6.811: Principles and Practice of Assistive Technology
Class Blog: Reflections on Assistive Technology and Disability

In addition to the assistive technology (AT) project part of PPAT, this term is also an opportunity to reflect on AT, disability, and related issues.

Each student participating in the class will submit **four individual blog posts** throughout the term. You should write an article (about a page long, but there are no strict word limits). In addition, you can embed photographs, diagrams, videos, or other elements to convey your ideas. You should write in the first person and with your own voice.

Most of your submissions will be available online on the class blog; they will be part of the public face of the class during the semester. As a result, you should get permission from other people if you are writing about them or taking photos or video. The course staff may lightly edit your writing for clarity before featuring it online.

Grading
We will use the following checklist-based grading scheme (out of 1.0).

Checklist Question	Weight
Is the post on time?	0.1
Is the post free of spelling, grammar, language, and formatting errors?	0.2
Topic: Is the post relevant to the goals of PPAT?	0.2
Ideas: Are the ideas interesting and clearly communicated?	0.2
Structure and Organization: Is the post well-written and an effective use of the blogging medium? (Recommended: photos, videos, headings, bullet points)	0.2
Distinctiveness: Is the post particularly original, insightful, personalized, or exciting to read?	0.1

Suggested Blog Topics
Most importantly, we want you to write about topics in disability and assistive technology that inspire you. Here are some suggestions; if you want to write about something else, just run it by one of the course staff.

Events/Field Trips
Write a report and reflection on your experience at one of the following events/places:
- Abilities Expo (September 5-7, Boston Convention and Exhibition Center)
- Open Style Lab final presentations (Saturdays in October at the Museum of Science)
- Visit with the BU/Tufts occupational therapy programs
- Visually Impaired and Blind User Group (VIBUG) meeting
- The Boston Home
- The Leonard Florence Center for Living
- Artisan's Asylum or Danger!Awesome
- Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital, Braintree Rehabilitation Hospital
- Labs around MIT (Hugh Herr, Neville Hogan/Igo Krebs, Leia Sterling)

Client Interviews
- Have your client teach you something, and write about what you learned and your experience.

● Write a more detailed "explainer" article about the disability that your client has.
● Discuss a non-technological challenge that your client faces.
● Describe a typical day in the life of your client, including some of the challenges that he or she faces (and also things that are easy).
● Describe the caregivers and other people that your client interacts with on a regular basis.

Lectures and Labs (Maximum: 2)
● Discuss people-first language and the complexities of communicating with and about people with disabilities.
● Write a summary and reflection on one of the guest speakers or lectures.
● If you disagreed with something that was discussed in the class, write a post about it, articulating your concerns.
● Write a more detailed analysis of the work you did in one of the lab activities (i.e. the wheelchair campus accessibility lab or electronic device access labs).

Advocacy
● Write about a disability-related cause or charity, and include actions that readers can take to support the cause.
● Conduct an interview of someone with a disability or an advocate (a community organization, a lawyer, an activist, or an entrepreneur) and write about what you learned.
● Write about an issue that people with a disability face and propose realistic changes in social norms or public policy that would address it.

Personal Reflection and Research
● Discuss a personal experience with impairment, disability, or assistive technology.
● Watch a film that includes someone with a disability and critically evaluate the portrayal of disability in that film.
● Investigate a local issue related to disability and accessibility (e.g. on the MBTA, in hilly Beacon Hill, or in taxis).
● Describe landmark legislation on disability (e.g. the Assistive Technology Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act) and its impact on your client or certain disability communities.
● Research a controversial issue in the disability community (e.g. Braille and sign language literacy, cochlear implants) and write a balanced post describing the different points of view.

Assistive Technology Ideas
● Discuss an issue related to the inaccessibility of existing technologies or the built environment.
● Describe a technology/device idea that is beyond the scope or timeline of this class, but that could be beneficial to people with disabilities.
● Research a new, emerging technology that you are familiar with and describe (or speculate) on how it will affect people with disabilities. Will it level the playing field or increase the gap between people with and without impairments?
● Propose an event or program that could promote assistive technology education, awareness, or innovation.

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