

Berkeley Removes 20k Online Videos to Comply with Nutty DOJ Order

Thanks to [a demand](#) from the Justice Department last year, the public will soon lose access to thousands of college lectures. Inside Higher Ed [reports that](#) the University of California, Berkeley will “cut off public access to tens of thousands of video lectures and podcasts in response to a U.S. Justice Department order that it make the educational content accessible to people with disabilities.” As it notes:

“Today, the content is available to the public on YouTube, iTunes U and the university’s webcast.berkeley site. On March 15, the university will begin removing the more than 20,000 audio and video files from those platforms – a process that will take three to five months – and require users sign in with University of California credentials to view or listen to them.”

As the Cato Institute’s Walter Olson [noted](#) last year, this will harm disabled people with mobility impairments:

“Even if the welfare of disabled persons is treated as the only important outcome, the application of the ADA [Americans with Disabilities Act] is probably going to do harm, because online alternatives to classroom instruction are particularly valuable to disabled persons, notably those with impaired mobility.”

Responding to Olson, The Suburbanist summed up the issue, [tweeting](#) “So if your disability keeps you homebound, then the ADA will prevent you from viewing online courses.” Prof. Alex Tabarrok of George Mason University wrote about the same effect at the Foundation for Economic Education in a post titled “[ADA Attack on Online Courses Hurts the Disabled Too.](#)” Lawyer Scott Greenfield also [criticized](#) the Justice Department’s demands as perverse and counterproductive.

As [Reason](#) noted, by effectively defining “equal access” as “no access for anybody,” the Obama Justice Department put itself in the role of “the Handicapper General” from the satirical and dystopian science fiction story [Harrison Bergeron](#).

Former Department of Justice Civil Rights Division attorney J. Christian Adams recounted [a similar counterproductive case](#) in an op-ed for the *Washington Examiner* in 2010, explaining that “Amazon.com...tried to sell a talking Kindle reader, but [the Department of] Justice said it couldn’t because the button to make the Kindle talk didn’t have Braille. Never mind that books neither talk nor have Braille buttons telling them to talk.”

The Obama administration viewed it as better to have *no* accommodation for the disabled rather than an *imperfect* accommodation. The Obama Justice Department also used the threat of suing under the Americans with Disabilities Act to [prevent colleges from using the Kindle](#) to lighten “the textbook load on their student body,” harming people with chronic back problems.

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