

Integrating Intersectional Frameworks into an Accessibility Capstone

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ABSTRACT

Disabled people live at the intersection of multiple identities that shape their access needs and technology experiences. Designing equitable systems requires preparing future technologists to critically engage with how technologies interact with systems of oppression. This experience report presents the design and instruction of an accessibility capstone that integrates intersectional theories, both within course content and as a guiding pedagogical framework. We outline the theoretical foundations informing the course, its structure and implementation, and reflect on the tensions that emerged throughout the course. We offer considerations for educators seeking to meaningfully integrate intersectional accessibility into computing education.

CCS CONCEPTS

• Social and professional topics → Computing education • Human-centered computing → Accessibility theory, concepts and paradigms.

KEYWORDS

Accessibility; Intersectionality; Inclusive Computing Pedagogy

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1 Introduction

Intersectionality, a term introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw [19], articulates how systems of power—such as racism, sexism, and ableism—interlock to shape the experiences of those who hold multiple marginalized identities. While intersectionality has informed critical discourse across law, racial justice, and identity

politics, it is less present in accessibility [26] and disability scholarship [8]. When it is mentioned at all, intersectionality is often used to mean having multiple identity strands that are separate and additive rather than mutually affecting one another. This results in incomplete or flattened understandings of access and accessibility [8], and reinforces a default user who is White, English-speaking, educated, and financially well off [26]. However, even if we focus just on North America, where a substantial body of accessibility research is conducted, there are racial, gender and socioeconomic disparities in disability prevalence [24]. Such intersections shape disabled people’s access needs and how they navigate and experience technology [29]. For example, multilingual d/Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing individuals use captions not only for communication access, but for navigating across languages and dialects—needs often flattened by captioning systems that assume English monolingualism [20]. Bennett et al. demonstrate how image descriptions often erase or distort the intersecting identities of people in images [12]. Hsueh et al. show that the use and non-use of access technologies, in the context of low-resource and low-income communities, are shaped by ongoing negotiations with the institutions and systems that often fail them [29]. Johnson and Lewis et al. demonstrate how multiply marginalized people with disabilities negotiate generative AI use amid mistrust, identity-based harms, and amplified accessibility taxes [35]. These examples illustrate how ableism embedded in technological systems compounds along intersecting lines of oppression, shaping how different disabled communities are (mis)recognized or erased by technology.

This gap is especially pronounced in computer science education. Developing a critical consciousness of how ableism in technology (technoableism [51]) interacts with other systems of oppression is essential to prepare future technologists in designing equitable systems. This paper shares our experience designing, implementing, and teaching an accessibility capstone course that integrates intersectional frameworks in both the course content and our pedagogical approach. In this project-based course, students engage with the sociocultural and political dimensions of disability and consider how micro- and macro-level power dynamics operate through design and system development to shape the lives of disabled people. Our goal is to help students move beyond



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technocentric approaches to accessibility and develop a sensitivity toward justice-oriented practices.

1.1 Background

Much of the theorizing and praxis of intersectionality emerges from disciplines outside of accessibility research, such as DisCrit [16]. Bailey and Mobley similarly call for a deeper integration of Disability Studies and Black Studies [8], arguing that both fields must move beyond siloed frameworks and adopt a comprehensively intersectional approach to non-normative bodies and minds, emphasizing the interlocking nature of ableism, racism, and sexism. Community-led frameworks like Disability Justice further provide a critical lens for examining oppression [54], shifting the focus from a single-axis model of disability towards relationality, interdependence, solidarity, and collective liberation [14]. Yet in accessibility research, intersecting identities are often overlooked or examined apart from disability [26].

One possible root cause of the lack of intersectional work in accessibility research is the lack of attention to intersectionality in computing education. There have been growing calls for computing education to center justice, both by interrogating what kinds of knowledge is valued in computing and by challenging structural barriers to participation. This work asks educators to go beyond narrow technical instruction, by engaging in the social, cultural, and political dimensions of computing. Lachney et al. compiled a special issue to explore diverse approaches to centering equity, power, and lived experiences of minoritized students in how computing is taught, practiced, and valued [40]. This movement consists of complementary directions: teaching intersectionally, or creating computing spaces that account for intersecting identities; and teaching intersectionality, or helping students engage directly with critical frameworks that analyze how systems of power intersect in computing contexts.

