

Dis/Ability and Access in Elementary Classrooms EDUC 285

Syllabus subject to change

Instructor:

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Words to Guide Us

“Disability means you do things differently. You can get help or you can do things yourself. ... Some people are afraid of children with disabilities. That makes me feel upset People who have disabilities are NOT from outer space. They are NOT aliens. We are all different. We are people.”

- Minal Lalvani, a fourth grader with Down Syndrome
(quoted from Lalvani, P. (2015). “We are not aliens.” In *Disability Studies Quarterly*.)

“There is no neutral body from which our bodies deviate. Society has written deep into each strand of tissue of every living person on Earth. What it writes into the heart muscles of five star generals is distinct from what it writes in the pancreatic tissue and intestinal tracts of Black single mothers in Detroit, of Mexicana migrants in Fresno, but no body stands outside the consequences of injustice and inequality ... What our bodies require in order to thrive is what the world requires. If there is a map to get there, it can be found in the atlas of our skin and bone and blood, in the tracks of neurotransmitters and antibodies.”

- Aurora Levins Morales, in *Kindling*.

“Our number one issue is still old attitudes toward us, and those old attitudes see us as helpless and unable. Disability can make you very strong and very able.”

- Ed Roberts, founder of the Independent Living movement in Berkeley

“I couldn’t tell any one story without being interrupted by a half dozen others. I landed inside a knot of contradictions. Cure save lives; cure manipulates lives; cure prioritizes some lives over others; cure makes profits; cure justifies violence; cure promises resolution to body-mind loss. I grappled through this tangle, picking up the same conundrums and questions repeatedly, turning them over and over, placing them side by side, creating patterns and dialogues [...] And then, brilliant imperfection emerged, swirling between my words. I learned this idea in disability community from my longtime friend and fierce activist Sebastian Margaret. As a way of knowing, understanding, and living with disability and chronic illness, brilliant imperfection is rooted in the nonnegotiable value of body-mind difference. It resists the pressures of normal and abnormal. It defies the easy splitting of natural from unnatural. It has emerged from collective understandings and stubborn survivals [...] **Come sit with me. Let this mosaic that began in conversation spark a hundred new conversations.**”

- Eli Clare, co-founder of Disability Justice movement and author of *Brilliant Imperfection*, p. xvii

Course Goals

As an instructor, I have some goals for what I hope that you will learn in our work together, and those goals have shaped the course content. Of course, these goals don't cover everything we should or will do together, nor do they account for the many wonderful ways you will expand upon these initial ideas I have about what we'll do together. They are meant as a beginning, and as a means toward accountability in my role as your instructor.

- Resisting the limitations of crystallized definitions, candidates will describe the meaning of dis/ability and ableism in society (as well its overlap with other forms of structural oppression), and will examine how the social meaning and public engagement with dis/ability has changed over time in the United States.
- Candidates will demonstrate familiarity with the legal responsibilities of a general education teacher in supporting students with documented dis/abilities, as well as less formalized responsibilities to all students in creating accessible learning opportunities.
- Candidates will begin to describe the meaning of dis/ability justice in elementary classrooms.
- Candidates will identify a variety of practical strategies for supporting an accessible classroom learning environment for all students, as well as eliminating barriers to accessibility.

Accessibility in this Course

One of the central organizing frameworks of this course is **accessibility**. Accessibility is a process that never ends. If there is anything you need in order to make the classroom space or course content more accessible to you as a learner, let me know, regardless of any diagnosis or formally documented accommodations you may or may not have. That might be things like extensions, proximity to the board, breaks, amplification, movement, snacks, a fragrance-free environment, or a heads-up when we're going to talk about something potentially upsetting. Chances are that if you think you might need it, someone else might be feeling the same way.

To maintain a conversation about this, we will have a class-wide accessibility check-in in our Class Meeting at the beginning of each of our sessions. This practice is done in an effort to recognize that access needs can change day to day, or even moment to moment. We'll discuss the specifics of this together when we meet.

As with our other courses, if at any point you feel bored with, frustrated by or disconnected from the course content, I'd like you to let me know so that we can figure out how to make things better.

