

# MAKING TEACHING ACCESSIBLE AND INCLUSIVE FOR STUDENTS

**Center for Teaching and Learning Workshop  
University of Pennsylvania**

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PhD Candidate  
Annenberg School for Communication

October 26, 2021  
12noon - 1:30pm  
On Zoom

# WORKSHOP GOALS

**1**

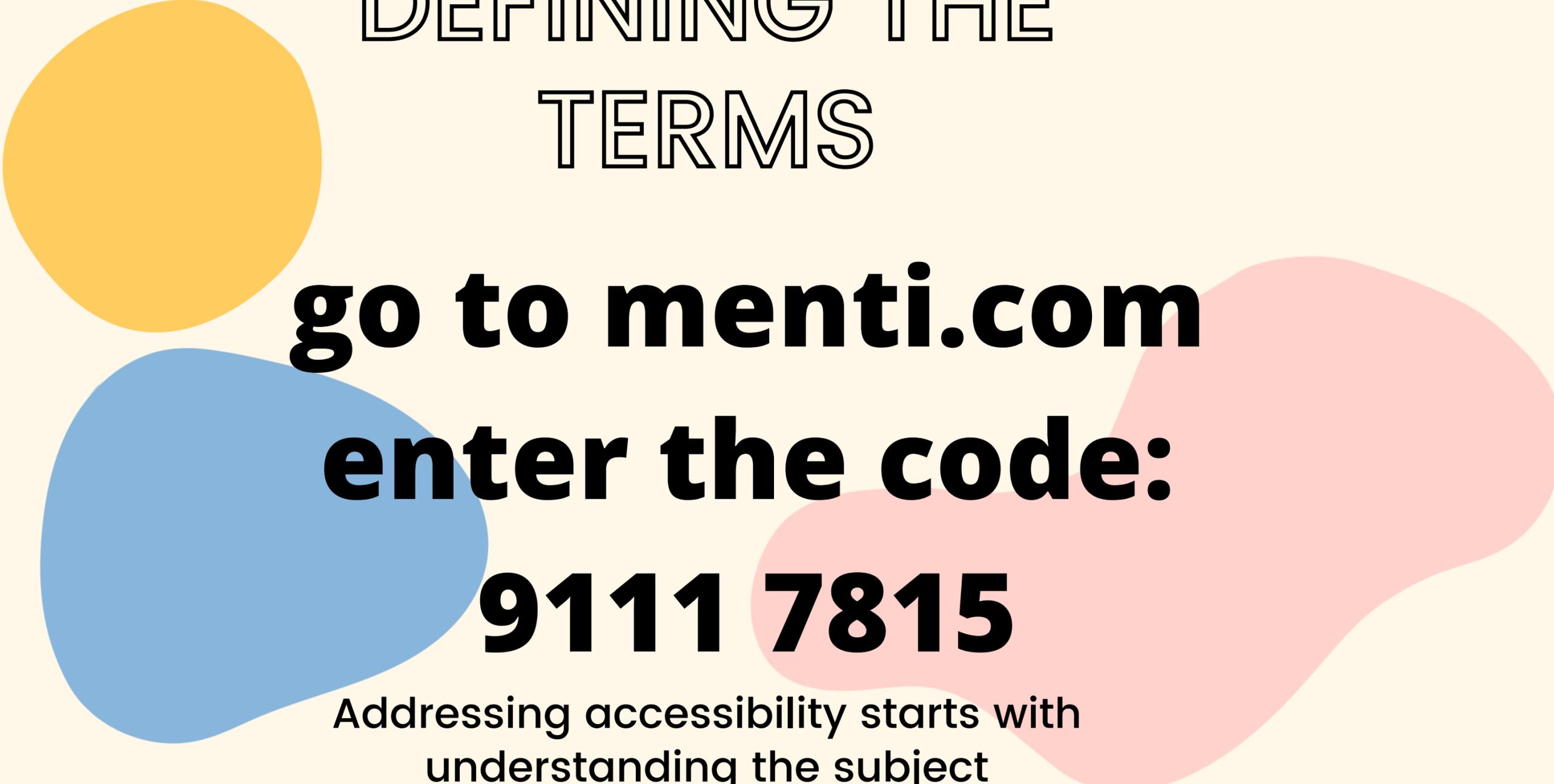
understand the terms  
and why accessibility  
matters

