November 15, 2021

November 2021 TLL NEWSLETTER

TEACHING TODAY: Making Courses Accessible and Engaging to Learners

Universal Design for Learning

Universal Design for Learning (UDL), a framework developed at CAST and based on scientific insights into how humans learn, empowers instructors to optimize learning for all students. How are HGSE courses currently using UDL principles to enhance their students' educational experience—and how might such approaches be helpful to your own teaching?

One compelling example is the Equity & Opportunity Foundations course on "Dis/Ability in Context (EDU EQO11B), co-taught in two sections in August 2021 by Jenna Gravel & Monica Ng and Hadas Eidelman & Todd Grindal, following a January 2021 pilot led by Gravel & Zach Smith. The course focuses on the "cultural and social forces that lead to the discrimination and exclusion of individuals with dis/abilities— and ways to disrupt these forces"; it does so by centering "experiences and perspectives of individuals with dis/abilities themselves" and taking an "asset-based approach," exposing "what society is missing as a result of its ableist values and theory."

| Jenna Gravel & Monica Ng | Hadas Eidelman & Todd Grindal |
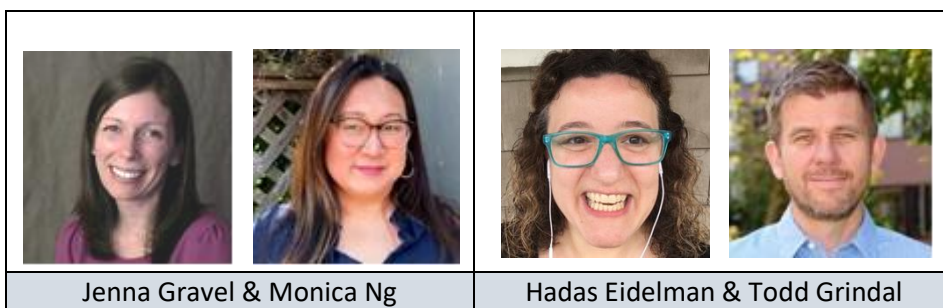
Given its focus on understanding and disrupting discrimination and exclusion of individuals with dis/abilities, this course tries to exemplify instructional design and pedagogy that advance that work and vision—engaging accessibility and inclusion in both its course content and its pedagogy. Here are some course elements that embody UDL principles—providing multiple means of engagement, representation, and action & expression—and that could be adopted in other HGSE courses:

❖ **The Course Roadmap** offers an at-a-glance view of key concepts, using icons and color-coding to indicate course segments later echoed in the detailed syllabus schedule. Such a layout offers a visual complement to text-based descriptions of the course, highlighting patterns and big ideas in a way that helps guide students' sense-making.
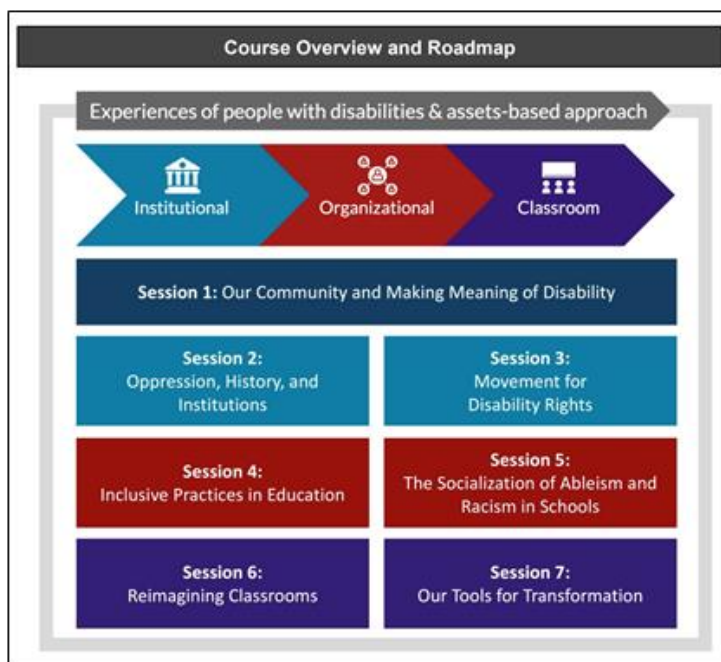
❖ **Clarity about terminology** helps learners understand how language will work in the course, provides scaffolding for further learning, and begins to set up a safe learning space.

Note on language: Throughout this module, you will encounter variability in the language used to describe disability. Some materials will use "person-first language" (e.g. "person with a disability"), while other materials will use "identity-first language" (e.g. "disabled person"). Some materials will use the word "disability," while others will use a slash or parentheses ("dis/ability" and "(dis)ability"). During the first class, we will explore norms and preferences regarding the language of disability, and we will continue to explore varied interpretations throughout the Module.

