

Who Am I Now? The Value of Métis in the Construction of the Disabled Identity

Brielle Campos

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in English

Middle Tennessee State University

May 2021

Dissertation Committee:

Dr. Allen Hibbard, Director

Dr. Erica Cirillo-McCarthy, Committee Member

Dr. Eric Detweiler, Committee Member

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would first and foremost like to thank my dissertation committee; without these amazing scholars to support me, this dissertation would not be possible. Each of you has helped in so many ways, from offering advice, to reading suggestions, to supplying motivation. May you all continue spreading your knowledge and support to everyone graced with the chance to meet you.

Second, I would like to thank my family. My family has always been a huge support to me, cheering me on even when they were not completely certain what it meant to be a PhD student. I have been graced with amazing people in my life who care to see me succeed.

Third, I wish to thank all those who have come into my life, whether for years or a single season, for what you have taught me. From children I have taught to teachers I have had; everyone has given me something which has influenced and inspired a piece of this dissertation.

Finally, and with the most love, I wish to thank my mother who has been the largest driving force in my life. You have believed in me when I didn't think I could, you have pushed me to try when I was afraid of failing, and you have carried me when I was sure I couldn't go any further. I am the woman I am today because of everything you have done for, to, and with me. You are my best friend and I can only hope to one day be as great as you are.

I love you all.

Brie

ABSTRACT

My dissertation is written as a reflexive or narrative ethnography. I examine my own life experiences and interactions as part of a disabled subculture. This extends previous scholarship, reflecting on how society has propagated lies or myths about disability. Using my experiences and interactions I create a counterstory (Martinez) by using rhetoric as Jay Dolmage, author of *Disability Rhetoric*, suggests: by moving sideways instead of back and forth. Dolmage sees *mētis* as a rhetorical move which can or is used by disabled people. He defines *mētis* as “wise and wily intelligence.” Expanding on his definition, Lois Bragg describes a weaving motion in which *mētis* loops back on itself. Using this definition, I metaphorically compare the way *mētis* moves to snakes, Tai chi, and trickster figures to generate a new understanding of how *mētis* works. This processed is contrasted with ableist rhetoric, which is often seen as marching forward in a straight and uniform line.

Even when not attempting to perform, disabled people are always using rhetoric. Influences which can change the way disabled people rhetorically present themselves are examined through historical context and the medical and social models of disability. In this dissertation, I show how disability and disability studies are affected by rhetoric. I explore how ability (able-bodied people) and disability (disabled people) use rhetoric to their advantage, associating four types of ableist rhetoric with Tae Kwon Do, and the flowing, weaving motion of *mētis* with Tai Chi and snakes. Third, I introduce a new definition of *mētis*, which shows a way to embody disability and disability rhetoric. I make connections between the disabled experience and gender, using Kimberlee Crenshaw’s theory of intersectionality. To demonstrate how these theories might be put into practice, I present two courses—one undergraduate and one graduate—which connect counterstory, *mētis*, disability, and rhetoric. I conclude with plans for further research.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction: What is “the Problem?”	1
The Unasked Question	1
This Dissertation	5
Defining Terms: Disabled vs Person with a Disability vs Differently Abled.....	6
Why Autoethnography?	8
My Story	12
What is Multiple Sclerosis?	14
Chapter 1: The Rhetoric of Ability	18
A Side Story about Disability in Martial Arts	18
What is Ableism?	22
Demagoguery	27
Media Representations of Disability.....	32
Pitiable section:	33
Sinister/Evil/Criminal:	35
Supercrip:	36
Anti-rhetoric.....	38
The Prosperity Gospel.....	40
A Side Story on the Relay for Life	45
Ableism in Relation to Epideictic Rhetoric	49

Chapter 2: Métis, Tai Chi, and Snakes	56
A Side Story on Tai Chi.....	56
What is Métis?	58
Métis As Movement.....	64
Tricksters, Snakes, and Disability.....	68
A Side Story about Loki	72
What Does Métis Look Like?	75
A Conversation in the Margins	77
Chapter 3: The History of Ableism and Disability in America	79
History.....	79
A Side Story on The Disability and Access Center (DAC)	92
A Disclaimer on the DAC.....	97
The Panopticon	98
The Law of the Panopticon	101
How to Act in a Panopticon	107
The Medical vs Social Model of Disability	110
A Side Story on Medical Leaves	115
The Societal Model	118
Chapter 4: Snakes, Métis, and Women (A Slight Deviation)	123

A Side Story on The Neurologist's Office.....	123
Why I have Deviated into Feminism	126
Feminist Theories: Intersection and Voyeurism	129
Women in Culture.....	131
Women and Snakes.....	135
Metis in Feminism	136
The Metis of a Disabled Female Trickster.....	138
Chapter 5: Applying Métis.....	144
Side Story about Disability Letters	144
What Métis “Looks” Like.....	148
Ableism at the University	149
Another Conversation in the Margins.....	155
Taking Back Power.....	156
Applying Métis to University Writing.....	158
A Side Note Too Big for the Footnotes	160
Undergraduate Course Description: “Autoethnography, Rhetoric, and Minority Studies”	162
Course Goals	165
Justification for Readings	167
The Ethnographic I-	168

On Writing-	169
Mike Rowe “Learning from Dirty Jobs” Ted Talk-	170
Aja Martinez “A Plea for Critical Race Theory Counterstory” Article-	171
Emanuel Ocho “Uncomfortable Conversations with a Black Man” YouTube Video-	171
Ami Vidali “Performing the Rhetorical Freakshow” Article:	171
Graduate Course Description: Access and Writing Pedagogy	172
Course Goals	175
Justification for Course Readings	177
The Disability Studies Reader 5th Ed	177
Academic Able-ism	177
A Guide to Composition Pedagogies 2nd Ed	178
Labor-Based Grading Contracts: Building Equity and Inclusion in the Compassionate Writing Classroom.....	178
“Weepy Rhetoric, Trigger Warnings, and a Question of Ethics”	178
“The Impact of Turnit-in to the Student-Teacher Relationship”	179
“Documenting and Discovering Learning: Reimagining the Work of the Literacy Narrative.”	179
Writing Theories	180
How to “Act” in a Panopticon	183

The Options for Métis	183
Appendix 1: Autoethnography, Rhetoric, and Minority Groups	188
Index 2: Access and Writing Pedagogy	199
Works Cited	212

Who Am I Now? Rhetorical Construction of Identity with a Disability

INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS “THE PROBLEM?”

The Unasked Question

Between me and the other world there is ever an unasked question: unasked by some through feelings of delicacy; by others through the difficulty of rightly framing it. All, nevertheless, flutter round it. They approach me in a half-hesitant sort of way, eye me curiously or compassionately, and then, instead of saying directly, how does it feel to be a problem? They say, I know an excellent colored man in my town... To the real question, how does it feel to be a problem? I answer seldom a word. W.E.B. DuBois

I can never hope to understand, nor do I believe many people want to know, what it feels like to be an African American in the 19th century, or even most of the current millennium. I do not pretend to understand what racial discrimination is like. Yet, I have my own unasked question which hovers at the margins of every conversation, dancing in the ether of possible topics until a comment comes along like “you look healthy,” or “but do you really need to ...” or my personal favorite, “have you tried...?” Just as with DuBois, these questions skirt around the real question everyone wants to ask: “What is it like to be a problem?”

My unasked question stems from my status as a disabled person. Existing as disabled comes with its own set of social challenges, well exemplified by Lennard Davis in his *book Enforcing Normalcy*:

if I am a woman, a person of color, or even poor, my body reveals enough so that I don't have to explain why I am a woman, how I became black, or why I am poor. But the disabled body must be explained, or at least tolerate the inquisitive gaze (or the averted glance) of the questioner. The question never has to be put

because it is always actively in a default mode—it is always already asked
(*Enforcing Normalcy*, xvi).

When I say I am a problem I mean that I am incomprehensible to others, as if saying I was a vampire, or a mermaid would be more fathomable than a disabled person. I am a disruption of the able-bodied person's reality, the assumption that every other body is like theirs. I was once among them, until the day I was suddenly not. I would argue this question works its way into every way I define myself: I have a gluten allergy, and so whenever I say I can't eat something, it is implied that I also must provide a reason for why. When I bring my cane with me somewhere because of my Multiple Sclerosis (MS), I must explain why it is suddenly with me. When I refuse alcohol or other kinds of beverages in public spaces because of the adverse effects it can have with my medications, I am encouraged to have a valid reason why I am not partaking of the festivities. None of these requirements are strictly enforced as straightforward questions, but they are all implied in social situations, a part of the 'normal' I will talk extensively about through this dissertation.

In other words, what I am saying is that I have been othered. Like the many marginalized groups in the United States, disabled people are a silent majority. As DuBois notes, those who are othered are considered a problem. This idea of a problem is the symptom of an intense, engrained rhetorical attack on the other which I plan to expose and combat through embodied rhetoric, specifically a technique called *métis*.

The idea of the problem, or the other, is a tool used to assert power over a specific group of people; in this dissertation I will focus specifically on the disabled, but othering

can be used against any minority group. Working from Foucault and Nietzsche, Judith Butler asserts that gender is a social construction, the “effects of a specific formation of power” (2541), which shows just one example of how othering asserts power. I would extend this to other categories of identity as well; identity is intrinsically linked to social constructions of power and their implementation on an individual. We cannot know who we are without frames of reference which come from our environment and the society in which we live. Therefore, as I critique my own identity, I in turn critique society and the constructions of power which have enforced a specific persona on me.

My first approach to critiquing the social constructions which hinder my personal growth will be to name them. Specifically, I wish to focus on a variety of tools which support the overarching nemesis called ableism--tools like stereotypes (in the form of media representations) and demagoguery. I believe in a power associated with naming, that by naming my opposition I bring them into the light and can evaluate them clearly. Undoing the power they have over me is a difficult added task, one I plan to undertake through this dissertation, but by naming the powers over me I have a better chance of flipping the power structure and taking control of my own identity.

If I am right that societal power structures influence and shape identity, then that creates a large mess of ideologies which must be untangled. All these ideologies—ableism, gender, science, medicine, social justice, etc.—are intrinsically intertwined, and therefore need an approach which can accommodate all the twists and turns. Throughout this dissertation, I use the metaphor of the snake, and the rhetorical term *métis* to represent this non-linear method of approaching complicated topics. The snake becomes

a metaphor for the slithering, sideways motion of *métis*, a form of rhetoric which relies on fast thinking and unique angles. For this reason, as best I can, I have tried to apply chapter and section markers to help move through this dissertation, but it still moves in a difficult to follow path. Readers can think of chapter headings as encompassing the entirety of the idea, while section headings identify the many facets of each chapter which will be explored. There are also the side stories, which I discuss in a moment, which might best be thought of as jumping off points where many of these ideas for chapters originated as I reflected on my experiences and identified the power structures I had previously willingly subjected myself to. I must trust that my path will lead to more interesting results, though there may be a lack of linear progression in some areas. If ever I did something the easy way, it would be a miracle in and of itself.

I make many connections to *métis* throughout this dissertation and create a few metaphors of my own for how to understand it. As is typical for us, most things have an antecedent, an opposite, and disability is no different. The opposite is of course ability, but the opposite of disability rhetoric is less clear. Some terms I will use extensively here are anti-rhetoric,¹ the prosperity gospel, and demagoguery, as well as referencing unfavorable media representations of disability, all which I collect under the umbrella term ableism. Anti-rhetoric was introduced to me by James Cherney, in his article “The Rhetoric of Ableism,” while I learned of demagoguery from Patricia Roberts-Miller in her book *Demagoguery and Democracy*. The prosperity gospel comes from the research of Kate Bowler, and media representations have been examined extensively by various

¹ I have seen this term written as both antirhetoric and anti-rhetoric, but for the sake of consistency, I will continue to use anti-rhetoric.

disability scholars. All terms will be discussed in detail later, but for now, it is important to know that they are tools I see ableism use against disabled people.

Those “disabled,” like all other minorities, face a huge obstacle. While I don’t know what it is like to be an African American, LGBTQ+, or poor, I do know what it is like to be othered. Each minority is in some instances seen as a problem, in other instances a conundrum, and in other instances a threat. We all face our own version of the silent question DuBois articulates so well in *The Souls of Black Folk*, a silent assumption grounded in ideas born out of the rhetorics of isms: ableism, racism, anti-Semitism, heterosexism. We together face a commonly constructed enemy, one with many faces and subtle personality shifts, but with the universal power of casting us as the villains in society. For this reason, we can share our methods of fighting back.

This Dissertation

This dissertation is messy and can appear disorganized. At its core, I wish to tell you a story, but not one of those neatly organized and well-planned stories which we purchase in bookstores and analyze in literature classes. I am telling you a story much older and deeper, the kind not written down, and which change every time they are told. I believe in the connection between this type of storytelling, the storytellers, and the power they hold. By telling my story to you I breathe life into it, but it may make sudden turns, wind around a subject, and pause intermittently to bask in the sunlight. This dissertation will be equal parts history, theory, and personal story, intertwining and weaving all three together to make my point. I ask you to trust the snake when she appears as a guide to keep you grounded and heading in the right direction.

This dissertation has three goals. First, it is an extension of previous scholarship, reflecting on how society has come to propagate lies or myths about disability and where we need to go from here. Second, it is meant to be reflective, showing my experience for others so they can find a little of themselves in the pages or see the same issues I have and start the process of reformation. Finally, it is a chance for me to work through the issues which have held me back from fully realizing the truth: my disability does not define what I am capable of, society does. I include personal stories alongside scholarship to dually reflect and move forward toward a new understanding of disability. If all goes well, I will accomplish at least one of these goals, perhaps all three.

Defining Terms: Disabled vs Person with a Disability vs Differently Abled

Since I am discussing language and rhetoric, it is only right that I also explain the terms I plan to use. Key to this discussion is the way I plan to refer to people with disabilities when making generalized assumptions about our group. While there are two terms which often are used in scholarship—person with a disability and differently abled—I have chosen to use disabled person in my writing.

“Person with a disability” is something I see often in scholarship, and linguistically it makes sense to have a person-first focus to disability discussions, since often disabled people are not thought of as whole persons. Linguistically, a person with a disability makes the disability an adjective, supporting the label of person. In the same way, “a disabled person” places focus on the disability and makes the person an adverb for disabled. The benefit of a person first approach is that it humanizes the group, making the disability a secondary thing to the person. Similarly, “differently abled” aims to

remove the stigma of disabled, where many see disabled as suggesting that there is something missing, or an inability to do things. Those who use “differently abled” are empowering those with physical, learning, or mental needs to feel they can still live a fulfilling life. Differently abled attempts to relabel disability as something special. My biggest complaint with these two terms is that “person with a disability” and “differently abled” are clunky on the tongue, confusing to the eye, and overall heavy concepts to explain. It may also sound like I am against person-first language. I have no quarrel with the multiple ways that disability can be expressed. However, I see choosing a label as a chance for the disabled to appropriate a negative term, as well as meet ableists with a common language.

I have decided to use disabled, disability, and disabled person in my research for two reasons. First is a mild form of appropriation in which I redefine disability in my own mind as having a positive rather than a negative connotation. It is a term I have had to wrestle with since my diagnosis of Multiple Sclerosis, especially since my disease does not manifest in constant disability: I can walk fine most days, I can speak clearly, I can make coherent thoughts (often enough to complete a PhD program), and I have learned to manage my symptoms to hide them when they do come to light, so constant work with it has helped me change my own mind. One might think this would be a reason I don’t want to use “disability” as my go to term, but I think there is a need for it to be appropriated by the disabled community. Second, as a chance to move sideways for a moment; many would expect me to pick an appropriate term which would empower disabled people, but as Patricia Roberts-Miller suggests in *Demagoguery and Democracy*, sometimes it is best to meet opposing sides where they are. After all, the truth is that while scholars intensely

examine the terms we use, legal terminology remains constant, and while not the best compromise when arguing, is at least a point of common ground. Currently the ADA, the Fair Housing Act, and other federal laws refer to us as disabled people. If we are to argue for rights or changes, we must at some point accept the terms already in play.

Overall, choosing a term for disability identity is just another form of rhetoric. People select the words which inspire the images that best support their purpose. But when it comes to disability, there are no great images to use. The end goal for disability studies would be the creation of new images, but to get to that point we as a disabled community must learn new rhetorical strategies.

Why Autoethnography?

In Autoethnography, we're usually writing about epiphanies in our lives and in doing so, we open ourselves up for criticism about how we've lived. You become your stories to your readers, and to yourself.

Carolyn Ellis

When I was much younger, like perhaps most English majors, books were my closest friends. Many have talked about the ways they have gotten lost in the pages, but for me, it was not just about the action on the page but the ability to take that action outside to my imagination. I have created stories from the time I was little, from conjuring imaginary friends, to whole worlds I believed were out there in the big wide world. In middle school I was a part of a group called Power of the Pen, a writing competition which centered around timed creative writing. I was an alternate on the team, and I never did well in competitions; I focused too much on character development and not enough on plot. In high school I was an avid drawer, and again, my focus was on characters. In college I minored in creative writing, enjoying the work but knowing that I

didn't have the talent to pursue a career in that area. Yet, I still find myself drawn to characters and stories, drawn to the why's. Why did he act this way? Why did she say that? Why would they do that?

When I found myself deep into my college career, I had already accepted the academic method of writing with great ease: no using I, no flowery language, and no assertions without evidence. These rules came from a collection of places, such as the highly prized aesthetic focus of the academy that Jay Dolmage recognizes in his book *Academic Ableism*. They were also never explicitly stated as rules but were reinforced by good grades when I stayed within these parameters, and criticism when I deviated from them. I saw the creative work I was doing for my creative writing minor on the side as a separate world. I rarely if ever saw scholars push beyond those aesthetic boundaries, and if they did, it was quite clear that I as a beginner was not supposed to do the same. While my scholarship was adequate, sometimes even excellent, it felt empty. What I wanted to talk about was the reasons I had picked my topic, the obscure connections I had made through discussions with others. I wanted to be in conversations with YouTube videos. However, referencing popular culture was still shunned in my undergraduate and master's programs because of their intense literature focus. I was writing what was expected of me, but not what I wanted to write.

What I wanted to write was a combination of my experiences, seen through a mix of academic and non-academic sources. In *The Ethnographic I: A Methodological Novel about Autoethnography*, Carolyn Ellis writes that “stories are the way humans make sense of their worlds. Stories are essential to human understanding and are not unique to

autoethnography” (32). When I finally read this book at the beginning of my dissertation research, I felt an immediate sense of relief. This is the type of writing I was looking for: A connection between scholarship and personal experience. It was a chance to show what I was going through, and yet still make academic connections to necessary scholarship. Previously I had seen these connections but was too timid to explore them in an academic setting. I was tentative about my ability to transition into this style, but eager to try it out for myself. I obviously had a fantastic dissertation committee that encouraged me to forge ahead with the project.

My academic career parallels that of my life with disability; I must be ready to support and defend my rights to access through valid sources and clear communication. For instance, to get a disabled parking permit on campus for my MS, I had to get one from the DMV, and to get that one I had to get a letter from my neurologist stating my needs and why this would be helpful. I had to do research into my eligibility for a handicap parking permit, and then I had to translate my disability into words my doctor could use which would convince the DMV that I was a qualified candidate for the placard. All this over a strip of laminated paper the size of a plane ticket which must be displayed whenever I am parked, so I don't risk having my car towed away and can get closer to the front door. Just like in my professional life, I had to do intense research, interpret and rearticulate that research to convince others, and then constantly reiterate or adapt my work to fit the situations which call for me to perform as disabled. Even with all this work, there are those who don't believe me or judge me based on outward appearances, on oversimplifications of my argument. My work as a rhetorician is never done.

My plan is not to dwell needlessly on the negative in my stories: when I present my own experience, I do so with the intention of realizing or bringing to the surface and speaking the question “What is it like to be a problem?” Each story is meant to enlighten readers to the truth, the real situations which disabled people face, and then examine those situations from a rhetorical perspective. My stories are part of my evidence for how society rhetorically labels me as a problem. Some of them are clear, such as my National Tae Kwon Do testing experience, but others are more subtle and may be accompanied by explanations. None are good examples of *métis*, the rhetorical method which Dolmage and Hawhee so eloquently relate to the disabled body, but in writing them I had the chance to see with fresh eyes my experience as an embodied rhetorical act. As Jay Dolmage suggests in his book *Disability Rhetoric*, it is more productive to move beyond stating injustice to investigating its power over society. Use my experiences as you will to help redefine the key terms presented here, to make better connections between the history of America and the rise of ableism, or simply to find some pathos and ethos in my argument about disability representation and activism. They are here because they need to be told if I am to fully understand my own experience if I am to feel out the terrain ahead of me and make decisions on how best to move forward.

My approach to this dissertation relies on autoethnography as a main research principle, however I want to add another rhetorical concept to the mix: counterstory. Discussed by Aja Martinez in her article “A Plea for Critical Race Counterstory: Stock Story versus Counterstory Dialogues Concerning Alejandra’s ‘Fit’ in the Academy,” Martinez situates counterstory as a method in which marginalized people can assert their authority when discussing their experiences as part of the minority. She says, “As a

narrative form, counterstory functions as a method for marginalized people to intervene in research methods that would form master narratives based on ignorance and on assumptions about minoritized peoples like Chican@s” (33). I bring up counterstory here, because without realizing it, my personal stories have become counterstories. Each story I have told here is counter to the domineering narratives which are told about disabled people. My courage to tell my story is itself part of counterstory. Martinez suggests that, “As an interdisciplinary method, CRT counterstory recognizes that the experiential and embodied knowledge of people of color is legitimate and critical to understanding racism that is often well disguised in the rhetoric of normalized structural values and practices” (37). My stories are expressions of my embodied knowledge as a disabled person, which seeks to counter the “well disguised” structural values and practices. Not only do my own stories reflect counternarratives, but I have found that counterstory and *métis* can work together to support disability rhetoric. The word counterstory will return to the discussion when I speak later about the courses I would teach; however, my narratives are counterstories used as evidence in my autoethnography.

My Story

When I turned twenty-one years old, I joined the ranks of 146,324 Americans with a disability (Harrell, 17). I was diagnosed with MS, a neurological disorder in the fall of my undergraduate career in 2012. Having lived for almost a quarter of a century as able-bodied, I suddenly found myself in a frightening new world, a world which flies in the face of all the beliefs I had previously held. Not only was I lost in the sense that I had to redefine myself; I also had to combat internalized stigmas which had influenced my interactions with others.

I not only faced the symptoms of my disease but also the societal beliefs which governed my new life. I worry for those who enter disability like I did, able-bodied for enough time that such venom becomes part of the way they see themselves. I know I thought I was lazy, worthless, and insufficient. I felt I was expected to be strong for others, to be a beacon of hope and inspiration, because that's what disabled people do. I thought I was lucky to receive whatever help and treatment I was allotted. It wasn't until I started this research that I realized what was wrong.

It is often seen as bad manners, admitting to having prevalent degrading world views, but I must be honest about my experience and how I have changed. I'll admit I was the type of person who secretly ridiculed overweight people with handicap placards and sold parents on the idea that the discipline martial arts provide would improve their child's ADHD. More than anything, I believed that health had a simplistic answer: follow your doctor and everything would be okay. (As I will explain later, these were ableist assumptions which I had learned from the society in which I live.) When I finally faced the truth, it was like a snake bite: quick and painful at first. But as the venom seeped into my veins, I came to realize that the more frightening issue wasn't the surface "get up and brush yourself off" attitude society had for the disabled but the systems which propagated these feelings and fed off the stigmas which paralyzed disabled people. I had learned these prevalent degrading world views form the subtext of society's treatment of disabled people, and now that I am disabled, I find myself hoping to bring these views to the forefront.

To be honest, there are days when I cannot even grasp the reality of my disease—days when everything goes right and there are no aches or pains, and I make it across campus in a flurry of energy and unexpected determination. Those days may not be prolonged, but they are more often than everyone expects. And just like DuBois, I seldom truly answer the question of what I am. My research has shown me that I am not the only one with this condition and it makes me more aware of others' experiences or strategies for dealing with their condition.

What is Multiple Sclerosis?

If I had to describe MS to someone, I would have to start with the fact that medical terminology doesn't do it justice. In my file it says that I have a neurological condition, with demyelination in multiple places in the grey matter of my brain, and a few on my spinal column. See how unhelpful that is? It's difficult even to begin breaking this down for the public. Then again, my go-to way of explaining my disease is equally unhelpful: I usually just tell people there are holes on my brain. This, too, is rather unhelpful and grammatically incorrect. Realistically, my disease lies somewhere between these two descriptions.

MS is caused by the immune system. One site says that "the immune system contains a network of lymph nodes, which are tiny glands containing immune cells called lymphocytes. Lymphocytes are normally good guys, but sometimes they can go rogue" ("About Relapsing Multiple Sclerosis"). Normally, lymphocytes attack damaged or

deformed cells in the body, protecting us from illness. When lymphocytes² attack healthy cells, they usually strike the protective coating of the nerves, called the myelin. With me so far? The spots where myelin has been attacked or damaged are called plaques, and these plaques are the source of most of my problems. Without the protective coating, signals moving through nerves can get disrupted or lost, which can cause pain, numbness, and cognitive issues. While myelin doesn't regenerate, it can scar over, healing a little of the damage, but sometimes leaving the person with continued symptoms.

The most common symptom of MS is tiredness, because to move through or around scarred myelin requires more energy than normal, paired with the fact that the body is constantly on the attack, producing more lymphocytes to eradicate the “attacker.” Other symptoms can include: “Numbness or tingling in various parts of the body; walking difficulties; weakness of one or more body part; visual blurring, and occasionally, double vision; dizziness; Lhermitte's phenomenon, a symptom in which people feel electrical tingling or shocks down their back, arms, or legs when they bend their neck forwards; and urinary symptoms, such as hesitancy when trying to urinate, or a feeling of urgency” (Cleveland Clinic). Almost no two MS patients have the same symptoms, but we all have some combination of these symptoms which presented themselves before diagnosis.

When I was first diagnosed, it resulted in a radical change in lifestyle. By the time my MS manifested I had been doing Tae Kwon Do for nine years. I was two and a half

² Lymphocytes are part of the immune system which lead to another difficulty; even though it is my immune system going rogue, MS is labeled as a neurological condition. I must tell people there is something wrong with my nervous system, even though the culprit is an overactive immune system.

years into my bachelor's degree and had been maintaining an independent life.³ There was a long period during which I didn't know what my disease meant, so I was certain my life was over: I was no longer an able-bodied person. I may not have labeled myself as depressed, but a dark cloud of fear and doubt hovered over me. It was not until the symptoms went away that I regained some hope for my life.

The symptoms of MS have rhetorical connotations. What is most difficult is that my disease is invisible to the naked eye: people cannot see my brain and the lesions on it, so they can often mistake my symptoms for common issues unrelated to health. Devin Garlit remarks that

many of the symptoms of MS are of the invisible variety: fatigue, pain, spasms, cognitive issues, etc. This world is incredibly focused on what they can see. If people can't see an outward sign that you are sick, it can confuse them. Many people simply can't get it through their head that you can be sick and look fine. ("When Are You Going to Get Better?")

Things like dizziness, weakness, or walking difficulties can be mistaken for drunkenness. Use of aids—walkers, canes, wheelchairs, etc.—can be misinterpreted as serving to deal with broken bones or other issues. Refusing certain foods or activities, even if clearly stated it is for medical reasons, causes disappointment and frustration. The act of living with MS is rhetorical, involving a constant need to narrate, refute, confirm, praise,

³ I was still living at home for financial reasons, but my parents never restricted my movements or dictated how I was supposed to spend my day.

compare, describe, and argue.⁴ It can be tiring refuting negative views directed at me, or praising caregivers for their sacrificed time and effort. The symptoms of MS also appear abnormal to the able-bodied population, and sometimes even to me.

⁴ All of which are activities in the *Progymnasmata* (translated by George Kennedy), an ancient rhetorical textbook, with around twelve practice exercises such as these listed.

CHAPTER 1: THE RHETORIC OF ABILITY

A Side Story about Disability in Martial Arts

“Do you have everything you need?” Mom asks me as we walk through the dazzling Orlando Florida sunshine. I give a simple nod, my stomach in too many knots to answer her with words.

“Do you want me to carry your bag?” The father of one of my students lightly touches my shoulder, ready to take my gear bag from me. The whole family traipses behind us as we enter Disney’s Wide World of Sports complex.

“I got it,” I manage to croak out, trying a reassuring smile. It’s the first time I’ve tested at a national event since I was diagnosed with MS, and I was a nervous wreck before getting sick.⁵ There is almost a fondness, a familiarity with how anxious I am, how it feels to have your heart flutter out of control.

Once inside, the rush of cold air-conditioning washes over all of us, a welcome relief as I’m wearing my heavy 100% cotton uniform. Normally, people think silence is calming, but the minute I hear the resounding sounds of people talking, tournament numbers being called out over the loudspeakers, and resounding ki-haps, I feel at home. Testing doesn’t start for another hour, so we wander around the event space, looking at products for sale and competitors getting in one last practice before the big event. I also

⁵ As I have continued to write this dissertation, I’ve found that this specific statement keeps recurring. After my diagnosis I developed severe anxiety with panic attacks, which would keep me from doing daily tasks. Perhaps this anxiety would have developed whether I had MS or not, but I have never been diagnosed with an anxiety disorder, despite being on Lexapro since 2017. My anxiety stands out to me as fluctuating between healthy nerves (which helps performance) and panic (which usually arises from uncontrollable irrational fears).

see a few testers planning out board breaks and a couple of friends wandering about. It feels like a family, like home.

“Do you need anything before you go down?” Mom asks again.

“No, I think we got everything.”

“Do you have water?”

“Yeah, I have a water bottle, and some Gatorade.”

“Do you have all your gear?”

“Yeah, I checked it all this morning.” The Wide World of Sports complex has two levels: an upper level of stadium-style seating and a lower level with retractable benches and a typical gymnasium floor. National and World events are a big deal. Instead of bare hardwoods, we compete and test on Zebra mats, an interlocking pattern of foam. The benches have all been pushed away, leaving plenty of space for 30 quadrants of 4 rings each. A typical ring is nine x nine feet, so it’s a lot of room.

“What quad are you in?” my student asks me.

“Quad fifteen,” I say, trying to read the little flags at the outside of each quadrant. The student’s mother spots it first, on the outer right side. From the second floor we all gather around. The parents look for seating while my mom keeps me distracted from my nerves.

“They have your letter down there,” she says, looking down at a long bank of tables strung together outside the quadrant.

“How do you know?” I ask.

“It’s next to the testing sheets, and it looks about the same length and paragraph style we used to write it.”

I know mom is pointing this out to make me feel better, but I have mixed feelings: I want the judges to respect that testing is stressful for me, and that I am doing my best, but I am also not happy that I am revealing myself as disabled in a dominantly able-bodied world.

I spend about another half an hour talking with everyone upstairs before heading down. In the ring I try stretching a little. I make small talk with a few testers and hook up with a few friends who are also testing. I am finally feeling good about my testing. An announcement goes out that testers need to meet at the front. There is a briefing about the new physical fitness test, which they are now doing right before the testing. The fitness test involves five rounds: pushups, sit-ups, punches, kicks, and combos.⁶ Each round is one minute long, with a partner counting every movement. At the end of the five rounds the score will be tallied, and competitors must have a score of 360 or better, or their formal testing will not count. They will go directly from this test into the formal testing of the forms, sparring, and board breaks.

The letter we wrote for the judges referred to this exact part of the test: it would be impossible for me to do the fitness test, and then perform at my best in the three-stage testing process. The fitness test would exhaust me, and every other part would suffer. So,

⁶ A combination of kicks and punches.

I got my doctor to suggest I take the fitness test before coming to Orlando, and a high-ranking master in the organization tested me in the fitness portion at his school. This means that I would not have to do the fitness portion at this event.

We are sent back to the rings, and the judges sit at their table. I make my way over to the floor judge, a type of announcer/director of the testing.

“I just wanted to make sure you knew who I was. I am Brielle Campos. I had permission to do the fitness test earlier, so I won’t be participating in that.” The floor judge looks over his clipboard and gives me a rather flippant response.

“Okay. If you want to help by holding pads so we have even numbers, then that would be good, but otherwise you can stretch on the sides,” he says. I nod and turn away, but don’t get far as a collection of my friends are warming up nearby. As I stand facing my friend, I hear the floor judge talking to the judges.

“We will start with the fitness test. Miss Brielle Campos has been given permission to forgo the fitness test, as you can see from the letter,” he tells them all. I hear a rustling of paper, along with a rather loud comment.

“Well lucky her that she gets to skip out on that.” One of the testing judges chuckles afterward.

My heart drops into my stomach, and all the nerves come rushing back. They think I’m a slacker, that I’m skipping out on my responsibilities. I spend the entire fitness test pacing back and forth, feeling like a cheat because I am not out there doing what everyone else is.

What is Ableism?

This word game reminded me that there is a structure to white supremacy, as there is to misogyny, as there is to all systemic abuses of power. Structure is what makes them systemic.

Baratunde Thurston

Before diving into the tools that ableism uses, it is important to know what ableism is and how it functions. Once we have a clear picture of ableism as a concept, we can then discuss what each tool is that helps support ableism, and how those tools get used, especially to support each other in perpetuating ableism.

There are multiple definitions of ableism, with subtle differences between them. For instance, Cara Liebowitz defines ableism as “the system of oppression that faces disabled people in our society, a system that marks disabled people as inferior and most importantly, other” (153). Similarly, Renne Butts, in *Salem Press Encyclopedia*, says “Ableism is the discrimination of people with disabilities. Ableism sends a message that disabled individuals are of lesser value than “able-bodied” individuals” (2). What these definitions often imply is that systems are built and sustained by a particular need; in this case, the need of ableism is to establish the superiority of the “healthy American.” Therefore, my own definition of ableism is a systemic construction of disability as a negative for the purpose of othering and undermining the existence of disabled people. Ableism has its own rhetoric, which is used to advance its goals, helping to undermine disabled existence as an abnormality. On a larger scale, ableism seeks to undermine disability to support the idea of the “healthy American.”⁷

⁷ I place the “healthy American” in quotes because disability reminds us that all people have the potential to become disabled. From car wrecks to medical conditions, from food allergies to brain damage, every

Ableism is supported and spread through rhetoric. The use of rhetoric to spread ableism does not inherently make rhetoric bad. Rhetoric or techniques are tools used in the process of communication, and their inherent morality comes from the message and the rhetor, not the technique itself. Moral arguments can be made about rhetorical techniques in the context of their use, but I refuse to go as far as equating these techniques with evil. In fact, as I begin discussing epideictic rhetoric and *metis*, many of these same techniques will appear used in the context of dispelling ableism. I will discuss this further in a moment when I bring up the technique of demagoguery, which is often seen as negative.

Another aspect of rhetoric is that it can extend beyond verbal claims and discussions. Dolmage and Hawhee, among other scholars, discuss the physicality or embodiment of rhetoric, especially pertaining to ancient Greece. Hawhee makes connections between gymnastics (or more accurately wrestling) and the *progymnasmata*, or a series of exercises to train rhetoric. Dolmage connects *métis* to the movement of a crab. Rhetoric can have a connection to the physical, and therefore can be described using physical means. Just as Hawhee and Dolmage examine positive movements, those that nourish the body or support the disabled, movement can be connected to ableism.

The martial arts world is an example of how ableist discourses get propagated, as well as a representation of the physical movement of ableism. One would think that Tae Kwon Do is not for the weak, feeble, or ill, as it requires intense focus, fine-tuned motor

human has the potential to become disabled at any moment. However, the American population, through a series of events discussed in the history section, find themselves believing that health is an ideal standard which can and should be attained/maintained.

skills, and peak physical fitness. This, however, stands in contrast to our founder Eternal Grand Master H.U. Lee's vision to share Tae Kwon Do with the world. He wanted a style which could be done by everyone. The H.U. Lee Memorial Foundation website explains that

Under the direction and dedication of Eternal Grand Master H.U. Lee, the ATA⁸ supported (and continues to support) numerous charitable organizations, especially the Muscular Dystrophy Association (MDA). For three consecutive years – 1987, 1988, and 1989 – the ATA received the MDA Award and donated over \$1.5 million to fight the illness. ATA fundraisers are also held for Susan G. Komen for the Cure, D.A.R.E. Program, Arkansas Children's Hospital and Arkansas Special Olympics.⁹

Eternal Grand Master was committed to supporting others. Yet, the ATA International website states that “The principles of Taekwondo techniques are based on the design of your body. For power you develop the larger, powerful muscles of the torso. The speed of the techniques comes from the fast, agile muscles of the arms and legs” (ATA International).¹⁰ This health-focused discussion of Tae Kwon Do displays an ableist rhetoric which has infiltrated the ATA. When I first joined, our goal was to improve people's lives through life skills such as discipline. When I went to do this testing, I was faced with a gradual progression towards creating “healthy” students, meaning ones who

⁸ Originally ATA stood for the American Taekwondo Association, but in recent years the organization has grown so large that they now call themselves ATA International, making it unclear what ATA currently stands for.

⁹ <http://www.huleefoundation.org/eternal-grand-master-haeng-ung-lee/>

¹⁰ https://www.ataonline.com/about_songahm

were young, agile, and without disability. The first time I went to an ATA national event, they showcased their disabled demo team; by the next year the team was relegated to a small part in the performance. Disability in the ATA has become relegated to special events, to supercrips¹¹ who have “defied all odds” to gain a black belt.

