Disability Studies: Obstacles and Solutions in Today’s World
Social Work 773-001
Fall 2013

Instructor: Carolyn Grawi, LMSW, MSW, ACSW
Contact: cgrawi@umich.edu or 734-274-9209
Office: SSW 3764
Office Hours: by appointment

1. Course Description
This course will examine the topic of disability from various perspectives, including the historical development of civil rights, the legal framework, the medical model, and how disability is viewed across various cultures. It will examine different types of disabilities, how people with disabilities are treated and denied equal access to programs and employment, and what political/legal recourse is available to address these inequities.

The course will also review progress that has been made in the United States regarding the integration of people with disabilities by removing attitudinal and architectural barriers that they face in daily life.

The course will also address how to interact with individuals who have disabilities, the differences between visible and non-visible disabilities, and how disability can affect individuals depending on whether they are children, teenagers or adults. Issues pertaining to dimensions of diversity (e.g. ability, age, class, color, culture, ethnicity, family structure, gender [including gender identity and gender expression], marital status, national origin, race, religion or spirituality, sex, and sexual orientation) will be given special attention, particularly in areas of policy development and service delivery for people with disabilities.

2. Course Content
This course will examine various perspectives presented by and about people with disabilities. It will focus on the historical influences that have
affected the development of a disability rights movement, the impact of medical and technological advances in creating expanded opportunities for individuals with disabilities, and the current state of political and legal power being utilized by the disability community.

The course will also address how professionals who work with people who have disabilities can act to change social systems to improve opportunities and to empower individuals with disabilities. We will look at the role of society, environment, community, and relationships and how that impacts the lives of people who have disabilities.

3. Course Objectives
Upon completion of the course students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate knowledge of the various social, political and legal forces affecting the lives of people with disabilities.
2. Articulate how various definitions and models of disability affect individuals who have disabilities.
3. Describe the progress that people with disabilities have made in gaining acceptance and greater opportunity for achievement in U.S. society.
4. Identify differences in treatment faced by individuals with disabilities depending on whether their conditions are visible or non-visible.
5. Assess how recent legislative and legal actions affect people with disabilities.
6. Discuss ways of working with people who have disabilities in a variety of settings that employ social work skills.

4. Course Design
The instructor will require several readings some of which will be the product of individuals with disabilities. A variety of pedagogical methods will be used including short lecture, participatory discussions, videos/films, and written assignments. Guest speakers with disabilities will be invited to address specific topics. There will be extensive discussion and written assignments will be based on research and reflection.

5. Relationship of the Course to Four Curricular Themes
• Multiculturalism and Diversity. Students will examine how disabilities are present without regard to gender, race, ethnicity, age, social class or other
forms of social stratification, and how “disability” should be part of any consideration of “diversity”. Emphasis will be placed on issues of privilege and discrimination, including the forces that work to include and to exclude people with disabilities from the mainstream of society.

• Social Justice and Social Change. Detailed information will be given on court cases and their effect on people with disabilities. The history of legal rights and social protest movements will be addressed, as well as how legal and social systems can promote or hinder change.

• Promotion, Prevention, Treatment, and Rehabilitation. The course will give attention to ways in which current policies and practices address these topics, and will cover issues related to whether disability should be viewed from a “treatment” or “rehabilitation” perspective.

• Behavioral and Social Science Research. Students will critically analyze how people who do not have disabilities relate to individuals with disabilities, and how people with disabilities view their treatment by society. Relevant research literature will be addressed.

6. Relationship of the Course to Social Work Ethics and Values
This course will address the ethics of individuals, families, communities and social systems. Students will learn about issues related to privacy, confidentiality, and enabling individuals to confront the barriers that they encounter in society. This course will look at the social worker’s responsibility to ensure equal access to resources, to prevent and to eliminate discrimination, and to advocate for changes in public policy and behavior that impede opportunities for people with disabilities.

