

# **Disability in Society: Theory, Practice and Intersectionality**

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“Disability is both a private and public experience. For some, disability represents a personal catastrophe to be avoided if at all possible, a shameful condition to be denied or hidden if present and negotiated within the sanctuary of one’s family and personal space. For others, disability is a source of pride and empowerment—a symbol of enriched self-identity and self worth and a central force coalescing a community intent on extolling the fundamental values of life, human rights, citizenship, and the celebration of difference.”—Albrecht, Seelman and Bury

## **Course Description:**

This course examines the study of disability from a sociological perspective, paying particular attention to social history and evolving social and cultural discourses pertaining to disability identity. After starting with an unpacking of the definition of ‘disability,’ we look at different forms of institutional oppression of the disabled such as eugenics and the freak show.

We seek to understand the sociological perspectives on disability, starting with the difference between the medical and the social models of disability and then moving to the examination of some important sociological texts. We will enhance our understanding of these analyses with important social narratives and documentaries.

In the latter part of the course, we examine the Disability Rights Movement, from the enactment of the Americans with Disabilities Act to the development of the model of Universal Design. Not least, we study the intersectionality of disability with other categories of diversity such as race, class, gender, and sexual orientation.

## **Course Objectives and Goals:**

1. Understand how the definition of disability evolved from a medical to a social one, and the implications of this evolution.
2. Identify the different sociological analyses of disability; from social deviance to labeling theory and social constructionism.
3. See the critical importance of how disability intersects with other historically marginalized identities and groups.

4. Develop knowledge about disability rights, including the Disability Rights Movement and the ADA.
5. Understand how disability is relevant to the important sociological themes of “class” and “culture.”

**Online learning: Online classes demand independence, discipline, self-motivation, and very good writing and reading skills (I will be grading your reading comprehension, analysis, and proper citations where relevant. However, this is not a reading or writing class, so I won't be able to spend loads of time with each student correcting basic mistakes in grammar, spelling, citations, etc. If I can't understand what you are trying to say, then I cannot give you credit for proper comprehension of the material). It is CRUCIAL that you have basic computer technology competence. You will be primarily interacting with your peers and myself online through discussion posts, forums, papers, and emails.**

**You must be competent in CANVAS operation and navigation. In addition, you must be able to commit to:**

1. **Checking the course website *very often*,**
2. **Referring to this syllabus and your course calendar **OFTEN** to keep up with due dates,**
3. **Keeping up independently with the readings, online lectures, multimedia clips, and assignments, and**
4. **You absolutely must be confident enough to contact me if you have any questions or concerns. We may or may not meet face to face, and that should be okay with you.**

**Can you meet these requirements? Then you are ready to take this course!**

### *Disability*

*The Disability Resource Center serves students with a wide array of learning challenges and disabilities. If you are a student who has a disability or learning challenge for which you have documentation or have seen someone for treatment and if you feel you may need accommodations in order to be successful in college, please contact the Disability Resource Center as soon as possible. If you are a student with a documented autism spectrum disorder, there is a program of support available to you.*

*The DRC office is located in B 132 or you can call our reception desk at 425.564.2498. Deaf students can reach us by video phone at 425-440-2025 or by TTY at 425-564-4110. Please visit*

our website for application information into our program and other helpful links at [www.bellevuecollege.edu/drc](http://www.bellevuecollege.edu/drc).

### *Diversity*

*While this course is conducted on the Internet, we are still committed to establishing a community of learners, readers and writers. Respect for the diversity of perspectives, histories, experiences and identities that exist in any community is crucial for the productive functioning of the course.*

### Assignments and Grading:

|   |                   |
|---|-------------------|
| Forum discussions [due Fridays, response due Mon]                       | 160 points        |
| Quizzes (3 at 40 points each)   | 120 points        |
| Ethnographic research interview (5 pages) [due October 17]              | 100 points        |
| Film Response Papers(2) (3 pages each) [due October 31 and November 14] | 100 points        |
| Issue Paper (topics due June 6) (5 pages) [paper due December 9]        | 100 points        |
| Total   | <b>580 points</b> |

Assignments: There will be separate guidelines for each of the above assignments posted under the 'Modules' tab at the left side of the Soc 249 course page on Canvas. When you open the Course Home Page, you will see the forum assignment guidelines, class calendar and syllabus. **Please print out all of the files and refer to them often, including the syllabus, the class calendar, and all assignment guidelines.**

You will turn in your assignments each week. Look under the 'Modules' tab in Canvas to find the appropriate assignment for that 'Module' of the week we are in and turn in your Forum Answer Sheet or your paper to the discussion or assignment drop box for that module. Refer to your class calendar to confirm due dates!

