SoTL and Disability Studies together in the “Big Tent”: An annotated bibliography

Joanna C. Rankin and Sarosh Sawani

University of Calgary

The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) has developed over the last thirty years as a transformative force in post-secondary education. As this field matures, the inclusive, “big tent” of SoTL, which welcomes a wide variety of faculty and students, approaches, disciplines, and reflections on teaching and learning, is open for further exploration around realities of diversity and inclusion in this ostensibly welcoming space. Issues of social justice and diversity are at the forefront of both university messaging and emerging SoTL literature. This current focus is of particular interest to faculty and disciplines that consider exclusionary and oppressive practices and their role in higher education. This area of interest is especially relevant to the field of Disability Studies (DS) where principles of inclusion, critical thinking, challenging of the status quo, questions of privilege and power and a focus on diversity overlap with identified SoTL goals, and push the boundaries of conceptions of inclusion and learning with every student.

This annotated bibliography has been shaped by the recognition of a relationship between the developing focuses of diversity and social justice in SoTL and the role of teaching and learning in Disability Studies. The selection of literature reviewed identifies key topics that take up current pedagogical practices in teaching and learning alongside central DS topics, as well as pointing to multiple intersections between these two areas. Annotations review the bases of these two disciplinary lenses as they relate to teaching and learning and provide a discussion of future directions for diversity and social justice informed SoTL work. This list of sources is not intended to be in-depth or comprehensive; rather, it is more of a suggested reading list for SoTL and DS researchers to provide an overview of the ways these varied but complimentary disciplines may overlap and inform one another.
Overview to Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

SoTL has not been widely explored by Disability Studies scholars’ to-date. While DS and SoTL differ in overall purpose, aspects of each reflect parallel objectives. By understanding the foundations of SoTL, Disability Studies scholars will be able to take advantage of some of the practices and philosophies offered, while concurrently offering a DS perspective for consideration in SoTL. To this end, the writings presented in this section offer an overview of foundational readings which have informed the practice and development of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning.


An innovator in secondary and post-secondary education, Boyer is known as the originator of Scholarship of Teaching, which later became Teaching and Learning. He maintained that research on teaching, service and the integration of knowledge across disciplines should be recognized as equal to disciplinary research. This book marks a revolutionary change in understandings of the role of the professoriate proposing four general views of scholarship: discovery, integration, application and the most relevant, teaching which involves the systemic study of teaching and learning process, the value of public sharing, and application and evaluation by others.


A central figure since the early stages of SoTL, Felten emphasizes five key principles of good practice of SoTL including, 1) Focused, critical inquiry into well-defined aspects of student learning, 2) Scholarship that is grounded in context, 3) Sound methodology, 4) Research conducted in partnership with students, and 5) Public sharing of results. These are areas of particular importance because they resonate across disciplinary boundaries and purposes. They consistently provide guidance for faculty to enhance student learning and collaborative inquiry as well as establish SoTL as “significant intellectual work in the academy” (p.1).

This book represents moving SoTL beyond individual case studies, best practices, and the work of individual scholars, to focus on the unique content and characteristic pedagogies of traditional and emerging disciplines. Each chapter summarizes a specific discipline such as humanities, fine arts, social and natural sciences, and interdisciplinary fields. The authors review traditional practices and pay particular attention to how faculty evaluate success. Each chapter identifies a “signature pedagogy” aimed to improve teaching and learning and puts forth an agenda for future research. This volume is followed by a second volume that further explores these topics: Chick, N., Haynie, A., & Gurung, R. (2012). *Exploring More Signature Pedagogies: Approaches to Teaching Disciplinary Habits of Mind* (1st ed.). Sterling, Va.: Stylus.


Hutchings, known for her influential work in the development of SoTL, identifies a taxonomy of questions for SoTL work including, “What works? What is? Visions of the possible and asking theory building questions. Hutchings describes SoTL as inclusive, energetic, and intellectual. This article lays the groundwork for future work while summarizing the history and significance of SoTL in post-secondary teaching and learning.


