

POLS/WGST 3780: DISABILITY THEORY and POLITICS

TR, 12:45–2:00pm, DesPeres Hall 213S

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Office hours: TR, 9am-10:30am

Course Description

This course applies insights from the field of disability studies to the canon of Western political thought in order to examine the political nature of disability and the disabling nature of politics. In this course, students are exposed to varying definitions, cultural meanings and representations, social justice and human rights issues, and current bioethical debates related to disability. Building off of feminist theories pertaining to “intersectionality,” the social construction of difference, and the politics of embodiment, we will address some important preliminary questions: What counts as “normal” in human cultures? How have fluctuating assumptions about ability and impairment structured political institutions, law, citizenship, education, and culture? How does the experience of disability affect and inform key political concepts such as identity, dependency, autonomy, and justice? And, how do public policies, civil rights statutes, and health care institutions impact the lives of people with disabilities across gender, race, and class lines?

Course Goals

- Critically examine and reconceptualize dominant concepts in political theory from a disability perspective
- Consider disability as a dimension of human diversity and a matter of justice, not a personal tragedy
- Develop the tools necessary to identify and challenge ableist policies and practices

Course Objectives

- Students will explore the Learning Studio and wider university setting to think about how (in)accessible it currently is for people with disabilities
- Students will develop communication skills in the classroom through engaged participation with classmates
- Students will develop the writing skills necessary to articulate one's ideas in a clear, comprehensive, and concise manner

General Expectations

Because this course is about ideas— which are to be analyzed and applied critically rather than memorized— the format emphasizes opportunities for students to process ideas through

discussion and writing. The format is organized around structured discussions, which are supplemented by occasional short lectures.

The format of this course places a great deal of responsibility on students. All students are expected to come to class prepared to discuss the readings (*you should bring the assigned reading to every class session*). Your work for this class will involve both autonomous and collaborative learning. The idea of *autonomy* stresses your personal responsibility for your own learning. This requires you to “do the reading”— read the text carefully, think through the underlying assumptions and implications of the arguments made, and apply a note-taking system which will allow you to quickly consult the readings during class discussions. The idea of *collaboration* stresses your responsibility for teaching and learning from one another. It is my responsibility as the teacher to secure the necessary conditions in which both types of learning can occur, and to engage in analytic thinking with you.

A few general guidelines for class discussions:

- 1) Critical engagement with the readings through active participation requires that we treat one another respectfully. Listening is as important as talking.
- 2) We can only have a successful discussion if all voices and perspectives are heard. Thus, it is my goal to ensure that all students feel comfortable to participate.
- 3) Do not be afraid to ask questions for clarification. Before we critique the arguments within the text, we need to first obtain a comprehensive understanding of them.

Class Policies

Regular attendance is important for class discussion. You are allowed one “free” absence in the course. Every subsequent absence will result in a full letter grade deduction off of your final participation grade. Absences will be considered “excused” in accordance with University Policy, in the event of extreme circumstances.

Cell phones, laptops and other electronic devices must be turned off during class. In keeping with the 5 principles of Jesuit education at SLU, I take it that conduct in the classroom will be good-natured, considerate and intellectually disciplined. I also expect that you will come to class on time.

The easiest way to contact me is through e-mail, which I check frequently. In most cases I will be able to get back to you within 24 hours. I also retrieve phone messages when I am in my office, but I am not on campus every day. I’m also delighted to talk to you in person, so if you are unable to come to my office hours email me to arrange an alternative time.

Academic Integrity and Honesty

The University is a community of learning, whose effectiveness requires an environment of mutual trust and integrity. Academic integrity is violated by any dishonesty such as soliciting, receiving, or providing any unauthorized assistance in the completion of work submitted toward academic credit. While not all forms of academic dishonesty can be listed here, examples include copying from another student, copying from a book or class notes during a closed book exam, submitting materials authored by or revised by another person as the student’s own work,

copying a passage or text directly from a published source without appropriately citing or recognizing that source, taking a test or doing an assignment or other academic work for another student, securing or supplying in advance a copy of an examination or quiz without the knowledge or consent of the instructor, sharing or receiving the questions from an on-line quiz with another student, taking an on-line quiz with the help of another student, and colluding with another student or students to engage in academic dishonesty.