**Grading: In order to pass this class, you must complete all of the major assignments, including the quizzes, the ethnographic research interview, the film response papers, and the issue paper. If any of these are not turned in, you will fail the class. All late assignments and postings will be penalized 5 points per day! No exceptions! No late assignments will be accepted 1 week after the due date. One week after the due date, assignments will automatically receive 0 points.**

**Readings:** Each week has assigned readings, found either as single files located in the appropriate module for that week (open the 'Modules' tab on the left side of this courses page on

Canvas) or in assigned books. There are modules containing readings for each week in the course. Again, refer to your course calendar if you are confused about which module you are responsible for at the current time. Give yourself enough time to do the readings (at least once, if not twice) so that you can answer the forum questions carefully. Do NOT wait until the last day or two to complete the readings and address the forum questions, which are lengthy! Expect to read at least 50 to 80 pages per week.

**Forums:** You are required to respond to three to four forum questions each week (except for weeks when papers are due), which I will unlock on the Friday of the appropriate Module week. Answers are due the following Friday, and peer responses are due the following Monday. Please keep in mind that this is a very large part of your grade, and it is imperative that you complete the readings on time and respond to the questions in a timely manner. **Late answer sheets will be penalized 5 points per day and no answer sheet will be accepted 1 week or more after the due date.** In terms of length, you will have to provide thoughtful, substantial responses that are based upon your familiarity with the readings and your own critical reflection. This would mean at least 100 words, essentially a whole paragraph, per question. You must answer each part of the question for full credit! Do not ‘blow off’ these responses! I will be carefully reading everyone’s submissions. **You must include direct quotes in your answers when I ask for information from the reading.** You will also respond to one of your peer’s forum posts, focusing on his or her opinion-based answers.

**Quizzes:** There will be three quizzes, each worth 40 points. They will be **open book** and **open note** quizzes, each with 10 multiple choice questions (worth 4 points each), and you will have 20 minutes to complete each quiz. **The quiz dates are OCTOBER 13<sup>TH</sup> (FOR QUIZ ONE), NOVEMBER 17<sup>TH</sup> (FOR QUIZ 2) and DECEMBER 8<sup>TH</sup> (FOR QUIZ 3).** I will open the exam for 24 hours, and you must click on the quiz, complete the multiple choice questions (within 20 minutes), and submit the completed quiz to me. **THE QUIZZES WILL ONLY BE OPEN ON THOSE DATES, FROM 11:59 PM THE NIGHT BEFORE THE DATE OF THE EXAM TO 11:59 PM ON THE EXAM NIGHT. THERE WILL BE NO MAKE-UP DATES FOR THESE EXAMS, SO MAKE SURE THAT YOU CAN TAKE THE EXAMS AT SOME POINT ON EACH OF THESE DATES.**

**Films:** You are required to watch two films in this course and submit a response paper for each one: 1) *Monica and David*; and 2) *Lives Worth Living*. These films are on reserve at the library, and *Monica and David* is available through Netflix. You are advised to watch the films as early as possible. When you watch the films, take notes based on the assignment guidelines you have printed out (available at the beginning of the quarter as an attachment posted on the course home page in Canvas). Then, when you get to the readings, you can refer to your notes and apply the readings to your analysis of the film vis-à-vis my questions.

**Ethnographic Research Paper (oral interview):** You will also complete an ethnographic research paper. This assignment involves interviewing a disabled or chronically ill person and

making social observations about the person based on your understanding of the course concepts thus far. See the assignment posted under the relevant module for more details.

**Issue Paper:** In this paper, you will choose a current issue related to disability and highlight how the issue relates to themes that you have studied in this course. Again, see the assignment posted under the relevant module for more details.