❖ **Multi-modal journaling** allows flexibility in means of expression and communication while supporting students in self-regulation and metacognition throughout their learning experience.

Feel free to reflect on any aspect of your experience with the course materials and experiences for each of your entries. There are no requirements or constraints on the range of ideas for these assignments. Reflect on whatever feels most salient to you. Journals can be expressed through written, oral, or visual

arts forms. If you include images or alternative forms of representation, we ask that you add a caption or explanation of your chosen medium.

Journals can be uploaded via multiple media:
- Video
- Visuals (with captions or audio clips)
- Typed text
- Or you design your own way!

❖ **Additional Resources**

To learn more about UDL for your own teaching, see these resources:

o [UDL Guidelines](#)
o "Universal Design for Learning: Engaging Diverse Learners including International Students & Students with Disabilities," an [Inclusive Teaching Institute](#) workshop ([handout](#) and [slides](#))

Accessibility Considerations

Making Your Course (More) Accessible

When creating digital content, whether it's a Word document, slide deck, or Canvas course, it is critical that you ensure that all users have the ability to access and engage with the material. You can make sure your content is accessible by following some general principles and reviewing your materials using built-in features of common authoring tools. [Making Your Course (More) Accessible](#) is a friendly guide to digital accessibility based on the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG). We've also created an [accessibility checklist](#) you may review when building your course to ensure you are creating an inclusive, accessible, and equitable learning experience for everyone.

Want to learn more about making your digital content accessible?

- The [User Research Center](#) in Lamont Library has developed extensive resources related to accessibility and provides events and workshops for the Harvard community.
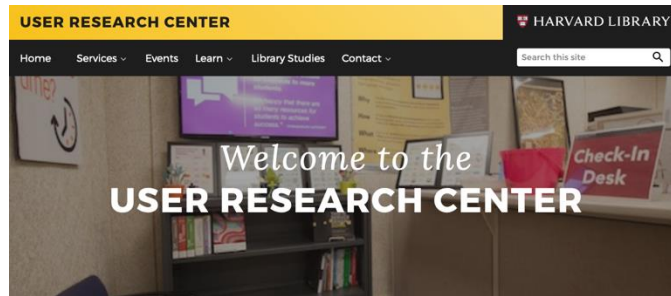
- Did you know that the rich text editor in Canvas has a built-in accessibility checker? When in edit mode click on the image of a human at the bottom of the frame to access this feature.

TECHNOLOGY TOOLKIT UPDATES
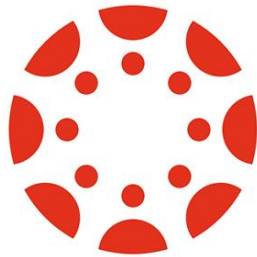
The contract for the communication tool Slack will be extended for Academic Year 22-23 and will be available for all courses.

Please check out the announcements section of the [Canvas and Tech Tools Support](#) page for exciting updates to Zoom and Canvas. A few highlights include:

❖ Zoom
   - Hosts and co-hosts can screen share in the main section and project to all Breakout Rooms.
   - Hosts can allow alternative hosts to add or edit polls.

❖ Canvas
   - [Microsoft Immersive Reader](#) is now supported in Assignments, the Course Home Page, and the Syllabus, as well as in all ordinary Pages.
   - [The Gradebook now includes two search fields:](#) one for student names and one for assignment names.

ON THE TLL BLOG

Canvas Course Templates
The TLL has developed a series of Canvas templates that you can use for either in-person or online teaching. Check out this [blog post](#) to learn more about how you can use the templates in your Canvas courses.

How to pick a template

Template #1

⌘ The "All in One Place" Template

Best for:

- in-person courses
- courses with a small amount of Canvas content
- those who like a syllabus-like structure where everything for the week is in one place

See an example of the "All in One Place" Template.

Template #2

⛰ The "Segmented Breadcrumbs" Template

Best for:

- online courses
- courses with moderate to high amounts of Canvas content
- those who like content for different parts of the course (preparation, class sessions, TF-led sections) segmented onto different pages

See an example of the "Segmented Breadcrumbs" Template.

Template #3

❧ The "Mix of Modalities" Template"

Best for:

- flexible courses
- courses with moderate to high amounts of Canvas content
- courses with multiple sessions in a week (multiple whole class sessions or TF-led sections, project teams, discussion groups, etc.)

See an example of the "Mix of Modalities" Template.

"The Mix of Modalities template uses accordions, a feature of the Cidi Labs formatting tool. If you choose this template, we recommend contacting your FA early so they can help you make any changes to it, or you can reach out to the Teaching and Learning Lab at william_wisser@gse.harvard.edu.