

USER SEES

Academic Ableism: Disability in Higher Education

USER HEARS

Voice Over - audio in sync with captions - if turned on.

USER INTERACTION

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ADDITIONAL NOTES

GRAPHIC ASSETS

- Book Cover:

Academic Ableism. (2017). Umich.edu.

<https://press.umich.edu/Books/A/Academic-Ableism2>

ON-SCREEN TEXT

In higher education, the concept of "disability" has evolved, now encompassing a wider range of conditions than ever before. This expanded understanding demands a shift in how universities approach accessibility and inclusion.

Yet, despite legal mandates and clear moral imperatives, many institutions resist accommodating diverse learners. "Academic Ableism" delves into this troubling paradox, exploring the deeply ingrained barriers within academia that hinder progress toward equitable education.

USER SEES

1. Steep Steps

USER HEARS

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USER INTERACTION

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ADDITIONAL NOTES

GRAPHIC ASSETS

- Rensselaer Stairs Postcard Image

Academic Ableism. (2017). Umich.edu.

<https://press.umich.edu/Books/A/Academic-Ableism2>

(page 2)

ON-SCREEN TEXT

“...the steps in this postcard are in ruins, but the ideology of the steep steps persists” (page 2)

“...while the stairs may keep out certain bodies and exclude certain disabilities, institutions don’t just make it hard to get around in wheelchairs or on crutches—though this is absolutely part of how academia excludes. Instead, physical inaccessibility is always linked—not just metaphorically—to mental, intellectual, social, and other forms of inaccessibility. (page 9)

“If it is an inaccessible building, it is alive and working to physically filter students out of the university every single day. It’s not solely an old building, it’s a living thing doing ableist work, and actively ignoring this allows it to do that work incredibly efficiently. (page 36)

USER SEES

2. Eugenics

USER HEARS

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USER INTERACTION

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ADDITIONAL NOTES

GRAPHIC ASSETS

- Eugenics Diagram and Description Image

Academic Ableism. (2017). Umich.edu.

<https://press.umich.edu/Books/A/Academic-Ableism2>

(page 64)

ON-SCREEN TEXT

“Academia was the place from which eugenic “science” gained its funding and legitimization”

“...the university was also itself a laboratory for “positive” eugenics, a place where the “right” combinations of genes could be brought together (“the better families”) and where eugenic ideals and values could be conveyed to the future teachers, lawyers, doctors, and other professionals on campus. (page 13)

“Eugenics works to strongly ground inferences about social worth in biological formulae, using science to suggest that differences between people are predetermined, genetic, and immutable. (page 59)

“But what if, instead of the idea that nature determines individual success, we saw the world as inequitably shaped and built, and believed instead that the reform of society and culture would allow for a more equitable world? (page 61)

USER SEES

3. Structural Ableism

USER HEARS

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USER INTERACTION

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ADDITIONAL NOTES

GRAPHIC ASSETS

- Disabled Parking Space no curb cut or exit ramp

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/lizhenry/3288413702>
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ON-SCREEN TEXT

“... ableism has to be seen as a series of entrenched structures— not just the action of an individual or of individuals. We have to understand that because of these pervasive structures, we live in a society that resists efforts to ameliorate or get rid of ableism.

As scholar and activist Daniel Freeman writes, “Able- bodied people all have things that they fall short with, skills or tasks that they will never master. But when disabled folks say, ‘These are the things I need in order to do my very best,’ it is labeled as an ‘accommodation.’ . . . (page 53)

...the structural ableism of society mandates not just that structures be built only for preferred bodies, but that this preferred status be borne out and proven by all of the bodies that are denied access. ... Being denied access— and pointing out this denial— creates a spectacle. (page 54)

Slide #:

5

Program:

Academic Ableism

Slide Title:

Abelist Apologia

USER SEES

4. Abelist Apologia

USER HEARS

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USER INTERACTION

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ADDITIONAL NOTES

GRAPHIC ASSETS

- Curb cuts to Nowhere

Photo by: Brett VA Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 Curb cut
JABA (4904754587).jpg

