Rackham 580: Topics in Disability Studies

Introduction to Disability in U.S. Law, Policy, and Culture

Architecture 609      PM & R 580
Education 580       Social Work 572
English 528         Sociology 580
Kinesiology 503    Women’s Studies 590

Instructor: Anna Kirkland
Class: Thursday, 1-3 pm, G463 Mason Hall
Office: 2203 Lane Hall (next to Sava’s on State Street)
Hours: Thursday 10-12 and by appointment
Phone: (734) 647-6181
Email: akirklan@umich.edu

ADA Statement
It is my intention to support the full participation of all students in the learning process of this class. I have incorporated a variety of instruction techniques and evaluation methods in the course process. In spite of these efforts, situations may occur in which the learning style of individual students is not met by the instructional climate. It is my expectation that students who require specific or additional support to acquire the course content or demonstrate their achievement of the objectives will inform me of their needs immediately. A useful contact is the Office of Students with Disabilities, G664 Haven Hall, at 763-3000.

Course Description
Topics in Disability Studies provides an interdisciplinary approach to disability studies, including focus on the arts and humanities, natural and social sciences, and professional schools. Students will also have the opportunity to interact with visiting speakers from a broad range of fields. The course is offered for 1 or 3 credits. Accessible classroom with real-time captioning. This term, the course will focus on themes from gender studies, critical health perspectives, contemporary American law and policy, and on the scholarship of University of Michigan disability studies scholars and invited guests. Several class meetings will also be designed based on student feedback during the term to provide content of interest to this term’s class.

Learning Objectives
The course will prepare the student
1. to understand how disability is culturally represented, historically and currently
2. to describe different models of disability, such as the medical model, social model, and the minority model, and to understand how they lead to different policy approaches and life opportunities; and
3. to understand specific current policy issues (autism, education policy, discrimination law, and wellness programs, for example) through the lens of disability studies and to offer a multi-dimensional critical perspective on them.
Readings: All readings are posted on CTools in accessible formats, both PDF and Word. There are no books or course packs to purchase.

“Big Questions” for every speaker: In order to maintain some coherence across the term, we will pose the same questions to each guest lecturer (in addition to whatever we ask them about their own work). The questions are:

1. How do you understand disability as an identity?
2. What would you say to someone embarking on a career with the aim (at least in part) of helping disabled people?
3. What is the most provocative scholarly idea about disability you’ve heard?

General requirements: 1 credit students: attendance, participation, one written sponsorship per week, and a paragraph summary of each class session due the week after the class; 3 credit students: attendance, participation, at least one oral sponsorship, and a class project or paper.

Sponsorships: Each student taking the course for 3 credits will be assigned at least one oral sponsorship of no more than 10 minutes (and at least 5). This means each student assigned for that day will lead off the discussion by discussing the following points about the readings. Students taking the course for 1 credit are required to produce a written version of a sponsorship in preparation for the day’s class. Sponsorships should be no longer than 3 pages and take the following format (for oral sponsorships, cover these points in your presentation). The first part should give a very brief summary of the main points or arguments of the reading. The second part should describe what you find most beneficial, valuable, useful, interesting, or provocative about the reading. The third part should describe questions, criticisms, or problems that you have with the reading. The final part should assess the reading from your disciplinary point of view: how would your discipline react to the problem taken up by the reading or how might the ideas in the reading change or challenge positions normally assumed by your discipline?

Requirements for the public lecture series course dates (February 7 and March 21): Each student must attend the full event from 1:00 to 4:00. During the presentations, prepare a question for one or all of the speakers that is particular to the presentations (NOT a big, general question, but one that shows you paid attention to their talk and drew something from it). Write it down and attempt to ask it during the question and answer session. Turn them in to me at the end of the event in paper (or another way if an accommodation is needed).

Final Projects: Projects should reflect the subject matter of the course, i.e., disability studies, and demonstrate an advanced reflection on the problem at hand, by which I mean that you should be in conversation with and actively contributing to the secondary literature in the field. I have loaded all the previously assigned readings for this course going back several years onto the CTools site, and I encourage you to search there for secondary readings as well as to do independent research. The workload of the project should be equivalent to a 15-20 page research paper for graduate students or 10-15 page research paper for undergraduate students.

