**Dr. Stephanie S. Rosen 2021 AVETH Social Justice Seminar Series Transcript**

17:03:06 Okay, I think we can get started. So hi everyone my name is Nako Nakatsuka, I'm a senior scientist in the laboratory of biosensors and bioelectronics, and I'm also a member of the AVETH diversity team.

17:03:18 And so I wanted to start out by telling you a little bit about the seminar series. The 2021 AVETH social justice seminar series is focused on disability rights and studies.

17:03:29 Each year, the seminar series concentrates on a theme to create scholarly opportunities to learn more about social justice. We really hope that participation in the seminar series stimulates your curiosity and interest to be deliberately inclusive in

17:03:41 your administering, leadership, advising, mentoring, and teaching.

17:03:48 Deepening your understanding of disability is important for everyone. And it is essential to promote the growth and evolution of ETH, in addition to the newly green lite Barrier Free Project at ETH.

17:03:57 If you have any questions or comments or would like to become more involved in social justice, please do reach out by emailing us or visiting our website.

17:04:06 This year we have had for leading experts in Disability Studies virtually joining us at the ETH, and today we will hear from our final speaker, Dr. Stephanie Rosen.

17:04:17 Before introducing Dr Rosen, I want to share a few of the guidelines for today's session. There'll be multiple communication and material formats for the seminar.

17:04:25 We will record the event and make slides available shortly after the live seminar. As you may notice there will also be automatically generated transcription in English during the session, which works okay but it's not entirely accurate.

17:04:39 This will also be saved as a transcription that we will edit and make make available shortly after the live seminar.

17:04:46 You can also type your questions in the chat box in English or German. We will then read the questions aloud to the speaker in English during the question and answer session.

17:04:55 While the chat is accessible for some, and even a preference, it's also a barrier for some people, so questions after the seminar can be shared with AVETH, or Dr. Rosen directly via email.

17:05:08 While we do not anticipate it, any hateful or harmful comment will not be accepted and you will be removed from the Zoom Room. Guidelines aside, I really want to personally thank you all for joining

17:05:18 and the entire AVETH team, especially Mark, for making this event possible.

17:05:23 Now I have the pleasure of introducing Dr. Stephanie Rosen, who is a librarian scholar who brings insights from disability studies and its intersection with feminist, queer, and critical race studies, and she brings this into library administration and digital

17:05:37 education.

17:05:38 She is currently a senior associate librarian at the University of Michigan, where she serves as accessibility strategist and librarian for disability studies.

17:05:48 Dr Rosen holds a PhD from the University of Texas at Austin. She is the author of accessibility and publishing, which was published in 2018 and articles on the intersection of access, disability, and libraries and publications, Such as, 'In the Library with

17:06:05 the Lead Pipe' and 'LIS interrupted; intersections of mental illness and library work', which I'm sure we will share more about in the seminar. So thank you so much Dr Rosen and the floor is now yours.

17:06:22 Okay, thank you so much. This is Stephanie speaking, and I just need to get sharing my screen

17:06:34 and sharing a link to the slides in the chat as well.

17:06:39 So please feel free to follow along there.

17:06:42 And I will also be sharing the screen as I go.

17:06:46 So Hello, good afternoon to you. Good morning from where I am. And thank you so much to the organizers, to Mark, to Nako, to Michèlle.

17:06:59 I'm very honored to be included in this series, along with many scholars who have influenced me, like Rosemary Garland-Thompson, Jay Dolmage, and Margaret Price.

17:07:11 You may notice that I cite them throughout, as they've been foundational in a lot of my own thinking about disability and access.

17:07:21 So for today's presentation, I'm going to take a step back and return to some of the basic concepts that have likely been common across this series, and then focus on ways to apply them in our own teaching and scholarship to ultimately change how we can

17:07:42 create access and work against ableism.

17:07:47 So in other words, how can insights from disability studies and disability activism, change the way we teach and produce scholarship in order to create an environment that is more accessible,

17:07:59 that includes more bodies and minds, that allows for more care and flexibility, and that recognizes that we all have access needs.