We can also use the physicality of Tae Kwon Do as a metaphor for how ableism moves. In Tae Kwon Do, there is a focus on meeting force with force, or blocking hard enough to stop the force coming at the practitioner. Tae Kwon Do does have some sidestepping qualities, but often the kicks and strikes which it teaches are linear movements; a sidekick can only send its energy in a single linear direction at the target. In the same way, ableism moves in a straight line, sending its energy in one direction at full force. I had a frustrating discussion with a man one time at a Tae Kwon Do training camp, where his philosophy was that if someone was not healthy enough to perform at peak level, they should not reach a high ranking position or own a school in the ATA. Despite some of my best arguments about inclusivity, he continued with a linear thought process that there should be no accommodation for the “weak.” Many instructors have a contradictory view of how disabled people fit into their classes, which ends up being ableist. The ATA started with a vision of inclusion but has instead generated an exclusionary system which forces disabled people out. The ATA thus becomes an

¹¹ Collin Barns defines the supercrip: “[T]he disabled person is assigned superhuman almost magical abilities. Blind people are portrayed as visionaries with a sixth sense or extremely sensitive hearing. Alternatively, disabled individuals, especially children, are praised excessively for relatively ordinary achievements” (12). The implication is that a disabled person should not be capable of doing physically strenuous tasks, so if they can they are super-human. An example is Nick Scott, documented in a YouTube video [here \(Bodybuilding.com\)](http://Bodybuilding.com).

example of what ableism is: a system of people or requirements which exclude the disabled from participation.

As will be made clear throughout this dissertation, the rhetoric which supports ableism must create an opposite, an antecedent, a duality. By establishing what is “normal,” we in turn establish what is “abnormal.” This means that if normal is a rhetorical concept, then abnormality is as well. Disability always falls into the abnormal category. As I will demonstrate in the historical chapter of this dissertation, ableism has permeated American culture and created a false duality between able-bodied and disabled. To accomplish and continually support the duality, ableists use a variety of techniques. Before I can explain how disability rhetoric or *métis* can combat ableism, I wish to define and exemplify some ableist techniques. This isn’t an exhaustive list, but it does identify some major obstacles for disabled people which my interpretation of *métis* can address.

The most prominent way that ableism uses rhetoric is through demagoguery. Underneath this overarching rhetorical tool are several sub-tools, anti-rhetoric, the prosperity gospel, and media representations. These sub-tools are representations of common demagogic rhetorical techniques, and in the fight for ableism they create the foundations for ableism to continue. Ableism is a demagogue, but it hasn’t got a specific rhetor who proports it, making it harder to combat. Instead of being able to point to a specific original demagogue who spreads ableism to others, those seeking to combat ableism must instead attack these sub-tools to have any chance at overcoming ableism. In

the next few sections, I plan to outline these sub-tools, to create a clearer understanding of how ableism uses demagoguery as its main form of rhetoric.

Demagoguery

I will come back to the same comment by Bragg a few times in this dissertation, as her words deeply resonate with the way I understand *métis* and ableist rhetoric. She says that “in contrast to linear progress of rational thought, [*métis*] never goes forward in a straight line” (32). Similarly, we can examine a statement from Patricia Roberts-Miller,¹² one in which she summarizes societal beliefs about rhetoric, where truth is stating things that are happening in the logical world and is not contaminated by excess or extra words. Both scholars are suggesting a linear method of argument, one often used to silence the opposition and undermine rhetorical discussion, which I assert can be equated with ableist rhetoric.

Both Bragg and Roberts-Miller suggest there is a type of rhetoric focused on logical progression or a direct line of thinking. Roberts-Miller defines demagoguery as

discourse that promises stability, certainty, and escape from the responsibilities of rhetoric by framing public policy in terms of the degree to which and the means by which (not whether) the out-group should be scapegoated for the current problems of the in group. Public disagreement largely concerns three stases: group identity (who is in the in-group, what signifies out-group membership, and how loyal rhetors are to the in-group); need (the terrible things the out-group is doing to us, and/or their very presence); and what level of punishment to enact

¹² See the Anti-rhetoric section of this chapter for quotes from Roberts-Miller.

against the out-group (ranging from restriction of the out-group's rights to the extermination of the outgroup). 33 (emphasis in the original)

This style of argument is direct, with a clear enthymematic progression; we are good, and therefore right, while they are bad, and therefore wrong. I equate this straightforward rhetoric with Tae Kwon Do: a martial arts style known for its high kicks and explosive power.

Later in this dissertation I will equate *métis* and disability rhetoric to a winding, slithering movement suggested by Jay Dolmage, Debra Hawhee, and Lois Bragg as a way to deal with ableism. For now, it is important to understand that a winding rhetoric will stand in contrast to a straightforward, methodical approach.¹³ The methodical approach is part of ableist rhetoric and is clearly represented by demagoguery.

Demagoguery uses straightforward approaches to argument; or at least on the surface that is the case. Especially when trying to single out another group, demagogues will reduce issues of access to black and white scenarios. Demagogues can also tend to label accommodation as an imposition on the part of their group, or as Roberts-Miller labels it, the in-group.¹⁴ For instance, there are still conversations going on about lack of planning when designing buildings which will and should be used by all people, such as court houses, doctors' offices, and the like. Demagogues will point out that accessible

¹³ An example of this forward marching rhetoric would be the conversation around stair climbing wheelchairs. While the able-bodied community see these as a feat of engineering, able to eliminate the need for ramps or other public access, disabled people see them as exorbitantly expensive death traps. Examples of these wheelchairs can be found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yihwW4ywGqE> <https://www.newmobility.com/2019/07/the-ibot-is-back/>.

¹⁴ See *Demagoguery and Democracy* for an in-depth discussion of how demagogues use rhetoric to create in-groups and out-groups.

materials are more expensive than ableist ones, that the extra time and planning for a small number of people is a waste of resources, and that disabled people should anticipate ways of dealing with these problems on their own, because they are the ones living with them. In other words, the in-group does not want to be further burdened or inconvenienced by the out-group, so they scapegoat the out-group with the burden of preplanning the ways that said out-group will be excluded and ways of fixing the problem. This is usually followed by a list of non-negotiable things the demagogues will and won't do in the name of convenience and is often represented as charity that they are willing to do anything at all.

Another example of demagoguery is the words of the judge at my ATA testing, which reflect a specific belief, that only the healthy have what it takes to be a high rank. While these words didn't stop me from testing, I was rather disillusioned with the organization I had once considered family. Despite all the concessions which were made for me, I could tell there were still people who believed I would not make it or shouldn't make it to a high rank status. Ableist rhetoric was used to suggest I am not enough to succeed.

Again, this relates back to demagoguery, as disabled people are seen as disrupting the "way things have always been done." Roberts-Miller contends that rhetors using demagoguery will often talk about how things have 'always' been done, and our need to return to how things 'used to be,' when 'always' and 'used to be' are mythologized versions of the in-group's youth" (47). Martial arts are an ancient practice. There is some truth to cinematic representations of Martial Arts origins. We see some of the traditional

conditions glorified or exaggerated in Asian cinema or American films about Asian culture: dirt floors, wooden posts, buckets of water and the like are the only training tools available to ancient masters. Students are shown cut and bleeding with no protective gear and often not even a shirt to cover their intensely chiseled abs. Even my own instructors talked about a time ‘before’ protective gear and airconditioned studios, when they would leave sweating, and no one complained when someone went home with a bloody nose. This translates into the modern age as disabled people asking for too much when they require airconditioned rooms or a chance to tap out when they get overheated. In the eyes of the public, martial arts are not for the weak, regardless of the vision of its creators or the history of the style.¹⁵

Another form that demagoguery can take is referenced in *Enforcing Normalcy*, where Lennard Davis reflects on an academic instance of ableism. In a discussion between multiple scholars at a conference, an editor spoke out about disability in a way which Davis felt compelled to share. He writes:

Recently, an editor at a prominent university press denied this assertion of culpability by claiming in all good faith that academics really were not exposed to many disabled people. This silence was one of omission rather than a commission, he maintained, since how many deaf people did one run into? But

¹⁵ Many martial arts styles were developed by monks both for self-defense and as calisthenics to help with stiff joints and muscles from hours of seated meditation. Few if any monasteries teach martial arts to promote fighting or the harm of another. Yet much of pop culture around martial arts focuses on the solo fighter, forced to defend someone’s honor by leaving his home and seeking out the bad guy, ending with the bad guy’s death.

this editor was simply participating in an ableist discourse—setting the limits of the argument with common sense. (6)

The implication in this example is that disability is not significant enough to need recognition. Not only is this an example of ableism, it is also an example of demagogic rhetoric. The underlying premise is that “I don’t run into many deaf people, so why should I cater to them?” In a sense of fairness, generating accessible materials does take time and money on the front end of production: a publishing company, for instance, would have to invest in programs and tools which allow for accessible design, and train employees on using those programs and tools. Once implemented, however, accessible design becomes a seamless part of the process. The same issues arise on college campuses where a lack of knowledge and understanding lead instructors to resent disabled students in the classroom. I have seen this sort of ableism at both the universities I have worked at, usually during discussions on accessibility for students. Both times, instructors felt that they were being saddled with unfair work to remake everything they had ever created for the possibility of having a disabled student, when in fact, accessible design can help more than just the blind, deaf, or physically disabled.

While it may not be clear at the outset, the following sections of this chapter will be a chance for me to demonstrate how media representations, anti-rhetoric, and the prosperity gospel function as tools for the demagogue who aims to other disabled people. Media representations of disability provide false evidence for the demagogue of how disabled people function in society. These false representations also feed into the prosperity gospel, where, in demagogic fashion, able-bodied people equate the health of

an individual with both spiritual and material prosperity. Anti-rhetoric then becomes a shield against confronting ableism, as demagogues deny their rhetoricity, ironically, through using rhetoric. My goal in exposing these types of rhetoric as associated with ableism is to later explain how disability rhetoric and *metis* counter these attacks.

Media Representations of Disability

One of the major places, if not the main place, that people see or learn about disability is through media. Multiple scholars have analyzed disability representation in modern media, such as Colin Barns of the British Council of Organizations of Disabled People. In 1992, the Council released a study which identifies twelve harmful types of representations in British media.¹⁶ Fifteen years later Rhonda Black and Lori Pretes created similar categories to evaluate disability representation in their article “Victims and Victors: Physical Disability on the Silver Screen.” These include representing disabled characters as “(a) pitiable and pathetic, (b) supercrip, (c) sinister, evil, and criminal, (d) better-off dead, (e) maladjusted, his or her own worst enemy, (f) a burden, and (g) unable to live a successful life” (67). While Black and Pretes combine some of Barns’ twelve categories to achieve their own, their studies reveal that media representation of disability has not changed drastically in the past decade. Five years later, Jay Dolmage lists similar categories in *Disability Rhetoric*. Common among all these examples is the fact that these lists do not portray disabled people in any positive light, they almost always reduce disabled people to oversimplified traits which are considered at the least undesirable and at the worst dangerous. Ableism benefits from

¹⁶ “Disabling Imagery and The Media: An Exploration of the Principles for Media Representations of Disabled People, The First of a Series of Reports.”

these poor representations because they provide evidence for why disabled people shouldn't be treated fairly.

Despite how misleading these representations are, they continue to be replicated in modern media because as Corbett, Jones, and Ralph say, “most disabled people are independent, intelligent, bubbly and full of life—but would people give money to charities if they did not show disabled people in a miserable situation?” (175). This is harmful because with the wide range of existing disabilities, not all disabled people are at such a disadvantage that they need charity. I wish to condense these categories further into the reactions they inspire in an audience. I have combined three categories—pitiable/pathetic, better off dead, burden—into the pitiable section, three—sinister/evil/criminal, maladjusted, disability drop—into the untrustworthy section, and the final one into the inspirational section. As I intend to connect these stereotypes to a forward marching rhetoric of ableism, I will define and exemplify some of them which relate to my experiences.

Pitiable section: The three stereotypes discussed in this section--pitiable, burden, and better off dead--all create a similar feeling in viewers. The implication of these stereotypes is that a disabled person is reliant on the charity of others to survive. For instance, in the case of the pitiable disabled person, Jay Dolmage asserts that “much of the language of disability relies on a semiotics of pity: myths of powerlessness that demand to be answered with charity” (40). This stereotype extends beyond feeling sorry for, or wanting to help the disabled, to a belief that disabled people are incapable of taking care of themselves regardless of the severity of their disability. Charity telethons

are the place where this stereotype is seen most. Charities often project a duality: children or disabled people are sad, lonely, and afraid before the charity's help, but they are happy and well taken care of after. There is no suggestion of a middle ground or a disabled person who struggles in some ways and succeeds in others. In this way, the charity inspires pity for the individuals they represent. This is harmful because it undermines what disabled people can do for themselves and encourages able-bodied people to treat disabled people like children.

In the better off dead stereotype, disabled people are represented as so disabled or incapacitated/in pain, that they really shouldn't be living. Statistics have shown that "disabled children are more likely to be abandoned by their parents than their able-bodied peers, they have less chance of being adopted, and they are more prone to physical and sexual abuse," showing that caregivers can sometimes feel their wards should be dead. The "better off dead" stereotype suggests that all disabled people are lacking an innate part of life which makes them whole. Since they are not whole persons, they suffer needlessly without ways of coping, and so death becomes the only humane alternative. We see this played out in films and storylines like *Of Mice and Men*, where the caregiver (George) comes to realize that the disabled person (Lenny) will no longer be accepted by society and must die. In the case of *Of Mice and Men*, George kills Lenny to protect him from a life of something worse.

The burden stereotype is related to the better off dead or pitiable/pathetic stereotype, as disabled people who are considered a burden rely on others to help them. The burden can often be used to justify other behaviors, such as pitying them for their

inability to live on their own (from charity telethons), or the fact that they may need to die (like Lenny in *Of Mice and Men*). Burdens can also morph into background characters, centering the focus on the caretaker and how noble they are for dealing with the disabled person. An example is the film *The Upside*, where Kevin Hart's character is shown growing as a man and the focus remains mostly on him. In the film, Kevin Hart plays an ex-convict looking for a job. Bryan Cranston is a quadriplegic who, despite needing a caretaker, hates having one. He hires Hart's character because he likes his nonjudgmental attitude and taking care of the quadriplegic caused both men to "grow" emotionally. Hart's character "grows" the most, as he starts to realize his potential and becomes more compassionate, while Cranston's character finds the love of his life who accepts him for who he is. Cranston's character does not develop nearly as much as Hart's character does, representing this stereotype.

Sinister/Evil/Criminal: These stereotypes suggest that disabled people are perpetrators of violence. This can often be connected to a sense of frustration and anger for being disabled, which they then supposedly take out on other individuals. Statistics like "In 2015, the rate of violent victimization against persons with disabilities was 2.5 times higher than the rate for persons without disabilities" from the U.S. Department of Justice, suggest that disabled people are more likely to be victims of violence than perpetrators. However, stereotypes like the sinister/evil/criminal one are often seen in television crime dramas like *Criminal Minds*, where mentally disabled individuals often are portrayed as attempting to commit mass murder. Someone suffering from paranoia and delusions can have sinister tendencies, but the characterization of mass murderer is not an accurate representation of disabled individuals. This stereotype gets perpetuated

further when mass murders happen, as disability provides an excuse for the murderer's actions.

In the maladjusted stereotype, characters are portrayed as unable to cope with their disability. Often, they are socially inept or purposely push others away with their actions, even if they also crave interpersonal interaction. An example is the show *House* where the main character is angry, aloof, and difficult to work with. Viewers see House mentally abuse the people around him and physically abuse mind-altering substances¹⁷ with few repercussions because "it's House."

Dolmage, for the most part, agrees that these tropes exist, but he adds one more which I find causes disabled people difficulties. The disability drop is a situation where a character fakes disability for personal gain. Dolmage says that "characters with disabilities 'drop' the act of being disabled as part of the climax of a narrative" (47). While disability drop is used as a plot device, it can have severe negative repercussions on the disabled community. An example of the disability drop that Dolmage identifies is in the film *The Usual Suspects*, where a criminal mastermind fakes a disability to appear weak and have control over the situation. Dolmage reflects on how disability drop, or malingering, influences public policy. To avoid malingering, policy makers will make requirements and standards exceedingly difficult to achieve.

Supercrip: Barns asserts that "the disabled person is assigned superhuman, almost magical abilities. Blind people are portrayed as visionaries with a sixth sense or

¹⁷ While House's drug of choice is Vicodin, throughout the show we see him use alcohol and other drugs freely. Surprisingly, he doesn't have the same physical reactions as those who typically mix a cocktail of controlled substances.

extremely sensitive hearing” (12). The problem with this representation is that it suggests to other disabled individuals that they are lacking if they cannot achieve the superior ability of the “supercrip.” A favorite Hollywood supercrip trope is the blind man who learns to use other senses to “see,” such as Daredevil, Eli from the film *The Book of Eli*, or the many blind Chinese Martial Arts Masters. In all cases the blind persons react and respond as if they were sighted, creating the illusion that disabled people develop special powers which allow them to see normally. In both the 2003 film *Daredevil* and the 2015 television show *Daredevil*, CGI is used to create the type of vision Daredevil has: the first is based on echolocation, and the second based on a collection of hypersensitive senses which looks like a three-dimensional thermal imaging. This stereotype has the opposite effect of the pitiable category. The supercrip creates a false sense that all disabilities are not disabling, that what the disabled person is lacking is the drive or perseverance to overcome. By believing in the supercrip, able-bodied people can redistribute blame to the disabled person when access becomes an issue, because the disabled person should “try harder to function without accommodation.”

These disability tropes are most often seen and used in the media, but their effect is wider reaching. Each of these stereotypes supports or instigates the other forms of ableist rhetoric by providing false evidence for preconceived notions of what disability is. Ableists can then use these stereotypes as evidence for why disabled people should be scapegoated for any current situations. In response, these stereotypes continue to be reinforced through public opinion. In this way, ableist rhetorics are all intertwined.

Anti-rhetoric

In “The Rhetoric of Ableism,” Cherney argues that ableism uses anti-rhetoric¹⁸ to undermine disability rights. He writes that “Practitioners of anti-rhetorics deny their own rhetoricity so as to appear value neutral, mere messengers of the truth, who by being above the sticky political world of rhetoric are not tainted with its excesses” (Cherney). Ableism uses anti-rhetoric, a contradiction of rhetorical terms to appear normal. The goal is to convince listeners that the rhetor is equal to them, that *we* are all in this together, and that *they* are the ones trying to deceive us with their words. Rhetors also use this tactic to convince listeners that they are “giving it to you straight,” or “aren’t BS-ing you.”

While not calling it anti-rhetoric specifically, Patricia Roberts-Miller also discusses how some rhetoricians create the illusion that their words are plain-speak, and that their opponent is the one who is using rhetoric in conversation. She says that “many people believe that the addition of more complicated words obscures the meaning of the sentence. Rhetoric, to them, is something that hides the truth” (“Rhetoric is Synonymous with Empty Speech,” 7). The terms obscure and hide how rhetoric is often thought of as a negative, as an attempt to confuse and withhold information, or to distract listeners from the “truth.” What is the “truth?” Roberts-Miller says, “a person can speak the truth simply by using words that refer to true things in the world. If she chooses not to use sentences filled with words that refer to true things in the world, then she is engaged in rhetoric” (“Rhetoric is Synonymous with Empty Speech,” 7). Roberts-Miller also

¹⁸“In argumentative speech and writing, anti-rhetoric is the act of disparaging an opponent's use of language by characterizing it as rhetoric or oratory, with the implication that eloquent language is inherently meaningless ("mere words") or deceitful. Also called straight talk” Nordquist, “Definition and Examples of Anti-rhetoric.”

suggests that “one of several underlying assumptions is that it’s harder to lie in plain language, or that lies are more obvious when the language is less complicated. Therefore we...should treat complicated language with suspicion” (“Rhetoric is Synonymous with Empty Speech,” 8). This exemplifies anti-rhetoric: where a rhetorician makes the claim “I’m not using rhetoric” despite the fact they may be doing so. An example of the anti-rhetoric that Cherney is talking about is the person who states, “I’m just being honest.” Usually these “honest” comments are non-descriptive personal attacks, instead of detailed criticism meant to help. In such situations, the rhetor, the person making the statement, is justifying his claim by suggesting his moral/ethical superiority; it is inconceivable that someone would want to be lied to, so his being honest, no matter how hurtful, is done only for the good of the conversation. In this example, lying is seen as rhetoric, spinning a tale, in contrast to the truth the rhetor speaks.

The reason Cherney associates ableism with this anti-rhetoric is because its use is so prevalent. He writes, “The same texts that broadcast ‘Ableism!’ to those oriented to perceive it are usually read innocently even when viewed from a liberal, humanitarian, or progressive perspective” (Antirhetoric). Cherney’s description of why anti-rhetoric is used by ableists is similar to the reason’s demagogues use anti-rhetoric. Especially in political conversations, manipulation is outwardly condemned while inwardly key to political debate. Cherney states that, “Ableism is so pervasive that it is difficult to identify until one begins to interrogate the governing assumptions of well-intentioned society” (Antirhetoric). Dolmage asserts that “ableism renders disability as abject, invisible, disposable, less than human, while ablebodiedness is represented as at once ideal, normal, and the mean, or default” (*Academic Ableism*, 7). Again, who would

willingly choose to be disabled? Yet, disability is not a choice; it is not ruled by the logical “forensic speaking” of classical rhetoric, or the classical rhetoric society honors.

I even find myself entrapped in the anti-rhetoric of ableism. While reading Cherney’s work I realized that after my diagnosis I accepted the ableist rhetoric which had been handed to me and unquestioningly assumed that all accommodation I was given was a gift to my abnormal self. Once diagnosed, I had to learn how to redefine myself within the confines of society’s norms and vocabulary. Truthfully, there is little that society really understands about my disease and disability, and yet, rules continue to be put into place which limit my abilities. For instance, the discussion of how I came to acquire my handicap placard: medically it is not normal for a person my age to need a close parking spot. I have seen countless Facebook posts from disabled people who have been harassed because they have gotten out of a car parked in a handicap spot without an assistance device, because society sees it as incredible that a visibly healthy person would need assistance. These are all examples where a short direct answer is assumed—you’re not disabled—and any attempt to explain is dismissed as rhetoric. Ableism uses anti-rhetoric to silence disability, a rhetorical move which in turn can be seen in another ableist tool, the Prosperity Gospel.

The Prosperity Gospel

While I was on YouTube one day viewing different videos about disability, Dr. Kate Bowler’s Ted Talk “Everything Happens for a Reason and other Lies I’ve Loved” appeared. I immediately made connections with her subject matter, the prosperity gospel, and my own experiences as a disabled person. I saw the ways that what Bowler terms

“religious right thinking” had influenced not only my interpretation of myself, but the interpretations others had of me. I could see how this right thinking undermines my experiences as either the work of God or a failure of my own moral character, and that its connection to religion makes it a wide-reaching theory of how the world works. This led to the realization that the prosperity gospel is another ableist rhetorical tool.

Bowler writes thoughtfully about the prosperity Gospel for a living, and her work has enlightened me regarding the reasons behind my own struggle with religion. Bowler defines the prosperity gospel as “the belief that God grants health and wealth to those with the right kind of faith” (“Death, the Prosperity Gospel, and Me,” Bowler) and as “a widely popular Christian message of spiritual, physical, and financial mastery that dominates not only much of the American religious scene but some of the largest churches around the globe” (*Blessed*, 3). She sees this gospel as infiltrating most of American religious life, and it can continue into secular institutions with its way of “represent[ing] the triumph of American optimism over the realities of a fickle economy, entrenched racism, pervasive poverty, and theological pessimism that foretold the future as dangling by a thread” (7). While she is not specifically studying the rhetoric of religion, key aspects of Christian rhetorics, which come from or are supported by the prosperity gospel, are hard to ignore, as they lay the foundation for how Americans view themselves and how we talk about health, wealth, and happiness. My goal is not to assail or shame Christianity, but instead to explore this rhetorical tradition which has so much

influence on American culture.¹⁹ Just as not all disabled people carry canes, or use service dogs, not all Christians believe in the prosperity gospel.

The prosperity gospel, as Bowler describes it, is a theory of invoking divine intervention through correct thought and unwavering faith. These interventions can come in the form of whatever the pray-er is asking for, whether health, money, spiritual clarity, or social power. Two big names in this early movement were E.W. Kenyon and F.F. Bosworth. Bowler writes,

Kenyon, however, stipulated that the divine power poured into the container of words could be called only one thing: faith. ‘Faith-filled words’ not only brought the universe into being but also governed the world as an invisible force. The power of the spoken word simply carried faith to its desired ends (19), [and Bosworth’s] bestselling manifesto, *Christ the Healer*, popularized the utterly confident view of divine health that all right-thinking Christians may lay claim to perfect health. (21)

What Bowler establishes in these references is that the prosperity gospel convinces followers they are entitled to the same godly power of creation/manifestation through faith-filled words. In other words, a Christian who has complete faith in the power of God can pray for healing and be healed. This essence of right-thinking causes some problems when science comes into play: we cannot always manifest our deepest desires simply by believing unconditionally. The idea of faith-filled words gets supported by

¹⁹ While America is a country founded on a right to religious freedom, Christian ideals, mainly Protestant, are often the hallmarks of American thinking. For this reason, religion must be addressed in relation to American societal beliefs.

Genesis, but not by modern day science. Christian right-thinking elevates language to the stage of creator and justifies this with support from biblical texts.

Bowler further makes connections between this right-thinking and American financial aspirations. Financial blessings spilled over into health, meaning that those who exemplified Christian American values would be blessed with health, wealth, and happiness. She identifies the end of World War II as the beginning of this dynamic. Bowler states that “this was an American gospel, based on hard work, pragmatism, innovation, self-reliance and openness to risk” in which “great men—and they were men—[who] were once regular people, separated from the masses by steely character” (32) were blessed with financial success through faith. If a Christian didn’t achieve wealth or good health, if someone was disabled, sick, or poor, then their struggles related more to their lack of faith and character, and less to their overall situation or outside economic factors. The prosperity gospel creates an image of man, fueled by God and good fortune, as capable of overcoming any obstacle. When disability appears, the gospel provides two options: Triumph through unwavering faith or fail and become pitiable and pathetic. Anything outside these two options is inconceivable to gospel believers. We can also see a connection between the prosperity gospel and the supercrip from the media representations. When disabled people overcome their disability, their success is often attributed to divine intervention. The prosperity gospel believer’s beliefs undermine disabled people’s real experiences, relegating victories to a higher power or pitying those who can’t overcome their disease. They also ignore the fact that illness can be a roller coaster of good and bad days, because it is hard to justify or explain why someone suffers

one day and is fine the next. Followers of the prosperity gospel intensely believe that disabled people are somehow deficient or lesser human beings.

The prosperity gospel, like other forms of demagoguery, relies on a rhetoric to maintain its status and control over followers and society at large. Such rhetoric uses logic to place blame squarely on the person who is suffering; you logically either don't want it (health, wealth, or a combination of the two) or you don't believe. This either/or style of belief is again an aspect of demagoguery. Demagogues not only create us versus them scenarios, they also create dichotomous options in which either people are believe in their ideals or individuals are secretly the enemy. The prosperity gospel is an example of demagoguery but also supports demagogues by empowering its Christian members to believe in their superiority based on their membership in the community.

There is always a fine line between rhetoric and bombast. Socrates had as much trouble with the Sophists as modern scholars have with religious soothsayers, and yet among all the chatter and ignorance is a small degree of truth. Despite the issues Socrates had with the Sophists, sophistic rhetoric continued to be taught and used by rhetoricians and contributes in the modern age to our understanding of rhetorical practice. Similarly, many scientists argue against religious soothsayers, yet there have been some instances where cancer survivors have reported better survival outcomes based on the prayer of others or themselves.²⁰ Discounting the role of religion and religious rhetorics play in society, especially American society, leaves out a large portion of the culture. Without

²⁰ These results can also have more benign explanations, like an increased sense of hope or support from the community contributing to recovery. Once these connections are made, however, they become engrained in the philosophy of the believer.

this understanding, we lack the proper knowledge to combat ableist rhetorics, of which I include the prosperity gospel for its stance that health is a prioritized or Godly state.

A Side Story on the Relay for Life

The music outside the tent continued to blare, setting the pace for the walkers still on the track. As a ten-year-old girl, at nine o' clock I should have been in bed, but I struggled to fall asleep in the little cot at the back of the tent. I chalked it up to the music and the lights: the stadium lights penetrated the thick tarp. It could be the cold too: when walking it was easy to ignore, but once you stopped you could feel it again. It was chilly for April.

I tried counting sheep. It didn't help. I shifted to my other side. It didn't help. I moved to my back. Since the tent was on grass, a few fireflies crawled across the ceiling, reminding me of the Luminarias around the track outside. It crossed my mind that I found it ridiculous: lanterns for the fallen, calling those who were still here survivors. While I supported the drive for cancer research, I didn't agree with the whole warrior mentality.

Perhaps that sounds harsh, but it is still reflected in my line of thinking now that I am an adult with MS. Many YouTubers have talked about "inspiration porn," an expectation people have that disabled people are there to tell us stories about beating the odds. It is difficult to see a disabled person out in society living life or struggling to live life. When I was little, at the Relay for Life event, I was already seeing through this, but I didn't have the adequate words to explain the problem. Inspiration porn relates to the supercrip and pitiable/pathetic stereotype, since it suggests we will all overcome our diseases to become motivational speakers. If we don't overcome, we are pathetic because

we didn't want to be healthy bad enough. But where did this all come from? Why did we need to be fighting our bodies? Why did we have to get better at all costs? It felt like the sick and dying were putting on makeup, painting on happiness, strength, and vibrancy at the detriment of their own lived experience. And oddly enough, I thought religion had something to do with it.

When I was younger, I believed in God the way most Christians do. I prayed for help, for protection, and for all the little things most kids do. I had horrible digestive issues throughout my childhood that left me sleeping on the bathroom floor with only my blanket and a book for company. Many nights I prayed for God to take away my pain. Whenever my friend would go into the hospital, I would pray for him to be okay. One night I prayed that he would be out of pain, even if he had to die to escape it. What felt like a week later his parents let me say my last goodbye to him. In that moment I lost faith, but recently I read an article by Dr. Kate Bowler.

I was at the relay for my friends and family who I had lost, but I struggled to think of them as "warriors." True they were fighting off an illness, but in the day-to-day they were doing everything they would do if they weren't sick. Failing to get out of bed one day didn't make my aunt weak; going to school didn't make my friend a hero. God has nothing to do with this. Even though I didn't know the term "inspiration porn," I didn't believe in unnecessary praise. I would have rather seen them praised for fighting through the nausea that comes with chemo, or for staying in bed and listening to their body.

I have no real problem with celebrating victories: going into cancer remission, getting a new wheelchair/prosthetic, or finding a new treatment plan which finally works.

Without celebrating the victories, life as a disabled person is a constant struggle with no real reason to keep going because there will just be more of the same. “Inspiration porn” is not about these moments; it is about turning every little struggle into a life lesson that able-bodied people can feel good about. Inspiration porn is not for disabled people; it is for able-bodied people.

Inspiration porn also relates to the prosperity gospel. Bowler has an enlightening paragraph in her *New York Times* opinion article “Death, the Prosperity Gospel and Me.” It follows an interaction where her neighbor visited after Bowler’s cancer diagnosis, touting the generic “everything happens for a reason” line. Bowler writes:

My neighbor wasn’t trying to sell [my husband] a spiritual guarantee. But there was a reason she wanted to fill that silence around why some people die young and others grow old and fussy about their lawns. She wanted some kind of order behind this chaos. Because the opposite of #blessed is leaving a husband and a toddler behind, and people can’t quite let themselves say it: “Wow. That’s awful.” There has to be a reason, because without one we are left as helpless and possibly as unlucky as everyone else. (np)

This paragraph gets to the heart of why the prosperity gospel is so appealing, as well as how fragile its tenets really are. As Bowler says, the reason her neighbor wanted to provide what is seen as comforting words, is because we struggle with the feeling that life could just be a random collection of occurrences. As beings who seek logical explanations, we want order, structure, and reason to rule, when nature itself is chaotic. The prosperity gospel is comforting because it suggests an order: God has chosen for

things to happen this way, or the person who is sick has failed in some way to access the blessings of good health from God.

The paragraph also reveals that the prosperity gospel has limitations. A believer will have to construct excuses rhetorically to defend against questions like “Why is there war, disease, and famine?” If God’s power were truly within all of us, we would be able to pray all these issues away, yet we still struggle with them. Gospel believers may also say that we do not believe fully enough or are not true believers and that is why we suffer, but this type of thinking places blame on the person for not doing enough, trapping the person in an endless cycle of failure. The disabled and the sick are the ones who suffer the brunt of this, as they are perceived as lacking faith or failing to believe. Once they leave, they can take comfort in the prosperity gospel: “I am a good Christian, so I will be protected by God” or “bad things happen to bad people.”

The prosperity gospel has much in common with demagoguery which has two modes: black and white, or overly complicated. Normally demagoguery tries to reduce conflict to a black or white, good or bad, dichotomy which usually proves the in-group as correct and the out-group as wrong. Just like in the prosperity gospel, we want the world to punish bad people and reward good ones. However, when things cannot be reduced to such simplistic choices, then demagogues often act as if the situation is too complicated. In the prosperity gospel, this happens when its main tenants of right thought and action are proved to fail. In these situations, “God has a bigger plan for you,” or “You are learning a lesson” which no one can clearly articulate because “God works in mysterious ways.” In relation to inspiration porn, demagogues would say that the disabled person

who overcomes a disease is admirable, while one who doesn't is a leech on social security and government disability programs; to a demagogue, the disabled want to remain disabled so they can get benefits.

Ableism in Relation to Epideictic Rhetoric

La mestiza constantly has to shift out of habitual formations; from convergent thinking, analytical reasoning that tends to use rationality to move toward a single goal (a Western mode), to divergent thinking, characterized by movement away from set patterns and goals toward a more whole perspective, one that includes rather than excludes.

Gloria Anzaldúa

None of the previously mentioned stereotypes are proper representations of disabled people. Each one is meant to ease the minds of able-bodied people, to make them feel better about disability, since every person has the potential for becoming disabled. Just like the power of voyeurism is maintained by the ability to see and not be seen, as presented in Laura Mulvey's "Visual Pleasure in Narrative Cinema," in media representations of disability, the able-bodied population can see disabled people without being seen and can therefore entertain the idea of being disabled without the threat of becoming disabled. In the theater, an able-bodied person can watch disability and be comforted by the illusion that, in such a situation, they would "act" the "right" way.²¹

We who are disabled have already learned to represent ourselves rhetorically in a world set against us. We are already placed on stage every time we walk out the door, as all eyes fall on us. We have seen this with the actor Michael J. Fox and his fight for

²¹ In the same vein, the illusion that able-bodied people would "act" the "right" way stabilizes, contains, and tames the other, like the male gaze does with the female figure (Mulvey).

Parkinson's research. As a Parkinson's patient, Fox is an advocate for disease research. Yet, whenever he appears at speaking events, media and critics focus on the manifestation of his disease instead of his rhetorical strategy (Quackenbush). In one instance, Rush Limbaugh even accused Fox of exaggerating his illness as part of a campaign strategy to help a Democratic candidate.²² In this situation, medical doctors had to appear on camera to defend the manifestation of Fox's disease (Quackenbush): his own diagnosis was both visually his greatest strength, and verbally his greatest weakness. Regardless of his verbal skill as an orator, Fox is reduced to the physical projection of his disease and the dis-ease it causes the audience. However, this is not a bad thing; it could be argued that Fox is allowing his body to be a representation of his main point that Parkinson's research is greatly needed (Moe). I argue Fox's decision to appear in public at all is itself a rhetorical choice; Fox has chosen to use his misfortune—being diagnosed with Parkinson's disease—as a rhetorical strategy when he appears in public as disabled. His presence is a move sideways instead of forward.

There are two things that are happening rhetorically when Fox appears in public to discuss Parkinson's. First, he must create epideictic rhetoric. Like a demagogue, Fox must praise those who support research, and vilify those who don't. In his speech to Congress²³, he complains about the unfortunate lack of funding, and then says, "but with your [congress's] help and if we all do everything we can to kick this disease..." (Fox, USA). He is creating a story of praise and blame. Dr. Ilon Lauer, in the article "Epideictic Rhetoric," writes, "epideictic facilitates community building, promoting an acceptance

²² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NrwOFWloXso>

²³ <https://youtu.be/fkOkeY0I3Cw>

and even appreciation for pluralistic values” (15). Just like demagogues, disabled persons must verbally create a community to combat their visual appearance, like Fox does.

Second, the community Fox creates with his epideictic centers around an ever-moving othered body. Fox has admitted in biographies that he purposely didn’t take his medication on the day of the congressional meeting. While at the time his symptoms were mild in comparison to current interviews (see CBS Sunday Morning²⁴), it is clear when his spasms rock his body. His slithering and shakes are visual representations of his winding story. He is using epideictic and demagoguery against politicians—the very people who use it best.

However, ableists ridicule Fox’s use of his disease, decrying it as a performance to garner pity. When Limbaugh accuses Fox of using his disease for the purpose of gaining votes, he is saying that pity is not okay: when *they* use it. Just like with demagoguery, when the able-bodied population represents disabled people as pitiable and pathetic for charity causes or to bolster how righteous they are, it is okay, but when disabled people do it for themselves it is manipulation.

In these situations, I would say Fox has the last laugh. Limbaugh may have launched a smear campaign against Fox, but by doing so he brought national attention to the actor, generating a larger platform which Fox used expertly to talk about Parkinson’s research. As Hawhee suggests, Fox deflected the conversation away from the semantics of manipulation and rhetoric and toward his goals to support research for a cure.

