Module 3: Access Hacks

Introduction to Code of the Freaks Curriculum Overview
By Theodora Danylevich

With the goal of helping instructors, students, and community members to enjoy deeper engagement with *Code of the Freaks*, this curriculum offers framing and contextualizing readings as well as companion reading and viewing materials. Included as well are some suggested experiential learning activities, which could be taken up as assignments in the classroom setting. Materials have been selected and organized to allow folks to fully appreciate the critical intervention that *Code of the Freaks* is engaged in. These supplemental reading and viewing materials are meant to invite and support engagement with the conversations that *Code of the Freaks* hopes to spark, additionally branching out into areas and subtopics that the documentary itself could not fully cover or address.

We begin (**Module 1: Contexts, Concepts, Methods**) with materials that articulate political, economic, and cultural stakes and contexts in relation to the emergence of the cinematic medium –the "moving image." This module also historicizes disability identity politics in relation to the turn of the twentieth century, when the medium of film emerges. Within this first module, we also include scholarly materials that engage with the question of spectatorship and counter-hegemonic interpretations to facilitate analytical discussions informed by and alongside historical and political contexts. Following this broadly contextualizing module, we have compiled two shorter modules. **Module 2: Political Economy and Genre** looks into considerations of labor, particularly the fraught intersections of disabled people and employment in the performance industry, and into the political economy of movie-making more broadly. This module also dives into documentary filmmaking as a specific genre and mode of critique (in the vein of *Code of the Freaks*). Finally, as a praxis-oriented component of the curriculum, **Module 3: Access Hacks** offers the opportunity to learn about and engage in access work. Reaching beyond the presumptive sensory determinism (audio-visual) of films as we know them now, this module explores the varied world of accessibility "hacks" in creative media projects as well as day-to-day accessibility hacks.

Throughout, this curriculum encourages consideration of the relationship of both disability and cinema to shifting landscapes of labor and media economies as well as medical and scientific paradigms and nation-building agendas. Questions we hope to stimulate and facilitate conversations about include:

- How does the development of the **scientific gaze** contribute to the formation and persistence of "**disability as a problem**" tropes?
  - What is cinema's relationship to the **codification of practices of diagnosis and taxonomy** emblematic of the 20th century?
- What is the relationship between **disability and race** on screen, and in production? How about **disability and gender**?
- How does the **type of disability** one might have impact inclusion and participation in the cinematic realm as **actors**, **directors**, and as **spectators**?
- What kinds of **sensory experiences** are produced and codified through film, and what do these experiences mean for the stories that unfold?

NOTE: Some readings/viewings appear in multiple modules; this is not a mistake!

**ALSO NOTE: The order in which readings appear in the below lists is neither strictly chronological, nor alphabetical. Rather, the order reflects a general sequence of ideas and approaches.*

MODULE 3: Access Hacks

Beyond Sensory Determinism: Accessibility and Disability Justice Connections

Subfields: Art and Art Production, Disability Justice

Rationale

In this final module, we move into accessibility and access hacks. We include existing scholarship that explores alternative sensory engagements with cinema as well as activist creative projects exploring a multiplicity of accessibility hacks.

This module also includes a mini-introduction to Disability Justice as a strand of activism and organizing that is increasingly getting recognized for the important analyses, awarenesses, and tools they offer. Notably, the platform for disability justice is attuned to intersectionality, offering students a way to understand how the original premise we offered of intersecting cultural tropes around multiple identity markers is being addressed from a grassroots activist vantage.

Reading/Viewing List

APPROACHES TO ACCESS

- Sins Invalid. *Skin, Tooth, and Bone: The Basis of Movement is Our People: A Disability Justice Primer, 2nd Edition.* Sins Invalid, 2019. (recommendation: "What is Disability Justice?" [pp.10-27], "Access Suggestions for Public Events" [28-41], "Access Suggestions for Mobilizations" [42-46].)
- Mingus, Mia. "Access Intimacy: The Missing Link." *Leaving Evidence.* May 5, 2011. https://leavingevidence.wordpress.com/2011/05/05/access-intimacy-the-missing-link/.
- Piepzna-Samarasinha, Leah Lakshmi. *Care Work: Dreaming Disability Justice.* Arsenal Pulp Press, 2018.
- Clark, John Lee. "Against Access." *McSweeney's 64: The Audio Issue*. https://audio.mcsweeneys.net/transcripts/against_access.html.
- Snyder, Joel. "Audio Description: The Visual made Verbal." *The International Journal of the Arts in Society:* 2, 2007. https://audiodescribe.com/about/articles/ad_international_journal_07.pdf
- W3C Web Accessibility Initiative. "Introduction to Web Accessibility."*w3.org*. https://www.w3.org/WAI/fundamentals/accessibility-intro/
- Lewis, TL. "Working Definition of Ableism - January 2022 Update." *talilalewis.com*. January 1, 2022. https://www.talilalewis.com/blog/working-definition-of-ableism-january-2022-update
  - Previous definitions and additional context can be found here (2021), here (2020), and here (2019)
- Brown, Lydia X. Z. "Ableism/Language." *Autistic Hoya.* https://www.autistichoya.com/p/ableist-words-and-terms-to-avoid.html
- (Forthcoming, Fall 2022) Hamraie, Aimi, Kevin Gotkin, and moira williams. "Remote Access: Crip Night Life." *Crip Pandemic Life: A Tapestry*, a special section of *Lateral: Journal of the Cultural Studies Association.*

SENSORY DIFFERENCES AND VISUAL/AUDIOVISUAL CULTURE

- Kleege, Georgina. "Blindness and Visual Culture: An Eyewitness Account," *The Disability Studies Reader, 3rd Ed.* Routledge, 2010. 522-530. [in *5th Edition* (2017)*,* pp.440-449.]
- Bolt, David. "Aesthetic Blindness: Symbolism, Realism, and Reality," *The Disability Studies Reader, 5th Ed.* Routledge, 2017. 256-268.
- Yates, Samuel. "Deafness: Screening Signs in Contemporary Cinema" in David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder Eds. *A Cultural History of Disability in the Modern Age: Volume 6*. Series edited by Robert McRuer and David Bolt. Bloomsbury, 2020.
- Straus, Joseph N. "Autism as Culture," *The Disability Studies Reader, 3rd Ed.* Routledge, 2010. 535-559.
- Kuppers, Petra and Neil Marcus. "Selections from *Cripple Poetics,*" *The Disability Studies Reader, 3rd Ed.* Routledge, 2010. 596-598.
- Marks, Laura. *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses.* Duke, 2000.

Activities/Projects

- Using some of the techniques and recommendations described in the materials, create a short access-hacked version of a clip, a trailer, or a music video.
- Put on a "Remote Access" style mini event for the class.
- Experiment with crowd sourced captioning versus auto-captioning.

Further/Discussion Questions

- How might we use *Code of the Freaks* as a background or context for new work coming out on Sensory Determinism and Disability Justice approaches to art and art production?
- What access hacks would make *Code of the Freaks* more accessible?

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