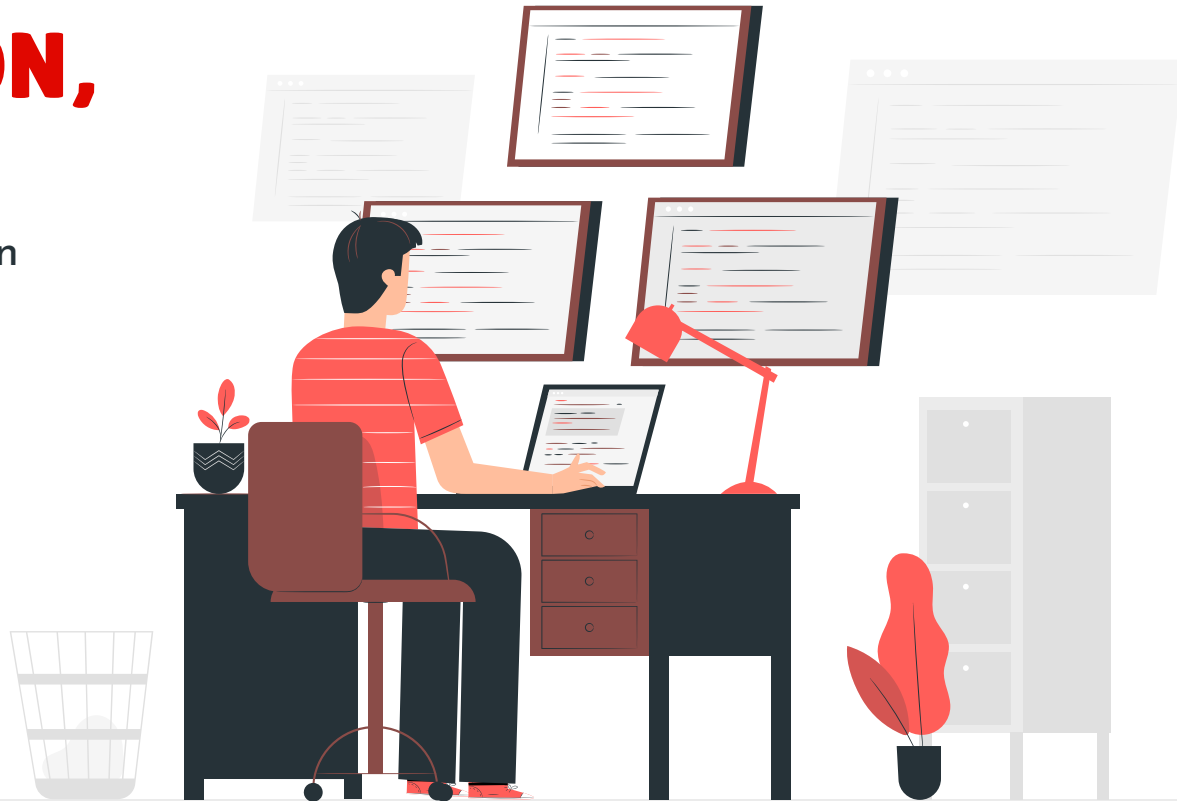
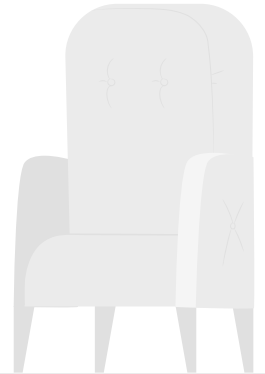
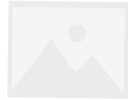
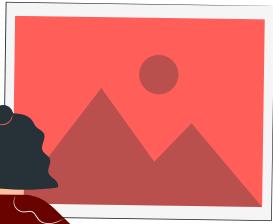


# ENGAGEMENT, REPRESENTATION, AND ACTION:

Universal Design for Learning in  
Writing Classrooms

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## CONSIDER THIS:

Roughly 19% of the US population reports some kind of disability, and an estimated 11% of students in higher education enter our classrooms with a disability. COVID-19 has accelerated the diagnosis of learning disabilities in particular (I'm a 30 year old who just now knows she has ADHD!).



## **AT THE SAME TIME, HUMAN INTERACTION...**

Involves negotiation! It necessitates multiple modes of meaning.