All clear violations of academic integrity will be met with appropriate sanctions. In this course, academic dishonesty on an assignment will result in *an automatic grade of 0 for that assignment* and a report of academic dishonesty sent to the Academic Honesty Committee of the College of Arts and Sciences. In the case of Class B violations, the Academic Honesty Committee may impose a larger sanction including, but not limited to, assigning a failing grade in the course, disciplinary probation, suspension, and dismissal from the University.

Students should refer to the following SLU website for more information about Class A and B violations and the procedures following a report of academic dishonesty:

<http://www.slu.edu/x12657.xml>

Disability Services

In recognition that people learn in a variety of ways and that learning is influenced by multiple factors (e.g., prior experience, study skills, learning disability), resources to support student success are available on campus. Students who think they might benefit from these resources can find out more about:

- Course-level support (e.g., faculty member, departmental resources, etc.) by asking your course instructor.
- University-level support (e.g., tutoring/writing services, Disability Services) by visiting the Student Success Center (BSC 331) or by going to www.slu.edu/success.

Students who believe that, due to a disability, they could benefit from academic accommodations are encouraged to contact Disability Services at 314-977-8885 or visit the Student Success Center. Confidentiality will be observed in all inquiries. Course instructors support student accommodation requests when an approved letter from Disability Services has been received and when students discuss these accommodations with the instructor after receipt of the approved letter.

Writing Services

I encourage you to take advantage of the writing services in the Student Success Center; getting feedback benefits writers at all skill levels. Trained writing consultants can help with any kind of writing project, multimedia project, and/or oral presentation. They offer one-on-one consultations that address everything from brainstorming and developing ideas to crafting strong sentences and documenting sources. For more information, call 977-3484 or visit <http://www.slu.edu/writingservices.xml>.

Assignments and Grade Breakdown

1. Participation, including attendance, in-class participation, posting discussion questions*, etc. – 25%

*Regarding discussion questions, you will be assigned a day of the week to post a discussion question. You are required to *post the discussion question on BB by 8pm the day before the assigned class*. I will often use these questions to guide our class discussions.

2. Midterm analytic essay- 25%

3. Final group report– 40%

4. Final group presentation— 10%

Your grade will be based on your performance on the assignments listed above. You must submit all assignments in order to pass the class. There is no extra credit available for the completion of additional work. Also, **I do not accept late papers**, unless you have contacted me ahead of time or it is an emergency.

I give letter grades, corresponding to the following assessment criteria:

| | | | | | | | |
|----|--------|----|-------|----|-------|---|----------|
| A | 93-100 | B+ | 87-89 | C+ | 77-79 | D | 60-70 |
| A- | 90-92 | B | 83-86 | C | 73-76 | F | Below 60 |
| | | B- | 80-82 | C- | 70-72 | | |

Books

The following required texts have been ordered through the SLU Bookstore:

The Disability Studies Reader, 3rd Edition, Lennard Davis

The Rejected Body: Feminist Philosophical Reflections on Disability, Susan Wendell

The Case against Perfection, Michael Sandel

POLS/ WGST 3780: Reading and Assignment Schedule

January 17 Introduction, go over syllabus, discuss class expectations, read Adrienne Rich’s “Claiming an Education”

Unit 1: FOUNDATIONS of DISABILITY STUDIES

January 19 Simi Linton, “Disability Studies/ Not Disability Studies,” (BB); Susan Wendell, *The Rejected Body*, Chapter 1, “Who Is Disabled? Defining Disability”

January 24 Susan Wendell, *The Rejected Body*, Chapter 2, “The Social Construction of Disability”; Susan Wendell, *The Rejected Body*, Chapter 3, “Disability as Difference”