7. Accommodating Diverse Needs
I would like to encourage all students to maximize their learning experience at the University of Michigan’s School of Social Work. 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 individual students’ needs are 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 as soon as possible. You may also contact the Office of Student Services here in the School of Social Work
(Nyshourn Price-Reed or Lauren Davis at 936-0961, SSW 1748), or the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities, G664 Haven Hall, at 763-3000. Students at the University of Michigan are required to obtain a letter from the SSWD office listed above. Please let me know as soon as possible about other issues or needs you may have as well. Information shared with the instructor will be kept confidential.

8. Active Learning
This is an exciting time in the field of disability studies, which is developing into a discipline in its own right. This course is intended to provide a space in which to discuss issues about disability and disabilities, and to explore a number of topics and perspectives in this area, including history, rights, activism, living with disabilities, social work practice, identity and diversity. It is not intended to be the “final word” in disabilities, as this would be both impossible and inaccurate. The disabilities movement (or movements) is an active, vibrant, growing and changing one, which incorporates diverse individuals, ideas, and perspectives. When relevant, we may discuss material that emerges from outside the field of social work (spanning from psychology to women’s studies to performance.) It is my hope and expectation that you as a student will be an active learner and contributor to the environment of learning and exploration. I am open to hearing feedback regarding this process and your experiences throughout the semester.

It is important to clarify that this course will not be based on a lecture format. Rather, students are expected to take an active role in their own learning. We will read a variety of materials, spanning from chapters to research articles to personal accounts. We will hear from a number of different speakers. It is my hope that this course will create a forum in which we can question, process, and learn together. As such, a significant part of your grade will be based on participation, which will take various forms, including leading a discussion, submitting discussion questions, attendance in class and at community events (as outlined further below) and participation in class activities. Since people learn in various ways and have varying degrees of ability, it is the goal of this course to provide different types of opportunities for learning and participation.

10. Guidelines for Writing about Disability

Currently, there are two main ways of referring to disability endorsed by different segments of the disability community: social model/civil rights
language ("disabled people") and people first language ("people with disabilities"). Both of these usages are widely acceptable, though disagreements exist. Further guidelines for writing about disability (from a “people first” perspective and endorsed by many disability organizations) can be found here:

http://www.lsi.ku.edu/~lsi/aboutus/guidelines.shtml

****************************************

**Required Books:**


Additional required readings include postings to course c-tools website

**Recommended Books:**


Assignments and Expectations

60% Papers
- Reflective Response Paper #1 (Investing in Ability Week Event) due 11/5/13 -10%
- Reflective Response Paper #2 (Community Meeting) due 11/19/13 -10%
- Paper #1 (Agency) due 10/1/13 -20%
- Paper #2 (Movie) due 12/3/13 -20%

20% Class Participation
- Leading one discussion 10%
- Submitting weekly questions & participating in discussions 10%

20% FINAL: Group Project
- Engaged in team work 5%
- Evaluating a topic and looking at the barriers in society 5%
- Formulating consensus on possible solutions 5%
- Participating in Group Presentation back to the class members 5%

TOTAL 100%

Response Paper #1 – Investing in Ability Event - (2 pages) – Due Tuesday 11/5 @ 11pm (online) = 10% of grade

You will have the opportunity to attend a variety of presentations during the month of October. If absolutely none of them will work I will make arrangements with you to view an online version of a presentation. After the event, you will be asked to write a reflective response paper of approximately 2 pages.

Please address the following issues/questions in your response:

- Briefly describe the presentation/performance.
What issues did it raise?

How was the issue of disability framed?

What was your general reaction to this event? (This can be anything – thoughts, feelings, etc.)

Did this event change the way(s) you think about disability? If so, how? If not, explain.

Did it change the way(s) you would approach disability as a social worker? Explain.

Reflective Response Paper #2 - Community Meeting - (2 pages) – Due Tuesday 11/19 @ 11pm (online) = 10% of grade

(While you have most of the semester to complete this, you are encouraged to get it done early in the semester and may submit it at any time before this date)

Community Meeting

You will be responsible for attending a community event or meeting – either one of the following (below), or you may find your own if you want (these must be approved by the instructor in advance.) Please write a reflective response that includes an analysis and critique of how disability is discussed and framed.