**2**

identify and address  
barriers to  
accessibility &  
inclusivity

**3**

practical tips and tools  
for making your  
classroom more  
accessible & inclusive



# DEFINING THE TERMS

**go to [menti.com](https://www.menti.com)**

**enter the code:**

**9111 7815**

Addressing accessibility starts with  
understanding the subject

# IN THE CLASSROOM:

## Accessibility

- Removing barriers to access
- Recognizing access needs look different for different students
- Being readily available to discuss access needs at the start of a semester and working with students to meet their access needs as they unfold
- Communicating your limits in your class policies and practices (eg. extension policy)

## Inclusion

- Affirming student's sense of belonging
- Authentic opportunities for students to affirm their individuality
- Holding all students to high standards
- Create cooperative learning environments
- Valuing multiple perspectives
- Consider your course content and syllabus & including diverse voices in course materials

# DISABILITIES

**are multifaceted, unique, and may affect students differently...**

- There are estimated to be 50 million people with disabilities in the U.S. today
- Disabilities may be temporary, relapsing or remitting, or long-term
- Although there are hundreds of distinct kinds of disabilities, we may group them into the following categories:
  - physical disabilities
  - mental disabilities (cognitive, psychological, social)
  - sensory disabilities



# PERSON-FIRST OR DISABILITY- FIRST LANGUAGE?



**it's an ongoing debate...**

- Some view person-first language ("a person who is deaf") as an important way to reclaim humanity
- Others view disability first language ("a Deaf person") as a way to de-stigmatize disability

# THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON DISABILITY

Our approach to accessibility is informed by ongoing theoretical debates. 2 predominant frameworks:

## medical model

vs.

## social/cultural model

- views disability as deficiency
- locates the agent of change as medical practitioner or technology
- aims to accommodate people with disabilities
- goal of change to diagnose, diminish, correct, and/or accommodate perceived deficits

- embraces disability valuable form of human variation
- focuses on correcting systematic exclusions in institutions based on ableism—
  - discrimination or prejudice against people with disabilities
- aims to change institutional policies and social norms and values
- aims to increase accessibility in all aspects of society

# DISABILITIES RIGHTS IN EDUCATION

- The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) prohibits discrimination on basis of disability
- Title III of the ADA applies to private colleges/universities/places of education. It states:

<b>A university or college cannot</b>	<b>A university or college must</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• discriminate in admissions on the basis of disability</li><li>• require that a student disclose a disability</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• provide physical access to all facilities, including classrooms, dorms, dining halls, student unions, etcetera</li><li>• provide meaningful access to the educational experience</li><li>• have a uniform system to address student needs, and to do so in a consistent manner</li></ul>

- **Note: Meaningful access may not be optimal.**
  - For example: a university may provide readable text for a blind student in biology, but optimal access might include tactile 3-D models



# SCENARIOS

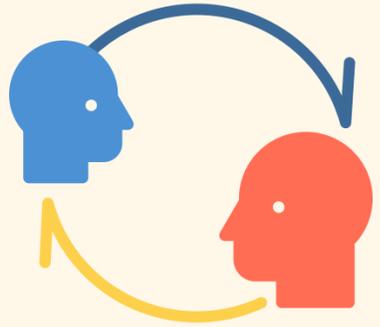
- Open the google doc
- Read the scenarios and choose one
- Go to that breakout room to discuss!

# TOWARDS UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING (UDL)

**UDL is an educational framework that emphasizes flexible goals, methods, materials, and assessments for diverse learners**

Rather than approaching accessibility as an afterthought or on a case-by-case basis, UDL principles help instructors design courses that address the needs of diverse learners from the start so all students may benefit.