17:08:07 So these are the questions that I typically pursue in my work.

17:08:12 I currently do so in the context of libraries.

17:08:18 As you heard in the introduction, I'm based at the University of Michigan library, but these are questions that I've considered for over a decade in the context of higher education.

17:08:29 And it may be worth noting that my background is in academic humanities, not the scientists like many of you, and not even in library science although that's where I found myself.

17:08:41 So, let's get started with some of these basic concepts.

17:08:48 So what is ableism? Well ableism has many definitions, and it operates at many levels. You may have heard discussion of internalized or systemic ableism.

17:09:01 But it is a whole system that allows society, systems, and individuals to assign value to people based on their appearance and their ability to produce, reproduce, excel, and behave.

17:09:24 It's a system that evaluates people on their divergence whether actual or perceived from constructive ideas of intelligence, excellence, and productivity.

17:09:28 These words come from TL Lewis, a Disability Justice activist in the US.

17:09:34 So you could say that ableism is quote like racism in that is not merely interpersonal, it is systemic and structural. It's built into the design of physical spaces, into ideals of academic excellence, into social practices, for example, classrooms and

17:09:53 conferences.

17:09:55 And yet, it would be inaccurate to say that ableism is like racism because that would suggest that ableism is over here while racism is over there.

17:10:06 When in reality these systems are interlocking and historically interdependent. They developed together.

17:10:15 Because ableism is systemic in this way that I've described, it can affect us whether or not we identify as disabled, whether or not we have a disability.

17:10:27 And just as an aside, I'll mention that in American English, both of these linguistic formations are common to say, I'm disabled or I have a disability, and there are strong preferences, among specific individuals and groups over person first versus

17:10:45 identity first language.

17:10:50 But ableism can show up in our lab whether or not we identify as disabled or not.

17:10:57 One way it shows up in classrooms, for example, is the assumptions we might make about what it looks like when students are paying attention. For example, an upright posture, sitting still, maintaining eye contact, which are actions that only some bodies

17:11:17 can easily do.

17:11:21 And ableism can show up in the way we write about certain populations whether or not we're writing about disability.

17:11:27 So what can we do about all this?

17:11:31 Well, I'd say the first step is to examine how we understand disability, the ideas that we hold, unless we've already done a lot of work to question them,

17:11:41 most likely reflect historical concepts, some of which might be inaccurate, outdated, or even potentially harmful to people with disabilities. So this is where we begin in working against ableism, with the question what is disability?

17:12:00 On the slide there are two images; on the left is an icon of a person using a wheelchair; on the right is an icon of a set of steps. And I often use this image to leave folks to an activity to find out what beliefs, we already hold about disability. The

17:12:18 prompt I usually give is, where is disability. If I asked you to point somewhere within this image to show where disability is located, where would you point?

17:12:30 I'll give you a few seconds for you to consider, you're welcome to put things in the chat, but not required, of course.

17:12:48 So initially when I go through this activity, some people say in the stairs because the stairs represent a barrier, preventing the person from getting where they want to go.

17:13:00 And some say in the space between, because there is a mismatch between the person's abilities and the design of the environment.

17:13:09 And some say in the person, because even without the stairs we recognize this icon of a wheelchair user, as a symbol for access or disability.

17:13:20 And some say it's a trick question, or they think they are not supposed to say what they think.

17:13:25 So the various ideas that invariably come out, show us that folks participating in spite of many different backgrounds and experiences have absorbed ideas about where disability is and what disability is from two of the most dominant models for thinking

17:13:43 about disability, the individual model and the social model. And whether or not we've heard these specific terms, we are already familiar with these ideas. The individual model locates disability in the person on the left and the social model locates

17:14:00 disability outside the person in the built environment, or social relations on the right.

17:14:05 And we'll look at both models a little more closely.

17:14:10 So, individual models, locate disability in the individual body or mind or body/mind which is a term that some disability scholars including Margaret price have used to emphasize the connection between both. The most prevalent version of this individual

17:14:28 model is the medical model of disability, as summarized by Simi Linton. The medicalization of disability casts human variation as deviance from the norm, as pathological conditions, as deficit and, significantly, as an individual burden and personal tragedy.