Teaching intersectionally. Efforts under the banner of CS for All movement have sought to broaden access to computing while ensuring CS classrooms are inclusive for students from historically minoritized backgrounds [3]. For example, Hubbard et al. advocate for applying Critical Race Theory in computing education to help students and educators name and confront racial inequities embedded in computing culture [30]. Other approaches emphasize building community and counterspaces. Rankin et al. introduce sister circles as a method for supporting Black women in computing degree programs [49], creating spaces for shared storytelling and affirmation. Likewise, Erete et al. explore how culturally responsive computing environments can increase participation among Black and Latina girls [22], emphasizing the need for computing education to recognize students' full identities and experiences.

Teaching intersectionality. Alongside structural reforms to make computing spaces more inclusive, researchers and educators have also investigated how to integrate intersectional and justice-oriented content directly into computing curricula. Bettina L. Love [42] established "abolitionist teaching" to propose a vision for

classrooms grounded in community care and restorative justice. This involves helping students understand the realities of racial oppression and equipping them with the tools to imagine and enact meaningful change in their communities through collective action and civic engagement. This work informed computing educators to map tenets of abolitionist teaching onto CS curricula [21, 33]. Other work has proposed CS course materials that embed social science concepts, inviting students to reflect on societal impacts of technology [34, 41]. Finally, Ko et al. call for critical computing pedagogies that help students examine how their values are embedded in technical systems and how computing contributes to social injustices [37].

These literature reviews demonstrate the necessity of scholarship in defining how to bring intersectionality into our teaching. However, prior work does not address disability as a specific axis of intersectionality that should be considered. Our work builds on these traditions by examining how justice-oriented frameworks can be integrated into an accessibility curriculum, specifically where students must grapple with the politics of disability, ableism, and structural barriers that shape access while also considering how this influences and is influenced by critiques and recognition of lived experiences relating to race, gender, income, and other identities typically erased by the defaults assumed in most computer science research and education.

2 Positionality Statement

Our teaching, analysis, and writing are shaped by the authors' lived experiences. The authors of this paper identify as disabled; as Black American, Asian American, and White Jewish American; are multilingual and multidialectal; and collectively hold additional marginalized identities, including queer identities. Our lived experiences at these intersections have shaped how we understand intersectionality as a necessary analytic lens for examining access, power, and participation, informing how we approach accessibility research and pedagogy. Our understanding of disability, accessibility, race, and other identities is situated within a U.S. context and based on our collective positionalities. Our recognition that accessibility is a sociopolitical practice shaped by intersecting systems of power, rather than a neutral or purely technical consideration, guided our course design and implementation. Intersectional disability and accessibility frameworks [6, 14, 17, 26] informed all stages of our course. Two authors have extensive experience researching and teaching CS and accessibility courses, while one author, who also conducts accessibility research, has served as a teaching assistant for courses in these areas. As instructors, we held positions of authority that shape classroom dynamics, requiring ongoing reflexivity around power, representation, and whose knowledge is being centered.

3 Description of Practice: Course Design and Intersectional Implementation

In Winter 2025, we offered a ten-week accessibility capstone course within the Paul G. Allen School of Computer Science & Engineering department at the University of Washington

accredited by ABET [2], whose outcomes emphasize ethically responsible and socially attentive engineering solutions. Co-led by all three authors, this capstone focused on teaching intersectional accessibility through project-based learning [1]. The course enrolled 27 undergraduate students who represented a diverse range of racial, disability, linguistic, and cultural identities. In this project-based course, students developed technical solutions to accessibility challenges that intersect with multilingualism, multiculturalism, or other dimensions of identity in addition to disability. Following a user-centered design process, students conducted semi-structured interviews and low-fidelity prototype evaluations with clients, culminating in the development of a functional prototype. The course also integrated engineering and accessibility-specific standards such as Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) [59] and the Voluntary Product Accessibility Template (VPAT) [5].