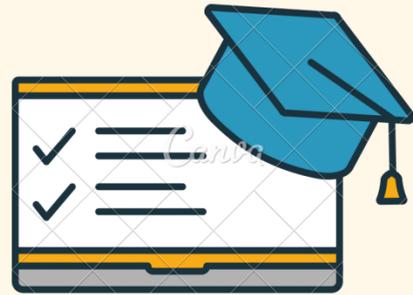
# UDL PRINCIPLES



open  
communication



physical  
spaces



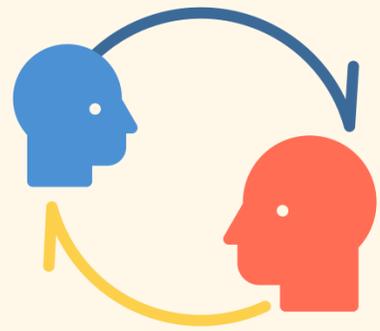
course  
materials



out of class  
activities



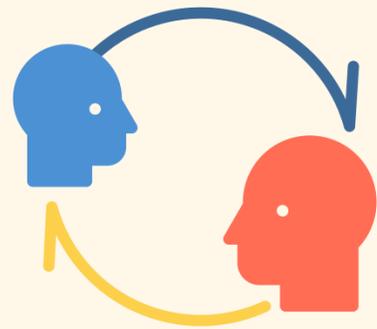
classroom  
culture



# OPEN COMMUNICATION

When working with accessibility requests:

- reach out to students, in private, to discuss how accommodations may work best for them
  - check in with them later to see how accommodations are working for them
- be aware that disclosure is often exhausting!
- students don't need disclosure to discuss accommodations
- sometimes accommodations can be straight-forward (eg. alternative testing location) and sometimes it may require brainstorming with the student
- be preemptive and make materials more accessible to start:
  - caption videos, provide alt-text for images, make sure PDFs are screen-reader accessible



# OPEN COMMUNICATION

Consider adding an "Inclusive Learning Statement" to your syllabus

Your success in this class is important to me. We will all need accommodations because we all learn differently. If there are aspects of this course that prevent you from learning or exclude you, please let me know as soon as possible. Together we'll develop strategies to meet both your needs and the requirements of the course.

I encourage you to visit the Office of Disability Services to determine how you could improve your learning as well. If you need official accommodations, you have a right to have these met. There are also a range of resources on campus, including the Writing Center, Tutoring Center, and Academic Advising Center

(from Tulane University's  
Accessible syllabus)

## SAMPLE LANGUAGE

- **Jessa Lingel, "Doing Internet Studies"**

It's important to me that everyone who wants to participate in this class has the resources to do so. Students who are differently abled will be fully included in this course. Please let me know if you need any special accommodations in the curriculum, instruction or assessments of this course to enable you to participate fully. I will make every effort to maintain the confidentiality of the information you share with me.

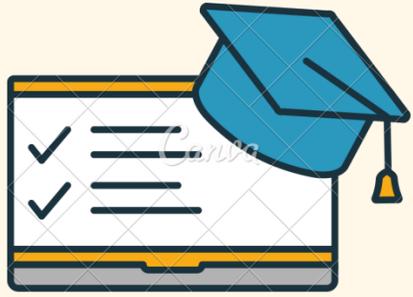
(from the CTL website!)



# PHYSICAL SPACE

This includes building location, classroom location, classroom layout, classroom technologies (lighting, tables, seating, projection, white boards). Also consider:

- changes in weather may disproportionately affect students with mobility impairments
- set-up classroom layout for wheelchair or service dog access
- moving classes last minute may cause difficulty for a range of students including for those with mobility, sight, hearing impairments as well as people with anxiety (give ample time when possible!)



# COURSE MATERIALS

## Consider course tools, technologies, and materials for accessibility

- eg. Canvas has an Accessibility Checker, that checks content for issues such as color contrast, image alt text, proper heading structure, and proper table markup.

Edit View Insert Format Tools Table

12pt Paragraph **B** *I* U A T<sup>2</sup>

Write an essay describing the possible implications of the Declaration of Independence not being drafted and adopted by the colonies. Discuss the implications on 3 major historical events and/or figures.