HONOR CODE:

Students are expected to adhere to Stanford's honor code. According to the Office of Judicial Affairs (OJA) website, "For purposes of the Stanford University Honor Code, plagiarism is defined as the use, without giving reasonable and appropriate credit to or acknowledging the author or source, of another person's original work, whether such work is made up of code, formulas, ideas, language, research, strategies, writing or other form(s)." For further information, please consult the OJA website:

<http://www.stanford.edu/dept/vpsa/judicialaffairs/students/plagiarism.sources.htm>

STUDENTS WITH DOCUMENTED DISABILITIES:

Students who may need an academic accommodation based on the impact of a disability must initiate the request with the Office of Accessible Education (OAE). Professional staff will evaluate the request with required documentation, recommend reasonable accommodations, and prepare an Accommodation Letter for faculty dated in the current quarter in which the request is being made. Students should contact the OAE as soon as possible since timely notice is needed to coordinate accommodations. The OAE is located at 563 Salvatierra Walk; phone: 723-1066; web site <http://studentaffairs.stanford.edu/oae>.

A note on the use of digital technology:

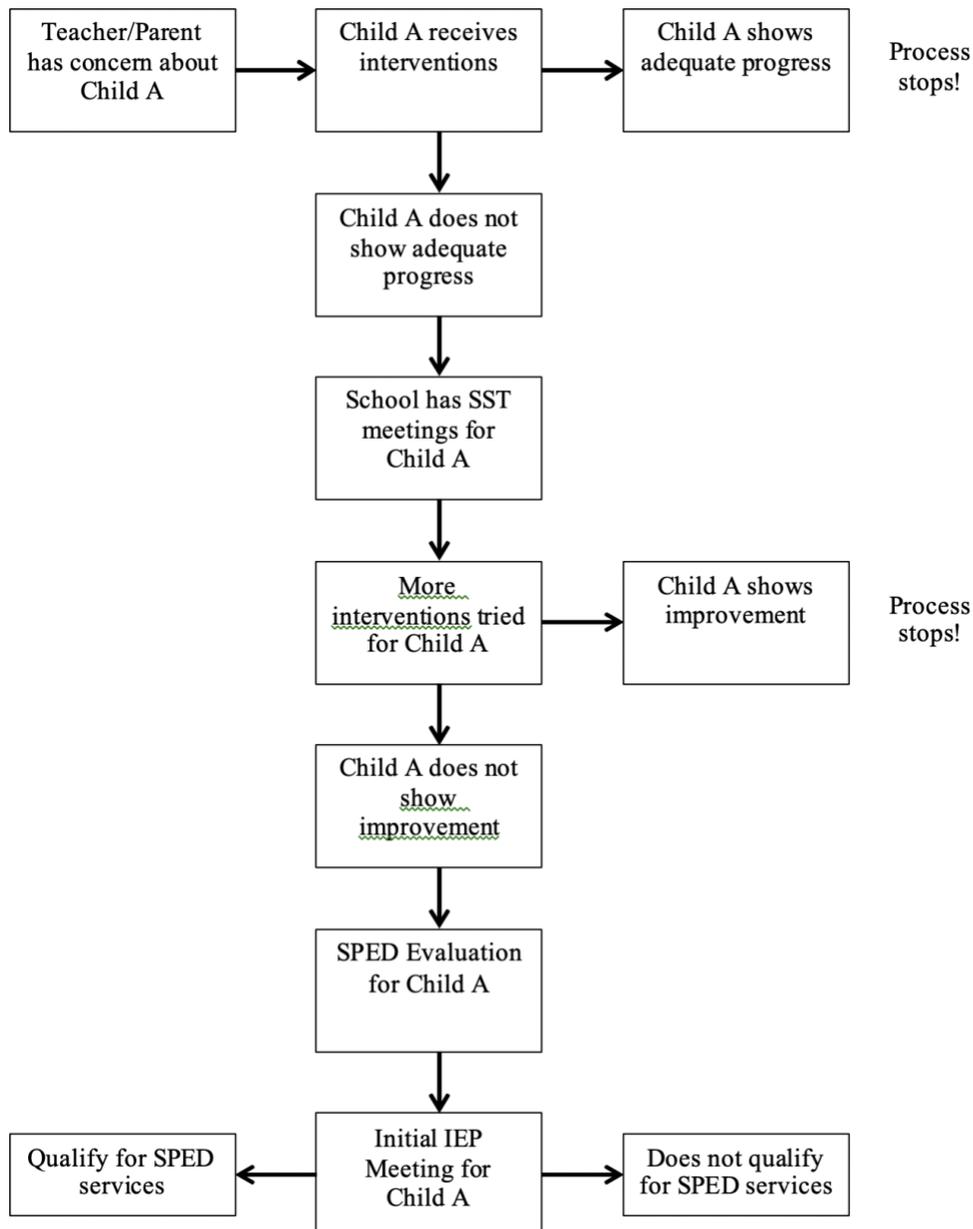
Cell phones and laptops are excellent research and note-taking tools, but they are sometimes distracting and can detract from our ability to be present with each other. If you are using your laptop to take notes in class, please turn off your wireless Internet. The use of cell phones for anything other than assistive learning support is discouraged, unless we are explicitly using them for a class activity. If you have an emergency situation, please do let me know.