So too should pedagogy, if we are to provide students with opportunities for play and learning and prepare them for lives as professionals and as citizens.



## **THIS IS A CALL FOR REVISING "TRADITIONAL ENGLISH ASSIGNMENTS."**

Such a revision serves multiple purposes:

- Drawing the circle wider to ensure that our pedagogy reaches learners with disabilities
- Providing students autonomy and choice
- Giving opportunities to exercise 21st-century "multiliteracies" and build writing skills broadly construed

# UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING:

A Jumping-Off Point for Curricular and Pedagogical Revision, Involves Providing Multiple Means of...

## REPRESENTATION

Options for perception;  
language, expression,  
symbols; options for  
comprehension

## EXPRESSION

Options for physical  
action; expression and  
communication;  
executive function



## ENGAGEMENT

Options for building  
interest; sustaining  
effort and persistence;  
self-regulation

# THE TL; DR OF UNIVERSAL DESIGN



The changes that we make in our curriculum and pedagogy to benefit students with disabilities... actually benefit everyone!

Think about elevators. Or curb cuts on the sidewalk. Or subtitles on Netflix.

# WHAT DOES THIS LOOK LIKE IN A WRITING CLASSROOM?



## Choice Architecture

Select from a set of genres?  
Have a free-for-all?



## Process Work

Walk through creating pieces of  
assignments + feedback cycles



## Multimodal Options

Facilitate student's  
composing beyond text



## Provide Models

Gather examples of  
completed work or public  
scholarship



## Transparency & Rationale

Being clear with students  
about these choices and  
their linkages with outcomes

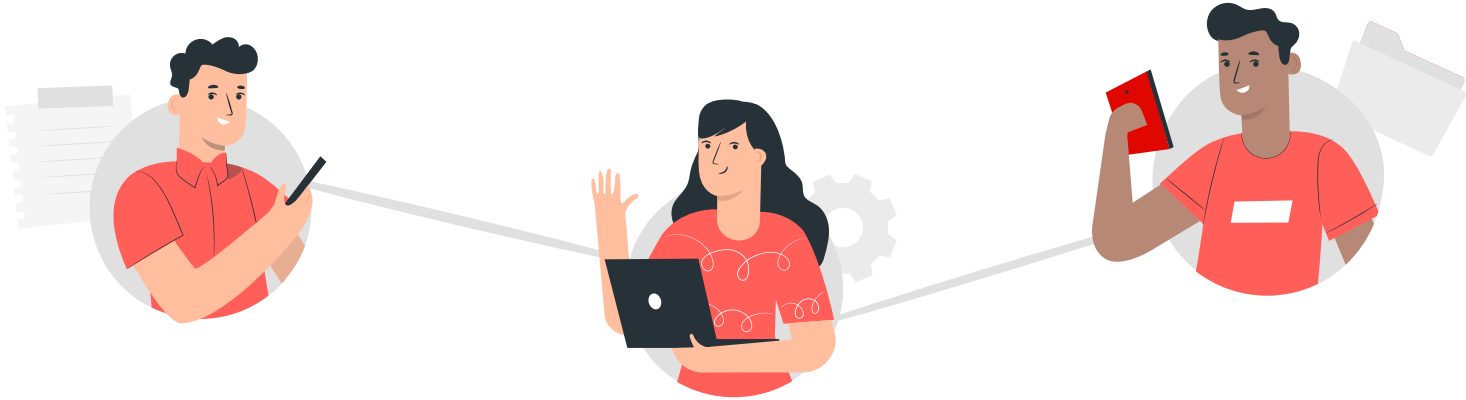


## Self-Evaluation

Give opportunities for reflection and  
metacognition (for both student  
learning and assessment)

# STRUCTURED TOPIC CHOICE: PROPOSALS

Design a selection of RFPs/scenarios to respond to based on student majors/interests



## Aviation

Make a bid for chartering a multi-millionaire's fleet of private jets!

## Exercise Science

Represent the local health department writing a proposal for a community fitness grant!

## Marketing

Birmingham is getting an MLB team! Propose their brand identity and management!