17:14:48 Society, in agreeing to assign medical meaning to disability, colludes to keep the issue within the purview of the medical establishment, to keep it a personal matter and 'treat' the condition and the person, rather than 'treating' the social processes and

17:15:04 policies that constrict disabled people's lives. The medical model has defined disability over centuries now and it remains influential.

17:15:17 Other versions of this individual model are the charity model of disability, which reinforces the assumptions that disabled people need assistance or aid, and even ostensibly positive inspirational stories about people with disabilities are shaped by an

17:15:33 individual model as they focus on one exceptional individual beating the odds, rather than the social conditions that set the odds against particular populations with disabilities.

17:15:49 Token contrast, these are the social model, in several interrelated activist movements in the latter half of the 20th century, disabled activists challenge individual models, and we can began defining disability as exclusion rather than embodiment.

17:16:10 The thinking of these movements generated now referred to as the social model of disability, emphasizes barriers to participation in the built and social environments,

17:16:21 while questioning assumptions about the relative value of different body/minds.

17:16:27 That is, while individual bodies and minds are different from each other, or have impairments, these differences and impairments don't cause disability.

17:16:38 Rather, they argue, disability is caused by ableist social relations and inaccessible built environments that disproportionately affect only some bodies. As an activist framework, the social model of disability focuses on what can be changed in the social

17:16:57 world to make it more equitable for some more embodiments. As Rosemarie Garland-Thompson has said, one of the fundamental premises of disability politics is that social justice and equal access should be achieved by changing the shape of the world, not

17:17:14 changing the shape of our bodies.

17:17:17 This focus makes the model useful for thinking through what we can change, whether it's in our teaching or in our workplaces.

17:17:26 It's important to note that social and individual models are not the only frameworks for thinking about disability.

17:17:34 And while the social model is extremely important, is not the last word I'm thinking about disability from activists or academics, but as an activist framework.

17:17:44 it points the way towards making a more accessible world.

17:17:51 So what is accessibility?

17:17:54 And I noticed that in your context, you are using the term barrier-free.

17:18:00 And I think a lot of what I'm saying here corresponds directly to the way you're using the term barrier-free, but I typically talk about accessibility and accessibility has a few different meanings or registers just as barrier-free does.

17:18:18 So, there are technical and legal standards for accessibility, which are highly specialized and define accessibility for individuals with disabilities and very specific contexts.

17:18:32 For example, the WCAG

17:18:37 is the standards for digital environments.

17:18:40 And the ADA design guidelines for the US, provide standards for architectural environments. They're both highly specific detailed and describe what it means to make something accessible.

17:18:53 There are also design philosophies that are broader like universal design, which attempts to anticipate a range of bodies, minds, sizes, backgrounds, and needs and differences, including disability and more.

17:19:07 And then there are also common sense definitions of accessibility, that can include things like affordability, convenience, understandable language, location, and more issues that are not directly related to disabilities, but which nonetheless are important

17:19:24 to disabled people.

17:19:27 So with all different meanings in play. How do we decide which are relevant. For example, I want to make my classroom accessible, but which kind of accessible?

17:19:39 So I think of these as all useful, but they all have kind of different uses.

17:19:45 So these common sense meanings, remind us that accessibility for people with disabilities is never not related to other issues of access.

17:19:58 For example, if an online textbook is accessible, in the sense that it can be used with assistive technology, like a screen reader,

17:20:07 but it's not accessible in terms of price, then it may fail to serve the blind student who just spent her money upgrading her computer or who has to pay more for an apartment directly on the bus line.

17:20:20 So it helps us remember that accessibility is most effective when we approach these intersecting issues together. Disability always related to issues of poverty, access to resources, language access, and so on.

17:20:35 These design philosophies, give us a mindset, or a framework for approaching everything we do with accessibility in mind, from building a syllabus to running a class session to publishing an article.

17:20:50 They provide high level principles that we can adapt and apply and changing context.