Comparing SoTL to the traditional Jewish story “From Minsk to Pinsk” Shulman answers questions about the reasons behind the need for SoTL and its larger role in post-secondary systems. Shulman describes SoTL as both a comprehensive and inclusive practice. This work asks post-secondary institutions and scholars to invest in teaching and learning through the creation of networks of leaning centers, partnership, support system, and practical responsibilities, social and practical obligations. Through this pursuit, he identifies three ongoing practices to enhance teaching and learning including professionalism, pragmatism, and policy.
This foundational SoTL literature provides a framework from which to approach teaching and learning in post-secondary systems as both a serious and vital scholarly pursuit. Each of these key readings provides a way to reframe teaching and learning and to encourage the development of research into teaching and learning in post-secondary environments. This selection lays the groundwork for increasingly prominent teaching and learning practices in higher education. While the call for increased study and application of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning practices and philosophies does not specifically address any aspect of Disability Studies, these two developing areas, in fact, share many goals and are complimentary in multiple ways.

Teaching and Learning in Disability Studies

In attempting to understand the potential benefit of incorporating SoTL practices into the field of Disability Studies more widely, we must first understand how teaching and learning are understood in the DS field. The following resources demonstrate developments around Disability Studies teaching and existing critical pedagogies and show promising but limited research around ways to engage learners in this scholarship. These resources point to the imperative role of critical inquiry in the pursuit of diversity and social justice in the disability field. The literature also demonstrates opportunities for more purposefully designed content for Disability Studies learners.

Disability Studies Pedagogy

Presented by students and instructors, this special issue of Disability Studies Quarterly focuses on the role of disability studies in undergraduate education, presented by students and instructors. Divided into eight parts, the essays explore the role of Disability Studies in the academy. Disability Studies is placed as an agent of change both as its own discipline and beyond, exploring the role of post-secondary access, inclusion, and diversity. Of particular importance throughout the essays is an identification of the critical perspectives that are brought forth through undergraduate courses about disability.

This article highlights the missing role of critical disability and mad studies pedagogy in critical pedagogy more generally. Written from an instructor’s perspective, the author parallels the central issues of power, justice, and transformation of critical pedagogy, with disability and mad pedagogies, noting the frequent absence of these subjectivities. He calls for a more “socially just” critical pedagogy that includes these perspectives, which will then lead to increasingly inclusive teaching and learning practices. This approach is also a way to counter what Kumashiro (2002) identifies as disabling oppression inherent in educational institutions and societal structures and beliefs. Providing examples from his own classroom, Castrodale encourages instructors to use various forms and formats for assignments, to encourage students to self-advocate, and to challenge instructors, and for instructors to think more deeply about differentiated learners needs and strengths, rather than expecting students to conform. (Kumashiro, K. K. (2002). Against repetition: Addressing resistance to anti-oppressive change in the practices of learning, teaching, supervising, and researching. *Harvard Educational Review, 72*(1), 67-92)


In this survey text, several approaches to the study of disability are explored. This includes sections on social and academic conceptions disability, politics and key debates in this field, difference and diversity, and the role of disability in society. In the earlier edition of this book, chapters are separated by an area of disability studies, which provides a helpful introduction to how pedagogy is shaped in this discipline.


This article provides important recognition of the developing understanding of disability pedagogy and its role in the radical critique of mainstream power relations. Based on radical pedagogies and platforms, Nocella decries the universalizing, normalizing, and standardizing practices associated with the dominant and oppressive educational systems. These problematic systems privilege individuality, competition, authoritarianism, and links between employment
and education. Nocella instead draws on collective dependence and efforts, creating environments where teachers and students learn from one another. He identifies education as a place for voluntary interest for those who want to learn. Based in alliance with theories such as feminism, critical theory, critical race theory, anarchism, and Marxism, disability pedagogy is based on providing spaces for people with disabilities and supporting inclusion and activism.