Course Assignments

Assignment One: Navigating Special Education Systems

DUE: Session 5, February 15.

Every school has a process for qualifying students for special education services. Very often, the process goes something like this:



Schools differ on how they qualify students for special education services, but in general, they tend to follow a similar path. Above is a skeletal outline of the path in its most basic form. For this assignment, you're going to better understand this process in the context of your school.

Note:

- ❖ *SPED = Special Education*
- ❖ *SST = Student Study Team (Schools may have different names for this)*
- ❖ *IEP = Individualized Education Program*

Your Task: Learn how your placement site identifies students for special education services. To do so, rely on conversations with at least 2 school staff, observations of at least 2 meetings (these can be either IEP meetings or SST meetings), and analysis of websites/documents. You might find that some parts of this aren't clear to you from that information – that is, unfortunately, quite common. Just make note of it in your assignment

You may choose to represent what you learn about this process however you like (slide show, comic, annotated artwork, audio recording of dictation, a traditional paper, etc.), but you must *thoughtfully* and *thoroughly* address the following:

1. How are students referred for special education services at your school?
2. How do staff seem to view the process of qualification for special education? Do they think it works well? Why or why not?
3. What happens at IEP and SST meetings at your school? What are your general impressions of these meetings?

Interviews

Possible individuals to interview might be: an RSP (resource/special education) teacher, school social worker, principal/assistant principal, intervention specialist (e.g. literacy specialist, literacy/math coach), counselor, and/or school psychologist.

Here are a few suggested questions for school staff:

- ❖ What is the process of qualifying a student for special education services at this school from the moment a teacher or parent has a concern about the child through when they qualify for services?
- ❖ What interventions do you offer students for whom there are academic, behavioral, or socio-emotional concerns?
- ❖ Tell me about your SST process.
- ❖ How does the decision to evaluate a child for special education get made?

- ❖ What does the evaluation process look like?
- ❖ How are parents involved in this process?
- ❖ How are classroom teachers involved in this process?
- ❖ What are your thoughts on how well this process works at your school?

There is no specific page requirement for this assignment, but to provide a general sense: if you were to do a traditional paper, we would expect that it might be around 3-4 pages single spaced.

Meeting Observations

The goal is for you to see what the meetings are like for children considered for special education pre-referral (SST) and/or post-referral (IEP). We encourage you to enter the meetings with a desire to learn, as well as a critical lens. Below are some guiding questions for your observations and reflections. Feel free to use these or other questions you've considered.

- ❖ Who was present at the meeting?
- ❖ What were the dynamics between the participants? Was there an interaction that struck you? If so, describe it and explain why.
- ❖ What was the role of the general education teacher in this meeting? What are your thoughts about this?
- ❖ What was the role of the parents in this meeting? What are your thoughts about this?
- ❖ What kind of language was used to describe the child, the child's family, the child's classroom/school experience, etc.?
- ❖ NOTE: Be specific - avoid simply describing the language as "tense language" or "judgmental language." Say what you heard, if you're able to remember.
- ❖ What if any outcomes emerged from this meeting?
- ❖ What connections can you make to our course readings?

