

ENGLISH 4597.01 Autumn 2018

The Disability Experience in the Contemporary World
MW 11:10-12:30 North Classroom Building 140

Amrita Dhar

dhar.24@osu.edu

Office hours: MW 1-2 Reese 236

Course Description

This advanced undergraduate seminar exists at the intersection of disability studies and cultural studies. With consideration of some of the foundational critical texts in the interdisciplinary field of disability studies, and with an eye towards the evolution of attitudes towards disability, we shall discuss a range of materials (including life writing, contemporary art and film, podcasts, academic essays, and opinion pieces in newspapers) to uncover the overt, covert, and possible meanings of disability in the world we inhabit. We shall similarly take note of areas where work remains to be done: towards intersectional thinking, and towards wider recognition of the community scholarship and activism that continue to advance the academic field of disability studies.

Course Goals

1. Gaining a firm understanding of the various models of disability in use in the world we inhabit, and how those models interact with one another.
2. Grasping the ubiquitousness of disability in the world around us and acquiring a vocabulary to talk about it in intersectional and inclusive registers.
3. Developing our collective research and intervention skills as we encounter a rapidly-evolving conversation whose content touches at least one in every five persons alive today.

Course Requirements and Breakdown of Final Course Grade

Class discussions (throughout the term)	20%
Discussion lead (45 minutes during class on the assigned day)	20%
Mid-term essay (3-4 pp; credit for original critical thought and argument)	20%
Final research or creative project (10-12 pp; credit for original contribution to the field)	40%

Course Policies

1. Our class is a learning community; remember that every member is an equal and valued participant.
2. Be aware that this is a reading-and-writing intensive class. Remember to make time outside class to review class material, prepare for the following class, and complete assignments in a timely manner. The better your preparation for class is, the better your in-class participation will be. And good participation is *vital* to good learning. I *want* you to ask questions, get involved, take the lead in discussions, and so on. Always keep in mind that this is about *your* learning.
3. If you require extra time or any other adjustments in order to fulfil course expectations, please let me know in the first few meetings of the term. I will do my best to enable the best learning conditions for you. (For more information on the support available to you, please see here: <https://newark.osu.edu/students/student-life/disability-services.html>).

4. Please try to attend all classes and stay for the entire class duration. If you *must* miss a class, however, please let me know in advance so that we may together plan the best means for you to make up work. It would be smart as well to arrange early in the term to trade notes with a classmate in case you do have to be absent.
5. I expect that the work you turn in will be entirely your own, written specifically for this course. Plagiarism will result in a failing grade for the assignment, and possibly for the course. Understand that I am also *required* to report all academic misconduct to the Office of Academic Affairs, which may impose other penalties. (For further information, please see here: <https://oaa.osu.edu/academic-integrity-and-misconduct>).
6. Please bring the relevant texts, a notebook, and a pencil/pen to class each day. (If you prefer to take notes electronically, do so. However, please make sure that neither you nor those around you are distracted by the technology you are using.)
7. The format for all written assignments for this class is as follows: 1-inch margin on all sides of the page; 12-point Times New Roman font; double-spaced. If the assignment is to be submitted in print, please print on both sides of the paper, and staple (if applicable). If the assignment is to be submitted electronically, please submit as a PDF. And do remember to write your name on the top right corner of the first page.

Required Materials

Keywords for Disability Studies, eds Rachel Adams, Benjamin Reiss, and David Serlin (New York University Press, 2015)

All other texts will be made available in class or through Carmen and the Secured Media Library.

Schedule

THINKING DISABILITY

Wednesday, 22 August

Welcome, introductions, and introduction to the course

Lateef McLeod, “I am Too Pretty for some ‘Ugly Laws’” (text distributed in class)

Daniel Simpson, “Democracy” (text distributed in class)

Informal writing prompt “Consider any one of the keywords in *Keywords in Disability Studies* towards an analysis of the film *Finding Dory*” (3 pp; due in class on 10 September)

After class: begin browsing the podcasts from the Disability Visibility Project (please aim to listen to one of these every week of this semester): <https://disabilityvisibilityproject.com/podcast/>

Monday, 27 August

Practice exercise towards short essay, using two short pieces by Catherine Kudlick: “The Price of ‘Disability Denial’” (<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/24/opinion/disability-denial.html>) and “In my Mother’s Eyes, and Mine” (<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/09/opinion/my-mothers-blindness-denial.html>)

Possible keywords for search and research: access, accommodation, activism, blindness, dependency, embodiment, gender, identity, impairment, invisibility, normal, passing, stigma, visuality, vulnerability

After class: browse and read as many essays as you can from the “Disability” series on the New York Times: <https://www.nytimes.com/column/disability> (Aim to read one each day until you are caught up with the series. Remember to make notes to yourself as the essays and issues trigger ideas and cross-connections in your head. These are the connections that will inform your class discussions and final projects.)

