**Dr. Jay Dolmage 2021 AVETH Social Justice Seminar Series Transcript**

17:05:08 This year's seminar is focused on Disability Rights and studies. Each year, the seminar series concentrates on a theme to create scholarly opportunities to learn more about social justice.

17:05:20 We hope participation in the seminar series stimulates your curiosity and interest to be deliberately inclusive in your administrating, leadership, advising, mentoring, and teaching. Deepening your understanding of visibility is important for everyone.

17:05:36 And this is essential to promote the growth and evolution of ETH in relation to the newly green lite Barrier free project.

17:05:46 If you have any questions or comments, or would like to become more involved in social justice, please reach out to diversity at AVETH at ETH dot CH or visit the website.

17:06:02 This year we have four leading experts in disability studies, virtually joining us at ETH, from which two already took place. Our speaker today is Professor Jay Dolmage.

17:06:11 But before I introduce him, I want to invite you to join our final seminar, entitled 'Against ableism in teaching and scholarship' by Dr Stephanie S. Rosen on November 30th, from five to 6pm

17:06:26 Next, I want to share a few of the guidelines for today's session, there will be multiple communication and material formats for this seminar. We will record the event and make slides available shortly after the live seminar.

17:06:42 As you may know this. There will also be automatically regenerated transcription in English during this session, which works okay, but it's not entirely accurate.

17:06:53 This will also be saved as a transcription, that we will edit and make available shortly after the live seminar.

17:07:01 You may also type your questions into the chat box in English or German.

17:07:07 We will then read the questions out loud to the speaker in English during the q and a session.

17:07:14 While the chat is accessible for some, and even a preference, it is also a barrier for some people, so questions after the seminar can be shared with AVETH or Professor Dolmage directly via email.

17:07:29 While with do not anticipate it, any hateful or harmful comments will not be accepted, and you will be removed from the Zoom Room.

17:07:40 Guidance aside, I want to thank you all for joining the seminar, and the entire AVETH team for helping make this event possible.

17:07:51 Professor Dolmage's pronounce are he/him, and he is a professor of English at the University of Waterloo, where he's Chair of the equity committee of the Faculty Association, and he is founding editor of the Canadian Journal of disability studies.

17:08:09 He's committed to disability rights in his scholarship service and teaching. His work brings together rhetoric, writing, disability studies, and critical pedagogy. Professor Dolmage will be presenting today his seminar today entitled, 'Academic ableism: eugenics, accommodation, and design'.

17:08:28 Please address your questions and comments to Professor Dolmage using the chat box function, and we will get them during the q&a session.

17:08:40 Jay, please begin whenever you're ready.

17:08:43 Thanks so much.

17:08:44 Yeah, so welcome, welcome everyone thank you for coming out on Tuesday. I want to begin just by saying that I work and live on the traditional territory of Attawandaron (Neutral), Anishinaabeg and Haudenosaunee peoples here in Ontario close to Toronto.

17:08:59 The University of Waterloo where I work, and close to where I live, is situated on the Haldeman tract, which was land promised to the six nations that includes 10 kilometers on each side of the Grand River.

17:09:13 The Six Nations now has less than 5% of this original land base. In my presentation today I want to talk about...I basically broken it up into three parts so that I can talk about examining disability in higher education

17:09:30 before COVID, during COVID, and hopefully after COVID. I want to lay out to begin, some of the ways that disability has been historically constructed at our universities.

17:09:40 How has ableism come to inflict what we do as teachers and researchers and the metaphor I commonly used for this approach is the steep steps, your campus is lousy with stairs.

17:09:53 And so is mine, my own campus at the University of Waterloo. On our campuses we build specific associations with the steps and staircases having traveled up them many times or having avoided them, but students and faculty and staff alike, recognize that

17:10:09 these steps have something to say.

17:10:11 The university that the steep steps metaphor sums up the ways that the university constructs spaces that exclude, not only have people with disabilities been traditionally seen only as objects of study in higher education rather than as teachers or students;

17:10:27 not only has disability been a rhetorically produced stigma, which could be applied to other marginalized groups to keep them out of the university,

17:10:35 but the university has also seen still today as performing the societal and cultural function of pulling some people slowly up the stairs, and it arranges others at the bottom of this steep incline.