Assignment 2: Designing an Accessible Learning Environment (A Case Study)

DUE: Session 10, May 1.

For this assignment, you will consider how to design a more accessible learning environment by carefully learning from one child that seems to be experiencing some kind of barrier(s) in their learning. There are four parts to this assignment:

1. Learning about one child
2. Considering a more accessible and/or inclusive classroom environment
3. Planning a lesson for an accessible learning environment
4. Reflecting on your lesson

These four components are described in greater detail below.

NOTE: The only part of this assignment that you are required to submit in written form is your lesson plan. For all other components, you may submit it as an annotated illustration, audio recording, video, or some other form as long as you meet the criteria for the assignment as they are outlined in the page that follows. Some of you may find a more

creative or alternative option to be liberating, while others will not. Either way is okay!

Part 1: Learning About One Child (1 page)

Select a student about whose learning you have some questions. Though it may be useful for the purpose of this assignment if this child also has an IEP, it is more important that you choose a student that you find yourself puzzling over and whose learning you would like to understand on a deeper level. **Prepare a detailed description of the child, including the child's learning profile and experiences in school (written as 1 page single spaced).** Essentially, you want to tell the “story” of this child in school. Here are some guiding questions that you may choose to reflect on as you write:

- ❖ Describe the student's current classroom/school.
- ❖ Who is this child as a learner? What are the student's areas of strength, affinities, and challenges?
- ❖ What is the child's school history (e.g. has the student attended the same school since kindergarten)?
- ❖ Is there anything in the child's medical or family history that is of note?
- ❖ What has the student's academic achievement looked like over time? How does this connect to the learning processes we've discussed in class?
- ❖ Has the student had any SST or IEP meetings? If so, what were the main areas of strength and concerns discussed at those meetings? Again, what connections can be made to the learning processes we've discussed in class?
- ❖ What connections can you make to the course readings?

Part 2: Making Your Classroom More Accessible and Inclusive (1 page)

Think about your current classroom. How might you change it to make it more inclusive, particularly for the student you selected in Part 1? **Write a 1 page (single-spaced) description of an inclusive classroom you would design for your case study student, or you can create an annotated diagram or some other format as long as you meet the criteria.** Consider the following aspects of your classroom: Physical space; class norms, structures, and routines; language used with and between students; curriculum and learning activities; integration of assistive technology; etc.

In your paper, draw connections between your vision for your inclusive classroom and our readings related to Universal Design for Learning/Differentiated Instruction, inclusion, and equity. Be creative! Remember, this is your vision of an inclusive classroom – the possibilities are endless.

Part 3: Planning a Lesson for an Accessible and Inclusive Classroom (please avoid writing anything more than 2-3 pages. This limit does not include appendices)

Option 1: Take a lesson plan that you've already written and think about how you would change it to make it more inclusive. As you do so, keep in mind your case study student. **Rewrite this lesson for an inclusive classroom**, drawing on principles of Universal Design for Learning and Differentiated Instruction that we discussed in class. Using track changes, highlight changes you've made to eliminate barriers and increase accessibility and inclusion. Also describe specifically how your case study student will access content and activities in this lesson.

Option 2: **Write a new lesson plan that you will actually use for a future day at school**. As you do so, keep in mind your case study student. Use the principles of Universal Design for Learning and Differentiated Instruction that we discussed in class to guide you. Please make note of efforts you've made to eliminate barriers and increase accessibility and inclusion, and describe specifically how your case study student will access content and activities in this lesson.

Part 4: A Reflection (1 page single-spaced)

What did you learn about your case study student, notions of accessibility, and your own personal vision for teaching through this assignment? Select at least two readings from the course that particularly resonated with you. How do these readings illuminate and challenge your main "take aways" from this assignment and the course overall? **Write a 1 page (single-spaced) reflection of this assignment and the course, drawing from two readings of your choice.**

Sessions & Readings

All readings will be posted on Canvas or sent to you via e-mail. You may also find it useful to purchase some of the books to read them in full, but that is not a requirement of the course.

Session One (1/11): Interacting with Dis/ability

What is dis/ability? What's up with the slash?

