

# RACKHAM 580



## DISABILITY RHETORICS

T 1:00-3:00PM • MASON 3401

CROSS-LISTINGS: ARCH 609 / EDUC 580 / ENGLISH 528 / KINESLGY 505 /  
PMR 580 / RACKHAM 580 / SOC 580 / SW 572 / WS 590

### INSTRUCTOR

Melanie Yergeau  
Department of English

### OFFICE HOURS

by appointment

### CONTACT

[myergeau@umich.edu](mailto:myergeau@umich.edu)  
4204 Angell Hall

## Course description and objectives • • •

In 1984, Jim Corder described rhetoric as an “inventive universe,” as a “a way of being in the world.” That same year, disabled activists nationwide protested inaccessible public transit, with many arrested and thrown from their chairs as they chained themselves to buses and blockaded doorways and streets with their bodies.

In this class, we will explore the many inventive universes that disability — as embodiment, as critical modality, as site of reclamation and protest — yields in past and present moments. Among other items, our explorations will take us through rhetorical theory and theories of affect and embodiment, multimodal technologies, and intersectional discourses on disability, race, gender, sexuality, and class. Our conversations will consider the topoi, commonplaces, and rhetorical affordances of disabled being in the world, by means of disability literature, blogs, and pedagogical offerings.

## Required materials • • •

McGuire, Anne. (2016). *War on Autism: On the Cultural Logics of Normative Violence*. University of Michigan Press. [[Available via Project Muse. Requires UM login.](#)]

OToole, Corbett. (2015). *Fading Scars: My Queer Disability History*. Autonomous Press.

Readings posted to Canvas.

## Assignments + activities • • •

**1 credit:** 6 reading responses (one of which *must* be a final reflection), participation & attendance

**2 credits:** 6 reading responses, artifact offering, participation & attendance

**3 credits:** 6 reading responses, artifact offering, proposal + final project, participation & attendance

### Reading responses

Throughout the semester, you will be expected to compose at least six responses to our course readings (to be posted to our Canvas discussion forum) and to comment on your peers’ posts as well. These postings will enliven our discussion and thus be an important part of our time together.

## Artifact offering

You will each sign up to bring in one artifact for offering, and you will present your artifact to the class and write a short, critical response on Canvas. Think of the artifact offering as a kind of “contemplative warm up” to begin class each day. Plan to spend about seven to ten minutes sharing this artifact with the class and talking about some of the questions that brought you to this artifact or that the artifact raises for you.

Your artifacts should come from the world around you and they should, of course, be related to disability in some way—to our work or conversations this semester. Some ideas: a text that you ran into recently, some choice quotation, an advertisement, song lyrics, TV show, film, media character, newspaper story on a real person or event, a toy, a moment in your own reality... the possibilities are endless. You might also think of offering an artifact that might in some way connect to your major field of study or to your own experience of/with disability.

Importantly, in sharing your artifact, you need also to consider its in/accessibility. Do not, for instance, show us an uncaptioned video clip, unless your analysis and discussion of the artifact pertains to the video’s lack of captions. In other words, think about the ways in which your artifact not only topically but formally addresses disability (or fails to). What assumptions does your artifact make of its audiences? In what ways is it in/accessibly designed?

## Final project

This final project is a rather flexible one. You may compose your project in any form, mode, genre, or register that makes most sense for your field. Your project might take form in/as poetry, technical or field reports, seminar papers, multimodal narratives (video, audio, artwork), syllabi or lesson plans, and so on. Your project should be broadly comparable to what is being produced in a 500-level (i.e., intro to grad school) class in your home discipline. This means that your project should be researched, with relevant and supporting sources that take form as citations, interviews, and/or background work for your project. You might think of the artifact offering project, for instance, as a preparatory move in this regard.

As well, with your project I will ask you to also include a short statement (2 to 3 pages) that positions your work within the context of our class. This statement should be both explanatory and reflective: It should provide detail that guides our reading/viewing, but it should also reflect on the process of creation and its connections back to disability studies.

Midway through the semester (**October 25**), I will ask you to submit an informal proposal that describes your intent for the project, in terms of form, scope, topic, and audience. We will discuss your proposals in class together. As well, I have reserved our last two class sessions (**December 6 & 13**) for workshopping of your projects. During this time, you will share your work with the class, as well as offer feedback for your peers.

**\*\* 1-credit folks:** Your final reading response will take form as a reflection on the course, including some of your peers' final projects. You may use these workshop sessions as material for these reflections.

## Course policies • • •

**Participation** // Effective participation in class discussion means being well-prepared through reading, paying careful attention to others, and contributing to the ongoing conversation (online or off) by offering a reflection based on the reading, posing a question, or identifying passages that are confusing or difficult to understand. Some people best participate in person, others in writing. Please be prepared to make your thoughts known through the modality that works best for you.

## Access • • •

**Accessibility & accommodations** // Services for Students with Disabilities, located in G-664 Haven Hall, offers services for students with documented disabilities. With or without documentation, it is my intent to make our learning experience as accessible as possible. I am especially interested in providing any accommodations that have been best determined by you and/or SSD staff in advance. Regardless of whether or not you are registered with SSD, please let me know what we can do to maximize your learning potential, participation, and general access in this course. You can contact SSD at (734) 763-3000 or <http://ssd.umich.edu/>.