17:10:47 So I have an image to share with you here... I'm just going to share my screen.

17:10:53 I have an image to share with you here of steep steps at ETH Zurich. So this is a brutalist staircase.

17:11:01 The image shows the side view of a series of crisscrossing suspended concrete staircases with wood railings, there are three students who are walking up the stairs.

17:11:13 On the right we have the facade of a building that's also a big concrete form. The stairs themselves are suspended by a huge cylindrical concrete columns. We see two of these columns holding the staircase up.

17:11:29 There's also a slight colored ramp at the very bottom of the image. But I want to know that it would just take people up to the beginning of the bottom staircase.

17:11:38 My point in showing this staircase from your campus is that we can all recognize staircases like these on our own campuses.

17:11:45 Another way to think about what the stairs do might be to look at a tweet posted by a student named Sara Marie Da Silva. Sara, Marie de Da Silva is from the University of Hall in the UK.

17:11:58 She posted this picture on Twitter, showing how she is forced to take in her zoology lectures. When she arrives at the lecture there's only one place for her to sit: in the doorway at the back of the room.

17:12:10 And in this image we see her in her chair at the backdoor way, there's a set of stairs that lead down through to a kind of auditorium style classroom with with rows of other students all sitting across tables, looking at their laptops holding their coffees,

17:12:25 paying attention to the front of the room.

17:12:28 This is what so many of the physical but also curricular and cultural layouts within a higher education actually look like. One second here.

17:12:42 Disabled students may be there, they may be able to get into the room, but their access is so clearly an afterthought, their participation is already minimized.

17:12:52 No wonder we're losing so many disabled students.

17:12:55 I have one more image to share with you here and this is also related to ETH Zurich.

17:13:02 This is the Striatous 3D-printed bridge. Okay, it's a 16 meter long bridge built through an innovative collaboration between the block research group at ETH Zurich, and Zaha Hadid architects in collaboration with concrete 3d printing

17:13:20 specialists incremental 3d. The project utilized custom made proprietary concrete, Inc. to show how we might build bridges in the future.

17:13:29 It's the world's first 3d printed structure of this size, but what I'm struck by and the image shows a bridge that comes up on four sides so there are big ramps that come up on both sides with kind of sweeping concrete columns and handrails along

17:13:45 the sides of them, it looks kind of like a four legged spider. But what strikes me about the bridge are the stairs. So instead of a ramp leading up on those four sides.

17:14:10 What we have instead are our stairs, right there actually wouldn't stairs that have been placed within the bridge.

17:14:04 As an artistic design it's a kind of thought piece about the future of design, but it's impossible not to notice it's physical inaccessibility. Why does a bridge needs so many stairs.

17:14:15 And will the future really have this many stairs. I include this image to remind us that it's not just the old traditional buildings on university campuses that are inaccessible.

17:14:25 But we also fail to imagine disability into the futures of higher education.

17:14:30 And the truth is the university sorts the population by a medicalized and legalistic definition of ability as effectively now as it ever has.

17:14:39 In the United States nearly two thirds of disabled students are unable to complete their degrees within six years. Just 41% of students with learning disabilities complete post secondary education. In North America disabled students are likely to have

17:14:53 up to 60% more student debt than other students by the time they graduate. And these statistics are skewed because they only account for the students who receive accommodations and some studies show that up to two thirds of disabled students

17:15:07 don't receive accommodation simply because their colleges don't know about their disability.

17:15:13 A recent study by by engineering faculty at the University of Illinois in the states suggested that actually 75% of engineering students under report disability, so they don't seek accommodations.

17:15:25 We know from things like the National College health assessment in North America, where we have a generation of students who are much more likely to experience higher education as disabling.

17:15:36 And at the same time they're much less likely to seek help or assistance. Even in the wealthiest European countries such as Austria, Germany, Luxembourg and Switzerland, where higher education is significantly supported by state funding.

17:15:49 We know that education opportunities beyond primary and secondary schooling are still seriously lacking for disabled people. A recent study in France also showed the disabled students are proportionately fewer in number to succeed at the upper

17:16:03 and graduate levels than the average student. So I think we can say we have a crisis of help seeking around disability, but we're also losing thousands of disabled students every day.