Briefly describe the meeting.

What issues did it raise?

How was the issue of disability framed?

What was your general reaction to this meeting? (This can be anything – thoughts, feelings, etc.)
- Did this event change the way(s) you think about disability? If so, how? If not, explain.

- Did it change the way(s) you would approach disability as a social worker? Explain.

Suggested meetings/events:
-- UM Investing in Abilities Week a second event beside the one for the first paper
-- GEO Disability Access Committee Meeting
-- Justice for Students with Disabilities Meeting
-- Washtenaw County Commissioner’s Meeting
-- Support group (if approved by a group leader and/or participants)
-- UM Council for Disability Concerns Meeting
-- A city council meeting
-- Ann Arbor Transportation Authority Meeting
-- A housing Commission Meeting
-- School Board Meeting
-- Board of Regents Meeting

**Paper #1: Analysis of your field agency’s attention to disabilities issues and access:** 6-8 pages and completed accessibility checklist, due Tuesday 10/1 at 11pm (online) = 20% of grade

This paper calls for you to conduct a critical analysis of your field agency’s practices and policies toward disability (you do not have to show this to your agency if you do not want to, although it can be helpful to their organization. If you are not currently in field, we can talk about other options.) It is important for you to answer all of the questions below. You should cite at least 5 relevant readings, 3 must be from class. Feel free to bring in outside sources as well. Separate from your paper you will turn in an ADA checklist.

A) Describe your agency briefly. What is the purpose of the organization? What is/was your role there? What was your first impression of the responsiveness of the organization to disability issues? To which model(s) of disability, if any, does the agency seem to ascribe? Explain.

B) Assess the physical layout of the space. How does it look/feel? How accessible is the physical space? Are people who have disabilities
programmatically included? When you fill out an ADA checklist you will be able to use your findings as notes for this paper.

C) What are your agency’s workplace policies toward disability? What happens if someone becomes disabled on the job? Look at your workplace’s written policies if possible (many may be online.) What is the diversity of employees in the organization?

D) How are clients treated if they have a disability? Be specific. If you know clients with disabilities, how have they been treated? Was this treatment similar/different to that of other clients? If you don’t have specific examples, (how) have you heard people at your agency make reference to clients with disabilities?

E) What changes/recommendations would you make to this organization to make them more responsive to the needs of people with disabilities? Please make at least 3 specific recommendations.

Please note that references should be presented in APA style (see APA Handbook for detailed information.) Please proofread your paper: formatting, spelling and grammar will be considered in your grade. Please see your syllabus for further information, or ask if you have questions.

**Paper #2 : Media Assignment, 6-8 pages, due Tuesday 12/3 at 11pm (online) = 20% grade**

This paper calls for you to watch a film in which a (prominent) character exhibits some sort of disability and analyze how disability (and the character) is treated. You should cite at least 5 relevant readings. After watching one of the following movies (or a different, approved film) write a paper about a character living with a disability (or who is defined by his environment as such), addressing the following questions:

1) How is disability portrayed in this film?

   • Consider race, ethnicity, religion, historical context, and other identity categories.
2) Describe the character you are focusing on. Consider the following questions.

• What is this character’s identified disability? (If it is not formally identified, how is it discussed?)

• What is the nature of this disability (e.g. visible/invisible, acquired/congenital, mobility/sensory/etc.) and how is it regarded?

• What other identities/characteristics does this character possess and how do they interact with the disability?

• What types of barriers does this character have to deal with?

3) How does this character’s disability affect his/her relationships with family? Friends? Romantic partners? Work colleagues or supervisors? (Discuss at least 3 relationships, as appropriate.)

4) Imagine that this character is a client of yours at a particular point in time.

Please answer one of the following sets of questions. If you are a social work student, you may choose A or B regardless of your area of concentration. If you are not a social work student, you may choose any of these but may be most comfortable with C if you do not have clients.

A. Case management/IP

1. How would you address this individual as the social worker/case manager?
2. How would you design a case plan/clinical plan for this client? Be specific. (e.g., what types of recommendations would you make? What types of accommodations might you advocate for? Which contexts/institutions would you need to work within to help this client?)

