

# CPD Collaborates with English Department on Project

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Jared Colton

An assistant professor of English who teaches classes in technical communication is working with Utah State University's Center for Persons with Disabilities to create a series of accessible videos related to the disability experience.

Jared Colton came to Utah State from Clemson University in Fall 2014. His research examines the intersection of social justice and technical communication. A topic that has come up recently has shown a need for research into technical communication and disability studies, Colton said, and to create accessible information in a way that is not only legal, but engaging to people with disabilities.

Colton was at a conference last summer where theories on rhetoric and technical communication were being discussed. One topic in particular—"how terrible closed captions are"—motivated him to develop this collaborative project.

First he contacted USU's Disability Resource Center, who in turn directed him to Judith Holt, director of the CPD's Interdisciplinary Training Division. She suggested that he work with the Interdisciplinary Disability Awareness and Service Learning (IDASL) class, which is housed at the CPD and offered to upper level undergraduate students.

"I felt like, in a weird way, that worked out better," Colton said. His students—advanced undergraduates in the Studies in Writing for Digital Media class—will turn IDASL lectures into a series of videos that integrate not only closed captions, but the technical communication design principles of plot, clarity, proximity, contrast and repetition.

"We want to try to incorporate knowledge of people with disabilities to produce technical communication, and not as an afterthought," Colton said. "As an instructor, I want the students to be engaging in some of those same problems. Some students want to have this ethical motive in their lives. Some don't. It challenged some, and some have just grabbed it."

Colton wants to encourage a relationship between his students and the CPD.

"I want to spread the word in whatever way we can," he said.