17:16:13 And I think this all goes for faculty and graduates colleagues doubling. We don't even try to imagine the ableism experienced by faculty instructors or graduate students.

17:16:23 And the result then is a culture that demands silence and passing.

17:16:28 Of course the knock on effect is the attrition, and huge attrition of disabled teachers and researchers, so the same steps is my metaphor for this and I want to suggest that it's in place for students, but they're also firmly in place and extremely steep

17:16:41 for us as teachers as well.

17:16:44 Of course we can't be that surprised when we recognize higher education and this has been one of the arguments in my work. When we recognize higher education for the last century and a half as a eugenic enterprise.

17:16:57 The stories have come to understand that eugenics was a powerful rhetoric as well as a series of practices, and it was built at large universities in North America and Europe.

17:17:08 Right. These schools provided what's called an opportunity structure for eugenics to become a widespread and transnational social movement, simply the teaching of eugenics at North American and European schools markedly sped the growth and popularity

17:17:22 of ideas around eugenics. The authors go on to say, so this is based on the research of Leland Garlic and Jones, opportunity structures like these persisted, even after eugenics faded as an international movement following the Holocaust.

17:17:37 So in teaching eugenics explicitly, or even simply doing things like asking students to record their own family trees, these curricular inclusions created the environment in which eugenics can germinate and grow as a movement.

17:17:51 So the actual curriculum that colleges and universities both fueled the rise of eugenics and allowed eugenics to continue to be taught in more subtle and covert ways well after the Holocaust.

17:18:02 And if you doubt this I encourage you to search the historical course catalogs at your own school for the word eugenics. Not only did eugenics actually reshape the North American population through things like immigration restriction.

17:18:16 Not only did it reshape families through its campaigns for better breeding. Not only did it reshape bodies through medical intervention, but it reshaped how we thought about bodies and minds and academia is implicated very deeply in this history, academia

17:18:30 was the place from which eugenics science, you know, quote unquote, gained its funding it's legitimatization, so that you Eugenesists could undertake massive projects that can change the course of human history.

17:18:42 But we see the presence of eugenics persistently to this day. When we understand that universities create doctors and special educators and therapists who learn how to rehabilitate or cure disability, or how to tokenize and minimally include it.

17:18:58 Seeing disability as fixable or eradicable, desiring it's fixing and eradication is very very different from seeing disability as desirable or understanding disability as an identity and culture.

17:19:11 In short, educating people to erase or diminish Disability insures limitations on all of our knowledge about bodies and minds. Moreover, the continued struggle to fight for small accommodations for students, staff, staff and faculty with disabilities,

17:19:26 also ensures that perhaps we're now in an era of people with disabilities fighting to get the chance to study and learn at all.

17:19:46 Educators must recognise both the long history of exclusion and experimentation of people with disabilities as well as the more recent history of academic ableism experienced by disabled students. And I think we can use steep steps as a metaphor for this ableism, but also recognize that the staircases reach all the way back to the eugenics era.

17:19:56 Steep steps of course have been a huge part of back to campus planning around coven 19 as well. All of a sudden administrators have to look at their buildings differently and six foot increments, that don't easily fit in crowded stairwells and don't fit

17:20:10 at all and elevators, and the steps, the temporal steps of going back to school have forever changed. We'll have a choice about teaching or learning in person on campus, who will get to choose to work and learn from home, who have the right to do so, what

17:20:24 social and student centered spaces will replace physical ones like these steps and who will be included in it and excluded. How is teaching change, just by moving many of the steep steps online with the same demands of student time and productivity, but without

17:20:40 the overhead costs of buildings and classrooms.

17:20:43 What regimes of individualization, self responsiblization, and personal wellness are being put in place. What new regimes of control and surveillance have been built, or are being built.

17:20:56 Since coven so many of the community supports that used to be in place on campus are gone.

17:21:00 As a recent article on students with disabilities and COVID concluded; barriers have changed. Here in Ontario, quote among faculty a full four and five agree that the university's pandemic response has had a negative impact on their teaching ability or ability

17:21:17 to convey important learning material to students. So during COVID we see a different relationship between disability and teaching, one in which I hope we can better understand the disabling impact of education.

17:21:33 Looking at these steep steps in a world in which COVID has changed how we think about buzzwords like community is jarring, but also in a world in which the prevalence of over and systemic racism needs to be forgrounded in all that we do. We have to

17:21:46 understand that these steep steps disproportionately impact students of color.