- January 26** Colin Barnes, “A Brief History of Discrimination and Disabled People,” (DSR, 20–32); *The Garrett History Brief* (BB)
- January 31** Joseph Shapiro, *No Pity*, “A Hidden Army for Civil Rights,” (BB); Richard Scotch, “Making Change: The ADA as an Instrument of Social Reform,” (BB)
- February 2** Kenneth Kavale, “Mainstreaming to Full Inclusion,” (BB)
Film: *Including Samuel*
- February 7** Aimi Hamraie, “Designing Collective Access: A Feminist Disability Theory of Universal Design” (BB)
- February 9** Harvey Molotch, “Learning from the Loo,” (BB); David Serlin, “Pissing without Pity: Disability, Gender, and the Public Toilet,” (BB)

Unit 2: FEMINIST DISABILITY THEORY

- February 14** Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, “Integrating Disability, Transforming Feminist Theory,” (DSR, 353–373); Helen Meekosha, “Body Battles: Bodies, Gender, and Disability,” (BB)
- February 16** Judy Rohrer, “Toward a Full-Inclusion Feminism: A Feminist Deployment of Disability Analysis,” (BB)
- February 21** Ruth Hubbard, “Abortion and Disability: Who Should and Who Should Not Inhabit the World?,” (DSR, 107–119); Amber Knight, “Disability and the Meaning of Reproductive Liberty” (BB)
- February 23** Russell Shuttleworth, “Disabled Masculinity: Expanding the Masculine Repertoire,” (BB); Cynthia Barounis, “Crippling Heterosexuality, Queering Able Bodiedness: *Murderball*, *Brokeback Mountain*, and the Contested Masculine Body,” (DSR 443–459)
Film: *Murderball*
- February 28** Clara Greed, “Creating a Nonsexist Restroom,” (BB)

Unit 3: QUEERING DISABILITY THEORY

- March 2** Robert McRuer, “Compulsory Able-Bodiedness and Queer/Disabled Existence,” (DSR, 383–392)
- March 7** Lerita Coleman Brown, “Stigma: An Enigma Demystified,” (DSR 179–192); Susan Sontag, “AIDS and Its Metaphors,” (DSR, 193–198)
MIDTERM Essay Due

March 9 Sumi Colligan, “Why the Intersexed Shouldn’t be Fixed: Insights from Queer Theory and Disability Studies,” (BB); Olga Gershenson, “The Restroom Revolution: Unisex Toilets and Campus Politics,” (BB)

March 14 **NO CLASS- Spring Break**

March 16 **NO CLASS- Spring Break**

Unit 4: DISABILITY, CRITICAL RACE THEORY, and MULTICULTURALISM

March 21 Chris Bell, “Is Disability Studies Actually White Disability Studies?,” (DSR, 374-392); Anna Stubblefield, “Beyond the Pale: Tainted Whiteness, Cognitive Disability, and Eugenic Sterilization,” (BB)

March 23 Adrienne Asch, “Critical Race Theory, Feminism, and Disability: Reflections on Social Justice and Personal Identity,” (BB); Joseph Straus, “Autism as Culture,” (DSR, 535–562)

March 28 Carol Padden and Tom Humphries, “Deaf People: A Different Center,” (DSR, 393–402); Joseph Shapiro, *No Pity*, “The Deaf Celebration of Separate Culture,” (BB)

March 30 Film: *Through Deaf Eyes*

Unit 5: DISABILITY in GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

April 4 Nora Groce, “People with Disabilities,” (BB); Benedicte Ingstad, “Disability in the Developing World,” (BB)

April 6 Michael Davidson, “Universal Design: The Work of Disability in an Age of Globalization,” (DSR, 133–145)

Unit 6: CHALLENGING IDEAS about HEALTH and BODILY PERFECTION

April 11 Michael Sandel, *The Case against Perfection*, Chapters 1-2

April 13 **NO CLASS- Easter Break**

April 18 Michael Sandel, *The Case against Perfection*, Chapter 3

April 20 Michael Sandel, *The Case against Perfection*, Chapter 4-5

Unit 7: FINAL PROJECTS

April 25 Share and analyze group reports

April 27 Final presentation workday

May 2 Final presentation workday

May 4 Final Presentation