Initially, many students engaged with intersectionality at a surface level—an expected outcome, given that for most, this course marked their first exposure to the term intersectionality and to broader accessibility frameworks within computer science contexts. Over the quarter, we observed meaningful growth in students’ conceptual understanding and their application of intersectional accessibility in design. One student wrote in an anonymous course survey that, despite initially thinking they understood intersectionality, ongoing feedback from course staff helped them “*realize how much more there was to consider.*” Students increasingly moved away from treating intersectionality as a checklist and began to understand it as an ongoing, relational practice that demands reflexivity and responsiveness. One student reflected, “*making an accessible intersectionally inclusive design is a process that is ongoing and persists in all stages of development, design, implementation, feedback, and revision.*” Similarly, another student highlighted the “*importance of listening to people’s actual needs rather than making assumptions,*” adding, “*it’s taught me how vital it is to consider people’s intersectional backgrounds—like their cultural, social, and personal experiences—in shaping their access and opportunities.*” In what follows, we outline the intentional pedagogical design and implementation choices that shaped these learning outcomes.

3.1 Project Development

In designing the projects for the course, we were intentional about grounding them in real community needs. The capstone featured eight project areas, some proposed by disabled community members who then became project mentors, and others co-developed through close collaboration with the mentors. From framing and scoping of project topics to selecting mentors, we centered needs that intersect issues of race, disability, and accessibility [26].

3.1.1. Project Topics. Each project centered the experiences of multi-marginalized communities historically excluded from technology design. Projects enabled students to critically examine how intersecting systems of oppression, such as racism, ableism, and linguistic discrimination, shape access, and to explore how these dynamics could be meaningfully addressed through design.

Projects included a resume design assistant to help mitigate bias in resume screening; a multilingual captioning tool supporting the diverse linguistic practices of disabled individuals; a mental health chatbot designed for unhoused individuals living in Tiny House Villages; an image generation tool to create personalized, culturally, linguistically, and disability responsive speech therapy materials; and a college search platform for assessing and sharing insights on campus accessibility and inclusion. See Table 1 in Appendix A for a more detailed, complete list.

3.1.2. Mentor and Community Stakeholder Engagement. Each project was mentored by a disabled community member. We recruited mentors whose work aligned with the course’s intersectional focus, drawing from prior collaborations and professional networks with pre-existing rapport. Mentors brought diverse disciplinary backgrounds in accessibility, computing, human-computer interaction, health, speech-language therapy, and collectively have extensive experience working with marginalized populations. Many mentors held disability and multi-marginalized identities (e.g., queer and disabled, multilingual and disabled, disabled person of color).

Beyond shaping the initial project development, mentors played a sustained role throughout the course, providing ongoing direct support across multiple stages of student learning, including in-class design critiques, project meetings, and in identifying appropriate community stakeholders to serve as project clients

Students collaborated with project clients to identify needs and evaluate their prototypes. To support ethical engagement, we organized in-class activities aimed at helping students build rapport, address access needs, and navigate power asymmetries in preparation for working with clients. Clients were compensated for their time and expertise, recognizing the value of their epistemic authority in shaping the project.

3.2 Course Material Development

Alongside project work, we designed lectures and curated readings that build students’ understanding of intersectional accessibility. From the opening sections of the syllabus, to our first lecture and final deliverables, the course integrated intersectionality at every stage. The syllabus introduced accessibility as a central and growing priority in product design and engineering, noting that disability is something most people will experience at some point in our lives. The course positioned intersectionality as a framework for understanding how disability interacts with other axes of identity and systems of power. We introduced Kimberlé Crenshaw’s words to students as a foundation for thinking about intersectionality: “*Intersectionality is a lens through which you can see where power comes and collides, where it interlocks and intersects. It’s not simply that there’s a race problem here, a gender problem here, and a class or LGBTQ problem there. Many times that framework erases what happens to people who are subject to all of these things.*” [4] The full course materials are available online at <https://courses.cs.washington.edu/courses/cse482a/25wi/>.

We provide a summary of the course design here, and excerpts from specific materials we created.

3.2.1. Lectures. The capstone consisted of seven lectures. In designing the course, we sought to balance teaching user-centered design methods with accessible design practices, framing each method taught through an intersectional lens. This involved designing lectures to help students critically reflect on how disability and intersecting identities shape the design and experiences of access. The lectures span aspects of accessible user centered design, from user research and engagement to prototyping and presentation.

