Designing Online Content Using UDL Principles
Include Welcoming Access Statement

A thoughtful statement on your website or Canvas’ initial page that describes your intention in making your online presence accessible is important.

~ Here is an example; “Usability, Access and Design; I am committed to creating a course that is inclusive and accessible. If you are encountering barriers, please let me know immediately so we can determine if a design adjustment can be made. I am glad to consider creative solutions as long as they do not compromise the learning goals.” (University of Arkansas at Little Rock)
Representation

Provide simple, consistent, navigation through the site

~Provide a table of contents on the first facing page
~Be mindful of how students will navigate (click) through your course. The clearer one is with your link descriptions the better.
~Two examples; Good: Writing Good Link Descriptions

  Bad; Click here for information on Good Links
~The fewer clicks to access the content, the better
~Pages should be simple, clean, consistent and well-organized
~Make sure that all links can be controlled by keyboard-only navigation, or without a mouse.


**Representation**

Make sure text is readable

~Choose an easier to read font, such as Arial or Helvetica for your text. These are more accessible for individuals with low-vision. *(The American Printing House for the Blind has developed a font called APHont, downloadable for their website; American Printing House for the Blind. There is also a font for dyslexic students-dyslexiafont.com)*

~Make sure that font size is large enough to read comfortably from a 15 inch distance.

~Limit placing texts within graphics. These images are difficult to read with magnification software.
Representation

Choose tools carefully for assessments
~Please be mindful of students who use adaptive technology or have accommodations. There are occasionally difficulties with some screen readers, which may be prone to crashing. This obviously is problematic during assessments, so it is advantageous to provide a mock test prior to the actual exam to ensure that there is compatibility in the programs. If it is not compatible, an alternative arrangement may need to be implemented.
Representation

Use color care carefully
~ Provide good color contrast, keeping in mind that black text on a white or light background is best.
~ Graphics or patterns behind text make it difficult to read by accessibility tools.
~ When creating an HTML document to post, consider using flexible options for the way colors can be viewed.
~ Headings and subheadings should not rely on color, as those with visual impairments may have difficulties distinguishing the color. Use symbols instead of color to differentiate items on a list. This allows students who are color-blind to differentiate the items you are contrasting.
Engagement

Flexible Presentation of Course Content - a combination of assigned readings, video, audio and other content-rich presentations which provide a student with more autonomy to decide which formats (or a combination of all) best suit their needs.
Engagement

Provide accessible document formats

~Note-takers for lectures sessions- Students may also choose to record their lectures on Zoom, or use Otter, for quick voice to text captioning.

~Documents created in MS Word Rich Text, and PDF provide access to students because it makes content portable to other devices. The design of these documents can improve access or create barriers for students. Documents online should include straightforward sentences, lists, short paragraphs, organized content and hierarchical headings, which provide a cognitive map in a pre-organized structure (Mayer, 2008) Be aware that students who use a screen reader cannot distinguish Headings, so it is preferable to create ordered lists using number lists.

~ Avoid word art and text box tools.
Engagement

Describe graphics and visual elements  *(If the content is visual, make it auditory)*

~Describe graphics and visual elements. Text descriptions allow better understanding of graphics intended to highlight features. However, descriptions are not necessary for images that are solely aesthetic.

~Sometimes charts and graphs will require longer explanations to be meaningful to those with low vision. This is important for videos too. Any content that is visually represented should be accessible in text format.

*Here are steps to do this simply within a Word Document. In Word, you can insert pictures using the menu at the top of the page. Click to insert, and then right click on the picture to bring up “format picture” menu. This allows one to create a title for the picture, and a description that a screen reader will detect.*
Engagement

Caption videos and transcribe audio clips easily  *(If the content is auditory, make it visual)*

*What used to be a difficult process is now more streamlined.* To create a transcript for any video, add information about audio that is not dialog, such as music or background noise, add names of speakers, add timings, and then describe the video file as narration. The website at amara.org has a free subtitle editor which allows for easy captioning. In addition, apps like Otter and other voice to text can be used simultaneously to the video while being played, instantly capturing all the dialog and content. You may do this process before showing the video to the students providing the captioning already, or show them how to do it on their own. It is a great way for students to use technology to capture videos, lectures and other audio content and turn it to text in almost real time.
Engagement

Redesign PowerPoint presentations.
~ Be mindful of dropping a PowerPoint presentation into an on-line learning experience. In order for this format to be accessible to all learners, it has to be redesigned to describe images, charts, and graphs with alternative texts.
~ It is most helpful to convert Powerpoint Presentations to HTML. (There are a few programs designed to do this conversion, such as iSpring converter)
Engagement

Choices in demonstration of knowledge that align with the goals of the course. Providing choice in expression may allow the student a greater motivation for engagement. A clear rubric on how projects will be evaluated are essential, but whether a student writes a ten page paper, prepares narrated slides, creates a website or submits an audio recording allows for different ways in which students can demonstrate what they have learned.

~ Formative assessments are useful to online learning, as students maybe tend to be overconfident in their understanding of material, and need frequent check-ins to ensure mastery.
Action and Expression

Provide Weekly Communication with Students
~ Students still need to develop a relationship with you, and getting to know one another, even though it is online, is still critical to their learning. (eLearn Magazine)

Model and teach good discussion board practices
~ There are sometimes barriers to students participating in Real-Time Chat. Students with visual impairments and reading and writing disabilities are apt to be left out of these conversations due to issues with reading and writing fluency.
~ Teach students to avoid creating a new thread unless they are introducing new ideas, and emphasize the importance of keeping discussion threads consistent.
We Welcome Your Feedback!

For any comments or questions, please contact:

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