**English 389**

**Accessibility Audit**

**Audience**

Imagine giving your report to a friendly audience of scholar/activists—people who are interested in disability and access, but who probably don’t have specialized knowledge. We’ll discuss together in class whether we want to disseminate our findings publicly—and if so, how.

**Purpose / Overview of project**

For this project, you will work with a small group to conduct an accessibility audit of a particular space on Spelman’s campus.

* By “audit” I mean a detailed observation and analysis that uses a specific set of criteria.
* By “space” I mean an area that you can reasonably observe, analyze, and take notes on in the space of a couple of hours.

A space that’s about the right size is “upper floor of Manley” or “first floor of Cosby.” I wouldn’t recommend taking on a whole building, unless it’s quite small; I also wouldn’t recommend taking on a larger structure such as “Health Services” or “Dorms.”

**What criteria will we use to measure “accessibility”?**

Your group will use the checklist at the end of this document, which combines criteria from the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), as well as exercises developed by professors Aimi Hamraie, Liat Ben-Moshe, and Dale Ireland, and input from architect Johnna Keller.

Note that you will *add* to the checklist with criteria that reflect your own understanding of access.

**Preparing for and conducting the audit**

1. Write on and discuss the questions below (this will be done in class).

* + What does “access” mean, in your opinion / experience?
  + What features of particular academic spaces (e.g., a classroom, the entrance to a building, a dorm, a cafeteria) make those spaces accessible for you? For others you know?
  + Do you take part in conversations among members of the Spelman community on access? If so, what is addressed in those conversations?
  + What are some barriers to access that you can think of?

1. With your group, add to the list of criteria at the end of this assignment. Ensure that you end up with a usable checklist that reflects your group’s understanding of accessibility. Err on the side of inclusivity: if one person wants to add a criterion, go ahead and add it, unless there is a compelling reason not to.
2. After the full checklist is completed, ensure that each member of the group has a printed-out copy.
3. Discuss what space you will audit and make plans for your visit. (For example, who can bring a tape measure? How will each group member take notes? How many people will be taking photographs?)
4. Visit your space with your group at the appointed time and make all needed observations. Remember that *all* group members should be taking notes (using the checklist), and at least one person should be taking photos. You may wish to include photos in your final write-up.
5. After the audit, meet with your group to debrief about your visit and make plans for your write-up.

**Creating your write-up**

Your group will produce a reflective write-up of your audit, which should respond to the following questions. The write-up should be 750 words minimum (and can be as much longer as you wish).

1. How would you describe this space generally? (For example, how large is it? How many people typically are using it, and in what ways? What is the floor / ground covering? What kind of light? Etc.)
2. What did your group observe about the space’s accessibility (using your checklist as a guide for what to comment upon)? Note highlights, as well as any barriers you observed. If you have relevant photos, include them.
3. What recommendations would you make to those who maintain this space, or who might design similar spaces in the future?
4. What recommendations would you make to those who use this space?

Recommendations for completing the write-up collaboratively:

* With your group, determine who is responsible for drafting which parts of the write-up. Set deadlines together. Ideally, this discussion will take place at the same meeting when you debrief your visit to the space.
* Schedule and conduct at least two meetings—one to plan the write-up, and one to revise it when various parts have been drafted.
* Clarify how the final write-up will be prepared and edited. (I recommend using Google Docs or another collaborative writing tool, so that *all* authors on the project can edit the final draft.)
* Turn it in and bask in your accomplishment!

**Individual process letter**

Each member of the group will produce a privately authored letter to me. This process letter (similar to the process letter you wrote for your research paper) should be addressed to me and should describe and evaluate the group’s process as the assignment was carried out. The process letter is due no more than 48 hours after the collaborative write-up is turned in. (See Moodle for due dates.)