**Our space** // Our classroom, 3401 Mason, is designated as an “accessible” room. As we’ll quickly learn, an institutional designation of accessibility does not necessarily embody nor encourage inclusion or participation of every kind of bodymind. While our classroom, for instance, has automatic door openers, it also bears furniture designed and arranged under normative conditions for normative bodies. We will, throughout the semester, tear apart this room—intellectually, critically, metaphorically, and physically. If, at any point, the design of our space is impeding access, please bring this to my attention (and, if you’re comfortable doing so, to the attention of the class).

**LSA Instructional Support Services** // [ISS](#) provides equipment and technical support to students enrolled in LSA classes. Depending on your project choices, you might benefit from using ISS’s resources throughout the semester. ISS operates three centers where UM students may check out AV equipment for classroom use and for short-term loans. You can contact ISS at (734) 615-0100 or email them at [lsa-iss-reservations@umich.edu](mailto:lsa-iss-reservations@umich.edu).

# SCHEDULE

	Reading Due	Assignments Due
<b>Week 1: Introductions</b>		
T 9/6	Linton, "Disability Studies / Not Disability Studies"	
<b>Week 2: Narrative, poetics, &amp; [crip] identity</b>		
T 9/13	Ferris, " <a href="#">Crip Poetry, or How I Learned to Love the Limp</a> " Milner, " <a href="#">Voice Giving (Way)</a> " Weise, " <a href="#">Cloning Disabled Subjects</a> " <b>Poems:</b> Howe, " <a href="#">The Star Market</a> "; Glück, " <a href="#">The Cripple in the Subway</a> "	
<b>Week 3: Pedagogy &amp; profession</b>		
T 9/20	Erevelles, "Coming Out Crip" Kerschbaum et al., " <a href="#">Faculty Members, Accommodation, and Access in Higher Education</a> " Cherney, " <a href="#">The Rhetoric of Ableism</a> "	

<b>Week 4: Theories of design</b>		
T 9/27	<p>Hamraie, "<a href="#">Designing Collective Access</a>"</p> <p>Cogdell, "Products or Bodies? Streamline Design and Eugenics as Applied Biology"</p> <p>Friedner, "Not-Understanding and Understanding: What Do Epistemologies and Ontologies Do in Deaf Worlds?"</p>	
<b>Week 5: Neurodivergent rhetorics</b>		
T 10/4	<p>Price, "The Bodymind Problem and the Possibilities of Pain"</p> <p>Derby, "<a href="#">Accidents Happen</a>"</p> <p>McWade et al., "Mad Studies and Neurodiversity: A Dialogue"</p>	<p><i>** Michele Friedner will be presenting at the <a href="#">CSAS Sound and South Asia Conference</a>, held at the School of Social Work on October 7-8.</i></p>
<b>Week 6: Guest speaker — Anne McGuire</b>		
T 10/11	<p><i>War on Autism: On the Cultural Logics of Normative Violence</i></p>	<p><i>** Anne McGuire will also be delivering a lecture at 4pm in 3222 Angell Hall</i></p>
<b>Week 7</b>		
T 10/18	<b>Fall break - NO CLASS</b>	
<b>Week 8: Be/Coming</b>		
T 10/25	<p>Schalk, "<a href="#">Coming to Claim Crip</a>"</p> <p>Kim, "Asexuality in Disability Narratives"</p> <p>Kafer, selections from <i>Feminist, Queer, Crip</i></p>	<b>Proposals due (3-credit)</b>

<b>Week 9: Disability histories</b>		
T 11/1	OToole, <i>Fading Scars: My Queer Disability History</i>	** Julia Watts Belser will be delivering a lecture at 4pm in Room 2022 in the 202 S. Thayer Building. Talk title: <a href="#"><u>"Disability and the Destruction of Jerusalem: Gender, Sex, and Flesh in Rabbinic Narrative"</u></a>
<b>Week 10: Guest speaker—Christina Cedillo</b>		
T 11/8	Dolmage, <a href="#"><u>"Disability Studies Pedagogy, Usability and Universal Design"</u></a>  Grinage, "Color Blindness, Unconscious Bias, and Student Achievement in Suburban Schools"  Edyburn, "Universal Design for Learning"  Grace, <a href="#"><u>"Cognitively Accessible Language"</u></a>	
<b>Week 11: Justice, pride, movement(s)</b>		
T 11/15	Dunham et al., <a href="#"><u>"Developing and Reflecting on a Black Disability Studies Pedagogy"</u></a>  Mingus, <a href="#"><u>"Changing the Framework: Disability Justice"</u></a>  Walker, <a href="#"><u>"Neuroqueer: An Introduction"</u></a>  Nolan & McBride, "Embodied Semiosis"	
<b>Week 12: Accessibility &amp; digital rhetoric</b>		
T 11/22	Boyle & Rivers, "A Version of Access"  Selections from Zdenek, <i>Reading Sounds</i>  Selections from Pullin's <i>Design Meets Disability</i>	

<b>Week 13: Relationality(s)</b>		
T 11/29	Belser, "Vital Wheels" Brown, <a href="#">"Ableism Is Not 'Bad Words'. It's Violence"</a> Jack, "Gender Copia" Mickee Faust, <a href="#">"Annie Dearest"</a> Street Roots / Elesia Ashkenazy, <a href="#">"Pretending to Be Normal"</a>	<b>Project drafts due to Canvas (3 credit)</b>
<b>Week 14: Workshopping &amp; sharing, continued</b>		
T 12/6	your peers' works-in-progress	
<b>Week 15: Workshopping &amp; sharing, continued</b>		
T 12/13	your peers' works-in-progress	<b>Final projects (3 credit) &amp; reflections (1 &amp; 3 credit) due by 5pm on Friday, December 16</b>