In this study of two groups of undergraduate students, the authors discuss students’ responses to disability studies pedagogies focused on cultural constructions of identity, experiences of resistance, the dominant role of positivism, individualism and identity-related norms. The authors explore how they influence the context in which students learn. Noting that disability studies represents an opportunity to address oppression specifically in higher education, the research findings suggest the possibility for change in students when presented with a counter-narrative around disability, injustice, and social responsibility. Researchers found students developed an interest in improving social systems, such as segregated education, and they encourage readers to consider the role of more effective pedagogy in the field of disability studies in the future.


In this article, Rodas reflects on approaches to disability studies in a four-year urban college. She suggests ways to share rich and sophisticated disability studies concepts with novice learners and engage them critically with dominant paradigms. She demonstrates that by using the theme of monsters in literature, students are able to unpack their understandings of disability, thus introducing this increasingly important subject area. The author remarks that outside of the sophisticated analysis often conducted in academic disability studies, developing students’ understandings of disability studies concepts and values allows them to serve as ambassadors of the field Disability Studies.
Teaching Disability Studies (n.d.) In *Facebook* [Public group], Retrieved March 29, 2018, from [https://www.facebook.com/groups/815091775182425/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/815091775182425/)

This public, closed group consists of over 6500 members interested in teaching and learning in Disability Studies providing practical and theoretical advice, space for questions and sharing of information and resources. This current source is an invaluable tool for instructors seeking resources, course ideas and information about teaching and learning in Disability Studies.

*Journal of Teaching Disability Studies*. [https://jtds.commons.gc.cuny.edu/](https://jtds.commons.gc.cuny.edu/)

This new journal, beginning in 2019, seeks to highlight the importance of Disability Studies and good pedagogical practices employed in this field, through a variety of educational settings. While the first issue has not yet been published, the journal calls for research and reflection on teaching and learning in the DS classroom as well as in other educational contexts. The conceptualization and launch of this journal marks a growing interest in the area of teaching, learning, and pedagogical inquiry in the field.

While limited resources exist to engage with pedagogy and research on how Disability Studies fits within the higher education classroom a growing interest in teaching and learning is evident. SoTL based practices and research are emerging in Disability Studies scholarship through avenues such as the new Journal of Teaching Disability Studies, the popularity of the Teaching Disability Studies Facebook page and an upcoming special issue of the Canadian Journal of Disability Studies focused on Disability Studies in Education. These developments point to an exciting evolution in the field which highlights a more purposeful approach to and analysis of the ways in which DS is taught and learned. The following annotations demonstrate this movement towards a more engaged pedagogical approach to teaching and learning in Disability Studies.

**Disability as part of the Diversity of Post-Secondary Education**

In this innovative book, the author challenges the socially constructed and opposing roles of disability and higher education. Dolmage argues the central role of disability in the creation of inclusive and thus better higher education. Built around the metaphors of “steep steps,” the “retrofit”, and “universal design”, the author explores the role of accommodation vs. design for inclusion in the neoliberal or capitalist university. This book serves as an important look into issues faced by students and faculty in a post-secondary academic context and in the pursuit of diversity within our higher education systems.


This edited collection provides an approachable entrance into discussions about disability in adult education environments. Recognizing the increase in students with disabilities in post-secondary environments, the book serves as both a resource guide offering practical teaching tools as well as a theoretical and methodological challenge to abelist post-secondary practices and student-faculty perceptual divides. The book provides ideas for post-secondary teachers to move beyond traditional models and exclusionary theoretical perspectives and embrace new ways to look at the post-secondary curriculum that will benefit the system overall.