²⁴ <https://youtu.be/PEDVKpbi48s>

The ableist rhetorics I have mentioned so far have a straight-forward or logical progression. Inference moves in a straight line 1, 2 ,3 etc. Demagoguery tries to reduce argumentation to inferences derived from media representations of disability. It shuts down civil conversation and leaves no room for compromise. Disabled people need a rhetoric which will help them deal with the direct attacks of ableism, and to do this, I turn to *métis*.

Personally, I see epideictic or storytelling rhetoric as a useful tool for the disabled person. Cherney states that “the context in which observers place something and the implications of the words used to make it meaningful rhetorically construct the experience,” and that “materials may exist independently of our subjective awareness, but what something is, how it should be, and why it matters cannot exist except as a function of language” (Antirhetoric). All human beings create their reality based on the rhetoric they use to describe the situation. Our understanding of the world is limited to the vocabulary we have, the stories we can construct in our own consciousness. It is a common connection that our only way of understanding the world is through the language we use. As Davis writes, “when one speaks of disability, one always associates it with a story, places it in a narrative” (3). While Davis “by using the concept of the disabled moment...defamiliarize[s] disability, denarrativize[s] it, and in a sense debourgeoisif[ies] it” (4), I would contend that the narrative aspect of disability is where power can be constructed and used to propel disability studies and rhetorical theories about disability.

These narrative sidesteps often require epideictic rhetoric to become meaningful, as generating a community around a cause helps to include more people. Epideictic can, and often does, turn into demagoguery when we add the moral component of right and wrong. In the article “Dangerous Demagogues and Weaponized Communication,” Jennifer Mercieca suggests “that there is a single criterion by which dangerous demagogues can be identified: whether or not they allow themselves to be held accountable for their words and actions” (226). Also, Mercieca argues that “heroic demagogues certainly use rhetoric, but they do not weaponize communication”²⁵ (266). While I don’t fully agree with the term “heroic demagogue,” I do agree that context and the rhetors’ intentions can separate epideictic rhetoric from demagoguery.

Some may think that I am implying a literature-based discussion of disability, but I still wish to ground this in the rhetorical.²⁶ Many believe, as Plato and Socrates did, that narrative leads to manipulation, however, manipulation is sometimes warranted and entrenched in human communication. I am not asking the disabled public to lie to others as a form of escaping the difficulties of life in an ableist world. The stories which we tell ourselves often are easier sells than the ones we tell the world, but in both cases, we are trying to argue or convince our listener—whether that is ourselves or a room full of people—who we are. We are storytelling creatures, but to tell those stories we select rhetorical tools to make them more interesting or garner buy in. Once I have established

²⁵ For a more in-depth explanation of weaponized communication, see the article listed in the works cited.

²⁶ I say this not because I wish to continue the large divide between literature scholars and rhetoricians, as that academic split is still in effect across many college campuses. Instead I wish to suggest that there is a more orative aspect to my thinking; it’s not just about exercises like “draw the best version of yourself” but also speaking and enacting, which are actions often not associated with literature.

what images suggest ableism, I will discuss the logical march of anti-rhetoric and a rhetorical technique which will combat it.

Now, as a disabled person and a scholar, I have the language and understanding to explain that discomfort I felt in the tent at the Relay for Life. I am not against creating a story of survival or remembering those who have passed on; this is part of our species. Stories inspire hope, which is an important tool in battling any illness, disability, or life trial. Without hope I would have struggled even more with my illness, with depression, with anxiety, and with motivation to keep going. Stella Young says it best: “I want to live in a world where we don’t have such low expectations of disabled people that we are congratulated for getting out of bed and remembering our own names in the morning.” What I am against is the system, and the generated images that system has created, which continue through demagoguery--about me, about my family members, and about my friends who struggle.

My disability has made me hyperaware of how my very existence is a rhetorical act. I return to DuBois and the feeling of being a problem: my existence, in the eyes of the able-bodied population, is a signifier of a specific disabled story. My story adds to the system which identifies disability as an other, seeks to entrap that other, and then begins the process of regulating it until it either becomes normal or proves the system correct. As Lennard Davis states in his collection on Disability Studies, “I would like to focus not so much on the construction of disability as the construction of normalcy. I do this because the ‘problem’ is not the person with disabilities; the problem is the way that normalcy is constructed to create the ‘problem’ of the disabled person” (*Disability*

Studies Reader, 3). We are not a problem, we are a rhetorical construction, made from multiple sources and designed within the parameters of societal understanding.

Disabled people's entire existence necessarily involves rhetorical acts. We choose the words that we want to be defined with, we choose the way we embody our disability, and then we project that definition out into the world. When we don't make these decisions, then others develop their own definition and project it upon us. If we have no definition of ourselves, we accept the definitions which others project upon us, and we are stuck with this view of ourselves which in the least feels untrue to our experience and at worst causes emotional damage to our understanding of self.

CHAPTER 2: MÉTIS, TAI CHI, AND SNAKES

Through such an embodied rhetoric, we would write and communicate and persuade; we would rhetorically deliver, affirming the possibilities and the limitations of the body, and in so doing we would refuse rhetorical and philosophical economies that silence, that deny the body or normalize it. Importantly, instead of stigmatizing embodied difference, we might advocate for a range of body images, an awareness of body values and a critique of the powerful discourses of silencing and delimitation that surround embodied rhetoric. We would look for what is beautiful in what we have been told is threatening (about ourselves and about others).

Jay Dolmage

A Side Story on Tai Chi

“I can still see the Tae Kwon Do in you,” Mr. Eli chuckles as I finish the 37 Tai Chi form developed by Chin Man Ching. I give him a frown, but his comment is not unwarranted.

“Where do you see it?” I’m desperate to improve my skills, to master some of what he is teaching me. It’s been harder than I thought.

“In everything. You still finish your movements instead of flowing. It’s more like a dance. Haven’t you ever gone out to the club and just danced before? It should be like that.” He repeats a series of movements, often called grasp the sparrow’s tail, and for the life of me I can’t see the difference between what he is doing and what I am doing. I hesitate to admit that no, I don’t go out to clubs, and I am, unremarkably, a horrible dancer.

“So how do I get better?”

“Practice. And relax a little. There are no belts here, there are no tests. You don’t have to get it right away.” He gives me a reassuring smile. He’s right. The biggest

difference I've found between Tai Chi and Tae Kwon Do is that in Tai Chi there is no rush to learn anything. In Tae Kwon Do we had belts and testing which came every few months, and so I had to learn quickly. I had to be prepared, and it took a lot of work. There were clear goals: my next belt, next tournament, next seminar. With Tai Chi I learn at my own pace, I progress when I am ready. The goal is to let go of logical progressions and predicting the movements of my opponent: instead I feel what she is doing and then respond with grace and ease. I still struggle with this.

My training for so long has involved fighting back, hitting hard, and standing my ground. When I first started sparring in Tae Kwon Do, I was both discouraged and enraged: I didn't want men to beat me, didn't want them to think I was weak, didn't want to allow them the satisfaction of knowing they could overpower me. I was twelve then, and now in my late twenties I feel like that was a stupid mentality I allowed myself to entertain. It came from a fear of looking weak or vulnerable mixed with a belief that strength came from taking a beating and getting back up. Now I don't have the luxuries of acting tough, I must be honest with myself about what I can do and what now constitutes weakness. Patience, Daniel-san, Patience.

What Mr. Eli has taught me, more than any form or move, is that strength does not always win fights. So many times, he has thrown me about the room with a simple shift in weight, a slight tilt of his hips, or a single step. I recognize what he is doing too late to counter, too late to respond, because that is how Tai Chi is meant to be. It is less about striking, less about lashing out before someone else hurts you, and more about

feeling out your opponent. Let the others expend their energy trying to beat each other with heavy blows and wide swings. I wish to master the art of flowing like water.

I am learning how to flow, how to redefine myself not by logically countering my disability, but by being okay with an unclear and unformed definition until I know what I am fighting against. Just like in Tai Chi, I am waiting to feel the attack of my opponent, and then respond. I must be willing to change it up, use multiple methods, and be comfortable in who I am without clear boundaries so that I can seize the moment, or use the objects, ideas, and surroundings to my advantage.

In the *Times* article “How to Win Every Argument,” Eric Barker suggests the first step is redefining argument to conform with its original Greek context. He asserts that today’s arguments are meant to be won instead of being a chance for equal discussion and debate. Similarly, Roberts-Miller suggests that some ways to combat demagoguery are “choos[ing] not to argue with family or friends who are repeating demagogic talking points,” or “support and argue for democratic deliberation” (94). We could take this as not entering the fight at all, or at least avoiding the fight at all costs. Tae Kwon Do left little room for compromise; if a fight started, someone was going home hurt. Tai Chi allows for options: striking, joint manipulation, pressure points, and even escaping. *Métis* and Tai Chi free the rhetor up for multiple forms of motion.

What is *Métis*?

So, what is *métis*? In his study *Disability Rhetoric*, Jay Dolmage states, “it is my hope that this book begins...laying out the rhetorical possibilities of *métis* as intellectual and material movement against normativity” (157). He sees the Greek goddess and

rhetorical technique *mētis* as a move which can or is used by disabled people. He defines *mētis* as “wise and wily intelligence” (156). He then uses the Greek Goddess *Mētis* and the Greek God *Hephaestus*²⁷ to represent the disabled body and a rhetorical ability to “move” in multiple directions. While focusing on *Hephaestus*, Dolmage writes in depth about the crab-like way *Hephaestus* is seen scuttling about when he walks. This scuttling motion, moving sideways to go forward, is key to Dolmage’s interpretation of how *mētis* functions.

Hawhee suggests that *mētis* is more than just a calculated rhetorical strategy, that it involves timing and comfort in uncomfortable or chaotic situations. She also states that “*mētis* is not an explicit set of precepts but rather a tacit style of movement running through most kinds of action, including thought” (47) and that “*mētis* thus becomes a mingling of quick, responsive impulses” (48). This cunning movement can be affected by disabled and able-bodied people alike, but specifically disability has trained the disabled person to be successful in these kinds of moves. An example of this cunning “movement” can be seen in the examination of Michael J. Fox provided earlier (45). Where ableist rhetoric creates a logical progression, a clear forward climb which can be traversed only by the healthy, Dolmage and Hawhee suggest that the disabled body is better adapted to the curving sideways movement of *mētis* because disabled people have always moved in

²⁷ *Hephaestus* was the Greek god of metal working, a master craftsman. There are two conflicting stories about how he became disabled, but common among all myths is that his legs were broken and twisted at odd angles. Usually *Hephaestus* is portrayed in his chariot, a wheelchair like contraption he created himself, but sometimes he is described scuttling along like a crab.

such a way. While *métis* is not exclusively reserved for disabled people, it does help in combatting ableist rhetoric.

To establish what is considered forward and what is sideways in rhetorical thinking, it is important to look back at ableist rhetoric and recognize its forward or linear nature. Ableism, using demagoguery, the prosperity gospel, anti-rhetoric and media representations, generates a strict progression of “if disabled, then bad.” These stereotypes present false impressions for able-bodied people and encourage negative self-talk among those with disabilities. As there are so many ways to define and describe harmful disability stereotypes, for the purposes of this dissertation, and because of their harmful nature as an expected norm, enacting these stereotypes without rhetorical purpose will be considered rhetorically moving forward or backward in a straight line, the line that Bragg suggests is counter to *métis*. Dolmage writes: “[M]y argument is that disability has myriad meanings, many of them positive and generative. *Mētis*, I will show, is the craft of forging something practical out of these possibilities, practicing an embodied rhetoric, changing the world as we move through it” (149). Instead of disrupting common convention, those with disabilities who enact these stereotypes are often doing so to fit into expectations and to relieve some of the social pressures which come with living in an able-bodied world. Those who do enact stereotypes with a purpose are enacting *métis*, are moving sideways, and are in control of their rhetorical choices.²⁸ I

²⁸ Dolmage also discusses fate, and the way it plays into *métis*. In other words, *métis* is hard to describe because “as Litchie and Statler suggest, the only way to ‘learn’ *métis* is ‘through a willingness to be open to unexpected ideas and a sensitivity for unseen possibilities...[M]etis thus assumes a partial abandonment of control” (ibid., 5) (162).

argue that using these stereotypes for a purpose, such as to call attention to their damaging nature, is moving sideways and subverting the narrative.

Jay Dolmage, in “*Métis, Mêtis, Mestiza, Medusa: Rhetorical Bodies across Rhetorical Traditions*,” combines the logical rhetoric of ancient Greece with embodied and storytelling rhetoric to establish a rhetoric of disability which moves sideways as well as forward. This article establishes Dolmage’s focus of disability rhetoric as a form of *métis*. Dolmage suggests that *métis* is a sideways rhetoric, an important tool for disabled people. He references Debra Hawhee, writing:

But Hawhee perhaps goes furthest in defining *mêtis* when she writes that according to this concept, “thought does not just happen within the body, it happens *as* the body” (58). Hawhee’s explanation of cunning intelligence offers important clarification about the situational nature of *mêtis* as an intelligence that emerges as unpredictable yet responsive action. (6)

Métis is the act of deftly reacting to the situation at hand. It is not just about knowing what to do but doing it immediately. Dolmage agrees with Hawhee that *métis* has a physical manifestation, that *métis* is as much a movement as it is a rhetorical technique. In *Bodily Arts: Rhetoric and Athletics in Ancient Greece*, Debra Hawhee further discusses *métis*:

Mêtis is thus the mode of negotiating agonistic forces, the ability to cunningly and effectively maneuver a cutting instrument, a ship, a chariot, a body, on the spot, in the heat of the moment. The force of *mêtis* distinguishes action that would

otherwise be predictable: charioteer against charioteer, woodcutter who usually relies on bodily strength. (47)

Métis is obviously difficult to define, because rhetorically it relies more on skill. It must be taught, cultivated, and practiced being perfected. I have just begun the work of enacting métis, which is why many of the personal narratives in this dissertation are not clear or strong examples, but I aim to explain my missteps.

As I work to define what métis is, I wish to diverge slightly from Dolmage's original interpretation of the word. One difficulty with Dolmage's discussion of métis is that the "contradiction or doubleness at the heart of métis, fittingly, disallows strict schematizations of métis. It is impossible to argue that any individual can fully control or master métis, or ever fully evade the control and mastery of others" (162). Here Dolmage is asserting that métis cannot be fully defined, understood, or taught in ways that those who do not use metis can understand. While Dolmage's assertion that métis is impossible fully to define may be correct, what he does argue is

that while history has written people with disabilities as losers and weak, carefully working with these constructions might be a way to (1) recognize the oblique, surprising, lateral forms of knowledge these positions have always allowed; (2) recognize the cunning threat that these alternative knowledges have always posed, and thus understand that nonnormative bodies and minds have been constructed as less than *because of* their threatening power; and (3) avoid the trap of replacing one type of normate history with a 'corrected' one just as straight as the old one [emphasis in original]. (159-160)

The abnormal/abject/deviant has always been a threat to society as explored by multiple scholars.²⁹ Here Dolmage asserts why: because being disabled necessitates a “lateral form of knowledge” which empowers the disabled person. Basically, Dolmage is creating the basis of a definition for what *métis* does; as a lateral form or alternative knowledge, *métis* empowers disabled rhetors with a new form of rhetorical movement, one that is often feared by able-bodied or ableist rhetors. Where the able body, or the able rhetor, has a clear and easy path forward when arguing a point, disability—not only physical—limits a rhetor from moving which also encourages practicing sideways rhetoric, a slithering about to move forward.

As readers dive further into my argument, they may ask how my interpretation of *métis* differs from the prosperity gospel. It is easy to construe my meaning into a boiled down idea that I can speak away my MS. In response to this, I make two distinctions between *métis* and religious right thinking, or even between religious right thinking and counterstory. First, there is a difference in the subject matter of *métis*/counterstory and the prosperity gospel. In the prosperity gospel, Christians seek to make changes to the physical world and their situation, evoking the power of God within them to dispel illness, gain prosperity, and improve their overall material condition. In contrast, I interpret *métis*/counterstory as dealing with language, as changing how we interpret and use words or definitions or as telling the stories of embodied moments, of accepting the world for what it is and seeking to convey the experience. In other words, developing *métis* is not meant to change the physical world so much as generating a means for

²⁹ See Julia Kristeva, Sigmund Freud, Michel Foucault, among others.

successfully negotiating rhetorical terrain. This change may have little effect on the material world, though a change in language could lead to better happiness in the individual; *métis* will not manifest desire. Telling a counterstory will not make the situation disappear or improve, it can only communicate the reality of the situation separate from the embellishments of different ableist influences. Second, there is an intended outcome for the prosperity gospel that negative forces will be completely removed. The prayer, the spoken affirmation is meant to speak into reality an abundance of money, a physical attraction, or cures for illness. With *métis*, the intention is to create a form of connection and communication. Telling a counterstory is meant to enlighten readers, not to speak away the issue. Mentally, by rejecting ableist rhetoric, the *métis* user then adjusts course and can create a new interpretation of themselves. The interpretation these *métis* users create about themselves is a counterstory, a counter to the ableist belief system of what disabled people are, do, or need.

Métis As Movement

The ability to respond is what is meant by responsibility, yet our cultures take away our ability to act—shackle us in the name of protection. Blocked, immobilized, we can't move forward, can't move backwards. That writhing serpent movement, the very movement of life, swifter than lightning, frozen.

Gloria Anzaldúa

When talking about *métis*, Lois Bragg says that “in contrast to linear progress of rational thought, [it] never goes forward in a straight line but is always weaving from side to side and looping back on itself” (32). This looping and weaving nature of *métis* reminds me less of the crab-like crawl that Dolmage asserts and more of the snake. While Hephaestus and *Métis* are signified by crabs, beings that scuttle along in a sideways

motion, this is not far from the undulating slither of a snake. Both animals move sideways to move forward. Dolmage makes his connections more for the historical and mythological link they provide, but he does suggest that other scholars should expand and reinterpret his theory for the sake of disability studies as a discipline. He therefore allows for new understandings of *métis* and its motion in rhetoric.

While I embrace Dolmage's vision for how *métis* "moves," and his intense research into the history of *métis*, I feel that interpretations of the term expand beyond just the crab and move sideways. As the Bragg quote suggests, *métis* has more motion than just side-to-side, similar to Hawhee's notion that *métis* requires craftsman-like precision. For this reason, I felt it necessary to rethink how *métis* can be metaphorized through snakes, Tai Chi, and trickster figures.

Slithering is a smoother form of sideways motion. Dolmage focuses heavily on the crab, mostly because of the Greek roots of *Métis* and Hephaestus, but the crab can only move sideways, and has only one form of motion. Meanwhile, the snake has four different forms of motion, from undulation to sidewinding, each which propels the snake in any direction, and allows for quick changes based on environment. This type of varied motion is more desirable when considering rhetoric and equally in line with *métis*: a wily intelligence requires a fast on your feet approach to speaking, observing surroundings, and making decisions about how to approach the next step. I would also contend that Dolmage's view of *métis* suggests more than a simple sidestep against harmful rhetorical concepts of disability; there should also be some attempt at progression when dealing with stereotypes.

A snake's adaptive method of locomotion relates back to *métis* and an adaptive form of rhetoric. Dolmage asserts that *métis* should be flexible, and that a rhetorician must be ever ready to change directions while speaking to best suit the audience and needs of the situation. Having such a varied form of motion—or perhaps more tools in one's toolbelt to use in rhetoric—is vital to mastering rhetoric. I see this in my own experiences: while at the doctor's office, I must be attentive to what the doctor is saying, and clear about what I am feeling. I may need multiple tools, like metaphor or simile, to convey the problems I'm having. Similarly, I must be attentive and direct when dealing with insurance companies bent on proving me as unqualified for their program. I must adapt my understanding of my disability to fit with the information I have been given. I am still learning when it is important to break the rules.

I would liken *métis* and its type of movement to Tai Chi, the method of fighting which is styled after water. In Tai Chi, it is common to step off the center line, to move off to the side as well as forward, so that one ends up on the side of the attacker without taking the brunt of the attack. Ideally, a well-trained Tai Chi student will slip past the opponent and open new opportunities to strike in exposed areas. This contrasts with my years of Tae Kwon Do, an equally formidable style but one where direct contact and meeting force with force is often more of an emphasis. Where the practitioner of Tai Chi will slither and slip around an opponent, expending the least amount of energy and force possible to create a maximum effect, the Tae Kwon Do expert often asserts an equal amount of force head on with the attacker to stop damage. Similarly, the snake decides on a form of motion which fits the situation: if it does not need to move quickly, and it has enough space, it will undulate across surfaces much like we see in wilderness

documentaries. If a snake needs to move faster, it may use Concertina¹ or Rectilinear² locomotion to progress. A snake, a Tai Chi practitioner, and *métis* all pick their new direction based on what is needed.

Some may struggle to accept this serpent-inspired rhetoric because of the many popular culture examples of snakes as trickster symbols, and a deep-seated discomfort with tricksters. Kristin Pomykala writes, “admittedly, serpentine rhetoric³ is bound to sound ludicrous or dangerous to a contemporary public. The word ‘rhetoric’ already rings with untrustworthiness in popular American usage. The first example of persuasion by a serpent’s speech to come to many minds, ... will be the one in the Garden of Eden that led to the fall of man” (265). Based on the mythology which has portrayed snakes as deceivers and dangerous, the thought of a serpentine rhetoric causes anxiety in modern readers: not only in those who would argue against it, but those who would use it as well.

It may not be obvious, but what I am most afraid of is pity. In the case of my cane, believing that it makes me pitiable means agreeing with the ableist rhetoric that disabled people deserve pity. Until I restructure my way of thinking, I can’t properly

¹ “Concertina locomotion involves alternately pulling up the body into bends and then straightening out the body forward from the bends. The front part of the body then comes to rest on the surface and the back part of the body is pulled up into bends again, and so forth. The bends may push laterally against the sides of a tunnel or vertically against the ground to keep the body from slipping. Thus, static friction is critical to concertina locomotion. Concertina locomotion is used in crawling through tunnels or narrow passages and in climbing. In concertina locomotion, blocks of muscles are activated simultaneously, and unilaterally, in regions of bending and of static contact with the sides of a tunnel” (Brad Moon, 2001).

² “Rectilinear locomotion is movement in a straight line. It is used mainly by large snakes such as large vipers, boas, and pythons. In rectilinear locomotion, the belly scales are alternately lifted slightly from the ground and pulled forward, and then pulled downward and backward. But because the scales “stick” against the ground, the body is pulled forward over them. Once the body has moved far enough forward to stretch the scales, the cycle repeats. This cycle occurs simultaneously at several points along the body. Static friction is the dominant type of friction involved in rectilinear locomotion” (Brad Moon, 2001).

³ In this quote, Pomykala references serpentine rhetoric, but her concept of it is different from my own. She does not refer anywhere in her article to *métis*. Her ideas relate back to Anzaldúa and Latinx/LGBTQ+ rhetorics. As I said before, we can borrow from other minority groups ways of dealing with injustice.

perform *métis*. Instead, I will continue to enact ableist rhetoric, to believe that I am not enough. I see ableism like a production line, an endless conveyor belt of logical progression. It can also be related back to my Tae Kwon Do experiences, where meeting force with force is the main option. To move with *métis*, I must be aware of the attack—the stereotype—and then I must create a new narrative for myself.

Tricksters, Snakes, and Disability

So far, I have used Tai Chi and snakes to exemplify rhetoric, but I wish also to make a connection between tricksters and disability rhetoric. When discussing both the origins and description of *métis* in his article, Dolmage speaks of *Métis* and Hephaestus as tricksters and when he evaluates Cixous he translates Medusa the same way. Later, in *Disability Rhetoric*, Dolmage states:

Further, ‘the features commonly ascribed to the trickster—contradictoriness, deceptiveness, trickery—are the features of the language’ of myth itself. The disabled body in myth then, through the figure of the cunning trickster, like Hephaestus, reveals the ‘difference between, and the undecidability of, discourse and story, referential and rhetorical values, signifier and signified, a conventional mind and one that is open’ (Doueih 1984, 308). (161)

My ultimate understanding of Dolmage’s work is that disability has a rhetoric which slithers; it moves side to side, ending in a straight line, but getting there through trickster means. Dolmage makes the argument that:

métis is a powerful way for us all to move. *Métis* is a way to think and a way to think about thinking. Importantly, *métis* values bodily difference as generative of

meaning, as in the example of Hephaestus. Looking at the image of Hephaestus in his chariot, we might feel some ambivalence—he is a disabled god, a ‘crippled’ craftsman, and we might assume that these things are mutually exclusive. One could suggest that he overcame his disability through hard work. Yet both his bodily difference and his craftsmanship are evidence of the form of intelligence that Hephaestus was said to symbolize: *métis*. In this way, his disability *is* his ability. (166)

The same way that the snake can move quickly over the ground and strike hard, *métis* is about taking a disability and turning it into an ability. Disabled people have learned how to adapt physically to their impairments—even when they are mental—and the snake has learned to move despite itself. The snake has no legs, but it has overcome this limitation and made its unique anatomy an asset.

Dolmage focuses exclusively on Hephaestus and *Métis*, but he does briefly mention other trickster gods, disabled gods, and mythological references to characters to whom he ascribes *métis*. While he does not examine each one closely, he is not against extending the theory of *métis* beyond just Greek myth. These mythological beings are of course tropes or constructions part of a larger framework of storytelling and meaning making which tries to extend human understanding (Joseph Campbell). These same tropes can be seen in popular culture today, still called tricksters and still performing the function of moving through the world in unique sideways ways.

In volume one of the comic *Loki: Agent of Asgard*, the trickster asserts that “magic is taking a thought and making it *real*. Taking a *lie* and making it the *truth*.”

Telling a *story* to the universe so utterly, cosmically *perfect* that for a single, shining moment...the world believes a man can *fly*” [emphasis in original] (“Trust Me,” 8). What Loki is saying is that when one crafts a narrative, one has the power to reshape one’s existence. Gloria Anzaldúa does this in *Borderlands/La Frontera* when she crafts her own space, her identity as a lesbian Chicana who has one foot in the white world, one in the Mexican, and one in the Native American. She tells stories to identify herself, and we believe them. The trickster has a special place in rhetoric as the *métis* user. The same descriptors which Dolmage uses for describing Hephaestus, and subsequently myth—contradictoriness, deceptiveness, trickery (161)—are terms often ascribed to trickster figures. Specifically, for my purposes, a few pertain to my favorite trickster Loki from the Marvel Universe.

Now some may have a problem with associating tricksters with the disabled, but I believe there is a common space where often disabled people are considered tricksters. For instance, there is a constant need from able-bodied people to catch disabled people in the act of being able-bodied, whether that is pointing out those with disabled parking permits who are not using mobility devices, or undermining anxiety and depression by joking about safe spaces. Even when disabled persons are honest and forthcoming, they often face an able-bodied world which is trying to catch them in the act, so to speak. Just like the trickster who is assumed to always be lying, the disabled person is assumed to always be able-bodied. This relates back to the Roberts-Miller passage about propositional sentences, and how rhetoric is considered negatively, adding extra to a sentence. However, in her book, Roberts-Miller makes a strong argument that propositional phrases can be wrong and adding rhetoric can sometimes be helpful. In the

same way, I wish to argue that trickster figures are not all villains or evildoers, but instead are well-trained and adapt rhetoricians, those who have learned to perform *métis*.

For me, tricksters inhabit and make use of the grey areas between the dichotomous world that demagogues often construct. They can easily do something selfish which benefits everyone, or something altruistic which hurts thousands. A well-developed hero could do the same thing, but heroes are often based off ideals which are hard to live up to, working within the binaries of good and bad which can support ableism.⁴

This also reminds me of discussions around Lord Byron's *Cain* and John Milton's *Paradise Lost*. In both texts, the trickster, Eastern religion's most prominent trickster the Devil or Lucifer, is the most compelling character. In *Cain* Lucifer makes a strong case against his involvement in the fall of man. In *Paradise Lost*, despite his best efforts to glorify God and condemn the Devil, Milton's portrayal of the Satan is seen as a tragic hero instead of a villain. These are prominent examples of trickster figures inhabiting a grey area where dichotomous thinking gets disrupted (I could also name *Grendel*, *Wuthering Heights*, *Of Mice and Men*, and *The Grinch Who Stole Christmas*—especially the movie adaptation—as other examples). As Dolmage says earlier (see pages 22-23) the strength of *metis*, of tricksters, of the disabled is the alternative knowledges they use which are a “cunning threat” to more lateral forms of speaking.

⁴ For instance, Superman is not only unstoppable, but he also has a moral code which enhances his superhuman appeal. While we aspire to be like Superman, we often cannot live up to this ideal.

A Side Story about Loki

I know that many people my age would hate to admit the level of their nerdy obsessions, but for a moment I want to indulge that side of myself.

The week after my diagnosis of MS, I sent an e-mail out to all my professors, telling them what had happened and that I was hoping to return to classes soon. All but one responded with words of encouragement and methods of adapting the course. The one who did not respond positively basically suggested that I drop her course because I had missed too much of the class already and there was no way to recover. Since I was only enrolled in twelve credit hours and would lose financial aid if I dropped below that, I had to take a medical leave from school for the fall. It was probably for the best, as I had to relearn how to walk again over that span of time, and large chunks of that semester are still missing from my brain. I would have struggled too much if I had returned to classes, so it was a blessing to have that time for myself, but I was not—and still am not—one who enjoys being idle.

Needless to say, within a week of withdrawing from school I found myself bored beyond all belief. It was at this time that some of my friends introduced me to online role-playing. Not the most scholarly of pursuits I'll admit, but in it I found something to do and connections to the outside world while not having to expend energy getting dressed, traveling to a space, interacting with people, and then leaving early from exhaustion. As everyone always says, the internet gave me the world at my fingertips. I started off with some personally made characters, but in such an online community originality is often at best undervalued and at worst shunned. There are pitfalls to creating characters too much

like yourself, too much like characters who already exist, or characters too difficult to work with.

So, I switched to playing a character already widely known—Loki from the Marvel cinematic franchise. What drew me to this character immediately was that Loki embodied something different than many of the other villains I had learned to like. Usually I am interested in villains who have complicated motivations, intelligence, and smooth talking. I enjoy them for their complex natures and the character studies they offer. But what drew me to Loki was an emotion I was locked in battle with during my recovery: rage. I think immediately of the scene in *The Avengers* where he is talking with Natasha (Black Widow) about Clint (Hawkeye), threatening the man's life so he can inspire fear in her. It was a moment of pure anger, and no one questioned why he was doing it.

I found the same thing online: I could act out my anger, be frustrated and reproachable, and often that made more people interested in roleplaying with me. I wasn't really acting out Loki's anger: I wasn't a demigod stripped of his title and birthright, but I was angry. I was angry that I had gotten this disease, that my life had changed, that one instructor had put my education on hold, that I no longer had full control of my body. I was angry with people who would impose on me the same tired paradigm of the disabled person who overcomes her disability. I didn't want to be a hero, I wanted to be angry and for that to be okay. Online I found a space where that was possible.

I must contextualize this discussion by asserting that I a) no longer role-play and b) no longer feel so angry about my disease. When I moved to Tennessee to pursue my PhD, I realized that holding onto that anger wasn't getting me anywhere; in fact, it was contributing to panic attacks and difficulty living on my own. I had to change my outlook, had to let go of old habits and coping mechanisms. Still, I must respect that this is how I coped with my disease and the emotions that come with it. I have found a different way of dealing with my emotions, and I still like Loki as a well-developed and interesting character, but I have mostly buried the Loki I used for so many years to release all the anger inside of me. He never grew and developed, and neither did I. It was unfair to the character to hold on to an interpretation which did not allow for development and growth, and it was disabling to hold on to that much anger for no reason.

Why do I bring this up? Well, because this is another aspect of *métis*. Rhetoric is often associated with logic: logical thinking, logical emotions, and logical ethics. We are meant to leave our emotions at the door, because they cloud our judgment from what is capital R Right, but this isn't the entirety of human experience. This is the Rhetoric of Plato, Aristotle, and other logical thinkers who construct neatly packed proofs with clear propositional statements and who devote their lives to finding capital T "Truth." What Loki gave me was a space to act out my emotions so that I could later examine them. He also gave me space to be comfortable with not being okay. Loki, for me, was not a logical character and that was fine by me. He was instead ever ready and attentive, thinking fast on his feet, demonstrating wily intelligence even if I was roleplaying in an asynchronous space. So now, when I write this, I can see why Dolmage makes connections between

métis and tricksters: not because they are intentionally deceptive, but because they extend rhetoric practice beyond the logical and into the realm of the human.

What Does Métis Look Like?

So, what does métis or serpentine rhetoric look like in real life? Well, there are multiple variations of this. For me, the best way to enact this is to take back the power of my own story. I see all human interaction as telling stories to one another, even those which do not involve words. The clothes we wear, the items we carry, the way we stand, and the words we say all work together to project the story of who we want others to see us as.⁵ Granted, some objects cannot be avoided. When I am in pain or feeling off-balance, my cane is a necessary part of my body and identity. However, my feelings about my cane, the type of cane I carry with me, and the things I say about it all fit into the story I tell the world, and even more importantly, the story I tell myself.⁶ By taking control of this story, I can control what people see to some extent. In the case of my cane, it is often difficult for me to take it out in public. I lose some of my power because instead of telling the story to myself that this is a tool, that it enhances my persona and provides strength, I often think it causes people to look at me and question what exactly is wrong with me. I lose control of my story by trying to guess what other people think, instead of confidently enacting the story I want them to see. Using métis could require

⁵ This is in line with scholar Robert Danisch, who while writing about Foucault says, “I assume that epideictic rhetoric is defined by: 1) aesthetic practices of display that uncover what lies hidden, 2) a focus on outlining, on describing, and on making present the common values of audiences, and 3) mechanisms for generating cohesion in a community” (293).

⁶ It is important to note the current way I see my canes: I am still struggling against this feeling that they bring unwanted attention to me and clearly mark me as disabled. Some of this comes from the multitude of people who ask, “What happened?” every time I bring one out. I see this battle less as a social one—arguing against how people view canes—and more as a personal one—disrupting my own view of what it means to need an aid to perform daily tasks, or even what is a “daily task” and how that looks.

that I buy a custom cane⁷ I am proud of; one I want to show off to others and feel better about. It also entails constructing a mythos: I am one of many strong women who walk with an aid, a staff of great power which helps me move through the world. Once I am confident of my story, and that I am projecting it into the world, I can focus on any contradictions or attacks which are voiced—like those who may say that I don't look disabled—instead of spending my time worrying about how everyone perceives me.

Well known theorists like Jacques Derrida use the concept of deconstruction to suggest our understanding of reality springs from the meaning we attribute to words. His belief that social structures are constructed of the words and meanings we ascribe to them is like my own. In other words, I am not suggesting that I can speak away my MS, but that I can choose the words I use to define my MS or even the way I define it. In this way I take control of my disease in my own mind because I no longer ascribe to the societal notion that I am less-than with a disability. I create the counterstory which I chose to believe and follow. I may not have the power to change the course of my disease, but I can take the venom out of my words and be “kinder to myself.” I have control of the definitions which play out in my mind based off what I will and will not accept about myself. Creating a counterstory around my disease does take constant reflection, as I have to continually examine my belief systems and their origins, however, *métis*, or

⁷ I do have one such cane currently, an Amish crafted one with multiple colored wood, twisted around the shaft at the top, and polished smooth with a great wood varnish. I also have the first cane I bought long before my diagnosis—a black shaft with a tarnished gold dragon-head handle—but that one has a blade in it, and therefore cannot be taken into many locations. I suppose it says something about me that a dragon-head cane is the one which supported me through my disease and continues to be my personal favorite: as many ancient cultures would use the terms dragon and serpent interchangeably.

sidestepping ableist rhetorics create a space for me to do this work and then embody my decisions in the world.

A Conversation in the Margins

During this dissertation, my director and I had a conversation derived in the comments feature on Word which I feel is necessary to include. It has no clear place in this dissertation, as it is a subset discussion of the one currently being discussed, but I felt like my response to his words was vital to understanding my theories. For this reason, I am including it here in the hopes that it clarifies what I am saying.

The comment is connected to my sentence “I have control of the definitions which play out in my mind based off what I will and will not accept about myself.”

Allen Hibbard (AH): Hmm. Perhaps to an extent.

Me: What do you mean? It is my mind. I can change a definition based on my own thinking. Its inherent nature may not be fully comprehensible, and I may be influenced to use a definition by society and outside forces, but once I understand this, I can decide to reject the societal definition of a term. What do you want me to do with this?

AH: Here I meant to draw your attention to the statement you make. I think it is an illusion to think that one has total control over one’s ideas—and definitions—that play out in one’s mind. So, isn’t it a matter of DEGREES? I DO think we can gain consciousness of our thinking process and, through that process, exercise a greater DEGREE of control. That’s all I’m suggesting. What you do with the statement is up to you. You should at least be aware that many readers may find the statement a bit naïve.

Me: Ultimately, I understand what you are saying. I tend to read a lot of books on self-mastery (see Don Jose Ruiz) and I believe that it is possible but a difficult road to travel. I may never fully reach that point because I live in society and therefore am subject to its values. That being said, even some degree of control is a step in the right direction and a level of control not previously held, so I feel it necessary that I see this as a definite.

I hope that it is clear I do understand we as humans do not have complete control of our minds and identities because of the multiple influences around us. We are social creatures, meaning we willingly accept some influences to become a part of society. While making an assertion in this case, I make a conditional assertion, one that I felt no need to quantify, however I respect that such a decision is confusing to readers. I have control over accepting or rejecting any definitions about myself which I knowingly examine through self-reflection. Those I do not recognize will continue to influence me until I identify them as originating from ableism and society in general.