**Cheating:** Do not plagiarize!! Do not use other people's ideas, interpretations and language without proper citation. Scholastic dishonesty includes having others do work for you, doing work for others, and plagiarism, and can lead to failure of the assignment or course. Please obtain help from the Writing Center or the Tutoring and Help Center. Please contact me with any questions.

**Communication:** I will hold office hours over Skype via appointment, so you must have a Skype account to speak with me. **Send me an email as soon as possible if you are not able to access Skype, and we will set it up together.** Skype is a free service. We can also communicate over email. You must include a proper greeting (Dear Ms. Bahl) and put your topic in the subject line. Do not leave the subject line blank! I will make every effort to respond within 24 hours.

**Required Books** (available at the bookstore or through Amazon):

Berger, Ronald J. *Introducing Disability Studies*

Goffman, Erving. *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*

Zola, Irving. *Missing Pieces: A Chronicle of Living with a Disability*

### **Course Schedule: Weeks 1 through 11**

(Again, readings other than the books listed above are on Canvas under the appropriate module in the 'Modules' tab at the left side of your course page screen.)

#### **1. Social History and Definitions**

Readings: Barnes, C. A Brief History...;

Berger, R. Chapters 1 and 3 (**through page 65 only**);

Video: Maysoon Zayed

#### **2. The Medical Model vs. the Social Model of Disability**

Readings: Berger, R. Chapter 2;

Shakespeare, T. The Social Model of Disability

Video: Examined Life

Video: Inspiration Porn

3. Traditional Sociological Perspectives on Disability: Goffman's Stigma

Goffman, E. *Stigma* (pp 1-50)

4. Traditional Sociological Perspectives on Disability: Goffman's Stigma

Readings: Goffman, E. *Stigma* (pp 51-108);

5. The Social Experience of Disability: Zola's Narrative

Readings: Zola, I. *Missing Pieces* (pp 1-110)

Mairs, N. *On Being a Cripple* OR Siebers, T. *My Withered Limb*

6. The Social Experience of Disability: Zola's Narrative

Readings: Zola, I. *Missing Pieces* (pp 110-end);

Berger, Chapter 5

Documentary: *Monica and David*

7. Disability, Class, and the Life Course

Readings: Russell, M. *Beyond Ramps* (Ch 5 through Ch 9);

APA Fact Sheet

Video: Al-jazeera America on People with Disabilities and Poverty

8. Laws, Policy and Socio-political Movements: the Disability Rights Movement, the ADA and Universal Design

Readings:

Berger, R. **Read pages 65-77**

Imrie, R. Universal Design;

Adams, R. Bring Down the Barriers;

Burgstahler, S. Universal Design: Process, Principles, and Applications;

Francis, L. and Silvers, A. Achieving the Right to Live...;

Documentary: *Lives Worth Living*

Video: International Disabled Women Activists (on Canvas)

## 9. Intersectionality of Disability with Race, Gender, and Sexuality

Readings: Berger, R. (**re-read pp 37-43**);

Jackson, V. In Our Own Voice (pp 5-22);

Vernon, A. The dialectics of multiple...;

Kafer, A. Queer Disability Studies;

*Choice of either:* 1) Rahman Ford, A. Race, Disability and Denial;

*and 2)* Mingus, M. Moving Toward the Ugly;

**or** 3) Clare, E. Stones in My Pockets...

## 10. Disability and Culture/Media, the Future

Readings : Berger, R. Chapter 7 AND **re-read pages 29-37**

Haller, B. The changing landscape of disability “news”:

Glee Wheelchair Episode

Online video clips: King Montana

TED talk: British Paraorchestra

AXIS Dance Company

Disability Culture: Research in Motion

#### 11. Review and Close:

*Optional Reading:* Chapter 8

Final comments and reflections! Please look on the course website's home page to see other recommended links! Thank you!

*Extra Credit: TED talks: Deaf in the Military and National Theater of the Deaf video clips*

Recommended blogs: Wheelchair Dancer, Wheelchair Kamikaze

Recommended memoir: The Diving Bell and the Butterfly, The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down, Cancer Journals

Recommended films: Murderball, When Billy Broke his Head, The Sessions, When I Walk