In the introductory lecture, “Ethics for Intersectional, Accessible Research”, we introduced models of disability (i.e., medical, social, and postmodern), framing disability as a context-dependent mismatch. We then introduced intersectionality as a critical lens for understanding how identity dimensions, such as race and disability, co-shape experiences with technology. This lecture also challenged students to reflect on how identity is represented in technology, framing user-centered design as an inclusive, reflexive practice situated in accessibility and HCI scholarship [10, 44, 45, 56]

To adapt user research through an intersectional lens, we focused on sensitizing students to the politics of identity and how this reflexivity can create more intentional and respectful engagement with disabled communities. In the second lecture, on user engagement, we integrated intersectional considerations by scaffolding students’ reflections across three dimensions: **activities** (“*how, if at all, are clients’ racial or other identities harmed, or supported, during these activities?*”), **environments** (“*what structural forces, or assumptions, are at play regarding client race, gender and/or disability status?*”), and **interactions** (“*what biases or assumptions might impact the client during these interactions?*”). We also taught students critical skills for user engagement such as how to be mindful when describing identity—drawing from perspectives of BIPOC, non-binary, and transgender blind people [12]—as well as how to recognize and navigate power asymmetries in the design process.

We next integrated intersectional reflections throughout the methods used throughout the iterative design process. For example, we guided students to recognize when design assumptions flatten complex identities (e.g. assuming all users with a given disability share the same language needs or goals). Students explored how to deepen their engagement by incorporating identity-based risks such as privacy concerns for disabled users of color—into early-stage ideation. In-class exercises invited students to examine how *interface* design dimensions (e.g. tactile vs. visual or sound vs. silent) might interact with *identity* design dimensions (e.g. culture, language, access need, identity-based risks such as racism or ableism). We also translated disability justice principles into analytical questions for students to ask about their design decisions. We asked students to identify specific disability justice principles that their designs either succeeded, or failed to meet,

drawn from the 10 principles put forth by Sins Invalid [31]. We asked students to reflect on broader questions of inclusion such as “*does the design give control and improve agency?*” and “*how might this design perpetuate harm?*”.

3.2.2. Readings. Students completed weekly reading reflections connecting intersectional frameworks to accessibility in practice. The readings combined practical guides on accessibility—such as creating accessible documents, presentations, and user tests—with accessibility focused writings on design justice [36] and disability justice [31], as well as intersectionality [52]. The corresponding reflection questions aimed to tie these readings back into students’ design activities, as entry points for developing intersectional thinking while designing accessible technologies. See Table 3 in Appendix for a full list of readings and reflection questions.

For example, during the first week, students were introduced to the concept of intersectionality [53] and were asked to reflect on how everyday technology they use may or may not support their own diverse identities, as well as how their past design work has addressed the intersecting needs of users. In response, students cited specific everyday technologies such as social media where personalized content and language support have helped affirm their identities by facilitating community building and information sharing, while also misrecognizing, stereotyping, and excluding those same identities. In reflecting on their past design work, students pointed out different ways they failed to account for cultural contexts (such as an Alexa app that didn’t support non-English accents) and access needs (such as instructional videos that didn’t have captions).

To help students further develop sensitivity to intersectional concerns in their projects, we asked them to select one of the following readings and consider its relationship to their project: Critical Race Theory in HCI [46]; Moving Beyond Damage-Centered Design in HCI for BIPOC Communities [56]; Disability studies as a source of critical inquiry for the field of assistive technology [44]; Interdependence as a Frame for Assistive Technology Research and Design [11]; 10 Principles of Disability Justice [31]; Language Justice is Disability [32], and A critical turn toward disability justice in HCI [55]. After reading their article, students were tasked with finding a first-person account, authored by a disabled person, about a topic relevant to their project. We asked students to reflect on its relevance to their project; how the intersecting identities of the author shape their experiences of disability; what groups or identities were missing from the accounts they found; and what impact that might have on their understanding of the problem. We also asked students to consider: “*How can your project goals address barriers that arise from multiple intersecting systems of oppression (e.g., racism, ableism, sexism)?*”, “*How would you define success for this project, and how will you determine if it has positively impacted your target users?*”, and “*What measures will you take to avoid reinforcing existing biases or excluding certain identities?*”

In addition, over the course of the quarter, aligned with their project tasks, students were asked to read and reflect on each of the following papers: She Coined the Term ‘Intersectionality’ Over 30 Years Ago. Here’s What It Means to Her Today (Time Magazine [53]); Anticipate and Adjust: Cultivating Access in Human-Centered Methods [43]; A Comprehensive Guide to Accessible User Research [25]; Computing and Society + Design Justice [36]; Accessibility Lo Fi Testing [62]; Wizard of Oz Prototyping [47]; WCAG Beginner’s Guide [7], and Voluntary Product Accessibility Template [18].