17:21:50 I know that many colleges and universities, colleges and universities have been working hard to address racism on campus.

17:21:57 There have been specific incidents, but there are also systemic issues. For example, we know that in the US, African American males are disproportionately placed in the categories of special education that are associated with extremely poor outcomes at

17:22:11 the K-12 level yet Joy Banks has shown that African American students with disabilities experience difficulty accessing Disability Support Services and appropriate accommodations at colleges and universities.

17:22:24 So for the same group of students that disability diagnosis and the K to 12 level can be hastily applied and will speed them into the school to prison pipeline at the post secondary level is so much more difficult to get. Further multiple studies show that

17:22:38 minoritized students, specifically black and Hispanic students exert more effort and are more engaged than their white peers, but get lower grades. Teachers absolutely have to understand that these differences changed the social and the educational

17:22:53 geography on campus. These are steep steps that we need to better understand and address. So that's what I urge you to do and think about right now: what are the barriers that are in place on your campus, not just architecturally but in the curriculum,

17:23:07 in the culture. What are the forces that tell students that they shouldn't seek help or assistance or the accommodations that they have the legal right to. Right.

17:23:16 How should we map campus now that a lot of these barriers have moved online.

17:23:22 That's the first piece of the talk, so in my work I also look at some of the means we've been given over the last few decades to address some of these inequities right and the retrofit is the metaphor that I use for that.

17:23:38 Those means we have for addressing the steep steps, right. To retrofit is to add a component or accessory to something that has already been built right and a retro fitness doesn't make the product function, it doesn't necessarily fix a faulty product,

17:23:52 but it acts as a sort of correction and adds a part in place of an older part right and it allows the product to measure up to new regulations. So automobiles or factories or retrofitted with new parts, so they can pass new guidelines, a building is retrofitted

17:24:08 to accommodate disability as per the specs of disability law and ramps are added onto the side of a building or around the back.

17:24:17 A perfect distillation of the retrofit mentality might be found again at ETH Zurich. What I'm showing you here is the Skewo-Bro stair climbing wheelchair.

17:24:29 Okay, in this image ETH researcher, sorry, I just have to get to this ETH researcher Pascal view Holzer sits in the Skewo-Bro, in front of ETH Zurich main building the chair seems to be controlled remotely by fellow researcher Bernard Winter behind

17:24:50 him, who stands behind pressing some sort of controller. Instead of removing stairs or building ramps, this chair climbs the stairs itself. The chair appears to have a cantilevering system that would allow the individual sitting in the chair to remain

17:25:05 upright, as the chair goes down the stairs, though one would have to imagine that there would be a substantial bump, each time the wheels move down a step. Inventions like this, and the accompanying argument that would be better to create stair climbing wheelchairs

17:25:20 than build ramps or elevators, or simply to create level entrances to more buildings, actually distill perfectly what happens when disability is accommodated in higher education.

17:25:32 Because the ramp, even when it's mainly used by disabled people exists in the public sphere, but a primary message around accommodation is that disability is actually isolating and individuated.

17:25:44 Right. something located within a single and singular body.

17:25:49 The demand is that that one body be adapted to a curriculum or structure or terrain that is otherwise unwelcoming, inaccessible, and inhospitable. The climbing wheelchair may not even be very good at driving on anything but stairs.

17:26:04 It may not be particularly safe to use on most stairs anyhow, it may be big and ugly. It's likely tremendously expensive, but these are all expected outcomes and seemed like reasonable problems or burdens for the individual disabled body to deal with,

17:26:19 in an ablist culture. And that's how retrofitting works, and it's all over our design of teaching, even if it may be harder to recognize. You, disabled student, adapt yourself to my inaccessible pedagogy, so that I don't need to dismantle my steep steps.

17:26:36 We're all becoming much more aware of this retrofitting in the COVID 19 era. Restaurants and built buildings have Plexiglas walls built, tables and chairs, and our measure distance apart. On university campuses retrofits can include ramps that are placed

17:26:50 around the back of the building where buildings in which the only elevator is also a freight elevator. On the syllabus and within the curriculum we similarly create access. I'll stop sharing so we can see one another event here.

