encounter writing that mixes features of written English and ASL, Rubel and Toscano suggest that rather than commenting on perceived errors, faculty help students make informed decisions about their language use.

## Simpkins, Neil. “Towards an Understanding of Accommodation Transfer: Disabled

## Students’ Strategies for Navigating Classroom Accommodations.” *Composition Forum*, vol. 39, 2018. <https://compositionforum.com/issue/39/accommodation-transfer.php>

**Themes: accommodation, crip time, theory, transfer**

**Summary:** Drawing from an interview-based qualitative study, Neil Simpkins illustrates how students with disabilities develop rhetorical competence, or communicative skills, in negotiating accommodations with faculty. He argues that the skills needed to discuss accommodations can benefit students in other aspects of academic writing. Simpkins defines this as “accommodation transfer,” or “the process of learning to transfer the rhetorical skills and knowledge needed to receive disability accommodations for writing in academic settings.” After discussing current scholarship on transfer and accommodation, Simpkins details the results of his interview-based study on accommodation transfer. He finds that accommodation transfer has two steps: students must “first learn what writing processes work for them” and then “learn rhetorical skills for communicating their needs with instructors.” These skills include audience awareness, or “assess[ing] their instructor’s relationship to accommodations,” and adapting the vocabulary used to discuss disability to an unfamiliar audience. The student interviewees frequently described needing extensions and more time to turn in assignments. Simpkins relates these experiences to “crip time,” or an expanded understanding of time that accounts for disabled peoples’ differing experiences of time and emphasizes flexibility over rigid deadlines. As such, Simpkins suggests that faculty not only offer flexible deadlines but also help students learn how to effectively ask for extensions in other contexts.

**Implications:** Simpkins supports assisting students in learning how to make effective arguments for disability accommodations and in transferring the skills used in asking for accommodations to academic writing. Because the first step of accommodation transfer for disabled students is identifying writing processes that work for them, faculty might encourage students to experiment with different writing processes (from using different modalities to trying out different strategies for time management, drafting, revision, etc.). Students largely determine how open faculty are to accommodations based on the syllabus and first day of class, which suggests that having an opening and inclusive syllabus and first day can make students more likely to ask for accommodations. In particular, Simpkins supports offering flexible deadlines.

## Smith, Judith Osgood. “Self-Reported Written Language Difficulties of University

## Students with Learning Disabilities.” *Journal on Postsecondary Education and Disability*, vol. 10, no. 3, 1993, pp. 2-13. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ497767.pdf>

**Keywords: accessibility, accommodation, learning disabilities, writing process**

**Summary:** Judith Osgood Smith reports on a study about how college students with learning disabilities experience writing, and she provides suggestions for faculty to make college writing more accessible for all students. Structured interviews with 31 university students with learning disabilities provided data about the “writing demands” they experience, “areas of writing difficulty,” and “writing accommodations” they have asked for (5). About two-thirds of participants said that they experienced “extreme difficulty” in completing large writing assignments (6). Specific areas of difficulty, from most common to least common, include: proofreading, grammar, spelling, “speed and legibility,” “organizing thoughts,” typing, and finding necessary information (7-8). Smith also found that students used a variety of strategies to manage these challenges. Respondents reported getting help proofreading, using outlines and spell checkers, and taking notes. They also asked professors for accommodations, including additional time on assignments, “grading emphasis on content rather than spelling,” more feedback, and “further explanation of assignment criteria” (9). From this data, Smith offers several suggestions for faculty to make their writing courses more accessible. These include giving more precise explanations of assignments, focusing on assessing content instead of grammar, giving students assignment prompts earlier, allowing extra time, and offering encouraging feedback.

**Implications:** Smith’s research supports a set of accommodations in writing assignments for students with learning disabilities. Faculty can be clear and precise in describing the criteria and required format for writing assignments. Because many students with learning disabilities may struggle with grammar and mechanics, faculty might place emphasis on content over grammar in assessing written work. Faculty can also encourage students to rely on others and on technology to help with proofreading. Students with learning disabilities often need and/or would benefit from increased time to work on assignments and flexible deadlines, which can be built into a course from the start. Finally, to help students organize their thoughts, faculty can “giv[e] feedback on rough drafts, hel[p] students narrow topics that are too broad, and assig[n] component tasks for a major assignment throughout the semester” (8).