17:20:57 For example, the universal design principles of tolerance for error and flexibility in use, can be used to design a syllabus that allows for some student choice in major deadlines that would allow adaptability whether a student has a chronic illness or

17:21:15 is parenting a young child or experiences of unexpected crisis.

17:21:22 And when the standards teach us how to make x accessible, where x can be web based content, a document and electronic book,

17:21:34 and these standards provide mechanisms to test whether we have been successful because standards are designed to be testable.

17:21:42 They also provide a level of technical detail that we might not be able to otherwise figure out, and they can provide a shared baseline that we all agree to meet.

17:21:54 However, just because we build something to standards doesn't mean it will work for everyone.

17:22:01 Standards are regularly updated based on ongoing research, but they're just a baseline, and they often lag behind the latest research because they're always catching up.

17:22:12 So what happens when we design something to be accessible, but then someone shows up and cannot use it as designed.

17:22:21 And that's where accommodations come into play.

17:22:26 So accommodations are individualized solutions that are implemented when a default design doesn't work for an individual.

17:22:34 They are a critical element of accessibility, but they are insufficient as the sole approach to accessibility.

17:22:43 Disability Studies scholar Jay Dolmage thinks about accommodations through the architectural metaphor of the retrofit.

17:22:53 The retrofit is a modification to a previously inaccessible design, which creates access but doesn't alter the original. So his classic example is a ramp added next to a set of stairs.

17:23:14 Dolmage states that retrofits like ramps fix space, but retrofits also have a chronicity, a timing and a time logic that renders them highly temporary yet also relatively unimportant.

17:23:23 Thus, the experience of seeking a retrofit usually reveals that they are slow to come and fast to expire.

17:23:31 When we think of classroom accommodations; for example, closed captions on class videos for a student with hearing loss, additional time on an exam for a student with learning disabilities, or a personal note taker for a student who is autistic,

17:23:48 we can see that these accommodations do not have a lasting effect in the individual class, or in the students academic career. So the instructor might stop worrying about closed captions

17:24:01 once that student leaves, and that student must start over with the next instructor who is showing videos in their class.

17:24:10 So, if accommodations were our only strategy, they would never be enough.

17:24:17 Still accommodations are crucial.

17:24:21 Sometimes accommodations are set up in opposition to accessible design, as if it's one or the other.

17:24:27 but I think rather that they inform each other in a recursive process. Again and again, disabled people encounter a world that was not designed for us, and invent solutions to make things more accessible.

17:24:42 It is only over time that these solutions are adapted widely, and then codified into standards. But this process will never end. There's always going to be changes in design trends and technology, and in cultural context.

17:25:01 So accommodations or these improvised solutions will always be necessary.

17:25:08 Accessibility, as I think of it, needs to include all of these approaches working together: accessible design, and accommodations, and technical standards.

17:25:19 Because at its base accessibility is not about any one approach, but it's about centering the needs of people with disabilities.

17:25:30 Indeed, the final piece of this puzzle is climate, or culture, those subtle messages that communicate, who is welcome, who is centered, who is marginalized.

17:25:42 We have to constantly work against ableism in order to create a climate and culture in which disabled people are truly welcome and impact centered.

17:25:55 So this is not just a question of whether things are accessible. This is a question of whether people feel that they can talk about their access needs,

17:26:05 whether disabled perspectives are included as scholarship, and so on.

17:26:10 The more that we learn from disabled perspectives, the more that we can work to make these changes.

17:26:20 So now that we've reviewed some of these key concepts that I'm sure are familiar to you through your own study or through this seminar series, we're going to look now at some specific strategies to work against ableism in academic spaces.

17:26:37 What can we do, and how can we do things differently in order to ensure that our classes, our teaching, and our scholarship are working against ableism and actually accessible to more people.

17:26:51 So I'll go through this section which I hope has several useful resources for you.

17:26:56 But we will meet just scratching the surface of a few different topics.

17:27:02 So I just encourage you to think of your questions, feel free to note them in the chat, and I'll look forward to discussing in more detail as we reach the end of my presentation.