CHAPTER 3: THE HISTORY OF ABLEISM AND DISABILITY IN AMERICA

History

Before moving forward in time, for a moment I wish to take a step back. It is a misconception that disability, or abnormality, and rhetoric have always been considered harshly in history. As the scholars referenced in this section have shown, disability has also gone through a transformation, one starting during the Industrial Revolution, which has heavily influenced how disabled people are treated today. Once again, the reasons for this complicated transition are a twisted web of multiple influences. Much of the historical research will come from Lennard Davis, a renowned disability scholar, however I will be adding in extra connections throughout to deepen understanding of how these historical events influence current understandings of the disabled.

In the same way that definitions of rhetoric have had a troubled and complicated history, conceptions of and attitudes toward disability also have evolved over the years. When wielded by the sophists, rhetoric has been seen as “sneaky” or “not noble,” however in the hands of Plato, Aristotle, and Socrates rhetoric is a “noble pursuit of knowledge and philosophy.” Similarly, current views of disability are often negative unless they involve some act of heroism or an overcoming of the disability. In this section, I plan to explore a couple of important historical time periods often discussed in association with disability and disabled representation. My hope is to reveal a paradigm shift starting in the late 19th century where disability became a topic of conversation and representation shifted to predominantly negative portrayals. This has not always been the case, but this shift in perspective greatly influences modern interpretations of disability.

Discussions about the body have been in vogue since the dawn of time. It is no surprise that if the great minds of Greece had many things to say about everything else in the known world, they would have much to say about what a body should be able to do and the disconnect between it and the mind.¹ For instance, the goal of contemporary scholar M. Lynn Rose in her chapter “Deaf and Dumb in Ancient Greece” is to examine surviving interpretations of deafness in Greek literature and to reflect on how disability was viewed in the Greco/Roman world. With a lack of modern understandings of anatomy and physiology, the Greeks often associated deafness, muteness, and cognitive impairments all together in the same category of “deafness.” For this reason, while Rose tries to focus on the life of deaf individuals in Greece, she inevitably is also speaking about other illnesses and impairments as well. One text she examines is the story of Croesus and his deaf child.² In the last seconds before his father’s death, the child regains his ability to speak and saves his father’s life. Rose states that an “assumption seen in Herodotus’ tale is that muteness indicated diminished worth. Croesus’ deaf son was incapacitated by his condition (Herodotus, 1.34), and it could not be clearer that the sole reason for the boy’s uselessness was his deaf-muteness alone; in all other aspects, he was acceptable” (18).

¹ While examining lines from Plato’s *Gorgias*, Dolmage says, “This suggestion is that the philosopher will enable humanity, the rhetorician will disable. Indeed, we are led to believe that the flesh is capable of only deception” (Dolmage, 87). This means that there has always been a division between able-bodied and disabled, and this divide can be associated with rhetoric. Dolmage, Rose, and Hawhee agree that disability was not a death sentence in ancient times, but that even then disability and rhetoric were viewed with caution.

² Rose explains that Croesus had two sons, Atys, who dies young, and an unnamed deaf son. Croesus has no use for his deaf child. Croesus tries to fight the Persians but is captured and sentenced to execution. It is in the final moments of his father’s life that the unnamed son speaks on his father’s behalf and saves his life.

Rose uses this example to illustrate the tensions around disabled people in ancient Greece, but she also suggests some underlying misinterpretations. When talking about a Hippocratic text she says that “throughout the Hippocratic corpus, deafness is seen more as a valuable diagnostic tool than as a physical infirmity in itself” (19). This means that deafness was not a specific ailment but a symptom of another disease which could be cured, marking a sliver of hope for deaf people that something could improve their lives. Also, as deafness is associated with speech and communication in Greek culture, “the ancient literature is full of references to people who lisped, stuttered, stammered, or mumbled. Their speech was ridiculed (Plutarch, *Demosthenes* 4.4) or admired (Plutarch, *Alcibiades* 1.4), but there is nothing to indicate the degree of derision seen in the story of Croesus’ son” (20). Rose reflects on important individuals, like Demosthenes, who were revered, supposedly without regard for their disability, which challenges modern interpretations that all disabled children were killed at birth or discarded by society. Rose interprets this as a sign that Greeks were less concerned with the fact that a person was impaired and more concerned with how this impairment affected their ability to speak and work. So long as they were able to overcome their disability to an extent and communicate, they were more respected than those without the tools to do so. Rose ends her chapter by stating: “While consequences of deafness are synonymous with exile or death in literature, it is important to remember that more people in the Greek world were interested in farming than rhetoric. While intelligibility in political and intellectual areas may have been a hardship, the hardship is magnified out of proportion in the surviving material” (22). She recognizes the fact that while speech was important in politics, it was not important enough in everyday life for deaf or mute people to be killed or outcast.

Jay Dolmage also makes similar claims to Rose's about the state of the disabled body in Greece. He writes, "we have chosen to focus on classical denials of the body, and we have erected a rhetorical tradition that also valorizes the split between the mental and the physical" (70). Dolmage talks about the multiple shrines and temples dedicated to Hephaestus. "Hephaestus was the famed inventor, trickster, craftsperson, the trap builder and machine creator of Greek myth," he writes. "His body was celebrated, not despite his disability, but because of his embodied intelligence" (151). This examination of Greek culture suggests that despite modern misconceptions, disability was not viewed as negatively as is the case now. There were ways for people who were disabled to contribute to society, and not all disabled people were put to death.

Rose and Dolmage both imply that Greco-Roman society once held some respect for the disabled body, and that there are common misconceptions about how disabled people were treated in Rome and Greece. These misconceptions stem from modern interpretations of mythology, interpretations influenced by a common source. Rose and Dolmage argue that our misconceptions come from reading mythology through a modern lens, one where disability is thought of as imperfection or flaw. This begs the question: when did disability become widely seen in such a negative light, if it has not always been that way?

The answer is that a massive change occurred around the time of the Industrial Revolution. Davis, in "Constructing Normalcy: The Bell Curve, the Novel, and the Invention of the Disabled Body in the Nineteenth Century," suggests there is a long period before the 19th century where understandings about disability remained the same.

Ultimately, in the dark ages there is little evidence that disabled people were killed off in droves or experimented on any differently than any other ailment. There is a long stretch of history where if a person couldn't walk, he could sit and whittle, if she couldn't speak she could still guide a horse, there was no reason that a person couldn't be a part of society until the 19th century. A sudden change came in the ways that the body was understood and how scientific advancements reshaped our understanding of disability. With this came a new rhetoric about disability, a rhetoric which has continued to the present day. Lennard Davis clearly articulates the attitude towards disabled people in the 19th century. He first establishes how in 1840 the term normal shifted from a word used to mean perpendicular, to its current definition, suggesting a standard. He focuses on several influences which help to construct our modern image of what "normal" is, and by association what is considered abnormal. Understanding how normality was constructed gives us insight into what is considered abnormal and how abnormality is viewed in modern society.

Some major focuses Davis analyzes are the development of Eugenics as a method and Marxism. Karl Marx focused on economic progression in the new age. His theories are based upon class conflicts between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, division between wealth and poverty which was markedly different than the feudal tradition. During Feudalism, rulers took care of the peasant classes because of an oath to protect

and a need for labor.³ In the newly established capitalist society, the bourgeoisie control the means of production and are not beholden to the same moral codes.⁴ Marx writes

[The bourgeoisie] has pitilessly torn asunder the motley feudal ties that bound man to his ‘natural superiors,’ and has left remaining no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, that callous ‘cash payment.’ It has drowned the most heavenly ecstasies of religious fervour, of chivalrous enthusiasm, of philistine sentimentalism, in the icy water of egotistical calculation. *The Communist Manifesto*, 659

In other words, the bourgeoisie see no reason to protect the commodity, which is the worker; in fact, they often separate themselves from the proletariat as much as possible. This separation and reduction are self-perpetuating; by not being in close association with the workers, factory owners can continue seeing workers as commodities, and by seeing workers as commodities, owners have less reason to interact with workers. By commodifying workers, the bourgeoisie stop seeing people as human beings.

One key feature of Marx’s works, such as *Capital*, is the construct of what a bourgeoisie would see as a “perfect” worker: someone healthy enough to work long hours without rest, but docile enough to resist revolution against the ruling class.⁵ Marx’s

³ This is largely an oversimplification of Marxist theory, of which there is not enough space to explain here. Most important to this dissertation is that the bourgeoisie stopped caring about the health of the people out of a sense of community and mutual need, and instead started seeing people as the objects they created.

⁴ Along with Friedrich Engels, Marx was able to assess capitalism perceptively, even if time has proven that capitalism does not always give way to socialism, as he predicted.

⁵ Marx and Engels theorized that if the bourgeoisie pushed workers too hard under unfair conditions, the proletariat would rise and revolt. While Marx and Engels saw this as a standard progression of things, revolts and strikes are far less common in relation to the expansive and abusive capitalist structures which continue to function in modern society.

theories on labor suggest a standard bourgeois theory of how the working class should be: workers should be treated like machines, used until just before the point of breaking and then retired. Davis also talks about Engels's work *The Condition of the Working Class in England*. In this book Engels makes clear connections between disability and the work performed by the English working class. Davis summarizes that "if Engels's work gives us an insight into the way the body was perceived in the nineteenth-century, it becomes clear that industrialization was seen as a palpable force in quite literally reshaping the bodies of the body politic" (88).⁶ While Marx and Engels are not suggesting this shift to industrialized mode of interpreting the body should be the norm, it seems that the industrial age thrived on the "standard" working man. During this time, we see the development of a standard which gets marketed to the public as what "normal" is. Davis states in *Enforcing Normalcy* that "in effect, the imperatives of Industrialism and Capitalism redefined the body. 'Able-bodied workers' were those who could operate machines, and the human body came to be seen as an extension of the factory machinery" (86-87), which means that normal is a well-oiled machine working at peak efficiency. Once normal is established, everything else becomes an other which must be feared and eradicated. Eugenics and the able-bodied population at large accept the bourgeoisie ideal and, what is worse, shun or exile those who cannot meet it. Both Marx and Darwin are a turning point in social thinking, creating a ripple effect which touches modern values.

Another major change in the 19th century was a focus on science as superior to religion. As advancements and discoveries continued to be made, faith in the church

⁶ For a more in depth look into how industrialization shaped the human body, as well as the body politic, see *The Condition of the Working Class in England* by Friedrich Engels.

waned, reducing its power and influence. While Davis writes briefly of this phenomenon, equating the rise of ableism more with the rise of capitalism, I wish to add another scientific influence. In 1859 Charles Darwin published *On the Origin of Species*, a direct challenge to Biblical theories of creation. Unlike previous revolutionaries, Darwin's theory of natural selection was better received by society because of its basis on empirical observations. The downside of Darwin's ideas is that his theory of natural selection became extremely popular and was taken out of context by other scientists.

One of Darwin's theories, the theory of natural selection, was integral to the focus of scientists after him. Natural selection suggests that the healthiest and best adapted members of a species will survive. This convinced scientists that there was a way to select the most important traits in a human population, which would improve humans. A fascination developed around controlling the human body which had not previously been an area of focus.⁷ Darwin's theory gets absorbed by the eugenics movement, where selecting the best genes for humans means creating a better, healthier, superior world. Where Darwin speculated on a natural process which he observed in nature, the eugenics movement sought to bring natural selection under human control: eugenicists believed they could decide which traits were best for survival and then breed those into the population. Again, we see a theory perverted into a societal belief which effects how disability is seen.

⁷ Davis doesn't make this argument as forcefully as I do. To Davis, Eugenics rises out of a need to statistically categorize the population. As the understanding and belief in evolution started to rise, it was easy to make the leap that disability could be statistically regulated out of the gene pool. Again, I know Darwin isn't suggesting this; his theory is perverted by the Eugenicists and a search for the perfect human.

The theory of evolution leads to a discussion of another major influence on modern societies' ideas/interpretations about the body: the eugenics movement. Started in the late 19th century, eugenicists portrayed themselves as acting in the best interests of their nation.⁸ Davis suggests eugenicists were motivated by statistically assessing the population and working to "improve it." Some literary examples of eugenics are "The Birthmark," "The Invisible Man" (H.G. Wells), *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, and *Frankenstein*. At the height of the eugenics movement, the focus was on creating a "healthy" human: a man who could live a long life and produce "superior" children.⁹ While there were multiple ideas of what constituted a healthy male, one unifying factor was a drive to correct or eradicate disability. With the eugenics movement developing standards based on healthy working men and twisting Darwin's theory of survival of the fittest to suggest that disability was a frightening mutation, society came to believe that disability must be corrected or destroyed. The downfall of an overt eugenics' movement came with WWII, but by that point eugenics theory had infiltrated public opinion and medical society. Covert methods of eugenic testing continued in the academy; Dolmage notes that schools for "idiots," Native Americans, and other "undesirables" gave plenty of test subjects to the major institutions they were affiliated with.¹⁰

⁸ This led to beneficial results in some areas, and disastrous consequences in others, most recognizable being the Nazi scientists of WWII, but as Davis shows, eugenics was deeply engrained in the scientific/medical community across the globe before the rise of the Nazi regime. While their methods were extreme, eugenicist and statistical thinking would continue in more subtle ways.

⁹ "Beginning at the turn of the twentieth century, eugenics was 'anointed guardian of [American] health and character,' as Nancy Ordoover has shown (xiv). Historians have come to understand that eugenics was a powerful rhetoric as well as a series of practices" (Dolmage, *Academic Ableism*, 11).

¹⁰ *Academic Ableism*

Chloë Taylor, in her book chapter “Biopower,” also talks about the eugenics movement in relation to biopower, specifically how eugenics establishes legitimacy by presenting a concern for the overall wellbeing of future generations as a necessary reason to regulate birth, lifestyle, and social support services. In line with Taylor and Davis, Michel Foucault writes that “one of the great innovations in the techniques of power in the eighteenth century was the emergence of ‘population’ as an economic and political problem: population as wealth, population as man power or labor capacity, population balanced between its own growth and the resources it demanded” (*The History of Sexuality*, 25). Foucault identifies “population” as a unifying factor against disability and for segmenting out large swaths of the population.

Some of the eugenicists’ work can still be seen today in designer dog breeds like goldendoodles, puggles, and multi-poo’s. By selecting a trait like hypoallergenic hair and allowing dogs with that trait to mate with dogs with a different desirable trait, a breeder can create a dog which is considered “better.” Another far more sinister example is the trend in designer babies, in which wealthy socialites select traits they wish to see in their child and then have fertility clinics select eggs and sperm which will unify into the desired child. Eugenic theory stands in direct contrast to real and natural principles: inbreeding dogs can cause severe health problems; rarely do goldendoodles come out with the perfect temperament they were bred for, and genetic testing facilities face strict rules from governmental agencies and the court of public opinion. These discussions may seem like social improvements or a push towards better medical treatments, but they also reveal how society sees disability: it reflects a social view that we should eliminate bad

traits, and disability is a bad trait in the eyes of society.¹¹ As Dolmage writes, “to value ability through something like the demand to overcome disability, or a research study to cure disability, there is also an implicit belief that being disabled is negative and to be avoided at all costs” (*Academic Ableism*, 7). While we don’t castrate disabled people anymore, we still see stigmas of people who “can’t handle” their spouses’ disability or “supercrip” stories about people who have learned to overcome their disability for the sake of becoming “normal.”

The next historical theorist I wish to make connections to is Sigmund Freud, who examined notions of norms, particularly sexual behavior, as well as mental development around sexual behavior. While he was not searching specifically for what is normal in the physical sense, Freud constructs theories which suggest there is a normal developmental process and thus an abnormal development which creates deviants from society.¹² Freud cultivated theories on how males should emotionally and psychologically progress, suggesting a standard male experience which is difficult to reconcile with lived experience. He also conceived of singular treatments like talk therapy and dream interpretation, which were suggested to be beneficial for the entire population. Again, Freud’s ideas, even if he was not focusing on the normality of the physical body, imply a

¹¹ An even more nuanced and difficult discussion comes from anti-vaxxers who specifically believe that vaccines cause Autism. While on the surface they are saying that they wish to protect their child, what are they protecting their child from? A life with Autism? These mothers, who by medical standards are misinformed, are rarely questioned by society about what is so bad about a child who has Autism? The suggestion is that Autism is more of a disease than a group of disabled people who are capable of exciting and varied lives. The opinion of anti-vaxxers against Autism is scary enough, but what is worse is that society refuses to question why Autism is worse than death.

¹² Dolmage says that “This ‘certain type of society’ or ableist ‘reality’ that Davis alludes to has been created, and is maintained, through higher education” (*Academic Ableism*, 6). While Dolmage focuses specifically on higher education, he clearly articulates that Davis’s observations survive into the current millennia.

normal mental experience. It is therefore clear that once “normal” came to be used as a descriptor of people, it became a measuring stick by which everyone was judged.¹³

A recent social theorist who also focused on the normal/abnormal dichotomy was Michel Foucault, who was well-versed in Marx and Freud. Of the many fields Foucault influenced, his social theory on power relations remains relevant today. Exploring how prisons, mad houses (psychiatric wards), and other institutional systems came to be, Foucault proposed that incarceration was used to remove “unwanted people”¹⁴ from society. While not using the term “other” specifically, many of the people these institutions targeted were othered, outside the constructed norms of society. Foucault was also able to recognize that “normal” was a form of control, a tool used to assert power which allowed for separating “unwanted” individuals. The power relations Foucault notices in his research, along with the panopticon have direct relations to disability; many disabled people were placed in such panopticons in the late 19th century, well into the 20th. There are multiple aspects of the panopticon and its power structures which have seeped into society and are being used against the disabled individual.

As Foucault suggests, people deemed “undesirable” were often placed in panoptic settings to be monitored because of their deviance from societies constructed norms.

Lennard Davis states that “one problem for people with disabilities was that eugenicists

¹³ “Ableism renders disability as abject, invisible, disposable, less than human, while able-bodiedness is represented as at once ideal, normal, and the mean or default” (Dolmage, 7). Normal can be associated with able-bodiedness, as the two are aspects of a similar coin: both suggest their opposite is undesirable and both are applied to disabled people (i.e. “His brain’s not normal.”)

¹⁴ I have placed words in quotes across this paragraph because at this point in the dissertation I feel I have established that normal is a social construct. While unwanted is a term more in line with Foucault’s terminology, he identified his own term as something constructed by society, something not scientific or concrete.

tend to group together all allegedly ‘undesirable’ traits. So, for example, criminals, the poor, and people with disabilities might be mentioned in the same breath” (“Constructing Normalcy,” 8-9). After being grouped into an unwanted or undesirable category, an individual would need to be further monitored and regulated, usually in a structure outside of society. Once inside these outlying structures, these same people were subject to constant surveillance until they reformed their way of being to meet “society’s ideal.” The system of incarceration and surveillance operates similarly regardless of the institution: Foucault applied his theories to prisons, schools, and most importantly to hospitals and psychiatric facilities. Unlike previously discussed theorists, Foucault outwardly focused on what society deems as normal and abnormal, as in his works *Madness and Civilization* and *The History of Sexuality*. These works trace a moderate yet unnoticed change across centuries: a difference in how society views and handles the abnormal, of which disability is a large part.

Based off this historical information, a definition of normal and abnormal emerges. In “Constructing Normalcy,” Davis notes that eugenic/statistics didn’t stop at making everyone average, but instead worked to redefine average to mean exceptional. A typical bell curve has two major groups, or outliers on either side of the main curve or average. In a standard curve, an exceptionally healthy male would be a right outlier, and an exceptionally unhealthy male would be a left outlier. However, the goal of eugenicists is to get as many people as possible to the right or exceptional outlier. This resituates the average.¹⁵ Normal makes a transition from a statistical average—what real humans look

¹⁵ We see the results of this in the 21st century diet industry. Products help to make people “healthier” through juice cleansings, weight-loss, or other body modifications. An average American dress size is a 14-

and act like—to an ideal image of what humans should be. This norm is often cis, white, male, and healthy. To be lacking any one of these “normal” traits is to be an other, to be lacking most or all of them can put a person in a state often projected as a lesser being: the abnormal. What’s more, the definition of normal is so vague that society constructs its literal manifestation. Society uses ableist rhetoric to solidify the image of normal and degrade the other. What is abnormal continues to be defined in the later eras after WWII, continuing society’s position as the authority of what is normal. Categorizing individuals as abnormal has continued to our times, where disabled people find themselves included in this category. Just as eugenics permeates our understanding of science but is often not identified as such, ableism continues to appear in public policy, often as “help” for the disabled. One such example of this is the Disability and Access Center on MTSU’s campus.

A Side Story on The Disability and Access Center (DAC)

The Disability and Access Center (DAC) is in the basement of the Keathley University Center (KUC). It is across the hall from the mailroom, a fully working USPS station. At first, the DAC looks cool; the main doors are made of newly varnished wood and glass, and they are accessible with a button to the right of the door. In the lobby they try to maintain this comforting atmosphere, with a large reception desk and a pair of couches, but the main space is mostly clear. I approach the front desk with confidence. I am supposed to take a test here. I’ve taken tests at another DAC before. I know the drill.

16, but a typical store sells ranges at less than that. This is its own privileging, which is beyond the scope of this dissertation, but feeds into Americans obsession with health.

“How can I help you today?” The receptionist is a younger woman, possibly a student, with dark features.

“I’m here to take a test,” I say.

“What subject,” she asks, and I hesitate.

“It’s a qualifying exam. For English.” Her puzzled look tells me she doesn’t understand. “I’m scheduled for it.”

“You need to check in with Testing Services. First door on the left.” She points to the small door next to her station. Confused, I head into the hallway and over to Testing Services. There is a large room with multiple computers behind a wall of glass. Another receptionist, this time an older man, asks me if I am here to take a test.

“Yeah,” I reply, unsure of what to do. He asks for my student ID.

“You aren’t in the system.” Now I start to panic.

“I’m registered. I’m supposed to take all my tests here. This is my qualifying exam. It will keep me in the program.”

“Well I don’t have you in the system. I’ve never heard of an exam for English either. Are you sure you’re taking it here?” He gives me a look as if he wants to help but isn’t sure how.

“I have an accommodation. They said this was the testing center for the DAC.”

“Oh no, you need to go back out to the front desk. They are Disability Services, not us.” It takes me a few seconds before I respond, mumbling an apology and walking back to the dark-haired girl.

“I’m here to take a test for English. I have accommodations.”

“Oh. Can I see your ID?” She doesn’t seem too concerned that she sent me around in circles for this test. She checks the records. “Please have a seat. Your tester will be up to collect you in a minute.”

I sit down on one of the couches, trying to take deep breaths and calm my heightened nerves. Panic raises my adrenalin, which keeps me focused while it lasts, but as soon as I come down from it, I will be exhausted, and I can’t have that happening in the middle of such an important test. As I wait, several people come through the doors. Most of them are heading straight to that other room, but they are not being turned away like I was. I’m relieved: my accommodation specifies a distraction-free testing environment, and if this many people were in the room with me it would be anything but distraction-free.

“Brie?” Another woman comes out of the hall, looking at me questioningly. I nod and stand up.

Across from the Testing Center is a large collection of lockers.

“You have to lock all of your belongings in there, except the lunchbox. Empty out your pockets, too. No phones, papers, hats, or coats in the testing area,” she says, checking over a manila folder in her hands. I look down the wall of lockers quickly

before selecting one and complying with her commands. My old college didn't have lockers to store stuff, but they also required all electronics and personal items to remain in the lobby. I suppose the lockers are safer than leaving them out in the open.

"Is this your first time testing here?" She asks.

"Yeah."

"Do you know the rules?"

"Vaguely," I say. I read the directions online when I registered to take the test, but I didn't spend that much time on them. She turns and starts down another hallway as she explains.

"You get an extra fifty minutes of time. You'll have a computer, scratch paper, and pencils in the room. Save your file often, just to be on the safe side. When you're done with the test, or if you need to go to the bathroom, don't leave the room. Stand up, and I'll come and get you." I'm only half listening as I follow her along, my eyes scanning over the rows of doors leading into small testing rooms. Mine is across from the bathroom, which is a plus. It's a standard slate grey box, a little bigger than a closet. There are two desks in the room, one with a computer on it, the other with a cup of number two pencils. A few signs hang on the wall reiterating the directions the tester just gave me. While she plugs in the flash drive, I look up, noticing the CVC camera in the corner of the ceiling next to a small black box.

"Alright, good luck," she says, before walking out and closing the door behind her. I notice a small window in the door, reminiscent of ones in hospital rooms they

sometimes show in movies when they want a unique angle. I sit down at the computer and start the test. I am thankful for the scratch paper, so I can brainstorm ideas and outline before typing. Even with the extra time, I still worry I won't be able to finish. It's a stressful test to begin with. The test is over a large swath of British and American literature. I only get two tries to pass it before I'll be kicked out of the program, destroying my chances at a PhD. After seven years of work, I am terrified that I might fail.

I am moments from typing my first sentence, my fingers hovering over the keys, when a loud voice interrupts the process.

"Warning. Warning. A fire has been detected in the building. Please calmly move to the nearest exit." An automated voice begins a repetitive chant, echoing from multiple fire detectors in multiple rooms. I hadn't even noticed the device in my own testing room, on the opposite wall from the camera. I look up at it expectantly, immediately unsure of what to do. Is this a drill? My instinct is to stand up, but as I approach the door, my eyes scan over the sign and I am reminded of the directions. Wait for a tester to come and collect me. I hesitate. Should I wait? What if it is a real emergency? What if it isn't and I break the rules? Instead of touching the doorknob, I stare out the window of my room. Across the hall and to the right of the bathroom is another young woman, also in a test, also looking through the glass. After the fourth reminder that we are to be proceeding to the nearest exit, she opens her door, but hesitates on the threshold. I follow suit, glad I am not the only one unsure of what to do. Together we scan the hallway, looking back and forth for someone coming.

“Should we leave?” She asks.

“I don’t know. I don’t know if it’s a drill or not,” I reply. We stand in silence for another few minutes before the tester reappears.

“Save your work, so you can return to it,” she directs. She then comes into each of our rooms and saves the files again. With little direction she guides us out of the building through a series of hallways. As we stand on the lawn of the KUC, amidst a crowd of undergraduates, my mind is mostly on my test. Are they going to account for this in my time?

A Disclaimer on the DAC

In the proceeding sections I plan to make clear connections between the DAC and the panopticon, a heavily researched and theorized piece of Foucault’s work. There are clear connections between the two spaces—the DAC and the panopticon—but I feel compelled to add a caveat to my assertions. I preface the following critique by saying that I have struggled with making the assertions to come for a single imposing reason: I cannot in good conscience come up with an alternative, better system for providing testing assistance. As I plan to show throughout this chapter, the DAC does assert control over testers, does influence the rhetoric of disability in multiple ways, but it also provides a vital service to students. As an instructor I understand the value of testing student achievement, of the necessities of different types of testing methods, but as a disabled person I clearly recognize the need for adequate accommodation is necessary. For this reason, I find myself in the middle, understanding both sides of this debate, and unable to suggest a compelling alternative without deep conversation with both sides. My aim in

examining the DAC is not to abolish it, but to reform it, to bring light to the difficulties of the space and encourage some form of change. This is also a chance to apply my interpretation of *métis* to a specific example. I also aim to examine my own rhetoric and actions while in the DAC, as I see my story as one example of many representing the complex nature of space, time, and rhetoric.

The Panopticon

In *The Birth of the Prison* Michel Foucault discusses the ways that the panopticon asserts control over inmates. The panopticon is a circular building, centered around an observation tower. Along the outer walls are rows and columns of cells, each visible from the tower, while being cut off from other cells. Responding to the work of Bentham, Foucault remarks that because of the panoramic view, guards can see everything going on in the prison. Also, the guard tower is usually fixed with special blinds or angles, so the prisoners cannot tell if they are being watched or not. Foucault writes: “All that is needed, then, is to place a supervisor in a central tower and to shut up in each cell a madman, a patient, a condemned man, a worker, or a schoolboy” (“Panoptism,” 214). By listing the many other situations in which the panopticon can be used, Foucault is suggesting here that the panopticon works for more than just prisons. Prisoners are supposed to feel compelled always to act accordingly, unsure of when they are being monitored and by whom. According to Foucault, the panopticon functions to encourage inmates into self-reformation: they will act better since they must be ever ready to convince prison guards of their moral improvements, because they are always afraid of being punished.

In other words, there are three ways of asserting power in a panopticon: the impression of surveillance, a constant strict routine, and removal of autonomy. The guard tower gives inmates the impression of constant surveillance which establishes power by the prisoner being unsure of when punishment will come for infractions. There are also no shadows to hide in; Foucault states, “Full lighting and the eye of a supervisor captures better than darkness, which is ultimately protected. Visibility is a trap” (“Panoptism,” 214). Second, most panopticons have strict routines or structure the way inmates move about the space. This asserts power by establishing the inmate’s own thoughts or responses as infractions which need punishment because they do not fit into the panopticon’s routine. Finally, inmates wear the same clothes, have the same haircuts, and are denied access to any objects or materials which would allow them autonomy. Control over the aesthetics of a population ultimately lead to that population developing a uniformed ideal about themselves as being part of the group, and individualism becomes a punishable offence to the panoptic space.

We see these same structures made literal in most movies: *The Chronicles of Riddick*, *Guardians of the Galaxy*, *Thor Ragnarök*, *The Snake Pit*, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest*, *Five Feet Apart*, all have examples of “cells” surrounding a “guard tower” where observation is key.

While fear of punishment is the main way that the panopticon enforces power, the punishment for an offence can be varied, relating to the type of institution: in prisons one could be placed in isolation, in a school one could be given detention or suspension of privileges, and in a medical setting a patient could be restrained or medicated into

compliance. All are punishments because they take an already restrictive situation—being locked up—and extending this further—deeper isolation.

What's more, Foucault notes how the panopticon functions with little reinforcement. He writes, "Bentham was surprised that panoptic institutions could be so light: there were no more bars, no more chains, no more heavy locks; all that was needed was that the separations should be clear, and the openings well arranged" ("Panoptism," 217-218). While previous forms of incarceration required restraining the prisoner, this is not the case with the panopticon; most of the restraints are psychological in nature. Fearing punishment and realizing the guards are always watching, the prisoner has no real choice but to comply. The panopticon forces prisoners to be willing participants in their reformation; they voluntarily act "correctly," so they can avoid punishment.

It is no surprise, then, that institutions such as psych wards, hospitals, and schools would be constructed as a panopticon, when the panopticon is a powerful tool for observation and rehabilitation: the design of the space makes it easy to observe offenders, and the constant feeling of observation inspires participants to act "normal" for the sake of avoiding punishment. These institutions also service the largest population of "abnormal" individuals, including the disabled. The panopticon's use is solidified by ableist assumptions of pitiable and pathetic or angry and maladjusted individuals who need constant observation and care. To assist such a group, observation is critical. After all, society must keep an eye on its abnormal/abject/deviant population.

We can tie this back to rhetorical spaces as well. In a panopticon, there is no darkness, no places to hide. The space communicates to "inmates" that they should

always be seen. As Foucault establishes, the routines and regulations dictate a particular way of acting which is acceptable. This means that the panopticon has a rhetorical stance: it persuades inmates to comply through surveillance and lack of autonomous space.

The DAC is a modern panopticon, where disabled students are monitored in “light cells” to control their supposed deviant nature. The DAC “says” to students—through its construction and design—that they need to be imprisoned and watched. The price of accommodation is that a student must comply with the rules, must give up their autonomy for a period of time, so that the DAC can accommodate both the student—providing testing accommodations—and the instructor—ensuring students cannot and will not cheat. The space itself connects to ableism, as the need to survey students reflects a larger social belief that students, especially those seeking accommodation, will cheat (are deviant).

The Law of the Panopticon

But how does one determine what is a punishable offence and what is not in a panopticon? When establishing the creation of the new penal system of the 19th century, Foucault notes that there is an

internal dislocation of the judicial power or at least of its functioning; an increasing difficulty in judging, as if one were ashamed to pass sentence; a furious desire on the part of the judges to judge, assess, diagnose, recognize the normal

and abnormal and claim the honour of curing or rehabilitating. (“Discipline and Punish,” 1498)¹⁶

Foucault refers to judges in the literal sense, a shift to legal judges making decisions about the moral and mental fitness of an individual. We could currently apply this to society’s need to pass judgement and diagnose individuals, especially those found in media or the celebrity sphere. Foucault makes the connection between what is offensive and what is abnormal: his main assertion as to the necessity of the panopticon is to uphold normality. We therefore make the connection that the abnormal is something which should be punished, and this holds true for other theorists: Julia Kristeva writes extensively about the abject self and the fear it inspires within us. Kristeva notes how we wish to see ourselves as normal, and anything which counters or proves otherwise is then the abject, which inspires fear, anger, and disgust. Before Foucault and Kristeva, we have Freud, who asserts that there is a normal psychological progression through an Oedipus complex, and that those males who do not move through this progression develop neuroses and complications. Earlier still is the Eugenics movement, disguising itself as a method of bettering the people and improving health, eugenicists suggested standards for what a “normal” male/female should look like, do, and feel (Davis). It seems that characterizing behavior as abnormal is how we determine what should be punished.

It may not be immediately clear why I bring up the prison system when talking about disability accommodation and rhetoric, however in my view it is vital to examine the space of the DAC rhetorically to understand how disabled people are seen, written

¹⁶ Leitch, *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism Second Ed.*

about, and self-identify. While I did not think of it at the time, the DAC functions as a panopticon, giving a single tester the power of monitoring multiple disabled people at a time. The disabled, in turn, must act on their best behavior, not only to impress the tester, but also to guarantee their release from the area with a clear record. Punishment in the DAC is failing the test and/or revoked testing privileges. Inside the DAC, the space implies that disabled students cannot be trusted. This power dynamic extends beyond the walls of the DAC and into academic life, where those who do not use DAC services, essentially outsiders, make unfounded judgments and assumptions about the students who do use the services.

In my own experience with the DAC, I have found that I easily internalize the rhetoric that it provides. Cameras in the space are needed not just to protect the student against harm, but to ensure professors that I am not cheating on my test. I paid little attention to this the first three times I used the DAC services, even at Youngstown State which I attended prior to coming to MTSU. If cameras were there, then they should be for some reason, I assumed. I was more worried about passing my test, about completing everything on time, and doing so before my energy stores ran out and I found myself exhausted. I was too busy thinking about how I would restructure my essay to question why I needed a person to escort me around the building. Already being under stress and pressure from the exam distracted me from the stress and pressure that the DAC places on students. In other words, I voluntarily allowed myself to be imprisoned for the sake of accommodation, another aspect of the panopticon's methods of enacting power over the disabled.

There is voluntary enforcement in the DAC as well: we voluntarily accept our seat in our cell, voluntarily submit to being observed, because if we do not we will not get accommodation and must instead endure the test under “normal” conditions, conditions in which we would likely not succeed. We willingly lock up all communication with the outside world, all identifying markers, so we can be herded into our cells to be watched. I require a distraction-free testing environment and extra time on exams because as my energy stores wear out, I can find myself having a difficult time formulating ideas, sentences, and words to respond. To take a timed test under normal conditions would not only be difficult mentally but would cause even more stress worrying about when I would finish and if everything would make sense, causing physical strain as well. What is worse, enduring the conditions the DAC provides is voluntary because there are no alternatives: we are offered accommodations, which we graciously accept because we need them, without considering how this space plays on our methods or ability to rhetorically define ourselves.

The revocation of testing privileges is a punishment for students because those who use the DAC services have valid and specific reasons for having those privileges, without which testers may suffer greatly during tests or underperform. On their website the DAC says that “we serve the Middle Tennessee State University campus by providing accommodations that level the academic playing field. We are also a cultural hub that provides relevant programming that gives students another avenue to participate fully in campus life” (DAC website). The goal of the DAC is to level the playing field for higher education, which can include longer testing times, a reader to help “see” the test, a writer to help with transcribing information, and allowances for breaks based on anxiety or

medical necessity. Clearly, if students have their privileges revoked, they will lack the necessary tools to have a level playing field.

The mission statement of the DAC brings up another rhetorical point. While the DAC is meant to level the playing field, when I interviewed the Director of the DAC Kevin States, and mentioned my feelings of captivity, he began defending their practices, and asked me for my suggestions to make the center less “prison like.” Even he agreed that in a perfect world, the DAC wouldn’t be needed. Despite a want to improve things, there is an underlying expectation, an underlying rhetoric, which suggests the DAC must continue to function as it currently does. So how level is the playing field if an organization which wants to render itself obsolete, cannot do so? What structures have been implemented which dictate their continued need? The answer is panoptic structures, supported by the ableism.

The DAC does provide a vital service to disabled students, by giving them a space to function at their best. My concern is that there is also a need to justify student academic honesty to instructors. The fact that CVC cameras and audio recording equipment are necessary, that testers must escort students around the building, and even babysit them while they go to the bathroom, suggests there is a level of distrust between instructors and disabled students which necessitates observation. As Foucault says, “it is at once too much and too little that the prisoner should be constantly observed by an inspector: too little, for what matters is that he knows himself to be observed; too much, because he has no need in fact of being so” (“Panoptism,” 214-215). The workers at the DAC mean well. They alert us that if we need anything, they will be watching but at the

same time, they initiate this same feeling of being watched. We students don't know if they are really watching, if they can see our every move, or if they are even paying attention at all, and yet, they could be. It is as much a deterrent as a safety precaution. I know I have stood in my "cell" waiting for what felt like an eternity waiting for a tester to come collect me, worried that they had went off to lunch and left me alone.