## Tomlinson, Elizabeth, and Sara Newman. “Valuing Writers from a Neurodiversity

## Perspective: Integrating New Research on Autism Spectrum Disorder into Composition Pedagogy.” *Composition Studies*, vol. 45, no. 2, 2017, pp. 91-112. <https://oregonstate.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=125991881&site=ehost-live>

**Themes: autism, neurodiversity, universal design for learning (UDL), writing process**

**Summary:** This article draws from survey data on 29 autistic students’ perspectives on writing to understand how neurodiverse students approach writing. Based on the results, Elizabeth Tomlinson and Sara Newman argue that faculty can better support autistic students as writers by using universal design for learning (UDL). Rather than viewing autism as something to “be cured,” the authors use the framework of “neurodiversity,” which “acknowledges the great variety of human physical manifestations—some rare, some common, and each with its own set of advantages and problems—by considering all human bodies on a physical/mental spectra” (92). Tomlinson and Newman’s study demonstrates that there is no one autistic experience of writing, as participants had varying strengths and weaknesses. However, multiple participants did express difficulties with audience awareness and word choice. The authors find that writers with autism possess a range of “adaptive techniques” that help them through challenges like these (100). Building on these techniques, participants gave suggestions for writing teachers, including helping students with audience awareness, granting accommodations for extra time and technology use, using clear and consistent evaluation criteria, and breaking assignments down into smaller pieces. Tomlinson and Newman explain that these suggestions promote UDL, as they are helpful not only for autistic students, but for all students.

**Implications:** Tomlinson and Newman’s survey of autistic student writers supports a range of pedagogical practices that can support all students in their writing processes. Faculty can help students gain audience awareness using strategies like having students read and analyze model texts, providing students with “reference sheets” with information about their audiences (101), and encouraging students to edit drafts for their audiences. More general accommodations Tomlinson and Newman’s participants suggest include “allowing computer use during class, reminding students about due dates, providing extra time when possible, breaking down tasks into smaller steps, and allowing ‘stims’ (self-stimulating behavior—often a repetitive body movement, for instance, body rocking or finger flapping) as long as these are not too distracting to others” (102). Perhaps most importantly, faculty can provide ample encouragement to autistic writers and help them find the writing processes that work for them.

## Walters, Shannon. “Toward a Critical ASD Pedagogy of Insight: Teaching, Researching,

## and Valuing the Social Literacies of Neurodiverse Students.” *Research in the Teaching of English*, vol. 49, no. 4, 2015, pp. 340-360. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24398710>

**Themes: autism, critical pedagogy, neurodiversity**

**Summary:** Shannon Walters uses semi-structured interviews with two students who self-identified as having Asperger’s Syndrom (AS) about their experiences with first-year writing. She argues that these students’ perspectives reveal neurotypical assumptions that underly writing pedagogies, leading her to suggest that critical pedagogy can better serve neurodiverse students. By using a neurodiversity lens and by centering autistic students’ perspectives, Walters aims to understand autism “as insight” into teaching and writing rather than a “proble[m] to ‘fix’” (342). From interviews with study participants, Walters finds that these AS students had “critical literacy” relating to autism, as they “define[d] AS in their own terms” rather than relying on dominant understandings of autism as a “problem” (346). Despite this critical literacy, however, both participants had trouble with the writing process required in their first-year writing course, which relied on the neurotypical assumption that students would progress linearly from prewriting to drafting and revision. While one participant felt that the course was too fast-paced and often missed deadlines, the other felt that the course spent too much time on revision. These AS students also struggled with unclear instructions, time management, and getting started with an essay. Importantly, Walters notes that both these students excelled as writers outside of the classroom and were engaged with social aspects of writing, including audience awareness. Walters concludes by suggesting that critical writing pedagogy be modified to value the experiences of autistic students. Faculty can regard different literacies and writing preferences as valuable, revise assignments to be more flexible, and encourage students to bring their interests into the classroom.