17:27:16 So let's begin with the content that we teach, of course documents, the course website, the readings, the assignments.

17:27:26 At the very least, we want this stuff to be equitably accessible to everyone in the course

17:27:33 regardless of the disabilities they have or the technology they use, including specialized assistive technology that some people with disabilities rely on.

17:27:46 For example, screen reader software for some blind users, voice input technology for some users with mobility impairments, and all kinds of other tools.

17:27:56 So what does it mean to make digital content accessible, and how do we do it. So this is one of those things that is defined for us in standards, and the relevant standards here are called the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, or WCAG

17:28:14 They are maintained by an international, independent body, the World Wide Web Consortium.

17:28:21 WCCC, and they regularly update based on ongoing research to represent a range of user needs and technologies.

17:28:31 This document, the guidelines themselves, it's highly technical and not very readable.

17:28:38 And you don't need to read it. In fact, I actually recommend this plain language summary that I've linked.

17:28:47 instead. But in reality you probably don't need to read either because many smart people have already thought through how these specific standards applied to educational materials and online teaching, in particular, and written up useful guides.

17:29:03 So, while WCAG is organized into four main principles, and many many specific criteria or rules,

17:29:13 the useful guides I'll share only really include the ones that apply and offer examples on how to achieve it.

17:29:25 For example, Cheryl Burgstahler offers 20 tips for teaching and accessible online course, which is very useful, and Explore Access goes into much greater detail about how to make things like slide presentations, images, class discussions and much more

17:29:54 accessible, with a focus on digital accessibility

17:29:50 So I recommend these resources. To make your own scholarship accessible, you can take many of the same steps. For example, you might provide textual description for images on your course website and you can do the same in an electronic book or article,

17:30:11 However, much of the work of making publications accessible falls to the publisher rather than the author.

17:30:19 So if you'd like to learn more about what publishers are doing, and what you can do,

17:30:24 I recommend reviewing the Accessible Books Consortium website compendium of information for work in this field.

17:30:32 And from the Society for Disability Studies, you can find a sample letter that you can share with your publisher in order to advocate for Accessible publishing practices, and to let them know that that is important to you.

17:30:49 So another place that accessibility can come up in our practice is in presenting and organizing events. When giving a talk, or running a class, or even organizing a conference or event,

17:31:04 we can use accessible design philosophies and time tested best practices to ensure that more people can participate and contribute.

17:31:15 There are many great resources available from scholarly associations and societies, and you may have got that type of information about how to make your presentation accessible for the annual meeting or an upcoming conference.

17:31:32 In reviewing many of these resources, over time, I've come to recognize a few main principles for presenting information in an accessible way, which I'll share with you here.

17:31:43 So the first is to translate information across sensory modes and across audiences.

17:31:50 So translating across senses, means, for example, having a video and also having captions. That means, showing a visual and also describing what it looks like.

17:32:06 Translating across audiences means things like spelling out acronyms, or explaining jargon, especially the first time we mentioned them without assuming that everyone knows their me.

17:32:21 Another principle is to amplify information and eliminate interference. So this includes practices like using large font, higher contrast, fewer words on the slides, eliminating background noise, using a microphone for example. When you're in a shared

17:32:41 space, literally, using a microphone and asking a question on a conference.

17:32:48 Another principle is to provide enough time and space. So giving people enough time to participate in the modes that they need. And when meeting in person, allowing sufficient space to maneuver and provide people flexibility in the ways that they can

17:33:06 sit or stand move throughout the space.

17:33:12 And finally, anticipate barriers and invent solution.

17:33:15 So this means asking people what they need before they get there, finding out if people will need specific accommodations or access services, and making sure they get what they need.

17:33:28 And it also means thinking through potential barriers and simple backup plans, as Nako said earlier today, people can send questions by chat, but they can also send them by email afterwards, perfect example.

17:33:43 So these are some general principles, but you'll find many more specific applications in the following resources.