In other words, we—disabled students—need to become more like tricksters, like snakes, like *métis*. To keep from internalizing and blindly accepting the role the DAC assigns me, I need to construct a counterstory in which I am not the cheater or a victim of the system. For example, I could outwardly question the practice of having students remain in a testing room until a tester can come and collect them: by asking this question directly of the administration I reject the notion that I inherently deserve to be surveilled. I have control over how I will be perceived, and no space should be able to disrupt that control if I have complete faith in it.

Something that could complicate this arose in an interview I did with the director of the DAC; he mentioned that students felt more comfortable in rooms alone than in testing rooms where the tester sat with them and watched them. I have no concrete answers for how the DAC could change its systems to function less like a panopticon but still provide vital service to students. CVC cameras are in the space for multiple reasons. Not only is this a deterrent for cheating, but it also allows students who require complete silence while they test the security of knowing that someone can come to their aid in an emergency. Some students need isolation to perform at their best, while others need more

time than a class will allow. Perhaps there are some benefits to panopticons despite my harsh judgement on them.

How to Act in a Panopticon

There are two things I find intriguing about my own story. First is that in the DAC testing center I so willingly subjected myself to such a small space, with no connection to the outside world. Without thinking, I believed that this space was a perfectly acceptable space for accommodation. It was not until a few months later, while tutoring another student with a disability who mentioned how the room felt prison-like that I realized how I had easily accepted that this was how things were, that this was all part of some master plan which was irrelevant to my own needs. As stated earlier, Cherney suggests that anti-rhetoric is meant to blind listeners to the truth; it is meant to convince others that the speaker is honest. In my situation, the rhetor was the college itself, suggesting that a distraction-free testing environment had to include CVC cameras, because students might cheat. The point of anti-rhetoric is to imply that naturally its existence does not need to be questioned. Without hesitation I accepted the rhetoric that I needed to be monitored because I might cheat.

Second was how easily the panopticon asserted control over me. While the fire alarm was nothing major (We returned to our tests a half an hour after the alarm went off), the fact that I would willingly risk my own life by staying in the room is an intriguing notion. As Foucault asserts, there is no need for restraints. I willingly stayed put for fear of failing my test. This could suggest that we need to reevaluate our programs, simply because students should not feel pressured to remain in danger,

physical or mental, simply to finish their degrees. This is especially true of disabled students, who have even more obstacles to negotiate in their pursuit of an education. However, it also suggests that I was not staying alert to my own story. I was the one who requested accommodation, yet I didn't have the confidence to control my own production. Instead of a stage, my light cell had become a rhetorical prison.

Foucault suggests that one way that panopticons can be maintained is that the outside world is free to enter in and examine the system at any time. Democratic practice is present in the institution: people can come and go as they please to observe the observers. This of course begs the question: Will people go and observe such spaces? As Foucault points out, the prison system is one of the strongest representations of this "machine," ("Panoptism," 221) and yet the privatization of the incarceration system has gone relatively unchecked in America by its people. We have no arguments against an incarceration system which does not actually reform individuals, but instead profits from containment in a similar panoptic setting, and the same thing goes for the DAC. While stakeholders will most likely enter the lobby, maybe take a quick walk around, most ordinary people who understand the stress of test taking may never set foot in the DAC, unless they suddenly become disabled. Similarly, few professors will visit the DAC to understand what testing accommodation is like. While the freedom of citizens to examine the system and become observers of the observed is a useful tool, if not used it means nothing.

The Panopticon also brings up a bigger question in academia: Why do instructors not trust students? Composition scholars have suggested a revision of attendance policies

such that they not to sound so strict, because harsh punishments and specific margins reveals a view of the student as already a culprit who will willingly skip class.¹⁷ The same thing applies in the DAC: The fact that CVC cameras are needed, that test takers are under surveillance and escorted around, suggests that, a priori, those in power have a suspicion of cheating. Every time instructors do something to curb cheating, they are unconsciously revealing that they believe students are cheaters. While classroom tests are less obvious forms of panopticons—the DAC is just a clearer representation—the instructor is still enforcing this method of control, of observing the students to prevent misconduct. In other words, the instructor does not trust the student to have good intentions.¹⁸

Once normalcy is established, anyone falling outside of such a definition is considered abnormal. Even years after Foucault, we still see the systems of incarceration being applied, as disabled people are shunned to their homes, relegated to disability programs, or locked in institutions. This idea that the abnormal should be removed colors the way society reacts to the disabled, as well as how it interprets history like the Roman empire. Especially when medical terminology or a need to heal the malady is applied to the concept of normalcy, then a model of viewing people emerges, usually termed the

¹⁷ Diann Baecker, “Uncovering the Rhetoric of the Syllabus: The Case of the Missing I.” This author studies several syllabi to examine the use of pronouns as sources of power. The lack of I in syllabi reflects a power structure where the instructor is giving out the work, but the student must complete the work. It also places most of the responsibility on the student to perform. Her assertion is not to eliminate power structures, since students know where power lies, but to take responsibility for the power we wield in the classroom.

¹⁸ I lack the space in this dissertation (as it would deviate too far from the overall discussion) to further examine this question, however I did want to suggest that those same Ableist rhetorics mentioned earlier do influence instructors’ understanding and acceptance of their students. These are ingrained societal images which create distrust. In further research I wish to continue examining this topic.

medical model. As a counter to the medical model, this medically based sterile way of approaching disabled people, the societal model was created to encourage viewing disabled people as humans affected by the rules of society. The medical and societal models are influenced by historical contexts, as well as societal beliefs about the disabled.

The Medical vs Social Model of Disability

The medical and societal models of disability are approaches towards disability representation in society. These models examine how disability is seen and understood. Many other scholars, like those cited in this section, believe that the medical and social models are not mutually exclusive. People vilify the medical model for its cold way of dealing with people like numbers and valorize the social model for its focus on the way's society disables. However, I believe they have a more complementary relationship, as the medical model defines what the parameters of the argument are, and the social model then accepts and reinforces medical model definitions. As Thomas Shakespeare concludes his chapter on the social model, he suggests the need for new models which will extend beyond the problems of the medical and social models (The Social Model, 203). I conclude this section by considering what a hybrid model would look like, taking the individuality of the social model and combining it with the sterile definitions of the medical model.

The medical model is structured around the way medicine sees disability and illness. In medicine, there should always be a cure or treatment for sickness. Previously we established that disability is often placed into the category of abnormality, and in

medical terminology this means that there should be some cure or fix for it. In the medical model, disability is considered an illness or ailment impeding people from living normal lives. Doctors then need to find a way to solve this issue. Thomas Shakespeare explains that “medical model thinking is enshrined in the liberal term ‘people with disabilities,’ and in approaches that seek to count numbers of people with impairment, or to reduce the complex problems of disabled people to issues of medical prevention, cure, or rehabilitation” (199). This medical model fails because it doesn’t see the disabled as people, but instead as numbers, data, and symptoms. We see this kind of thinking in Hawthorne’s story “The Birthmark” and Poe’s “The Man That Was Used Up,” as well as in the current difficulties of the Autism Speaks organization.

In “The Birthmark,” the main character Aylmer takes his wife, an otherwise healthy woman, and tries to get rid of her birthmark. The narrator says “but seeing her otherwise so perfect, he found this one defect grow more and more intolerable with every moment of their united lives. It was the fatal flaw of humanity which Nature, in one shape or another, stamps on all her productions, either to imply that they are temporary and finite, or that their perfection must be wrought by toil and pain” (6). The birthmark is not causing pain or harm, yet its presence reminds Aylmer of his inability to conquer nature, which maddens him. Aylmer makes it his mission to remove the birthmark, and succeeds, but his victory is short lived, as the remedy for her birthmark kills his wife. As time goes on in the marriage, Aylmer sees less and less of his wife, and more of her so called “disfigurement.” As is often the case with the medical model, Aylmer seeks to correct something which isn’t hindering or compromising his wife’s life.

Poe's "The Man That Was Used Up" is often seen as an attack on the body politic of America, but it also reflects societal fascination with aesthetics. The narrator becomes obsessed with the Brevet Brigadier General John A. B. C. Smith, only to find out the object of his interest is only a quarter human. Smith has lost most of his body to Indians in the Bugaboo and Kickapoo war. When he speaks about his prosthetics, Smith doesn't praise them for how they assist or enrich his life. Instead, his focus rests on the aesthetic, how realistic they look. By the same token, the narrator admires Smith because of the prosthetics, because of the perceived image that Smith has created from his prosthetics. Especially in this period, let alone with current technology, prosthetics would not be able to accomplish what Poe depicts, but the point of the prosthesis isn't their function, but how they make Smith look normal, making it seem that with the right tools, disability can be overcome. The focus of this narrative is on the prosthetics and how they heal Smith's visible illness, his disability.

In both these narrative cases, the disability is not seen for how it disabled but for how it is seen. The disabled characters in these stories are considered lacking not because they are missing some innate part of themselves, but because they cannot look normal without assistance. Also—and key to the medical model—solutions are created to reestablish the normal, not to improve the patient's life. In the case of General Smith, for example, the prosthetics are not prescribed to him; nor are they created so they can help him live. They are there to make him the visual envy of the narrator, to make him aesthetically pleasing or superior. In "The Birthmark," the birthmark is not causing pain, discomfort, or difficulty, but since it is seen as a flaw Aylmer seeks to eliminate it.

Both these narratives are old, rooted in the very early stages of the industrial boom which we have established as a time when there were changes in how the body was seen. Opinions in medicine have not changed much over the past three centuries when it comes to disability and what to do with disabled people. The medical model still sees disabled people as their disease and seeks to cure it instead of treating the person. To take my test at the DAC, I needed a doctor's note saying I had a medical condition. I was then granted allowances based on a "standard" assistance measure. The DAC at YSU tried to make this appear as a conversation, but even then, there was a lot of "you don't need this" or "you will want that" instead of me communicating my concerns. Rhetorically, disabled people face a no-win situation: If they disclose, they are presumed too weak to participate in society, and if they refuse to disclose, they are considered deceptive. The medical model does not account for the social stigma and pressure which dictate how disability is seen.

Many times, the fact that doctors have treatments or assistance objects to help disabled people gives society a false sense of how capable disabled people are. A modern example is the Autism Speaks movement, which sees Autism as a monster or virus, instead of an autistic child as a human being.

Autism Speaks treats Autism like cancer or the flu, as an illness which has a cure. Many of the group's campaign ads portray Autism as a horrible burden. The Autism Self Advocacy Network (ASAN) describes how "the disability community reacted in horror to the 'I am Autism' campaign,"¹⁹ which presents Autistic people as kidnap victims and

¹⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9UgLnWJFGHQ>.

burdens on their families and local communities” (ASAN). This video states specifically that Autism will ruin marriages, cause bankruptcy, and moves faster than most deadly illnesses. While they attempt at the end of the commercial to show families supporting their autistic children, they do not combat the horrible message they have already portrayed. Ultimately, Autism Speaks is asking for monetary support to end Autism and its effects on families and societies, suggesting that Autism is an illness which should have a cure.

The medical model encourages disabled people to see their disease as a flaw which they should cure or eliminate in order to return to “normal” society. It constantly reinforces the shortcomings of the disabled person, much like Puritan literature degraded the natural lifestyle of the average American.²⁰ A part of ableist rhetoric is using “normal” as a synonym for “healthy.” Ableist rhetoric often proves itself to be the default norm, and therefore it becomes the medical standard by which clinicians measure the disabled body. The definition of normal continues to be reestablished in modern medicine today. Modern medicine is influenced by standards: a standard weight, standard blood pressure, standard methods of treatment. The medical model does not see individuals; it sees only illnesses.

The medical model also influences how society sees disabled people. An example is the high rank testing I did at Nationals in Orlando. My medical diagnosis was used in a non-medical situation to evaluate my ability to perform and my right to test. While the

²⁰ See Jonathan Edwards’ “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God,” or John Winthrop’s “A Model of Christian Charity.”

ATA did make accommodations for me, the very idea of accommodations, or of physical disabilities within the ATA is something which contradicts the persona the organization portrays. What is worse, the organization has now become a company, and that company believes that its future lies with the able-bodied population. They, therefore, create a standard that disability is not wanted, and this implication is supported by medicine; the ATA implements programs to increase the health of its members, based on medical understandings of what health is. Medically, if I am not healthy enough, fit enough, thin enough, then I am not capable of handling the rigors of high rank material. Just like the ATA, higher education implies that there is a limit to how far students can go. No organization says this out loud; they hide their implications behind “logical” assumptions of how rigorous a program is, how important muscle control is, or how normal it is to be healthy. Their silence about where disabled people fit into the fabric of their organizations leaves disabled people suffering under difficult standards. It can also make disabled people feel pressured or bullied into seeking out risky or expensive procedures to fit in with “normal people.” Even when not dealing with medical professionals, the medical model of disability still influences how disabled people are treated.

A Side Story on Medical Leaves

This instance came from my undergraduate university. A professor had already stipulated that I had missed too many classes, so I was trying to find a way of pausing my education. It was not clear what my options were or how I was supposed to manage my education moving forward. My mom was my personal assistant through all of this, as I had minimal energy stores and even sitting on hold for long periods of time was

exhausting. We sat together on one such call when someone finally gave us a clear answer.

“How can I help you?” The woman on the other end of the line asked. Mom looked at me hesitantly for a moment before speaking.

“My daughter goes to school at YSU, and she is having a medical issue right now. We are trying to find out if there is a way, she can take a break this semester and come back in the spring.” I nod as I listen, so she knows she is telling them the right things. Our conversations with the college are often an intricate dance between us: me giving her buzz words or anticipating questions they will ask, while she would stand her ground and never take no for an answer.

“Is Brielle there with you?” The lady seems to hesitate here.

“I’m here. I give my permission for you to discuss this with us both.” I sit back in the kitchen chair and close my eyes. A part of me wants to go to sleep right now, but I need to be around for these Title IX regulated discussions.

“Thank you, Brielle. What is her YSU ID number?” Mom reads off the number from my ID card, another in a long string of numbers which represent my body. “And is she looking to do a medical hold, or are you choosing to unenroll from college?”

“What is a medical hold?” Mom asks.

“A medical hold is a pause you can take for a semester. You will take a W for each class you are enrolled in now, which can be removed from your record by retaking the class in the spring. You’ll have to give back the loans you took this semester, but you

will not have to start paying back your loans in the spring.” She pauses to allow for questions or concerns.

“Does she only get a semester?” My mom asks, immediately taking up her pen to write down every word said.

“Yes, only one in her career.” There is a pause. “If you think you can come back from your illness, then this is a good option.”

“Well she has been diagnosed with MS, and one of the teachers won’t work with her, so she has to do something. I think you can do it.” My mom gives me a confident smile, even though I’m not sure.

“Oh. Are you sure you want to do that? College is a lot of work. You might be better off unenrolling and rethinking your career choice.” The tone this woman has is pleasant, but her words cut to the core.

“She can and will complete her degree.” My mom’s tone goes from pleasant to icy.

“Alright then. My department doesn’t handle medical holds, so I am going to have to transfer you. Please hold for a minute while I connect you.”

This seemed to be a recurring theme during my treatment and recovery: that I was no longer healthy enough to attend school. The medical model suggests people like me aren’t strong, smart, or dedicated enough to complete a degree. This is because medicine has a standard, one that I can no longer meet. Despite how unique MS patients and their

symptoms are, we can often get judged medically against other MS patients, enforcing a medically constructed norm.

The Societal Model

The societal model has become a standard method for disability scholars and activists to speak about disability and against ableism, in contrast to the medical model. The societal model was developed in the 1980's to combat the stigma of the medical model through post-structuralist thought. It developed alongside a movement toward "social construction" theories of gender, race, etc., all grounded in deconstruction. At its core, the societal model posits that society creates disability by privileging ability. In other words, disabled people are not handicapped or stopped by their disability, but by the way's society blocks their ability to exist in social spaces. Wheelchair users are stopped not by their wheelchair, but by the stairs that society builds, or the lack of ramps that society refuses to build. Followers of the societal model believe that the medical model is reductionist, that it reduces disabled people to their disease. In contrast, the societal model expands disability to any instance where society "cripples" a person. Ultimately, by changing society's attitudes toward disabled people, we can create access for disabled people. It is because of the different focuses of each model that the models are placed in contrast with each other.

Jay Dolmage, in the introduction to his book *Academic Ableism*, does a fantastic job of explaining the social model. This same emotion can be felt by African American, Latinx, and other minorities when they are accepted into a program. He uses a long-established image of the college as an ivory tower with imposing stairs in comparison to

the real stairs scattered around campuses which limit access. These stairs are not removed or modified despite their limiting potential, because they add to the aesthetic of the university. Dolmage paraphrases Daniel Hunter to make a point about campus access, stating that “in the construction and maintenance of the steep steps there is also a latent argument about aesthetics or appearances, one that trips over to the classroom, into ideology and onto pedagogy, where teachers are also sometimes concerned about pattern, clarity, propriety—and these things are believed to be ‘beautiful’ (access, Hunter)²¹” (Quoted in *Academic Ableism*, 2). Society has determined that the stairs are beautiful despite their limiting potential, and they then reinforce other societal beliefs, such as with ambiguous terms prevalent in academia: clarity, flow, and organization.

The social model makes the argument that society creates disability: without societal norms a disabled person would also be considered as normal, but because of ingrained societal prejudices, the world has been constructed for an able-bodied audience. Thomas Shakespeare writes that “Societal model thinking mandates barrier removal, anti-discrimination legislation, independent living and other responses to societal oppression” (“The Social Model,” 199). I see some value in this perspective, as it takes blame off the disabled person and places it on a society; however, like Shakespeare, I think that there are still shortcomings to this approach.

The downside to the societal model is that many ableist rhetors shrug their shoulders and say things like “You can’t expect everyone to agree with you.” The

²¹ Hunter, Daniel. “Out of Sight, Out of Mind: Disability and the Aesthetics of Landscape Architecture.” *Adaptive Environments*, May 1999. In his notes, Dolmage says that he will replace the common phrase “see x for more,” with “access x,” explaining the style of this citation.

societal model places blame on an ambiguous “society” which is a large, complicated entity, an organism which disabled people cannot fight or win against in the struggle for proper treatment and recognition. Stella Young, a disabled TED Talk presenter, adds to this discussion when she admits that smiling isn’t going to get her and her wheelchair up a flight of stairs. This is a tactic of demagoguery in which the rhetor oversimplifies the conversation: you can’t expect all schools to pay to add ramps to their buildings, which ignores the fact that the problem is with the building. Much like issues with the ADA and vague language when defining reasonable accommodations which do not cause undue hardship, a societal approach to disability requires in-depth discussions about what society does with and to disabled individuals, how unique each disability is and the need to constantly revise support, and how we define terms like disabled, access, and inclusion. Currently, many of these definitions are derived from medical terminology, which perpetuates a stigma of ‘pull yourself up by your bootstraps and help yourself.’

There are two influences working together in society which affect how the public views disability. The medical model gets influenced and supplemented by society’s interests, which in turn revises the medical model. As was explained in the history chapter of this dissertation, an obsession with health or a standard healthy person has influenced medicine to strive in that direction. Once medicine began using specific terminology like BMI’s, food pyramids, and diets, society adopted these terms and expanded them to include strange and often poor ways of managing health. Focus on health or an ideal healthy individual has created a social dialogue in which everyday consumers search for the next thing which will make them healthy. I’m thinking of *The*

User's Guide to Cheating Death, a show where Timothy Caulfield²² examines metaphysically based scams which target people's fears about death, health, and appearance. Caulfield argues that media has created a false sense of how far technology has come. Advertisements or fake news articles have convinced consumers that there are scientists, medical professionals, or gurus out there who know exactly how to gain the perfect body for a lump sum of money. Also, society has developed a need for quick fixes and answers, and the medical community bears the brunt of society's wrath when medicine doesn't have all the answers in a timely manner. Society's thirst for health creates diet plans, supplements, and workout routines which then return to the medical community for research into their effectiveness. Medicine then spends time trying to debunk and explain how complicated the human body is, only to have a new craze pop up and repeat the cycle. The two forces—society and medicine—continue to play off each other as doctors try to encourage healthy lifestyles for their patients, and society continues to suggest sometimes outrageous methods of acquiring good health.

Neither model on its own meets fully with the needs of disabled people. We are not yet at a point in our society where we can address subtle injustices with calm cohesive understanding. It is easy for disabled people to become distraught by the difficulty of overcoming societal views to gain proper representation and acceptance. Depression may set in as one views oneself as incapable and invalid, even when one can live a relatively normal life. We must acknowledge the influence each has on one another and begin identifying ways to create a new strong unified method that contains aspects of

²² Timothy Caulfield is a research director for the Health and Law Institute and chair of Health and Law Policy at the University of Alberta, Canada.

each and perhaps even goes beyond both. By recognizing the ways society disables people, we can use medicine to consider how to “cure” the problem not the person. By identifying the reductionist tendencies of the medical model, society can help teach medicine how to respect disabled people’s lived experiences. We can start to make changes, moving from a medical community that cures to a medical community that heals. To unify these models requires sidestepping the tendency to pick one and argue for its legitimacy; we must use a different rhetoric.

CHAPTER 4: SNAKES, MÉTIS, AND WOMEN (A SLIGHT DEVIATION)

A Side Story on The Neurologist's Office

It was in early spring, right after starting back to school. I was at the Cleveland Clinic, talking to the attending physician to my neurologist.

“I’ve still been having trouble with panic attacks,” I start first thing when I enter the office. Since Cleveland Clinic is a teaching hospital, I technically see three people every time in the same order: a nurse who takes the preliminary vitals and verifies my medication list, an attending physician who performs slightly more difficult tests, and at the tail end the head specialist who usually just stops in to shake my hand before sending me out the door.

“Okay. We can get to that. First, let’s check your vitals.” The attendant is a young Middle Eastern man in his last month of residency. He was also the one who confirmed my diagnosis to me, or at least it was the first time I remember hearing it said with confidence. From the beginning I could tell I didn’t really like him, mostly because I could sense a lack of bedside manner. I am a little wary of male doctors, especially as I’ve spent more time around them, for the same reason.²³

“Stand on one leg. Now the other.” He gives a routine of commands to me, tricks to perform that supposedly give him some insight into the progression of my disease. As usual, he doesn’t explain these tests, he just directs me through them. Often, they are accompanied by a simple “good.”

²³ Maybe this is sexist, but I have yet to meet a male neurologist I have liked.

“So, you’re still having anxiety?” he asks.

“Yeah. It’s stopped me from going to class a few times. The breathing exercises haven’t worked either.”

“Hmmm...” he looks over the computer. “You’ve stopped coming to see the psychiatrist here at the clinic,” he observes.

“We couldn’t keep driving up here every week. Plus, it wasn’t helping. He wasn’t doing anything but telling me to do breathing exercises. I couldn’t even tell if he was paying attention or not.”

“Hmm.” Again, this is followed by the side of his face as he studies the screen.

“I think it’s the Copaxone.”

“It’s not that,” he immediately responds. “Being diagnosed with a chronic illness is difficult. It can be a heavy burden on you. And you went back to college already. That’s a lot of stress too.”

“I can’t just sit at home. My life isn’t over,” I speak softly; I haven’t fully committed to this line of thinking just yet.

“But it might have been too fast,” he asserts. “There is no such side effect listed for Copaxone. I have never heard of this before.” He looks me over before quickly returning to the computer. “It could be a hormonal thing. Or it could be the amount of stress you’re under.”

“But the only thing that’s changed is the medication. That or the lesions. Is there maybe a lesion on the part of my brain which controls the production of that hormone?²⁴”

Before the words can even finish coming out of my mouth, he is shaking his head. His whole body exudes the feeling of impatience, as if I should just accept his words and move on.

“There is no one center of the brain which controls that hormone production. Besides that, all your lesions are in the grey matter, so they won’t affect your hormone production. More than likely it is the result of increased stress. Maybe you should rethink your career choice. College is stressful.” It finally hits me that in the span of this conversation he has maybe looked at me twice.

“Are you saying this is all in my head?” I ask. The question throws him off-guard.

“No, I didn’t say that. I am simply saying that there are many reasons you could be dealing with anxiety that don’t relate to the medication.”

“But you’re telling me it’s me. That this has nothing to do with my MS, with the medications, with anything but being a stressed-out woman.” I rarely get angry with people, but when I do it is a difficult emotion to hide.

“Well, I mean, it is understandable. You’ve been through a lot, so it isn’t unwarranted. I think you just should have taken a little more time to cope first.” He seems to be backtracking a bit.

²⁴ Secretly I was trying to give him a chance, a chance to explain away my panic attacks in a way I couldn’t argue with. Now I see that I was giving him a scapegoat, a chance to blame me and my physiology for my problems instead of facing them and dealing with them.

“I have holes on my brain, and you’re telling me it’s my fault I’m having panic attacks?” I’ve now become a little frantic. The resident looks unsure what to do next.

“I’m going to give you a minute to calm down. Let me speak with the doctor.” He gets up and quickly leaves, casting a sidelong glance at the “hysterical” woman he is leaving behind.

Why I have Deviated into Feminism

I have decided to call this section a deviation, because while it has relevance to my topic of disability, rhetoric, and identity, it is also a subject which could produce enough material for a dissertation all on its own. There are multiple connections and threads between feminism and disability studies, as well as females and “deviance” as Foucault would categorize it. This section merely scratches the surface of a much wider and deeper discussion which can be had around how the female embodied experience intersects with the disabled embodied experience. While this is a jumping off point for further research, what is presented here is abbreviated for the sake of making connections to the current topic.

There are two reasons I feel the need to make a slight digression into feminist rhetorics, particularly related to disability, as we talk about metis. So far in this dissertation I have not fully discussed the ways that my gender has influenced my experiences, and I am compelled honestly to represent this side of the conversation. While I have never consciously noticed the intersections between my gender and disability, they are inevitably there. I make this move because, first I am a woman and cannot deny the role my gender plays in my experience as disabled, and second because

of the strong connection which has been made in culture between the feminine and illness.

First is because I am a woman; I have made minor connections so far between the difficulties of other minority groups and disabled people—like my epigraph at the beginning of the work from DuBois—but when it comes to feminism I see the tightest connection between my experiences as a woman and as disabled. These are hard experiences to unpack, because they come layered with multiple influences, from biological to cultural. For instance, women often apologize for taking up space or time. I find myself apologizing for my disability and the inconvenience it causes. These apologies are influenced by culture—women should be care givers not care takers—and biological—I can be highly sensitive to the emotional states of other people. I can see myself doing this for three reasons: 1) as part of politeness and a need to save face for others, to protect their expectations and assumptions about disabled people,²⁵ 2) because I have been raised in a society where the masculine is the normal and as a woman I am an other which must always be apologetic for my existence, and 3) because I find myself drawn to activities which are often coded as masculine, which tend to undermine the validity of my experience in those spaces (the martial arts center and higher education). I cannot deny how my gender has shaped my disease and how myself and others see it. For this reason, I see it as important that I give feminist theory a space in this dissertation.

My second reason for discussing feminism in relation to disability rhetoric is the many historical connections between women and illness. Literature provides us the most

²⁵ see politeness theory for more on this.

examples of how women are portrayed as ill, as less than the “impressive, healthy, male specimen.” An immediate jumping off point is “The Yellow Wallpaper,” an overly anthologized²⁶ piece of literature which easily demonstrates both the female and disabled experience. Further examples include *Jane Eyre*, and many of Virginia Woolf’s writings. In all these examples, the women are either ill or equated with illness. While most of these texts refer to madness, madness when speaking of women runs the gambit from post-partum depression to general anxiety disorder.

One text which enhances our understanding of the connections between feminism and disability is *The Mad Woman in the Attic*, by Gilbert and Gubar. In their analysis, Gilbert and Gubar make connections between fears about writing and common social illnesses like hysteria, anorexia, and agoraphobia. They state that

for if contemporary women do now attempt the pen with energy and authority, they are able to do so only because their eighteenth- and nineteenth- century foremothers struggled in isolation that felt like illness, alienation that felt like madness, obscurity that felt like paralysis to overcome the anxiety of authorship that was endemic to their literary culture. (1931)

Gilbert and Gubar are comparing the state of being a woman to the state of being disabled, or at least to having illnesses which socially and mentally disable women. Female writers have the task of fighting through their own madness, a madness imposed

²⁶ I say over-anthologized here not because I have problems with the work, but because it often tends to be used as the token example of women’s writing from the time. Discussions about it are often focused on how little control women had over their own bodies at the time. What doesn’t get talked about enough is how this work is an accurate picture of body autonomy and post-partum depression. I believe anthologies need to provide deeper examinations of this text which explore the disability or illness side of the text.

on them by society, to write. What is key about these texts is that illness must be fixed in some way, either by denying writing or partaking in it.²⁷ The literary connection between women and illness influences our culture's way of viewing disability, as well as my own views about myself.²⁸

Feminist Theories: Intersection and Voyeurism

Intersectionality and Voyeurism are two feminist theories which have helped me make sense of my experience as a patient in medicine. Voyeurism, an important theory in understanding feminism, is best explored in Laura Mulvey's "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." Mulvey explains the ways that the female form is objectified through film (scopophilia). Her discussion about how the fourth wall creates a barrier between the audience and the subject, while still allowing the viewer to watch the subject is like the ways that Foucault's panopticon maintains power.

When discussing the panopticon and the DAC, I was focused on the ways in which such a space contained the body, restricted its movement, and how disabled students were willing participants because they had no alternatives. However, there is another aspect of the panopticon: its voyeuristic nature. As stated earlier, "Full lighting

²⁷ It is also important to note that doctors were mainly male at this time, subjecting women to their limited and often flawed view of the female experience. Another noteworthy tidbit is that many women today have similar stories of men dismissing or mishandling their disease based on gender and gender norms. Not only were women's lives controlled by men, but for a large chunk of history, men wrote stories about women, where women were not allowed to write their own stories. The same thing happens with disability; many disability stories are told with able-bodied writers, produced with able-bodied, actors, or sponsored by able-bodied caretakers.

²⁸ A second text discussing a similar theme is Susan Sontag's *Illness as Metaphor*, which deeply examines the metaphors surrounding Tuberculosis and Cancer. Skinny, pale, with sunken eyes and weathered features is still a standard for models in the fashion industry, representing a societal view of what beauty should look like: this sickly look is reminiscent of Tuberculosis symptoms, harkening back to the Romantic era when such characteristics were in fashion. Sontag compares this to Cancer, which attacks all aspects of the body, and therefore continues to remind us of the corporal body we all inhabit.

and the eye of a supervisor captures better than darkness, which is ultimately protected. Visibility is a trap” (“Panoptism,” 214). Just as film creates a fourth wall which separates the viewer from the subject, the central guard tower creates a barrier between the guards and their wards. Voyeurism allows male viewers to indulge in the pleasure of viewing, while the female remains unaware of their presence; similarly, the guard is able to watch his wards without fear. Even better for the Warden, he is expected to watch his subjects carefully. In film, the subject of the camera cannot be hidden, even if she is supposed to be hiding from the villain, she is always visible on the screen. In the panopticon the ward is always visible, as there are no shadows to hide in or spaces without light. Voyeurism becomes a key component of the female and the disabled experience, creating an intersection between feminism and disability.

A second feminist theory which is of importance is that of intersectionality. Kimberle Crenshaw critiques legal doctrine which divides the experiences of black females into separate categories. Crenshaw demonstrates multiple legal cases where black women are faced with situating an experience of marginality into either their female experience (being prejudiced against because they are women) or their black experience (being prejudiced against because of their race). Even though both race and gender play a part in the black woman’s experience, and sometimes both racism and sexism work together against the black woman, often the law forces black women to situate their argument in either camp. Crenshaw calls for intersectionality, for the chance that black women can and should argue their lived experience as encompassing both race and gender, sometimes simultaneously. In relation to Crenshaw’s work, I see disability and gender playing equal and sometimes complimentary roles in my experience.

Especially in the case of dealing with doctors, I often find my gender informs a medical professional's interpretation of my symptoms, and my disease is often ignored as a possible cause for my conditions.

I will not be able to cover all these views in the space of this dissertation; however, I wish to highlight a few instances where the overlap between gendered female, serpent/trickster, and disabled or ill are visible. These intersections play into our cultural understanding and have lasting influence on how women are treated into the present day. For this reason, there is no escaping the fact that my gender will be placed in relation to my disease, and my gender will frame interpretations of my disease.

Women in Culture

Opportunities remain to re-member imaginatively, transversally, the feeling of raising serpentine energy along one's spine, sloughing off old skin, and slithering away in a sidewinding horizontal direction or down into the depths of uncertainty.

Kristin Pomykala

The history of interpreting the female body goes through similar jumps and changes to that of the disabled body discussed in the history section of this dissertation. Early on in history women's emotions were equated with their physiology, and this was then used to undermine female intelligence and personhood. As Grant Shreve notes in his historical discussion about hysteria, "Although diagnoses of hysteria date back to ancient Greece (hence its name, which derives from hysteria, the Greek word for "womb"), it was in the nineteenth century that it emerged as a linchpin of modern psychiatry, gynecology, and obstetrics" ("The Racialized History of 'Hysteria'", NP). What Shreve identifies in this quote is that the female body has always been linked to hysteria, to an "irrational state" of existence. Women constantly face ridicule for their more emotional

state of being, for their connection to emotional experiences and responses. Around the same time that the disabled body became an object of disgust—during the industrial revolution—the female body was being scrutinized for its connection with embodied experience. Despite multiple advances in women’s rights, women today still find themselves in a liminal space, one developed of constant contradictions or a need to deny their nature to fit in to a male world.

Women, or the female body, face a collection of contradictions when it comes to society’s beliefs. There are the contradictions of the double bind—being at once both the virgin angel and at the same time the sexually complicit mother—which force women to deny their interest in sexual encounters. There is the glass ceiling of the corporate world, in which a woman must act masculine and cold to assert dominance, while at the same time enduring the constant ridicule of being a bitch. There are women who live in abusive relationships, convinced they are unworthy of love beyond the one they are currently in, ignoring their instincts which tell them the situation is wrong. There are rape cases and female abductions, where women ignore their natural instincts that they are in danger because they have been taught that running away or seeking escape is strange or counter social norms. The state of living as a female is the state of denying emotion.

A couple of feminist authors align themselves with snakes, as I seek to do based on snake locomotion, I laid out previously. Just as snakes are often associated with deviousness, women battle against images of deviance. Kristin Pomykala, in her article “Snake(s)kin: The Intertwining of ‘Métis’ and Mythopoetics of Serpentine Rhetoric,”

compares this negative connection with snakes to her own experience, an experience influenced by Gloria Anzaldúa. Pomykala says of the female that

the fear of ceasing to exist or the fear of becoming ‘monstress’ may make the serpent-woman cling to the old and tattered protective layers with the false hope of certainty and security. Weakened, at risk of infection, she may fall into debilitating illness until, brooding underground, enough energy is regained to let go of the skin that no longer serves her, releasing it to the cosmic compost to nourish the growth of a birch-skinned goddess. (270-271)

Two things become apparent in this quote. First is the connection Pomykala makes between fear and weakness. Fear of “ceasing to exist” and “of becoming monstrous” paralyzes the woman from moving at all. We can connect this fear to the split between body and mind that masculine notions of power create. The state of being a woman is a state of embodiment (just as the state of being disabled is a state of embodiment): one cannot be without the other. However, embodied rhetorics for most of history have been invalidated by logo-centric theories. Despite the fact that humans live and experience the world inside of a body, an embodied way of interacting is often seen as marginal or abnormal. The invalidation of embodied experience dates to the birth of rhetorical theory, with a focus on logical over emotional decision making, or with Plato’s focus on transcending to a completely logical method of discourse. Even today, this creates feelings in those—like women, the disabled, and those who are both—of invalidation who cannot help but live an embodied life. As Pomykala says, the woman will be paralyzed with fear of not existing since her normal way of being is invalidated. This

means a woman will often ignore her emotions or instincts in favor of the logical approach. Even though, like the snake, a woman's embodied experience may lead her to want to use *métis* or counterstory, her fear of rejection, of becoming monstrous, will stop her. This potentially puts her in danger or as Pomykala suggests, "weakened and in risk of infection."

The second conclusion we can draw from Pomykala's quote is a continued equivalence between the state of being a woman and being ill. Counter to the many masculine tales of divine inspiration or ecstatic frenzy which accompanies writing, the female author's experience is always metaphorized with illness.²⁹ Hysteria, mania, melancholy, and other mental diseases are all connected with the female author. Pomykala is making a connection between remaining stagnant and illness, which is different than previous notions, but it again plays into the connection between women and a state of disability.

There is even a connection to be made between the female and the monstrous in Pomykala's quote. Pomykala is making connections to her own work and that of Gloria Anzaldúa in *Borderlands: La Frontera* who states that "according to Christianity and most other major religions, woman is a carnal animal, and closer to the undivine" (17). Seeing women in such a way comes from two spaces: the male lusting after the female figure (Laura Mulvey), and a male sense of righteousness or superiority. Despite associating women with a 'carnal animal,' society will expect women to act as divine

²⁹ Again, we are drawn to Sontag and the metaphor of illness. While she only examines Tuberculosis and Cancer, it is easy to see how many illnesses become connected to gender.

pure beings, revealing a dual or contradictory understanding of women which feminist rhetorics explore, combat, and complicate.

These aspects of Pomykala's quote could be further extended to the importance of *métis* for female authors, for the disabled experience, and to how *métis* can heal the disabled female. Relevant to this rhetorical moment is the connection between women, disability, and the snake.

Women and Snakes

In the chapter on *metis*, we talked about the movement of *metis*; the sideways slithering that also propels the rhetor forward. *Metis* can also be applied to feminist rhetorics, where an embodied experience slithers around gender norms.