**Implications:** Walters’ study of autistic student writers supports the use of inclusive and critical pedagogy in the writing classroom. Faculty can value and make room for the experiences and writing processes of autistic students. Specific adaptations Walters suggests include “more freedom with topic selection, opportunities for semester-long projects, flexible due dates, mixed-genre or multimodal formats for assignments, online/asynchronous peer review, and additional opportunities for one-on-one online or face-to-face meetings with teachers” (356). Autistic writers, as well as neurotypical students, might benefit from opportunities to write for real-world audiences about real issues with personal significance. When possible, faculty can also encourage autistic students to analyze “the unequal power relations that structure how their social activities of writing are often less recognized, valued, and accepted as meaningful in neurotypical writing classrooms” (354).

## Walters, Shannon. “Toward an Accessible Pedagogy: Dis/ability, Multimodality, and

## Universal Design in the Technical Communication Classroom.” *Technical Communication Quarterly*, vol. 19, no. 4, 2010, pp. 427-454.

<https://www-tandfonline-com.oregonstate.idm.oclc.org/doi/abs/10.1080/10572252.2010.502090>

**Themes: accessibility, course design, disability studies, multimodality, STEM, technical and professional communication (TPC), universal design for learning (UDL)**

**Summary:** Shannon Walters explains how she applies universal design for learning (UDL) and teaches students about disability and accessibility in technical writing. She explains the social model of disability, which suggests that disability is created by social contexts and is not inherent in individuals, to illustrate the benefit of using UDL. Rather than accommodating individual students, “UDL comprehensively changes curricula and pedagogies to include the widest range of students, both disabled and nondisabled” (432). Walters conducted a research study using her own observations and students’ reflections on UDL in her technical communication class. After describing her methodology, she outlines how she had students engage with materials from disability studies to help them understand “that *normal* is a product of professional and technical discourse” (436). Walters encouraged students to use multimodal composition by composing technical communications in audio and visual format to make them more accessible for other students and a wide range of possible audience members. Students practiced using assistive technologies, testing web content for accessibility, and making disability-related policy recommendations for the university. Walters argues that the course allowed students to rethink disability as more social (than medical), and that students were prepared to use UDL in their future professional and personal lives.

**Implications:** Walters supports using UDL and engaging students with disability studies in technical writing. Faculty might assign readings about disability and technical writing, ask students to examine how the concept of “normal” emerges from assumptions that underly technical writing, and have students construct their idea of a “normal” human to show how those constructions vary widely. Faculty can also use multimodal pedagogy to both make writing assignments more accessible to students and have students produce compositions that are more accessible to audiences with a range of abilities and/or disabilities. Faculty can also assign students to revise existing web content to be more accessible and make disability-related policy suggestions to the university, companies, and/or community organizations.

## Wilson, James C. “Making Disability Visible: How Disability Studies Might Transform the

## Medical and Science Writing Classroom.” *Technical Communication Quarterly*, vol. 9, no. 2, 2000, pp. 149-161. <https://oregonstate.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=oih&AN=3229893&site=ehost-live>

**Themes: disability studies, course design, science writing, STEM, technical and professional communication (TPC), theory**

**Summary:** James C. Wilson explains how a disability studies approach to science writing can help students “understand how science is socially constructed” and view disability as a social, not medical, phenomenon. Wilson posits that disability studies is particularly suited to critiques of science because it challenges the medical model of disability, which suggests that disability is located in the individual body, to show how disability is instead a social construction. He describes how he integrates disability studies into his medical and science writing course, which caters to both professional writing majors and STEM students. One exercise Wilson uses asks students to first define a “normal” human physique and mind, and then identify all the ways that humans fall outside of those norms, to destabilize the authority of science. Wilson also engages students in contrasting the objectified portrayals of patients in medical discourse, which views disabled people “as specimens, as entities or objects of scientific interest,” with disabled people’s portrayals of themselves as full humans (155). He uses autism as a case study, comparing the medical diagnosis of autism as a “pathology” to autistic people’s self-representations of their autism (158). Students can then reflect in writing on disability representations and terminology. Wilson asks that students do a research project on disability that includes both medical research on and interviews of people with a particular disability. He concludes that disability studies can help science writers and future scientists gain a more critical understanding of the social dimension of medicine through writing.

**Implications:** Wilson’s research supports the application of disability studies to scientific and medical writing courses. He suggests assigning texts about disability from both a medical perspective and the perspective of disabled people, which allows students to understand the limits of scientific knowledge and representation. Students can try to construct a “normal” human to understand how the scientific “norm” does not actually describe most people in reality and works to marginalize certain groups. Finally, Wilson advises having students juxtapose the perspectives of disabled people and scientists and doctors when writing about disability, rather than only considering disability from a scientific perspective.