VOCABULARIES OF CRITICISM, VOCABULARIES OF ADVOCACY

Wednesday, 29 August

Tobin Siebers, “Introduction” to *Disability Theory* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008), pp. 1-33

Douglas Baynton, “Disability and the Justification of Inequality in American History” in *The Disability Studies Reader*, Fourth Edition, ed. Lennard Davis (New York: Routledge, 2013), pp. 17-33

Optional: “The Art of Disability: An Interview with Tobin Siebers by Mike Levin,” *Disability Studies Quarterly*, 30.2 (2010): <http://dx.doi.org/10.18061/dsq.v30i2.1263>

After class: start reading Henri-Jacques Stiker, *A History of Disability*, trans. William Sayers (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), pp. 1-89

Monday, 3 September

Labor Day; no class; read up on the following from *Keywords*: disability, ability, access, accident, aging, citizenship, communication, crip, design, diversity, education, ethics, family, genetics, history, human

Wednesday, 5 September

Henri-Jacques Stiker, *A History of Disability*, trans. William Sayers (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), pp. 1-89

Monday, 10 September

David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder, “Narrative Prosthesis and the Materiality of Metaphor” in *Narrative Prosthesis: Disability and the Dependencies of Discourse* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000), pp. 47-64

Ato Quayson, “Aesthetic Nervousness” in *The Disability Studies Reader*, Fourth Edition, ed. Lennard Davis (New York: Routledge, 2013), pp. 202-213

Due in class: essay on a disability reading of the film *Finding Dory* (available in the class playlist on the Secured Media Library) OR a disability reading of Alice Munro’s short story “Child’s Play” (available in Files on Carmen). This is an informal writing assignment towards preparing for the mid-term essay.

Wednesday, 12 September

Margaret Price, *Mad at School: Rhetorics of Mental Disability and Academic Life* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013), excerpts

Ellen Samuels, “My Body, My Closet: Invisible Disability and the Limits of Coming Out” in *The Disability Studies Reader*, Fourth Edition, ed. Lennard Davis (New York: Routledge, 2013), pp. 316-332

Monday, 17 September

Nirmala Erevelles and Andrea Minear, “Unspeakable Offenses: Untangling Race and Disability in Discourses of Intersectionality” in *The Disability Studies Reader*, Fourth Edition, ed. Lennard Davis (New York: Routledge, 2013), pp. 354-368

Wednesday, 19 September

Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, “Disability and Representation,” *PMLA* 120. 2 (2005), pp. 522-527, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25486178>

“Sculpting Body Ideals: Alison Lapper Pregnant and the Public Display of Disability” in *The Disability Studies Reader*, Fourth Edition, ed. Lennard Davis (New York: Routledge, 2013), pp. 398-410

Mid-term essay prompt distributed

Monday, 24 September

Jasbir Puar, *The Right to Maim: Debility, Capacity, Disability* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), excerpts

Wednesday, 26 September

Robert McRuer, *Crip Times: Disability, Globalization, and Resistance* (New York: New York University Press, 2018), excerpts

Monday, 1 October

Research Skills Workshop (meet in the Warner Library classroom)

Wednesday, 3 October

Writing Day: peer-reviews of mid-term essay (in groups of three)

Monday, 8 October

Writing Day: peer-reviews of mid-term essay (in groups of three)

Wednesday, 10 October

ADA: <https://www.ada.gov/pubs/adastatute08.htm>

ADA factsheet: <https://adata.org/factsheet/ADA-overview>

ADA website: <https://www.ada.gov/>

Mid-term essay due in class

EXPERIENCES OF DISABILITY, REPRESENTATIONS OF DISABILITY

Monday, 15 October

Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Idiot*, trans. David McDuff (1868; London: Penguin, 2004), excerpts