During the accessible user research week, students were asked to read A Comprehensive Guide to Accessible User Research [25], consider how research settings could create different access barriers, and to brainstorm creative accommodations for different disabilities, such as flexible pacing, plural communication options, simplified interfaces, and asynchronous participation as ways of making user research accessible for participants with motor or speech impairments, and chronic illness. We also introduced the concept of design justice in the context of disability [36]. Students were asked to reflect on how their interview protocols aligned with principles of design justice and how they might better account for power relations between designer and user and how to center care in their interview questions. Students described avoiding making generalizations and assumptions during interviews, as well as proactively considering who would be directly impacted by their design outcomes and making sure their voices are centered.

To support students’ iterative design process, we introduced them to the popular AEIOU framework for user-centered design [50]. They were assigned Anticipate and Adjust [43] and Working at the Intersection of Race, Disability and Technology [26] as accompaniment to think critically about intersectional accessibility. Informed by these, students planned how they would engage with clients and how they would make their experiment inclusive. We adapted the AEIOU framework to support analysis of the data that they collected by adding the following questions about intersectional aspects of identity:

- **Activities:** What activities did you learn about?; How, if at all, are clients’ racial or other identities harmed, or supported, during these activities?; and How does your proposed design engage with this?
- **Environments:** Where do the activities take place?; What structural forces, or assumptions, are at play regarding client race, gender and/or disability status?; and How does your proposed design engage with this?
- **Interactions:** Who or what does the client interact with when accomplishing the activities?; What biases or assumptions might impact the client during these interactions?; and How does your proposed design engage with this?
- **Objects:** What objects do they use and how?; How are cultural identity, gender identity, and disability identity represented in these objects, if at all?; and How does your proposed design engage with this?
- **Users:** Who are the stakeholders that clients interact with when accomplishing the activity?; What sort of power differentials exist in these interactions?; and How does your proposed design engage with this?

We also guided students in responsible user engagement. Before each interaction with clients (interviews and lofi prototype testing), we asked students to reflect on dynamics that might exist due to the identities of students and clients in play, prompting them to: (1) Identify any ethical issues (“*Are there any risks of safety, privacy, or other concerns regarding these activities?*”) “*How will the access needs of each person be met?*”), and (2) Identify and address concerns regarding power dynamics, safety, ableism, racism, or anything else that might affect inclusive participation.

When designing their lo-fi prototypes, students were asked to think about accessibility barriers with popular prototyping tools. Students identified issues such as screen reader compatibility, color contrast, and suggested ways to implement prototypes in Google Slides to make them more accessible. In an effort to consider disabilities across multiple dimensions, students also sought to create prototypes that can be navigated using a variety of methods (e.g. multilingual displays, adjustable captions). As students prepared to test their prototypes, they were asked to pick a task that will capture intersectional perspectives. Many students focused on language and accessibility, such as testing the multilingual capabilities of the chatbots they’re designing and evaluating image descriptions for cultural inclusivity. Others focused on customization and identity expression, like allowing participants to edit image descriptions or input personal or cultural preferences. Several students also explored how users could control the disclosure of aspects of their identity, such as disability, race, or gender, while interacting with their app or tool.

3.3 Teaching Style and Assessment

We were intentional about modeling values of access, interdependence, and inclusivity in how we taught the course. At the start of the quarter, we invited students to anonymously share their access needs, which helped us frame accessibility as a shared responsibility. Throughout the course, we supported hybrid participation, used captions consistently, and regularly checked in about how access was experienced in class. Our approach to assessment was similarly shaped by these values. We adopted competency-based grading, which emphasizes iterative skill development and positions learning as a continuous process rather than a singular demonstration of mastery [58]. This model supported ongoing assessment of student growth across assignments, with competencies evaluated on a rubric from no evidence to excellent. The five competencies—Disability and Design Justice, Inclusive and Person-Centered Design, Accessible Implementation, Accessible Communication, and Inclusive Experimentation—each operationalized a unique dimension of intersectional accessibility and each was explicitly aligned with an ABET learning outcome. For example, the Disability and Design Justice competency assessed students’ ability to prioritize user agency and challenge normative

assumptions and harms embedded in technology, whereas Inclusive and Person-Centered Design required students to ground design decisions in first-person perspectives from disabled stakeholders, positioning community expertise as a core epistemic resource. See Table 2 in Appendix A for a complete list of competencies. Beyond this grading scheme, we also incorporated flexibility through a two-day grace period for submissions and offered resubmissions to support students' evolving understanding and integration of feedback beyond the constraints of weekly deadlines.