## Womack, Anne-Marie. “Teaching Is Accommodation: Universally Designing

## Composition Classrooms and Syllabi.” *CCC*, vol. 68, no. 3, 2017, pp. 494-525. <https://oaa.osu.edu/sites/default/files/uploads/nfo/2019/Womack-Teaching-is-Accommodation-2017.pdf>

**Themes: accessibility, accommodation, syllabus design, theory, universal design for learning (UDL)**

**Summary:** Anne-Marie Womack explains why all faculty who teach writing should view accommodation as central to the process of teaching, and she provides suggestions for implementing a universal design approach to syllabi. The article begins with a critique of the individualized, case-by-case structure of accommodation in most universities and the prominence of resistance to accommodating students with disabilities. While some accommodations are “seen as a deviation from [the] norm,” Womack argues that “there is no normal, primary way of learning, only normalized methods made primary through frequent use” (497). A universal design (UD) approach recognizes learning itself as a process of accommodation and promotes inclusive teaching that removes “barriers to access” (498). Womack looks to the syllabus to illustrate how UD works in practice. She recommends that teachers work on “creating accessible document design,” “encouraging students with cooperative language,” and “empowering students through flexible course plans” (501). Accessible syllabi are concise, multimodal, and “user-friendly” (511). For students with disabilities to feel comfortable approaching teachers, course syllabi should include an “inclusive learning statement” (513) and use a positive tone. Womack also recommends that faculty offer suggested deadlines but let students set their own due dates when possible. She concludes by emphasizing that universal design is an ongoing process, and that teachers should continually redesign their courses according to their students’ needs.

**Implications:** Womack’s research supports universal design (UD) as a framework for writing course design. Implementing a UD approach means understanding teaching *as* a process of accommodation that helps as many students succeed as possible. Womack recommends, first, using accessible document design when composing syllabi. This means moving away from text-heavy documents toward more user-friendly documents that are concise, swap some text for images, use hyperlinks to link to policy statements and assignments, and make use of tables of contents and lists to organize information. Womack provides a sample accessible syllabus design on pages 507 and 510. Faculty might also revise syllabus language to focus on student cooperation rather than “negative consequences and bad behavior” (512). This means writing an inclusive learning statement for the syllabus and using cooperative, positive, and invitational language (see example on page 514). Finally, Womack advises making course and assignment schedules more flexible by building options into assignments, creating extended submission windows and/or giving students more control over deadlines, and giving students more choice in how they are graded (for example, how much weight they assign to one essay vs. another).

## Wood, Tara. “Cripping Time in the College Composition Classroom.” *College*

## *Composition & Communication*, vol. 69, no. 2, 2017, pp. 260-286. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44783615>

**Keywords: accessibility, crip time, disability studies, theory, timed writing**

**Summary:** This article presents the results of Tara Wood’s interview-based study on how students with disabilities experience time in college writing and writing-intensive courses. Drawing from the disability studies concept of “crip time,” which refers to understandings of time that do not fit within “normative time frames,” Wood argues that timed writing assignments disadvantage students with disabilities (264). Disabled students in Wood’s study communicated “a desire for flexibility with deadlines and with processes of writing, along with a resistance to timed writing” (264). While anxiety may be a common part of the writing process, Wood suggests that normative time frames can unnecessarily exacerbate anxiety for students with disabilities. She also discusses how writing assignments done outside of the classroom can produce barriers to access, as some students with disabilities may be unable to meet weekly deadlines and may experience long periods in which they cannot write. Given these results, Wood advises that faculty “crip” time by making writing deadlines and processes more flexible. The point is not to give individual students more time as a form of accommodation, but to negotiate time with disabled students. Students with disabilities often have a sophisticated awareness of their relationships to time, which, if taken into account, can transform how we understand time in writing classrooms.

**Implications:** Wood’s research supports flexibility in writing processes and assignment deadlines. In particular, Wood advises against in-class, timed writing assignments, which often disadvantage disabled students. Faculty can negotiate timings and writing processes that work for disabled students, rather than assuming that all students will be able to adhere to one writing timeline.