17:27:04 One second.

17:27:12 I can

17:27:13 maybe I can.

17:27:14 Yeah, hold on.

17:27:19 So, okay. So, most often okay on the syllabus and within the curriculum we similarly create access, but only in minimal ways, and often in ways that can further stigmatize students, most often the only time disability is spoken or written about in class

17:27:35 is in the final line of the syllabus, when students are referred to the Office of Disability Services should they desire assistance. The message to students, of course, is that disability is a supplementary concern, and that it's not the teachers concern or

17:27:48 really part of the course; it's at the back door of the syllabus. And many, to begin with, the truth is that there's such a limited range of accommodations offered. More than three quarters of the accommodations offered are the exact same thing, extended

17:28:03 time on tests and exams and if like me you don't offer tests or exams in your classes and never in a timed way, fine, but if you keep working with disability services and they keep offering this accommodation, then you, then we, are doing something dangerous

17:28:18 there in fact, right, that ramp is going to lead students nowhere. We need a much broader repertoire of accommodations in labs and classrooms where we rarely give tests and we rarely lecture, we must work to expand the range of accommodations that can be

17:28:32 offered to students. We argue for innovative teaching methods that move beyond lecturing that include, you know, experiential learning, hands on learning, collaboration all of these things, but we continue to work with a really narrow range of accommodations.

17:28:47 And that's really problematic. The accommodation stay stuck in a Fordist educational regime, where rigidity and uniformity and timing reign supreme.

17:28:58 And that brings us closer to what we might call malicious compliance where following the letter of the accommodation law actually hurts the student.

17:29:07 That said these retrofitted adjustments are still legally mandated, and we need to continue to offer them. But, how can we allow retrofits to become permanent.

17:29:16 What are some of the ways that in higher education we've taken accommodations that were made over time and turn them into mainstream pedagogical techniques, how can we do more?

17:29:26 How do we do more of that?

17:29:28 We've had an opportunity over the last 16 months to do some redesigning of higher education in ways we never have before. Yet, unfortunately, very few people were talking about accessibility as part of that process.

17:29:40 We spent much more time investing in surveil and test proctoring software than we spent developing alternative teaching models that relied less on testing.

17:29:50 And just as disabled people were left out of many COVID social support programs, and at the same time were being spoken about as disposable citizens, disabled students and people were not at the table when plans were made for emergency online

17:30:03 teaching.

17:30:05 There's some irony of course that the ablest demands for physical attendance and participation that we used to cling to so tightly, have been so easily left behind, asking to have a grade competitive converted to credit rather than a numerical grade,

17:30:19 asking for an extended deadline, getting extra time on a research grant or a 10 year deadline, all of a sudden anyone who wanted those things could have them, and disabled people can hardly count the number of times they were denied these things, and

17:30:32 stigmatized for even asking about them.

17:30:36 As we, for example, as we were forced to pivot online we learned how to caption video maybe or how to provide transcripts, or how to share these things so that students could access them anytime.

17:30:49 In a recent study of engineering students with disabilities at the University of Illinois, results from 303 responses from 49 different courses, show that students with disabilities have always wanted these recorded lectures as videos with transcripts,

17:31:04 that they want, they've always wanted course textbook and instructor notes and slides that they can engage with offline. COVID has forced us to do that, right.

17:31:13 And these are all things we began to really began to offer quite broadly during COVID. The key I guess is to keep doing this, even when we move back into the physical classroom, and that that would just be a very small place to start, but a place to start

17:31:28 nonetheless. My challenge to you is to think even more about the barriers students might be facing right now. Also, what are the workarounds, how have we built accessibility into online learning.

17:31:40 How will we need to retrofit or teaching in ways that remove barriers as we slowly returned to campus. And how will these sync with our own access needs and with our own safety, and that issue of our own safety is something I'd be glad to talk about during

17:31:54 the question period. I had a big chunk of the talk about this issue and about the right to remote work for faculty, staff and students with disabilities that I've had to cut out just for time today, but be glad to come back to.

17:32:09 So like in the fairy tales of the three little pigs are Goldilocks and the Three Bears, universal design becomes our third image or metaphor, instead of stairs that only some people can climb and the message that sends the center of a universally designed

17:32:23 space and in central message are about accessibility for all bodies, instead of retrofits that are minimal or temporary or that force disabled people to adapt themselves like the stair climbing wheelchair.