To support reuse and adaptation, we encourage CS educators to adopt the course materials and pedagogy practice described in this section, and we provide additional resources through our course website (i.e., lecture slides) and Appendix A (i.e., curated readings with discussion questions (Table 3), and a competency-based grading scheme (Table 2). We encourage educators to adapt these resources to their own contexts and curricular goals.

4 Limitations and Assumptions

In Section 3, we reflect on students' observed growth in understanding intersectionality and their ability to apply it in design. However, these pedagogical gains also raise a critical question: who ultimately benefits from this learning, and at what cost? While students internalized intersectional principles in ways that shaped their technical decision-making, they also gained tangible assets such as academic credit and resume-building artifacts. Although compensated, community collaborators whose lived experiences grounded these projects were not positioned to receive reciprocal or sustained benefits beyond the academic term. Importantly, students' accrued benefits themselves were constrained by compressed academic timelines. Here, we reflect on the tensions that emerged due to pedagogical and institutional limitations and how these tensions shaped both students' understanding and the distribution of benefits between students and the community partners.

Conflicting temporal demands. Throughout the course, both we and the students became increasingly attuned to how temporal constraints shaped what could be taught, learned, and built. These constraints stemmed from compressed quarter system timelines, ABET-mandated engineering outcomes, and dominant CS logics that prioritize tangible deliverables (e.g., code, prototypes, and presentations) with linear, goal-oriented progress. These cadences often conflicted with the reflective, and relational practices demanded by intersectional thinking. Several students articulated this misalignment, describing how the demand to quickly generate user insights and prototypes led them to view course components such as making materials accessible or engaging deeply with lectures as lower priority or “*busy work*”, because they were not perceived as directly advancing the projects' development. Some students also suggested shifting foundational content on

accessibility and user-centered design practices to prerequisite courses, noting that these topics felt rushed in the current format. As we taught the capstone, we continually wrestled with what it means to engage deeply with intersectionality within the temporal structures of CS curriculum that incentivize efficiency over reflection, deliverables over relationships, and individual technical achievement over collective flourishing. These priorities conflict with the nonlinear, relational, and liberatory temporalities [13, 27] demanded by intersectional frameworks. Working within these constraints revealed epistemic frictions that cannot be easily resolved.

Lack of structure for positional reflexivity. Students entered the course with varied relationships to disability and other axes of identity, which shaped how they interpreted design problems and approached access. Some with lived experiences that closely aligned to projects drew firm boundaries around what they felt should be explored and how, while others—positioned further from the communities they worked with—began to confront the limits of their situated knowledge and understanding. Although the course invited students to engage in reflection regarding power dynamics through structured prompts (see Table 3 in Appendix A), many responses remained at the level of acknowledgment—naming positionality¹ without examining how proximity to power and marginalization informed their design choices or translating this awareness into informed design action. This can result in exacerbating asymmetries of benefits and reinforcing extractive dynamics between designers and users. A few students, however, did engage more deeply, articulating how their positionality shaped their design approach. Still, we observed that sustained engagement with positional reflexivity remained difficult. This range in students' positional reflexivity suggests the need for greater scaffolding—not only to support critical self-reflection, but to help students concretely link their situated knowledge to the design and development of sociotechnical systems.

5 Implications and Next Steps

Designing accessible sociotechnical systems requires understanding how ableism intersects with other systems of oppression to shape the lived experiences and access needs of people with disabilities. Embedding this intersectional lens within CS education is essential for preparing future technologists to meaningfully engage in justice-oriented design. By operationalizing intersectionality in an accessibility capstone course—both through the integration of intersectional content and the adoption of intersectional pedagogical practices—we have demonstrated how iterative engagement with intersectionality can deepen students' conceptual and applied understanding of it within technical design. At the same time, our report surfaces tensions around temporality and positional reflexivity that complicate the implementation of intersectional pedagogy in computing contexts. This requires us to interrogate the logics that shape pedagogy in computing and

¹ Positionality, rooted in feminist epistemologies [57], is the critical examination of how one's social location structures knowledge production through embodied, situated relations to power, privilege, and oppression [15].

design. English education scholar and Black feminist Carmen Kynard has framed pedagogy as “*political intervention ... something bigger that is also not limited to just classrooms. We are talking about deliberately planned series of actions and counter-literacies that move a group towards political contest and intervention*” [38].