17:33:52 The first is 'Helpful tips for making presentations accessible from your disabled colleagues'. This comes from the International Society for Molecular Plant Microbe Interactions, and it has tips for slides and posters and for both in person and online presentations

17:34:11 'Ways to make meetings accessible' is published in Nature,

17:34:17 and it provides first hand accounts for scientists with different disabilities, about what works and what doesn't at conferences and meetings.

17:34:27 The third, 'How to make professional conferences more accessible for disabled people: guidance from actual disabled scientists' focuses on event organizing, and covers topics from etiquette, space setup, to receptions, also has links to a few more resources.

17:34:49 And finally, beyond following standards and applying the framework of accessible design,

17:34:56 I wanted to add a note about climate and culture. What does it look like to communicate who is welcome in your classroom, to whom your scholarship is speaking.

17:35:06 This is a more subtle effect and one that comes from many factors, including the language we use, and the way we include our don't include disabled perspectives. In a classroom context, there are a few places where this comment typically gets established and

17:35:23 one is in our course syllabus. So, do we include a legalistic statement that students with disabilities may be entitled to reasonable accommodations or do we express a more genuine commitment to access for all students, and an openness to creating solutions

17:35:43 when barriers arise. In the US it's typical to include some statement like this on the syllabus, but often they do little to communicate a welcome environment.

17:35:55 And if students have experienced ableism from their instructors before they may still be wary.

17:36:02 I've linked to a blog post, I recommend by Zoe wall. It offers examples of syllabus statements that do the bare minimum, and many examples that go much further.

17:36:14 And I want to point out that many of the issues that come up here on the course syllabus would also apply to things like job postings, descriptions of a research lab, and so on.

17:36:25 They apply just as much when you are the supervisor or the mentee.

17:36:31 Another place this comes up is in those interactions where someone discloses a disability or an access need.

17:36:38 As we teach classes, students with disabilities or with other access needs may approach us to discuss their situation. This actually happens more as we make further strides against ableism.

17:36:52 Recent research by Tara Wood shows that students with disabilities, engage in a complex process of impression management and risk calculation and the choices that they make around disclosure.

17:37:05 So the research shows that students with non apparent disabilities often do not disclose their disability or needs to instructors, even if it means going without unnecessary accommodations because they fear even worse outcomes from instructors who may

17:37:22 discriminate against that.

17:37:24 The research shows that some students disclose one disability, but not another disability they perceived as more stigmatized.

17:37:34 Some students avoid disclosing because they already face discrimination related to other aspects of their identity and some students disclose to some instructors but not others based on their perceived personality.

17:37:50 So the way we handle these situations when a student does disclose, one employee from the other, can make a huge difference. What can we do here.

17:38:01 Well, a few things.

17:38:03 First, we can keep information about student accommodation needs confidential, only showing them to the extent that is absolutely needed to support the students writing for access.

17:38:18 Second, we can be transparent in communicating exactly how the accommodations needed will specifically apply in our particular course, letting them know what can and cannot be done.

17:38:32 Third, we can be curious, asking open ended questions to learn more from the student, recognizing that they are an expert on their own access needs.

17:38:43 And they know what has worked in the past as well as what potential challenges they see in the present.

17:38:50 And finally, We should make sure that whenever a student first makes us aware of their needs. We respond in a timely manner and work to implement accommodations as soon as possible.

17:39:04 Together all of these actions can contribute to a climate in which students with disabilities may feel more welcome and in which all students will be more likely to discuss their access needs that are not being met.

17:39:17 And the same goes when we are the advisor, the supervisor, and whether we are teaching or mentoring, or supervising, we can design things, such that flexibility is built in, and with the recognition that everyone, including ourselves has access needs, and

17:39:41 may at some point have unexpected changes in availability. I recommend this article by Ashley Shew on how she as a disabled researcher already runs her research projects based on online participation and flexible schedules and how her project was perfectly

17:39:58 poised to adapt

17:40:00 when her University moved to online only in early 2020. So that brings us to the end of the ideas and resources that I wanted to share with you today.

17:40:13 The following slides have the references that I've mentioned on my slides are used and research for my talk.

17:40:22 Feel free to review them on your own, you'll find links to the original sources.

17:40:30 And with that, I think we will transition into the question period.