# STRUCTURED GENRE CHOICE: GRID APPROACH

This is designed for instructors in a writing program, but could easily be applied to students to enable them to choose from a selection of projects you are comfortable with teaching, assessing

Unit Number	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
<b>1: Rhetorical Thinking + Analysis</b>	Digital Interface Report (Images, Text)	Rhetorical Analysis (Text)	Scholarly Article Analysis (Text)
<b>2: Research + Argument</b>	Primary Research Report	Mapping the Problem Essay (Literature Review)	Researched Argument
<b>3: Remediation</b>	Podcast	TED Talk	Infographic

Smith, A., Chernouski, L., Batti, B., Karabinus, A., & Dilger, B. People, Programs, and Practices: A Grid-Based Approach to Designing and Supporting Online Writing Curriculum. *PARS IN PRACTICE*, 83.

# OPEN GENRE CHOICE: WHAT'S THAT LIKE?

It needs to be scaffolded in a way that meets learning outcomes and is assessable (and doesn't create undue grading work for you). Here's one example from a first-year writing course.

## Select Topic

Topic may be in a themed course (e.g., social justice writing, Victorian literature, eco-criticism), or within a specific area (e.g., students' majors, communities of practice, etc.). I did this in first-year writing (second semester in a 2-course sequence).

## Select Audience

Students identify the targeted audience they are writing to (e.g., concerned parents, Poe scholars, folks who are unaware of the impact of environmental pollutants on their community, etc.).

## Select Genre

Students then determine which mode they will use (e.g., educational website, TikTok video, direct mail campaign). Instructor articulates source requirements, rhetorical moves, etc.

Students propose topic, audience, genre for instructor approval before drafting!

## Assess

Flexible rubrics that can apply to multiple projects are key; criteria like "project includes multiple persuasive appeals appropriate to identified audience" and "analysis of issue is focused and targeted;" use reflections to understand process

# OKAY, I KNOW I SAID "UPPER DIVISION COURSES," BUT...

01



## First-Year Writing

Provide flexible assignment options centered around purpose, rather than genre

02



## Literature Survey

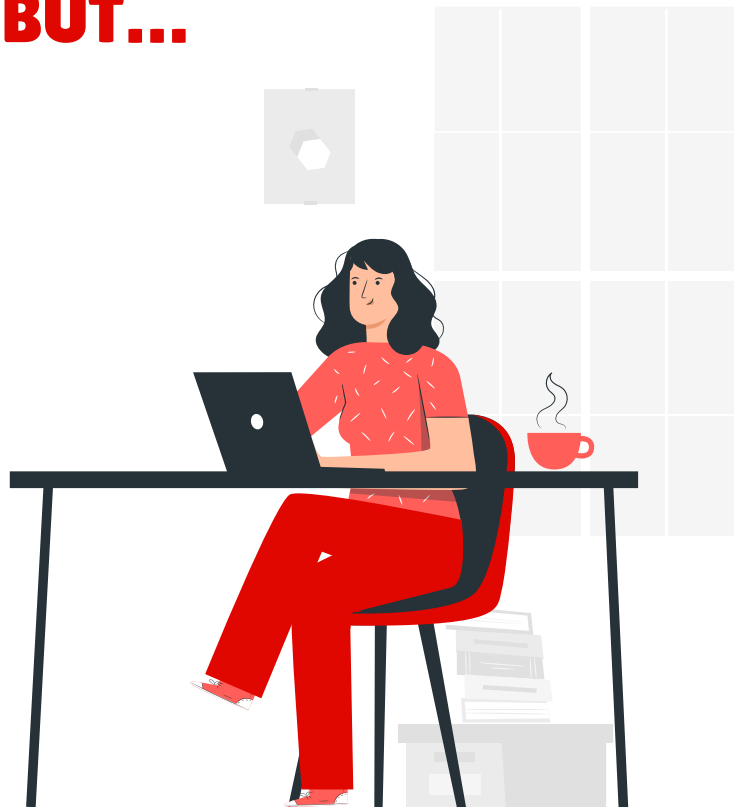
Writing about novels can take many forms! Why not make an analysis assignment where students can choose between an audio essay, a digital exhibit, or a TikTok?

03



## Speech

Public speaking is the #1 fear of Americans; how could it be practiced in a way that builds skills but also foregrounds students' informed choices?





## ULTIMATELY...

The root of UDL is accessibility, and the root of accessibility is access.

Each move to increase access is a small but potent gesture that bolsters opportunities for student learning and engagement. Start small and build.

# THANKS

Questions? Ideas? Commentary?

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