Following Conor et al.’s lead [16] in understanding inequities embedded in American education, we argue that teaching intersectional accessibility must likewise confront and intervene in the systemic factors that marginalize those who are intersectionally disadvantaged. Some existing efforts illustrate what such structural intervention might entail. We might, for example, reshape CS curricula to center marginalized epistemologies (e.g. [39]), challenging dominant ways of knowing in CS and sharpening students’ awareness of “where they know from” [64]. Recognizing that theory is inseparable from practice [28], we can also rethink where learning takes place, extending beyond the classroom into community spaces. For example, in our capstone, student projects followed a user-centered design process, engaging with community mainly through interviews and prototype testing. How might we experiment with alternative forms of community-engaged teaching that can cultivate more meaningful, mutually beneficial partnerships within the constraints of a course [9, 63], such as embedding a capstone within a larger ecosystem where students can build on, refine, or hand off projects across cohorts. Designing for this kind of project hand-off framework could support deeper community engagement and expand the impact of student work beyond a single quarter. We might also consider other forms of evaluation beyond grades, taking inspiration, for example, from Mitch Goldstein’s self-evaluation [48] or Jack Shneider’s explorations of practical reforms [60], or even shift away from grading entirely to the practice of ungrading [61]. These shifts highlight an opportunity for reorienting of CS education, treating students not as deposit holders of knowledge [23], but as active citizens and critical thinkers.

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APPENDIX

Table 1. Overview of final capstone projects, including project titles, descriptions, and communities they aimed to serve.

Project Title	Project Description	Community Served
Inclusive Resume Assistant	Nearly 99% of Fortune 500 companies use AI-driven resume screening tools in recruitment. How can job seekers manage AI biases that arise when a resume mentions certain disability, gender and racial identities? Our tool suggests tailored resume adjustments and tests biases for job seekers.	Disabled job seekers from diverse backgrounds
CollegeSearch	20% of undergraduate students have a disability. And yet in 2025, there is no easy way to find a college that truly accommodates for their unique disabilities and intersecting identities. CollegeSearch lets students share their experiences and rate the accessibility and inclusivity of their university, and empowers applicants to choose a college that truly fits them.	College students and applicants from diverse backgrounds
CaptionCrafter	Caption users have diverse needs beyond hearing loss accommodation. Few captioning tools address the needs of language learners, multilingual individuals, or people with disabilities like dyslexia. CaptionCrafter provides customizable captions in multiple languages with adjustable fonts, text sizes, and orientations to create an optimal viewing experience for all caption users.	Multilingual disabled individuals
Chattybara	Consistent access to mental health support usually depends on financial and other forms of stability. In the Tiny Home Village, individuals with a range of needs and disabilities can benefit from advice and pointers to resources. Chattybara provides multimodal, chat-based empathetic mental-health support.	Unhoused individuals with mental health conditions living in Tiny House Villages
CoPal	Mental health needs are common, yet undertreated and undersupported, and strategies for mental health support may not account for differences in lived experience and resources connected to varied identities. CoPal allows users to curate regulation methods based on their identity and community to facilitate reflection and growth.	Neurodiverse students from diverse backgrounds, Students with mental health conditions from diverse backgrounds
Chat SLP	Chat SLP supports Speech-Language Therapists in generating engaging culturally responsive image prompts tailored to therapy goals, session themes, and client needs to support clients from diverse cultural backgrounds—saving time and enhancing lesson effectiveness.	Speech-language therapists who work with culturally and linguistically diverse children with disabilities
Tactile Art	For blind and visually impaired individuals, art is often available only as a verbal description that may not flexibly represent their modalities of choice or cultural understandings. A central resource that makes it easy to find and explore art using culturally influenced, multimodal methods can make art more inclusive.	Blind or low vision artists from diverse backgrounds
Cultural ALT-Text	Almost 23% of images have no alt text, and most others lack cultural context. Our Chrome extension provides culturally-aware image descriptions, offering customizable settings to tailor alt text preferences. A chatbot feature enables users to inquire more deeply about cultural aspects.	Blind or low vision individuals from diverse backgrounds

Table 2. Overview of five grading competencies and corresponding ABET requirements they met.