B. Macro/CO

1. How would you address this client as the social worker?
2. What types of accommodations would you advocate for?
3. What types of policies would be useful and what types of policy changes might you try to make?

C. Non-social work

1. How do you think your field would see this character/disability?
2. How would you address this person in your chosen field?
3. What suggestions do you have in terms of how your field could make changes in order to improve how people with disabilities are treated?

Here is a list of recommended movies. If you would like to choose a different one, please check with me before doing so.

- Adam
- Awakenings
- A Beautiful Mind
- Benny & Joon
- Born on the Fourth of July
- Children of A Lesser God
- The Diving Bell and the Butterfly
- Edward Scissorhands
- Forrest Gump
- Girl, Interrupted
- I Am Sam
- Million Dollar Baby
- Music Within
- My Left Foot
- The Other Sister
- The Piano
- Rain Man
- Ray
- Sessions
- Shine
- What’s Eating Gilbert Grape
- Or other film with prior discussion with instructor
Class participation = 20% of grade

You will be responsible for submitting at least one discussion question each week, based on the readings. Questions will be due Sunday night at 11pm – please email them to cgrawi@umich.edu. I will send them to the week’s facilitators by Monday evening so they can prepare their class presentation for that Wednesday. Presenters for a given week are also responsible to turn in a question by Sunday.

In addition, usually with another student, you will be responsible for leading discussion on the readings for one week. During the week that you are facilitating discussion of the readings, you should be prepared to discuss all of the required readings (though we may not get to all of them, and/or we may discuss them in groupings rather than individually), and at least take a look at the recommended/optional ones so you have a sense of them. I will send you the discussion questions submitted by students and you can organize those as you wish and use them as a tool if you would like. In addition, you can create some sort of activity (e.g., debate, etc.), bring in extra material (e.g. relevant newspaper article, etc.) or present your own "burning questions" to the group if you have them. These are not required but many students like to do this.

It is a good idea to touch base with me in some way so that we can chat briefly about your plan. You should expect to facilitate for about 60-75 min (I will be there too to help, but student facilitators should take the lead).

General class participation is expected. You should plan to be attentive to your peers, guest lecturers, and instructor. This is an interactive course where respectful discussions will take place.

FINAL: Group Project = 20% of grade

Work as an engaged team member to integrate information learned throughout the semester to address and resolve societal issues or experiences of people who have disabilities. Evaluate a topic and look at the
barriers in society, formulate consensus on possible solutions and recommended improvements. Create a group response and presentation. Participate in Group Presentation to the class.

**********************************************************

**SCHEDULE**

**September 4 – NO CLASS due to Rosh Hashanah**

Please use time you would have spent on class to complete readings for September 11 class. Please send me a question by email on or before 9/9/13 that is about the readings that you have or that you think can assist in class critical thinking of the topics read. My email is cgrawi@umich.edu.

**September 11 – Disability and Diversity**

Introductions
- Go over syllabus
- Discussion of Disability and Diversity
- Space assessment

Required readings:

- Shapiro – Introduction and Chapter 1 (pp. 3-40)
- Mackelprang & Salsgiver – Chapter 1
- Smart – Ch 2. pp. 33–47. In Disability, society, and the individual. Austin, TX: PRO-ED, Inc. (models of disability)

**September 18 – More definitions…**
Required readings:

• Shapiro, Chapter 2 – From Charity to Independent Living (pp. 41-73)

September 25 – ADA History, Policy, etc.

Required readings:

• Shapiro – Chapter 4 – ADA (pp. 105-141)
• Freidin, L. (2010). Impact of the ADA on Americans with Communities. ILRU, Texas

Recommended readings:

• Pardeck, J. T. Chapter 1-An Introduction to the ADA
• CRS Report for Congress.
Required readings:

- What Siblings Would Like Parents and Service Providers to Know (www.siblingsupport.org)

Recommended readings:


**October 9 – Thinking about Bodies**

Required readings:
• Shapiro – Chapter 3, The deaf celebration of separate culture.
• Mackelprang & Salsgiver – Chapter 6, Mobility (pp. 176-206).