Short Description of Project and Bibliography: I expect each person who is taking the course for 3 credits to write one or two paragraphs describing what you plan to do for the final project,
preliminary bibliography of the material you have reviewed for the project (including material other than what is collected on CTools), a brief description of the format you plan to use and the department or program you represent. I will ask each of those persons to briefly talk about their project in class at the end of the term. This project description is due to me by email or other arrangement by **February 7** (note that we will not have the usual class meeting and instead will have an event that day).

**Midterm Review on February 12 (required for all students):** The following three questions will be the point of departure for your review discussion. Please write down your responses so you can submit them on the day of class.
1. Describe three points you have learned so far
2. List one or two questions about disability or disability studies that you would like to be answered (more if you have them)
3. Offer any recommendations for the class format, structure or physical environment

**Presentations of Class Projects and Submissions of Projects on April 18:** Each student who is taking the class for 3 credits is responsible for a brief (10 minute) presentation about the results of their project. It is expected that the presentation will demonstrate how you have integrated material from the class (lectures, readings and visiting speakers) into your project. All final projects are due on April 18.

**Required readings (available on CTools):**

January 10:

**Introduction**
In-class movie: “When Billy Broke His Head” (1995 Sundance Film Festival Freedom of Expression Award winner)

January 17:

**Eugenics in Disability History**
Guest speaker: Prof. David Mitchell
In-class film by David Mitchell and Sharon Synder, “A World without Bodies”

January 24:

**Disability Culture and Performance**
Guest speaker: Prof. Petra Kuppers, University of Michigan Departments of English, Theater, and Women’s Studies.
In-class viewing of film and performance excerpts.
January 31:

**Fatness, Stigma, and Disability**


*Optional* (account of my interviews with fat rights activists, including their views about disability): Anna Kirkland, “Think of the Hippopotamus”

**Requirements for the public lecture series course dates (February 7 and March 21):** Each student must attend the full event from 1:00 to 4:00. During the presentations, prepare a question for one or all of the speakers that is particular to the presentations (NOT a big, general question, but one that shows you paid attention to their talk and drew something from it). Write it down and attempt to ask it during the question and answer session. Turn them in to me at the end of the event in paper (or another way if an accommodation is needed).

*February 7:*


Public lecture event: **Dis/color: Race and Disability**


**Institute for the Humanities, 202 S. Thayer, room #1022, 1:00-4:00 p.m.** (please note that you are expected to attend the entire event).

February 14:

Guest speaker: Prof. Susan Brown, University of Michigan Kinesiology

Readings TBA

February 21: **Midterm review materials due in class.**

**Disability Law**

Guest speaker: Prof. Sam Bagenstos, University of Michigan School of Law.


February 28:

**Neurodiversity**

Guest speaker: Prof. Melanie Yergeau, University of Michigan English Department.


March 14: Readings and topic TBA based on midterm feedback.

*March 21:
University of Michigan Initiative on Disability Studies Spring Conference, Michigan League, Henderson and Koessler Rooms, 911 N. University, 1:00-4:00 p.m. (please note that you are expected to attend the entire event).

Autism Speaks Back: Neurodiversity and Disability Studies
Morton Ann Gernsbacher, Psychology, University of Wisconsin-Madison
Jordynn Jack, English, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Ari Ne’eman, President, Autistic Self-Advocacy Network, Washington, DC
Chloe Silverman, English, Women's Studies, and Bioethics, Pennsylvania State University

March 28:
Education

April 4: Readings and topic TBA based on midterm feedback.

April 11:
Disability, Healthism, and Wellness
Guest Speaker: Prof. Carrie Brasas, Professor of Law at Case Western Reserve
Carrie Brasas, “Wellness within a Disability Law Paradigm,” manuscript.

April 18: Presentation day. All final projects due in class or posted to CTools.

* Class held in a different location due to our attendance at a public event.