## Wood, Tara, and Shannon Madden. “Suggested Practices for Syllabus Accessibility

## Statements.” *Kairos: Rhetoric, Technology, and Pedagogy.* <https://praxis.technorhetoric.net/tiki-index.php?page=Suggested_Practices_for_Syllabus_Accessibility_Statements>

**Keywords: accessibility, disability studies, syllabus design**

**Summary:** Noting that the syllabus plays an important role for setting the tone of a course and its “attitude towards issues of access,” Tara Wood and Shannon Madden provide a list of guidelines for syllabus accessibility statements. Their suggestions are based on the perspectives of disability studies scholars, and they provide example statements throughout the article. They recommend, first, that faculty create their own disability statements, “even if it’s an addition to an official required statement at your home institution.” Accessibility statements should be placed early in the syllabus to signal their importance. The authors also advise carefully considering the title of the statement—while “Disability Statement” might be stigmatizing, terms like “accommodation” or “inclusion” may be more inclusive. No matter its title, the accessibility statement should make it clear that the teacher will allow space for “differences in learning style,” which demonstrates to students that many “ways of knowing are valued and valuable in the classroom.” Faculty can also invite students to talk to them and work together to make the course fit students’ learning styles and needs. Finally, Wood and Madden encourage teachers to be provide “alternative modes of assessment and delivery” for assignments, which may mean, for example, offering different methods of participation for students who are unable to speak in class. They conclude the article with a list of relevant resources.

**Implications:** Wood and Madden support accessibility statements in syllabi and provide a list of suggestions for crafting such statements. First, faculty should write their own accessibility statements, even if this means adding onto an institutional disability statement. Second, the statement should come early in the syllabus. Third, Wood and Madden suggest calling the section an “inclusion” or “accommodation” statement, rather than a “disability” statement. Fourth, the statement can indicate openness to different learning styles. Fifth, the statement might invite students to talk to faculty about how the course can fit their needs. Sixth, Wood and Madden suggest drawing from universal design for learning (UDL) to explain how the course aims to be accessible to everyone (not just students with documented disabilities). Finally, the accessibility statement can indicate openness to multiple methods of assessment and ways in which students can demonstrate knowledge.

## Wyatt, Christopher Scott. “Accessible Writing Spaces: A Framework for Inclusive

## Design of Virtual Composition Classrooms.” *Making Space: Writing Instruction, Infrastructure, and Multiliteracies*, edited by James P. Purdy and Dànielle Nicole DeVoss, University of Michigan Press, 2017. <https://www.fulcrum.org/concern/monographs/2514nn59z>

**Keywords: accessibility, inclusive design, online learning**

**Summary:** In this chapter, Christopher Scott Wyatt proposes a framework for designing inclusive online writing classrooms. Wyatt notes that while many writing teachers strive to cultivate inclusive learning spaces, online classrooms with “audio, video, and interactive features” may not be easily accessible to all students. Because more college students are identifying as having a disability, and because the ADA requires that colleges accommodate disabled students, Wyatt argues for the importance of designing courses to be inclusive from the start, rather than accommodating individual students. His framework for inclusive design in online writing courses contains six steps. First, faculty and instructional designers should “consider inclusion during each step of course development.” Second, given that disabled students may face barriers to accessing multimodal content, faculty should have clear reasons for using technology. Third, teachers can work with students to learn about their needs and design courses accordingly. Fourth, online courses should allow students to express their identities and experiences. Fifth, faculty should guide students to understand how to navigate their online course. Finally, Wyatt reminds teachers that it is important to adhere to ADA or other local requirements. Wyatt concludes with a list of tips and resources for teachers to implement these six steps, including getting feedback from students, remaining flexible, and trying out online spaces before giving students access to them.

**Implications:** Wyatt provides suggestions for accessible and inclusive online writing courses. Faculty can design online courses to be inclusive, rather than accommodating individual students after the fact. Inclusive design should include students’ input and consider barriers to access, especially for technology. When teaching online courses, faculty should actively guide students through the course. Wyatt suggests that faculty try out their online courses to understand how disabled students might experience it. Specific suggestions for accessible online course design include drawing from existing resources on accessible websites (like WebAIM), centering text and including alt text for all images, and making courses asynchronous to increase flexibility.