How are teachers are set up to interact with dis/ability at school?

How do I interact with dis/ability, and what role does that play in my pedagogy?

Readings:

- Picciuto, E. (2018). *Not mine to mold*. Retrieved from Slate: <https://slate.com/human-interest/2018/12/parents-of-kids-with-disabilities.html>
- Annamma, S., Connor, D.J., Ferri, B.A. (2016). Dis/ability Critical Race Studies: Theorizing at the Intersections of Race and Dis/ability. In *DisCrit*. (Chapter 1)
- Clare, E. (2017). Ideology of Cure. In *Brilliant Imperfection* (Chapter 1).

Session Two (1/18): Histories of Dis/ability

What is the history of dis/ability, and how has that history unfolded in schools?

Readings:

- Clare, E. (2017). Violence of Cure. In *Brilliant Imperfection* (Chapter 2).
- Ferri, B., & Connor, D.J. (2005). Tools of exclusion: Race, disability, and (re)segregated education. *Teachers College Record*, 107(3), 453-474.

Recommended, but not required:

- Rachel Aviv, Georgia's Separate and Unequal Special Education System. In *The New Yorker*: October 18, 2018. Retrieved from: <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2018/10/01/georgias-separate-and-unequal-special-education-system>

Session Three (1/25): Interacting with Ableism

What is ableism, and what are some different ways that it manifests in the schools where we work? How does ableism intertwine with other forms of oppression?

What is disability justice?

What kinds of specific barriers exist for people with dis/abilities and how might we work to eliminate them in schools?

Readings:

- **VIDEO:** Patty Berne & Stacey Milbern, "Ableism is the Bane ..." Watch at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IelmZUxBIq0>
- Lakshmi Piepsna-Samarasinha, L. (2018). *Care Work: Dreaming Disability Justice*
 - Chapter 1: Care Webs: Experiments in Creating Collective Access

- Chapter 3: Making Space Accessible is an Act of Love for our Communities

Session Four (2/1): Special Education Law

What are the contemporary models for special education?

What are the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act?

What are the responsibilities of a general education teacher within those laws?

Reading:

- **Re-read:** Ferri, B., & Connor, D.J. (2005). Tools of exclusion: Race, disability, and (re)segregated education. *Teachers College Record*, 107(3), 453-474.
- Adams, D.L., & Erevelles, N. (2016). Shadow play: DisCrit, dis/respectability, and carceral logics. In D.J. Connor, B.A. Ferri, and S.A. Annamma (Eds.) *DisCrit: Disability studies and critical race theory in education* (pp. 131-144). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Also recommended, but not required:

- Mahon-Reynolds, C., & Parker, L. (2016). The overrepresentation of students of color with learning disabilities: How “working identity” plays a role in the school-to-prison pipeline. In D.J. Connor, B.A. Ferri, and S.A. Annamma (Eds.) *DisCrit: Disability studies and critical race theory in education* (pp. 145-156). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Blanchett, W.J. (2006). Disproportionate representation of African American students in special education: Acknowledging the role of white privilege and racism. *Educational Researcher*, 35(6), 24-28.

Please note that there is no class on 2/8. Instead, we will meet the following week.

NOTE: In the second half of this course, we will spend approximately one hour per week engaged in a **lesson planning workshop**, increasing our class time that is focused on practice-based modeling. During this time, Harper will model a teaching practice and then you will consider how to apply those practices to your own unique classroom context. Most immediately, this time is intended to support your work on the final assignment for this course. However, the **bigger picture** is that we are practicing how to design and adapt curriculum and instruction to work toward meeting all of our students’ needs through the framework of Universal Design for Learning and dis/ability justice. In alignment with practices of adaptation and accessibility, please expect that the content of the workshops is subject to change in response to our needs and interests as a class.

Session Five (2/15): Pathways to Access & Universal Design: Collaboration

Who are the other adults who may be working to support children with

dis/abilities, and what do they do?

How can I build care webs with other adults (e.g. families, co-teachers, paraprofessionals, specialists)?

What are some different models for co-teaching and collaboration?