ON-SCREEN TEXT

“On the college or university campus, we know that the steps are steep, and they are also steeped in tradition. Many universities make the argument that steep steps are stylistically desirable, that they fit with the template, the architectural fingerprint of the school. (page 121)

“... ableist apologies are often tinged with a sense of regret or fatigue, with the feeling that the apologizer is throwing their hands up in the air and saying: there’s nothing I can do. Or a feeling that this is the last thing the apologizer is willing to do— that they are asked to do so much, that they do so much, and now they are also being asked to do more, to be more diligent...

Because ableist apologia, as well, are rarely personal apologies— they are apologies for a state of affairs, not claims of individual responsibility. (page 35)

USER SEES

5. Capitalism

USER HEARS

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USER INTERACTION

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ADDITIONAL NOTES

GRAPHIC ASSETS

- Stylized money

<https://pixabay.com/illustrations/dollar-money-us-dollar-finance-2099950/> by Gerd Altmann from Pixabay

ON-SCREEN TEXT

“Accommodation is thought of as something that always needs to be created, something that has a cost. This underlines the inherent inaccessibility of nearly all of society: seemingly, nothing is ever designed to be accessible in the first place. (page 53)

“...all other students cost money to educate as well, of course— and most of them also pay tuition. But students with disabilities are (in general) the only ones who are uniquely constructed economically— they cost too much. Other students are seen as investments to be protected. (page 82)

“Cash rules everything around modern higher education, and cash rules most effectively when it can be hidden behind values like individual choice and responsibility. More simply, higher education is an industry which, beyond the surface, is dominated by economic considerations, but most of the time doesn’t want to be seen as a business. (page 28)

USER SEES

6. The Retrofit

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ADDITIONAL NOTES

GRAPHIC ASSETS

- Katie Lalley's Access Ramp

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<https://press.umich.edu/Books/A/Academic-Ableism2>

(page 76)

ON-SCREEN TEXT

This is the house of a seven- year old girl who uses a wheelchair.
... it is a terrifically depressing and perfect encapsulation of the logic of the retrofit: it took two years to get a terrible solution...
Retrofits like this are passive aggressive. In fact, passive aggression might describe the affect (or emotional life) of most retrofits. Passivity and aggression also seem to describe the timing of retrofits, as they so often aggressively delay access. (pages 76-77)

The retrofit is ... an after- the- fact construction. It is always supplemental— always not- original. The retrofit is additional. Like eugenic design, a retrofit can be meant not to fit a need, but to make its user perform and behave in a particular way, often in a constrained way.(page 122)

That is, when the accommodations that students with disabilities have access to, over and over again, are intended to simply temporarily even the playing field for them in a single class or activity, it is clear that these retrofits are not designed for people to live and thrive with a disability, but rather to temporarily make the disability go away (page 70)

USER SEES

7. Responsibility

USER HEARS

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USER INTERACTION

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ADDITIONAL NOTES

GRAPHIC ASSETS

- University of Connecticut Plaque RE: Responsibility

https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/0/08/Student_Activities_Extend_the_Concept_of_Human_Rights_and_the_Appreciation_of_Individual_Responsibility_-_University_of_Connecticut_-_DSC09952.JPG Daderot, CC0, via Wikimedia Commons

ON-SCREEN TEXT

“The social construction of disability on campus often mandates that disability exist only as a negative, private, individual failure. Very little real space is made for the building of coalitional, collective, or interdependent disability politics. Moreover, the university can never be viewed as the space responsible for causing disability. Disability had to exist prior to, has to remain external to, and has to be remedied according to the arm’s- length accommodations of a blameless and secure academic institution. (page 56)

“What if higher education isn’t creating knowledge and ability but instead is systematically disabling?(page 58)

“As mentioned previously, we can draw a (sort of straight) line from eugenic mental hygiene and physical fitness tests, to their existence as promotional programs, to family life education programs, to wellness initiatives. Such programs currently offload the responsibility for “wellness” onto individual students (and teachers)...What these programs also do not attempt to do is attempt to address structural ableism and the educational construction of disability. (page 56)

USER SEES

8. Laws & Mandates

USER HEARS

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USER INTERACTION

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ADDITIONAL NOTES

GRAPHIC ASSETS

- Jennifer, 8, climbing the capitol steps.