There is a longstanding connection between snakes and women which suggests a female ability to embody *Metis*; an ability often smothered and invalidated to the point of being hidden deep within the subconscious. These connections between the female and the snake are either denied by patriarchal structures or assigned negative connotations which prevent women from exploring this power on their own. Some examples of this are the stories of *Metis* and *Eve*. The goddess *Metis* was seen by *Zeus* as too powerful, and he swallowed her to gain her power and stop her from overthrowing him. *Metis* receives little mention in Greek myth, besides this story, besides how dangerous she is to the order of things. *Eve* is also seen as a negative figure, as she convinces *Adam* to share in her fall from grace. She is easily convinced by the snake to partake of the fruit, and then convinces *Adam* to join her. Yet, not all interpretations of snakes are bad. The snake does occupy a liminal space on the borders of multiple worlds. Pomykala writes, "Sexuality,

fertility, guardianship, vengefulness, magic, healing, and boundary-crossing are all within the snake's domain, although more positive and complicated meanings are often lost on the popular imagination" (266). Anzaldúa also makes connections between all these aspects in *The Borderlands/La Frontera*, noting strong positive connections with snakes. She calls the rattlesnake her *tono*, or spirit animal, and devotes a section of her book to discussing how she came to connect with the great serpent of the earth.

Anzaldúa also makes dual associations with the snake: "since that day I've sought and shunned them. Always when they cross my path, fear and elation flood my body" (48). Just as the snake has multiple forms of movement, it also has multiple interpretations. It is typical for a western audience to associate snakes with deviousness and lies, yet snakes can also be protectors or glorious specimens of beauty. By recognizing the dual nature of the snake, Anzaldúa makes a sidestep in her work away from traditional norms and toward a rich understanding of her spirit. This duality is also reminiscent of Julia Kristeva and her exploration of the other. Much like Pomykala and Kristeva, Anzaldúa embraces the other, the snake or animal self, to become whole. None of these women are afraid of their trickster nature. They take the abnormal—lying or tricking others—and turn it into a strength which supports them in telling their story.

Metis in Feminism

There are a few things which come up for me when reviewing my story of the neurologist's office. First is the voyeuristic nature of medicine, the need to "see" the patient while not seeing the person in front of them. Similar to the panopticon (in fact Foucault extended his definition of the space to include hospitals), a meeting with a

doctor is a performance on a singular stage, separated from others. In a voyeuristic way doctors watch a patient perform, making silent judgements about the performance. Unlike film, where the screen creates the fourth wall, doctors must create a fourth wall through professionalism and a divorced attitude towards patients. The focus of this voyeurism is the generalized disabled body, whether temporarily or permanently.

An intersection between disability and gender is the connection between this disabled voyeurism and the female body. Already the subject of voyeuristic advances, the female disabled body in the doctor's office is privy to a unique set of critical ideals. The female body is already equated with hysteria, with an excess of emotions, so it is easier to ignore the female when she expresses concerns about her symptoms. For thousands of years, it was believed that there were no differences between how to treat the male and female body in medicine, so symptoms which did not align with the male experience were invalidated. While medicine has made advancements, medical practitioners continue to dismiss strange, unusual, or distinctive symptoms as irrelevant. Even though my panic attacks were/are real symptoms, I continue to feel that my neurologists viewed them as an unrelated ailment connected to my gender instead of my disease. My male neurologists were borderline combative about connecting symptoms to my medications or disease, while female neurologists have appeared to agree with me for the sake of agreeing. The fact that I have a female body intersects with my disabled state to create a body medicine invalidates.

So how does *métis* fit into all of this? *Métis* is the sidestep, the ability to respond to voyeurism without playing into the hysterical woman. The female body for thousands

of years has been considered lacking, less than, disabled. While the intersection between female and disabled can cause extra frustration, it also means women have become more strategic about approaching doctors when ill. Métis becomes even more vital when a woman has to deal with a disabled female body. Métis is the disabled woman who takes charge of her health without becoming hysterical. She will do the research to confirm her symptoms are real and will demand better treatment without causing a scene.

I have chosen to claim métis for feminism alongside disability because I can see how it could help the female body in rhetorical situations. My interpretation of métis suggests that the disabled body embodies métis rather naturally, however further research is needed to determine if the same can be said for the female body.

As I suggested before, this deviation into feminism only scratches the surface of the intersection between disability, women, and rhetoric. Many feminist scholars, such as Amber Knight, Margret Price, Brenda Brueggemann etc. are also disabled. They make clear connections between their experiences as women and their experiences as disabled. They often use counterstory to examine their experiences. Some may think that the use of personal experience is manipulative, however, using the metaphor of the trickster, I wish to show that métis has far less nefarious intentions.

The Metis of a Disabled Female Trickster

Even though the trickster figure is often labeled the villain, her role is far more ambiguous. Deldon McNeely, in *Mercury Rising: Women, Evil, and the Trickster Gods*, and Joseph Maurone, in “The Trickster Icon and Objectivism,” both help expand the definition of trickster into the murky waters of psychoanalysis. What becomes clear from

these two texts is the value of a trickster figure in modern life, specifically as a chance to, as McNeely states, “play off of the dominant authority, and by [the tricksters] contradictions bring issues to light and reinforce the basic structure of the society by their clarification of fundamental conflicts” (19). Similarly, Maurone rightly situates the trickster “at boundaries or crossroads, sometimes navigating them, sometimes creating them” (229), where the trickster doesn’t live on one side or the other, but dances along the line as she pleases. It is this line-walker who I want to use as part of my metaphors for how *métis* functions.

For me, tricksters inhabit and make use of the grey areas between the dichotomous world that demagogues often construct. They can easily do something selfish which benefits everyone, or something altruistic which hurts thousands. A well-developed hero could do the same thing, but heroes are often based off ideals which are hard to live up to working within the binaries of good and bad which can support ableism.³⁰ McNeely recounts that the hero will inevitably generate the need for a trickster figure, as the hero’s “very existence calls out for a trickster who violates boundaries, ridicules righteousness, and poses ethical questions” (19). To McNeely, the trickster is meant “to further awareness and communication between all possible factions” (19), meaning that the trickster, despite his association with lying and deceit, is in fact the one who facilitates communication.

³⁰ For instance, Superman is not only unstoppable, but he also has a moral code which enhances his superhuman appeal. While we aspire to be like Superman, we often cannot live up to this ideal.

This also reminds me of discussions around Lord Byron's *Cain* and John Milton's *Paradise Lost*. In both texts, the trickster, Eastern religion's most prominent trickster the Devil or Lucifer, is the most compelling character. In *Cain* Lucifer makes a strong case against his involvement in the fall of man. In *Paradise Lost*, despite his best efforts to glorify God and condemn the Devil, Milton's portrayal of the Devil is seen as a tragic hero instead of a villain. These are prominent examples of trickster figures inhabiting a grey area where dichotomous thinking gets disrupted (I could also name *Grendel*, *Wuthering Heights*, *Of Mice and Men*, and *The Grinch Who Stole Christmas*—especially the movie adaptation—as other examples). As Dolmage is quoted earlier, the strength of metis, of tricksters, of the disabled is the alternative knowledges they use which are a “cunning threat” to more lateral forms of speaking.

As Laura Mulvey suggests in “Visual Pleasure in Narrative Cinema,” women in film are constantly subjected to the voyeuristic eye. The female on the screen has no safe place away from the cameras; we could compare her to a prisoner in Michel Foucault's panopticon. There is no need for bars on the screen; the edges of the frame contain her in a constant light box. She is always seen. Similarly, the disabled body is always seen, is always marked as disabled and therefore watched with unwavering eyes. Disabled people are constantly under surveillance by caretakers, family, or concerned citizens, especially in some of our most private moments. So how do we escape this voyeurism? What good is metis to the body constantly under “the gaze?”

My mind drifts to Loki in the *Avengers* for an example of our shared panopticon space and how to handle the panopticon. Like many other tricksters, he is at one point

caged in a circular cell with glass windows—perfectly lighted so not a shadow is cast on even an inch. The same goes for Hannibal Lecter in *The Silence of the Lambs/Red Dragon*, and Kan in *Star Trek: Into Darkness*. Even in *The Dark Knight*, a film known for its dark and gritty staging, has its main villain, the Joker, isolated in a cage, spotlight shining down on him and no obstructions around the bars. These characters charm with their words, think quickly on their feet, and counter common rhetorical theories or methods, and the main form of captivity is to try and eliminate any method of hiding, and shadow to disappear into.

It seems that the point is the light will keep them bound, will force them to stay put. Foucault states, “Full lighting and the eye of a supervisor captures better than darkness, which is ultimately protected. Visibility is a trap” (“Panoptism,” 214). A vital component of the panopticon is that the prisoner cannot escape the watchful eye of her captor. However, none of these trickster characters remains trapped for long. All escape through well thought-out plans involving intricate moving parts. So, the question is, why do the conventions of the panopticon not work on them? Why do they not feel compelled to act accordingly, or how do they use their metis to escape?

In a small glimmer of metis, Baratunde Thurston, in his TED Talk about the rhetoric of white supremacy makes an insightful connection. He turns white supremacist news article headlines into anti-racist ones, playing with the wording that would make him inferior. He notes that, “there is a structure to white supremacy, as there is to misogyny, as there is to all systemic abuses of power.” This is true of the panopticon as well. Thurston goes on to say “we can change the action, which changes the story, which

changes the system that allows these stories to happen. Systems are just collective stories we all buy into.” I interpret *metis* as a type of storytelling rhetoric, a counterstory, in which a deft rhetor recognizes the system, and then sidesteps it. In this way, Loki succeeds because he recognizes the system (panopticon) and sidesteps the power systems (surveillance, routine, and conformity). Instead of conforming, he continues to embody his own ideals and strength, standing tall and stating with confidence his beliefs. He makes comments about who is coming next, the good cop or bad cop, recognizing how interrogation works and making a mockery of it. He uses the surveillance cameras much like a talk show host would, speaking to the audience watching, because to him there is no punishment, they could inflict which would suppress his ideals. I see this as a sidestep, as not absorbing the stories or accepting the ways power is being asserted. It is in this way, this comfortable side-step, that I believe *metis* is embodied.

It may seem strange that I would willingly associate myself with such villainous characters as Loki or Hannibal Lecter, but perhaps it is because we share a common space. Foucault says of the panopticon cell that “They are like so many cages, so many small theaters, in which each actor is alone, perfectly individualized and constantly visible” (“Panoptism,” 214). I am reminded of my time in the Disability and Access Center, testing for my qualifying exams: cut off from the outside world, I sit alone, and yet I am still performing. Like Hannibal Lecter, my little cell does not cut me off completely: I still have an audience of surveillance personnel to perform for. The point of a test is to convince the professors that I know what I am talking about, even when I am uncertain, or my memory fails me. Added to this pressure to perform is the stress of grades and academic achievement. Even though I speak not a word, I still find myself

cognizant of every action I make. I am enacting a story, a persona for the CVC cameras, the one of the quiet, obedient students, the one who will not cause trouble. In the same way, these villains enact a rhetoric, sometimes with words and sometimes without speaking at all.

In the case of the disabled female trickster, her job is to bring to light the nature of the panopticon. Separately, the female body faces the voyeuristic eye as her main type of entrapment, continually being watched and judged by someone. The disabled body faces the physical space of entrapment, placed in spaces which allow for careful monitoring and breed conformity. Combined, the disabled female faces both physical entrapment and voyeurism, creating an intersection that a trickster, a strong *métis* user, can avoid. The female disabled trickster is best suited to inhabit the intersection her existence creates. Through her, we can see the connections between disability and gender, as well as how power structures can be manipulated.

CHAPTER 5: APPLYING MÉTIS

Side Story about Disability Letters

The first semester after registering with Disability Services at Youngstown State, I received an e-mail saying my accommodation letter was ready and I would have to come and pick it up. The procedure had been explained to me earlier, but now enacting it stands out in my mind as a moment I first realized something had changed in my life.

I drove over to the Disability Services building, a small box of brick and mortar at the side of the road on the border between the campus and the city. Such a tiny space to accommodate so many needs, somehow Disability Services managed. I walked into the building, made a left, and approached a large desk.

“I’m here for my letter,” I said, glancing around nervously at the mostly empty building. Obviously, everyone else had already gotten their letters, or perhaps they were coming later.

“I need your ID number,” the secretary said, a student worker, already bored this early in the day. I handed her my student ID, watching her scan it quickly before putting it back on the counter.

“You need to sign a few forms.”

“Okay,” I said, a little puzzled. I had already signed a bunch of papers, talked to multiple people. What more did they need? Turns out that what they needed was an agreement: I would not share the recordings I made during lectures with other students, I would sign up for testing accommodations at least a week before classes began or risk

forfeiting the privilege, and I was responsible for alerting my instructors of my need for accommodation. I scribbled a signature across all the documents, while the student worker printed out a copy of my letter.

“You have to make copies of it on your own. Give it to the professors either before the first class or after but try to get them out before the end of the first week.”

“Okay. Where do I make copies?”

“There are copy machines on campus,” the student worker replies, gathering up the other documents to file.

“Oh...” Not knowing what to say next, I mumble a simple goodbye and hurry out the door. Once in the privacy of my car, I decide to read my letter. It is printed on college letterhead, looking rather official, more like a letter of recommendation instead of an accommodation statement. It also looks generic, as if it was created with a template, which it was.

The letter read:

Brielle Campos has supplied Disability Services (DS) with documentation that qualifies the student for the services indicated below.

The purpose of providing accommodations is to ensure that the student has an equal opportunity in the class. However, the University is not required to modify any essential requirements in the program of instruction or to provide accommodations when the request poses an undue hardship. If you have questions regarding issues of requirement or hardship, please contact the DS at ###-###-####.

Specific accommodations the student is eligible to receive:

Instructors must apply classroom accommodations as long as they do not fundamentally alter an essential element of the course/assignment. If you have any questions or feel that an accommodation would alter an essential element, contact the DAC as soon as possible.

Food and/or Drink

Reasonable Allowance for Tardiness

Sunglasses and/or Hat in Classroom

Audio Record Lecture

Use of Laptop/Tablet in Class

Reduced Distraction Environment for Exams/Quizzes

Extra Time Tests/Quizzes 50% (Does not apply to take home tests)

Speak with the student about implementation. Accommodations are not intended to be applied retroactively and reasonable notification must be given via this letter to facilitate implementation. Maintain this record for the duration of the semester. All information is strictly confidential.

Disability Services

Reading this letter over in the car, I realized for the first time that my disability was real. Even though I didn't want accommodations, here I was needing them and asking for them from my professors. I was immediately uncomfortable. I wasn't the type of person to make a spectacle of myself in class: I wouldn't answer questions

immediately unless no one else would talk; I wouldn't brag about grades or point out my difficulties. I kept to myself mostly and made few friends. Now I was being forced to approach my professors, looking relatively healthy, and hand them a letter saying I was imperfect. How was I supposed to do that? What was I supposed to say? What would they even ask from this letter?

I contemplated throwing the letter out as I sat in my car looking it over again. Do I really need these accommodations? I was feeling better. Maybe I could get by without them. Immediately I was reminded of a week previously. I had been walking across the campus, a walk I had done thousands of times before being diagnosed, when my heartrate went through the roof. I began to sweat profusely, and I felt my chest constrict. It was a feeling I had never truly felt before, like running a marathon in only four steps. I had to stop right where I was, only a couple of feet from the building. My heart rate wouldn't slow down, my mind raced with a million thoughts of what was wrong, and each thought brought more symptoms to the surface: my stomach rolled, my palms became sweaty, and I felt faint. I was having the first of many panic attacks, an issue I had never had before my diagnosis.

My thoughts then drifted back to the week I spent at Cleveland Clinic, the week which had felt like a month given how often I was in and out of consciousness. How would I ever remember my course information if that happened again? I couldn't even read my assignment sheets in that state; how would I complete my courses if another relapse happened? Reluctantly, I shoved the letter into my bookbag and headed for class.

What Métis “Looks” Like

In the previous section entitled “What does Métis Look Like?” I referred to *métis* as a rhetorical sidestep, referencing a few metaphors to give a visual representation. I have provided physical examples of what sidestepping is, along with an example from Michael J. Fox, but what does *métis* look like in a rhetorical situation? To discuss this further, I wish to return to Fox for a moment and then apply this theory to an academic writing situation.

Since his diagnosis with Parkinson’s Disease, Fox has been an advocate for disease modifying research. Once Fox became comfortable with his identity as a Parkinson’s patient, he became more vocal about research and funding for Parkinson’s. When Fox appeared before Congress, he made the rhetorical decision to use his body and his embodied experience as evidence. He was able to sidestep the supercrip stereotype—he did not appear to have overcome his illness—as well as the bitter and maladjusted persona—he was not angry or volatile.

The same can be said for his response to Limbaugh’s comments. Fox focuses his response—not to meet Limbaugh with equal force and *ad hominem*s, but to explain why he wanted to support the senator, as well as the damage Limbaugh caused the Parkinson’s community. In both cases Fox exemplifies *métis*. He sidesteps a trope or negative comment and chooses to respond to the issue instead of the attack. Equally important, Fox uses his embodied experience as a rhetorical tool; he evokes pity without being pitiable. As we transition to the university setting, we will continue to see disabled people

sidestepping the harmful nature of these tropes to instead use them in new and unique ways.

Now that we have established the historic and societal forces which support ableism, as well as several metaphors for sideways movement, we can explore an instance of metis in action. To accomplish this, we will use Ami Vidali's study "Performing the Rhetorical Freakshow: Disability, Student Writing, and College Admissions." Briefly, Vidali studies the rhetorical astuteness of four disabled students applying for university. She coded their essays looking for key words and references to disability tropes. What she found was a consistent pattern; the students used their disability to talk about perseverance and overcoming, as if they were supercrips. When asked by Vidali why they chose their topic, it was clear the students have some idea that the trope would improve their chances of getting accepted into university. However, none of the students were willing to admit that they had purposely used pathos, sympathy, and perseverance as a structure to help them sway readers. In the following sections I will explain why this is metis, their innate sense to use it in Rhetoric, and why it is important to encourage a metic approach for disabled people.

Ableism at the University

My disability accommodation letter along with Vidali's research are examples for the rhetorical situations that disabled people find themselves in at the academy. Often, disabled people face competing forces when it comes to their status as a disabled individual; a disabled person has a right to privacy when it comes to their medical records, but often a disabled person will have to disclose information to garner

accommodation or must construct a persona involving their disability. To receive accommodations for my disability, I was required to gather evidence from my private life. I had to reveal intimate details about my experience to the access center so they could determine which accommodations were available to me. They then constructed a letter which further publicizes my having a disability. This public invasion of the private is surprisingly in line with the ADA. Even though I have a right to keep my medical records private, there are inevitably situations where I need to disclose my condition, or I won't be accommodated. This means that I as a disabled person must be prepared to respond to these situations when they arise, using *métis* when possible to sidestep prodding questions.

This is both an example of how my previous understandings of disability shaped how I handled my own illness, as well as the fine line between “outing myself” and getting the assistance I needed. Even at MTSU, my first two semesters I had to deliver my letters; they have only just recently implemented an online forum, and that is still a bit of an “outing” as I reveal that there is something “wrong” with me. Previously I saw disability based on the medical model as a disease which was undesirable and meant I was incapable of accomplishing my goals unless I was cured. I was under the impression that as a 22-year-old, I should be capable of making it through my undergraduate degree without issue. As Dolmage states in *Academic Ableism*, “the ethic of higher education still encourages students and teachers alike to accentuate ability, valorize perfection, and stigmatize anything that hints at intellectual (or physical) weakness” (3). Now that I was disabled, I was subconsciously made to feel that any request I had was an imposition. All these statements written in black and white suggest that I as a disabled person could and

will ask for something which I did not earn or deserve.³¹ Similar to the way society favors a masculine, white, cis way of thinking, the academy favors able-bodied achievement. Legally, a university will and should protect the integrity of its classes. However, the current thoughts about university policy give instructors the freedom to implement ableist practices, whether or not they realize it.

Disabled persons are constantly in a rhetorical state: they are living their embodied experience as a disabled person, but they must also be ready to recreate their story to please able-bodied individuals, especially ones who have power over their existence. *Métis* is a rhetorical strategy which can help disabled individuals navigate this bind, however the disabled must be taught that *métis* is not manipulation or that using *métis* does not make them an evil person. I believe that disabled people innately learn *métis* as part of coping with the status of being disabled, and therefore do not need to be taught how to use it, but instead convinced to use it. As discussed in the history section of this dissertation, the use of rhetorical techniques outwardly is often seen as manipulative, however giving disabled people the chance to use *métis* allows them to work around societal barriers for their own benefit.

I am not alone in this feeling, as Ami Vidali reveals in her research on college admissions essays. In her work “Performing the Rhetorical Freakshow: Disability, Student Writing, and College Admissions,” Vidali examines the admissions essays of three disabled students applying for college. She then interviews these students to discuss

³¹ This is further complicated by a lack of self-worth which followed me from my early childhood where bullying caused me great distress. I avoided confrontation at all costs, and often felt that whatever I got in a situation (money, support, friendship, etc.) was what I deserved. Until I realized that the system was broken it was impossible for me to stand up for myself.

their motivations and rhetorical choices while writing. Vidali states that “For those with disabilities, writing personal essays for educational purposes not only invades and erases marginalized identities...it also reifies existing rhetorical tropes that position disability as always and only a personal identity” (618). The author argues that personalized essays written for the university often force students to reuse tropes, reuse negative stereotypes like the maladjusted, the burden, and the supercrip to describe their experience, creating a standard disability narrative that pleases the assessment team. Vidali continues:

While [the students’] essays’ ‘happy endings’ are partially influenced by the genre of autobiography and all applicants focus on potential for academic success, such expectations are compounded by the larger cultural discourse that expects people to ‘overcome’ their disabilities through acts of talent, kindness, and inspiration. (627)

Vidali recognizes here that students are not just influenced by the vague and often prescriptive nature of personal essays, but also a societal requirement that disabled people prove their ability to function in society despite their limitations. The college admissions essay demonstrates a rhetorical space where disabled students consciously or unconsciously choose to enact the supercrip stereotype in writing to prove their ability to succeed at university. What students don’t realize is that the act of manipulating this trope for their own gain is a form of *metis*, akin to that of Michael J. Fox and his visit with congress (mentioned in a previous chapter).

While disabled people may not understand their existence as rhetorical, Vidali points out that students do know how to use rhetorical tools innately while writing

personal essays. While talking with one of the students, named Rebecca for the purposes of the study, Vidali asks why she decided to tell the story she did and why she chose to end her story the way she did. Vidali says, “it is not that Rebecca was unaware of and or unable to articulate her rhetorical strategy,” but “instead she resists admitting that she even had a particular rhetorical strategy for fear of ‘looking bad’” (632). Rebecca knew she was manipulating her disability to create sympathy and justify her admittance into college, but to admit such a thing reflects the ‘trickster’ side of *métis* which society paints as sinister, a label Rebecca seeks to avoid. As discussed in the rhetorical section of this dissertation, logic and truth are rhetorical principles favored in society. Even counterstories such as Rebecca’s get painted as manipulation or trickery, which is considered evil and wrong. We see this in Rebecca’s denial of her rhetorical strategy. Vidali reverses the connotations of Rebecca’s work as part of the point of the study; the student was obviously more rhetorically savvy than instructors would admit if she knowingly manipulated a disability trope to her own benefit, based on a system which privileges those who know how to manipulate. Society may make manipulation out to be a bad thing, but is this a failure of the system, not a moral lapse for Rebecca.

In this situation the student Rebecca was trying to save face, to hide her rhetoric under the guise of not having any. This goes back to anti-rhetoric and people’s views of what rhetoric is. Rhetoric is associated with manipulation and therefore nefarious intentions. Rebecca resists associating herself with manipulation, despite the fact that she is expertly manipulating her embodied experience to convince a college application board to admit her into the program. Not only is Rebecca demonstrating rhetorical precision in her exigence, she is also skilled at facing rebuttals which may come with her choices. She

is rewarded for her skill by being accepted into the program even though she doesn't believe she has conquered her disease as mainstream stereotypes suggest she should. Rebecca is using a bit of *metis* without formally knowing about it, but as most disabled students do, she has an innate sense for it which comes with her status as disabled.

Based off Vidali's research, I conclude that it is not disabled people we need to teach about *métis*, but instead able-bodied people. Disabled people need to know what *métis* is and learn to accept it as part of their innate state of being, but able-bodied people need to be enlightened on how disability and ableism set up disabled people to learn *métis* as a survival technique. We must change the understanding of how manipulation should and does function in society and in rhetoric.

When I held my disability letter in my hand, I felt outed. Every time I had physically to hand a letter to a professor, I felt exposed. Yet, just like Rebecca, when it came time to apply for graduate school, I also used my disability in my personal essay. This holds a dual effect: in one respect I know it must be done to help me stand out from the crowd, and I am happy it worked. On the other hand, I feel exposed and undermined, revealing my disability to strangers and crafting a story of triumph when I still don't feel I've conquered my disease.³² It can put one easily in a state of paranoia: did I get in because I deserve to be here, or because of my disability?³³ Am I really earning my degree, or are my accommodations an unfair advantage?

³² I believe we all have moments of imposter syndrome but releasing feelings of inadequacy is vital to learning how to use *métis* effectively.

³³ This same emotion can be felt by African American, Latinx, and other minorities when they are accepted into a program.

Again, my theory of serpentine rhetoric and a *métic* framework would have been helpful here. I am now at the point where I speak about my disability with everyone, and though I have some reservations about it, I still feel confident owning my embodied state. A *métic* approach to disability letters could be constructing a letter of my own, one to go along with this Disability Center letter—something which explained how my disability became a strength, as Hawhee suggests when she defines *métis* as having the skills of a craftsman.³⁴ I could say something like, “as food is a necessary requirement for me in the classroom, I am willing, with permission, to demonstrate my well learned cooking skills by providing food for the whole class” to counter the blatant statement that I am allowed food and drink. Knowing how to slither through the ableist rhetoric which survives in systemic institutions is a difficult but vital skill for the disabled.

Another Conversation in the Margins

Another conversation which has happened in the comments feature in Word is one about the usefulness of my disability letter as an example of *métis*. Based off my conversation with Dr. Erica Cirillo-McCarthy, I feel it is important to talk about timing surrounding *métis*. The conversation went something like this:

Me: Could I use this disability letter as an example of *métis*?

Cirillo-McCarthy (ECM): Yes, the letter could be an example of *metis*. but it’s also about “on the spot” and “in the heat of the moment.” Could you consider developing one’s *metic* response so that while in this case you weren’t able to respond on the spot, that in

³⁴ Section quoted earlier (pp. 61): “*Mētis* is thus the mode of negotiating agonistic forces, the ability to cunningly and effectively maneuver a cutting instrument, a ship, a chariot, a body, on the spot, in the heat of the moment” (47).

the future you will? That metis is almost like a muscle or a habit that gets stronger with use?

Dr. Cirillo-McCarthy's comment showed me that I have been unclear about how I perceive the immediacy of *métis* when using it rhetorically. So, what is the timing associated with *métis*? My interpretation again goes back to Tai Chi. In battle, and even in practice, I cannot predict what my opponent will do until they are already in motion. I can practice different scenarios and train responses for what might happen, but until the attack is coming at me, I don't know what move to make. I see *métis* the same way.

While I can practice sidestepping ableism before it happens, I also must be prepared for the attack I don't see coming. The sidestep allows me to have an extra second to react.

Often writing is a response to a current event, situation, or experience. I highly doubt Fox went before Congress without planning his speech, but his response to Limbaugh was immediate based off the ableism which was coming at him. In Tai Chi we sidestep to give us time and control. By being out of the direct line of fire, a practitioner can decide what to do next. She has control over the situation; she can decide to fight, flight, avoid, or forgive. In this way *métis* can be both the planned speech which uses disability tropes or empathy to garner buy-in from listeners, but also the act of responding immediately to attacks.

Taking Back Power

There is something *metis*, snakes, Tai Chi, and tricksters all have in common: they do not conform to the three power structures of the panopticon. Briefly, a snake has multiple forms of motion, allowing it to move into tight spaces and seek out shadows to

hide even while under surveillance. Tai Chi relies on flow, on wu wei, to move around an opponent, instead of absorbing the strikes of another, and builds an autonomy even under the structure of specified forms. To me, the concept of a trickster figure best represents an amalgamation of how metis acts in a rhetorical setting, and how we as disabled people combat the panopticon and its commonplaces.

In other words, we—disabled students—need to become more like tricksters, using metis. The power of surveillance is believing that being surveyed is acceptable. The power of routine is in its capacity to enslave us. The power of conformity is believing that individuality is dangerous. The rhetorical technique metis asks us to step aside, to not absorb the power structures, but instead to notice them coming and expertly move out of the way like a masterful Thai Chi practitioner. This could be internal, like mantras about self-worth, or external like wearing bright colors. It could be personal, like asking for alternative accommodations, or it could be universal, like asking college boards why they don't reallocate money to specific resources. The panopticon is a place, but it is also a systemic power structure, which as Thurston suggests, means we disrupt it by disrupting the story, by creating our own counterstories and acknowledging the intersections between our embodied experiences. Who better than the trickster goddess Metis to disrupt these structures? Who better than the disabled body to change the story of how power is used?

APPLYING MÉTIS TO UNIVERSITY WRITING

I have come to realize that my previous view of myself was completely influenced by society's views about disability, and those views are constructed and propagated by ableist rhetoric. I had not originally intended for ableist rhetoric to take up so much space in my dissertation, but as I continued to work through my personal experiences and related them to *métis*, I found a need to explain what and how *métis* was a tool to combat ableism. There is an emphasis here on tool, as *métis* is not the only way. I would equate my interpretations of *métis* with a more passive rhetorical strategy, focusing inward and building strength through repetition—like learning a form in martial arts—in contrast to more active rhetorics, like social justice movements and direct addresses to inequalities. While both forms of rhetoric are valid and necessary, a lack of active rhetorics in this dissertation needs to be remedied.

Ultimately, this dissertation is a sort of personal pep talk, outlining all the ways I have failed to control my own identity by accepting the identities that society has created for me. From my first Tae Kwon Do testing with MS, to my current position as educator, I have repeatedly accepted that my disability makes me less than. For me, the way to overcome this is to do what I have always loved doing, “Telling a *story* to the universe so utterly, cosmically *perfect* that for a single, shining moment...the world believes a man can *fly*” [emphasis in original] (“Trust Me,” 8).¹ This story isn't for anyone but me; without these new stories I will continue to cling to the old rhetorics which have kept me connected to society's story for me. It is a chance to practice *métis*, to practice

¹ Repeated from pg. 71.

sidestepping all those ableist rhetorics, by not absorbing them in the first place.

Internally, I will have to constantly remind myself of the new me and will often find my mind is the hardest ableist to combat. But such a victory will be worth it in the end.

Seeing my dissertation as a writing to and for myself does not mean that I have forgotten to look outward as to how I can help those who also live an embodied life. In this final chapter, I suggest some connections to writing theory, culminating in a pair of classes which I hope someday to teach. As of this date I have not conceived of a *métis* centric class, however, I have several ideas of how to teach students about *métis* and train them to sidestep rhetorically. I also plan to include some documents, in a rough state, which would be used in these classes to guide writers to a sense of self.

Throughout this section, I will use writer and student interchangeably, as I see my students as writers, and I see writers as students of the craft. I try my best to conceive of courses which will benefit the largest group of students possible. However, I cannot deny the influences of my previous experiences on the decisions I have made as an instructor. I have had several jobs in which I was an instructor of some sort, from Tae Kwon Do to the university setting. In each teaching position I served a different population of individuals, resulting in my teaching adapting to fit the group I was working with. I have worked to demonstrate inclusive practices, even if this means that I am still learning new ways to be inclusive. It is always encouraging for me to self-reflect in a way which further creates empathy in my teaching.

A Side Note Too Big for the Footnotes

The focus of the first course I am about to present is to teach a combination of rhetoric and counterstory, using my status as a disabled person as an example for students. I expect that this class will be a bachelor level upper division course, attracting people from all walks of life, lasting one semester in length. Throughout this section, readers will notice that I will put “minority group” or “marginalized group” in quotes, where in the included materials there will not be any quotations. This is because for the students I seek to enlarge the definition of marginal/minority group to a point that is beyond the standard.

As a scholar I know the definition of a marginal/minority group is a collection of people who have historically struggled to be accepted as completely human in society. They are people who have been judged based on factors out of their control—age, race, sex, gender, ability, etc. Marginalized/Minority groups are created and maintained by the isms—ableism, racism, anti-Semitism, etc.—which use the demagogic principles that have been discussed throughout this dissertation to undermine the humanity of the marginalized/minority group. As a member of a marginalized group myself, I know that it is difficult to take ownership of an identity as a marginalized or minority person. This is especially true for people who fall under the white, cis, Christian, middle class categories.² I cannot expect students to take ownership of a minority identity by the end of a semester long course; if it took me nine years to take ownership of my identity as a

² I fall into the categories of white presenting, straight, and my family has tried to maintain middle-class values, even if I would categorize us as working poor. Surely these labels made becoming disabled even more difficult, as I was privileged with the multiple affordances my race and economic status provides.

disabled person, I could not possibly hope to expect a student to do that kind of work in the course of a semester.³ I planned and conceived of this undergraduate class as a collection of students much like the groups of students I taught at MTSU, which means that while minorities are present in the class, at least one third of the class is white, cis, Christian, middle-class men who will inevitably see themselves as not fitting into any minority category.

I personally ascribe to the belief that attempting to force students to view a perspective they have never encountered can lead to disconnect and shutdown. Instead, I prefer to deliver tools to students so they can make connections between their experiences and others, until they develop to the point that they can clearly see the differences between their own experiences and that of the marginalized group. Asking the young men in my classes, and sometimes even the young women, who have held privileges they do not understand to suddenly identify themselves as a minority may cause friction and pushback counter to my goals for the class. Beyond this, until this past year, I myself refused to identify as disabled because of the stigma that comes with it. Some students may feel forced if they are expected to reveal an identity they have not already owned or revealed to others. I have no intentions of outing a student in this class. It is for these reasons I have expanded the definition of “minority” and “marginalized” group; to protect students from situations which will hinder their learning of rhetoric, counter story, and ethnography. While we will critically analyze the struggles of minority

³ Obviously, students will come to this class from different backgrounds. Some students, such as POC, may already understand their identity as a minority, while some may be coming to terms with an identity like gay or transgender.

groups and their counterstories, I leave the door open for students to find their own group to represent based on their current level of comfort or safety.⁴

In each section I will present a course description and goals, and then a justification for readings. The justification for readings section presents most of the readings I have planned for the courses, along with descriptions of each text and a brief discussion of why it was chosen. Copies of the administrative documents—syllabi and assignment sheets—can be found in the appendix of this dissertation.

Undergraduate Course Description: “Autoethnography, Rhetoric, and Minority Studies”

In the course “Autoethnography, Rhetoric, and Minority Studies” students will practice identifying the rhetoric which has supported division throughout history. The students will also view themselves as a “minority group”, and use this perspective to grasp different rhetorical strategies, such as embodied rhetoric, metis, and rhetorical appeals, to combat negative rhetorics which try to suppress them. Students will complete an autoethnographic study of a “minority group” they feel a part of, demonstrating the tools they have acquired throughout the semester. Students will be required to critically evaluate a variety of texts looking for clues on how to write a strong minority autoethnography.

⁴ As stated earlier, some students may be coming to terms with minority identities. These students may feel threatened by the current rhetorics of society, or by physical threats (there have been multiple cases of gay or transgender people being bullied to suicide or beaten to death, as an example of fears these groups face). If a student doesn’t feel safe revealing a minority identity, despite the atmosphere I seek to cultivate in class, I do not want them to place themselves in danger for my class. I want students to question the racist, ableist, homophobic systems more than risking their physical or mental health.

Upon completion of the course, students should be able to critically evaluate texts for their rhetorical strategy. They should understand how to perform an ethnographic research paper and should begin questioning the social norms which create and maintain division. During the course, students will create writing communities to help with evaluation and revision of their work, and once they complete the course, they should be able to seek out such communities for further writing projects.

Writers will have three major assignments in this course. The first is a Personal Mission Statement and Stance on Writing (PMS). Part of teaching students about writing is meeting them where they are and pushing them to add to their toolbelt. To do this, students will write the PMS to give me a sense of what their writing experiences have been like and what they feel they know or need to know to become better writers (stance on writing). They will also outline goals for this class (mission statement). The stance on writing is akin to a literacy narrative, however I prefer not to refer to the document as such, since, like college acceptance letters, writers feel a need to focus on positive situations.⁵ The negative situations students have faced can be associated with some of the different minority groups they come from and are important for their development in the course.⁶

The second assignment is an Autoethnography of a moment in time. Again, this assignment might resemble a literacy or personal narrative (Ellis includes personal

⁵ See "Ableism at the University" in this dissertation for a discussion about Vidali and collage entrance essays. Just like the entrance essays, students feel the need to have happy endings or morals to their literacy narrative stories which I want them to push back against with this assignment.

⁶ For example, low-income students often have poor education, and are considered incapable of proper writing or speaking in "Standard American English." This places those students in a minority group and reflect a clear rhetoric which contributes to their oppression.

narratives as a type of ethnography); however, students will have to contribute strong critical analysis of this moment. Writers will write a story about a specific time or event, then use the tools they currently have, along with minor research on historical and social influences on that specific situation. I plan to encourage students to select an event which pertains or relates to themselves, but if writers find themselves pulled to write about an event they were not a part of, they are welcome to do so. While students do not have to speak on a specific minority situation just yet, they are welcome to use this essay as a bridge for the next. My focus for this essay will be that writers examine the experience for its academic value, for example if it presents some rhetorical move or holds a motive/meaning relative to a group.