Text nomination and discussion lead: Megan Gallaher

Suggested reading: Michael Bérubé, *The Secret Life of Stories: From Don Quixote to Harry Potter, How Understanding Intellectual Disability Transforms the Way We Read* (New York: New York University Press, 2016), excerpts

Wednesday, 17 October

Hellblade (video-game featuring a central character with a disability)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f7Ir5icRsZ0> (please listen with headphones, if possible—this is necessary in order to fully experience the main character's disability)

Interview with *Hellblade* creator Tameem Antoniades:

<https://venturebeat.com/2017/10/22/game-boss-interview-tameem-antoniades-journey-into-madness-with-hellblade/>

Text nomination and discussion lead: Shelby Royal

On disabled gaming and disabled gaming devices

<https://www.gameinformer.com/b/features/archive/2018/05/29/this-is-what-disabled-gamers-are-saying-about-microsofts-xbox-adaptive-controller.aspx>

Text nomination and discussion lead: Zac Colopy

Monday, 22 October

Flannery O'Connor, “The Life You Save May Be Your Own” and “The Lame Shall Enter First” (texts handed out in the previous week)

Text nomination and discussion lead: Conner Moore

Ona Gritz, “Finding Myself on the Page,” New York Times, 4 October 2017,
<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/04/opinion/cerebral-palsy-writing-html>

Wednesday, 24 October

Jessie Nelson, dir., *I Am Sam* (2001)

Text nomination and discussion lead: Maria Bowen

Alice Wong, “Film Criticism” (*Disability Visibility* podcast with Kristen Lopez and Angelo Muredda),
<https://disabilityvisibilityproject.com/2018/07/29/ep-30-film-criticism/>

Monday, 29 October

Charlotte Perkins Stetson, “The Yellow Wall-Paper,”

<https://www.nlm.nih.gov/theliteratureofprescription/exhibitionAssets/digitalDocs/The-Yellow-Wall-Paper.pdf>

Text nomination and discussion lead: Bella Moreno

Sarah Ismail, poems from *Listen to the Silence*,

<https://samedifference1.files.wordpress.com/2010/05/listentothesilence-4.pdf>

Text nomination and discussion lead: Christen Carey

Wednesday, 31 October

Peter Farrelly, Bobby Farrelly, dirs., *Shallow Hal* (2001)

Stephen Chbosky, dir., *Wonder* (2017)

Text nomination and discussion lead: Ashley Eberst

Suggested reading: Susan M. Schweik, *The Ugly Laws: Disability in Public* (New York: New York University Press, 2010), excerpts

Monday, 5 November

Gavin O'Connor, dir., *The Accountant* (2016)

Text nomination and discussion lead: Cassidy Flora

Alice Wong, “Disabled Actors” (*Disability Visibility* podcast with Shannon Devido and Ryan Haddad), <https://disabilityvisibilityproject.com/2018/05/20/ep-25-disabled-actors/>

Wednesday, 7 November

Lasse Hallström, dir., *What's Eating Gilbert Grape* (1993)

Text nomination and discussion lead: Lauren Toney

Cumulative debrief following class discussions led by students

PREPARING FOR FINAL PROJECTS

Monday, 12 November

Veterans Day; no class; read up on the following from *Keywords*: identity, illness, institutions, medicalization, minority, modernity, narrative, performance, race, representation, rights, senses, sex, sexuality, technology, work

Wednesday, 14 November

Initial research or creative proposal (250 words) due in class

Individual and group consultations towards final research projects

Monday, 19 November

Initial research or creative proposal (250 words) due in class

Individual and group consultations towards final research projects

Wednesday, 21 November

Thanksgiving Break; no class; work on final projects

CONFERENCE-STYLE PRESENTATIONS

Monday, 26 November

Research methodologies and citations workshop (with Katie Blockside from the OSUN Library)

Wednesday, 28 November

Revised proposal (250 words) and annotated bibliography (5-8 items) due in class

Peer discussion towards outlines of presentations

Monday, 3 December

Public conference-style presentations of final projects

Wednesday, 5 December

Public conference-style presentations of final projects

Wednesday, 12 December

Final project due, along with self-assessment, through Carmen by noon