Reading:

- Connor, D.J. & Goldmansour, K. (2012). Doing the civil right thing: Supporting children with disabilities in inclusive classrooms. In *Bank Street Occasional Paper Series*, v. 28, p. 24-38.
- Riojas-Cortez, M. (2011). Culture, play, and family: Supporting children on the autism spectrum. In *Young Children*, 66(5), p. 94-99.

Optional:

- Trites, N. (2017). [What is Co-Teaching? An Introduction to Co-Teaching and Inclusion.](#)

Session Six (4/3): Pathways to Access & Universal Design: Designing Classroom Spaces

NOTE: Class is now on Wednesdays, 3:00-5:15

What can I do to design the environment of the classroom to provide maximum access for all students?

Reading:

- **Skim** the UDL Guidelines website. Start [here](#) with the UDL guidelines.
- **VIDEO:** [Stacey Milbern & Patty Berne: My Body Doesn't Oppress Me, Society Does.](#)
- **VIDEO:** [The Ed Roberts Campus Design: Building Community.](#)
- **VIDEO:** [Disability Activist Ed Roberts on 60 Minutes](#)

Lesson Planning Workshop: Accessibility audits and task-analyzing lesson plans

Please note that there is no class on April 10.

Session Seven (4/17): Pathways to Access & Universal Design: Language Status and Disability, and Fostering Student Relationships

What specific barriers exist for multilingual students with disabilities?

What can I do to support positive social interaction for all students in my classroom?

Reading:

- Park, S. (2014). Bilingualism and children with autism spectrum disorders: Issues, research, and implications. *NYS TESOL Journal*, 1(2), p. 122-129.
- Lalvani, P. (2015). We are not aliens: Exploring the meaning of disability and the nature of belongingness in a fourth grade classroom. In *Disability Studies*

Quarterly.

- Atkins, D. (2012). From access to interaction: Prioritizing opportunities for interpersonal development for children with physical disabilities in classrooms. In *Bank Street Occasional Paper Series*, volume 28, p. 47-55.

GUEST SPEAKER: Dr. Soyoung Park (via Skype), Assistant Professor of Special Education at the University of Texas at Austin, will join us to talk about working with English learners with dis/abilities.

Lesson Planning Workshop: Interpreting IEPs, needs assessments, and staying organized while developing individualized curricular goals for students.

Session Eight (4/24): Pathways to Access & Universal Design: Meaningful Differentiation & Curriculum/Lesson planning, Part 1 - Assistive Technology and Curricular Design

What is assistive technology (AT)? What is the relationship between AT and UDL? How can I incorporate technology in my inclusive classroom?

Reading:

- Hitchcock, C., & Stahl, S. (2003). Assistive technology, universal design, universal design for learning: Improved learning opportunities. *Journal of Special Education Technology*, 18(4), 45-52.

GUEST SPEAKERS: Jen Dorwin and Brian Gadus from [Palo Alto Technology Collaboration Hub \(PATCH\)](#) will join us to talk about assistive technology and its local use in Palo Alto.

Lesson planning workshop: Making use of assistive technology through framework of UDL.

Session Nine (5/1): Pathways to Access & Universal Design: Meaningful Differentiation & Curriculum Design

Reading:

- **Re-skim** the UDL Guidelines website. Start [here](#) with the UDL guidelines.
- Waitoller, F. & King Thorius, K.A. (2016). *Cross-pollinating culturally sustaining pedagogy and Universal Design for Learning: Toward an inclusive pedagogy that accounts for dis/ability*. In *Harvard Educational Review* 86(3), p. 366-389.
- Tomlinson, A. (1999). The differentiated classroom: Responding to the needs of all learners, chapters 2 & 9, 9-16 & 95-107

Lesson Planning Workshop: Focus on instructional dexterity & flexibility in differentiation - Accommodations, modifications, scaffolding, and chunking in unit

plans and individual lessons.

Session Ten (5/8): Guiding Principles for Inclusive Classrooms

What does inclusion mean to me and my work as a general education teacher?

As educators, what are our (working) guiding principles for interacting with dis/ability and supporting access in our classrooms?

How will I incorporate dis/ability justice into my teaching philosophy and teaching practice?

Lesson planning workshop: Peer feedback session on final assignment lesson.

Reading:

TBD