The final assignment will be an Autoethnography of a Minority Group. In this assignment, writers will need to identify a “minority group” which they will perform quantitative and qualitative research on. Not only will students use their own experiences as part of this “minority group” but they will also conduct interviews with other “minorities” and academic research. The purpose of the paper is to explain to an audience what it means to be a part of this “minority group.” Writers can examine the shared values, language, experiences, and ideas which identify someone as part of the group. The essay will be an 8-page research paper, a 3-4-page reflection piece, and an optional 1-page scholarship essay expressing what being part of the “minority group” has contributed to the writer’s life. My hope is that students will start to see patterns in a group’s shared values and ideals which contribute to the ways those group members interact with non-group members. I also plan to push students to examine what makes

their “minority group” a “minority” and if the term really fits the individuals they have chosen to study.

Alongside these major assignments, students will have a list of readings which will be used as both examples of ethnographic research and serve as teachings for the experiences of different minority groups. Students will also complete discussion board posts and labor logs to track student progress and comprehension. All these assignments will focus on progressing students towards the five course goals I have conceived are most important for student growth.

Course Goals

There are five goals I have for a class like this, a course based around autoethnography and “minority studies.” First, I would want my students to redefine their definition of rhetoric. As I have tried to argue in this dissertation, rhetoric is not the evil enemy that many have made it out to be. Rhetorical strategy is woven into every interaction between humans, as we seek to convince others to listen to our ideas, accept us as humans, and communicate wants or desires. Rhetoric also has an embodied aspect to it which is even less respected than the term rhetoric itself. I want students to break the cycle of seeing rhetoric in a negative light. Even in my Fall 2020 class, my students evaluated any work which used rhetorical appeals as trying to deceive them or misguide them. If students have such a bad perception of such basic rhetorical strategies, then what will they believe about themselves when they realize how much rhetoric they use daily without realizing it? I want students to redefine and bring positivity to the term rhetoric, as they use it in class.

Second, I seek to help my students redefine disability. While the class itself is not centered around disability studies, I plan to use my own experiences and the material in this dissertation as examples to show students both the validity of using personal experience in writing, and the necessary parts of writing in an ethnographic style. My hope is that through my experience and an explanation about how marginalized groups are formed, students will begin to see how disability has been portrayed in the media. They can then redefine what it means to be disabled in an ableist world.

Third, I want my students to go beyond sympathy and develop empathy. To me, empathy is attempting to understand and connect with the experience of another human being, while sympathy is feeling sorry for or about a specific person or situation. Empathy is an active state which encourages action: to actively support the person or to seek understanding. Sympathy is passive; while sympathy may inspire someone to give money to a cause or person, it is a short-term fix to make the giver feel better, instead of a long-term fix which helps the receiver. I want my students through this course to learn a small bit about what it means to be a minority, so that they feel moved to be empathetic instead of simply sympathetic.

Fourth, students should gain an ability to critically analyze arguments, which leads into the fifth goal: getting students to question social norms and their construction. I want to encourage students to think critically about the many social norms which they live with and through that have influenced how they see “minority groups.” While a semester is not enough time to undo the years of social conditioning these students have gone through which creates the many divides between minorities and the majority, when

students can critically analyze their surroundings, they can begin the work of questioning how social norms become established and engrained in culture.

The goals for this course are ambitious, however with the focus of this class on autoethnography, I believe that students will gain a better understanding of what rhetoric is, how it is used for good and bad, and how to use *métis* and rhetoric to combat their own “marginalized” state. To accomplish these goals, students will need to practice personal writing, evaluating social norms, and writing strategies. They will develop their own writing community to feel safe sharing their work. They will need social norms to question, which I will provide through my own experiences as a disabled person. They will also need rhetorically dynamic examples, which I plan to provide from the list of sources in this dissertation.

The syllabus for this course, including the schedule (designed as a course meeting for one hour a day on Mondays, Wednesdays. and Fridays) and assignment sheets, will be included in the appendix of this dissertation.

Justification for Readings

I use the term readings loosely in this section, as many of the readings are YouTube videos and Ted Talks. I have selected all these non-academic sources because they perform a dual purpose; they introduce a minority group and an issue, but they are also chances for students to critically analyze the argument being presented. These readings will be supplemented by in-class discussion and discussion boards to give a full space for analysis.

There are only two books included on this reading list, *The Ethnographic I* and *On Writing*, mostly because I want to respect the labor writers have outside my class. I considered adding Patricia Roberts-Miller's book to my list but felt that time spent reading the chapters would detract from time spent analyzing other readings. Roberts-Miller's book will remain an alternative reading to King's *on Writing* based on its success and usefulness to students.

The Ethnographic I- As this class is about autoethnography, it is only fitting that this book which has inspired so much of my dissertation be shared with students in this class. *The Ethnographic I* is a great example of combining creative non-fiction with research. Ellis does a great job of interweaving her student's experiences with the theories relevant to ethnographic research. Reading this book is akin to being present in Ellis' class without needing to be enrolled at her university. My goal for using this book is to share Ellis's knowledge with my students, as well as convey the necessity of having some connection to a research topic. As stated earlier, for most of my college career I believed that personal narrative was off limits to the scholar. *The Ethnographic I* is one text which changed my mind, along with Aja Martinez's "A Plea for Critical Race Counterstory." Writers should feel capable of wielding all the tools of the trade in their work, and they shouldn't be afraid to use personal experience. Martinez argues that "As an interdisciplinary method, CRT [Critical Race Theory] counterstory recognizes that the experiential and embodied knowledge of people of color is legitimate and critical to understanding racism that is often well disguised in the rhetoric of normalized structural values and practices" (37). I would extend the importance of using counterstory to any minority group, especially in my case the disabled, as much of minority suppression

focuses on the body and an embodied experience which counterstory legitimizes. *The Ethnographic I* provides the tools for writers to create this type of research. While this book follows a graduate level course, I think that upper division undergraduates can at least grasp the concepts of Ellis' class and apply them to their own writing.

On Writing- King's memoir on writing reads like an autoethnography in the sense that he moves between life stories and advice on writing. What I most like about his book is that King doesn't make writing out to be a Walden-esque experience most students perceive it to be—where an author disappears into his little cabin in the woods, is struck by the muse of writing, and within a few months emerges with the next great American novel. King writes,

I don't believe writers can be made, either by circumstance or by self-will (although I did believe those things once). The equipment comes with the original package. Yet it is by no means unusual equipment; I believe large numbers of people have at least some talent as writers and storytellers, and that those talents can be strengthened and sharpened. (18)

Here King is saying what all writing instructors feel—that all students can be writers with practice and the will to do so. King is honest about the difficulties of writing and the amount of work and practice it takes to create good writing. This to me, reflects a major tenet of my own views on first-year composition: all students are writers, but not all students want or can devote the time to becoming excellent writers. My work, and what I hope students get from King's book, is to teach students to develop their process and feel comfortable with the type of writing I am asking of them.

King has been criticized in the past for his writing process, which might call into question the use of his book in this class. King devotes hours a day to writing, sitting down and not getting up until he has completed at least five pages of his current novel. When using this memoir, I plan to emphasize the style and rhetorical choices King has made, not his writing process, as it does not work for all writers. I expect students to see how easily King transfers from personal story to writing advice, so they may emulate his writing, not his writing process.

Mike Rowe “Learning from Dirty Jobs” Ted Talk- Rowe’s Ted Talk is an excellent example of using personal story to guide a discussion. Rowe references one of many stories from his show and uses it to explain his theory about the “war on work.” While his organizational skills seem a little haphazard, this Ted Talk is a good chance for students to practice evaluating, so they can point out what has been done right and what could be improved.

Baratunde Thurston “How to Deconstruct Racism One Headline at a Time” Ted Talk: My favorite thing about Thurston’s presentation is his game of changing news headlines. Thurston is probably closer to an understanding of *métis* in his game than I am with my counterstory, as his game is more immediate and responsive. I think Thurston’s game can be applied to all minority groups and is inspirational in the sense that it asks students to revise their views of news headlines. This will have to be accompanied by some supplemental discussion about the difference between news headlines and academic writing, along with entrenched racist practices and ideas, but it is worth it to inspire students to try his game for themselves.

Aja Martinez “A Plea for Critical Race Theory Counterstory” Article- Key

to my own coping with my minority status has been creating counterstory and feeling comfortable with such a practice. A main part of this class will be developing the counterstory for their own group, and for this reason introducing students to counterstory, especially early in the semester, will give them some definition and structure to their work. They can use the idea of counterstory to evaluate other works for the course and see how story can be incorporated into academic discourse.

Emanuel Ocho “Uncomfortable Conversations with a Black Man” YouTube

Video- This video series is a strong complement to Thurston’s game because Ocho brings to light the headlines and the statistics which contradict our internal bias about the black community. Thurston is suggesting a solution to racist headlines which perpetuate racism, while Ocho is pointing out the topics themselves. Ocho also seeks to have dialogues with others, identifying biases which contribute to the problem, and he is honest about his own feelings and biases. It is for this reason I want students to link the two videos and see the connection between media and the way we view each other. While not all students will be capable of creating these kinds of conversations around their own “minority groups,” it may inspire students to start conversations with their family, friends, and close peers.

Ami Vidali “Performing the Rhetorical Freakshow” Article:

A key part of Vidali’s research paper is that students with disabilities have learned to use college acceptance letters to their advantage. Able-bodied individuals may feel immediate distrust for disabled individuals after reading this article, but it is important that the able-

bodied population sees that the disabled manipulate stereotypes, not their own lived experience, in these types of writing. Even more important, Vidali points out that it is the system which prompts disabled people to manipulate it, by asking for stories of perseverance or overcoming obstacles, rhetorical situations ripe for the supercrip stereotype. Like most narratives, there is a need for writers to find meaning and purpose for their stories when others will be reading and evaluating them. This also relates forward to Kate Bowler and the prosperity gospel, to a need for order out of chaos and sense out of nonsense. Hopefully students will see how the need to impress and perform as a disabled person relates to other minority groups.

Graduate Course Description: Access and Writing Pedagogy

“Access and Writing Pedagogy,” a graduate-level course, is an introduction to writing pedagogy with a focus on theories which make classrooms more accessible. Throughout my training in pedagogy, I have found that inclusive pedagogies often lay groundwork for creating access as well. I could point, for example, to the anti-racist pedagogy of Asao Inoue. Inoue’s labor-based grading system would not just benefit students working while going to college, but also someone with a disease like mine which can steal energy and make it difficult to complete long tasks. It is my goal for students to learn about theories of writing which will inform and forward their teaching. I plan to also show the adaptability of these theories for creating an accessible course. I envision this class replacing a common “Teaching of Writing” course or being modified to supplement one. Students will leave the course with a fully constructed writing course design, including an access statement. I envisioned this course being one semester in length, although out of experience, a two-semester course would serve students better.

Students will have three major writing assignments, along with self-assessments, a teaching demo, and discussion/discovery work. The first assignment will be the Reading Study Guide Handout. The main goals for this assignment will be a) to practice designing accessible handouts and b) to condense information for others. Students will select a chapter from *A Guide to Composition Pedagogies* and construct a two-page handout conveying the main points of the chapter. This is based off a similar assignment from my Teaching of Writing course, only that assignment didn't require the document to be accessible. Future teachers should be able to condense information for students in a way that can be easily read and make sense, so practicing with these chapters will improve an important skill.

The second assignment is an Access Scholar Review. This five-page paper is a mini biography and major works list about a scholar in the field of accessible pedagogy. Students will select one individual in the field of writing pedagogy who in some way advocates for accessible practices. Then the student will give a brief biography of the writer and list some major works others can read. The goal of this paper is to introduce students to wider scholarship in the field, but I also hope it encourages further research into creating accessible classes.

While the teaching demo will be graded, I plan to grade it on completion and feedback instead of assigning a grade based on the content or presentation. To prepare for this demo, students should begin mapping out their teaching persona, or the person they wish to present to future classes. While this assignment is least related to accessible pedagogy, it is important for future instructors to practice delivering a course and

communicating ideas in their teaching persona so they can feel comfortable in the classroom.⁷

Students will complete three written letters which will be “graded”⁸ on completion: the Statement of Goals (SOG), the midterm self-reflection, and the end of semester reflection. The SOG is a chance for students to communicate to me what they wish to learn from this course. From my work at Youngstown State University’s Reading and Study Skills Center, as well as my martial arts training, I have learned the importance of having SMART goals, and many of the questions associated with the SOG will relate to developing SMART goals about teaching. At midterms, I expect these students honestly to evaluate where they are at and how they feel they are progressing. Finally, the end of semester reflection asks them to think critically about what they have learned and whether they wish to incorporate anything into their teaching plans. I have found these letters helpful in other courses for helping students progress and causing metacognition.

Finally, students will submit a teaching portfolio at the end of the semester, including a syllabus, assignment sheets, grading rubrics, and an access statement. This portfolio can be used to propose a course, as preparation for a first-year writing course, or as part of their teaching portfolio for the job market. Key to this portfolio will be its accessibility for all students, as well as a clear teaching persona that comes through in all documents. I am asking students to create an access statement, because I feel that future

⁷ I would say this relates to my dissertation, where exploring and researching disability helped me to own the identity of disabled and better communicate my ideas with others. On the assignment sheet I create a spectrum of the types of teachers, and I want students to be comfortable with whatever persona feels right to them.

⁸ Students will receive points for turning in the assignments on time, but most of my feedback will be about ways to better reach their goals, or questions about how I can assist them in accomplishing their goals.

instructors should have a stance on access. Traditional ADA compliant university statements tend to be bland in nature, difficult to read, and unwelcoming. By designing a new one to go alongside the university mandated one, instructors have the capability to communicate their support for students and the things they are willing or not willing to do in the name of access. All these assignments relate to the five course goals I have developed.

Course Goals

I have five goals for this course that students should achieve by the end. The first is that students should come to understand what access looks like in the classroom. It seems sensible that because all people are unique, the needs of all disabled people are varied. However, many accommodations are a boiler plate of selections based off a one-size-fits-all model. I want students to be cognizant of these options for accommodating students based on need, and to consider planning for how access can help even able-bodied students. This pushes students to a) think critically about current accommodations and how those relate to real world and lived experiences and b) make connections to pedagogies which best represent their teaching style and persona.

My second goal is for students to develop an access statement. Like for a teaching statement, I want students, based off course materials and further research, to develop their theory on providing access. Not only could this document help them connect with their students, it can help them on a job search, as well as push them to discover the teaching persona they wish to present.

Next, I expect students to create an introduction to writing course and related documents. The course doesn't have to center around disability, but students should be able to point to specific composition pedagogies which have influenced their decisions about the course they design. Documents should be created using accessible design. Students will demonstrate their ability to create accessible documents and develop a teaching persona or voice which clearly communicates their views about access.

Fourth, students should understand how access in the academy came to be and functions today. Jay Dolmage's book *Academic Able-ism* has a fantastic historical section detailing the development of current views on disability in the academy. He also examines the university campus as a rhetorical space, demonstrating how such a space excludes disabled people. Students should be able to take this information and use it to think critically about what the future of access looks like. They should become proficient at critically analyzing pedagogies and spaces which exclude, so they can work to solve such problems.

Finally, students should feel inspired to design with access in mind. Upon completion of the course, students should feel compelled to try making accessible classrooms as best as can be expected. While no space is perfect for all disabilities, students should feel compelled to develop and design their teaching pedagogy around practices which provide access to the most individuals. This inspiration will make their documents stronger, as they clearly communicate their expectations with students.

Justification for Course Readings

Before I jump into justifying the different readings I have selected, I wanted to make a general statement about the different texts I have selected. I feel that, especially in graduate school, students can face barriers with time and money. I prefer to use texts which are easily accessible, cheap, or provide the most value for the course. For that reason, I have selected specific textbooks which I feel best meet these criteria. For instance, *Academic Able-ism* is open access through the publisher's website and can be downloaded by students for free. I also have multiple journal articles, which I provide for students in a Google Drive folder. However, I have a text, *The Disability Studies Reader*, which I will further defend in the sections below.

The Disability Studies Reader 5th Ed. Obviously Davis's edited collection has had a profound influence on the ways that I understand disability, and I therefore could not create a course centered around disability without it. However, there are currently multiple versions of this textbook with different readings in each one. The 5th edition was selected for two reasons: 1) it is open access, with a downloadable version for students to acquire and 2) it has Davis's article "Disability, Normality, and Power." This historical explanation which details how normality became a standard, to me, is vitally important to understanding how current understandings of disability came to be. There are other readings that I feel are important, listed in the schedule section of the syllabus, but these two factors played a part in the version of the *Disability Studies Reader* I chose.

Academic Able-ism This text by Jay Dolmage is a fantastic resource for exploring the many ways higher education fails to create accessible spaces. He makes connections

between the space's students are meant to occupy and the university's approach to access. This text is vital to student understanding, as many students who are not disabled may see access as something the ADA has rectified, or that access centers solve without issue. This text is also open access, so students can download the text for free.

A Guide to Composition Pedagogies 2nd Ed. While taking the Teaching of Writing course I was introduced to this collection and have found it invaluable for my understanding of the different types of pedagogies. While these are generalized, I feel that students can take that information and then research the theories that relate to their teaching style.

Labor-Based Grading Contracts: Building Equity and Inclusion in the Compassionate Writing Classroom. My purpose with this text is to introduce alternative forms of grading to future instructors. It is important that they are aware that alternative grading practices exist, so they can decide if such practices fit with their teaching persona within the bounds of institutional restraints. As I have stated earlier, I have found that labor-based grading can create more access by allowing students with disabilities to determine how much labor they can base on the extenuating factors of their lives. While not all future instructors will agree with this system, knowing they have options will allow them to explore systems that work for them.

“Weepy Rhetoric, Trigger Warnings, and a Question of Ethics” There is a large controversy over the use of trigger warnings in the academy. The authors of this article expertly articulate the original intent behind trigger warnings, as well as how survivors of trauma use trigger warnings in classes to protect their mental health. Future instructors

need to consider how they plan to handle student mental health, as a mental health issue can seep over to classroom life. Reading this article will ask future instructors to continue refining their definition of disability and access.

“The Impact of Turnit-in to the Student-Teacher Relationship” I plan to use this text to scaffold into the *Labor-Based Grading Contracts* text. My own experience with a plagiarism checker has led me to doubt their effectiveness, but this article further articulates the potential problems with the system. As I mentioned in the section on the DAC, there seems to be a level of distrust between instructors and students. While some instructors may feel it is their job to catch plagiarizers, it brings up the question of whether or not they catch plagiarizers because of their vigilance, or if students plagiarize their works because the instructor puts so much pressure on plagiarism. By introducing the topic of plagiarism checkers in class, I expect students to consider their stance based on experiences and the persona they wish to create.

“Documenting and Discovering Learning: Reimagining the Work of the Literacy Narrative.” I wish to pair this text with “A Plea for Critical Race Theory Counterstory; Stock Story vs Counterstory Dialogues Concerning Alejandra’s ‘Fit’ in the Academy” as I think they both play into the exact type of writing I am using in this dissertation. As Vidali notices in her article, personal narrative has genre aspects which encourage students to write happy endings or supercrip narratives. By discussing the fact that other types of narrative exist, or that the literacy narrative could be reimagined, I seek to encourage future instructors to push writers beyond traditional narratives to something more akin with their experiences.

All of these texts help further my course goals and are all reflective of the writing theories which I practice in my own classroom.

Writing Theories

There are a few pedagogical theories which I have incorporated into my teaching over the years which are staples of any course I teach. These theories are a part of my teaching philosophy and govern how I interact with students in the classroom.

The first theory which influences how I teach is Peter Elbow's theory on developing writing communities. While I was an undergraduate, I worked with a program called the Reading and Study Skills Center (RSSC). The RSSC was both a center for students to receive help, and a course required by the university for at risk students.⁹ As a peer tutor at the RSSC, my job was to help facilitate group activities where students would demonstrate their comprehension of the material previously introduced by the instructor. These group activities taught me the value of having a community of learners, even before reading Elbow's work, as I saw the way one student could clarify a concept for another much faster than the peer tutors could. While the job of a peer tutor was to be an example and to keep conversations flowing, it was the interaction between students and the communities which formed in the class that would benefit the students' learning. When I began teaching and was introduced to Elbow's work with writing communities, even those outside of academic classrooms, I was immediately reminded of the

⁹ The course was akin to a college prep course, teaching basic skills like how to create a schedule, how to take notes from a textbook or lecture, and strategies for test taking.

communities which had formed in the RSSC classes. A major part of my teaching skills revolves around creating communities within the classroom.

I see writing communities as beneficial to “Autoethnography, Rhetoric, and Minority Studies” because they will help alleviate some of the discomfort around speaking to “marginalized/minority” groups and, especially with something like autoethnography, they will facilitate better communication. Given the demagogic practices which marginalize individuals, it is unsurprising that students may hesitate to speak about their experiences, that they may feel underqualified to examine minority experience, and that they could shut down when sharing experiences for fear of being marginalized. Creating communities can help reduce the impact these feelings, so that students are more likely to share their feelings and experiences with the group.

There is a collection of influences which I feel feed into one another, which I have decided to introduce as one collective group: a selection of writing principles which I feel encourage students to feel confident in their writing. These are process pedagogy, writer as expert, and access. When teaching, I encourage students to create their own process, and I model different processes which students can use. A one size fits all model of writing is too prescriptive and encourages students to see writing as coursework which has a right answer. It is not an accessible model; nor does it encourage students to feel they are experts in writing about their own experiences and expertise. Especially in the case of ethnography, students are the experts about their experiences, but when students are too focused on a specific outline strategy or writing progression, it can reduce their confidence and make them feel like they don’t know what to do. This is especially true

for disabled students, who have a wide variety of challenges which need to be managed alongside their writing. By making not only my documents but the content of my courses as accessible as possible, I seek to encourage students to build their writing skills alongside one another and myself. My theories about teaching writing are influenced not only by my teaching persona and what agrees with that persona, but also the theories which would have helped me in my undergraduate courses. My disability has shaped how I see the world, forcing me to adapt my teaching to recognize the situations I have been through.

HOW TO “ACT” IN A PANOPTICON

The Options for Métis

Slithering underneath and to the edges of entrenched political debates, we enter dark and dangerous liminal territory wherein identities are challenged.

Kristin Pomykala

At the end of this dissertation, I want to try and map out where I have been and what I have discovered. This will be a bit of a process discussion, as I reflect on what was written when and how it came to be shaped, but it is also a tying up, so to speak, of any loose ends. My dissertation begins with DuBois and the “problem,” but I started writing with the DAC as a Panopticon. As I stated previously, my DAC and writing center experience (the one with the young man who felt jailed in the DAC) had a profound effect on me, as I finally became aware of how easily I had accepted its structures, internalizing the idea that we disabled people were “cheaters” and needed watching over or regulated. I felt angry and abused, which led to writing such a section with harsh words to vilify the system.

My focus on disability led me to Jay Dolmage’s work and the concept of *métis*, one I chose to chase across multiple scholars and through a thicket of tangled definitions. When I finally arrived at the crux of what *métis* is, I found myself in more familiar territory than I had first believed possible. Deft movement, wily intelligence, and curling back were all tricks I had learned from personal experiences, and many of them became the side stories represented throughout these chapters as well as the movements I had enacted in Martial Arts. Meanwhile, Lennard Davis, and his collection on disability studies, gave me a better sense of the medical and social models. Many rhetoricians and

disability activists view the social model as an important tenet of their work, however, Thomas Shakespeare, a contributor to Davis's work, sees that the societal model is deficient, and I take issues with it as well. I think that until we can create a harmonious union between seeing disability as a social issue, and medicine searching for ways to improve access instead of "cure" all disabled people, we will continue to see flaws in each.

As is often the case, two other influences soon emerged at the same time: 1) it was suggested I look at *The Ethnographic I* and 2) I found *the Disability Studies Reader 2nd Ed.* in the library. Had I not read the first I would have struggled through fear and doubt about including my own experiences in this dissertation. Had I not found the other I would never have fully understood the historic influences which have created modern society's notion of disability. Feeling free to write about how I was existing in the world as a disabled person, I was able to begin piecing together the influences which had led to my view of self.

At the beginning of this dissertation, I laid out three goals I wished to accomplish by the end, as well as a focus on answering the question "what is it like to be a problem?" The goals were to extend scholarship about disability rhetoric, reflect on my experiences, and work through issues of identity related to my disability and the many societal beliefs which influence it.

In this dissertation I have extended the understanding of disability rhetoric, of Métis, by using the metaphors of Tai Chi, the trickster/villain, and the snake. Tai Chi is a difficult martial art to describe in writing, it is flowing, calm, and its gentleness hides

explosive power. Tai Chi circles around an opponent and sidesteps attacks so opponents' force betrays them. I see Métis' core strength being this ability to move at just the right moment to open opportunities: the opportunity to flee, fight, subdue, or forgive. The trickster character is equally fluid and playful, despite society's tendency to ascribe him the role of the villain. To me, the trickster sits outside society, unphased by social norms. "He" can be ambiguous, gaining his confidence from "his" freedom and endless potential. It is this freedom I as a disabled person strive for. I seek confidence in my existence and the fluidity to be myself in the moment, aware but unfazed by society's expectations of me. Tricksters are often associated with snakes, a perfect animal to represent the movement of Métis. The snake slithers and shifts, fitting into small spaces and sidewinding across the plains, unlike Dolmage's crab who only scuttles side to side. These metaphors for Métis have helped during the reflective process of this dissertation to recognize ableist assumptions.

This dissertation has helped me reflect on my experiences as a disabled female at university. My reflections have led to further research and potential courses where my experiences can be used as examples and subject for analysis. Examining my identity after my diagnosis has revealed the ways MS has made me a "problem" society seeks to solve, as well as how to avoid being "solved." With this knowledge I seek to better combat ableism and support disabled people in their practice of Métis.

Establishing what ableism is and the rhetorical tools which keep it intact with the panopticon, I mindlessly submitted to many preestablished rules which limited my potential. My hope is that my work can bring attention to these societal beliefs for

reformation. Still, I find that the four types of ableism I discuss in the *Ableist Rhetorics* chapter are universal influences on my life, with media representations providing false fuel for the prosperity gospel and demagoguery, or demagoguery and anti-rhetoric supporting media representations. Specifically, through Roberts-Miller, I have come to realize how demagoguery has become a mighty tool for all forms of oppression. In this way, we return once again to DuBois: society views “us” as a problem because we are not “them.” There are plenty of ways to bridge this divide, but personally, I had to feel I was worthy of speaking out before I could begin the work of defending disability rights.

So, what do readers do with the information presented in this dissertation? Several things. In fact, so many that I’m not sure I have a straight answer. Readers could change public perception by renegotiating definitions of rhetoric and disability. Dolmage suggests that

Through such an embodied rhetoric, we would write and communicate and persuade; we would rhetorically deliver, affirming the possibilities and the limitations of the body, and in so doing we would refuse rhetorical and philosophical economies that silence, that deny the body or normalize it.

Importantly, instead of stigmatizing embodied difference, we might advocate for a range of body images, an awareness of body values and a critique of the powerful discourses of silencing and delimitation that surround embodied rhetoric. We would look for what is beautiful in what we have been told is threatening (about ourselves and about others). (21)

What he is suggesting here is a rethinking of what embodiment means, of what rhetoric means, and of how we see disability. By recognizing the limitations of the body, we are faced with the other and must change our understandings of what the other is. Once the other is part of the norm, or at least is deconstructed in a way which reveals how problematic it is, society will be forced to reevaluate how disability is expressed and seen.

Finally, readers could learn from my mistakes. As I said at the beginning, I have not yet masterfully escaped ableist rhetoric through *métis*. All those scholars who discuss this technique discuss the difficulty of learning to master it, as it is a nebulous concept. Even though I categorize *métis* as an embodied part of the disabled experience, many social influences keep disabled people from using it. This is the blessing and curse for *métis* and for disabled people, as they seek out ways to deal with ableism. I also believe that the first step to learning *métis*, or learning to accept *métis*, is epideictic rhetoric: telling myself a story which exemplifies my strengths and reflects the things I like about myself. Once I have constructed this counterstory, I must sidestep rhetorics, stories, and ableists who would disrupt my story. In martial arts the only way to learn a form is to practice it. In Tai Chi, it is imperative that the participant hits a point where, through an empty mind, the body moves without thought altogether. I am looking to develop my sidestepping abilities like I develop my Tai Chi skills, making them effortless and deft. I will continue to practice until I can master *métis*, which may be never, but at least will bring me closer to peace.

APPENDIX 1: AUTOETHNOGRAPHY, RHETORIC, AND MINORITY GROUPS

I have included in this appendix image files of my syllabus and all my assignment sheets. Unfortunately, the image file was the only way I was able to add the documents to my dissertation without compromising the formatting integrity of either work. I have added alternative text to these image files, meaning that technically they are accessible in this document. Still, none of these image files are truly accessible as visually impaired readers cannot read or interact with them the same way that a sighted person can. For this reason, I have compiled all documents in a Google Drive folder which I am linking here for anyone who wishes to view the original documents. All documents have passed Microsoft Office's Accessibility checker, and I have worked to make my documents accessible to alternative learning and reading styles. If you wish to access these documents, you can go to my [Google Drive folder](#).

ENGL. 3000: Autoethnography, Rhetoric, and Minority Studies

Table of Contents

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. Course Information | 5. Resource Links |
| 2. Course Goals | 6. Schedule |
| 3. Grading | 7. Required Textbooks |
| 4. Assignments | 8. Grade Breakdown |

Course Information

My name is Dr. Brielle Campos. My goal this semester is to help you to develop an accessible practice which can blend seamlessly into your teaching. If you need any help with this semester, you can contact me at my email, Brielle.Campos@mtsu.edu. If I do not respond within 24 hours of your question, feel free to email me again.

This class meets three times a week for 1 hour at a time. All major assignments will be due on Sunday nights at 11:59 PM. For more information on assignments, see the [assignments](#) section of this syllabus.

Required Textbooks

-
1. [The Ethnographic I: A Methodological Novel about Autoethnography](#) by Carolyn Ellis
 2. [On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft](#) by Stephen King
 3. Various resources which can be found in the class [Google Drive folder](#)

Course Goals

By the end of the semester you should:

1. Improve critical thinking and analytical skills through reading and writing.
2. Critically analyze the social norms which create minority groups and their construction.
3. Redefine your definition of rhetoric away from solely negative connotations.
4. Redefine your definition of disability or minority to include factors of race, sex, class, etc.
5. Develop empathy instead of sympathy for others and their experiences, through research and writing.

Grading

Fig. 1 Syllabus Page 1: Table of Contents, Course Information, Required Texts, and Course Goals

This course will be graded using a labor-based grading system, coupled with a self-assessment component. Labor-based grading puts emphasis on the amount and quality of the work you do, not on the skills you have come to the class already knowing. It is a form of grading which accommodates multiple learning styles, as well as meets students where they are. Each assignment will have a few required parts which will determine if you have successfully completed the assignment. This number has nothing to do with the quality of your writing, it is a checklist to be sure you have followed all the directions for the assignment.

The self-assessment is a series of labor logs in which you will discuss the labor you have put into the course. Your assessment will be taken into consideration when determining your grade for the semester. These assessments should focus around how you feel you have retained and applied the course information ,

as well as the labor you feel you have put into the course.

You will receive a letter grade corresponding to the amount of work you put into the course.

A= Completion of all assignments (with a score of 50% or higher), submission of all self-assessments, and completion of 90% of the discussion & labor log work.

B= Completion of all assignments (with a score of 50% or higher), submission of all self-assessments, and completion of 80% of the discussion & labor log work.

C= Completion of most assignments (with a score of 50% or lower), submission of self-assessments, and completion of 70% of the discussion & labor log work.

D= Completion of some assignments (with a score of 50% or lower), submission of self-assessments, and completion of 60% of the discussion & labor log work.

F= Lack of submitted work which makes it impossible to assess labor in the course.

Assignments

- **Discussion and Labor Log Work:** Each week you will be expected to post a discussion to the discussion board and comment on 2 of your classmate's posts. There will be a total of 12 discussion boards, each worth 3 pts (one point for your post, and one point for each response). These posts will factor into the percentage part of your grade. The Labor Logs are a 200+ word discussion each week about the amount of labor you have done, where you are struggling, and what you have successfully accomplished. See the Assignment Sheet for details about Labor Logs. Each Log is worth 1 pt.

Fig. 2 Syllabus page 2: Grading and Assignments

- Personal Mission Statement and Stance on Writing. This is a [2-3 page](#) discussion about your goals as a MTSU student, a writer, and for this class. Your writing should also detail your current level of interest and feelings about writing. See the Assignment Sheet for details. Worth 2 pts.
- Autoethnography of a Moment in Time: Pick an event in your life and write/evaluate it. The paper should set the scene for readers, and provide analysis of what happened, why it happened, and what you have come away with. [See the Assignment sheet for details](#). Worth 2 pts.
- Autoethnography of a Minority Group: Create an Autoethnography about a minority group you see yourself as a part of. These groups can be smaller than traditional race/sex/religion/class. The paper must be research based, with primary and secondary evidence present. [See the Assignment sheet](#) for all the things which should be present. Worth 3 pts.
- Final Course Portfolio: The portfolio is a collection of all the documents created in this class. [See the Assignment Sheet](#) for all the requirements. Worth 3 pts.

Resource Links

This is a list of links pertaining to resources for this course. If you have trouble accessing or understanding any of these links, please let me know and we can schedule a time to review them.

Student Conduct

[MTSU Plagiarism Policy](#)

[My Plagiarism Policy](#)

[Attendance/Tardy](#)

[Missed Work](#)

[MTSU Writing Center](#)

[Veterans Center](#)

[Disability and Access Center](#)

[MTSU Access Statement](#)

[My Access Statement](#)

[Lottery Scholarship](#)

Fig. 3 Syllabus Page 3: Assignments continued and Resource Links

Schedule

This class meets 3 times a week for an hour at a time. You are also expected to turn in Discussion Board Posts and Labor Logs each week by Sunday at 11:59pm. As stated earlier, all assignments are due on Sunday's by 11:59 PM. Please let me know if you cannot make it to class.

Week 1: Introduction to Course

Introduction to course policies. Labor Inventory. Contract negotiations by the end of the week.

Week 2: What is Autoethnography?

The Ethnographic I "Class 1 (23 pg.). "Learning from Dirty Jobs" Ted Talk (20:03).

Week 3: Telling Stories

PEER REVIEW OF MISSION STATEMENT. *The Ethnographic I* "Class 2" (33pg.) "A Plea for Critical Race Theory Counterstory" (22pg.)

Week 4: Adding Research

PERSONAL MISSION STATEMENT AND STANCE ON WRITING DUE SUN. 11:59 PM. *The Ethnographic I* "Class 3" (27pg.)

Week 5: The Difference Between Creative Non-Fiction and Autoethnography

The Ethnographic I "Class 4" (25pg.) *On Writing* "C.V." Sections 1-10 (17pg.).

Week 6: The Labor of Writing

PEER REVIEW OF AUTOETHNOGRAPHY OF A MOMENT. *On Writing* "C.V." Sections 11-25 (35pg.)

Fig. 4 Syllabus Page 4: Schedule for weeks 1-6

<p>Week 7: Don't Stop</p> <hr/> <p><i>On Writing</i> "C.V." Sections 26-38 (32 pg.). "Changing the Way, We Talk About Disability" Ted Talk (14:50). "USA: Michael J. Fox Speaks Out About Parkinson's" YouTube (2:50).</p>
<p>Week 8: Memory and Experience in Academia</p> <hr/> <p>AUTOETHNOGRAPHY OF A MOMENT DUE SUN. 11:59 PM. <i>The Ethnographic I</i> "Class 5" (17 pg.). "Uncomfortable Conversations with a Black Man" YouTube (9:28).</p>
<p>Week 9: What Writing Is</p> <hr/> <p><i>The Ethnographic I</i> "Class 6" (25 pg.). <i>On Writing</i> "What Writing Is" (4pg.).</p>
<p>Week10: Inquiry</p> <hr/> <p><i>The Ethnographic I</i> "Class 7" (14pg.). "How to Deconstruct Racism on Headline at a Time" Ted Talk (16:51).</p>
<p>Week 11: Telling Our Own Stories</p> <hr/> <p>"Performing the Rhetorical Freakshow" Article (26pg.). "Death, The Prosperity Gospel, and Me" Article (5pg.).</p>
<p>Week 12: Building a Toolbox</p> <hr/> <p>PEER REVIEW OF AUTOETHNOGRAPHY OF A MINORITY GROUP. <i>On Writing</i> "Toolbox" (26 pg.).</p>
<p>Week 13: Critically Examining Examples</p> <hr/> <p>In Class Readings.</p>
<p>Week 14: Working</p> <hr/> <p>AUTOETHNOGRAPHY OF A MINORITY GROUP DUE SUN. 11:59 PM.</p>

Fig. 5 Syllabus Page 5: Schedule weeks 6-14

Week 15: What Revision Looks Like

On Writing "And Furthermore Part 1" (13 pg.). *The Ethnographic I* "class 9" assigned sections.

Week 16: Finals Week

FINAL COURSE PORTFOLIO DUE MONDAY BY 11:59 PM.

Fig. 6 Syllabus Page 6: Schedule weeks 15 and 16

Personal Mission Statement and Stance on Writing

Overall Description

To get a sense of who you are as a writer and where you want to go, I want you to write a personal mission statement and a stance on writing. While these are technically two different documents, you will be submitting them together as a unified assignment. You are more than welcome to write these documents in different files but total your mission statement and stance should be between 2-3-pages in length.