17:32:37 Universal Design adapts the environment and all that we design for the broadest possible range of bodies and minds. And I believe that should really matter for institution of higher learning, especially in an innovative school like mine or like yours. As Ronald

17:32:51 Mace wrote, quote universal design is the design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible without the need for adaptation or specialized design.

17:33:03 This was at first an architectural movement that worked against the exclusion of people with disabilities, but it also has become a pedagogical movement.

17:33:13 Right. And we can find echoes of these goals and the recently greenlit barrier free at ETH Zurich project. The idea behind the project is to ensure that quote, everyone, as far as possible with or without disabilities is able to access the university.

17:33:29 As Mace and his team discovered, quote, many of the environmental changes needed to accommodate people with disabilities, actually benefited everyone, recognition that many such features could be commonly provided and thus less expensive, unlabeled

17:33:52 attractive, and even marketable laid the foundation for the universal design movement. Okay, I am going to show you another slide here. Okay.

17:33:57 These are the principles then of universal design for learning. The first piece is multiple means of representation. In universal design language one of the words, wordings for this is positive redundancy.

17:34:11 Right, so, giving learners various ways of acquiring information and knowledge; example of that can be transcripts, right. An example of that can be closed captioning.

17:34:22 An example of that could be, for instance, today, providing a copy of my slides and my, my notes on on another site. Right, having a video of this talk that has captions and transcription up so that people can come and access this later.

17:34:36 Right multiple means a representation in the classroom, often means extending outside of the 50 minutes or 90 minutes that you spend together, to be sure that students can come back and access that information when they're ready to learn. Multiple means

17:34:50 of expression, the second piece is a way to provide learners alternatives for demonstrating what they know and I'm going to get into a little bit of a soapbox rant in a minute about around timed

17:35:04 timed tests and exams, which I think are the worst way to provide learners, the means for showing what they know. And that's, they give instructors really bad information and feedback about how effectively we've taught.

17:35:14 Right. Finally multiple means of engagement is just how we tap into learners interest, offer appropriate challenges, and increase motivation. So moving beyond simply, and I realize I'm guilty of it here, but the modality where the teacher is talking at

17:35:28 the front of the room for most of the time.

17:35:32 Okay, so that's universal design; that's our like perfect porridge in the three little in the Goldilocks and the Three Bears metaphor or it's the Brickhouse right in the in the three little pigs.

17:35:46 The belief in the disability rights movement was that the critical reinscription and remapping of social and educational space was necessary, right, that disability was in part being constructed, and in a negative way, by the ways that we taught, by the

17:36:01 ways that we built our spaces. Another push behind this movement was the idea that ignoring the centrality of disability perpetuates an injustice against more than just a small group of people.

17:36:13 Right. I want to point out here that universal design is a list, and it's applied solely to the physical environment looks a lot like just a checklist or a set of specifications.

17:36:24 But imagine if we conceptualize all structures, even huge institutions like universities as changeable spaces not as built spaces, but as spaces that we're designing and redesigning as we move through them as we interact with them.

17:36:37 And what if we thought of them from the beginning of spaces that had a responsibility to the broadest possible spectrum of users, and that thought of users as moving across embodiments throughout the course of their lives.

17:36:50 Importantly, I think that universal design allows us to understand disability from a justice perspective and a cultural perspective, rather than a legal and medical one.

17:36:59 It asks us to foreground intersectionality, it means that we understand that disablement disproportionately impacts people of color, for example, and we never forget that.

17:37:08 It also means that we listened disabled students and allow them to shape education, rather than privileging only service professionals, it means that the goal is not a better University just for disabled people but for everyone.

17:37:22 For the last decade, I've been working on creating a long, long list of universal design ideas, and I'll show you there's a link to that here.

17:37:30 And I call it places to start right so you have a link here, and this is also up on the WordPress site, and I'll cut and paste these into our chat but an open access version of my book, Academic Ableism, but also a link directly to these universal

17:37:45 design ideas for teaching, and there are thousands of them there. And I guess I have an evangelical take on this which is, you know, I want to challenge you all to visit that site, and to pick a universally designed teaching technique to try and they apply

17:37:59 to labs, traditional classroom spaces, small classrooms, collaborative learning, field trips, everything, right. Um, I also hope that in our discussion period that we can hear some examples of accessible teaching that people already use.