Bringing an additional perspective to who is understood to be a post-secondary student, Uditsky and Hughson provide an overview of successful Inclusive Post-Secondary Education (IPSE) in Alberta, Canada, over the past twenty-five years. This initiative, which has spread across the country and to other parts of the world, includes students with intellectual disabilities in an authentic student experience where students are fully included in regular courses, labs, and field studies. The authors remind readers that traditional segregated post-secondary special education does not reflect inclusive philosophies or practices. Looking at how students with disabilities are viewed as part of the post-secondary system brings an additional lens to understandings of diversity and inclusion, especially considering students with varied intellectual disabilities.
The inclusive goals that are foundational to DS resonate with Barr & Tagg’s (1995) Learning Paradigm that is intrinsically associated with SoTL. This is evident through the broader understanding of students and their diversity, as well as more holistic conceptions of approaches to learning. Where SoTL speaks of “producing learning with every student by whatever works best” (Barr & Tagg, 1995, 13) DS argues for Universal access and inclusivity (Dolmage, 2017). The critical engagement and reflection on teaching and learning practices (see for example Felton, or Bernstein) to improve post-secondary learning outcomes replicates DS goals which support critical thinking, reflective practice and personal growth (Swain, French, Barnes, & Thomas, 2014). SoTL based aspirations to confront the roots of deep-seated post-secondary teaching practices based in a teaching based paradigm, likewise correspond to DS’s confrontation of social constructions that create and maintain societal barriers for people with disabilities and confront the kinds of learners that traditionally make up post-secondary students. Both, aim to query positions of privilege (able-bodied/minded/, teacher/learner), and to honor the voice of the dis-empowered.

**Social Justice and Diversity in SoTL**

With increasing frequency, the strong interest in social justice and diversity, which has been present in DS, is also demonstrated by SoTL scholars. In fact, four books have been published in 2016 and 2017 on this topic. SoTL, meant to be a transformational movement in the academy (Gilpin & Liston, 2009) is taking up socially transformational action and pushing Shulman’s (2002) focus of SoTL as a “concept of moral action aimed at cultural change.” (p. viii). Considering the intersectionality faced by students and faculty, and the identities they inhabit, students and faculty are demanding more from their institutions as they relate to oppression, repression, and understandings of social controls and conflicts. The literature calls for faculty to question issues such as who is included in higher education and to challenge both systems and pedagogies that have produced inaction or stagnation. These authors promote a move towards more socially just pedagogical practices that once again can borrow from and shape DS practices around teaching and learning.


This article provides a helpful overview of the ways in which SoTL literature has supported transformative action from 1999 to 2008. The authors assess works that recognize the role of identity in post-secondary educational experiences to increase and support conscientization as well as help people address social ills. Looking at the concept of a commons, the authors find that the SoTL movement has the capacity to provide transformation towards social justice. They assert that transformative education increases conscientization and challenges the complicity of the status quo in perpetuating injustice.


This edited collection explores the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning and highlights its potential as a foundation for the promotion of social justice in post-secondary education. The concepts of inclusion, the presence of diverse perspective, and the critical dimensions of pedagogy that support social justice are discussed in terms of the characteristics and value base of SoTL. The core of SoTL is transformative education and critical pedagogy. The section on classroom practices of reflection and counter-narratives is especially relevant to social justice education.


Recognizing the roles of identity and oppression faced by students, this edited collection highlights the roles of power and marginalization that are faced on post-secondary campuses. While discussing disability in some capacities, the collection more fully explores the multiple roles faced by students and the impact of these intersections on institutional capacity, inclusivity, and movement towards more inclusive campuses.


Part of the previously listed book, this chapter merits its own annotation as one of the few SoTL writings that discusses the role of disability specifically in the context of diversity and inclusion. The authors remind readers of the role of physical, sensory and mental health disabilities, including how they can be accommodated in the classroom. The authors urge classroom instructors to see disability as one of the numerous intersections of student identification.


Recognizing the changing state of higher education, these authors consider the role of hierarchy and competition alongside widening participation in higher education. In a system of inequality and meritocracy, the authors look to critical theories of race, ethnicity, gender, and socio-economic status, to challenge dominant discourses of diversity in post-secondary systems that are argued to silence difference and inequality. The authors instead seek to make visible the socially constructed linkage of diversity in post-secondary institutions with falling educational standards. They argue that a more inclusive space does not include diversity if it is based on conformity and normalization. Instead, inclusion requires pedagogies that include and embrace diversity. These pedagogies must engage rather than ignore difference.

