My name is Joseph Diaz and I was born here, in San Diego, in January of 1993. My family has been here in San Diego since the 1970s; my Mom and Dad moved here from Michigan and Mexico, respectively. They’re both educated; my Dad holds 2 Bachelor’s and a Master’s degree, all from SDSU, and my Mom hold an Associate’s and a Paralegal’s certificate, neither from SDSU. My parents are no longer married, but they didn’t get divorced until after they’d had 5 kids, myself included. We we’re all raised in North Chula Vista and grew up in a house that my Mom is currently preparing to sell so that she can move back to the Midwest. Our family was, still is, dysfunctional; but in spite of that we had a fairly standard middle-class upbringing in which both of my parents worked, and we didn’t really want for much. My older brothers have had problems with crime since their teen years, but are more recently getting their lives back on track; My two sisters both have degrees in sciences, and I’ll have one myself soon enough!

I don’t live down in Chula Vista anymore, I live in Mission Hills with the younger of my 2 sisters. I don’t really participate in the community of the area in which I live; if you were my neighbor, you might consider calling me a recluse. What I have instead are my cadre of friends here at SDSU, my family, my classmates in the Applied Math major, and the Metal community of San Diego (More on them later)! I met my school friends in a class called “Programming In Math” my first semester here. We all struggled in that class, but managed to pull through by working and studying together; the rest, as they say, is history. In addition to my nuclear family, the rest of my Dad’s family moved up here from Mexico and they’ve played a large role in my upbringing as well. I see them regularly and I consider my cousins to be more like siblings. Additionally, I’m currently working with other students in my math program on original research, under an advising professor, and I enjoy their company as we figure things out.

I’ve been in and out of college since 2011, when I graduated High School; though it has been since last year that I’ve really taken School seriously. Before I was at SDSU, I attended Southwestern College and Mesa College; I transferred to SDSU in Fall 2018. This is my fourth and (potentially) last semester here at SDSU as an undergraduate. I study Applied Math, with an emphasis in Computational Science, and I enjoy the problem solving that that entails and writing programs for that purpose. I may come back to SDSU to get my Master’s, but I’m focusing on one piece of paper at a time! I’m also planning to earn a minor in Computer Science; as I love computers, programming, and using computers to solve practical or computational problems. When I finished High School, I never expected that I would finish college and earn a Bachelor’s degree, much less consider a Master’s and I’ve come to realize that I enjoy learning quite a bit.

When I’m not taking care of business; I enjoy videogames, educational videos, hiking, listening to metal, talking about metal, talking about math and science, learning new things about computers, learning new things in general, camping, beer, going to metal shows, drinking at metal shows, head-banging at metal shows, head-banging in general, and moshing. Most people don’t like extreme music, but I do! I eat, sleep, and breathe extreme metal. I haven’t done a significant amount of traveling in my life, but almost all of the traveling that I have done has been in service of going to metal festivals across the country. I love the music, I’ve met lifelong friends at these fests, and I’ve travelled to some interesting places. Most of my friends in San Diego are people I’ve met in the metal scene; it’s not a big scene, but pretty tight-knit. As I type this, I’m planning on going to a show tomorrow night! Metal aside, I also like camping and the outdoors; and learning new things always excites me. When I can’t do any of those things, it’s all about video games! I’ve been playing since I was a kid and it’s what ultimately spurred my interest in computers.

All these things make the Joe you see before you. My life has had good and bad, and I try and take things as they come. I know it’s not easy for everyone to do, but I keep myself from stressing about the future; and as much as we are all products of our environment, I try and keep from attributing my shortcomings and personal failings to my past. After all, at least in so far as we get to choose our demeanor and attitude, we are who we choose to be. I’ve never really had much experience with people who have disabilities; none of my close friends or family have a disability (or at least, none of them had what I perceived to be a disability). Consequently, I don’t know what it’s like to live with a disability. It isn’t even something I had ever considered or cared to know. As a kid and teenager, I was too selfish to realize that their lives may be different or more difficult or something else entirely. As an American, we expect people to sort of pick themselves up by their own bootstraps and make their own ways in life. But what that looks like is different for everybody and for some people it’s significantly more difficult due to a variety of reasons. What I want to learn in this class is how disabilities affect people lives, what challenges are posed to them, how they overcome those challenges and how we as a society can help mitigate those additional challenges.