United States	Great Britain		
Row 1	Row 3		
Row 2			

p 110 words |

Edit View Insert Format Tools Table

12pt Paragraph **B** *I* U A T<sup>2</sup>

1 

United States	Great Britain		
Row 1	Row 3		
Row 2			

### Accessibility Checker

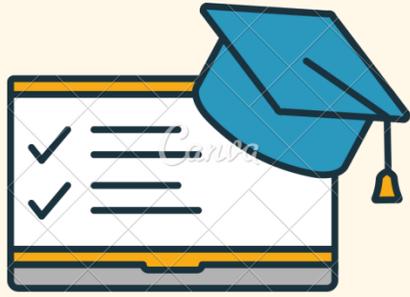
Issue 1/4

3 Image filenames should not be used as the alt attribute describing the image content.

Change alt text

2 Washington\_Constitutional\_Cor

Prev Next Apply



# COURSE MATERIALS

## **Check assigned reading materials, handouts, and presentations:**

- make syllabus available as soon as possible
- ensure materials are screen reader compatible
  - need to be saved as text file eg. as a word doc or Rich Text Format (RTF)
  - provide alt text for graphics, tables and images

## **Provide Text for audio or video used in class:**

- ensure video content has closed captions or text file
- upload text files with audio files (eg for podcasts)
- creating audio of visual images in real-time or prerecorded description



# OUT OF CLASS ACTIVITIES



The ADA also **includes extracurricular activities.**

- Does your course integrate lab work, field work, practicum placements, internships, service learning, or presentations in community based or academic settings?
- If so, it will be important to think about accessibility within these spaces as well
- Check out "Composing Access" from The Ohio State University for tips on creating accessible events



# CLASSROOM CULTURE

- Learn and use students' names
- Encourage students to contribute in a variety of ways
  - eg. online discussion boards, in-class discussions, and individual assignments
- Enable group interactions
- Respond to microaggressions
- Normalize inclusive and appropriate language
- Consider turning difficult dialogues into teachable moments



# ACCESSIBILITY AGREEMENTS

a consent-based model for  
approaching collective access  
in the classroom

Accessibility agreements communicate:

1. What the institution provides and what is standard
2. What you are willing to do in addition
3. What you need in order to do that



Aimi Hamraie they/them  
@AimiHamraie

13. For example: "To request accommodations, please contact ... In addition, I commit to working with you to provide .... If you would like to discuss this, please set up a meeting via email."

6:18 PM · Aug 23, 2021 · Twitter Web App

25 Likes



Aimi Hamraie they/them  
@AimiHamraie

14. A common form of consent-based access is an extension/late work policy. Mine says something like: "All work is due by the due date unless negotiated by .... via .... You are encouraged to ask for an extension ahead of time, and you will not be penalized."

6:18 PM · Aug 23, 2021 · Twitter Web App

36 Likes





## SCENARIOS 2

- Open the google doc
- Choose a scenario and go to that room
- Discuss how you might incorporate UDL principles in this scenario

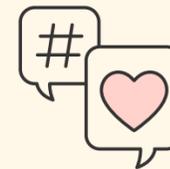
# CHALLENGES TO SELF-ADVOCACY

**CAN YOU  
THINK OF  
OTHERS?**



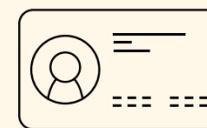
## **Awareness**

The first step to receiving assistance is recognizing differences or difficulty.



## **Shame or stigma**

Some students at Penn may be ashamed of their disability or face stigma from their friends or family members



## **Difficulty getting documentation**

There could be many barriers a student might face in attaining the right documentation for DS eg:

- difficulty navigating medical care
- not understanding what is required

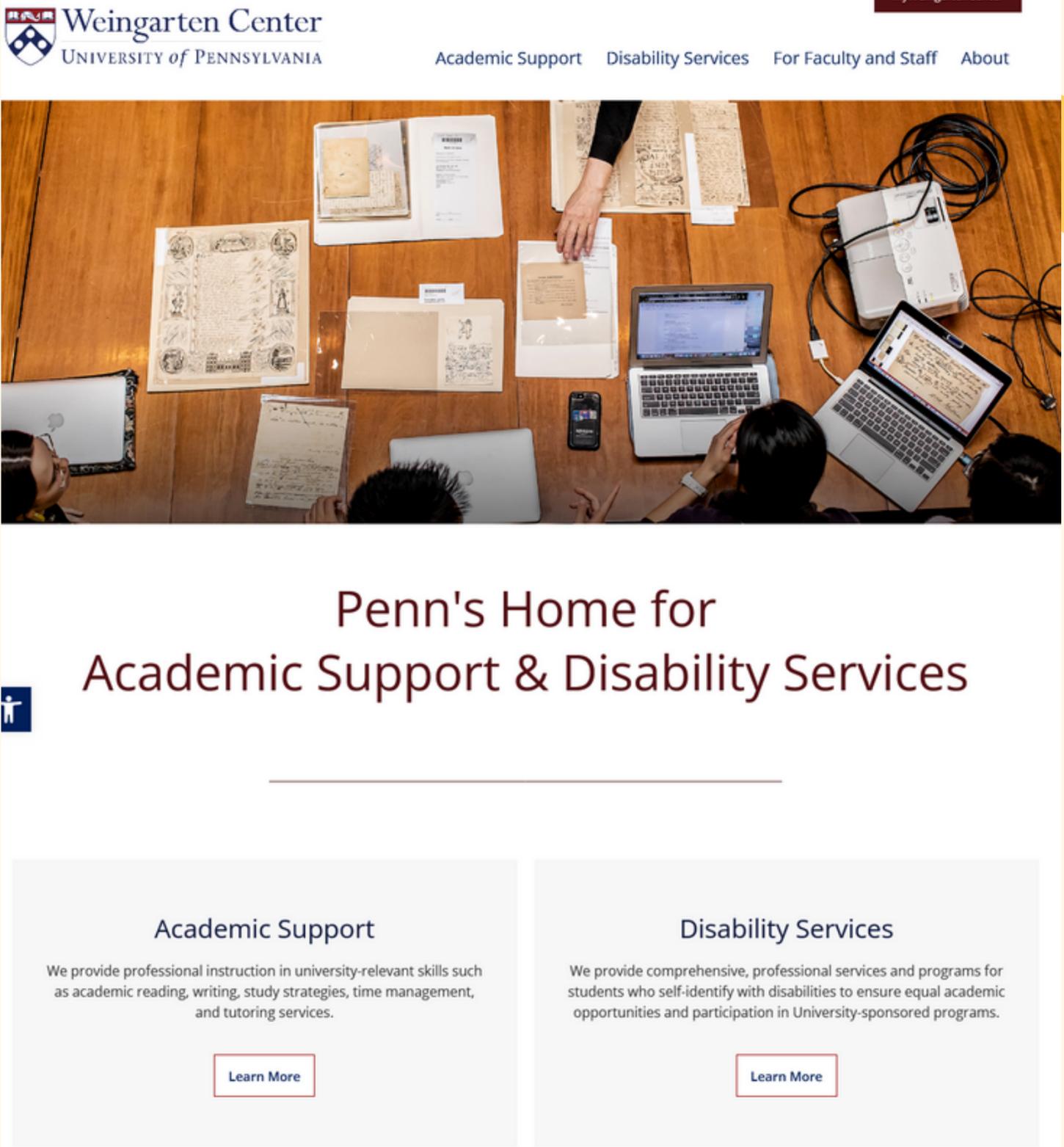
# UPENN RESOURCES

**The Weingarten Center includes both academic support and disability services**

The Disability Services (DS) office works with students who self-identify with a disability. Policies promote self-advocacy and independence.

Academic support includes learning consultations (skills such as academic reading, writing, study strategies and time management) and free tutoring services (see website for list of courses offered)

[wlrc.vpul.upenn.edu/](http://wlrc.vpul.upenn.edu/)



The screenshot shows the Weingarten Center website for the University of Pennsylvania. At the top left is the logo with the text "Weingarten Center UNIVERSITY of PENNSYLVANIA". To the right are navigation links: "Academic Support", "Disability Services", "For Faculty and Staff", and "About". Below the navigation is a photograph of a group of people sitting around a wooden table, looking at documents and laptops. The main heading reads "Penn's Home for Academic Support & Disability Services". Below this are two columns of service descriptions. The "Academic Support" column states: "We provide professional instruction in university-relevant skills such as academic reading, writing, study strategies, time management, and tutoring services." with a "Learn More" button. The "Disability Services" column states: "We provide comprehensive, professional services and programs for students who self-identify with disabilities to ensure equal academic opportunities and participation in University-sponsored programs." with a "Learn More" button.