Think of your personal mission statement as a set of goals you wish to achieve during this class. What is it you want out of this class, or what do you hope to improve about your writing? Self-assessment is a key feature of a strong writer. It would be helpful to examine the course objectives, both mine and the universities, when deciding on your goals. Remember that goals should be SMART: Specific, Motivating, Achievable, Relevant, and Trackable. Goals like "I want to get better at writing" are not specific or trackable; a goal like "I want to write an engaging introduction that draws readers in for my final project" is a specific goal and a trackable one that I can help you with.

Think of the stance on writing as a quick timeline of your experiences while writing. What kind of feedback have you received in the past? Do you like writing or hate it, and why? What is it about writing that you like/dislike? Do these feelings help motivate you/create roadblocks for you? How so? Try to be honest in this stance on writing; knowing where you are starting from allows me to come up with better ways to help you progress towards your goals. I know not everyone likes writing, and some have had horrible and damaging experiences with writing teachers in the past, but knowing this information helps me to approach teaching in a way which is sympathetic to your experiences.

Goals

1. Practice a form of personal writing.
2. Establish a community of writers through a peer review session.
3. Collaborate on goal setting and completion.

Fig. 7 Personal Mission Statement Page 1 Overall Description and Goals

4. Establish a baseline feeling towards writing to reflect on for later.

Requirements

This assignment is worth two points. These points represent that you have included the aspect of the assignment I am asking for; it is not a reflection on your writing style, or the material presented. Assessment on the writing and subject matter itself will come in the form of comments on your work.

Requirement 1: The document meets the minimum page requirement of two pages double spaced.

Requirement 2: The Mission statement and personal stance stay on topic, focused around your goals and feelings about writing. Try to be as honest as possible, so we can continue a dialogue about how to help you.

Fig. 8 Personal Mission Statement Page 2 Requirements

Autoethnography of a Moment

Description

A key part of ethnographic writing as opposed to personal or life writing is assessing our stories for their value to our lives. These valuable moments may not be pretty or nice, but all moments teach us something or influence how we see and respond to the world around us. You are going to select a moment in time, preferably one which you have experienced, and write an autoethnography about that moment. This means telling the story of the moment, as well as evaluating it. What happened? What was or wasn't said? How did this event influence you? How does this effect show up in your current life? What could have been done differently? Whose "fault" was it, and why?

Remember these don't have to be happy stories, and you don't have to have some life altering realization at the end. Instead, focus on how this event was shaped by the people, places, and things around you. This will help you build an awareness of all the influences you have in your life which effect your outlook. I would prefer you select a moment which you have experienced, but if you wish to select a moment in time you haven't experienced you will 1) have to clear it with me first and 2) provide research to support the elements of your story. You cannot make up a story for this project.

Goals

1. Practice personal writing.
2. Develop self-empathy.
3. Practice peer review.
4. Start questioning social norms.

Requirements

This assignment is worth three points. These points represent that you have included the aspect of the assignment I am asking for; it is not a reflection on your writing style, or the material presented. Assessment on the writing and subject matter itself will come in the form of comments on your work.

Requirement 1: The document meets the minimum page requirement of four pages double spaced.

Requirement 2: The story is limited to a moment in time and is not a series of events spanning months or years.

Fig. 9 Autoethnography of a Moment Assignment Sheet: Description, Goals, and Requirements

Autoethnography of a Minority Group

Description

Now that we have practiced ethnographic writing, we will push towards using this ethnographic style in something a little more formal. You will select a minority group you are apart of, regardless of its size or importance, and you will write an ethnographic study of the group. Think about what a typical day is like for a member. What things do they do? Where do they go in a day? What kind of lingo do they use? Try to use personal stories, interviews, and visual language to connect readers. You will also need to conduct research for your paper, using statistics and scholarship to help discuss the group. Remember that ethnography also provides an evaluative component, so you'll want to think about something you want to argue or convince readers of. Should they support this minority group? May they be a part of it without realizing? Should the group be examined further? What can we learn from this minority group?

You will be asked to write a 10-page paper double spaced. While you will need a works cited page, the works cited does not count toward your 10-pages.

Goals

1. Practice ethnographic writing.
2. Develop research skills for ethnographic writing.
3. Practice using stories in academic writing.
4. Start questioning social norms.

Requirements

This assignment is worth five points. These points represent that you have included the aspect of the assignment I am asking for; it is not a reflection on your writing style, or the material presented.

Assessment on the writing and subject matter itself will come in the form of comments on your work.

Requirement 1: The document meets the minimum page requirement of ten pages double spaced and a works cited page.

Requirement 2: The document includes primary and secondary sources.

Requirement 3: The project uses MLA 8th edition formatting and citation where applicable.

Fig. 10 Autoethnography of a Minority Group Assignment Sheet: Description, Goals, and Requirements

INDEX 2: ACCESS AND WRITING PEDAGOGY

I have included in this appendix image files of my syllabus and all my assignment sheets. Unfortunately, the image file was the only way I was able to add the documents to my dissertation without compromising the formatting integrity of either work. I have added alternative text to these image files, meaning that technically they are accessible in this document. Still, none of these image files are truly accessible as visually impaired readers cannot read or interact with them the same way that a sighted person can. For this reason, I have compiled all documents in a Google Drive folder which I am linking here for anyone who wishes to view the original documents. All documents have passed Microsoft Office's Accessibility checker, and I have worked to make my documents accessible to alternative learning and reading styles. If you wish to access these documents you can go to my [Google Drive folder](#).

ENGL. 7000: Access & Writing Pedagogy

Table of Contents

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. Course Information | 5. Resource Links |
| 2. Course Goals | 6. Schedule |
| 3. Grading | 7. Required Textbooks |
| 4. Assignments | 8. Grade Breakdown |

Course Information

My name is Dr. Brielle Campos. My goal this semester is to help you to develop an accessible practice which can blend seamlessly into your teaching. If you need any help with this semester, you can contact me at my email, Brielle.Campos@mtsu.edu. If I do not respond within 24 hours of your question, feel free to email me again.

This class meets once a week for 3 hours at a time. All major assignments will be due on Sunday nights at 11:59 PM. For more information on assignments, see the [assignments](#) section of this syllabus.

Required Textbooks

-
1. [The Disability Studies Reader 5th Edition](#), by Lennard Davis
 2. [Academic Able-ism](#), by Jay Dolmage
 3. [A Guide to Composition Pedagogies 2nd Edition](#), edited by Tate, Taggart, Schick, and Hessler
 4. [Labor-Based Grading Contracts: Building Equity and Inclusion in the Compassionate Writing Classroom](#), by Asao Inoue
 5. Various Articles which can be found in the class [Google Drive folder](#)

Course Goals

By the end of the semester you should:

1. Understand what access looks like.
2. Develop an access statement.
3. Create materials for an introduction to writing course using the tools you have learned.
4. Understand how access in the university has come to be and what it looks like today.
5. Feel inspired to design with access in mind.

Fig. 11 Access and Writing Pedagogy Syllabus Pg. 1: Table of Contents, Course Information, Required Textbooks, and Course Goals.

Grading

This course will be graded using a labor-based grading system, coupled with a self-assessment component. Labor-based grading puts emphasis on the amount and quality of the work you do, not on the skills you have come to the class already knowing. It is a form of grading which accommodates multiple learning styles, as well as meets students where they are. Each assignment will have a few required parts which will determine if you have successfully completed the assignment. This number has nothing to do with the quality of your writing, it is a checklist to be sure you have followed all the directions for the assignment.

The self-assessment is a series of three letters in which you will grade yourself overall in the course. Your assessment will be taken into consideration when determining your grade for the semester. These assessments should focus around how you feel you have retained and applied the course information to your own

teaching, as well as the labor you feel you have put into the course.

You will receive a letter grade corresponding to the amount of work you put into the course.

A= Completion of all assignments (with a score of 50% or higher), submission of all self-assessments, and completion of 90% of the discussion & discovery work.

B= Completion of all assignments (with a score of 50% or higher), submission of all self-assessments, and completion of 80% of the discussion & discovery work.

C= Completion of most assignments (with a score of 50% or lower), submission of self-assessments, and completion of 70% of the discussion & discovery work.

D= Completion of some assignments (with a score of 50% or lower), submission of self-assessments, and completion of 60% of the discussion & discovery work.

F= Lack of submitted work which makes it impossible to assess labor in the course.

Assignments

- Discussion and Discovery Work: Each week you will be expected to post a discussion to the discussion board and comment on 2 of your classmate's posts. There will be a total of 12 discussion boards, each worth 3 pts (one for your post, and one for each response). These posts will factor into the percentage part of your grade.

Fig. 12 Access and Writing Pedagogy Syllabus Pg. 2: Grading and Assignments

- Reading Study Guide Handout: Create a handout for your fellow classmates based on a reading from the course. [See the Assignment sheet](#) for details on what this handout should look like. Worth 2 pts.
- Self-Assessment Letters (x3): A series of three letters assessing your work in the class. [See the Assignment Sheet for details](#). Worth 2 pts. Each.
- Teaching Demo: You will be asked to teach a short (30 min.) lesson in front of the class. The subject matter is of your own choosing. [See the Assignment sheet for details](#) on what the teaching demo should do. Worth 3 pts.
- Access Scholar Review: Select a scholar who specializes in access and create a five-page discussion on them. [See the Assignment sheet](#) for all the things which should be on this review. Worth 3 pts.
- Final Course Portfolio: The portfolio is a collection of documents pertaining to a created Writing 1 course. [See the Assignment Sheet](#) for all the requirements. Worth 2 pts.

Resource Links

This is a list of links pertaining to resources for this course. If you have trouble accessing or understanding any of these links, please let me know and we can schedule a time to review them.

Student Conduct

[MTSU Plagiarism Policy](#)

[My Plagiarism Policy](#)

[Attendance/Tardy](#)

[Missed Work](#)

[MTSU Writing Center](#)

[Veterans Center](#)

[Disability and Access Center](#)

[MTSU Access Statement](#)

[My Access Statement](#)

[Lottery Scholarship](#)

Fig. 13 Access and Writing Pedagogy Syllabus Pg. 3: Assignments and Resource Links

Schedule

This class meets once a week; however, I will also expect you to submit discussion board posts for several of the reading assignments. As stated earlier, all assignments are due on Sunday's by 11:59 PM. Please let me know if you cannot make it to class.

Week 1: Introduction to Course

Come prepared with access to the Syllabus and other course materials to be reviewed in class. You will sign up for Reading Study-guide Handout's (see [Assignments](#).)

Your First Self-Assessment Letter (See [Assignments](#)) is due by Sunday at 11:59 PM.

Week 2: Bad Ideas about College Composition

Read: *Academic Able-ism* Introduction. *A Guide to Composition Pedagogies* (GCP) "What is Composition Pedagogies" and "Basic Writing."

Week 3: What Is and Isn't Normal?

Read: *Academic Able-ism* chapter 1. *The Disability Studies Reader* (DSR) "Disability, Normality, and Power." "Weepy Rhetoric, Trigger Warnings, and a Question of Ethics."

Handout for GCP "Writing in the Disciplines" Due by class time.

Week 4: Are We Helping?

Read: *Academic Able-ism* chapter 2. DSR "The Social Model if Disability."

Handout for GCP "Community Engaged" Due by class time.

Week 5: "Imaginary College Students"

Read: *Academic Able-ism* chapter 3. "Student Goals, Gatekeeping, and a Question of Ethics." "The Emotional Work of Revision." "The Impact of Turnit-in to the Student-Teacher Relationship."

Handout for GCP "Critical" due by class time.

Fig. 14 Access and Writing Pedagogy Syllabus Pg. 4: Schedule for Weeks 1-5

Week 6: Practice Part 1

Read: *Academic Able-ism* chapter 4 part 1 (pp. 115-131). *Contract Grading: Building Equity and Inclusion in the Compassionate Writing Classroom (CG)* Introduction and chapter 1.

Handout for GCP "Cultural Studies" due by class time.

Week 7: Practice Part 2

Read: *Academic Able-ism* chapter 4 part 2 (pp.132-152). *CG* chapter 2.

Access Scholar Paper (see [Assignments](#)) Due Sunday at 11:59 pm.

Week 8: Narrative

Read: *Academic Able-ism* chapter 5. "Embodying the Writer in the Multimodal Classroom through Disability Studies." "Documenting and Discovering Learning: Reimagining the Work of the Literacy Narrative." "A Plea for Critical Race Theory Counterstory: Stock Story versus Counterstory Dialogues Concerning Alejandra's "Fit" in the Academy."

Handout due for GCP "Feminist" by class time.

Second Self-assessment letter (see [Assignments](#)) due by Sunday at 11:59 pm.

Week 9: Meeting Students

Read: *CG* chapter 3. *DSR* "Disabled Upon Arrival."

Handout for GCP "Genre" and "Literature and Composition" Due by Class time.

Week10: Meeting Students Where They Are

Read: *CG* chapters 4 and 5. *DSR* "The Institution Yet to Come."

Handout due from GCP "New Media" and "Online and Hybrid" by class time.

Fig. 15 Access and Writing Pedagogy Syllabus Pg. 5: Schedule for Weeks 6-10

Week 11: Troubleshooting: Can We be 100% accessible?
Read: CG chapter 6. <i>DSR "Unhealthy Disability."</i>
There will be 2 teaching demos today.
Week 12: Practice 1
Read CG chapter 7.
There will be 2 teaching demos today.
Week 13: Practice 2
There will be 2 teaching demos today.
Week 14: Practice 3
There will be 2 teaching demos today.
Your final self-assessment letter is due by Sunday at 11:59 PM.
Week 15: What Kind of Professor are you?
Final Portfolio is due by Sunday at 11:59 PM (see <u>Assignments</u>).
Week 16: Finals Week

Fig. 16 Access and Writing Pedagogy Syllabus Pg. 6: Schedule for Weeks 11-16

Self-Assessment Letters Assignment Sheet

Overall Description

Self-assessment is a key feature of a strong instructor, and even more important for an instructor hoping to implement access in the classroom. I want you to examine the course objectives, both mine and the universities, and generate a set of goals you wish to accomplish by the end of the semester. Remember that goals should be SMART: Specific, Motivating, Achievable, Relevant, and Trackable. Goals like "I want to get better at writing" are not specific or trackable; a goal like "I want to write an engaging introduction that draws readers in for my final project" is a specific goal and a trackable one that I can help you with.

These assessments will benefit you twofold; first, they will help solidify the direction you wish to take your teaching in and give you clear ways to judge your learning. Second, these assessments will provide me with insight in how to best direct you towards your goals as an instructor. Together, we can create a plan and track your progress towards becoming an accessible instructor.

Letter 1: Statement of Goals

At the beginning of the semester, you will submit to the Dropbox, an email/letter to me about your goals. I suggest you pick 3-4 goals for the semester, as more may be overwhelming. Make sure these goals relate in some way to teaching composition and rhetoric. I want you to tell me what the goal is, why it is motivating, and how you think your goal should be tracked. The letter should be at least a page long single spaced.

Midterm Self-Evaluation

Continuing with the goals theme, around midterms I will ask that you send me another letter which details how you feel you are doing on your goals, as well as any help you may need from me to improve. This letter will be used in place of conferences, so we can discuss your overall work in the course. This should be at least a paragraph long, single spaced.

Fig. 17 Self-Assessment Letters Assignment Sheet Pg. 1: Description, Letter 1, and Midterm Self-Evaluation

The End of Semester Evaluation

At the end of the semester, I want you to grade yourself on how well you met your goals. Do you think you improved enough? Where did working on your goals become hard, or maybe even impossible? Do you plan to continue working on a goal, and if so how? Why do you think you might not have completed a goal, or what did you do that guaranteed you did complete your goal? Once again, this should be a letter to me, at least a single page single spaced.

Goals

1. Practice self-evaluation, as well as traditional evaluation methods.
2. Plan goals and see them through.
3. Collaborate on goal setting and completion.

Requirements

Each letter in this assignment is worth two points. These points represent that you have included the aspect of the assignment I am asking for; it is not a reflection on your writing style, or the material presented. Assessment on the writing and subject matter itself will come in the form of comments on your work.

Requirement 1: The document meets the minimum page requirement of one page (or paragraph in the case of the midterm letter) single spaced.

Requirement 2: Each letter remains on topic and pertains to the subject matter of the goals you are setting and your ability to assess them. Try to be as honest as possible, so we can continue a dialogue about how to help you.

Fig. 18 Self-Assessment Letters Assignment Sheet Pg. 2: End of Semester Evaluation, Goals, and Requirements

Reading Study Guide Handout Assignment

Description

Create a handout for your fellow classmates, based off a reading from *A Guide to Composition Pedagogies*. You will select this reading at the beginning of the semester, and each handout will be due on the day specified (see the course schedule for dates). This handout should help summarize the information presented and guide your fellow classmates to resources where they can learn more about the pedagogy presented in your chapter. The summary of the chapter should help classmates to begin the studying process for any type of exams which involve Composition and Rhetoric knowledge. The handout can be up to two pages long (front and back), depending on how much space you need. All accessibility standards should be followed to achieve a strong, helpful handout. If you are unsure how to make documents accessible, you can check out the [Accessible Syllabus Website](#) online, view The Pocket Guide to Accessible Typography (found in the class Google Drive Folder), or use the Accessibility Checker feature on Microsoft Word.

Goals

1. Practice universal design principles and consider different learning styles and needs.
2. Introduce yourself and others to different composition pedagogies.
3. Practice summarizing information in a way easy to understand.
4. Understand how access in the university has come to be.

Requirements

This assignment is worth two points. These points represent that you have included the aspect of the assignment I am asking for; it is not a reflection on your writing style, or the material presented. Assessment on the writing and subject matter itself will come in the form of comments on your work.

Requirement 1: The document meets the minimum page requirement of two pages front and back (i.e. You have a front and a back side of your handout).

Requirement 2: The handout pertains to the subject matter and is accessible (you can check out the [Accessible Syllabus Website](#) online, view The Pocket Guide to Accessible Typography (found in the class Google Drive Folder), or use the Accessibility Checker feature on Microsoft Word).

Fig. 19 Reading Study Guide Handout Assignment Sheet: Description, Goals, and Requirements

Access Scholar Review

Description

Now that we have discussed access, I want you to further your own interests by creating a profile and bibliography for a scholar who studies access or disability. This scholar can come from disability studies or rhetoric and composition studies. Your profile and bibliography must be 5-pages in length. Think of the profile as if you were introducing this person to a group of people at an event and add a summary of their major research interests and theories. The bibliography should be as comprehensive a list as possible of the scholar's publication history.

Goals

1. Introduce more voices into the access conversation, particularly voices which align with your interests as a scholar.
2. Understand what access in the University looks like today.
3. Create bibliography lists which others could use for further research.

Requirements

This assignment is worth three points. These points represent that you have included the aspect of the assignment I am asking for; it is not a reflection on your writing style, or the material presented. Assessment on the writing and subject matter itself will come in the form of comments on your work.

Requirement 1: The document meets the minimum page requirement of five pages.

Requirement 2: Written materials conform to MLA 8th edition guidelines.

Requirement 3: Your scholar meets the criteria of being a voice in the access community. This means someone who advocates for access, who studies the ways access is denied, or who discusses their own experiences as a disabled person. If you wish to interpret access more broadly, as in access to resources or education, you will have to preapprove your scholar with me ahead of time.

Fig. 20 Access Scholar Review Assignment Sheet: Description, Goals, and Requirements

Teaching Demo Assignment Sheet

Description

A teaching demo is a chance for you as a future instructor to practice delivering information to students and writers, using your peers as the students. It is a chance to get out some jitters, test curriculum ideas, and build confidence in your teaching ability. In my opinion, professors fall into three categories, with some overlap: the strict professor, the middle of the road, and the friendly professor. Part of this teaching demo is to find out where you fall in this spectrum. Your natural first instinct will often be correct. None of these categories of itself is better or worse than the others, to me it is about how we want to interact with our students, and our comfort level with perception. We will discuss these categories in class, and you may find yourself fitting into more than one depending on the situation (remember that it is a spectrum). I am looking for you to become comfortable with this label/outlook, so you can feel confidence about your teaching.

Goals

1. Practice delivering material to a group of writers.
2. Develop a sense of the type of teacher you are.
3. Test ideas about class planning, organization, and delivery.
4. Work out first-day jitters.

Requirements

This assignment is worth three points. These points represent that you have included the aspect of the assignment I am asking for; it is not a reflection on your writing style, or the material presented. Assessment on the writing and subject matter itself will come in the form of comments on your work.

Requirement 1: You meet or come within 10 minutes of the presentation time (30 minutes long).

Requirement 2: You have some written lesson-plan which directs your presentation. The design of this plan is up to you, but I should have a copy before you present.

Requirement 3: The presentation remains on a subject about a skill that someone in a first-year writing sequence would need to know (it stays on topic and doesn't deviate).

Fig. 21 Teaching Demo Assignment Sheet: Description, Goals, and Requirements

Final Course Portfolio

Description

To prepare for your first teaching assignment, we will be creating a teaching portfolio for the final assignment. Usually used for scholarships, job applications, promotions, and tenure, a course portfolio is a collection of course documents. You will need a syllabus and assignment sheets for all major assignments (often jobs will ask for student evals or an example class planner, but you don't have those yet).

Your portfolio will include:

1. A syllabus
2. Course Calendar
3. At least 3 assignment sheets/grading rubrics
4. An access statements
5. The class planner from your teaching demo

Goals

1. Create materials for an Introduction to Writing Course.
2. Develop a sense of the type of teacher you are.
3. Develop an access statement.
4. Feel inspired to design with access in mind.

Requirements

This assignment is worth two points. These points represent that you have included the aspect of the assignment I am asking for; it is not a reflection on your writing style, or the material presented. Assessment on the writing and subject matter itself will come in the form of comments on your work.

Requirement 1: You meet the minimum page requirement (See the list above for all the "pages").

Requirement 2: Your documents pass an accessibility check from Microsoft Word (including alternative text for any image files).

Fig. 22 Final Course Portfolio Assignment Sheet: Description, Goals, and Requirements

WORKS CITED

2018 Annual Disability Statistics Supplement. Disability Statistics and Demographics

Rehabilitation Research and Training Center, 2019, pp. 1-259.

The User's Guide to Cheating Death. Netflix, 2017.

"About Relapsing Multiple Sclerosis." *Gilenya (Fingolimod)*.

www.gilenya.com/c/multiplesclerosis/symptoms-causes. Accessed 25 June 2019.

Abrams, J.J. *Star Trek into Darkness*. Paramount Pictures, 2013.

Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. Aunt Lute Books, 1987.

Aristotle. *Rhetoric*. Perseus Digital Library, J.H. Freese Ed., Tufts University,

www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3atext%3a1999.01.0060.

Accessed 15 June 2019.

Autistic Self Advocacy Network. "Disability Community Condemns Autism Speaks."

Autistic Self Advocacy Network, autisticadvocacy.org/2009/10/disability-community-condmns-autism-speaks/. Accessed 11 Jul. 2019.

Baecker, Diann. "Uncovering the Rhetoric of the Syllabus: The Case of the Missing I."

College Teaching, vol. 46, no.2, 1998, pp. 58, *JSTOR*.

Banks, Adam. *Digital Griots: African American Rhetoric in a Multimedia Age*. Southern

Illinois UP, 2011.

- Barker, Eric. "How to Win Every Argument." *The Week*,
<https://theweek.com/articles/454234/how-win-every-argument>. Accessed 10 Aug.
 2018.
- Barns, Colin. *Disabling Imagery and the Media: An Exploration of the Principles for
 Media Representations of Disabled People, The First in a Series of Reports*. 1,
 The British Council of Organizations of Disabled People, 1992, disability-
 studies.leeds.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/40/library/Barnes-disabling-
 imagery.pdf. Accessed Feb. 20, 2017.
- Black, Rhonda S., and Lori Pretes. "Victims and Victors: Representation of Physical
 Disability on the Silver Screen." *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe
 Disabilities*, vol. 32, no. 1, Spring 2007, pp. 66-83. *EBSCOhost*, doi:
 10.2511/rpsd.32.1.66.
- Bodybuilding.com. "Rising Up: The Story of Wheelchair Bodybuilder Nick Scott."
YouTube, 2016, www.youtube.com/watch?v=W8u2zYXL6DI.
- Bowler, Kate. *Blessed: A History of the American Prosperity Gospel*. Oxford UP, 2013.
- . "Opinion: Death, the Prosperity Gospel and Me." *The New York Times*, 13 Feb. 2016.
NYTimes.com, [www.nytimes.com/2016/02/14/opinion/sunday/death-the-
 prosperity-gospel-and-me.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/14/opinion/sunday/death-the-prosperity-gospel-and-me.html). Accessed Jul. 6, 2019.
- Bragg, Lois. *Oedipus Borealis: The Aberrant Body in Old Icelandic Myth and Saga*.
 Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 2004.

- Brueggemann, Brenda Jo, et al. "Becoming Visible: Lessons in Disability." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 52, no. 3, 2001, pp. 368-98. *JSTOR*, doi: 10.2307/358624.
- Burger, Neil. *The Upside*. 2017.
- Butler, Judith. "from *Gender Trouble*." Leitch, pp. 2540-2553.
- Butts, Renee. "Ableism." Salem Press Encyclopedia, 2020. EBSCOhost, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=ers&AN=121772770&site=eds-live&scope=site.
- Byron, Lord George. *Cain*. John Murray Publisher, 1821.
- Ceraso, Stephanie. "(Re) Educating the Senses: Multimodal Listening, Bodily Learning, and the Composition of Sonic Experience." *College English*, vol. 77, no. 2, 2014, pp. 102-23. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/24238169.
- Cherney, James L. "The Rhetoric of Ableism." *Disability Studies Quarterly*, vol. 31, no. 3, Aug. 2011. *Dsq-sds.org*, doi:10.1806/dsq.v31i3.1665.
- Cixous, Hélène. "The Laugh of the Medusa." Leitch, pp. 1942-59.
- Cleveland Clinic. "Multiple Sclerosis (MS)." *Cleveland Clinic*, Jan. 28th, 2019, Cleveland Clinic, <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/articles/14315-multiple-sclerosis-frequently-asked-questions>. Accessed 25 Jul. 2019.

Corbett, Jenny, et al. "A Shared Presentation: Two Disabled Women on Video."

Disability, Handicap, and Society, vol. 8, no. 2, June 1993, pp. 173-86.

EBSCOhost, doi:10.1080/02674649366780141.

Crenshaw, Kimberle. "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black

Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics." *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, 1989, p. 139-168. *HeinOnline*.

Accessed 2 Dec 2020.

Danisch, Robert. "Power and the Celebration of the Self: Michel Foucault's Epideictic

Rhetoric." *Sothorn Communication Journal*, vol. 71, no. 3, 2006, pp. 291-307.

Taylor and Francis Group, DOI: 10.1080/10417940600846078.

Darsey, James. "Forum: Demagoguery Reconsidered; Patricia Roberts-Miller,

Demagoguery, and the Troublesome Case of Eugene Debs." *Rhetoric and Public Affairs*, vol. 9, no. 3, 2006, pp. 463-488. *EBSCOhost*,

Darwin, Charles. *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the*

Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life). John Murray Publisher, 1859.

Davis, Lennard J. "Constructing Normalcy: The Bell Curve, The Novel, and the

Invention of the Disabled Body in the Nineteenth Century." Davis, pp. 3-16.

---. *Enforcing Normalcy: Disability, Deafness, and the Body*. Verso, 1995.

--- Editor. *The Disability Studies Reader, 2nd Ed.*, New York: Routledge, 2006.

Demme, Jonathan. *The Silence of the Lambs*. Orion Pictures, 1991.

Derrida, Jacques. "from *Of Grammatology*." Leitch, pp. 1688-1697.

Dolmage, Jay. *Academic Able-ism: Disability and Higher Education*. U of Michigan P, 2017.

---. *Disability Rhetoric: Critical Perspectives on Disability*. Syracuse UP, 2014.

---. "Métis, Mêtis, Mestiza, Medusa: Rhetorical Bodies Across Rhetorical Traditions." *Rhetoric Review*, vol. 28, no. 1, 2009, pp. 1-28. *EBSCOhost*, doi:10.1080/07350190802540690.

DuBois, W.E.B. *The Souls of Black Folk: Essays and Sketches*. U. of Massachusetts P., 2018.

Edwards, Jonathan. "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God. A Sermon Preached at Enfield, July 8th, 1741." *Electronic Texts in American Studies*, edited by Reiner Smolinski, vol. 54, pp. 35. *U of Nebraska-Lincoln Commons*.

Ellis, Carolyn. *The Ethnographic I: A Methodological Novel about Autoethnography*. AltaMira P., 2004.

Engels, Friedrich. *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, translated Florence Kelley Wischnewetzky, Cambridge UP, 2010. First published in 1892.

"Eternal Grand Master Haung Ung Lee." *H.U. Lee Memorial Foundation*, www.huleefoundation.org/eternal-grandlmasterlhaeng-ung-lee/.

Ewing, Al, and Lee Garbett. "Trust Me." *Loki Agent of Asgard*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2014.

Foucault, Michel. "from *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*." Leitch, pp. 1490-502.

---. "Panoptism." *Ways of Reading: An Anthology for Writers*, 8th ed., Bedford/St. Martin's, 2008. Pp.209-41.

---. *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception*, New York, Pantheon Books, 1973.

---*The History of Sexuality Volume 1: An Introduction*. Robert Hurley Translator, Pantheon Books, 1978.

Freud, Sigmund. "from *The Interpretation of Dreams*." Leitch, pp. 814-824.

---. "from The 'Uncanny.'" Leitch, pp. 824-841.

---. "from *Fetishism*." Leitch, pp. 841-845.

Garlit, Devin. "When Are You Going to Get Better?" *MultipleSclerosis.net*, 2019, multiple sclerosis.net/living-with-ms/cure-misconceptions/?fbclid=IwAR1dRMjIcn7qm8nWi6UUJuyAYz6gzdMewujjXRL e94VOM4eVMdB3ETEBaMA. Accessed Jul. 3, 2019.

Gilbert, Sandra and Gubar, Susan. "from *The Mad Woman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*." Leitch, pp. 1926-1938.

Goddard, Drew. *Daredevil*. Netflix, 2015-2018.

Harrell, Erika. "Crime Against Persons with Disabilities, 2009-2015- Statistical Tables." *Statistical Tables*, 2017, pp. 17.

Hawhee, Debra. *Bodily Arts: Rhetoric and Athletics in Ancient Greece*. U of Texas P, 2004.

---. "Bodily Pedagogies: Rhetoric, Athletics, and the Sophists' Three R's." *College English*, vol. 65, no. 2, 2002, pp. 142-62. *JSTOR*, doi:10.2307/3250760.

---. "Toward a Bestial Rhetoric." *Philosophy and Rhetoric*, vol. 44, no. 1, 2011, pp. 81-87.

Hawthorne, Nathaniel. "The Birth-Mark." *The Pioneer*, 1843.

Hugheds, Allen. *The Book of Eli*. Alcon Entertainment, 2010.

Johnson, Mark. *Daredevil*. Marvel Enterprises, 2003.

Johnson, Maureen, et. al. "Embodiment: Embodying Feminist Rhetorics." *Peitho Journal*, vol. 18, no. 1, 2015, pp. 39-43.

"Join the Country's Martial Arts Organization." *ATA International Website*. www.ataonline.com. Accessed Jan. 20, 2019.

Kennedy, George. *Progymnasmata: Greek Textbooks of Prose, Composition, and Rhetoric*. Society of Biblical Literature, 2003.

King, Stephen. *On Writing: A Memoir on Craft*. Scribner, 2000.

Kristeva, Julia. "from *Revolution in Poetic Language*." Leitch, pp. 2071-81.

Lauer, Ilan. "Epideictic Rhetoric." *Communication Research Trends*, vol. 2, no 4, 2015, pp. 4-18. *Ebscohost*.

Liebowitz, Cara. "Just Because It's Ableist Doesn't Mean It's Bad." *In Privilege: A Reader*, edited by M. S. Kimmel and A. L. Ferber. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2017. Pp. 153–155.

Leitch, Vincent B., General Editor. *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism Second Edition*. W.W. Norton & Co, 2010.

Martinez, Aja Y. "A Plea for Critical Race Theory Counterstory: Stock Story versus Counterstory Dialogues Concerning Alejandra's 'Fit' In the Academy." *Composition Studies*, vol. 42, no. 2, 2014, pp. 33-35.

Marx, Karl, and Fredrich Engels. "from *Capital Volume 1*." Leitch, pp. 663-74.

---. "From *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*." Leitch, pp. 651-55.

---. "From *Grundrisse*." Leitch, pp. 661-62.

---. "From *the Communist Manifesto*." Leitch, pp. 657-60.

---. "From *the German Ideology*." Leitch, pp. 655-56.

Maurone, Joseph. "The Trickster Icon and Objectivism." *The Journal of Ayn Rand Studies*, vol. 3, no. 2, 2002. Penn State UP, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41560188>.

McNeely, Deldon. *Mercury Rising: Women, Evil, and the Trickster Gods*. Ebook, Fisher King P, 1996.

Mercieca, Jennifer. "Dangerous Demagogues and Weaponized Communication."

Rhetoric Society Quarterly, vol. 43, no. 9, June 2019. *Rhetoric Society of America*, DOI: 10.1080/02773945.2019.1610640.

Milton, John. *Paradise Lost*. Samuel Simmons Publisher, 1667.

Moe, Peter. "Revealing Rather than Concealing Disability: The Rhetoric of Parkinson's

Advocate Michael J. Fox." *Rhetoric Review*, vol. 31, no. 4, 2012, pp. 443-60.

Taylor and Francis, doi:10.1080/07350198.2012.711200.

Moon, Brad. "Snake Locomotion." *Snake Locomotion*, 2001,

userweb.ucs.louisiana.edu/~brm2286/locomotn.htm.

MultipleSclerosis.Net. "New Study Changes Estimate of MS Prevalence in US."

MultipleSclerosis.Net, multiplesclerosis.net/news/study-changes-ms-

prevalance/?utm_source=weekly&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=c7df6c7

3-blea-4ad0-9a9b-

0f731c36dc71&utm_confid=sovifjrls&aGVhbHRoIHVuaW9uIGJsYWg=d1f293

bdd76776555487092a70623d5a2162f432655de18ab3f8d82a186e4e76. Accessed

26 Jul. 2019.

Mulvey, Laura. "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." Leitch, pp. 2081-95.

Nolan, Christopher. *The Dark Night*. Warner Bros., 2008.

Plato. *Gorgias*, Perseus Digital Library, Gregory R. Crane, Editor, Tufts University,

www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0178%Ate

[xt%3DGorg.%3Asection%3D453a](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0178%Ate%3DGorg.%3Asection%3D453a). Accessed 20 Jul. 2019.

Poe, Edgar Allen. "The Man That Was Used Up." *Burton's Gentleman's Magazine*, 1839.

Pomykala, Kristin. "Snake(s)Kin: The Intertwining *Métis* and Mythopoetics of Serpentine Rhetoric." *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, vol. 47, no. 3, 2017, pp. 264-74. *Crossref*, doi:10.1080/02773945.2017.1309916.

Price, Margaret. *Mad at School: Rhetoric of Mental Disability and Academic Life*. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P., 2011.

Quackenbush, Nicole. "Speaking of—and as—Stigma: Performativity and Parkinson's in the Rhetoric of Michael J. Fox." *Disability Studies Quarterly*, vol. 31, no. 3, 2011. *Disability Studies Quarterly*, dsq-sds.org/article/view/1670.

Roberts-Miller, Patricia. *Demagoguery and Democracy*. The Experiment, 2017.

--. "Rhetoric is Synonymous with Empty Speech." *Bad Ideas About Writing*, Ebook, Ball, Cheryl and Loewe, Drew Ed, WV University Libraries Digital Publishing Institute, 2017.

Rose, Martha L. "Deaf and Dumb in Ancient Greece." Davis, pp. 17-31.

Shakespeare, Thomas. "The Social Model of Disability." Davis, pp. 197-204.

Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*. Lackington, Hughes, Harding, Mavor, & Jones Publishers, 1818.

Shreve, Grant. "The Racialized History of 'Hysteria.'" *JSTOR Daily*, 20 Sept. 2017, daily.jstor.org/the-racialized-history-of-hysteria/.

Shore, David. *House*. Fox, 2004-2012.

- Sontag, Susan. *Illness as Metaphor and Aids and It's Metaphors*. Ebook, Farrar, Straus, and Grioux Publishers, 2013.
- Stevenson, Robert L. *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hide*. Longmans, Green, & Co Publishers, 1886.
- Steinbeck, John. *Of Mice and Men*. Penguin Books, 1937.
- Swales, John. *Other Floors, Other Voices: a Textography of a Small University Building*. 1st ed., Routledge, 1998.
- Taylor, Chloë. "Biopower." *Michael Foucault: Key Concepts*, Dianna Taylor Ed, Routledge, 2011, pp. 41-54.
- Thurston, Baratunde. "How to Deconstruct Racism, One Headline at a Time." *TED*, 2019. *YouTube*, www.youtube.com/watch?v=RZgkjEdMbSw.
- Vidali, Amy. "Performing the Rhetorical Freak Show: Disability, Student Writing, and College Admissions." *College English*, vol. 69, no. 6, 2007, pp. 615-41. *JSTOR*, doi:10.2307/25472242. \
- Wells, H.G. *The Invisible Man*. Edward Arnolds Publisher, 1897.
- Winthrop, Jonathan. *A Model of Christian Charity*, Hillsdale College Online Resources. <https://online.hillsdale.edu/file/american-heritage-2017/lecture-2/A-Model-of-Christian-Charity.pdf>.
- Young, Stella. "I'm Not Your Inspiration, Thank You Very Much." *TED*, 2014. *YouTube*, www.youtube.com/watch?v=8K9Gg164Bsw.