

Disability in Society: Theory, Practice and Intersectionality

Instructor Seema Bahl

seema.bahl@bellevuecollege.edu

Office hours by appointment via Skype (Skype address: **soc205**) and phone

“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 that look at disability as a category of deviance. 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 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.

GRCC Outcomes:

In this course, we will work diligently towards achieving the campus-wide learning outcomes of Green River Community College. These outcomes include the following: effective written communication, demonstration of critical thinking, and assuming responsibility for one's role in the class and at GRCC.

Disability

- *If you need course adaptations or special accommodations because of a disability, and/or if you have emergency medical information, please contact me. Please let me know as soon as possible so that appropriate accommodations can be made. The Disability Resource Center may be contacted at: (425) 564-2498 (phone), (425) 440-2025 (video phone) or TTY: (425) 564-4110.*

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 Wednesdays, response due Thurs]	160 points
Ethnographic research interview (4-5 pages) [due October 25]	90 points
Film Response Papers(2) (2 pages each) [due November 8 and 22]	50 points
Issue Paper (topics due Dec 2nd) [paper due December 10]	90 points
Total	390 points

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 'Modules' tab, you will see the 'Introduction and Course Files' module at the top. These files contain directions for the assignments, as well as a class calendar and syllabus. **Please print out**

all of the files in this folder and refer to them often, including the syllabus, the class calendar, and all course 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 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 1 point per day! No exceptions! No late assignments will be accepted 2 weeks after the due date. Two weeks 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!

Lectures: I will be posting lectures to help guide you through most of the modules. Lectures can be found as external web links in the appropriate Module. **Listening to the lecture is required in this course. There will be prompts and questions posed in the lecture that will give you the proper context to think about the readings and your forum responses.** You will have the benefit of the lecture to help you consider the material in a deeper way (similar to how being in class supplements the readings!). **The lectures have been recorded using the Camtasia multimedia platform. You will have both audio lecture and detailed Powerpoint slides to guide you through the lecture, and you can pause and rewind any part of the lecture as needed.**

Forums: You are required to respond to forum questions each week (except for weeks when papers are due), which I will post on the Wednesday of the appropriate Module week. Answers are due the following Wednesday, and peer responses are due one day later. 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 1 point per day and no answer sheet will be accepted 2 weeks 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 a

few sentences, if not 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.

Films: You are required to watch two films in this course and submit a response paper for each one: 1) *Monica and David* (response paper due **Fri, November 8**); and 2) *Lives Worth Living* (response paper due **Fri, Nov 22**). These films are on reserve at the library, and *Monica and David* is available through Netflix. I will arrange viewing parties for those of you who would like to watch the movie as a group. Stay tuned for the date, time and location of these viewing parties. You may watch the films on your own, if you wish. 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 'Course Files' under the 'Class Introduction' module 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 (**due Fri, Oct 25**). 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 (Simi Linton's analysis of naming and claiming identity, social vs. medical models in action, the applicability of stigma, etc). See the assignment you printed out as part of your 'Course Files' from the 'Class Introduction' module for more details.

Issue Paper: In this paper (**due Tue, December 10**), 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 in the 'Class Introduction and Course Files' 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 or phone 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.** You can send me an email to set up an appointment. **I prefer Mondays and Tuesdays during the day, so please try to arrange for an appointment during these times.** 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):

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.)

- *Intro Forum: Class Introductions and Preliminary Reflections*

1. Social History and Definitions

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

Linton, S. Claiming Disability;

Baynton, D. Disability and the Justification of Inequality...

Forum answer sheet due Wednesday, response due Thursday

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

Readings: Barnes, C. & Mercer, G. *Exploring Disability* (Ch. 2 **ONLY**);

Shakespeare, T. The Social Model of Disability

Video: Examined Life

Forum answer sheet due Wednesday, response due Thursday

3. Traditional Sociological Perspectives on Disability: Talcott Parsons' 'Sick Role' and Goffman's Stigma

Readings: Parsons, T. *The Social System* (pp 428-447, pp 473-479);

Barnes, C. & Mercer, G. *Exploring Disability* (pp 43-51) [in last week's pdf];

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

Forum answer sheet due Wednesday, response due Thursday

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

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

Extra Credit: Siebers, T. My Withered Limb **or** Mairs, N. On Being a Cripple

Ethnography due Friday, Oct 25th, no forum answer sheet due

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

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

Forum answer sheet due Wednesday, response due Thursday

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

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

Documentary: *Monica and David*

Film Response Paper 1 due Nov 8th, no forum questions due

7. Disability, Capitalism and Class

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

APA Fact Sheet

Forum answer sheet due Wednesday, response due Thursday

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

Readings: Imrie, R. Universal Design;

Adams, R. Bring Down the Barriers;

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

Scotch, R. American Disability Policy in the Twentieth Century;

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

Documentary: *Lives Worth Living*

Video: International Disabled Women Activists (on Canvas)

Film Response Paper 2 due Nov 22nd, no forum questions due

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

Readings: 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...

Forum answer sheet due Wednesday, response due Thursday

Issue Paper topic due Monday, December 2nd

10. Disability and Culture/Media

Readings : Barnes, C. and Mercer, G. *Exploring Disability* (pp 185-195, pp 202-212);

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

Davis, L. *The Disability Paradox...*;

Glee Wheelchair Episode

Online video clips: King Montana

TED talk: British Paraorchestra

Free Neli Latson

Forum answer sheet due Wednesday, response due Thursday

11. Review and Close: Final comments and reflections! Please look on the course website's 'resources' tab to see other recommended links! Thank you!

Issue Papers due Tuesday December 10th

Extra Credit: Watch and respond to TED talk: Deaf in the Military and National Theater of the Deaf video clip

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