*Little, B. (2020, July 24). When the “Capitol Crawl” Dramatized the Need for Americans with Disabilities Act. HISTORY.
<https://www.history.com/news/americans-with-disabilities-act-1990-capitol-crawl>*

ON-SCREEN TEXT

“...The Americans with Disabilities Act was finally passed in 1990. Throughout this time, boycotts, sit-ins, and civil disobedience became ways to draw attention to the educational barriers facing many people with disabilities. For instance, a group of protesters staged a very physical protest against the steep steps that kept disabled people disenfranchised within legal and political processes, by taking off their braces, getting out of their wheelchairs, putting down their crutches, and climbing the Capitol Steps in Washington. (pgs 58-59)

Unfortunately, following the ADA, and a fairly large public backlash against this act, access for people with disabilities is no longer seen primarily as a civil rights issue. Access is constructed as a matter of compliance, as the dominant terminology of the ADA is the idea of “reasonable accommodation.” The “reason” of the medical and legal establishment, then, finally decides upon which accommodations are to be made— and this is reproduced at the university, where the student with disabilities must catalogue their deficits, and then is granted access through a finite range of legally and institutionally sanctioned accommodations, doled out carefully by professors and instructors under pressure and circumscription of the law. (page 61)

USER SEES

9. Online Education

USER HEARS

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USER INTERACTION

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ADDITIONAL NOTES

GRAPHIC ASSETS

- Online Classes (scrabble tiles with pencil beneath)

Shotkitimages: <https://shotkit.com/https://pixabay.com/photos/online-classes-online-letters-5556840/>

ON-SCREEN TEXT

“...to seek an accommodation or a trigger warning is not to ask for a special advantage within a world in which your needs are centered— rather, it is to identify your needs within a framework in which everyone (from teachers to administrators to pundits) seems to know what college students need, and who they are, better than they do themselves; a world in which any small, real adjustment can be quickly inflated into a “state of the kids these days” fictionalization; a realm in which asking for help is immediately stigmatized. (page 69)

Who seems to be investing, who is benefiting from, and who is paying the costs for ableism? Well, online courses are growing at a rate of 10 times the growth of on- site classes...

How can we ensure that these courses are going to be accessible to all students? How will we guard against an impulse that is the seeming inverse of this inaccessibility? That is, how will we make sure that students with disabilities are not going to be funneled away from on- site classes and into online classes as a method of exclusion? (page 29)

USER SEES

10. Universal Design

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ADDITIONAL NOTES

GRAPHIC ASSETS

- Universal Design Frameworks and Principals figure 6

Academic Ableism. (2017). Umich.edu.

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(page 147 – reprinted from CAST diagram 2012)

ON-SCREEN TEXT

Is there a way to increase access without negating the presence of disability? In a sense, this is what Universal Design does... (page 123)

On the other hand, a critique of universal design would point out that there is no built-in process for collecting feedback from users, thus no way to ensure that those who inhabit the designed space have an active role in its reconstruction. (page 129)

...The same thing might happen through the offloading ... onto teachers, the vast majority of whom are only tenuously employed. Again, it isn't that we wouldn't want all teachers, eventually, to design their classrooms more accessibly from the start. It is just that, again, we are currently nowhere close (page 144)

The "Universal" of UD also suggests that disability is something that is always a part of our worldview. Thus, when UD is successful, it is hopeful and realistic—allowing teachers to structure space and pedagogy in the broadest possible manner. Universal Design is ... about building—building community, building better pedagogy, building opportunities for agency. (page 118)