The focus on diversity and social justice in contemporary SoTL literature demonstrates progress and maturation of the philosophy and practice of post-secondary teaching and learning. This growing body of literature can offer significant insights into the further development of
Disability Studies pedagogy.

**Moving Forward**

Based on the literature identified in this bibliography, we suggest that SoTL offers important insights for Disability Studies scholars and learners alike in seeking and preparing transformative educational experiences. As an emerging discipline without its own strong pedagogical home, the place of education is especially relevant for DS undergraduate students who seek to challenge systems and practices related to disability. The emerging focus of SoTL on social justice and diversity will allow SoTL practitioners to learn from the counter narratives, systemic challenges, and consciousness raising that inform Disability Studies.

The literature reviewed for this annotated bibliography identifies critical and purposeful teaching and learning as a key to effective post-secondary education. With this focus in mind, the literature outlines five areas, which directly demonstrate ways to create more diverse and socially just SoTL practices, which take steps towards a more inclusive “Big Tent” as well as a more pedagogically developed Disability Studies.

1. Continued questioning of and commitment to enhancing teaching and learning practices around diversity and inclusion is evident. Further commitment to this area is essential to continue to enhance post-secondary inclusion efforts.

2. The approach to teaching and learning in Disability Studies has been secondary to the analysis of disability and the role of disability itself. As Disability Studies moves forward, more consideration needs to be given to the teaching and learning of this critical content.

3. Disability is part of our post-secondary systems. We need to account for how all students, and specifically students with disabilities can be better included in our teaching and learning in this context.
4. There is a significant lack of discussion of disability in SoTL writings generally and in discussions of social justice and inclusivity. Disability needs to be more consciously included in SoTL research.

5. The increased interest in social justice in SoTL provides a window of opportunity for both SoTL and Disability Studies to mutually inform each other at their many intersections.

Disability Studies (DS) has poised itself in a contentious position between advocacy and activism, service provision and theoretical interpretation (Goodley, 2011; Jarman, M, 2014). This polarizing context invites examination of the role of the undergraduate learner as a central piece in the future of this discipline. Learners’ contributions are vital in the unsettling of notions of disability and the re-imaging of people with disabilities in increasingly valued roles. Future advocates, service providers and academics study and teach in this field, and are expected to engage as competent learners who are comfortable questioning and upsetting “right” answers to challenge the devaluation that upholds the status quo around people with disabilities.

To contextualize teaching and learning research within this discipline, it is imperative to emphasize student learning in the broader context of complex social phenomenon. The harm, exclusion and systemic violence that exists at both individual and structural levels is foundational to the study of disability. To discern between competing ideologies and to gain the skills to work in inquisitive and analytical ways in the variety of roles and systems in which our graduates end up, educators need to work to enhance learning between theory and action. Students need to be exposed to diverse teaching methods to promote critical thought, to practice this skill and to be guided through information (Oliver & Utermohlen, 1995).

As SoTL becomes more immersed in questions of diversity and social justice and the realities of inclusivity within the “Big Tent” (Hutchings, 2013; Miller-Young, Yeo, & Manarin, 2018) disciplines such as Disability Studies rooted in justice paradigms, become increasingly relevant. Disability Studies, in the same manner has much to gain from SoTL and the exploration and analysis of teaching and learning pedagogies and philosophies that have been explored to a much lesser degree within the discipline. As DS learners grapple with complex systems, questions and critical approaches to understanding the societal place of disability, SoTL approaches offer the opportunity to engage with these concepts in strategic and vital
ways. Felten’s (2013) principles of good practice, Hutchings (2000) taxonomy, or Wiggins and Grant’s (2005) *Six Facets of Understanding*, provide guidelines to determine how we know when students have attained a “complete and mature understanding” (85) of ideas that incorporate critical reflection. We foster this understanding on our learners, and critical reflection serves to encourage students to be observant, inquisitive and systemically analytical as they prepare to work in various roles and systems in alliance with people with disabilities.

**References**


for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, 12(1).

https://doi.org/10.20429/ijsotl.2018.120103