Weingarten Center  
UNIVERSITY of PENNSYLVANIA

Academic Support Disability Services For Faculty and Staff About

Penn's Home for  
Academic Support & Disability Services

**Academic Support**  
We provide professional instruction in university-relevant skills such as academic reading, writing, study strategies, time management, and tutoring services.  
[Learn More](#)

**Disability Services**  
We provide comprehensive, professional services and programs for students who self-identify with disabilities to ensure equal academic opportunities and participation in University-sponsored programs.  
[Learn More](#)

# FURTHER READING

\*Much of the materials for this workshop were drawn from Vanderbilt's Accessibility Guide (2018) collated by Amie Thurber, Joe Bandy and participants in the 2017-2018 Disability and Learning Community at Vanderbilt University



Dunn, D. S., & Andrews, E. E. (2015). Person-first and identity-first language: Developing psychologists' cultural competence using disability language. *American Psychologist*, 70(3), 255



Hamraie, A. (2016). Beyond Accommodation: Disability, Feminist Philosophy, and the Design of Everyday Academic Life. *philoSOPHIA*, 6(2), 259-271.



Linton, S. (1998). Disability studies/not disability studies. *Disability & Society*, 13(4), 525-539.



Miles, A. L., Nishida, A., & Forber-Pratt, A. J. (2017). An open letter to White disability studies and ableist institutions of higher education. *Disability Studies Quarterly*, 37(3).



**Thurber, A., & Bandy, J. (2018). *Creating Accessible Learning Environments*. Vanderbilt University Center for Teaching. Retrieved [October 01, 2021] from <http://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/creating-accessible-learning-environments/>.**



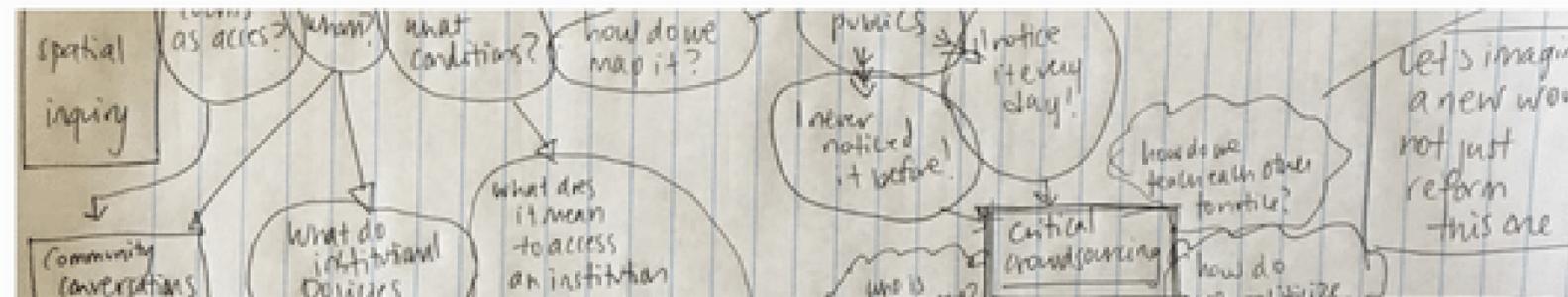
Titchkosky, Tanya. 2011. *The Question of Access: Disability, Space, Meaning*. University of Toronto Press.

# RESOURCES

mapping-access.com

## CRITICAL DESIGN LAB

HOME ABOUT PROJECTS PODCAST BLOG CONTACT



[Image description: a hand-drawn diagram with arrows, bubbles, and words on lined paper. Visible phrases include "Spatial inquiry," "what is access?" "whom?" "what conditions?" "how do we map it?" "I've never noticed it before!" "I notice it every day!" "critical crowdsourcing" "how do we teach each other to notice?" "Let's imagine a new world, not just reform this one," "what do institutional policies" and "what does it mean to access an institution"]

## CRITICAL DESIGN LAB

is a multi-disciplinary arts and design collaborative centered in disability culture and crip technoscience. Our work pivots around the concept of access: access is our ethic, our creative content, and our methodology. We use digital media and social practice to craft replicable protocols that treat accessibility as research-creation, an aesthetic world-building practice, and an invitation to assemble community.

# RESOURCES

Accessiblesyllabus.com

[Accessible Syllabus](#) [Image](#) [Text](#) [Rhetoric](#) [Policy](#) [About us](#) [Sources](#)

## ACCESSIBLE SYLLABUS

Accessible classroom resources promote student engagement and agency



IMAGE



TEXT



RHETORIC



POLICY