

### Inclusivity and Accessibility<sup>3</sup>

The challenge . . . is to broaden the research base, the inquiry base, the knowledge base from which interpretive frameworks can be drawn, not simply to say that we know that we don't know but to do the work of finding out.

—Jacqueline Jones Royster and Jean C. Williams

As a teacher, I'm committed to doing the hard work of learning what I don't yet know. This includes not only doing my own research (which informed my design and text selections for this course) but also listening to and learning from my students. As such, I strive to welcome with humility and nondefensiveness students' suggestions for how our classroom space can work better. Given that I'm a beginner when it comes to teaching online and using Zoom, and given that I'm a White person who has assigned scholarship written predominantly by BIPOC, I'm especially aware of my responsibility to do the hard work of teaching myself what I don't know and listening to and learning from those who already know and do better—and then translating this learning into action.

If it turns out that the way I've designed this course is not working for you, we can collaborate to change it. Toward this end, I've created a topic in Reggient Forums where you're invited to inform the rest of us of things we can do to create a more inclusive and accessible space (e.g., "Hey everyone, please don't use the term 'x.' It's ableist."). If it turns out we need to overhaul the course design itself, then I'll cut some readings to make room for a discussion about what needs to change and how. If at any point in the semester you want to have such a class meeting, please email me to let me know. Please also *unhesitatingly* visit me during office hours or request an appointment or call me to talk about your accessibility needs, emerging project ideas, ways the course and my teaching of it can work better for you, etc.

As a human being, I'm committed to becoming a better one—more patient, loving, joyous, fierce, just, aware. I'm also an imperfect human being. If I ever do, say, or write something that hurts or offends you, I would welcome the opportunity to apologize, make amends, and do better. I also understand that calling someone out or in is a relational investment and that not all relationships are worth the work. I aim to demonstrate in both word and deed that our working relationship is deserving of such frank talk.

Everyone in this class is deserving of the kind of courteousness and respect each of us expects to receive in return. Disrespect toward your classmates or me will not be tolerated. Little things that we may not even be aware we're doing can shut people down, robbing them of the opportunity to claim their full potential in this space. So, please be aware of how what you're doing in our space may be impacting someone else's ability to flourish in it. In physical, f2f classrooms, I can usually feel a vibe that lets me know this happening, and I respond accordingly. I won't have access to that embodied

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<sup>3</sup> Here I adopt technical communication scholars Rebecca Walton, Kristen R. Moore, and Natasha N. Jones' definition of **inclusivity** as "efforts to forward a more expansive vision [of an established space, such as an academic discipline], one that intentionally seeks marginalized perspectives, privileges these perspectives, and promotes them through action" (3; in *Technical Communication After the Social Justice Turn: Building Coalitions for Action*, 2019). My understanding of **accessibility** is informed by crip theorist Robert McRuer, who argues that "an accessible society is not one simply with ramps and Braille signs on 'public' buildings but one in which ways of relating to, and depending on, each other have been reconfigured" (94; *Crip Theory: Cultural Signs of Queerness and Disability*, 2006).

energy while interacting with you all on Zoom, though. So, to the extent that you feel you can trust me to honor your truth, please let me know if anything is undermining your learning experience so that I can work to make things better.

Everyone has the right to be addressed by the name and pronouns that correspond to their gender identity. Chosen names and pronouns are to be respected at all times in and out of our classroom space. If mistakes happen, please receive corrections in the spirit in which they are offered and work to do better next time (I'll work on this, too). Because chosen names and pronouns may change, if at any point during the semester you would like to be addressed differently, please let us know.

I support your right to practice self-care as needed. If, for example, you find yourself being triggered by a reading or our discussion of it, or you simply find yourself needing a space to breathe without being "on," go ahead and leave the Zoom (feel free to use a line I've said in the chat more than once: "I'm out," or something like that so we know you're choosing to exit); ask for an extension if needed, etc. GO on and mentor for the rest of us what radical self-love looks like. I'll try to do this, too.

And now, here's the institution's important statement re: **accommodations and accessibility services**: Any student needing to arrange a reasonable accommodation for a documented disability and/or medical/mental health condition should contact Student Access and Accommodation Services at 350 Fell Hall, (309) 438-5853, or visit the website at [StudentAccess.IllinoisState.edu](http://StudentAccess.IllinoisState.edu).