17:38:14 We have to share these ideas, I think and reward one another for the teaching that we do. As I near the end of the presentation, I also want to offer three specific challenges that are informed by Universal Design.

17:38:27 I spent the majority of this talk

17:38:30 identifying pretty difficult problems, historical ones, and the ways that these historical attitudes shape current realities, but I think that our, you know, recent pivot in teaching in higher education could allow us to redesign and rethink several key

17:38:45 components of teaching and curriculum and pedagogy that for whatever reason, our conservatism and orthodoxy previously made it impossible for people to touch.

17:38:55 And I think if we make some noise around these things right now, we can take an active role in reshaping our post COVID future, and we can design a better University.

17:39:04 The first thing is help seeking, and I realize the word help is not the right word here, right.

17:39:11 Access to accommodations, access to the legal right to an education, right, students who have these things are not utilizing it. Right. And we know that students who do access accommodations do so only in their third or fourth year of university. We see

17:39:26 because I went through the statistics, just how poor the retention is for disabled students, how much more debt they have to carry, how difficult it is to have to negotiate and renegotiate accommodations over and over and over again.

17:39:40 Students are having to invent and reinvent the stair climbing wheelchairs to access the curriculum class after class, right. We also know that we have a generation of students who seek help less than previous generations. The student engagement and health

17:39:55 surveys show us that. We also know that these students experienced poor mental health in general, more than in previous cohorts. This impact students of color even more than others.

17:40:06 So we need to develop an entrance to help and assistance and learning that doesn't have barriers and steep steps. We need to rethink what that help looks like, right. We need to see our classrooms as possible entryways.

17:40:20 We need to develop this entrance online as well as on campus and we need to be creative. We need our services for disabled students to foreground Disability Justice, not just minimal accommodations, and that means asking disabled students to design these

17:40:34 systems, develop them in ways that understand systemic racism that are not focused only on legal minimum accommodations, but that are focused on the flourishing and success of disabled students, and an understanding that we need permanent systemic changes.

17:40:49 Speaking of those permanent systemic changes. I think one of the big pieces for us as instructors, is to drastically rethink things like attendance and participation.

17:41:10 Right. During COVID, I think we realized it isn't fair to grade participation based on quantity, because we just don't know the context that students are learning in.

17:41:03 Well we've never known. So I want to suggest that we should shift towards giving students options to tell us the different ways that they can contribute in valuable ways and move more to quality rather than quantity, not counting up the number of times they

17:41:22 show up for class or the number of things they say, and importantly admitting that not everyone can learn what they need to in 15 minute chunks of class time.

17:41:31 So what are the options, we're going to offer students after COVID to learn and to show what they've learned. In a connected way then, the final thing I want us to reexamine is assessment of student learning and it's a big piece, it's a systemic piece.

17:41:45 But how can we pull back on testing, and increase teaching. How can we assess less and teach more. How can we prioritize engagement instead of content? In the winter term of 2020 most Ontario universities like my own allowed students to choose credit or

17:42:02 non credit grades. And then for some strange reason even though fall of 2020,

17:42:15 Winter 2021, fall of 2021, were more stressful and difficult and risky and dangerous. This offer was rescinded. So we need to ask them what do grades actually do for us.

17:42:22 And why do we let them back in our classrooms in the same way. Why do we time exams and tests at all. We removed time testing and we altered our exams for only one term.

17:42:31 And now universities are spending millions of dollars on complicated test proctoring services, just so we can give the same old timed exams. I guess I'm asking why we should ever go back to assessing one another, the way that we used to. Should any of those

17:42:46 forms of Fordist assessment that hung around since the mid 20th century, be allowed to hang around any longer.

17:42:52 Okay.

17:42:54 So thanks for your time today. I hope we can talk more about how to continue to design an alternative future for higher ed. I think we can all agree that before COVID our schools had too many unnecessary barriers in place for students. During COVID we

17:43:08 all viewed and experience new barriers, or we've seen old ones from new perspectives. And I do believe and I hope it's not too optimistic or pollyannaish, but I do believe we have a chance now to build something different.