Recommended readings:


October 16 – Access to Education

Required readings:

• Mackelprang & Salsgiver – Personal Narrative – Abby Kovalsky – pp. 100-104 (MSW)

Recommended readings:

October 23 – Arts, Activism, and Advocacy

Required readings:

• Shapiro – Ch. 6 (pp. 184-210) – advocacy & people first; epilogue: pp. 322-339

Recommended readings:

October 30 - Mental Health & Mental Illness

Required readings:

• Mackelprang & Salsgiver – Chapter 10
- NAMI Newsletter (Sept. 2009)
- Visit NAMI website www.NAMI.org and review postings regarding Stigma Busting

Recommended readings:


**November 6 – Issues of Veterans and Disability**

Required readings:

Recommended readings:


November 13 – Disability Experiences

Required Readings:

November 20 – Emerging Topics in Disability Studies

Required readings:


November 27 – No class. Break starts for Thanksgiving

December 4 – Integrating Ideas and Social Work Practice

Required readings:

• Mackelprang & Salsgiver, Ch. 13, 14, 15
• Ch 13 – Assessment in Practice (pp. 393-421)
• Ch 14 – Models of Practice (pp. 422-435)
• Ch 15 – Practice Guidelines (pp. 436-456)

*********************************************

December 11 – Last class – in class FINAL group project.
Utilize information learned throughout the semester, sharing what the group with consensus would change in society related to disability issues if they could include rationale and ways you would organize to achieve your groups stated goals and objective.

Work as an engaged team member to integrate information from throughout the semester to address and resolve societal issues or experiences of people who have disabilities. Evaluate a topic and look at the barriers in society, formulate consensus on possible solutions and recommended improvements. Participate in Group Presentation back to the class members.

Policies

Copies of the section syllabus, announcements, and additional resources will be placed on our C-tools site, so please check the site regularly.

ASSIGNMENTS:

With the exception of the in-class assignments, copies of all assignments must be turned in by email to cgrawi@umich.edu by the assigned due date and time. 10% of your grade on the assignment will be deducted for late assignments on each day an assignment is late. Papers should use APA style for references and for the body of the paper (Arial 14-point font, double-spaced, standard 1-inch margins.) Each assignment should have a cover page that includes a title, your full name and your UMICH ID. Please proofread and spell-check your assignments. Papers that do not follow these guidelines will lose points. Please submit papers as word documents as they will be read by screen reader to me.
PLAGIARISM:

Plagiarism is unacceptable. Plagiarism includes turning in an assignment written by someone else, and/or using ideas or words that are not your own -- without properly citing the appropriate source. If you are caught plagiarizing or cheating, you will be harshly reprimanded, you will receive a zero on the assignment in question, and you may be given a failing grade for this course. If you are not sure if something is plagiarism, you can feel free to come talk to me about it before you submit the assignment. If you are concerned that either you or someone else has, or is on the verge of committing plagiarism, you should talk with me ASAP. If you need additional information about plagiarism, please visit http://www.lib.umich.edu/handouts/plagiar.pdf.

COUNSELING SERVICES:

There are instances in which material in class, or events outside of class can bring up uncomfortable personal feelings and/or reactions. Often, students find that they need some help coping with these feelings. It is very important that you check in with and take care of yourselves. It is perfectly okay, and quite healthy for people to seek help. If you find that you or someone that you know needs emotional assistance, please contact Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at http://www.umich.edu/~caps/ or (734)-764-8312, or visit them at 3100 Michigan Union. You can also visit the SSW Office of Student Services.

WRITING HELP:

If you need help with your written assignments, please contact the Sweetland Writing Center at (734) 764-0429 or swcinfo@umich.edu, or visit them at 1139 Angell Hall. You can also log on to their website at http://www.lsa.umich.edu/swc/.

Please note that this syllabus is subject to revision. Any revisions will be posted on CTools and you will be made aware of them.