Competency	Description	Relevant ABET Requirement
Accessible Implementation	In our course, this means you can apply standards for accessible design (WCAG 2.1 AA) in your prototypes.	“An ability to identify, formulate, and solve complex engineering problems by applying principles of engineering, science, and mathematics”
Inclusive, person-centered design	In our course, this means you can demonstrate your ability to base design decisions on first person perspectives. This includes understanding the stakeholders; learning from them; and designing for them.	“An ability to recognize ethical and professional responsibilities in engineering situations and make informed judgments, which must consider the impact of engineering solutions in global, economic, environmental, and societal contexts”
Accessible Communication	In our course, this means that you know how to ensure that documents, posters and presentations you create are accessible to everyone in your intended audience, including people with disabilities.	“An ability to communicate effectively with a range of audiences”
Design/Disability Justice Principles	In our course, this means that you know how to enact positive disability principals in your design. These include learning and applying principals such as non-ableist language and ideas such as emphasizing agency and control and avoiding disability dongles. You should be able to summarize and critique accessibility projects, including your own, on the following concerns: - Is it being used to give control and improve agency to the intended clients? - How might this project perpetuate harm against those with marginalized racial or disability identities? - Is it prioritizing the design’s impact on the client community over the intentions of the designer? - Is it engaging with all aspects of participants’ identities, rather than oversimplifying by erasing part of who they are? - Is it addressing the whole community (intersectionality, multiple disabled people, multiply disabled people) - How might this project balance what you gain by learning from clients by giving knowledge, tools, or other results back to the client community? - Does this project honor and uplift existing client community knowledge and practices?	“An ability to apply engineering design to produce solutions that meet specified needs with consideration of public health, safety, and welfare, as well as global, cultural, social, environmental, and economic factors”
Inclusive Experiments	In our course, this means you appropriately consider the following in your experimental design and analysis: - Accessibility - Ethical and/or intersectional identity related issues relevant to your project - Concerns regarding power dynamics, safety, ableism, racism, or anything else that might affect inclusive participation or engagement with your project	“An ability to develop and conduct appropriate experimentation, analyze and interpret data, and use engineering judgment to draw conclusions”

Table 3. List of readings and corresponding questions assigned.

Reading Assignments	Reading Questions
Working at the Intersection of Race, Disability and Accessibility [26] Kimberlé Crenshaw Interview (Time Magazine) [53]	- Choose a technology you use regularly. How does it (1) recognize and support your own intersecting identities, or (2) fail to address or conflict with aspects of those identities? (If you're not comfortable reflecting on your own identities, consider how it impacts others.) - Reflect on the last interface or technology you designed (e.g., a class project, research, or personal project). How did it address—or fail to address—the diverse needs of end-users? What changes would you make to your system to ensure a more inclusive and equitable design?
Accessible User Research [25]	- As research shifts increasingly to virtual settings, what novel access challenges might they bring? - Can you think of other disabilities not addressed by the article and how making research methods accessible might look different? - What different ways can our research meaningfully benefit the participants, beyond addressing their needs through the design of the final product?
Design and Disability Justice [36]	- In your interview protocol, what Design Justice principles did you apply, and how could you have better accounted for design justice? - As you progress in your academic and professional journey, how do you envision carrying forward the principles of design justice in your work? How can you advocate for a culture of design justice in larger tech organizations?
Accessibility Lo Fi Testing [62]	- Describe the key factors you will consider when designing your lo-fi prototypes. Think about aspects such as the environment in which the prototype will be tested (e.g., online vs. in-person) and the range of disabilities and intersecting identities that may influence user interactions. - Based on the article, what key accessibility considerations will you apply to your lo-fi prototyping process to ensure it effectively meets the diverse needs of your clients?
Wizard of Oz Prototyping [47]	- As your group prepares for your Wizard of Oz peer testing, what technical challenges and human-centered challenges (e.g., identity-related biases) might impact participant interactions? How can you implement strategies to ensure an accessible, inclusive, and unbiased testing process? - As you begin selecting tasks for your Wizard of Oz peer testing, what is one key task for your project that will capture intersectional perspectives?
VPAT 2.5 WCAG (November 2023) [18]	- Select one WCAG guideline and evaluate your system based on it. As shown in the provided template, identify your system's conformance level (i.e., Supports, Partially Supports, or Does Not Support) and provide a justification for your assessment.